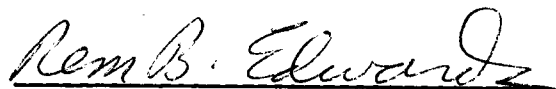


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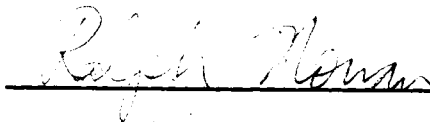
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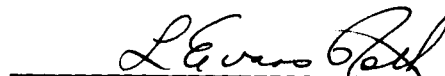
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Accepted for the Council:



Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

THE THEODICIES OF JOSIAH ROYCE AND JOHN HICK

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Christopher Hardeman

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the solutions to the problem of evil in relation to God proposed by Josiah Royce and John Hick--solutions which maintain that evil is necessary for moral and spiritual development. Hick and Royce were chosen because as strong advocates of this view, they, nevertheless, represent contrasting conceptions of God. Royce was a philosophical idealist, while Hick represents Christian theism.

I first isolated the usual problems for theism with regard to evil and considered the weaknesses of the usual explanations. Then I developed Royce's idealistic conception of God which he claimed avoided those weaknesses. Next I set forth his theodicy and critically evaluated it. Having completed my analysis of Royce, I turned to Hick's conception of God and his theodicy, comparing the latter with Royce's and critically evaluating it. Finally, I summarized the main points of the type of theodicy represented by Royce and Hick and followed this with a summary of the main problems.

Royce maintained that God suffers in order to be perfect. Moral and spiritual perfection consists not of innocence but of overcoming evil. Because human selves are fragments of God's life, God suffers in us and through us. Hick also maintained that developed moral and spiritual character is superior to a preestablished state. Therefore, God brought humans into existence in an undeveloped state and maintained an epistemic distance from

them in order that they might develop freely. Thus, in both Royce and Hick, the conditions that make evil a virtual inevitability are necessary.

The major findings of this study were that the type of theodicy advocated by Royce and Hick suffers from serious weaknesses. God is absolutely good but requires evil to accomplish the divine purpose. A large degree of moral and spiritual development does not require evil, yet God who is absolutely good requires it for development. Excessive evil is admitted to be a mystery and yet this mystery is also used by God. The final outcome of the process either requires abandoning the original necessary conditions (Hick) or has no redemptive value on an individual basis (Royce).

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INTRODUCTION

There are two observations that I have made concerning the nature of philosophy which have a bearing upon its status as a discipline. The first observation concerns the subject matter. In the days of Plato and Aristotle, philosophy was a vast, uncultivated field. As time marched on, however, less and less of that field needed cultivation. In our present day, one can hardly imagine any bit of ground that has not been put to the plow. The ages have seen the harvest of a fertile crop of speculative thought. Frankly, there is not much that has escaped philosophical scrutiny. As the writer of Ecclesiastes puts it, "there is no new thing under the sun."¹

The second observation is concerned with relevance. To those who are well-acquainted with the discipline of speculative thought, the relevance of philosophy is beyond question. To the so-called man-in-the-street, the relevance may not seem so clear. For many the rigors of everyday life are sufficient; there is no need or time for the rigors of speculative thought.

I have mentioned these two observations as a means of introducing the topic of this study: the problem of evil. There is certainly nothing novel about this topic. Philosophers have hammered away at it throughout the ages and just about every conceivable

¹Ecclesiastes 1:9.

explanation has been given. Thus, this study breaks no new ground, but it does seek to analyze some of the ground that has been broken.

The problem of evil, old as it may be, is, nevertheless, relevant to our lives. In fact, it may be as relevant as any philosophical issue can be. I say this because we all are subject to the problem of evil. We observe it in the world around us, and we experience it in our own lives. One only has to read a newspaper on any given day to see that this world is a place of great tragedy and sorrow, a place of pain and injustice. Natural forces destroy lives and property; human beings kill, maim, and cheat one another; millions suffer from disease and starvation. Furthermore, in many or most cases, the sufferer does not seem deserving of such woe, while many who seem less innocent never suffer.

This is not problem that is far-removed from any of us, but one that is close at hand. Its relevance is no mere theoretical relevance, but one that truly has existential import. Thus, people have been compelled to ask: Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why does the world have to be like this?

I have referred to evil as a problem, but an important qualification is in order. The existence of evil is a problem only for those views which maintain that the universe is constituted in such a way that one might expect no evil at all or at least considerably less than we actually find. For instance, if one believes that a Supreme, Benevolent, Intelligence governs the world, then one must explain how the existence of evil is compatible with the existence of such a being. A familiar way of expressing this question is to

ask: How is the existence of evil compatible with the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent God?

If one rejects this kind of world-view in favor of a naturalistic view, then the existence of evil is not a problem. Naturalism maintains that the universe is not governed by some Supreme, Moral, Intelligence but is merely the result of natural forces. William Halverson writes,

The problem of evil arises for any world-view that affirms that the universe is constituted in such a way that we might reasonably expect that it would contain no evil. If the universe is the result of the mindless working of purely natural forces, as naturalism affirms, then it is not surprising that the world is the way it is. If, however, the universe as we know it is the creation of a God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-good, then it is surprising that there is evil in the world; for one would expect that such a God, if he is going to create a world at all, would create good one.²

The existence of evil, therefore, is a problem only if one believes in the existence of God, and to be precise, a God who is both all-powerful and all-good. If God lacks one or both of these attributes, then an explanation for the existence of evil is more readily available. In this study, I am not concerned with naturalism, nor with a God who is limited in some way. My concern lies with the conception of a God who is both all-powerful and all-good. How is the existence of evil compatible with such a being? The purpose of this study is not the examination of various

²William H. Halverson, A Concise Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 160.

views but rather one view in particular--the view that evil is necessary for moral and spiritual perfection.

In examining this view, I wish to focus attention on two individuals--Josiah Royce and John Hick. Royce (1855-1916) was a philosophical idealist. Hick, a current writer, represents a Christian theistic view. In spite of their differing conceptions of God, Royce and Hick share a common theme--evil is necessary for the perfection of certain persons. In Hick's case, it is the perfection of the individual in relation to God. In Royce's case, it is the perfection of God or the Absolute. In Royce's case, however, there is a sense in which evil is also necessary for the perfection of the individual. His conception of God is not that of a being other in essence from the world. Individual human selves are fragments of God's life; hence, the perfection of individuals is as much in view as that of God. Thus, Royce and Hick are doing much the same thing from different perspectives.

I shall examine this type of explanation for the problem of evil from Royce's idealistic perspective and from Hick's Christian theistic perspective in order to see if it can dispose of the problems raised by the existence of evil. I am not primarily concerned about the truth or falsity of the metaphysical positions represented by Royce and Hick, but rather the adequacy of the solutions arising from those positions. The reason why I have chosen to examine the problem of evil in terms of Royce and Hick is because I find the position they represent to be rather intriguing. As we shall see, on one hand, evil is considered to be genuinely evil, and

yet, on the other hand, it is necessary for a perfect moral order. To put it another way, evil is necessary for the Good. I find this to be a rather intriguing and provocative position. But why Royce and Hick? Royce and Hick go to great lengths to develop this position; hence, I feel that they are very appropriate objects of study. But not only are they worthy representatives of the view in question, they also represent two vastly different conceptions of God. Again, I find a certain amount of intrigue in this contrast--a contrast which covers this kind of position from, shall we say, "both sides of the metaphysical coin." Thus, because of an interest in this particular view, the extensive treatment given to it by Royce and Hick, and their contrasting conceptions of God, I approach the problem of evil in this study in terms of Royce and Hick.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEMS OF THEISM

"God" and "Evil"

In the Introduction I stated that this study is concerned with how the existence of evil is compatible with the existence of a good and powerful God. In this chapter, I shall introduce the usual problems that arise for a theistic view with regard to the presence of evil in the world. To refer to evil as a problem for a theistic view presupposes that God is the kind of being who would not desire the existence of evil and who could do something about its prevention or elimination. In other words, evil appears as a problem only if God is both benevolent and omnipotent. If one has a conception of God which omits one or both of these attributes, then an explanation for evil is more readily available. God may not desire the happiness of the creature, or he might be so limited as to be unable to produce a state that excludes it. In this study, I am presupposing that if God exists, then he is benevolent and omnipotent. Such a conception does not have solutions so readily available as do the conceptions just mentioned. When God is conceived as benevolent and omnipotent, problems arise which, on the surface, may seem insoluble.

Before focusing attention on those problems, I want to focus attention on evil. To what conditions or sorts of experience do we usually apply the term "evil"? First of all, there are human

actions which appear to have a detrimental effect upon the lives of others. Actions such as murder, rape, vandalism, slavery, fraud, to name a few, are actions that we denounce, actions that we would like to eliminate. Thus, immoral acts such as human cruelty are one sort of experience that is considered evil.

Secondly, there are such things as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, droughts, tornadoes, to name a few, which also have a detrimental effect upon the lives of people. Such things result in death, suffering, disability, and loss of goods and property. These phenomena are usually thought of as external natural disasters--the forces of nature.

Thirdly, there are such things as disease, birth defects, and mental retardation which produce suffering and hardship. Such things may be differentiated from external natural disasters in that they appear more as internal disorders, but they are the same in that they are not willfully caused by human beings and do not result from natural processes.

These three kinds of phenomena can be reduced to two basic categories: moral evil and natural evil. These evils can be defined as follows:

Moral evil is evil that we human beings originate: cruel, unjust, vicious, and perverse thoughts and deeds. Natural evil is the evil that originates independently of human actions: in disease bacilli, earthquakes, storms, droughts, tornadoes, etc.¹

¹John Hick, Evil and The God of Love (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), p. 18.

The things which are described by moral and natural evil are things which bring about mental anguish, physical suffering, and the frustration of our very efforts to survive. We can conceive of our lives and the life of the world as better off without them. Thus, I suggest a definition given to me by Dr. R.B. Edwards of The University of Tennessee: "Evil is intrinsic disvalue; something worth eliminating and avoiding for its own sake."

"Theodicy"

How then is the existence of evil compatible with the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent God? This question reflects a dilemma:

1. Evil exists.
2. An omnipotent God could destroy evil.
3. A benevolent God would destroy evil.
4. Therefore, since evil is not destroyed, then either--
 - a. God is omnipotent and, hence, malevolent in some way,
 - or
 - b. God is benevolent and, hence, impotent in some way, or
 - c. God is both malevolent and impotent, or
 - d. there is no God at all.²

Since I have assumed that God is benevolent and omnipotent, it would appear that there is a serious dilemma that needs to be resolved. This is the purpose of a "theodicy." "Theodicy" comes from the Greek θεος which means "God" and δικη which means

²Norman L. Geisler, Philosophy of Religion (Grand Rapids: Zonderuan Publishing House, 1974), p. 328.

"justice." In other words, a theodicy is a defense of the righteousness and justice of God in light of the existence of evil.

Leibniz, in his Theodicy, stated this enterprise as follows:

Likewise concerning the origin of evil in its relation to God, I offer a vindication of his perfections that shall extol not less his holiness, his justice and his goodness than his greatness, his power and his independence. I shall show how it is possible for everything to depend upon God, for him to cooperate in all actions of creatures, even, if you will, to create these creatures continually, and nevertheless not be the author of sin.³

A theodicy is concerned to show that the existence of evil is not a reflection of some moral defect or limitation of power in God. Let us now turn to the traditional defense of God.

The Free Will Defense

The traditional explanation for the existence of evil, at least moral evil, has been that of free will. This view maintains that the creation of beings who possessed free will was of extreme value to God; therefore, he created such beings, and because he values their capacity for free choice so highly, he does not interfere with their choices or the consequences of their choices even when they are evil. Thus, moral evil is explained on the basis of free-will and the permission of God who respects that freedom.

Does this explanation really exonerate God? It can be said that although God is not directly responsible for the evil produced

³G.W. Leibniz, Theodicy (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1952), p. 61.

by human beings, he is responsible for their existence and their free will. Certainly, we cannot attribute to God ignorance of the risk involved. Even if God is not omniscient, even if omniscience is incompatible with free will, God surely would have known that evil was a very distinct possibility. Thus, God chose to create even though evil was a possible consequence.

This would not be a problem if the consequences of evil acts affected only evil doers, but such is not the case. The consequences of evil acts extend to those innocent of wrong doing. There is untold suffering in the world among the innocent. Thus, it appears that God has sanctioned not only free will but unjust suffering as a consequence of free will. Would not God have done better by not creating?

The underlying motive for such a creation was said to be the extreme value of free will beings, but given the result of free will, it would seem that God has a strange set of values. Is free will so valuable that so much suffering must be allowed? It would seem that God places more value on the free will of human beings than on the human beings themselves.

Another possible problem for the free will defense is that God could have created beings possessed of such a nature that they always choose good rather than evil. This argument has been championed in recent times by Antony Flew and J.L. Mackie. Mackie writes,

If there is no logical impossibility in a man's freely choosing the good on one, or on several, occasions, there

cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong: there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right. Clearly, his failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good.⁴

According to Flew,

to say that a person could have helped doing something is not to say that what he did was in principle unpredictable nor that there were no causes anywhere which determined that he would as a matter of fact act in this way. It is to say that if he had chosen to do otherwise he would have been able to do so

 not only is there no necessary conflict between acting freely and behaving predictably and/or as a result of caused causes; but furthermore that Omnipotence might have, could without contradiction be said to have, created people who would always as a matter of fact freely have chosen to do the right thing.⁵

Thus, an omnipotent God could have made human beings with such a nature that they are naturally repelled by evil and naturally do that which is good. They would be acting freely because they were under no coercion; they act in accordance with their own natures. Had they chosen to do otherwise, they could have, but they simply had no desire to do otherwise.

⁴J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," Mind, LXIV, No. 254 (April 1955), p. 209.

⁵Antony Flew, "Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom," New Essays In Philosophical Theology, ed. by Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1955), pp. 150, 152.

The Instrumental View

Let us now turn our attention to another explanation which is really an added ingredient to the free will defense--the instrumental view of evil. Of this view, William Halverson writes,

I would observe that some things that are indeed evil in and of themselves are nonetheless productive of a good that could not have been produced in any other way. We clearly recognize this principle in the case of surgery: the pain experienced by the patient, considered simply as an instance of suffering on the part of a sentient creature, is certainly evil; but it is an evil that is willingly endured because it is a means to a good end, that is, healing and health.

What I am suggesting, then, is the evil may play a role in the total economy of the universe analogous to the role of pain in the process of surgery It is not unthinkable that God in His infinite wisdom should have allowed some evil in the world so that He might use it for man's moral training and thus for his ultimate good.⁶

This view supposes that God created human beings with free wills and that free will accounts for moral evil. The reason that God allows the consequences of evil is because they are an instrument for producing good. Through the struggle with evil, human moral character is developed; human benevolence is developed; the human race rises to a higher level of goodness than if evil did not exist. In other words, the suffering of humanity gives rise to all that is noble in the human spirit. In whatever way we may characterize the instrumental view, the point is that in some way the human race benefits; a higher good is attained.

⁶William H. Halverson, A Concise Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 165.

One problem with this view is that it presupposes an evil which is logically prior to moral evil itself: the conditions that needed improvement. Why did not God make the world better so that the instrumental use of moral evil was not needed? Even though surgery may produce good health, it presupposes an unhealthy state to begin with.

Another problem consists in the random way in which the consequences of evil occur. Everyone is not affected with the same frequency or severity. Often the righteous suffer more than the unrighteous. The point is that it is very hard to see any consistent pattern in the way that evil affects people. It seems difficult to understand how uniformly positive results are produced and justice is served by the existence of evil.

Natural Evil

Thus far, we have considered only moral evil. What about natural evil? If God is considered the creator of all things, then the forces of nature are characteristics of that creation and bring about much suffering. How is the suffering produced by natural forces compatible with a benevolent, omnipotent God?

Perhaps natural evil is a form of punishment imposed upon the human race for moral evil. This punitive view of natural evil is very suspect. Natural disasters fall upon people seemingly without regard to their relative goodness. The righteous appear to suffer as frequently and with as much severity as do the unrighteous. This would be an erratic kind of punishment to say the least.

Perhaps natural evil is not a form of punishment, but rather an instrument for producing good (the instrumental view again). We might say that natural disasters create an opportunity for the building of character through rising above one's hardships, or create the circumstances where humanity is compelled to learn more of its environment and, consequently, make far-reaching discoveries which benefit the race.

The problems here are the same as with the instrumental view of moral evil. Once again, this view presupposes an evil which is logically prior to natural evil itself: the conditions that needed improvement. Once again, the random way in which natural evil occurs makes it difficult to understand how any uniformly positive results are produced and justice is served. Therefore, natural evil, like moral evil, appears to be a problem if God is both benevolent and omnipotent.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been the introduction of some possible problems that arise for theism due to the existence of evil. I began by posing an apparent dilemma. If God is all-good, then would he not hate evil and not want it in the universe? If God is all-powerful, then would he not be able to prevent it? Since both moral and natural evil exist, how can God be both all-good and all-powerful?

I examined the free will defense and raised two objections:

1. Although God may not be responsible for evil acts, he is responsible for unjust suffering.

2. God could have created beings who always freely choose to do right.

Next, I examined the instrumental view of evil and raised two objections:

1. This view presupposes an evil that is logically prior to moral evil, namely, the conditions that needed improvement.
2. The suffering caused by moral evil occurs too randomly to be of any consistent instrumental value.

Finally, I examined natural evil as a punitive measure and as an instrumental measure and, again, raised two objections:

1. As a disciplinary measure: the randomness of natural evil rules out any form of just discipline.
2. As an instrumental measure: the same objections as applied to moral evil apply here.

The problems that I have raised are in no way intended to be taken as ultimate. They serve only to demonstrate that a theodicy is not readily achieved and that it must face some serious challenges. These problems should be kept in mind as we turn to the soul-making theodicies of Josiah Royce and John Hick.

CHAPTER II

ROYCE'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

In Chapter I, I attempted to introduce the problems that the existence of evil poses for theism. The basic question that I raised is this: if God is perfect in goodness and power, then why does evil exist?

Josiah Royce was sensitive to this question. Using the biblical Job as an example, Royce examined the problem of evil and concluded,

Grant Job's own presupposition that God is a being other than this world, that he is its external creator and ruler, and then all solutions fail. God is then either cruel or helpless as regards all real finite ill of the sort that Job endures.¹

Royce argued not against the existence of God but rather against the transcendency of God--conceiving God as a being who is separate in essence from the universe. The fundamental mistake of western theological thought, according to Royce, lies in the conceiving of God as the external creator of the universe and, hence, separate from it. He writes,

God is not in ultimate essence another being than yourself. He is the Absolute Being. You truly are one with God, part of his life. He is the very soul of your soul.²

¹Josiah Royce, Studies of Good and Evil (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), pp. 13-14.

²Ibid., p. 14.

What does Royce mean by saying that God is not in ultimate essence another being than yourself? The purpose of this chapter is to examine Royce's conception of God which, according to Royce, is able to provide a satisfactory theodicy. Having done this, I will then be prepared to examine that theodicy. In order to see how Royce develops his conception of God, I shall examine his idealism, his conception of error, and his conception of ignorance. This method is a long and rather round about way of presenting Royce's conception of God. I could merely cite Royce's own description of God, but in order to have a better insight into his conception and, therefore, a better insight into his theodicy, a more detailed examination of the development of his conception is required. As I examine these elements of Royce's thought, I do so uncritically, for it is not his conception of God that is my primary interest but the theodicy that arises from it. At a later time, I will suggest certain problems that I have with his view of God, but for now, this chapter shall be merely an elucidation of his thought.

Royce's Idealism

In order to arrive at Royce's conception of God, we must understand his conception of reality. Therefore, I shall begin by looking at his philosophical idealism. For Royce, an understanding of reality requires that one understand the nature of ideas through which we think of reality. He writes,

I am one of those who hold that when you ask the question: What is an Idea? and: How can Ideas stand in relation to reality? you attack the world-knot in the way that

promises most for the untying of its meshes . . . If you view philosophy in this fashion, you subordinate the study of the world as fact to a reflection upon the World as Idea.³

Gabriel Marcel puts it like this,

Reality, considered as pure fact eludes the mind's embrace. It is a kingdom of riddle and contrast, appearing to us in a thousand varying aspects that reason cannot reconcile But the secret of this marvelous diversity lies in thought itself, in the contradictory multiplicity of the demands with which thought accosts reality.⁴

Royce, then, undertakes an examination of two questions: "What is an idea? and second: How can an Idea be related to reality?"⁵ An idea is generally conceived as a cognitive act in the mind that reflects objective reality. Royce accepts this as far as it goes, but there is more. For Royce, ideas contain an element of volition or intention. He writes,

it is enough to note that your intelligent ideas of things never consist of mere images of things, but always involve a consciousness of how you propose to act towards the things of which you have ideas. A sword is an object that you would propose to use, or to regard in one way, while a pen is to be used in another.⁶

³Josiah Royce, The World and the Individual, I (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), pp. 16-17.

⁴Gabriel Marcel, Royce's Metaphysics, trans. by Virginia and Gordon Ringer (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1956), p. 3.

⁵Royce, The World and the Individual, I, p. 19.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 22.

Thus, Royce defines 'idea' as "any state of consciousness, whether simple or complex, which, when present, is then and there viewed as at least the partial expression or embodiment of a single conscious purpose."⁷ The primary character of an idea, for Royce, is not its representative character but its volitional character as the embodiment of a conscious purpose.

Royce, then, turns to the meaning of an idea and distinguishes between two senses of meaning: internal and external meaning.⁸ An idea has been defined as, at least, a partial embodiment of a conscious purpose. The embodiment of my conscious purpose or intention is the internal meaning. Take, for example, a melody sung by me.⁹ Merely hearing a brute noise is no idea, but the melody I hum is an intentional embodiment of my conscious state of mind. The melody is my idea, and as the intentional embodiment of my conscious state, it has internal meaning.

Ideas, however, appear to have a meaning which is not exhausted by the internal meaning.¹⁰ For instance, the melody I hum happens to be a certain theme from one of Beethoven's symphonies.¹¹ Even though this melody constitutes the embodiment of my conscious

⁷Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁸Ibid., p. 24 ff.

⁹Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 26-27.

purpose, it is, nevertheless, a melody that has reference to something outside of my own purpose of the present moment, namely, Beethoven's symphony. This reference is the external meaning of the idea.¹²

This outer reference is demonstrated in Royce's example of ships.¹³ Suppose I sit on the shore and see a number of ships in the distance and attempt to count them. The number of real ships does not result from my counting them. It is by contrasting the internal and external meaning of ideas that Royce sets forth the problem of the relation between Idea and Being--how is an idea related to reality?

An idea, viewed in terms of its external meaning, appears as a representation of a being external to our representation. This external being appears to be separate from our idea of it which seeks to correspond to it. Thus, we have a sharp contrast between external and internal meaning. On one hand, we have the embodiment of a conscious purpose--a purpose which is fulfilled by the presence of certain mental contents. On the other hand, we have conformity to an external existence which has no dependence upon our inner meaning, but is what it is.

This contrast, however, may not be as sharp as it seems. Royce writes,

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 28.

After all, the counting of the ships is valid or invalid not alone because of the supposed independent being of the ships, but also because of the conscious act whereby just this collection of ships was first consciously selected for counting. After all, then, no idea is true or false except with reference to the object that this very idea first means to select as its own object.¹⁴

According to Royce, apart from a conscious selection of an object, the object itself can neither correspond nor fail to correspond with an idea. Vincent Buranelli writes,

It is not enough to have an object on one side of the epistemological bridge, and an idea like it on the other. One may have the idea of the color brown in one's mind without attributing it to any object. One can even say to oneself "There is a brown dictionary on the table" without getting outside a mere psychological event, an entirely mental phenomenon. In order to make this statement objectively meaningful, the will must be applied in a definite concrete case. One must intend to represent this dictionary on this table.¹⁵

According to Royce, this contrast between internal and external meaning is fundamental to understanding the nature of Being. He writes,

the whole problem of the nature of Being will for us, in the end, reduce the question: How is the internal meaning of ideas consist with their apparently external meaning? Or again: How is it possible that an idea, which is an idea essentially and primarily because of the inner

¹⁴Ibid., p. 31.

¹⁵Vincent Buranelli, Josiah Royce (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), pp. 111-112.

purpose that it consciously fulfills by its presence, also possesses a meaning that in any sense appears to go beyond this internal purpose?¹⁶

Royce's solution to this question, as we shall see, is his idealistic thesis that internal and external meanings are resolved into a higher, all-embracing consciousness which, according to Royce, is God. Let us now move on to the next stage of Royce's conception.

The Possibility of Error

As mentioned in the previous discussion, the question of truth and falsity depends not only on the correspondence between an external existence and my idea of it, but also on the conscious selection of that external existence as the object of my idea. As in the example of the ships, my counting of the ships could neither be true or false unless I first determine to make those ships the object of my selective attention. Royce writes,

A judgment can have as object only what it intends to have as object. It has to conform only to that to which it wants to conform. But the essence of an intention is the knowledge of what one intends.¹⁷

¹⁶Royce, The World and the Individual, I, pp. 31-32.

¹⁷Josiah Royce, The Religious Aspect of Philosophy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1885), p. 397.

Let us consider the example of John and Thomas.¹⁸ We have "four persons"--John as Thomas conceives of him, the real John, Thomas or John conceives of him, and the real Thomas. When John makes a judgment about Thomas, or Thomas about John, what is the object of their thoughts? For John, it is his image of Thomas; for Thomas, it is image of John. About whom can they err? John cannot err about his image of Thomas, nor can Thomas err about his image of John, for each knows his image of the other. Can John err about the real Thomas, or Thomas about the real John? No, for the real John and Thomas are not part of their thoughts, only their images of one another. The question that arises is this: how can there be disagreement between an idea and its intended object? We can intend only that which we know, but how can we err about what we already know? How, then, is error possible?

If error is real, and Royce believes that it is, then the conditions that make error possible must also be real.¹⁹ In analyzing the nature of error, Royce points out that error is a concept that applies to judgments, but judgments do not occur apart from a mind that focuses on a certain object.²⁰ Thus, the first basic condition for error is that our judgments intend certain objects. The second basic condition is that judgments must fail to agree with their intended purpose. But, according to Royce, as shown in the example

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 408-409.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 385.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 396-397.

of John and Thomas, we can intend only what we already know; hence, how can we ever be in error about what we already know? We have a dilemma in the volitional theory of ideas.

Royce proposes a solution to this dilemma. The solution lies in the existence of an infinite unity of consciousness. He writes,

In short, error becomes possible as one moment or element in a higher truth, that is, in a consciousness that makes error a part of itself, while recognizing it as error Either there is no such thing as error, which statement is a flat self-contradiction, or else there is an infinite unity of conscious thought to which is present all possible truth.²¹

What is meant by an "infinite unity of conscious thought?" In so far as the objects of our judgments are intended by us, the judgments cannot fail to agree with their chosen objects. But if our internal meaning is only part of an organism of thought, then error could be explained on the basis of the incompleteness of our internal meanings. Thus, if error is possible, there must be an "infinite unity of conscious thought" to which is present all possible truth. Because an infinite mass of error is possible, this unity of conscious thought must itself be infinite, and because error also applies to all possible relations of objects as well as the objects themselves, this infinite thought must be a rational unity and not a mere aggregate of truth.²²

²¹Ibid., p. 424.

²²Ibid., pp. 424-425.

What, then is an error? An error we reply is an incomplete thought that to a higher thought, which includes it and its intended object, is known as having failed in the purpose that it more or less clearly had, and that is fully realized in this higher thought. And without such higher inclusive thought, an assertion has no external object, and is no error.²³

Thus, returning to the theme of internal and external meanings of ideas, the internal meaning is a partial, incomplete thought that finds its external meaning in an organic unity of thought which includes it and completes it. For Royce, the condition that makes error possible is the existence of "an infinite unity of conscious thought," or, in other words, Absolute Thought. This Absolute Thought, for Royce, is God. Vincent Buranelli writes,

This is the only explanation of how we get outside our own minds and reach objects. As participants in the Absolute, we know the truth. We know (fundamentally) and we don't know (momentarily). That is why the internal meaning of ideas can be decisive in knowledge without ensuring infallibility. The sum of errors about anything--and a fortiori about everything--is infinite. Since error is impossible without a mind to know it, infinite error involves the necessary existence of a being infinite in knowledge. Error implies omniscience. Internal meanings imply the Absolute.²⁴

For Royce, God is "an infinite unity of conscious thought" or Absolute Thought. This means that the universe is not separate in its being from God, or as Royce puts it, "God is not in ultimate

²³Ibid., p. 425.

²⁴Buranelli, Josiah Royce, pp. 116-117.

essence another being than yourself."²⁵ The universe is the manifestation of God, and human beings are fragments or expressions of the life of God. Our minds are partial expressions of the Universal Mind; our lives are partial expressions of the life of God.

Let us return to the example of John and Thomas. If John and Thomas are, as a common-sense view would conceive, beings who are totally independent of one another in their being, then the objects of their judgments are not actually each other but their own ideas of each other. They cannot get outside their own ideas to the real person. But if John and Thomas are not independent beings but rather parts of an organic whole of thought, then the intended objects of their judgments are fully included and realized in a higher thought. When they err, their thoughts have been incomplete and are known to a higher thought as having failed in the purpose they had. Without this higher, inclusive thought, their judgments have no external objects and, hence, cannot be in error. Royce writes,

Even so we must conceive the relation of John's thought to the united total of thought that includes him and Thomas. Real John and his phantom Thomas, real Thomas and his phantom John, are all present as elements in this including consciousness, which completes the incomplete intentions of both individuals, constitutes their true relations, and gives the thought of each about the other whatever of truth or of error it possesses.²⁶

Thus, for Royce, absolute idealism leads to the existence of an All-knower who is not separate from the world but is the all-

²⁵Royce, Studies in Good and Evil, p. 14.

²⁶Royce, The Religious Aspect of Philosophy, p. 424.

inclusive organism of thought which constitutes the world. This one ultimately real being is God, and we are fragments of the divine being. Royce also develops this theme in The Conception of God by analyzing the nature of ignorance. To this we shall now turn.

The Nature of Ignorance

In The Conception of God Royce sets out to prove that God exists. He begins by identifying God as an Omniscient Being and defines this by saying,

An Omniscient Being would be one who simply found presented to him, not by virtue of fragmentary and gradually completed processes of inquiry, but by virtue of an all-embracing, direct, and transparent insight into his own truth--who found thus presented to him, I say, the complete, the fulfilled answer to every genuinely rational question.²⁷

Does this Omniscient Being exist? Royce feels certain that he can demonstrate that it does. Basic to his proof is his view that man is essentially ignorant of reality as it is in itself, and that this reality which we seek to know is that which is or would be present to an absolute experience. He writes,

For my thesis to-night will be that the very nature of human ignorance is such that you cannot conceive or define it apart from the assertion that there is, in truth, at the heart of the world, an Absolute and Universal Intelligence, for which thought and experience, so divided in us, are in complete and harmonious unity.²⁸

²⁷Josiah Royce, The Conception of God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), p. 8.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 15-16.

According to popular agnosticism, we know that there is a reality, but we do not know the true nature of this reality.²⁹ Apart from experience, there is no knowledge, but what does experience indicate? Experience is given to us through our particular type of organization--our senses. Thus, reality, whatever its nature may be, is mediated through our particular type of sensory organization. Experience, therefore, does not represent the true nature of reality but the current states of our own organization.

After referring to this agnostic view, Royce attempts to give a higher definition of human ignorance.³⁰ He writes,

our ignorance of the Absolute Reality can mean only that there is some sort of possible experience, some state of mind, that you and I want, but that we do not now possess.³¹

The fallibility of our senses is clearly brought out when compared with the work of science.

What science says is simply that there is a sort of indirect and organized experience which reveals more of phenomenal truth than can ever be revealed to our direct sensory states as these pass by.³²

²⁹Ibid., pp.16-18.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 18-22

³¹Ibid., p. 19.

³²Ibid., p. 21.

Instead of demonstrating an agnostic view, however, science demonstrates that there is a reality beyond our immediate sensations which can be known indirectly, or as Royce puts it,

the knowledge of certain indirectly known physical phenomena as they really are, not to be sure as absolute realities, but as the objects of our organized physical experience.³³

Thus, Royce defines ignorance in terms of an organized experience ordered by the mind as contrasted with the fragmentary character of immediate experience. He writes,

All our actual sensory experience comes in passing moments, and is fragmentary. Our science, wherever it has taken any form, contrasts with immediate fragmentariness of phenomenal truth, which is first of all characterized by the fact that for us it is a conceptual world, and not a world directly experienced by any one of us. Yet this ideal world is not an arbitrary world. It is linked to our actual experience by the fact that its conceptions are accounts, as exact as they may be, of systems of possible experience, whose contents would be presented, in a certain form and order, to beings whom we conceive as including our fragmentary moments in some sort of definite unity of experience.³⁴

The reality that we seek to know is an organized experience; there can be no other conception, according to Royce. We distinguish between what is illusory and what is real by appealing to a wider, more universal experience. Royce writes,

Reality, as opposed to illusion, means simply an actual or possible content of experience, not in so far as this

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 27.

experience is supposed to be transient and fleeting, but in so far as it is conceived to be somehow inclusive and organized, the fulfillment of a system of ideas, the answers to a scheme of rational questions.³⁵

The organized experience as manifested in the special sciences is limited and relative, but according to Royce, we may go beyond this and assert that there is an absolute reality, an absolutely organized experience. If we assume that there is no universal experience as concrete fact, but only the desire for it, we actually establish its reality.³⁶ The absolute finiteness that we would be asserting would itself be an absolute truth. Truth, however, to be truth, cannot be definable apart from experience.³⁷ Royce writes, "To say: So and so is possible, is to say: There is, somewhere in experience, an actuality some aspect of which can be defined in terms of this possibility."³⁸ For whose experience will this absolute truth of absolute finiteness exist? It cannot exist for finite experience because, just in so far as it is finite, it cannot know that there is no absolutely organized experience.³⁹ Royce writes,

To assert a truth as more than possible is to assert the concrete reality of an experience that knows this truth. Hence,--and here, indeed, is the conclusion of the whole matter,--the very effort hypothetically to assert that the

³⁵Ibid., p. 32.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 40-41.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 36-37.

³⁸Ibid., p. 37.

³⁹Ibid., p. 40.

whole world of experience is a world of fragmentary and finite experience is an effort involving a contradiction. Experience must constitute, in its entirety, one self-determined and consequently absolute and organized whole.⁴⁰

Thus, according to Royce, reality is an absolutely organized experience, and as truth, it must exist for someone's experience--a universal Subject. Royce concludes the matter by saying,

Our result, then, is: There is an absolute Experience, for which the conception of an absolute reality, i.e. the conception of a system of ideal truth, is fulfilled by the very contents that get presented to this Experience. This Absolute Experience is related to our experience as an organic whole to its own fragments. It is an experience which finds fulfilled all that the completest thought can rationally conceive as genuinely possible.⁴¹

Royce's analysis of ignorance has led him to an Absolute Experience, and, for Royce, this Absolute Experience is God.

The Absolute and The Individual

In The Religious Aspect of Philosophy Royce's idealism led him to conceive of an Absolute Thought. In The Conception of God this doctrine of an Absolute Thought or All-knower is developed into a parallel conception as Absolute Experience. For Royce, this is God. As such, God is Absolute Being, or, in short, the Absolute. Thus, when Royce says that God is not transcendent, not in ultimate

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 41.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 43-44.

essence another being than ourselves, he is asserting that there is, ultimately, only one real being--God. The universe is the manifestation of God, and human beings are fragments of the life of God.

Royce brings this out very clearly in the following:

the idealist maintains that there is in the universe one perfectly real being, namely, the Absolute We exist as fragments of the Absolute life, or better, as partial functions in the unity of the Absolute and conscious process of the world. On the other hand, our existence and individuality are not illusory, but are what they are in an organic unity with the whole life of the Absolute Being.⁴²

Reality, for Royce, is One, and that One is the Absolute or God. Individual finite lives are manifestations of the One. The Absolute is self-conscious in that it consists of conscious individual lives. The Absolute is dynamic in that it consists in the multiplicity and diversity of finite selves. The Absolute is one in that it is not merely the sum of its fragments but a unified, integrated system of thought and experience. God is, therefore, a Universal Intelligence which constitutes the world.

When it is said that God constitutes the world, it should be noted that God is not the external creator of the world. God did not create the universe, but rather the universe is the manifestation of God. "The Absolute is unique and expresses itself in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe."⁴³ This

⁴²Royce, Studies of Good and Evil, p. 15.

⁴³Marcell, Royce's Metaphysics, p. 39.

is not a causal process. The notion of cause and thus of necessity cannot apply to all reality. Royce writes,

All conceptions of source, of origin, and of causation are relative conceptions, which apply only to specified regions or spheres within the whole of reality. The conception of causation does not apply to the whole of reality itself In the last analysis, in fact, one cannot say: The world, or reality, or the Absolute, must be; but only: The reality, the Absolute, the world, is. Fact is always superior to necessity, and the highest expression of truth in terms of thought is inevitably the categorical judgment rather than the hypothetical, the assertory judgment rather than the apodictic. For that very reason all assertions such as "A requires for its explanation, or for its cause, something else, namely, B," must be subordinate to the ultimate assertion, "The whole world of given fact is."⁴⁴

Thus, the Absolute is treated by Royce as a given; it just is. According to Royce, the world is as it is by the Absolute's act of self-limitation, or what he calls "arrest."⁴⁵ This is the act whereby the Absolute excludes all other possible worlds. In other words, the Absolute has willed that this world is the best expression of itself. James Harry Cotton puts it like this,

the Absolute selects his world as a complete embodiment of his purpose, by an act analogous to our human selective attention. This world of truth and experience is determinate because the Absolute has selected it. Purpose is that which individuates and says, "There shall be no other."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Royce, The Conception of God, pp. 203-204.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 212 ff.

⁴⁶James Harry Cotton, Royce On The Human Self (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 96.

Marcel writes of this,

Arrest is the act of free self-limitation by which the Absolute separates from itself non-actualized possibilities. Of course we can only interpret this Arrest in determinist terminology, and say that the Absolute could only realize itself in this manner. But this is external commentary. The highest metaphysical truth, here as elsewhere, can only be expressed by a categorical judgment. This self-realization is achieved by what we are constrained to consider as a choice, as an attentive selection of the actual world within an indefinite (or infinite) series of abstractly possible worlds, but which because of this choice are not actually possible worlds. The world is a whole because things happen if the Absolute said or (in the terminology just used) attentively observed that since the absolute system of ideas is realized in this world, "there will be no other world than this."⁴⁷

The world is just as it is because the Absolute, this Universal Intelligence which constitutes all of reality, has selected just this world as the best expression of itself. Human beings are fragments of this divine manifestation, but we now need to see just what this entails. According to Royce, the uniqueness of a human self is to be thought of in terms of a unique life-plan. He writes,

A plan in life, pervading and comprehending my experiences, is, I say, the conditio sine qua non of the very existence of myself as this one, whole, connected Ego. If I have no such plan, whether abstractly defined or concretely intuited, I simply do not exist as one Ego, but remain a disconnected mass of fragments. But such a plan means that we are conscious of ourselves as continually setting before ourselves an ideal, noble or relatively base, good or relatively devilish; a model of what this individual life and its successive experiences, in our view, ought to be.⁴⁸

⁴⁷Marcel, Royce's Metaphysics, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁸Royce, The Conception of God, p. 290.

Royce points out that we never fulfil our life-plan; we never live up completely to our ideal; we are always striving toward an ideal but never attaining its completion.⁴⁹ This failure, however, does not alter the condition of our selfhood. It is the having of an ideal, the striving after that ideal, that constitutes our selfhood. He writes,

Yet all our empirical life has meaning, and constitutes the life of one Self, just in so far, but only in so far, as this our empirical life is consciously viewed by ourselves as a process towards the fulfillment of our individual and consciously chosen ideal.⁵⁰

It is this life-plan, this ideal, this purpose, which gives continuity to one's sense of identity. It is devotion to a life-plan which connects the present, past, and future states of consciousness. Peter Fuss writes,

It is only through his adoption of a life purpose that the individual is able to attain a sense of continuing self-identity. For it is commitment to such a purpose that alone brings into significant relation his momentary self-awareness with what he was before and with what he is still to become.⁵¹

We now need to see what is meant by a life-plan. To talk about a life-plan, a goal, an ideal, is a bit vague. We all have many interests which we pursue, some at greater lengths than others. At

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 290-291.

⁵¹Peter Fuss, The Moral Philosophy of Josiah Royce (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 83.

any one period in our life, we may lack a distinctive ideal which gives unity to our lives. Our purposes may be fickle and uncertain. In such a state, we cannot truly be said to be a self. A principle of organization is needed, a principle which unites all of our empirical states. This principle is an ideal to which we commit ourselves, and our lives are then shaped by that commitment. Royce writes,

If I really know what, on the whole, I mean to be, the chaotic succession of empirical states of my ego which varying experience brings to me, will not break up my deeper unity.⁵²

We may think of a life-plan on two different levels. As one seeks to find his place in the community through vocation, family, social habits, and other "routine" pursuits, one is seeking to unify his life. This kind of unity forms a lower level of life-plan. This certainly contributes to our selfhood, but there is yet a higher selfhood that may be attained. This higher level of life-plan, which develops out of our social interaction, is an ideal, a cause, which rises above all other interests and pursuits. Royce develops this notion most fully in The Philosophy of Loyalty where the life-span is defined in terms of loyalty to a cause, or as Royce says, "The willing and practical and thoroughgoing devotion of a person to a cause."⁵³

⁵²Royce, The Conception of God, p. 283.

⁵³Josiah Royce, The Philosophy of Loyalty (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), p. 16.

It is not necessary for this study that we go into Royce's philosophy of loyalty. It is sufficient, I think, to merely point out that the life-plan which constitutes our selfhood is, in its highest form, loyalty to a cause, a cause which does not impede or destroy the other forms of loyalty in the world, but exists in harmony with them.⁵⁴ It is such loyalty that gives our lives structure and direction. Thus, selfhood is a process, and the degree of selfhood is proportionate to the extent one finds and pursues this ideal, this cause, this life-plan.

What, then, is the relationship of human life-plans to the Absolute? There is, ultimately, only one Self, the Absolute Self, but the Absolute Self expresses itself in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe. The Absolute expresses its purposes through the multitude of life-plans of human selves. In attentively selecting this world as the fulfillment of its universal plan, the Absolute has expressed itself in the life-plans of human selves so that the striving after an ideal of each human self is identically a part of God's attentively selected universal plan. Royce writes,

I assert: (1) That this individual experience is identically a part of God's experience, i.e. not similar to a portion of God's experience, but identically the same as such portion; and (2) that this individual's plan is identically a part of God's own attentively selected universal plan. God's consciousness forms in its wholeness one luminously transparent conscious moment, and whatever

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 116-118.

is, has, in general, such relation to that whole as, in our consciousness, the partial elements of any one moment of consciousness have to the whole of that moment. On the other hand, I insist that this individual's experience . . . is, when viewed in relation to an exclusive ideal . . . a unique experience, and consequently a unique constituent of the Divine life nowhere else capable of being represented in God's universe, and therefore metaphysically necessary to the fulfillment of God's own life ⁵⁵

Thus, for Royce, the criterion of selfhood is a life-plan, an ideal, a cause, to which the individual devotes himself. The life-plans of human selves are the expressions, the manifestations, of the Absolute Self, and all work together to form the divine purpose of the world.

We have seen that human beings are the fragmentary expressions of the life of God, and that the divine purpose is expressed through the concrete and differentiated individuality of the world. One might suppose that since human selves are expressions of the Absolute Self, freedom cannot be meaningfully attributed to human selves. One might suppose that the human pursuit of self-realization is merely an unfolding of a divinely determined drama. Certainly, when dealing with the problem of evil, the question of human freedom is most relevant, and Royce emphasizes strongly that freedom can be meaningfully attributed to human selves. Let us now examine this issue.

⁵⁵Royce, The Conception of God, pp. 292-293.

The problem that one might have in considering this issue is that one thinks in dualistic terms, according to Royce. In other words, we may think of God and human beings as separate in existence from one another. Thus, we may contrast God's will and human will, playing them off against one another. We must remember, however, that Royce holds no such dualism, but rather holds a monistic view. God is the one real being, and human beings are manifestations of God's life. God is not a being "outside" the universe who, therefore, can either determine events or keep his hands off. Since the being of God is expressed in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe, the will of God is expressed in the complex of individual wills. Royce writes,

But the freedom of each finite moral individual is part of the divine freedom,--not an absolutely separate part, but a part having its own relative freedom,--a differentiated element of this freedom itself The One Will of the Absolute is a One that is essentially and organically composed of Many. These many forms of will harmonize with the whole, just by being, in a relative measure, free in respect one of another. The many forms of will form One, because it is best--is an aspect of the perfection of the Divine Selfhood--that they should do so. The One will stands differentiated into many, because in such variety of ideals there is greater significance than in a merely dead and abstract unity. The many ideals are indeed all thus subject, even in their very freedom, to the condition that their various embodiments of freedom should be such as ultimately to unite in the one system of the Absolute Will; but this condition simply does not exhaustively predetermine what each ideal contains or expresses, since the best type of unity as consists of elements which are of a universal type, but which are not exhaustively predetermined either by that type or by another.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 273-274.

The human self, according to Royce, is free because God has willed its freedom. It is as though God decided that the best expression of his being was the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe, and, consequently, the will of God is the expression of the multitude of human wills. It is not a question of God determining our wills, but rather our wills are identical to God's will. Royce writes,

The self is not wholly determined by a power that fashions it as clay is fashioned and that is called God's will; but, on the contrary, what the Self in its wholeness is, just in so far, God's will, and is identical with the many expressions implied by a single divine purpose, so that . . . the Self is in its innermost individuality, not an independent, but still a Free Will, which in so far owns no external Master, despite its dependence in countless ways upon Nature and upon its fellows, for everything except the individuality and uniqueness of its life.⁵⁷

Thus, if any were to object that Royce's idealism absorbs the individual and the freedom of the will, Royce would argue that God has willed our freedom as the expression of his own will. It is not a question of God determining our wills, but rather our own wills constitute God's will. Royce says of this,

It is not right to say: God in his wholeness is, as such whole, the maker of what I am. In my grade of reality, I am unique as this element in and of the Divine Will. Nothing else than my will gives my will its essential character. From this point of view, the individual will, in its essentially although always incomplete self-conscious determination to the pursuing of just this ideal, can say to God in his wholeness: "Were I not, your

⁵⁷Josiah Royce, The World and the Individual, II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), pp. 286-287.

Will would not be;" for had I not this my unique attentive choice of my own ideal, God's will would be incomplete.⁵⁸

Thus, Royce strongly insists that the freedom of the human will is genuine because the human will is identical to the will of God. God has willed to be manifested in the diversity of human wills; therefore, God has willed our freedom.

And so, as we conclude this chapter, let me summarize the essential points of Royce's conception of God. There is, ultimately, one real being, namely God. The universe is the manifestation of God's life, and, therefore, human selves are fragments of God's life. Even though human beings are fragments of God's life, their freedom is genuine, for God has willed that his will be expressed in the multiplicity and diversity of human wills. The divine purpose is fulfilled through the life-plans of human beings, the pursuit of self-realization. In Chapter I, I introduced some major problems for theism with regard to evil. According to Royce, the major mistake of western theological thought is its conception of God. Royce maintains that his conception is not beset with those problems. It is for this reason that I have spent so much time developing his conception in what may seem as a long, roundabout way.

⁵⁸Royce, The Conception of God, p. 294.

CHAPTER III

ROYCE'S THEODICY

In Chapter I, the dilemma that confronts theism was examined. If God is all-good, then would he not despise evil? If God is all-powerful, then would he not be able to prevent evil? How is the existence of evil to be reconciled with the existence of such a God?

In Chapter II, Royce attacked the conception of God which he believed was the source of the dilemma--the conception of God as the external creator of the universe, separate in existence from the universe. Royce put forth a conception of God as the Absolute. Human beings are not other than God in their being but are fragments of the divine life. Theism's error, according to Royce, is a dualism consisting of the eternal being of God and the created being of the universe. For Royce, reality is one, but the One is manifested in a multitude of diverse individuals. The unified whole is the divine. According to Royce, such a conception is the key to solving the problem of evil.

In this chapter, we shall consider Royce's solution. The purpose of this chapter is merely to set forth Royce's theodicy and not a critical evaluation. Such an evaluation shall be undertaken after the whole of Royce's theodicy is laid out.

The Suffering and the Perfection of God

In Royce's idealism, the being of God is not sundered from the being of the universe, but they are one. The relationship between

individuals and God is that of fragments to the whole. Because of this, God experiences what is experienced in the world. It is not as if God sits in heaven looking down on the suffering of humanity, but rather the suffering of humanity is the suffering of God. This suffering is no mere sympathy from an external observer but is suffering actually experienced. Royce writes,

When you suffer, your sufferings are God's sufferings, not his external work, not his external penalty, not the fruit of his neglect, but identically his own personal woe. In you God himself suffers, precisely as you do, and has all your concern in overcoming this grief.¹

Royce's idealism gives rise to a different situation than the traditional theism of Chapter I. In Royce's scheme, not only do human beings suffer, but God suffers too. This casts the problem of evil in an entirely different light. If God suffers, then we are not alone, metaphysically speaking, with the problem of evil. The question becomes less a matter of why God has subjected us to evil and more a question of why God suffers. According to Royce, suffering is necessary for the perfection of God. Royce writes,

The true question then is: Why does God thus suffer? The sole possible, necessary, and sufficient answer is Because without suffering, without ill, without woe, evil, tragedy, God's life could not be perfected. This grief is not a physical means to an external end. It is a logically necessary and eternal constituent of the divine life. It is logically necessary that the Captain of your salvation should be perfected through suffering. No outer

¹Josiah Royce, Studies of Good and Evil (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1898), p. 14.

nature compels him. He chooses his own perfect selfhood. He is perfect. His world is the best possible world. Yet all its infinite regions know not only of joy but of defeat and sorrow, for thus alone, in the completeness of his eternity, can God in his wholeness be triumphantly perfect.²

For Royce, perfection is not viewed as a static level of being where no further attainment is possible, but rather as a dynamic process. Suffering is necessary for the perfection of the being of God. This may sound like the instrumental view that was criticized earlier, but Royce would emphasize a major difference. The other view was based on the conception of God as the external creator of the universe. This meant that God was responsible for a deficient environment in the first place. In Royce's view, the being of God and the being of the universe are not sundered. God is not the creator of an external order, but his very being constitutes the universe. God, therefore, is not responsible for a deficient environment that needs improvement.

The Foundation of Moral Goodness

But why is suffering necessary for perfection? In order to understand this, Royce would have us examine the meanings of good and evil. According to Royce, we are deceived if we abstract these terms from experience and set them in opposition to one another.³ We assume that good cannot include evil or that perfection cannot

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 15.

include suffering, but this is an erroneous notation arrived at by abstraction rather than taken from experience. Royce writes,

The existence of evil, then, is not only consistent with the perfection of the universe, but is necessary for the very existence of that perfection. This is what we see when we no longer permit ourselves to be deceived by the abstract meanings of the words good and evil into thinking that these two opponents exist merely as mutually exclusive facts side by side in experience ⁴

According to Royce, moral goodness is not the absence of evil but the overcoming of evil. Goodness is not mere innocence but the conscious choice of good over evil. If one is to make a conscious choice, however, then the knowledge of evil is required, and for this knowledge to be experiential, the tendency to perform evil acts must exist. Royce writes,

It is the essence of moral goodness that positively good deeds should be the result of what we call choice--that is, that morality should be a matter not of fate, but of consciousness But if the moral processes are thus processes of conscious choice, it follows that every such choice involves a knowing of something against which one chooses, as well as something in favor of which one decides. But that against which one chooses is necessarily a motive, an interest, a solicitation, a temptation.⁵

Thus, for Royce, the foundation of moral goodness is not mere innocence but the overcoming of the genuine impulse to do evil through a conscious choice of good. Moral virtue is not attained

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

⁵Ibid., pp. 98-99.

through the absence of such an impulse but by thwarting it. If evil were impossible by virtue of a predetermined nature, one that could have no evil impulse, then we would have no moral order at all but "only the laziness of an infinitely vacant life."⁶ Royce writes,

The explanation is that the good has its existence and life in the transcending of experienced present evil No genuine moral goodness is possible save in the midst of such inner warfare. The absence of the evil impulse leaves naught but innocence or instinct, morally insipid and colorless. Goodness is this organism of struggling elements.⁷

This foundation of moral goodness is the key to Royce's theodicy. By means of a value-judgment, Royce maintains that in order to have a moral order and, hence, moral virtue, there must be the temptation to do evil. The value-judgement is, of course, that moral character attained through overcoming temptation is superior to one that was never tempted. Thus, the fact that human beings are not immutably good by nature is not a defect in the moral environment. The temptation to do evil must be a genuine constituent of human nature if they are to be moral beings.

The Evil Impulse

According to Royce, moral virtue is constituted by the overcoming of the impulse to do evil; therefore, the impulse to do evil must exist in human beings. At this point, however, one might wonder about the consistency of a God who is good making human

⁶Josiah Royce, The Religious Aspect of Philosophy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1885), p. 464.

⁷Ibid., p. 459.

beings with evil tendencies, or, as in Royce's case, a God who manifests himself in human beings and, thus, manifests evil tendencies. In other words, how is God to escape the charge of being the author of evil?

According to Royce, the tendency to do evil, the evil impulse, is an inevitable constituent of individuality. He brings this out most clearly as he discusses the moral burden of the individual in The Problem of Christianity. In this work, Royce interprets the essence of primitive Christianity and finds an affinity between its basic ideas and his own. Neither Christianity nor Royce's treatment of it is of importance for our considerations. What is of importance is Royce's idea of sin which he conveys in the book.

Christianity had taught the doctrine of original sin, a moral burden of some kind upon the human race. Royce has his own doctrine of original sin or moral burden which he expresses as follows: "The individual human being is by nature subject to some overwhelming moral burden from which, if unaided, he cannot escape."⁸ Royce believed that this moral burden consisted of the natural conflict between the individual and society. The individual is a product of social training.⁹ The individual becomes a concrete self, not in isolation, but in a social environment. It is this very environment, however, which gives rise to conflict between the

⁸Josiah Royce, The Problem of Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), p. 41.

⁹Ibid., pp. 136-137.

individual and society. As the individual self is formed through the societal structure, a contrast between "myself" as opposed to "other selves" takes place. As a consequence, there is a tension, a conflict, between the interests of self and society which bred the self. The more complex the society, the higher the cultivation of the self and the more intense the conflict. This inevitable conflict is the moral burden of the human race. Cotton writes,

When Royce speaks of the moral burden from which man unaided cannot free himself, he is not merely alluding to the fact that the isolated individual is a lost soul. For even the individualist is the product of social training. The social nurture, which is indispensable to the individual, nevertheless awakens hostility within him. The higher and more complex the civilization, the greater the individual's dependence upon it and the more intense his hatred of the community. Collectivism and individualism are trends that feed each other.¹⁰

Thus, according to Royce, we can speak of original sin or a moral burden in the sense that this conflict, this tension, is a constitutive element of man's nature as a social being. Royce writes,

Man's fallen state is due to his nature as a social animal. This nature is such that you can train his conscience only by awakening his self-will.¹¹

Marcel puts it like this,

¹⁰James Harry Cotton, Royce On The Human Self (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 254.

¹¹Royce, The Problem of Christianity, p. 176.

Original sin is precisely that radical and organic impotence of the individual when it consciously enters into conflict with a social order to which it inevitably owes everything ¹²

Royce equates the evil impulse with the impulse to act in ways that pursue one's own self-realization at the expense of others. This conflict is a natural constituent of individuality. The question that arises, however, is why this evil impulse is not thwarted, not overcome? Again, the answer lies in the nature of individuality. God has manifested himself in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the world--in a multitude of finite selves. As finite selves, we lack a complete insight into the harmony that ought to exist in the world among finite selves. Royce writes of the human self,

Its own will, as it is now consciously present, is not yet known as in harmony with the Other wherein it inevitably seeks to find its own expression. It is always abstractly possible, therefore, for the Self to conceive its search for self-expression as simply an understanding not to obey, but to subdue, to its own present purpose, the world which is beyond. Instead of developing its momentary Internal Meaning into harmony with its own External Meaning, it may, in its narrowness, seek to convert the latter into the former ¹³

I shall now attempt to sketch the whole picture of Royce's system, thus far. The Absolute Being, God, has chosen to manifest

¹²Gabriel Marcel, Royce's Metaphysics, trans. by Virginia and Gordon Ringer (Chicago: Henery Regnery Company, 1956), p. 136.

¹³Josiah Royce, The World and the Individual, II (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), p. 358.

itself in the individuality of human selves, and such manifold and dynamic expression, according to Royce, is the best of all possible worlds. Human selves are constituted by the striving for self-realization, and their individual wills are "willed" by God; therefore, human will is free and yet identical to God's will. As individuals there is a natural awareness of "self" as opposed to others and a natural conflict or tension to pursue self-realization at the expense of others. This is the evil impulse, or the moral burden of humanity. As finite selves, we are not sundered from the life of God, but we are sundered from the insight, the unity, the harmony, that is God. Therefore, we do evil--assert ourselves at the expense of others. Moral evil is an inevitable, or, at least, a virtually inevitable result of selfhood or individuality. God did not impose it upon us so as to be the author of sin; it is merely a natural constituent of the finite realm. Given this metaphysical foundation, which is the best of all possible worlds because of its rich and dynamic diversity, the foundation of moral virtue is not innocence but overcoming the evil impulse, developing virtue through experience. And if this be so, the foundation of a morally perfect world is not the absence of suffering but the overcoming of suffering. To this notion of overcoming, we shall now turn.

The Overcoming of Evil

Royce's theodicy consists of three basic steps. The first is that the possibility of moral evil, the evil impulse, is a natural constituent of individuality or selfhood. The second, following

from the first, is that the foundation of moral virtue consists not of innocence but of overcoming the evil impulse. These two steps constitute a moral order. The third step is that all evil in the world is overcome. This last step constitutes a perfect moral order.

Royce maintains that all evil in the world is overcome. We view the struggle against evil from a temporal perspective and see it only in part. God, however, sees this struggle in its totality and sees it as complete. Royce's idealism, in his opinion, assures us that all evil is overcome, for God's knowledge is absolute, hence, of what is good, and what God knows is the case. John Roth puts it this way,

Royce's world is one where things are finally and accurately judged as to their moral worth. Moreover, the life of the Absolute is itself a manifestation of the moral ideal of unity, for the Absolute holds of the moral ideal of unity, for the Absolute holds together a vastly rich set of experiences and wills. Still further, since the knowledge of the Absolute is perfect, it follows that the totality of existence is known by the Absolute as fully good. For the Absolute, knowing and being actual go together. If the Absolute's knowledge is perfect, it knows fully what is desirable, and hence, what is desirable exists fully Men can be assured that they live in a meaningful and moral universe, and that as they strive for the actualization of harmony and unity in human life they are moving in the direction of a closer realization of the life of God.¹⁴

Just how is evil overcome? Royce asks and answers this question:

¹⁴John K. Roth, "Introduction" in The Philosophy of Josiah Royce, ed. by John K. Roth (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971), p. 15.

but how is this ill included and reconciled within the perfect whole? Not . . . by virtue of the fact that the evil deed expresses the finite agent's evil will, but because his will is supplemented, is overcome, is thwarted, is overruled, by what expresses some other will than his finite will ¹⁵

According to Royce, evil acts are countered by the good acts of others. There is a kind of dynamic moral balance, a moral equilibrium, in the world order in which evil acts furnish the opportunity for acts of creative goodness on the part of others. Royce writes,

If you do ill, the world-order will, indeed, in the end make good the ill you have done . . . because elsewhere, in the temporal order, other agents, seeking to overcome the disquieting ill which you will has chosen as its expression, will somewhere and somehow succeed The moral order of your idealistic world means, then, not that no moral ill can be done, but that, in the temporal order, every evil deed must somewhere and at some time be atoned for, by some other than the agent, if not by the agent himself, and that this atonement, this overcoming of the evil deed, will in the end make possible that which in the eternal order is directly manifest, namely, the perfection of the whole.¹⁶

But not only are evil acts countered by the good acts of others, the world is actually made a better place as a result of these creative acts of goodness, better than if the evil had not occurred. Royce writes, "The world, as transformed by this creative

¹⁵Royce, The World and the Individual, II, p. 365.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 367-368.

deed, is better than it would have been had all else remained the same, but had that deed of treason not been done at all."¹⁷ Thus, for Royce, all evil is overcome by creative acts of goodness, and these acts are of such a nature that the resulting world is better for having had the evil. Had not such evil occurred, such creative goodness would not have occurred, robbing the world of a qualitative advance. And so, Royce can speak of a perfect moral order, or God as perfectly good:

To say that God is nevertheless perfectly good is to say, not that God is innocent, knowing of no evil whatever, and including none; but that he so includes the evil will in the structure of his good will, as the good man, in one indivisible moment, includes his evil will in his good will; and that God is good only because he does so.¹⁸

Natural Evil

Thus far, the emphasis has been on moral evil--the evil produced by human beings. Royce admits to a lesser degree of understanding about natural evil--that which is not produced by human beings.¹⁹ We can never be quite sure just how such evils fit into the perfection of the whole. In principle, however, what is true of moral evil is also true of natural evil. Just as the evil impulse is a condition for the attainment of moral virtue, so

¹⁷Royce, The Problem of Christianity, pp. 307-308.

¹⁸Royce, The Religious Aspect of Philosophy, p. 457.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 454-455.

natural evil may also be viewed as a condition for the perfection of character--the overcoming of adverse conditions. Gabriel Marcel writes,

Moral evil is the only evil which we know from within. It is evidently much more difficult for us to see how relatively external evils like suffering and death can be integrated in a concrete totality which nevertheless does not dissolve them. But there is no doubt that the explanatory principle remains the same, from the moment when it has been established that our sufferings are identically God's sufferings. There are cases, moreover, where it is even possible for our finite consciousness to see all the spiritual enrichment that misfortune brings to human life.²⁰

The source of natural evil must, obviously, be God. In manifesting himself in and through the world-order, God has produced a world-order that offers natural obstacles as a challenge to be met in the cause of human development. Just as moral evil provides occasions for creative acts of goodness, so natural evil provides occasions for positive development which leaves the world better than if such evil had not existed.

The Relevance of Royce's Theodicy to the Individual

Thus far, I have set forth Royce's theodicy in relation to God. In other words, Royce has attempted to show that the world is a perfect moral order in spite of the existence of evil. He does so by attempting to show that moral and natural evil contribute to the

²⁰Marcel, Royce's Metaphysics, p. 69.

moral development in a way that is superior to a world where only innocence existed. But where does this leave the individual who suffers from the existence of evil? I believe that a theodicy ought to offer some comfort to the victim of evil. It ought to produce a positive attitude in the one who suffers, overcoming any bitterness, overcoming the feeling of being treated unfairly by God. A theodicy ought to enable the individual sufferer to say: All things, even evil, work together for my good.

Royce does not ignore this practical aspect of theodicy. He writes,

Yet the mourner may still insist: "If my sorrow is God's, his triumph is not mine. Mine is the woe. His is the peace." But my theory is a philosophy. It proposes to be coherent. I must persist: "It is your fault that you are sundered from God's triumph. His experience in its wholeness cannot now be yours, for you just as you--this individual--are now but a fragment, and see his truth as through a glass darkly. But if you see his truth at all, through even the dimmest light of a glimmering reason, remember, that truth is in fact your own truth, your own fulfilment, the whole from which your life cannot be divorced, the reality that you mean even when you most doubt, the desire of your heart even when you are most blind, the perfection that you unconsciously strove for even when you were an infant, the complete Self apart from whom you mean nothing, the very life that gives your life the only value which it can have. In thought if not in the fulfilment of thought, in aim if not in attainment of aim, in aspiration if not in the presence of the revealed fact, you can view God's triumph and peace as your triumph and peace. Your defeat will be no less real than it is, nor will you falsely call your evil a mere illusion. But you will see not only the grief but the truth, your truth, your rescue, your triumph.²¹

²¹Royce, Studies of Good and Evil, p. 27.

I have cited this lengthy passage in order to present clearly Royce's response to the victim of evil. According to Royce, the consolation, the comfort, the encouragement, that one may find in the face of evil lies in sharing in the victory of the Absolute. This sharing consists of the consciousness of evil as being overcome, thwarted, atoned for, in the eternal order. It consists of the recognition that evil contributes to the development of humanity. Our suffering is real, and its effects at the time can be traumatic, but we are to find solace in the consciousness of our role in the eternal order. We, through our suffering, are actually contributing to the perfection of the whole--a whole in which we have an organic part. Marcel writes,

Some will lament the bitterness of a fate which wills that God alone should know triumph, whereas they have lived only to suffer. But the philosopher cannot join in these childish recriminations. If you do not take your part in the divine victory, he says, it is your own fault. For if your condition as a finite being prevents you from loving God's triumph in its eternal fullness, through thought and faith you can regard "God's triumph and peace as your triumph and peace."²²

And so, according to Royce, we can take comfort in the Absolute's victory. This is his response to the sufferer. While there is no guarantee that the individual will personally benefit from creative acts of goodness as pertains to specific suffering, there is the guarantee that humanity, of which each of us is a part, will benefit

²²Marcel, Royce's *Metaphysics*, p. 70.

in the long run, and, hence, each individual will benefit in the sense that the human environment improves. In light of Royce's view of overcoming, I think it is fair to say that his theodicy applies primarily to society and secondarily to the individual.

Immortality

Based upon the aforementioned application of Royce's theodicy, or, perhaps, I should say the scope of his theodicy, what ultimate hope can an individual have concerning the resolution of personal ills experienced in this world? Granted, humanity or society benefits through the doctrine of overcoming, but what can an individual expect concerning personal suffering? Is there anything in the future that will make all the suffering seem worthwhile on a personal basis? At this point, we are concerned with the possibility of life after death--some ultimate state which has been the goal of our development in this world.

In Royce's metaphysical scheme, human selves are the expressions of a purpose. Each is a unique part of the divine purpose. Each self is known as an individual in the Absolute consciousness, and the purpose of each self is known as complete in the Absolute consciousness. Royce states the implication of this:

What we so far assert is that, in God, every individual Self . . . eternally possesses a form of consciousness that is wholly other than this our present flickering form of mortal consciousness. And now, precisely such an assertion is indeed the beginning of a philosophical conception of Immortality. In brief, so far, we assert that individuality is real, and belongs to all our life, but that individuality does not appear to us as real individuality in our present human form of consciousness.

We accordingly assert that our life, as hid from us now, in the life of God, has another form of consciousness than the one which we now possess ²³

Thus, Royce's first consideration for immortality is that his absolute idealism implies that we are known as individual selves in the eternal order.

His second consideration concerns the fact of death, and the problem it poses for his idealism.²⁴ If individuals are known in the divine consciousness as having fulfilled their meaning, their purpose, then death must not mean the end. It is obvious, according to Royce, that death cuts short individual fulfillment; hence, the fulfillment of purpose must continue after death. He writes,

For us, to be means to fulfill a purpose. If death is real at all, it is real only in so far as it fulfils a purpose. But now, what purpose can be fulfilled by the ending of a life whose purpose is so far unfulfilled? I answer at once, the purpose that can be fulfilled by the ending of such a life is necessarily a purpose that, in the eternal world, is consciously known and seen as continuous with, yes, as inclusive of, the very purpose whose fulfilment the temporal death seems to cut short.²⁵

Royce's idealism, therefore, leads him to conclude that there is personal existence after death. Royce puts it like this,

God is One, all our lives have various and unique places in the harmony of the divine life. And just because God

²³Royce, The World and the Individual, II, p. 435.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 437-440.

²⁵Ibid., p. 440.

attains and wins and finds this uniqueness, all our lives win in our union with him the individuality which is essential to their true meaning. And just because individuals whose lives have uniqueness of meaning are here only objects of pursuit, the attainment of this very individuality, since it is indeed real, occurs not in our present form of consciousness, but in a life that now we see not, yet in a life whose genuine meaning is continuous with our own human life, however far from our present flickering form of disappointed human consciousness that life of the final individuality may be. Of this our true individual life, our present life is a glimpse, a fragment, a hint, and in its best moments a visible beginning. That this individual life of all of us is not something limited in its temporal expression to the life that we now experience, follows from the very fact that here nothing final or individual is found expressed.²⁶

That Royce advocates immortality is clear, and that he advocates personal immortality also seems clear. What is relevant, however, to our study is the relation of suffering to the immortal state. To my mind, Royce is not clear concerning this point. I do not see any clear principle of discrimination as far as the immortal state is concerned. In other words, it appears that all enter into this state regardless of their lives on earth. As to whether or not the quality of the eternal state might differ among individuals due to their earthly lives, Royce again, is not clear.

If all do enter into the eternal state and are completed and fulfilled as individuals, as Royce maintains, then the eternal state would seem to offer no particular recompense commensurate with the amount of undeserved suffering in the former life. Thus, I would

²⁶Josiah Royce, The Conception of Immortality (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1900), pp. 75-76.

maintain that the scope of Royce's theodicy is this life, this world.

The Religious Mission of Sorrow

In a chapter entitled "The Religious Mission of Sorrow," Royce attempts to show the positive effect that evil has in our lives.²⁷ I have refrained from dealing with this material until now, because I believe that it provides a very appropriate conclusion to what we have seen thus far.

Royce points out that in experience our first reaction to evil is to shun it, avoid it, eliminate it.²⁸ As we carefully reflect upon our experience, however, we find, instead, that there are evils which we would not have shunned, would not have eliminated.²⁹ There are evils of which we may not find any redeeming value but not all evils are this way in our lives. Royce writes,

And toward those other ills we take an attitude which is not wholly destructive. We find them, upon a closer view, inseparably bound up with good--so closely bound up therewith that we could not conceive a life wherein this sort of good which is here bound up with this sort of ill could be separated therefrom. In these cases the principle: "Evil should be simply put out of existence," proves to be a palpable falsity.³⁰

According to Royce, we all can find some evils in our lives which, while momentarily unpleasant, enabled us to grow as persons.

²⁷Josiah Royce, The Sources of Religious Insight (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 215-252.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 215-216.

²⁹Ibid., p. 232.

³⁰Ibid., p. 235.

We "idealize" these evils and consider them as parts of a good whole. Royce writes,

In the face of these idealized evils, justified moral distinctions are not abandoned, but they are assimilated into one's life for growth rather than destruction. They become "parts of a good whole."³¹

Such idealized evils provide insight by which even those we do not presently understand may be viewed. Royce calls these idealized evils "sorrows" and writes of them,

By sorrow, then, I here mean an experience of ill which is not wholly an experience of that which as you then and there believe ought to be simply driven out of existence. The insight of which sorrow is the source, is an insight that tends to awaken within you a new view of what the spiritual realm is.³²

Sorrow, therefore, enhances our very being in a way that could not be achieved without it. This can be recognized in our own experience in part and applied to our experience in whole.

Conclusion

I now come to the end of my exposition of Royce's theodicy which may be summarized by the following essential points. As far as the individual is concerned:

1. The evil impulse is a natural constituent of selfhood.
2. The foundation of moral virtue is not innocence but over-coming temptation.

³¹Ibid., p. 236.

³²Ibid., p. 240.

3. Individuals grow in personhood through the experience of sorrow.

As far as the world is concerned:

1. The foundation of a perfect moral order is not the absence of evil acts but the overcoming of their consequences.
2. All evil is continually being overcome by creative acts of goodness in response to evil.
3. The world is a better place for having overcome evil than if evil had not existed.

Thus, in Royce's system, evil is part of a whole that is good. When viewed abstractly, apart from experience, evil appears to conflict with that which is good, but when viewed from an absolute perspective, evil is necessary for the perfection of the world. The Absolute Being, or God, has chosen to manifest itself in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the world. It has done so because such dynamic diversity is the best of all possible worlds. Inherent, however, to the nature of such individuality is the tension and conflict that is the root of moral evil. The foundation of moral virtue in this best of all possible worlds is the overcoming of temptation, and the foundation of perfection in this best of all possible worlds is that all evil is being overcome, leaving the world infinitely richer than if evil had never occurred.

CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF ROYCE'S THEODICY

The path that has brought us to this point has been a rather winding one. Much time was spent developing Royce's conception of God in order to present the theodicy that arises from it. In order to present this concept fully, I have looked at such things as the nature of ideas, the nature of error, and the nature of ignorance. Such things could have been avoided had I merely stated Royce's various definitions of God. In the process, many possible objects of criticism have, no doubt, arisen. Such things, however, have not been presented as an end in themselves but as a means to an end, namely, Royce's theodicy. Thus, as I begin this critical analysis, a qualification is in order. I do not propose to analyze Royce's views on ideas, error, or ignorance--the idealism that yields his particular conception of God. It is not the steps leading to his conception of God to which I shall direct my attention but to the conception itself. But even this object of analysis is not the primary interest of this study. The primary interest is the adequacy of Royce's theodicy. For even if we go so far as to grant the existence of Royce's God, can we accept the resulting theodicy? Thus, I shall undertake, first of all, a rather brief and general evaluation of his conception of God, and, secondly, a longer and more detailed evaluation of his theodicy.

Royce's God

As I begin to deal with Royce's conception of God, I shall set before us several points which characterize Royce's view. Royce maintains that "God is not in ultimate essence another being than yourself. He is the Absolute Being;" God is "an infinite unity of conscious thought;" God is "an Absolute and Universal Intelligence, for which thought and experience . . . are in complete and harmonious unity;" God is "Absolute Experience;" "there is in the universe one perfectly real being, namely, the Absolute."

Concerning the relation of human beings to God, Royce maintains that human beings are "one with God, part of his life;" exist as fragments of the Absolute life, or better, as partial functions in the unity of the Absolute;" our experience is "identically a part of God's experience;" our life plans are "identically a part of God's own attentively selected universal plan;" individual consciousness is a partial element in God's consciousness, and individual wills are differentiated elements of God's will.

I cite these points in order to emphasize the major difficulty that I find with Royce's conception of God, namely, that this conception makes it trivial to talk about God in contrast to the world. God is not other in his being from the world. The life of the world is the life of God. Royce seems to take the whole of experience, the whole of thought, and defy them. He takes the conception of an absolute system of experience, an absolute system of thought, and turns them into an Absolute Being.

This objection has relevance to the problem of evil. Royce criticized the view of God as other from the world, claiming that the problem of evil is insoluble with such a conception. But if Royce's God is not anything more than an absolute world system, then evil ceases to be a problem, for we are left with nothing but natural processes. In other words, there is no distinction between God and the world; they are merely different names for the same reality, and there is no ultimate transcendent being who can be questioned with regard to evil. Vincent Buranelli writes,

His critics, for all his protests and appeals to logical and mathematical analogies, refused to admit that he had safeguarded pluralism either metaphysically or ethically. He remained for them a monist They argued that the Absolute swallowed up everything else, if Royce's theory were true. They argued that this was pantheism, the identification of God with the world, leaving no room for human freedom. They argued that Royce in one place or another attributed both human frailties to the Absolute (James) and absolute power to human beings (Santayana)--in short that he unites God and man "with a literalness truly appalling." (Howison)¹

Royce explicitly denies that his conception obscures the distinction between God and the world. He maintains that his conception is a theistic conception, the conception of a personal being. He writes,

it is not the conception of any Unconscious Reality, into which finite beings are absorbed; nor of a Universal Substance, in whose laws our ethical independence is lost;

¹Vincent Buranelli, Josiah Royce (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 142.

nor of an Ineffable Mystery, which we can only silently adore.²

But if we are to make a distinction between God and human beings, then we must have some qualitative principle of distinction. What can this principle be? God is not the external creator of the world, not separate in being from the world. There is one ultimate being in the universe, namely, God, and the world is the manifestation of God's Being. When considering human selves in terms of thought, we are told that our thoughts are partial manifestations of divine thought. If we consider human selves in terms of experience, we are told that our experiences are fragments of the divine experience. Even our wills, so we are told, are partial manifestations of the divine will. We are fragments of one Being, one mind, one experience, and one will. We cannot say that this particular thought is my thought and not God's, or that this experience is mine and not God's, or that this is my will and not God's. Wherein lies the principle of distinction? Mary Briody Mahowald writes,

Although he explicitly denies that absolute idealism is pantheistic (WI), his failure to provide any qualitative principle of distinction greatly diminishes the weight of his denial. Since finite wills, finite experiences and finite (relative) truths are defined as neither more nor less than partial manifestations of the Absolute Will, Absolute Experience and Absolute Truth, these are all in reality conceived as parts of the Absolute who is God. Within Royce's idealistic system, the world itself, as constituting partial fulfilment of the divine purpose,

²Josiah Royce, The Conception of God (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), pp. 49-50.

becomes for all its finitude divine. In the end, no being exists or can be thought to exist apart from the Absolute, whose all-inclusiveness is intended by Royce to be taken quite literally.³

What we are searching for is some principle of distinction, some means by which we may say, "This is me and not God." We cannot, however, make such a statement in Royce's conception. All we can ever say is "This is part of God; that is part of God." God is all-embracing, all-inclusive. According to G.H. Howison, we cannot escape pantheism without such a distinction. He writes,

But we do not escape Pantheism, and attain to Theism, by the easy course of excluding the Unconscious, or the sole Substance, or an inscrutable Mystery, from the seat of the Absolute. We must go farther and attain to the distinct reality, the full otherhood, of the creation; so that there shall be no confusion of the creature with the Creator, nor any interfusion of the Creator and creature. But if the Infinite Self includes us all, and all our experiences,--sensations and sins, as well as the rest,--in the unity of one life, and includes us and them directly; if there is but one and the same final Self for us each and all; then, with a literalness indeed appalling, He is we, and we are He; nay, He is I, and I am He.⁴

Thus, I believe that it is trivial in Royce's system to talk about God in contrast to the world, or the world in contrast to God.

Another difficulty arises if we closely examine what sort of being Royce's God is. God includes all human thought, all human

³Mary Briody Mahowald, An Idealistic Pragmatism (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), p. 173.

⁴G.H. Howison, in The Conception of God by Josiah Royce, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), pp. 98-99.

wills, all human experience in his own thought, his own will, his own experience. What sort of being is this? Let me suggest a number of descriptive categories, not necessarily precise or distinct, but somewhat encompassing. In human life we find rationality and irrationality, sanity and insanity, truth and error, consistency and contradiction, a multitude of divergent theories, beliefs, opinions, preferences, etc., various degrees of knowledge and ignorance, countless desires to do evil, countless desires to do good. This list could go on and on, but the point is this: in human life, we find a myriad of turmoil, conflict, and discord. Now Royce assures us that all human experience is resolved into a perfect harmony in God; but, nevertheless, all the turmoil, the conflict, the discord of human experience is the experience of God. Howison puts it like this,

Professor Royce rightly says that it is not the conception of an Ineffable Mystery, which we can only silently adore. For, in very fact, it is not the conception of a being that we can adore at all. The fault of it at the bar of religious reason is, that by the force of the argument leading to it all, the turmoil and all the contradictions and tragic discords belonging to experience must be taken up directly into the life of the Absolute; they are his experiences as well as ours, and must be left in him at once both dissolved and indissolved, unharmonized as well as harmonized, stilled and yet raging, atoned for and yet all unatoned. Contradiction is thus not only introduced into the very being of the Eternal, and left there, but its dialectic back-and-forth throb is made the very quickening heart of that being.⁵

⁵Ibid., pp. 122-123.

Thus, Royce's conception of God is plagued with two serious problems. First of all, it lacks a qualitative principle of distinction whereby God and the world may be distinguished. Secondly, if we consider Royce's absolute system as an absolute being--a conscious agent--we have a most bizzare God, one whose being consists of contradiction.

My immediate impression is that I find it very difficult to conceive of God as a being who must suffer so, who must struggle so, in order to be a perfect moral being. Furthermore, I find it difficult to conceive of evil, of suffering, as so necessary, so compatible with perfection. Of course, immediate impressions are no substitute for careful analysis. Nevertheless, the tendency to question Royce's entire enterprise is strong. Vincent Buranelli summarizes the negative impression left by Royce's theodicy:

That evil exists so that we may overcome it, or at least so that we may struggle through to virtue even when the cause is lost, and that the suffering of the Absolute answers the problems of Job--all this seems obviously unsound to some readers of Royce. Does goodness really imply evil, and are there no virtues (like Pauline charity) that can exist without temptation? If everything that happens in the world, good and evil alike, rebounds to the glory of the Absolute, is our struggle to be virtuous anything more than a puppet drama without moral or religious significance? Since the Absolute triumphs over finite evil, can Royce claim without self-contradiction that the Absolute suffers as we often-defeated mortals do? the Absolute.⁶

⁶Buranelli, Josiah Royce, p. 143.

Hence, I come to this analysis not only dubious of Royce's God but uncomfortable with his theodicy. Let us now consider Royce's argument in detail.

I have cited my criticisms of Royce's conception of God. Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that such a being does, in fact, exist. In other words, let us assume that there is one real being who is manifested in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe. This one real being is God, and human beings exist as fragments of God's life. Even if we assume this, does Royce have a satisfactory theodicy? To this question I now turn my attention.

Critical Analysis of Royce's Theodicy

Royce has claimed that God is a perfect moral being and that the world is a perfect moral order. The existence of evil is necessary for the perfection of both, and this perfection lies in the total victory over evil. The world is the manifestation of the divine life. Its sufferings are God's sufferings. God suffers in order to be perfect. As God triumphs over all evil, the world triumphs as well. His triumph is our triumph.

1. The Conflict in Absolute Consciousness. In discussing Royce's conception of God in the first part of this chapter, I raised the problem of the Absolute's consciousness containing simultaneously a myriad of turmoil and conflict. This issue is raised again in connection with Royce's theodicy, only this time focusing attention on two specific objects of consciousness--

consciousness of all evil as overcome and the inclusion of our consciousness of evil.

For Royce, the key to the solution of the problem of evil lies in the central thesis of his idealism: there is ultimately one real being in the universe--the Absolute. We are fragments of the divine life, or rather, partial functions in the unity of the absolute and conscious process of the world. All of our thoughts, wills, experiences are included in a complete and harmonious system within the Absolute's consciousness. All finite being constitutes the manifestation of the one ultimate being and the expression of its purpose. Our suffering is, therefore, included in God's experience. We see only in part, however, whereas God knows all experiences in its wholeness. We know only struggle, defeat, and very limited victory at best, whereas God knows all evil as overcome.

This absolute consciousness of evil as overcome is essential to Royce's theodicy. By his own definition, moral virtue consists in overcoming evil, and a perfect moral order consists of all evil being overcome. But this absolute consciousness, which is so essential, is plagued by two very conflicting notions. On one hand, we have the Absolute's consciousness of all evil as overcome, but, on the other hand, we have the Absolute's consciousness as inclusive of our individual consciousnesses. But of what does our consciousness consist? It is a consciousness not of total victory but of much defeat at the hands of evil. This position seems to involve a contradiction. Evil is absolutely real to us but not absolutely real to God. Yet we are God! If our consciousnesses are genuine

parts of the Absolute's consciousness, then our relationship to evil is a genuine part of the Absolute's experience. If our consciousnesses lack insight, then the Absolute's consciousness lacks insight. If our consciousnesses consist of sorrow and despair over evil, then the Absolute's consciousness is filled with sorrow and despair. That our consciousnesses do, in fact, lack insight and consist of defeat rather than victory is essential in distinguishing our finiteness from the Absolute. If Royce's God merely knew our finiteness from the Absolute. If Royce's God merely knew our consciousness and experience, then this conflict would not arise, but Royce's metaphysical position is that our consciousness, our experience is not merely known but is an organic part of the Absolute. Hence, we have a contradiction in the Absolute. The Absolute's experience is one of insight and ignorance, victory and defeat, at the same time. This must be so, for we our genuine fragments of the divine life.

Essential to Royce's idealism is the all-inclusive consciousness of God. Essential to his theodicy is God's knowledge of all evil overcome. The former supposition, however, undermines the latter. If God's consciousness is inclusive of ours, then he is not sure of the outcome, but can only have faith that good shall triumph over evil. God must participate in time, growing in experience, in insight, as humans must do. If this is the case with Royce's God, and I believe it must be, then Royce has no theodicy, but only a plea for faith. Charles Hartshorne writes,

There is a pathos in Royce's insistence that in the Absolute all goals are eternally attained. Be serene, he

says, about the impossibility of banishing open possibilities for yourselves--for in reality, i.e., in the Absolute Experience, there are no open possibilities. It seems the more remarkable that Royce took this illusionist way out when we reflect that his treatment of suffering deliberately took just the opposite tack. Be brave, he said, in your pain and grief, for the Ideal Experience shares in all your suffering and sorrow? Very well, why not also say that it faces with us an open future of inexhaustible potentialities? If suffering cannot be excluded from the all-inclusive consciousness . . . then neither can the inexhaustibility of possibility fail to apply to it. Can it be doubted that Royce was deeply at odds with himself here?⁷

2. The Absolute's Knowledge of the Good. There is another problem concerning the Absolute's knowledge of evil as overcome. Royce assures us that God's knowledge is absolute, perfect; hence, God knows of what is good, and what God knows is the case. In other words, this is Royce's assurance that all evil is overcome. Royce assumes that absolute knowledge means knowledge of good overcoming evil, but he has made an unwarranted step here for there could be an absolute knowledge of evil unredeemed. He has assumed that this supposition is a logical step when, in fact, it is a leap of faith.

When Royce speaks of God's knowledge as "absolute," as "perfect," he is guilty of an equivocation on two senses of "perfect" or "absolute." He uses the terms to describe the completeness of God's knowledge--an infinite unity of conscious thought. But he also uses these terms to describe God's knowledge

⁷Charles Hartshorne, "Royce's Mistake and Achievement," The Journal of Philosophy, LIII, No. 3 (Feb. 2, 1956), p. 126.

as that of what is fully good. It does not follow logically that because God's knowledge is complete that it is knowledge of good overcoming evil. Logically, it is possible that God knows what is fully evil--that God knows evil as overcoming good. Royce has no logical foundation for taking this step. He assumes that completeness of knowledge is a knowledge of good overcoming evil. In short, it is his faith that good shall overcome evil. I am not criticizing Royce for such faith, but it does not constitute a theodicy. Howard B. Jefferson writes,

It is true that the perfection of the world from one point of view is in no way affected by evil facts. But this is true only as long as we think of perfection as synonymous with explained systematic existence. The fact that all things in the universe are intelligible bears no relation to the moral values of those same things. We are able to find explanation in the constitution of nature for that which we call evil as well as for that which we call good. Good and evil are equally intelligible, equally consistent with the systematic character of the universe, and so do not invalidate the conception of universal perfection. But Royce insists upon attributing to reality a perfection in which all our purposes find fulfillment, whether they be intellectual or ethical.⁸

3. Our "Triumph" over Evil. Royce maintains that God knows all evil to be overcome by good; hence, God knows the world as a perfect moral order. Let us ignore the conflicts in the Absolute's consciousness and examine Royce's word of consolation to those who suffer. For a theodicy to have any practical value, it needs to

⁸Howard B. Jefferson, "Royce on the Problem of Evil," The Journal of Religion, XI, No. 3 (July 1931), p. 374.

convince the victim of evil that "all things work for good." Royce's response to the victim is that they share in God's triumph; his victory is their victory. If they are too blind to see this and share in it, then it is their fault.

Let us consider this alleged sharing in the Absolute's triumph. According to Royce, God's knowledge is absolute and, therefore, a knoweldge of triumph. We, however, do not share in such an insight; we are but fragments. Our experience is one of incompleteness. Nevertheless, Royce maintains that the part-whole relationship makes us partakers of the ultimate triumph. Royce's part-whole relationship, however, is inadequate because we, the parts, also happen to be conscious beings. We are not merely limited elements in the Absolute's consciousness, but we also possess the ability to feel this limitation. The suffering of the parts may be transcended in the perfection of the whole, but we are still conscious of our sufferings as not transcended in our experience. The fact that all evil is ultimately overcome somehow, somewhere, does not mean that I personally benefit. I may live a life victimized by evil and die without ever actually experiencing any personal triumph or consolation. The Absolute knows ultimate triumph, ultimate joy. As fragments, we know defeat, sorrow, and pain. In no experiential way can we ever share the Absolute's triumph. Our very constitution as fragments means that our experience is imperfect, incomplete, non-triumphant. Royce tries to obscure this problem by his part-whole relationship, but due to the fact that the parts happen to be conscious beings, he fails.

It appears to me that Royce is guilty of an inconsistency concerning his concepts of God and human selves. On one hand, there is his conception of God as an infinite unity of conscious thought--one whose knowledge is complete. On the other hand, concerning his conception of human beings, it is our very lack of insight, our incompleteness, our fragmentariness, that distinguishes us from the Absolute. Yet when it comes to our sharing in God's triumph, Royce dissolves the distinction between these concepts. We are finite individuals precisely because of our incompleteness and lack of insight. We can never know complete triumph in our experience by the very definition of our being. But Royce now tells us to share in the Absolute's triumph. What Royce, in fact, is asking us to do is accept the perfection of the universe by faith, even though it has no reality in our experience.

4. The Absolute's Indifference to Human Beings. Another problem concerns the indifference of the Absolute to human beings. This indifference arises from the fact that the Absolute is perfected through the suffering of human beings. The Absolute, we are told, is a perfect moral being, and yet this cannot help but appear questionable to the finite beings who suffer simply so the Absolute may be perfect. William James, in speaking of Royce's type of monistic theism, addresses this issue:

It introduces a speculative 'problem of evil' namely, and leaves us wondering why the perfection of the Absolute should require just such particular hideous forms of life as darken the day for our human imaginations. If they were forced on it by something alien, and to 'overcome' them the Absolute had still to keep hold of them, we could

understand its feeling of triumph, tho we, so far as we were ourselves among the elements overcome, could acquiesce but sullenly in the resultant situation, and would never just have chosen it as the most rational one conceivable. But the Absolute is represented as a being without environment, upon which nothing alien can be forced, and which has spontaneously chosen from within to give itself the spectacle of all that evil rather than a spectacle with less evil in it. Its perfection is represented as the source of things, and yet the first effect of that perfection is the tremendous imperfection of all finite experience. In whatever sense the word 'rationality' may be taken, it is vain to contend that the impression made on our finite minds by such a way of representing things is altogether rational.⁹

The evil that we experience is something we cannot help; it is thrust upon us from outside. But this is not the case of the Absolute. The Absolute chooses to have evil as part of its being; evil is not foreign to its nature but is necessary for its perfection. Therefore, we suffer so that the Absolute may be perfect. Royce fails to see that such a being lacks any moral worth for us. He insists that our suffering is necessary for the Absolute's perfection, and, then, by virtue of the part-whole relationship, argues that it is our perfection as well. The problem with this, as we have seen, is that only the Absolute can know such perfection. Our organic relationship to the Absolute does not change the fact that we are conscious beings who, by virtue of our finitude, can never know perfection. The claim that we share in the Absolute's triumph as a justification for our suffering is an empty

⁹William James, A Pluralistic Universe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 57.

bit of rhetoric that has no reality in our experience. Royce wants us to believe that human beings are of great value because the Absolute manifests its life in such, but human beings actually have no value except as instruments in the Absolute's pursuit of fulfillment--as mere means to an end of which we have no part. Human beings have no value in themselves.

The Absolute, then, is quite different to the intrinsic value of human beings. For Royce to escape this charge, he must insist (and he does) that such manifestation was necessary. The necessity lies in the Absolute's perfection, but the notion of the Absolute's perfection, as Royce perceives it, poses a serious dilemma. If the Absolute must achieve perfection in time, then how can we speak of the Absolute as perfect? If the Absolute must posit evil in order to overcome it, then it has not achieved perfection. But, as Royce would insist, the Absolute is perfect because the time element is done away with in the Absolute Consciousness. All is present as an eternal now, a total simul, in its consciousness. The Absolute knows the triumph over evil even though in time it has not taken place. If this be the case, however, why could not the divine Mind contemplate within itself the "world spectacle" and not have finite spectators come in and add imperfection to what was already perfect. If the Absolute can have the consciousness of perfection apart from its realization in time, then why was such a manifestation necessary? Either Royce's God is imperfect or responsible for an unnecessary evil environment. In addressing this problem, William James writes,

Grant that the spectacle or world-romance offered to itself by the absolute is in the absolute's eyes perfect. Why would not the world be more perfect by having the affair remain in just those terms, and by not having any finite spectators to come in and add to what was perfect already their innumerable imperfect manners of seeing the same spectacle? Suppose the entire universe to consist of one superb copy of a book, fit for the ideal reader. Is that universe improved or deteriorated by having myriads of garbled and misprinted separate leaves and chapters also published, giving false impressions of the book to whoever looks at them? To say the least, the balance of rationality is not obviously in favor of such added mutilations. So this question becomes urgent: Why, the absolute's own total vision of things being so rational, was it necessary to comminute it into all these co-existing inferior fragmentary visions?¹⁰

Thus, the Absolute's manifestation in the form of conscious individuals in order to achieve perfection was not necessary. It could have enjoyed the consciousness of perfection without such manifestation, just as it enjoys the consciousness of perfection without its realization in time. Royce's theodicy needs this necessity. Without it, Royce's God seems insensitive, indifferent to the welfare of individuals.

5. The Problems Associated with Overcoming. Royce maintains that all evil is overcome in the Absolute. The Absolute's knowledge of overcoming is what constitutes the perfect moral order. This notion of overcoming, however, faces several serious problems.

The first problem concerns overcoming and the evil impulse. Royce has maintained that the foundation of moral virtue consists

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 57-58.

not of innocence but of overcoming the evil impulse. The evil impulse is necessary for a moral order. For now, let us accept this necessity and see what follows.

Royce attributes a relative amount of freedom to the human will--the freedom to attend or not attend to the Moral Ought of harmony. Evil acts are thus attributed to the free will of human beings in that they do not attend to the Moral Ought and, instead, heed the evil impulse. Royce emphasizes that God has willed this relative freedom in human beings. He has determined only that our wills be free and not the content of those choices. He must emphasize this in order to avoid a determinism in which God causes us to do evil. Therefore, when it comes to evil choices, the freedom of the human will is emphasized.

When Royce turns to his solution, however, we find a different emphasis implied. We are told that all evil is overcome by creative acts of goodness. In other words, we have a dynamic moral balance in the world. But how is it that such a guarantee can be made? If human beings have the relative freedom that Royce attributes to them, then there is no guarantee that evil acts shall be countered by acts of goodness. There is no guarantee unless God determines that it should be so. How can the Absolute have the knowledge of all evil overcome unless it determines the means to this end? Herein lies the problem. If the Absolute was going to determine human response to evil, then why not determine it to resist the evil impulse in the first place?

Royce has assured us in the most noble rhetoric that the Absolute shall triumph; evil shall be overcome. But such an end, in Royce's theory, has for its means human agency, and human agency has already been unable to thwart the evil impulse. How, then, is it able to counter all evil unless the Absolute determines it? But given the fact of determination, the Absolute could have used its determining capabilities far better by resisting the evil impulse in the first place. Royce has a dilemma on his hands. If the human will towards evil is not determined, then there is no guarantee of triumph. If, however, the human will is determined to overcome evil, it could have been determined to resist temptation in the first place.

In Royce's theory, it is the overcoming of the evil impulse that is necessary for moral virtue; therefore, the Absolute could have been morally perfect by merely overcoming all evil impulses. To object to this because it violates free-will is invalidated by the implied determinism of overcoming all experienced evil. To determine human wills to overcome all evil acts that proceed from evil impulses is a belated and unnecessary step for the Absolute's perfection. Its perfection could have been achieved without all the misery caused by evil acts and at no less loss to human freedom. I am suggesting that complete overcoming of evil implies determinism, and since it does so, a determinism to thwart all evil impulses would have been morally superior to a determinism to overcome the consequences of evil acts.

A second problem for the notion of overcoming all evil concerns the undermining of Royce's own moral foundation. According to Royce, moral virtue is constituted by the overcoming of evil impulses, and moral perfection is constituted by the overcoming of all the consequences of evil acts. If there was no struggle, if evil did not exist, then there would be no moral order, or to use Royce's own words, there would only be "the laziness of an infinitely vacant life." The Absolute is perfect because it knows all evil as overcome. But if this be the case, then has not the Absolute lost its ground for moral virtue? The Absolute does not merely know the overcoming of evil in a temporal process, but its knowledge is a totum simul. This means that the Absolute must experience a state of struggle, no overcoming. It must, then, experience "the laziness of an infinitely vacant life." The Absolute is caught in a dilemma. The perfect moral order depends upon the Absolute's knowledge of all evil overcome, but such a state has lost the necessary condition of moral virtue. The Absolute must be, therefore, either a morally vacant being or an imperfect being.

A third problem concerns overcoming and its relation to moral responsibility. Even if we ignore the previous problems, what does the fact that the Absolute overcomes all evil do to our responsibility towards evil? If the Absolute knows all evil to be overcome, if the triumph is guaranteed, then why should we be particularly concerned about making the world a better place? A.J.M. Milne writes,

does the claim that, within human life, morality will always triumph over immorality add anything to our understanding of morality? On the contrary, it seems to take the heart out of morality. If the possibility of the triumph of immorality is denied, if we can be sure that, no matter how bad things may seem, no matter how feeble and irresolute current behavior appears, nevertheless all will come right in the end, our own human responsibility becomes a hollow sham. Unless there is a real possibility of failure, success is worthless.¹¹

This, of course, is not a logical inconsistency, but it does constitute a psychological inconsistency. Royce, to his credit, has emphasized that evil is no illusion from our point of view; it is real and should be opposed. But does the conflict seem quite as serious or require as much urgency if I am assured that good shall prevail? The problem for Royce, at this point, is not that good ultimately prevails over evil but that every evil act shall be overcome by good. In a world-view such as Christianity, God ultimately triumphs; the Kingdom of God ultimately prevails. Here, the final outcome is guaranteed but not each and every situation. In other words, such religious perspectives maintain that God will finally do away with the evil world, but human responsibility for dealing with particular situations is left in tact. In Royce's view, all evil acts are atoned for in some way by someone. This hardly motivates the individual to the heights of moral responsibility and urgency that Royce would want. The tendency towards passivity would be strong, supposing that someone will respond even if I do not.

¹¹A.J.M. Milne, The Social Philosophy of English Idealism (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1962), p. 305.

6. The Value of Evil in Royce's Theodicy. Not only does Royce's view of overcoming take the heart out of moral responsibility, but his view that evil is necessary does this as well. According to Royce, moral virtue consists not in mere innocence but in overcoming evil. The world is actually a better place for overcoming evil than if evil had not existed.

In the first place, on this hypothesis, the evil will is just as valuable as the good will. The one who practices evil is just as essential to the world as the one who practices good, for without his evil, the good could not be. The one who relishes in evil doing is serving the purpose of God just as much as the one who does good. Howard Jefferson compares this "moral order" to a well-written melodrama.¹² The play has its hero or heroine, and it has its villain. When the villain plays his role well, projecting himself as a most despicable fellow, he makes a genuine contribution to the play. Without him the hero or the heroine would have no occasion to show their true colors. If the villain projects himself in an especially outstanding way, the audience will find itself more involved with his character and more laudatory of his performance than the hero or heroine. In fact, the success of the play is more dependent upon the performance of the villain than upon the hero or heroine, and it is the villain who will be most remembered. One only has to think of the current smash prime-time soap opera, Dallas, with its

¹²Jefferson, "Royce on the Problem of Evil," p. 367.

wonderfully wicked J.R. to see the great value of a first class villain.

In Royce's theory, however, we are not dealing with a play; we are dealing with real life, and yet his theory makes the real life villain as essential as our fictitious one. The real life villain is an essential part, a valuable part of life. His evil deeds are just as important as good deeds. In short, Royce makes evil a thing of great value.

In the second place, consider the effect this has on moral responsibility. The wicked person can reason justifiably that because his wickedness is essential to a perfect moral order, then his life task shall be the pursuit of evil. He is serving the purpose of God just as much as the good man. There is no rationale for doing good if one enjoys evil and can get away with it. There is no threat of eternal punishment hanging over his head; there is no guarantee that his evil acts will produce bad consequences for him. Furthermore, there is the guarantee that his evil is needed and will be overcome.

In the third place, the necessity and the value of evil leads to a dilemma. Evil is real; it is to be condemned and countered, and yet the moral order depends upon the existence of evil. Without evil the world would be morally vacant, according to Royce. If this be the case, then the desire to rid the world of evil is the same as the desire to rid it of moral perfection. If humanity succeeded in doing away with evil, it would become, to use Royce's words, "morally insipid and colorless." It would be characterized by "the

laziness of an infinitely vacant life." Thus, humanity's struggle against evil must not go too far; the human race must not improve itself too much, for if all evil were eliminated, then the world would be amoral. Royce's theory leads to the absurd consequence that doing away with all evil would itself be an evil!

Royce's moral order is one where evil has as much value as good. It is one in which the evil man fulfills the will of God as much as the good man. It is one in which there is no reason to turn from evil, and no reason to pursue its elimination. Can one seriously speak of this order as perfectly moral? In the beginning of this study, I defined evil as something of intrinsic disvalue, something worth eliminating for its own sake. In Royce's system, evil has great instrumental value and must not be eliminated.

7. The Logic of Royce's Theory. I have now criticized Royce's theory on a number of points. I have concluded that Royce's conception of God makes it trivial to contrast God and the world, and that his God is a being of internal contradiction. Furthermore, his theodicy is logically and psychologically inconsistent. It values evil and devalues human beings. I would like to close this analysis with a general examination of the logic which characterizes Royce's theodicy.

Royce's theodicy maintains that the whole is perfect even though all the parts are imperfect. Can such a logic be accepted? William James writes,

The ideally perfect whole is certainly that whole of which the parts also are perfect--if we can depend on logic for anything, we can depend on it for that definition. The absolute is defined as the ideally perfect whole, yet most of its parts, if not all, are admittedly imperfect. Evidently the conception lacks internal consistency, and yields us a problem rather than a solution.¹³

Royce gets into trouble because of his equivocation on "perfect" or "perfection." He equates complete intelligibility with moral completeness. The fact that all the facts of the universe can be explained bears no relation to the moral value of those facts. Royce has not demonstrated the moral value of those facts, no matter how completely intelligible he thinks his system is. Howard Jefferson writes,

How can an Absolute which includes everything within itself be morally perfect when its parts are morally imperfect? In a morally perfect world is not sufficient that things be explained; the must be shown to be good in that they find room for themselves within the perfect moral order. The natural perfection of the universe depends upon the intelligibility of its parts. A universe could not be completely comprehensible in which events are incomprehensible. Likewise moral evil cannot be included within an Absolute which is morally perfect.¹⁴

Underlying Royce's entire enterprise is the faith that reality must be a perfect moral order. Again, Jefferson writes,

The logic of the theory which we have been examining seems to be as follows: If the Absolute is a perfect being, if his choices are perfectly rational so that the world he chooses is a perfect world, and if there is such a reality of evil in the world, then it logically follows that evil

¹³James, A Pluralistic Universe, p. 60.

¹⁴Jefferson, "Royce on the Problem of Evil," pp. 374-375.

is necessary. The appearance of evil in a perfect world is explained by saying that without this evil the good could not exist.¹⁵

Royce begins with the assumption that God must be good; hence, evil, since it exists, must be necessary to that goodness. Royce begins with faith and then attempts to explicate that faith into an intelligible system. But once again, intelligibility is not the same thing as moral perfection, and faith is not the same thing as a theodicy. We are left only with the illogic of how a perfect moral being can choose to include evil within its own being. Such a being is not only one who cannot be completely good, but it is appropriate to ask if such a being can be completely sane?

¹⁵Ibid., p. 368.

CHAPTER V

THE THEODICY OF JOHN HICK

Josiah Royce's theodicy was the kind in which evil was necessary to produce a higher good--the perfection of God. As fragments in the life of God, this perfection applies to us in a secondary sense.

When we turn to John Hick, we come to the same kind of theodicy. In Hick's theodicy, which he calls "soul-making," evil is also necessary to produce a higher good.¹ Hick's theodicy, however, differs from Royce's in both metaphysical conception and teleological design. Hick's conception of God is the more familiar or traditional theism. God is the external creator of the universe and exists separately from it, whereas in Royce's conception, God is manifested in the world; God is not other in essence from the world. In short, the contrast between Royce and Hick is the contrast of immanence and transcendence.

Concerning the teleological design, in Royce, it is God who is being perfected. In Hick, God is already in a perfect state, but human beings are in need of development or soul-making. Of course, since human beings, in Royce's scheme, are fragments of God's life, the difference is trivial.

¹John Hick, Evil and The God of Love (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), p. 289.

I hope to show that Hick's theodicy is very nearly identical to Royce's in all essential points. Having examined Royce's theodicy and found it somewhat wanting, the main question will be whether or not Hick's is an improvement, arising, as it does, from a different conception of God.

Hick's Approach

In approaching the problem of evil, Hick asks, "Is Theodicy Permissible?"² There are some theists who might question the propriety of such an enterprise. A theodicy, it might be maintained, is an attempt to justify God; but who is man that he should justify God? Therefore, some might dismiss theodicy as an impious endeavor.

Hick, however, argues against this view as shown in the following:

some might say, the investigation is in itself religiously improper, whatever may be the personal attitude of the investigator. It is ipso facto irreligious for man to seek to justify God! In this formulation of the difficulty the word 'justify' seems to cause the trouble. But suppose we use instead the more neutral term 'understand.' Is it impious to try to understand God's dealings with mankind? Surely if theology is permissible at all, it would be arbitrary to disallow discussion of the topics that come under the rubric theodicy: creation, the relation of human suffering to the will of God, sin and the fall of man, redemption, heaven and hell!³

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 7.

Hick has made an important point concerning the relation of theodicy to one's religious faith. In one respect, it is absurd to speak of 'justifying' God, for God certainly does not need our justification. There is nothing that man can do to God, no higher court of appeals to which God can be brought. There is a sense, however, in which the justification of God is not absurd but which is very essential to a life of religious faith. It is the sense in which justification involves understanding and appreciating God. Presumably, a personal God who creates a world of personal beings delights in the adoration of those beings. Adoration, however, is not a blind impulse in rational creatures. This sort of response to God depends upon a certain degree of knowledge and understanding. A theodicy is an attempt to render God's ways intelligible to his creatures, to demonstrate God's worthiness of adoration, to demonstrate that God is a source of comfort and hope, in light of certain facts that call such things into question, namely, evil. Evil is a painful reality that cries out for explanation, and a theodicy seeks to provide it.

Essential to Hick's approach to the problem of evil, is his conception of God. Hick is a Christian theist. According to Hick, God is, "the unique, infinite, uncreated, eternal, personal Spirit, absolute in goodness and power"⁴ He also speaks of "the

⁴Ibid., p. 5.

fundamental Christian belief in the reality of God as the sole Creator and ultimate ruler of all things."⁵

But this is only part of the Christian conception. Christianity is essentially bound up with the person and mission of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of God must be seen in its relation to Jesus Christ. Hick writes of Christ,

Whatever realms of life and dimensions of meaning there may be beyond our present awareness and concern, our positive knowledge of God's nature and purpose still derives from His incarnation in Jesus Christ.⁶

this death was the slaying of God's Messiah, the one in whom mankind was to see the mind and heart of God made flesh.⁷

Jesus himself was not a mythological figure; he lived in Palestine and his life and death and resurrection made their impact upon others in a long succession of faith down to ourselves today.⁸

Although Hick is not theologically precise, it is clear that he considers Jesus as God incarnate (the Son of God), the supreme revelation of God, the one who rose from the dead. Therefore, the Christian doctrine of God and, hence, Christian theodicy are essentially bound up with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Christian theodicy

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁶Ibid., p. 204.

⁷Ibid., p. 279.

⁸Ibid., p. 284.

is also bound up with biblical revelation as the source of our knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hick often refers to "revealed theology," "revealed truth," the "Biblical revelation," and "Christian revelation."⁹ Hick accepts Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God and, to at least some extent, the Bible as authoritative. There are certain facts, therefore, which are not negotiable for the Christian theodicit, particularly the conception of God as omnipotent, benevolent, and the external creator of the universe who was incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ. It is from this epistemological and metaphysical stance that Hick approaches the problem.

Hick clearly recognizes the tension that exists for this conception of God. He writes,

On the one hand, it appears that the absolute monotheism of the Christian (as of the Judaic) faith entails an ultimate monism. If God is God, and if God is good, there cannot be any coequal contrary reality; and therefore evil must in the end be subject to God's sovereignty and must exist by a permission flowing from His purpose for His creation.¹⁰

But on the other hand, Hick points out that

the life of faith has always been an active warfare against evil. Through His prophets God uncompromisingly attacked greed, cruelty, and injustice within Israel; and in Christ He not only condemned these sins but also, by many acts of healing, relieved men's bodily diseases, thereby treating natural as well as moral evil as hostile to His purpose.¹¹

⁹Ibid., pp. 35, 122, 129 ff., 149, 185, 211, 255 ff.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹Ibid., p. 22.

On one hand, Christianity maintains that God is the sovereign ruler of the universe, and, therefore, evil exists only by divine permission. But on the other hand, Christianity maintains that God is righteous and holy and, therefore, condemns moral evil. These appear to be contrary views. How are they to be reconciled by the Christian faith? According to Hick, ultimately, the truth of both views must be acknowledged, and the Christian theodicy must present an "interim dualism within the setting of an unqualifiedly monotheistic faith."¹² It is to this task that Hick devotes himself in Evil and The God of Love.

Before we proceed to an examination of Hick's theodicy, we need to see the historical foundation that underlies his thought. Hick's view arises out of a contrast between the two basic historical Christian theodicies: the Augustinian and the Irenaean. I shall briefly examine these two types of theodicy in order to set the stage for Hick's view.

The Augustinian Theodicy

Augustine was one of the most influential Christian thinkers. Much of his thought has been incorporated by both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. His interest for this study lies in the type of theodicy that has come to bear his name in theological circles. I emphasize type because it is not Augustine's particular system

¹²Ibid.

per se that is the object of our attention but the general type of theodicy that received its impetus from him.

The essential feature of this type of theodicy is the doctrine of Original Sin which produced the fall of the human race. This theodicy maintains a literal interpretation of the early chapters of Genesis and, therefore, maintains that God created the first humans in an immediate way and that the human race has descended from them. Adam and Eve were not created as sinful beings but were tempted and sinned. The result of this original sin was the corruption of their moral natures and a curse on the natural order as punitive measures. The human race that descended from the first humans has inherited this moral corruption. Thus, both moral and natural evil are attributed to the original sin of the first humans, an act arising from their free will.

Obviously, this is but the briefest sketch of the Augustinian type of theodicy, but I merely wanted to point out the essential element, that of Original Sin. For Hick, the mere notions of original sin and of a fall are objectionable. First of all, Hick rejects this account on scientific grounds, accepting instead theistic evolution. Hick looks upon the creation account and the account of original sin as myths which were generally accepted as historical until the advent of modern science. Hick expresses his view by saying,

¹²Ibid.

By an exercise of creative power God caused the physical universe to exist, and in the course of countless ages to bring forth within it organic life, and finally to produce out of organic life personal life; and when man had thus emerged out of the forms of organic life, a creature had been made who has the possibility of existing in conscious fellowship with God.¹³

Secondly, Hick rejects this theodicy on moral grounds. The Augustinian theodicy implies that the first humans were acting as representatives of the race. The effects of their sin were imputed to all of their descendants. We are sinners because they sinned and corrupted human nature. Hick writes of this, "the policy of punishing the whole succeeding human race for the sin of the first pair is by the best human moral standards, unjust"¹⁴

Thirdly, Hick rejects the Augustinian theodicy on logical grounds, for it suffers from internal contradiction. God is alleged to have made the first humans wholly good and placed them in a perfect environment; yet, they rebelled against God. Hick writes,

there is a basic and fatal incoherence at the heart of the mythically based 'solution'. The Creator is preserved from any responsibility for the existence of evil by the claim that He made men (or angels) as free and finitely perfect creatures, happy in the knowledge of Himself, and subject to no strains or temptations, but that they themselves inexplicably and inexcusably rebelled against Him. But this suggestion amounts to a sheer self-contradiction. It is impossible to conceive of wholly good beings in a wholly good world becoming sinful. To say that they do is

¹³Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 285.

to postulate the self-creation of evil ex nihilo! There must have been some moral flaw in the creature or in his situation to set up the tension of temptation; for creaturely freedom in itself and in the absence of temptation cannot lead to sin. Thus the very fact that the creature sins refutes the suggestion that until that moment he was a finitely perfect being living in an ideal creaturely relationship to God.¹⁵

Now, of course, the Augustinian theodicy maintains that the first humans were tempted by Satan as a test from God; hence, the environment was not perfect. This fact, however, merely transfers the problem to the angelic realm where, admittedly, the explanation remains a mystery. Thus, Hick rejects the Augustinian type of theodicy on scientific, moral, and logical grounds.

The Iranaean Theodicy

There is another major type of Christian theodicy which has been somewhat overshadowed by the Augustinian type. This is the Iranaean type of theodicy. Iranaeus, an early church father, pursued a different line of thought concerning the state of the first humans when created. His view is that God did not create the first humans in a finished state but as the raw material for further development. Hick writes,

Instead of regarding man as having been created by God in a finished state, as a finitely perfect being fulfilling the divine intention for our human level of existence, and then falling disastrously away from this, the minority report sees man as still in the process of creation.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 285-286.

Iranaeus himself expressed this point in terms of the (exegetically dubious) distinction between the "image" and the 'likeness' of God referred to in Genesis 1:26 His view was that man as a personal and moral being already exists in the image, but has not yet been formed into the finite likeness of God.¹⁶

And so, because man was not created in a finished state, man is capable of sin. The reason for creating man in such a state is based upon the notion that such a state was required for fulfilling the creative telos. We shall be examining this telos as we look at Hick's theodicy.

Thus, there is a sharp contrast between the Augustinian and the Iranaen theodicies. In the former, man was created in a state of goodness and fell. In the latter, man was not created in a finished state but as the raw material for further development. Hick, of course, does not accept the immediate creation of human beings which both types of theodicy maintained. But Hick finds that the Iranaean view fits very well into an evolutionary theory of origins. It is from this historical and theological perspective that Hick builds his theodicy.

The Creative Telos and Man's Unfinished State

Hick begins from the position of theistic evolution. God created the raw materials of the universe and established the process of evolution. Finally, after a long period of time, human

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 289-290.

beings emerged as personal beings in the "image" of God. God's purpose for human beings has two dimensions: ethical and religious. Hick describes the ethical dimension as "a certain valuable quality of personal life which reflects finitely the divine life."¹⁷ In other words, God's purpose is that human beings act rightly. But there is another dimension--the religious. God desires that human beings enter into a personal relationship with himself. Hick writes,

According to Christianity, the divine purpose for men is not only that they shall act rightly towards one another but that they shall also freely enter into a filial relationship with God himself. There is, in other words, a religious as well as an ethical dimension to this purpose.¹⁸

Hick is expressing a divine purpose very much like Royce's. For Royce, the divine purpose is its own perfection; a perfection, however, that takes place in and through human beings. The notion of perfection is present in Hick, only it is the perfection of individuals that is in view rather than God's.

What was required for the fulfillment of this creative telos? As far as the ethical dimension is concerned, Hick says that God, as an omnipotent being, could have created beings who are predisposed toward acting rightly.¹⁹ The fact that he did not is based upon a

¹⁷Ibid., p. 290.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁹Ibid.

value-judgment that predetermined righteousness is not as valuable as that which is attained through the experience of overcoming temptations. He writes,

The value-judgment that is implicitly beings invoked here is that one who has attained to goodness by meeting and eventually mastering temptations, and thus by rightly making responsible choices in concrete situations, is good in a richer and more valuable sense than would be one created ab initio in a state either of innocence or of virtue.²⁰

At this point, Hick is expressing a value-judgment that is identical with Royce's. Royce maintained that the necessary condition for moral virtue must be genuine temptation, for virtue is not innocence, nor even pre-established goodness but the overcoming of the evil impulse. Moral virtue is attained through conflict, struggle, and overcoming. If there is any difference between Royce and Hick on this point, it is only in that Hick seems to attribute some moral value to a conflict-free order, whereas Royce seems to attribute no moral value to it at all. Such a difference, however, is trivial as far as their theodicies are concerned.

As far as the religious dimension is concerned, God, as an omnipotent being, could have programmed human beings to respond to him in love and obedience. God could have done so, but this would not have been satisfactory for the fulfillment of the religious dimension of his purpose. According to Hick, such a relationship

²⁰Ibid., p. 291.

would not be authentic, would not be gratifying to God. God desires that human beings respond to him in a self-directed way. To have programmed them to do so would be analogous to a hypnotist and patient.²¹ Suppose a hypnotist was able to cause someone, under a hypnotic trance, to love him. This would not be an authentic response. If the hypnotist genuinely desired to be loved for himself, then such a response would bring little or no gratification. So it is with God; the religious dimension of his creative telos can be fulfilled authentically only by creatures who are not programmed to do so but who are self-directing.

What implication does this have for the state in which human beings were brought into existence? It means that they cannot be created in any kind of finished ethical or religious state but must be created as the raw material for further development. Hick writes,

And so man, created as a personal being in the image of God, is only the raw material for a further and more difficult stage of God's creative work. This is the leading of men as relatively free and autonomous persons, through their own dealings with life in the world in which he has placed them, towards that quality of personal existence that is the finite likeness of God.²²

Thus, on the basis of the creative telos, Hick accounts for the fact of why human beings were not created immutably good or religious (which presumably would make them immutably good). God's

²¹Ibid., pp. 308-309.

²²Ibid., p. 290.

creative process consists, therefore, of two stages: the first stage leading to personal beings; the second (which is a continuing process) leading to the ethical and religious development of those beings. Hick writes,

But the second stage of the creative process is of a different kind altogether. It cannot be performed by omnipotent power as such. For personal life is essentially free and self-directing. It cannot be perfected by divine fiat, but only through the uncompelled responses and willing co-operation of human individuals in their actions and reactions in the world which God has placed them. Men may eventually become the perfected persons who the New Testament calls 'children of God', but they cannot be created ready-made as this.²³

The Meaning of Good and Evil

Having looked at God's purpose for creation, we are now in a better position to evaluate the moral quality of that creation. The well-being of the creature must be evaluated in light of God's purpose. Hick examines this issue from both a theological and non-theological perspective. The non-theological refers to the human perspective unaided by religious faith. From this perspective, what constitutes the 'good' of human beings? Hick sets this forth in Aristotelean terms--'good' is understood as happiness.²⁴ Hick writes,

Aristotle suggests that the happiness of any kind of creature consists in its fulfilment of its own telos, or

²³Ibid., p. 291.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 12-14.

the realization of its given nature and potentialities Happiness is thus relative to structure, being the fulfilment of a thing's nature, whatever that nature and its fulfilment may be. And the happiness of a human being will accordingly consist in his fulfilment of the potentialities of specifically human nature.²⁵

If the good of human beings consists in their happiness which is the fulfillment of the potentialities of human nature, then evil is a state of misery which is the frustration of the potentialities of human nature. If we apply these definitions to a theological setting, happiness will be defined in terms of the divine purpose for human beings. Hick writes,

The analogous theological definition will be in terms of the divine purpose for the created world. Whatever tends to promote the attainment of that purpose will be good and whatever tends to thwart it will be bad. The full and irreversable fulfilment of that plan would be the complete good sought by God in His activity in relation to His creation, whilst any final and irrevocable frustration of that plan would constitute irredeemable and ultimate badness.²⁶

This concept of the 'good' has great significance for the evaluation of experience. Hick writes,

We must note finally that the eschatological character of man's final good affects the present significance of the experiences which we undergo. We welcome these (i.e. regard them as good) or shun them (i.e. regard them as

²⁵Ibid., p. 15.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 15-16.

bad) according as they cause us pleasure and happiness or pain and misery. From the point of view, however, of the ultimate good of our creaturely self-fulfilment in the divine Kingdom they are to be welcomed or shunned according as they move us nearer to or further from the ultimate and all-inclusive good. In this eschatological perspective, as we shall see later, even experiences that are unwelcome to us and that we would shun may be good if they are so used, in our response to them, as to bring us nearer to God's Kingdom. Conversely, even experiences that we desire and welcome may in the same ultimate perspective be bad if our response to them is such that we are thereby moved further from the divine Kingdom.²⁷

In this notion of the 'good,' we find, again, identity between Royce and Hick. Royce maintained that the terms 'good' and 'evil' must not be abstracted from experience and set in opposition to one another. We must not assume that 'good' cannot include suffering which, in abstraction, we call evil. Therefore, the goodness of the moral order is not necessarily destroyed because evil is present. Its goodness depends upon its conduciveness to the fulfillment of the divine purpose. In Royce's case, this purpose is expressed in terms of the perfection of God taking place in and through the world. In Hick's case, it is the perfection of the individual human being that is in view--developing in the "likeness" of God.

This notion of the 'good' is the key to Hick's theodicy, as with any soul-making type of theodicy. It makes an important distinction between points of view. From the human point of view, we tend to judge experiences on the basis of their immediate

²⁷Ibid., pp. 17-18.

effects, but there is another perspective that transcends the immediate--the perspective of the creative telos. We may judge certain experiences to be bad when, in fact, they are contributing to the realization of our highest good. Conversely, we may judge some experiences to be good when, in fact, they are detrimental to such realization. Our experiences, therefore, must be viewed teleologically and evaluated as to their efficacy in fulfilling the creative telos in human life.

Hick suggests that the fundamental mistake of those who use evil to show the non-existence of God, or, at least, that God is not all-powerful or all-good is a faulty assumption of what the divine purpose ought to be. They assume that a loving God would create a hedonistic paradise.²⁸ But God's purpose is not the creation of a hedonistic paradise. His purpose is that human beings, through self-directed activity, develop into the moral likeness of God and enter into a personal relationship with God. Thus, the essential question in evaluating the world should be: "Is this the kind of world that God might make as an environment in which moral beings may be fashioned, through their own free insights and responses, into 'children of God'?"²⁹ Obviously, Hick believes that the answer is "yes."

What I have attempted to show thus far is Hick's justification of God for not creating a perfect world, that is, a world of

²⁸Ibid., pp. 292-293.

²⁹Ibid., p. 293.

immutably good creatures. God's telos required beings who were not programmed, beings who were not immutably good, but beings who develop through self-directed activity. Therefore, as God brought forth human beings, he brought forth beings totally undeveloped. As the human race evolved, as the light of rationality and moral sensitivity set in, they would be shaped by experience. The fact that moral evil exists is not, in any way, a failure on God's part but is due to the necessity of an unfinished state in need of development.

The Epistemic Distance

The picture that we have drawn, thus far, is not that of a human race "fallen" from some original state of goodness, but that of a race which emerged morally and spiritually unformed from a long process of evolution; hence, man was "created" as a fallen being.³⁰ Having emerged in this way, what type of environment did man encounter? According to Hick, man's environment was one of epistemic distance from God. He writes,

When we compare the way in which man has in fact, so far as we know, appeared on this earthly scene, emerging out of apedom with only dim and rudimentary notions of his Creator, with the epistemological conditions presupposed by man's status as a free and responsible agent in relation to his Maker, we find a remarkable agreement between them. For human freedom vis-a-vis God presupposes an initial separation and a consequent degree of independence on man's part. In creating finite persons to love and be loved by Him God must endow them with a certain relative autonomy over against Himself, from which he can then voluntarily come to God The kind of distance

³⁰Ibid., p. 316.

between God and man that would make room for a degree of human autonomy is epistemic distance.³¹

The environment into which man emerges is one where God is hidden. God is hidden not in the sense of the unknowable, but in the sense that God's reality is not immediately given. Human beings, through the development of their insight into the world, can come to an appreciation of the divine being. Hick writes,

On the one hand, then, we should expect the reality of God to be other than automatically and undeniably evident to us; it will, on the contrary, be possible for our minds to rest in the world itself without passing beyond it to its Maker. But we should also expect the reality of God to become evident to men in so far as they are willing to live as creatures in the presence of an infinitely perfect Being whose very existence sets them under a sovereign claim of worship and obedience. We should expect the world to be such that, given this willingness (which is the volitional element or religious faith), we become able to recognize all around us the signs of a divine presence and activity.³²

Thus, according to Hick, there is an epistemic distance between God and man. Man did not evolve into an environment that was saturated with the presence of the divine but into an environment in which God's presence must be discovered through religious faith. Given the divine telos, God could not bring man into any other sort of environment. God desires the voluntary affection of the creature. Had human beings emerged into an environment where God's presence was immediately and unmistakably revealed, their response

³¹Ibid., p. 317.

³²Ibid., p. 318.

would have been guaranteed by the sheer magnitude of God's glory. Such a response would not be in accordance with God's purpose which is for beings to come to him an uncompelled, self-directed way. Hick writes,

We may express this today by saying that man was created at the epistemic distance from God at which the gospel has found him. That is to say, when God summoned man out of the dust of the evolutionary He did not place him in the immediate consciousness of His own presence but in a situation from which man could, if he would, freely enter into the divine Kingdom and presence. And the creation of man in his own relatively autonomous world, in which the awareness of God is not forced upon him but in which he is cognitively free in relation to his Maker, is what mythological language calls the fall of man. Our present earthly existence is described in myth as man's life after the fall. Man exists at a distance from God's goal for him, however, not because he has fallen from that goal but because he has yet to arrive at it.³³

The necessity of the epistemic distance explains why God chose the evolutionary method of creation. As part of the evolutionary process, man is linked to the natural order, an integral part of the natural world. Human consciousness has arisen out of the natural order, and having emerged as a personal being in this way, man's natural awareness is of the natural world rather than of God. Thus, evolution was a most suitable means of establishing the epistemic distance that God desired.

The Virtual Inevirability Of Moral Evil

The creative telos required that human beings emerge as the raw material for further development. The condition that satisfies this

³³Ibid., pp. 318-319.

state of affairs is that human beings be placed at an epistemic distance from God. It is this epistemic distance that makes moral evil a virtual inevitability.

Let us consider what the ideal relationship between God and human beings would be. According to Hick,

The ideal relationship of a human person with God would consist in a vivid awareness of Him, at once joyous and awesome, and a consequent whole-hearted worship of the infinite Goodness and Love by obedient service to His purposes within the creaturely realm.³⁴

Assuming that human beings were not at an epistemic distance from God but confronted continually with the glory of the divine presence, we would expect them to be in perfect conformity to the will of God. They would be so absorbed in the divine presence, so aware of their own creatureliness, that they would manifest perfect obedience. Hick writes of this,

Such a knowledge of God would make impossible the natural egoism in which we treat ourselves as the center of our own world, whilst the awareness of God's universal care and watchful love would render needless that protective self-concern by which we seek to safeguard our own interests in imagined competition with our neighbors.³⁵

Hick's point is this: moral evil is the result of our epistemic distance from God. Were there no epistemic distance, there would be no self-centeredness, and were there no self-centeredness, there would be no sin. Because we exist in an undeveloped state and

³⁴Ibid., p. 298.

³⁵Ibid.

a state of epistemic distance, we develop self-centered attitudes as a matter of competition, of survival. It is this natural egoism that gives rise to evil acts.

Thus, moral evil is a virtual inevitability given the conditions for God's creative telos. Human self-centeredness is not an absolute necessity given these conditions but is of such great probability as to make sin a virtual inevitability. Placed at an epistemic distance from God, it was inevitable that human beings develop the natural egoism that is at the heart of moral evil.

Hick's notions of epistemic distance and the inevitability of moral evil have their counterparts in Royce. In Royce, human beings are fragments of the life of God. God has chosen to express himself in the concrete and differentiated individuality of the universe. As such, human beings lack insight into the organic unity of the universe and, hence, their relation to God. Through social interaction their individuality is bred due to contrast and opposition. Therefore, the natural environment in which human beings find themselves is one in which they are actually separated from God or the Absolute, as Royce conceives of God.

Just as sin is an inevitable result of the undeveloped state and epistemic distance in Hick, so it is with Royce. For Royce, sin or moral evil is an inevitable constituent of individuality or selfhood. Selfhood is bred through social contrast. As a result, there is tension, a conflict between the interests of self and those of society which bred the self. It is this tension, this conflict, this individualism which is at the heart of the evil impulse.

Sin And Suffering In God's Providence

Thus far, Hick has concluded that sin is the price man must pay for his autonomy, and sin, obviously, leads to pain and suffering in the world. Now we must see how sin and its attendant suffering have their place in the divine economy.

Let us consider an alternative to pain and suffering. Could not God, while allowing human autonomy, directly intervene so as to prevent pain and suffering? Hick's answer is that an omnipotent God could work in such a way as to allow freedom but overrule the effects of evil acts.³⁶ But the key question is this: should God do so? This question must be answered in light of God's goal for human beings.

The highest good of human beings consists of their development into the ethical likeness of God and entering into a personal relationship with God. It is a state to which they must develop freely. According to Hick, a world devoid of pain and suffering would not allow human beings to develop and to grow into such a state. If evil acts basically are those which harm others, then there would no longer be any moral distinction in a world where God intervened.³⁷ If God allowed freedom to do evil but did not allow the effects of evil acts, then sin and virtue would lose their meaning. Human beings would be in a totally sheltered environment where such things as "self-sacrifice, care for others, devotion to the public good,

³⁶Ibid., p. 360.

³⁷Ibid., p. 361.

courage, perserverance, skill, and honesty" would have no function.³⁸ The most desirable qualities of personality would never develop, and human beings would never approach the likeness of God. In short, it would be an order of little or no moral value.

But even if we grant this, still might one wonder: must there be so much pain and suffering in the world? The suggestion here is that, at the very least, God could intervene to prevent "exceptional and excessive evils."³⁹ Hick's response to this is that "evils are exceptional only in relation to other evils which are routine."⁴⁰ The point is that this line of thought has nowhere to stop. We would end up with "a divinely arranged paradise in which human freedom would be narrowly circumscribed, moral responsibility largely eliminated, and in which the drama of man's story would be reduced to the level of a television serial."⁴¹ If God eliminated those evils which we now consider excessive, then those which are now considered lesser would become excessive, and so on and so on until nothing is left.⁴²

But as we consider the excessiveness of evil, another issue is raised which we have not dealt with as yet--natural evil. If we grant the allowance of all the effects of moral evil, we still might

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 363

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 363-364.

⁴²Ibid., p. 363.

think that the suffering caused by natural evil is excessive. Surely, the moral variety is enough! Based upon the soul-making hypothesis, natural evil is brought about by God because God's purpose cannot be accomplished in a hedonistic paradise. The physical environment must offer some challenge to human life. But Hick himself poses the question: "Need the world contain the more extreme and crushing evils which it in fact contains?"⁴³ It is one thing for man to have to cultivate the ground by the sweat of his brow; it is another for natural forces to cause devastating famines. It is one thing for man to learn the proper care of his body in order to maintain good health; it is another to have serious diseases and crippling defects.

While still acknowledging the soul-making function of moral evil and natural evil, Hick confesses that the excessiveness of suffering, particularly that caused by natural evil, is a mystery.⁴⁴ But of this mystery, he writes, "Our 'solution', then, to this baffling problem of excessive and undeserved suffering is a frank appeal to the positive value of mystery."⁴⁵ What does he mean by the "positive value of mystery"? He means that a degree of uncertainty, a degree of unintelligibility, surrounding life is itself a factor in soul-making, for it leaves room for the exercise

⁴³Ibid., p. 365.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 369-370.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 371.

of faith, the exercise of ultimate dependence upon the wisdom and goodness of God.⁴⁶ Therefore, Hick concludes that suffering, while seemingly excessive and not altogether intelligible, nevertheless, contributes to the "divinely created sphere of soul-making."⁴⁷

Concerning this notion of excessive suffering and the positive value of mystery, we find very much the same idea expressed in the Roycean phrase "the religious mission of sorrow." Royce also admits that there are ills which we do not understand (especially the natural variety), but he suggests that there is a positive value in sorrow which transcends complete intelligibility. He claims that certain evils which are recognized as part of a constructive whole hint at how those we do not understand may also be part of a good whole.

There is even an affinity between Hick's view of God's intervention and Royce's view. Hick maintains that causal regularity is necessary for distinguishing between good and evil actions. Royce maintains that the effects of evil must be allowed if we are to share in a spiritual relationship with others, or, in other words, if we are to be a factor in their lives. Royce writes,

No God could conceivably give you the good of self-expression without granting you the privilege, not only of choosing wrongly, but of involving your brethren in the results of your misdeed. For when you love your kind, you

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 370.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 372.

aim to be a factor in their lives; and to deprive you of this privilege would be to insure your total failure. But if you possess this privilege, you share in a life that, in proportion to its importance and depth and range and richness of spiritual relations, is full of the possibility of tragedy.⁴⁸

Thus, although Royce and Hick both admit to the mystery of suffering, they defend its positive value as part of the soul-making process, and, therefore, defend God's choice of nonintervention.

The Eschatological Character Of Hick's Theodicy

The creative telos for human beings is that they develop into the ethical likeness of God and enter into a personal, filial relationship with God. The environment in which human beings find themselves is necessary for the fulfillment of that telos. But there is yet an eschatological character to Hick's theodicy, without which it would not be complete. Hick writes,

And yet, so far as we can see, the soul-making process does in fact fail in our own world at least as often as it succeeds.

At this point a further, eschatological, dimension of Christian belief becomes importantly relevant ⁴⁹

God's purpose for the world does not find complete fulfillment in this life. There are many who do not attain to the ethical

⁴⁸Josiah Royce, The Sources of Religious Insight (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 252.

⁴⁹Hick, Evil and The God of Love, p. 372.

and/or religious dimension that God desires. Thus, based on the experience of the world, God's goal would appear to be greatly frustrated. It is at this point that the concept of life after death is so essential. Hick maintains that this concept is necessary if God's purpose is to be achieved. He writes,

Further, belief in an after-life has its roots in religious reasoning as well as in the biblical revelation, as a corollary of belief in a transcendent personal God who has created finite persons for fellowship with Himself. Would it not contradict God's love for the creatures made in His image if He caused them to pass out of existence whilst His purpose for them was still so largely unfulfilled?⁵⁰

If, then, the evil in human life finally reveals its nature according as it becomes or fails to become a phase in the fulfillment of God's purpose, we must conclude, so far as the present life is concerned, that there are both good and evil suffering, and that there are redeemed and unredeemed sinners. Any revision of the verdict must depend upon lengthening the perspective out until it reaches a new and better conclusion. If there is any eventual resolution of the interplay between good and evil, any decisive bringing of good out of evil, it must lie beyond the enigma of death.⁵¹

It is in the after-life that God's creative telos must be completely fulfilled, for in this life there are many who never attain unto a God-centered life, an active, life-changing relationship with God. For those who do, the next step seems simple enough--they die and go to be with the Lord in a joyous

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 374.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 375.

environment. Their sufferings in this life may then be justified on the basis of the ultimate good which was produced. Hick writes,

The 'good eschaton' will not be a reward or compensation proportioned to each individual's trials, but an infinite good that would render worthwhile any finite suffering endured in the course of attaining to it.⁵²

But what about those who do not attain such a state in this life? What does the after-life hold for them? Hick rejects the doctrine of eternal punishment, believing that it is not compatible with God's goodness or creative telos. God created people for fellowship with himself. Since a large number of people appear to live less than righteous or godly lives, hell would be well-populated, and God's purpose would largely be frustrated for all eternity. Hick writes,

For the doctrine of hell has as its implied premise either that God does not desire to save all His human creatures, in which case He is only limitedly good, or that His purpose has finally failed in the case of some--and indeed, according to the theological tradition, most--of them, in which case He is only limitedly sovereign. I therefore believe that the needs of Christian theodicy compel us to repudiate the idea of eternal punishment.⁵³

What then of the unredeemed? Hick stresses that a rejection of eternal punishment is not to be equated with universalism.⁵⁴ Treating all people alike after death would be a grave injustice,

⁵²Ibid., p. 377.

⁵³Ibid., p. 378.

⁵⁴Ibid.

for it would make moral responsibility in this life meaningless. There are two alternatives to an everlasting hell and universalism, one being annihilation of the unredeemed, the other being an intermediate state where the soul-making process continues. Hick rejects the former on the basis that it frustrates the divine telos. The annihilation of a significant number of people would mean that God's purpose had irrevocably failed to a large degree.⁵⁵ It is the latter alternative that Hick accepts, one that is in keeping with God's soul-making purpose--an intermediate state following death where the unredeemed are molded into people of the right character for fellowship with God.⁵⁶

Let us consider the nature of this intermediate state. Hick, as a professing Christian, takes the biblical teaching on punishment after death with some degree of seriousness.⁵⁷ This is especially so with regard to Jesus' teaching on the subject.⁵⁸ In Jesus' reference to eternal punishment in Matthew 25:46, Hick argues that the word 'eternal' does not have to mean 'unending' but only refers to an indefinite period of time. It is the notion of unending

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 384.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 381-382.

⁵⁸Matthew 25:46.

punishing that Hick rejects, not the notion of punishment. What Hick proposes is an intermediate state of punishment which shall ultimately rehabilitate the unredeemed, making them fit for the ultimate state of God's kingdom or heaven. He writes,

If, then, we assume that such sufferings are not eternal and hence morally pointless, but rather temporal and redemptive in purpose, we are led to postulate an existence or existences beyond the grave in which the moral structure of reality is borne upon the individual, and in which his self-centeredness is gradually broken through by a 'godly sorrow' that represents the inbreaking of reality.⁵⁹

Hick points out that this sounds very much like the Roman Catholic doctrine of 'purgatory', but suggests the preferable phrase "progressive sanctification after death."⁶⁰ Unlike the doctrine of purgatory which is something of a divine torture-chamber, Hick's intermediate state appears to be characterized more by psychological suffering than physical. Obviously, a detailed description of such a state is not available, and Hick does not try to offer one, but in keeping with the character of God, one may conceive of such a state as more like a prison term than a chamber of horrors.

Thus, God's soul-making purpose, begun in this life, extends into the after-life until all are transformed into the kind of people God desires. All eventually attain the highest good and do so through self-directed activity which is necessary to the divine economy, but it is an ultimate state that could only be achieved

⁵⁹Hick, Evil and The God of Love, p. 382.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 383.

through the suffering, the hardships, the obstacles of life. In the final analysis, according to Hick, God's allowance and use of evil can be justified in light of the goal which has been attained.

Concerning the eschatological character of Hick's theodicy, we find a major difference between him and Royce. Both advocate life after death, and both advocate that we shall find our highest realization in the eternal state.

The major difference seems to be the role which this eschatological state plays in relation to theodicy. In Hick's scheme, his theodicy is not complete without it, for only in the eschatological state will individual sufferings find their justification. It is the sufferings of the former life (or the intermediate state) that make us ready for our eternal communion with God. In Royce, the state of immortality does not complete his theodicy and thereby constitute a perfect moral order. Royce's perfect moral order is constituted by the fact that all evil is continually being overcome. Even without immortality, Royce could still make his claim that the world is a perfect moral order. Hick does not share this notion of a dynamic moral balance. He would agree that the social order can improve because of its struggle against evil but not necessarily. Hick's theodicy is primarily aimed at the individual rather than society, whereas Royce's theodicy is much more aimed at the good of society. Hick writes,

Because this is a pilgrimage within the life of each individual, rather than a social evolution, the progressive fulfillment of God's purpose does not entail any corresponding progressive improvement in the moral state of the world. There is no doubt a development in man's ethical situation from generation to generation

through the building of individual choices into public institutions, but this involves an accumulation of evil as well as of good.⁶¹

The Role Of Christianity
in Hick's Theodicy

I have referred to Hick's theodicy as a Christian theodicy which is, of course, Hick's own assertion. A Christian theodicy is one which, obviously, places a great deal of importance on the person and mission of Jesus Christ as essential to God's purpose for the world. In my presentation of Hick's theodicy, however, nothing has been said about Christ's significance for theodicy. This is because Hick's theodicy is actually not dependent upon Jesus Christ in any significant way despite his Christian profession. His theodicy can be used by merely a general theism. All the essential features of Hick's theodicy can be maintained apart from a Christian setting: a personal, transcendent God, the creative telos, the soul-making process, the intermediate state, and the eschatological state. The divine purpose, the divine method, and the divine achievement of Hick's theodicy can all be incorporated into a general theism.

What role, then, does Jesus Christ play in Hick's theodicy? Hick professes that Christ is the Son of God who died on the cross and rose from the dead, but what we have yet to determine is what the person and work of Jesus Christ have to do with theodicy.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 292.

First of all, according to Hick, Jesus Christ was the supreme revelation of God's love for the world. He writes,

Whatever realms of life and dimensions of meaning there may be beyond our present awareness and concern, our positive knowledge of God's nature and purpose still derives from his incarnation in Jesus Christ. Here we see the divine love for persons expressed in activities of healing, teaching, challenging, forgiving--activities that are wholly personal in character. To say that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself' is to say that Jesus' attitudes to the people with whom He had to do in first-century Palestine were God's attitudes to those same individuals, expressed in and through attitudes of a particular historical personality.⁶²

Secondly, Jesus Christ is the model, the perfect example of being in the right relationship with God. Hick writes,

But who is portrayed by such a picture of man dwelling in a right relationship with God? Only, according to the claim of the Christian faith, one man: Jesus, who was the Christ. Born into the stream of human life running in this wrong channel Jesus nevertheless lived in perfect obedience to his Father's will. He thus represented a higher purpose which was in conflict with the prevailing dynamics of human society, and as a vulnerable human agent of that higher purpose he met a death which has decisively illumined both the horror of man's life apart from God and the depth of the divine love which is so costingly at work to rescue us from that horror.⁶³

Thirdly, Christ fulfilled the pattern of redemptive suffering.

Hick writes,

The malice which assailed him was part of a solidarity of human evil that was provoked by God's presence in

⁶²Ibid., p. 204.

⁶³Ibid., p. 299.

vulnerable human flesh to this violent act of rejection. All this was divinely foreseen, and by enduring 'from sinners such hostility against himself' for the sake of mankind Christ fulfilled the pattern of redemptive suffering. For the Church has always believed as one of its cardinal doctrines that the judicial murder of the Christ was the focus of God's redemptive work and the turning point of man's salvation.⁶⁴

Hick is not theologically precise concerning the redemptive activity of Christ, but two points seem certain. Christ's death was the supreme example of the creative telos--perfection through suffering--and his life and death serve as the supreme inspiration, the supreme force, that draws one to a God-centered life. Noticably absent from Hick's view of Christ's redemptive work are the notions that Christ's death atones for sins and that salvation is through faith in Christ alone--notions that are prevalent in historic Christian thought. Hick's view of redemption is not that of a vicarious sacrifice--the penal satisfaction theory--but rather that of a moral example, exemplifying the ideal life and providing the inspiration to be likewise.

Thus, the role that Christ plays in Hick's theodicy is epistemic rather than soteric--a source of knowledge rather than a source of actual salvation. For Hick, Christ is the supreme revelation of God, revealing the love of God and the will of God for our lives through his teaching, his life, and his death. His life and death, however, are not without some efficacy, for in Christ the

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 391-392.

supreme inspiration to live a God-centered life is found. I maintain, however, that while Christ fulfills an important role in Hick's total world-view, Christ is not essential to his theodicy.

Hick's Concluding Perspective

Having now completed our exposition of Hick's theodicy, let us look at the actual relation between evil and the world. In light of the instrumental value of evil in Hick's theodicy, might we not say that evil is not really evil, but only appears that way because of our limited human perspective? According to Hick, this view is to be shunned. Evil is really evil. It is to be feared, resisted, and abhorred. We are to do all that we can to seek its prevention.

But having affirmed the omnipotence of God, the sovereignty of God over all things, can we deny that evil originates in the divine will? According to Hick, this fact cannot be denied, but is an inevitable theological inference. Of both views, Hick writes,

We must insist both that evil is really evil and that God has really willed for a good purpose a world in which evil, with its demonic quality, arises. For it is an inevitable deliverance of our moral consciousness, of which nothing must be allowed to rob us, that evil in all its forms is to be abhorred and resisted and feared. And it is . . . an inevitable theological inference, to which we must not blind ourselves, that the actual universe, with all its good and evil, exists on the basis of God's will and receives its meaning from His purpose.⁶⁵

These two seemingly opposing views find their reconciliation in the eschatological hope. God's purpose for human beings is to

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 398-399.

mold them and ready them for the eternal state where they shall find their highest good. This highest good, however, can only be reached through growth and development in the temporal sphere. God allows and uses evil in the temporal order to bring the eschatological hope to fulfillment.

Evil is, therefore, really evil, and as such it is to be feared, resisted, and abhorred. But out of this very struggle arises a final state by which the whole created order must be evaluated. In light of the eschatological hope that is fulfilled, its creator must be judged as good. Hick writes,

The bridge between these standpoints is provided by the Christian hope of the Kingdom of God. The compatibility between the 'existential' view as utterly malevolent and harmful and the theological view of it as divinely permitted and overruled, is a form of the compatibility between the temporal process which we know by our own present immersion within it, and the future completion and transformation of which we affirm by faith . . . evil must ultimately be defined as that which thwarts God's purpose for His creation. This means that if in fact God's purpose of universal good is eventually attained, then in relation to that fulfilment nothing will finally have been sheerly and unredeemably evil. For everything will receive a new meaning in the light of evil. For everything will receive a new meaning in the light of the end to which it leads. What now threatens us as final evil will prove to have been interim evil out of which good will in the end have been brought.⁶⁶

Thus, I conclude my exposition of Hick's theodicy by summarizing it in the following points.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 399-400.

1. God's purpose for human beings is that they act rightly toward one another and respond rightly toward Him.
2. God could not create human beings with a preestablished ethical and religious nature because developed virtue and spirituality attained through self-directed activity are of a higher value than the preestablished kind.
3. In order to provide the necessary conditions for this development, God brought forth human beings in an undeveloped state and at an epistemic distance from Himself.
4. The undeveloped state along with the epistemic distance leads to natural egoism which leads to sin. Moral evil is, therefore, inevitable, given the creative telos and the necessary conditions for it.
5. The suffering that results furnishes the occasion for moral and spiritual growth.
6. The preceding point also applies to natural evil.
7. Excessive suffering is a mystery, but even the mystery contributes to moral and spiritual growth.
8. When God's purpose fails in this life, it will succeed in an intermediate state after death.
9. The final state will be one in which all people have finally been made ready for God, and they shall live eternally in perfect communion with God.

10. This final state is the highest good of human beings; therefore, since evil was a necessary part of the process that brought them into that state, God is exonerated.

CHAPTER VI

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HICK'S THEODICY

Having completed an exposition of Hick's theodicy, it is now time to subject his thought to critical scrutiny. My evaluation will be of two kinds: philosophical and Christian. In other words, I shall examine his theodicy from a philosophical perspective, but I shall also examine it within the Christian framework he professes to represent.

The Creative Telos And The Fallen State

Hick maintains that God, as an omnipotent being, could have created human beings in such a way that they would not commit evil. The crucial question is, therefore, why God did not do so? According to Hick, God did not create in this way because it would be incompatible with God's purpose for the creature. God's purpose has two dimensions: ethical and religious. God desires that human beings attain all the traits of moral virtue and that they enter into a personal relationship with himself.

With regard to the ethical dimension, Hick argues that moral virtue that is attained through self-directed activity in the face of temptation and hardship is superior to that of a preestablished state. Hence, Hick's defense of God on this point is really a value-judgement. With regard to the religious dimension, Hick argues that a genuine personal relationship with God rules out any

preestablished religious disposition. For love to be authentic, the creature must choose to give it through self-directed activity.

Let us now consider these two dimensions of God's purpose and attempt to shed some light on Hick's argument. These two dimensions do not carry equal weight as evidenced by the fact that one might attain unto a morally virtuous state and yet not have any religious commitment at all. Highly ethical people can readily be found among agnostics or even atheists. It is difficult, however, to conceive of one truly entering into a genuine personal relationship with God--love, trust, obedience--and not pursuing the virtuous path. To know the true God who is righteous and loving is to follow after righteousness and love. Therefore, it would appear that the religious dimension, as Hick defines it, is the greater of the two and a sufficient condition of the ethical.

If the religious dimension is, therefore, the ultimate goal of God, God could have sacrificed the subordinate dimension and concentrated solely on the primary one--the religious dimension. This would mean that God could have created human beings immutably good but not religious. God could have directed his efforts at trying to bring people to himself without the evil and suffering we find in the world. David Ray Griffin writes of this,

God could have done this and still left us free in regard to whether we would acknowledge God's existence and be willing to enter into a personal relationship with God. Whereas it is natural for theologians to think as Hick does, that a lack of faith in a God who loves all humanity (or creation) will leave one in self-centeredness, which will lead to acting unjustly towards one's fellow creatures, there is no necessary causal connection involved. That is, fully ethical attitudes and actions

towards one's fellow creatures do not necessarily lead to, or presuppose, faith in God.¹

Thus, as far as the creative purpose is concerned, the highest goal could have still been genuinely pursued without the existence of moral evil. Whether or not this fact casts a negative light on God depends upon the value one gives to the ethical dimension. In view of the religious dimension of God's purpose, was the ethical dimension worth the pain and suffering caused by evil? It seems to me that God could have accomplished or, at least, pursued his goal without it.

There is, however, another question that needs to be raised. Hick has maintained that moral virtue attained through conflict is superior to preestablished virtue. This is a value-judgement which cannot be demonstrated or refuted, but it can be shown that at least many traits of morally virtuous character can be attained even though no evil exists. G. Stanley Kane writes,

We can imagine situations where these traits could be displayed even though there is no actual evil existing. Courage and fortitude, for instance, could manifest themselves as the persistence, steadfastness, and perseverance it takes to accomplish well any difficult or demanding long-range task--the writing of a doctoral dissertation, for example, or training for and competing in the Olympic Games. Tasks like these take the same sort of strength of character, the same sort of persistence in the face of difficult obstacles, that is required to endure nobly the suffering of disease, natural disasters and similar sorts of adversity. Compassion could be evi-

¹David Ray Griffin, God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 193.

denced in the sympathy and fellow-feeling that a person could show for someone engaged in one of these long-range enterprises and in all that he might do to help the person complete his task.²

The point is that if the attainment of virtue is superior to preestablished virtue, there is still plenty of room for development even though evil does not exist. God could have made human beings so that they do not commit evil, but that does not mean that they would have fully developed moral character. The absence of moral evil in one's life is not necessarily equal to the presence of virtue. The absence of evil is not necessarily equal to an undemanding way of life. Thus, even if development through self-directed activity is the condition for a moral order, it does not necessitate the existence of evil and suffering.

One might respond, however, that the quality of such character traits would not be as valuable as those same traits arrived at through pain and suffering. But one must ask whether or not the difference is great enough to justify the suffering caused by evil. Based upon the seeming similarity of the two kinds of traits, Hick's argument appears to be questionable in light of the extensive suffering caused by evil.

Thus, there are two basic criticisms that I have against Hick's defense of God based upon the creative telos.

1. The highest dimension (religious) could have been genuinely pursued without the existence of moral evil.

²G. Stanley Kane, "The Failure Of Soul-Making Theodicy," International Journal For Philosophy of Religion, VI, No. 1 (Spring 1975), p. 2.

2. The ethical dimension could have been genuinely pursued to a large degree without the existence of moral evil.

Casual Regularity

Let us now, for the sake of argument, grant Hick's view that human beings had to be brought forth with undeveloped moral character. If this be the case, then we may ask another question. Why does not God intervene to prevent the effects of evil acts? In other words, God could suspend the causal regularity which now occurs when the circumstances are evil. Bullets would not penetrate; knives would not cut; bones would not break, etc. In this way, freedom to sin would exist but not the suffering that results. Hick's answer to this question is that the suspension of such causal regularity would result in an order that had no moral significance. Hick maintains that evil basically means harming others; therefore, in an order where no one could be harmed, there would be no basis for calling acts "evil". There must be causal regularity--certain acts produce certain results--if there is to be any distinction between good and evil acts.

An omnipotent God conceivable could create such an order. The issue is not power but plausibility. G. Stanley Kane believes that such an order would have been plausible,

It certainly seems possible for a world to operate according to general causal regularities without the occurrence of major natural upheavals like earthquakes, tornadoes, diseases, etc. It is also possible to imagine a world that is in many ways like ours, one in which, for example, there are many of the same substances as there are in ours and in which these behave in much the same way

as they do now, but in which all the problematic forms of pain and suffering have been systematically eliminated. For example, such a world could contain items like steel and water. In our world these items have both beneficial and harmful consequences for human and other sentient beings. In the imagined world they could behave just as they do now except in those circumstances where doing so would bring physical harm or injury to any of these beings, and in these circumstances they would behave in a wholly harmless fashion. If such harmless behavior occurred regularly and according to a discernible pattern, scientific knowledge would still be possible though perhaps somewhat more complicated.³

I would venture to say that Kane's use of the word "complicated" to describe this imagined order is a bit of an understatement. While such an order is not inconceivable, it conveys to me the impression of a very confusing environment. It is not the possible confusion, however, that is Hick's argument but the ethical insignificance of such an order, and I am inclined to agree with Hick on this point. What makes evil, evil, if not for the detrimental effects it has on life? What other criterion is there for judging an act to be evil? Perhaps we could, in our imaginary world, say that a particular act would have been evil if the causal regularity had not been suspended. The problem with this, however, is that in a world where there had never been any evil effects there would be no basis for this judgment. I think the burden of proof falls upon those who would grant ethical significance to such an order. Therefore, due to the possible confusion and the lack of an ethical criterion, I agree with Hick's position on this point.

³Ibid., pp. 6-7.

Excessive Evil

The primary issue, I believe, is not God's allowance of the effects of evil acts, but the acts themselves. This raises another question which, in my opinion, proves more difficult for Hick. Granted Hick's position of morally undeveloped character which is free and able to sin and granted the causal regularity of the effects of evil acts, why, then, does not God intervene and suspend human freedom to prevent excessive evils, such as Hitler's activity? To put it another way, why does the soul-making process require such depths of suffering that we see in the world?

Hick's response to this question is that the notion of excessive or exceptional or worst evils is a relative notion. If those evils which are usually judged as the worst were eliminated, then lesser evils would become the worst. The point is that there would always be evils judged as the worst, evil which, then, would be the object of divine elimination. If God continued to eliminate the evils judged as worst, we would wind up with a world that contained no evil and, hence, no moral and spiritual development.

Hick has constructed a "slippery-slope" argument that suggests a lack of divine wisdom, inferior even to human wisdom. David Ray Griffin writes,

There is an initial plausibility to Hick's slippery-slope argument. However it suggests a lack of divine wisdom. For we as human parents are able to decide rather well where the proper balance is between overprotecting our children so that they fail to develop on the one hand, and exposing them to so much danger that they will probably perish before they have a chance to develop, on the other. Surely God, if perfectly wise, could find some place to

strike a balance between the present world, which is somewhat too dangerous for most of God's children, and a world in which moral qualities would not develop at all.⁴

Even within Hick's soul-making framework, the extreme depths of suffering seem far beyond what would be required. Not only does Hick's system not have a balance which seems a reasonable technique in human experience, but he is wrong in his assumption that humans would judge all the "worst" evils on his slippery-slope to be equally bad. Suppose that the extermination of six million Jews had been prevented, leaving, for example, the enslavement of six million Jews in labor camps as the worst evil. As terrible as the latter would be, would anyone seriously consider it as terrible as the former? The principle here should be obvious. If the worst evils were less excessive, we would consider the world to be less evil. Therefore, Hick has not shown satisfactorily why soul-making could not take place with less suffering in the world.

Hick himself does not appear to be very comfortable with his justification of excessive suffering. When speaking of the excesses of natural evils, he admits that such excesses are a mystery. This mystery equally applies to excessive moral evil. In referring to excessive suffering as a mystery, Hick takes back with one hand what he gives with the other. He refuses to acknowledge that a balance could be maintained within a soul-making framework, but he does

⁴Griffin, God, Power, and Evil, p. 189.

acknowledge that excessive suffering is a mystery. He attempts to skirt this difficulty by incorporating even this mystery into his system. The mystery of excessive suffering, according to Hick, is in itself a soul-making factor. It would seem that Hick cannot lose. His soul-making theodicy admits to a significant degree of mystery or unintelligibility, but instead of viewing this as a weakness, he views it as a strength. Kane writes,

This ploy is unlikely to satisfy the critic, who will doubtless contend that a theodicy is in a very weak position if it claims that all evils are necessary stages . . . in the achievement of God's purposes but then admits an inability to give a plausible account of how a great many of the evils that actually occur serve this function. A theodicy that does this, he is likely to say, is admitting its own failure.⁵

The Epistemic Distance

In connection with this problem, a word about Hick's epistemic distance is in order. The epistemic distance, according to Hick, is the ignorance of human beings concerning God. The world appears atheistic in character--the knowledge of God is not immediately evident. This was necessary in order to ensure that human beings develop by self-directed activity and not by the overwhelming influence of the divine presence. The mysterious nature of excessive suffering is part and parcel of this epistemic distance, for such separation is further enhanced by the very problem of evil we are considering.

⁵Kane, "The Failure Of Soul-Making Theodicy," pp. 18-19.

The epistemic distance, according to Hick, is necessary for responsible, self-directed development in both the ethical and religious dimensions. God wants human beings to behave rightly and to respond to him rightly. They are held responsible by God for their failure to do so as evidenced by Hick's intermediate "purgatory." Yet they have been brought into an environment of ignorance by God--ignorance of both the ethical and religious dimensions. In fact, at least concerning the religious dimension, the state is not merely a neutral ignorance, but one that appears to work against belief in God. The atheistic character of the natural order, to which excessive evil contributes, seems to work against the religious dimension of God's purpose. According to Hick, human beings, by virtue of the epistemic distance, do not know what God expects ethically and are "repelled" religiously.

Now, of course, Hick would refer us to God's redemptive program recorded in the Bible and centering upon Jesus Christ as God's method of enlightenment. This answer, however, begs the question. Given the epistemic distance, some means of divine revelation are needed, but it is the epistemic distance itself that needs justification. God's redemption would not be necessary if he had not instituted the epistemic distance to begin with; and Hick, to my mind, has not provided this justification. One can only wonder about the divine wisdom that desires a particular ethical and religious fulfillment, holds human beings responsible for that fulfillment, and yet creates an environment that is not conducive to that fulfillment.

Thus, in my opinion, Hick's theodicy is led by its epistemic distance into a paradox. On one hand, evil contributes to an epistemic distance by seeming to be evidence against the existence of God, and, yet, on the other hand, a theodicy is supposed to show how evil is not evidence against the existence of God. Is this not a paradox? Kane states this objection most forcibly,

If his theodicy succeeds qua theodicy, the existence of evil is not evidence against the existence of God. But since one of the pillars of his theodicy is the notion of epistemic distance, his theodicy cannot succeed unless the existence of evil is evidence against the existence of God. Now, the existence of evil is either evidence against the existence of God or it is not. But in either case Hick's theodicy fails. For if it is evidence against the existence of God, then his theodicy qua attempt to show that the existence of evil is not evidence against the existence of God fails, for it would be seeking to show something that is false. On the other hand, if the existence of evil is not evidence against the existence of God, then evil cannot play the role that Hick's theodicy claims for it in establishing epistemic distance, and on that account his theodicy fails.⁶

To sum up the matter, Hick's theodicy is self-defeating at the point of epistemic distance.

Hick's Eschatology

Another problem area for Hick is his eschatological scheme as it relates to the soul-making process. In Hick's eschaton, human beings will live in a state that is free of evil and suffering. It will be a blissful state known in Christianity as heaven or the Kingdom of God. The entire soul-making process in this life and in

⁶Ibid., pp. 15-16.

the intermediate state following this life is aimed at making people ready ethically and religiously for entrance into the final state. The crucial question at this point is whether or not, given the nature of this final state, the struggle against evil makes any sense.

In Hick's scheme, the most important factor related to the qualities of moral character is the possession of these qualities as opposed to the actual use of them. The actual practice of them is ruled out because in Hick's eschaton there will be no need to use them. Thus, the ultimate goal in Hick's soul-making process is the possession of a certain disposition. This admission, however, is damaging to Hick's theodicy as G. Stanley Kane points out,

But admitting this seems to damage other, major points in the soul-making theodist's case. For if these qualities can be possessed dispositionally, without the existence of any evil, it would seem that God could have made men originally possessing these qualities as dispositions. Then they would have the qualities that are regarded as so important but the world could have been spared all the evil that has brought so much suffering to man.⁷

Hick, of course, rules out this sort of preestablished character on the basis of his judgment that freely developed moral character is superior to the preestablished kind. This brings us back to an earlier criticism that the development of moral traits does not require evil nor does religious development. Any loss in the value of such development, as was pointed out before, seems insignificant in the light of the pain and suffering in the world.

⁷Ibid., p. 9.

These objections receive added force in light of the eschatological issue in question. If the ultimate goal, the ultimate state, is one of purely dispositional truths rather than the use of such traits, then why go through the painful ordeal of developing such a disposition?

Hick's only defense at this point must be the value-judgment that developed moral virtue is of extreme intrinsic value, even if no longer needed. But how is one to conceive of such value when there is no potential in the final state for using these moral traits? One can easily understand the value of such traits in a world that requires their use, but if God's ultimate goal is a realm where their use will not be required, then why go through all the suffering?

Another problem in Hick's eschatological framework is the intermediate state which his system requires to make up for the failure of soul-making in the earthly life. Hick rejects the notion of Hell, but the rejection is aimed more at an everlasting duration than the notion of punishment itself. While not accepting the interpretation of Jesus' words that would mean an eternal state of punishment, Hick does stress the seriousness of being unredeemed. For Hick, this does not necessarily imply a state of physical suffering, but perhaps only some kind of state where the spirit abides in a gloomy, lonely, and depressing environment. Of course, I am only speculating at this point, and I do not wish to put words in Hick's mouth. The point is that he does advocate some kind of

intermediate state that is not pleasant and is of such a nature as to complete the soul-making process.

I feel that this is a most serious problem for Hick's theodicy, because he violates the very principle that he considered so essential to the creative telos--free, self-directed, uncompelled activity requiring an epistemic distance. Hick surrenders all of this by his view of the intermediate state.

The impact of such a state is obvious, whatever its characteristics may be. It would be an influence that went far beyond that of the natural environment of the living. The impact of the intermediate state is evidenced by the fact that Hick virtually guarantees its complete soul-making success. After all, if all are not ultimately redeemed, then, according to Hick, God's creative telos fails.

Hick takes back with one hand what he had given with the other. His soul-making principle requires, he tells us, a particular sort of environment. This environment consists of human beings in an undeveloped state and an epistemic distance between God and the human race. My question is this: If the epistemic distance is not ultimately sacred (as in the intermediate state), then why did not God resort to extraordinary measures in the first place and thereby eliminate, at the very least, a large portion of suffering in the world? Hick undermines his whole theodicy in this step from epistemic distance to intermediate state.

Analysis From A Christian Perspective

Thus far, I have analyzed Hick's theodicy from purely a philosophical perspective. Hick, however, is not a philosopher in the general sense of the word but represents a Christian position. Thus, there is another dimension of analysis to which Hick's theodicy can be subjected. An important distinction between merely a philosophical approach and a Christian approach is that of epistemology. Christianity, to one degree or another, is based upon the biblical revelation. The essential information concerning Christ and the teachings of early Christianity is derived from the Bible. Therefore, the Christian accepts as authoritative at least biblical teaching. Hick accepts biblical teaching concerning the nature of God. The view of God as omnipotent and benevolent as Hick has said is "non-negotiable". Furthermore, Hick accepts biblical authority when it comes to asserting that God is offended by sin. He also takes seriously the biblical teaching concerning Jesus Christ as the Son of God who died and rose again. In other words, Hick takes the biblical revelation with some degree of seriousness when concerning the Christian faith.

When it comes to his theodicy, however, we find a different attitude toward biblical revelation. First of all, he rejects completely the biblical notion of special creation, even though this view appears throughout both Testaments. Now, of course, Hick would maintain that the creation doctrine of the Bible is not essential to the Christian faith nor to the notion of revelation, for it was merely an unscientific, primitive way of expressing the basic truth

that God is the creator of all material and responsible for the existence of the world.

The creation/evolution debate, however, is not the crucial issue here, but rather it leads to the crucial issue--when human beings came into existence, was it into a fallen state or unfallen state? The evolutionary hypothesis is conducive to the fallen state because human beings emerged out of brute beasts to possess totally new and undeveloped qualities. This hypothesis, however, does not preclude divine endowment which produces an unfallen state. The real issue, then, is not so much the method of creation but rather the state into which creation led.

Hick, as we have seen, maintains creation in a fallen state--totally undeveloped and at an epistemic distance from God. I find it hard to take the Bible seriously, as Hick allegedly does, and maintain this view. The creation account of Genesis teaches a fall from a superior state to an inferior state. Even if one takes this account as mythological, the myth still portrays a fall. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to the creation account of Genesis in an authoritative manner, and the Apostle Paul bases the whole logic of Christian redemption upon the fall, deriving a parallel between Adam and Christ. It's one thing to regard an alleged event as non-historical; it's quite another to deny the theological principle which is drawn from the alleged event. Hick himself states that the Augustinian view (unfallen state) has been dominant in the history of Christianity. This obviously is due to the fact that the notion

of the fall is so clearly maintained in the Bible. From a philosophical point of view, this issue may be quite irrelevant, but from the Christian perspective, Hick is guilty of epistemological inconsistency or exegetical error.

This is also true concerning Hick's eschatological view. Hick rejects the notion of eternal punishment even though Jesus himself seemingly teaches it. Hick, aware of this fact, attempts a little exegetical slight of hand. In Matthew 25:46, Jesus refers to two groups of people and says that one group shall enter into eternal punishment, and one group shall enter into eternal life. The Greek word αἰώνιος clearly means "unending." Furthermore, in the context, this word is applied to both groups and obviously means "unending" when referring to the redeemed. These two uses of the word are parallel. What it means for one, it means for the other. Hick is guilty of just plain bad exegesis at this point.

If one claims that these are not really the words of Jesus but only ascribed to him, then one has the problem of determining just what was his authentic teaching. If one takes this route, any claim to the gospels as authoritative must be dismissed. Hick does not seem to follow this route but instead seeks to circumvent the problem by an exegetical exercise that is questionable at best. In short, Hick is an attentive disciple when Jesus speaks of love but not when he speaks of judgment. The implications of eternal punishment for theodicy are not the issue here but the matter of epistemological consistency and/or exegetical accuracy within the

Christian perspective. David Ray Griffin sums up Hick's problem from the Christian perspective by saying,

he does not make clear the criteria for deciding what is to be counted as revealed truth. It certainly is not everything in the Bible, or even in the New Testament, since he excludes Paul's teachings about the origin of sin. Sometimes the teaching of Jesus seems to be definitive; but Hick rejects the doctrine of hell, which Jesus did evidently teach. Hick does suggest that this "cannot safely be affirmed," and that the textual evidence must be interpreted in the light of "Jesus teaching as a whole," at the heart of which is said to be the sovereign divine love. But this removes any unambiguous basis for deciding precisely what "the revelation" is.⁸

Another problem for Hick from the Christian perspective is the incompatibility of his soul-making system with the Christian doctrine of God. In Hick's theodicy, the existence of evil in the world is the will of God. Yet, as Hick himself states, the Christian conception of God is of a being who hates sin. How is it that a God who loves righteousness and hates unrighteousness wills that unrighteousness exists? How could the very thing God hates be the necessary means of producing the highest good?

If it could be shown that human beings could have been created unfallen and yet fell without implying blame upon the creator, then one could say that God hates evil but uses it in a fallen world which he is not responsible for. This, of course, is not an easy task, but it is the only scenario in which the use of evil would not be so incompatible with God's hatred of evil. In Hick's scheme, God willed it from the start because it was the very best way of

⁸Griffin, God, Power, and Evil, p. 202.

accomplishing the divine goal. I can only repeat the seeming incompatibility of God's hatred of evil and his need of it.

The Value Of Evil

In analyzing Royce's theodicy, I suggested that evil has a great value--too much value, I suspect, for many to accept his theodicy. It appears to me that the same can be said about Hick. Hick asserts that evil is really evil, and, as such, it is to be feared, resisted, and abhorred. Yet, when all is said and done, evil is necessary in order to produce the highest good. I find it perplexing that something which is to be abhorred is also something that has much value, namely, the necessary condition for the highest good.

As with Royce, so also with Hick, I wonder if there is not a strong element of self-defeat in the system. We are right to fight evil, Hick says, and yet if somehow we were to greatly reduce the amount of evil in the world, would we not be diluting the environment necessary for moral growth? We might be depriving future generations of the very substance of soul-making. The point that I am trying to make is this: evil has great value; it is willed by God, and it is necessary for the highest good. I find it very difficult to equate such a view with the definition of evil with which I began and to which I still adhere: evil equals intrinsic disvalue; something worth eliminating for its own sake. As with Royce, so with Hick--evil has positive value and is necessary.

Summary

I have now completed my analysis of Hick's theodicy, and a summary is in order.

1. The Creative Telos. Hick maintained that in order to fulfill the ethical and religious dimensions of God's creative telos, human beings must exist in an undeveloped state and fulfill the telos through uncompelled, self-directed activity rather than being programmed to do so. Against this view, I have argued that development in both dimensions does not require evil. God could have made people so that they do not sin but yet have much to learn about positive goodness and spirituality. To say that development without freedom to sin and the results of sin is not as valuable as development including these things is a value-judgment that is not at all conclusive. If development is essential, then it can take place without evil, and if evil adds some value to the development, is the difference really worth all the pain and suffering that results?

2. Excessive Suffering. Even if we grant Hick's view (above), we still have a problem with excessive evil, Hick maintains that God could not intervene by annulling the consequences of evil acts because this would disrupt causal regularity in the world and destroy the distinction between good and evil. I am inclined to agree with Hick at this point. The key question, however, does not concern the consequences of evil acts but the acts themselves. Could not God suspend or overrule freedom in the case of extreme

evils thereby reducing the amount of suffering in the world? Hick argues that excessive evil is a relative notion. The elimination of the worst evils would leave others as the worst, and so on until all evil should be prevented. I have argued that Hick's slippery-slope argument suggests a lack of divine wisdom for God fails to maintain the balance that even human parents utilize successfully. Furthermore, the prevention of the worst evils does not entail Hick's slippery-slope. Even though there would always be "worst" evils, we can readily observe that all "worst" evils are not equally as bad. If there were less suffering in the world, we would consider the world to be less evil.

Hick himself admits the mystery or the unintelligibility of excessive suffering, and yet he asserts that even this has soul-making benefit. At this point, Hick cannot lose. The soul-making theodicy admits that excessive suffering is a problem, but then it says that the problem is part of the solution--soul-making. In short, Hick does not give a plausible account of how excessive suffering contributes to the ultimate welfare of the world.

3. Epistemic Distance. Ignoring the previous objections, let us move on to the epistemic distance. Hick maintains that this is necessary for genuine self-directed activity. I have argued that Hick's theodicy is self-defeating at this point. As part of the epistemic distance, evil is intended to be evidence against the existence of God. Yet the purpose of a theodicy is to show that evil is not evidence against the existence of God. Hick has a

paradox. On one hand, if evil is evidence against the existence of God, then his theodicy qua theodicy fails, for it would be seeking to show something that is false. On the other hand, if evil is not evidence against God's existence, then evil does not establish Hick's epistemic distance, and his theodicy fails.

4. Eschatology. We find a serious problem with Hick's eschatology which is so essential to his theodicy. In Hick's final state, there will be no evil, no struggle, no development. Therefore, it is not the actual use of moral traits that is God's ultimate purpose but rather dispositional traits. If this is the case, then why go through all the pain and suffering to acquire traits which have no use in the ultimate Kingdom of God? Hick must take recourse in the value-judgment that acquired traits are intrinsically more valuable than preestablished moral traits. But how is one to conceive of such value when there is no potential in the final state for using them?

Hick also has a serious problem with his notion of an intermediate state. Such a state implies an extraordinary environment, an extraordinary influence, in contrast to the epistemic distance of the natural order. Hick violates the very principle that he considered so essential to the creative telos--free, self-directed, uncompelled activity requiring an epistemic distance. Hick admits the failure of soul-making in this life, and, then, changes the rules of the game in the intermediate state to make it successful. He takes back with one hand what he had given with the other.

5. The Christian Perspective. Finally, I criticized Hick from within the Christian perspective. Hick, at least in part, accepts the biblical revelation as authoritative. This is especially true concerning the nature of God. However, Hick rejects the Bible when it comes to creation, the fall, and eternal punishment. Hick's "pick and choose" method appears to coincide with prior philosophical commitments. He uses the Bible when it agrees with his thinking but rejects it when it does not. From a Christian perspective, Hick lacks epistemological consistency.

Also, I find Hick's notion of soul-making to be incompatible with the Christian doctrine of God which Hick himself accepts. God loves righteousness and hates unrighteousness, and yet in Hick's system, evil arises out of the will of God. I find it hard to conceive of God willing what he hates, and that what he hates is the necessary ground for the highest good.

CHAPTER VII

ROYCE AND HICK RECONSIDERED

I have now completed my examination of the theodicies of Josiah Royce and John Hick. In each case, I have attempted to show that serious problems arise--problems that call into question either the goodness or wisdom of God. In this concluding chapter, I want to reconsider their theodicies in general in order to focus attention on the problems inherent to their kind of theodicy.

The theodicies which we have just examined, in spite of their differing conceptions of God, share the following principles.

1. Moral and spiritual character that is attained through self-directed activity is superior to that which could have been endowed through creation.
2. In order for such development to take place, God must not interfere with the established order, but must allow pain and suffering to exist.
3. The evil in the world serves as the condition for moral and spiritual development.
4. The moral order must be evaluated by its conduciveness to bringing about humanity's highest good which is the development mentioned above. Because the world, with its evil, is the right kind of environment for this development, God's goodness is held intact.

I have attempted to set forth in detail the problems that arise for this kind of system, but now, in general form, I want to reconsider it.

The first general problem concerns the notion of absolute goodness and the divine use of evil. This kind of theodicy asserts, on one hand, that God is absolutely good, despising evil and condemning it. But, on the other hand, it is asserted that God requires evil for the accomplishment of his goal. For me, this is a problematic situation. It is one thing to use evil that already exists and that one is not responsible for, but it is another thing to require its existence. As I consider the absolute goodness of God, especially as espoused in Christian thought, I find it difficult to see how such a being could place any value at all on evil. How God could despise and condemn evil and yet require it is an enigma for my understanding of a God who is righteous, holy, and just. The soul-making theodacist must define evil differently than I have done (intrinsic disvalue).

The second general problem concerns the notion of development which is essential to the theodicies of Royce and Hick. The development of moral and spiritual character is held to be superior to any pre-established moral and spiritual character; hence, human beings must be brought forth in an undeveloped state free from divine influence and intervention. This alleged superiority is strictly a value-judgement and, therefore, not conclusive, but more importantly is the view that development precludes any type of preestablished character. The development of moral and spiritual

character is not prohibited by an immutably good nature. Human beings could have been created immutably good but with much room for growth in the ethical and religious dimensions. Development does not necessitate evil.

Keeping this in mind, let us remember the first generalization that I made. If development is the goal, and if development can take place without evil, and if God truly despises evil, then would it not seem more likely that God would choose development without evil, even if, as Royce and Hick claim, such development is not as high in quality as the kind involving evil? Sacrificing a little of the so-called quality of development through evil would be more compatible with absolute goodness in light of the pain and suffering that evil produces.

A third general problem for this kind of theodicy is the excessiveness of evil in the world. We have seen that Royce and Hick admit to the seeming unintelligibility of so much pain and suffering in the world. Royce and Hick, however, take the questionable step of turning this vice into a virtue. If the use of evil, as I have proposed, seems incompatible with absolute goodness which despises it, how much more could this be asserted of excessive evil? Royce and Hick must include the most excessive forms of evil into the divine purpose. To my mind, this stretches the notion of absolute goodness beyond all intelligibility. Even within human experience, we recognize the wisdom of a balance as we raise our children. Even if we ignore the fact that evil is not necessary for development, this type of theodicy cannot offer a satisfactory

explanation for excessive evil. To claim that such unintelligibility is part of the system is to beg the question. This procedure is equivalent to merely saying that evil cannot be explained, but God is still good.

A fourth general problem for this kind of theodicy concerns the final outcome of the process. In Royce's system, moral and spiritual development has no relevancy to the final state of the individual. The immortal state is entered into equally by all. The design of development is this life and not primarily the individual but society. In Hick's system, the process actually fails and must be supplemented by the extraordinary conditions of an intermediate state. In the former case, the struggle against evil does not ultimately benefit the individuals who suffer. In the latter case, the struggle ultimately does not work with much success. My question, therefore, is what ultimate justification is there for such a system that requires evil? If the struggle against evil readied us for a blessed eternal state, and only a struggle could do this, then evil might be plausible due to the ultimate good it accomplishes. Obviously, it fails to do this in many cases. By any standard, many leave this world as scoundrels rather than saints. If such people are accepted into eternity on an equal basis with those who were of a higher moral and spiritual caliber, then God is not just. If, however, a special intermediate environment is provided for their "rehabilitation," then the original process is rendered null and void. We may simply ask why God did not use extraordinary measures in the first place? If the struggle against evil is aimed only at

the moral quality of life in this world, having no effect upon the eternal life of individuals, then there is ultimately no justice. If there is eternal life, the scoundrel and saint share in it alike. If there is no eternal life, then there is no ultimate "atonement," no ultimate "making up for unjust ills," on an individual basis. This individual basis is, in my opinion, essential to a theodicy's success. Societies may suffer, but it is individuals who feel the pain. A theodicy that does not address this issue is impotent.

Whatever the design of the process, it either ultimately fails or ultimately includes injustice that is not resolved on an individual basis. Thus, the final outcome of the process is self-defeating. It either does not work, or it is unjust.

Considering these general problems all together, this kind of theodicy lacks congruity. God is absolutely good, but requires evil to accomplish his purpose. A large degree of moral and spiritual development does not require evil, yet God who is absolutely good requires it for development. Excessive evil is admitted to be a problem, a mystery, and yet this mystery is part of the process. The final outcome of this kind of theodicy either requires abandoning the original process or leaving much injustice unresolved on an individual basis. If one starts with the belief that God exists and that God is absolutely good, then perhaps the incongruity of this kind of theodicy can be accepted in comparison with other theodicies. But if one starts with no belief, then it is doubtful that this kind of theodicy will convince him of either the goodness or wisdom of God.

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