

GOD HYPOTHETICALLY CONCEIVED AS MORE THAN PERSONAL.

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IN working out our theme upon the implied ideal elements in Zoroastrianism we come, in the legitimate course of investigation, upon the above-mentioned question, not that it is in fact at all mooted, not even to the least degree either in the Avesta proper, or in the Zoroastrianism of the traditional and later period; for that lore whether the original, or that of a secondary stage, is almost purely like our own. That is to say, it is simple uncoordinated deism and creationism. But in making an exhaustive examination of all that is either implied or more fully stated in Zoroastrianism, such a question as the above naturally arises as a preliminary. Before then we enter into any detailed discussion of personification, this particular personification of all others should meet our close attention. We have dwelt upon the sublime though simple scheme of a pure God with His clustered attributes,¹ if indeed qualities so imposing as the characteristics of a Deity could be said to "cluster";—better had we said "which surround Him" as the strong rays spread out from a morning sun.

And to be thorough, we must not now arrest our thought here at all at this junction; but we must allow ourselves once for all to think out even the negative suggestions of the entire system; and just at this next point in the logical sequence of development we come upon this *per contra* again, as in addition to that already treated.² And it is indeed a curious form of negative which soon transforms itself into a positive; for in fact we are obliged to proceed here in reference to a circumstance which, whether really

¹ See "God and His Immortals" in *The Open Court* of January and March, 1907.

² See "God and His Immortals, Their Counterparts," *The Open Court*, March, 1907.

negative or positive, is yet one of vast as well as of august intellectual proportions, while it is likewise of acute practical significance. God might then be conceived of (and let us ponder it well) as being "hyper-personal."

But, in order to be exhaustively thorough and thoroughly honest, let us at once both acknowledge and point one primal objection to our entire hazardous though necessary discussion; and to do this we must not hesitate to say that the very mention of our theme here implies a certain slur upon our familiar and long since endeared image of a Great Quasi-human Divine Personification. A strangely close reflection upon our former accustomed modes of thought is indeed here at once contained in that very word and idea of transcendence which is expressed in the prefixed word-form *hyper-* (or *super*) of "hyper-personal." For the mind's attention is at once by this directed to a series of distinctions which surpass our hitherto generally accepted views upon the sublimest as well as upon the most awful of all imaginable subjects,—if indeed Our Adored believed-in Ideal One may be in fact "hyper-personal." That is to say, in thinking out our ideas with reference to Our One supremely Adored Divine Being, and in this way fulfilling our duty both to ourselves and to others (which, as I need hardly here pause to mention, is also often at the same time a very dangerous as well as very necessary procedure) the well-meant results of some of us might be such as go out beyond what we generally conceive of as being naturally "personal" in the usual common-sense meaning of the word, with human personality as our guide before us to show us and others what we mean by the terms we use. Or, at all events, our adored concept of the Supreme Divine Being often seriously transcends what we once allowed ourselves to contemplate as the mentally constructed image of a once omni-conscious and omnirational living and personal Object whose power takes in all things, although much in a human way. Strange as such a "transcendence" may be supposed by some of us to be, it is, however, as it should be, in its interior significance, familiar enough; for I mean by it merely that unavoidable and stringently searching excursus of severely analytical minds into the region of what Kant would call "the ideas," and what we also popularly mean when our faith goes out beyond the established limits of "poor human reason"; that is to say, when we look beyond the bounds of the sphere of our mere intellectual understanding, which I call our "intellection," the limits of which are clearly marked. For an idea in the Kantian, and indeed in the common-sense of it, can well go out beyond this range of in-

tellection:—and such would be any such conception of the *hyper-personality*,—a concept of a thing outside of experience, and indeed outside of categorical as of hypothetical cognition, which last, both of them, can only be conceived of as being strictly limited by the conditions of space and time, and so of clear natural conception, for no object in simple nature can be either cognized, or re-cognized, as being outside of those limits. And further, as I believe, some very distinguished theologians within that one communion which of all other Christian Churches, has most the right to speak for its original, have expressed themselves at times in some such a sense; that is to say, they prefer at times to imply that God is “*Hyper-personal*,” whatever they, or we, may exactly mean when we make use of such a word.

EXCLUDING DEFINITION IS A PRELIMINARY NECESSITY.

But first of all in considering the subject, and in order to take in sharply all its distinctive circumstances, let us bring up before our mind's eye for a moment, and for a special purpose, that sharply defined view of the natural universe, which, intellectually only considered, and closely within the sphere of both our thoughts and our senses, is yet entirely aside from that One Holy and endeared ideal Being, who, as we are all so well aware, was once held to dominate that Nature in a sense which has always appeared to us to be the summit of all power,—strange as such a proposition of exclusion may, at the first sight of it, appear to some of us to be. For it is indeed, and as of course, not only quite possible for us for a moment, and for a special purpose to frame our concept of the world material without that great Ideal, whose contemplation we have been accustomed to regard as the very breath of our expectant spiritual life, but it is yet also at times clearly and stringently our duty so to do; for strange (and yet again not strange) to say, the studious consideration of such an opposite can but bring the great supposed Objective, whether reality or ideality, more firmly than ever into just outline within our view.

THE INTELLECTUAL-MATERIAL, AND THE IDEAL WORLDS.

Let us then divide the Ideal from the Intellectual and material worlds, and in doing so let us proceed without either prejudice or reserve.

And first of all as regards these expressions just used above,

let us persistently and continuously make plain what we mean by "intellectual and material" powers, though I have endeavored to let drop my impressions with reference to them from the beginning on. Let it be understood then distinctly, and once again for all, that, in my view upon these two seemingly so divergent forces, I am wholly with those who see no radical nor essential difference between them. With me the distinction is between those two combined, the "intellectual-material" and the "ideal-spiritual";—they are, the first of them, in my opinion merely varied manifestations of one and the same objective power identical in essence, and differing from each other solely in the matter of degree. And on this understanding this intellectual-material sphere of knowable nature should, as a matter of stern but yet at times of gratifying duty, be regarded, if only for a moment, as excluding from itself all thought connection with that One supreme and glorious Extra-mundane Supposition to which we should never in one syllable allude without the deepest reverence and joy.

And this intellectual-material sphere of knowable nature should be regarded, not only as thus separate from the Supreme Ideal, but, if only for a moment, as being also entirely aside from and outside of all and everything whatsoever which might be conceivable as being either ideal, spiritual, or supernatural.

The way is so far cleared for our procedure.

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Nature then, which is phenomenon in substance, transpiring in space and time, is most certainly upon occasion to be recognized in a somewhat clearly definable sense of it, as being distinct from God, and in fact as being in so far apart from Him that it should be considered as the baldest profanity for us to trifle for one moment with such a proposition in its serious solemnity, or to consider the possibility of its denial.

THE VAST MIND-FORCE IN NATURE AS A THING UNSPEAKABLE IN MAJESTY.

And yet there is in nature one vast majestic Power which is almost as mysterious as the supernature itself, with its supreme adored spiritual Ideal One,—and in this fact of its magnitude and its majesty it also nearly approaches in most other particulars that God-idea itself towards which we all so instinctively turn with our profoundest hope, and before which we also so willingly in our deepest spiritual affections still bow down; and this great Power is

no less than *Reason*; or, as I should rather say, it is that startling evidence of all-controlling and all-incisive *intention*³ which presses upon us everywhere, and which is as pervading as it is obvious,—though how it can be conceivably regarded as being in any sense of it extant, is of course difficult, if not indeed quite impossible, for us to place before our image-making power; see however farther on. It is a thing never, yet ever, beginning; for to say that it comes “most to its consciousness in man” is to say something very hazardous indeed, as well as something little centrally touching the matter in hand at all; for how many grades of intellectual beings may there not be above us? as there are *so* many which, as we are so assuredly convinced, are much beneath us. And indeed, if forced to hazard a remark, we can only say that the material manifestations of this Reason are violently everywhere in evidence to us as the characteristics of the most mighty, as well as the most glorious, force cognizable to us with the use of our as at present developed intellectual capacities. And we indeed all believe this so simply, or so implicitly, that many of my readers may not, at their first startled thought upon the subject, be able to make out just exactly what I mean by this all-present All-thought; for it appears to most of us to be a thing so common, this simple self-thinking of the world itself, that we can only with difficulty understand how any diligent person with serious occupations upon his hands, could make it at all an object of laborious reflection,—especially as there always lurks in it that certain danger which inheres in every effort to approach any question which concerns itself with the supernatural, whether thought of in its supernatural origination, or as supernatural interference after a creation may have been conceived to have taken place. For every investigation into every such a realm has been generally regarded as forbidden; that is to say, as one in regard to which we should always instinctively arrest the activity of our interpenetrating searchful powers, leaving its mysterious suggestions unpursued, or else simply solving them in the old childish opinions of infantile days;—yet they will not be altogether denied, nor will they cease actually to press themselves upon us,—these questions. See them indeed everywhere in the crystallizations and in the symmetric growths of leaves and embryos, as also in such other things as the sidereal mathematics, for they, these almost vivified objects are, each and all of whatever grade in the scale of being, obviously actuated by a reasoning force which controls all their exactness with all their attritions also coordinated, though they,

³ Aristotle.

these last, the siderial objects, and their mates, as a matter of course, are like all things else, slowly wearing off in measured waste. The greater Greeks, some of them, even actually thought those moving heavenly forms alive, and self-moved like any conscious things; but the questions, all of them anent them, nevertheless continuously and remorselessly revert and force themselves upon us. How is it, so we forever ask ourselves, that all mechanical as well as all animal processes follow law so unmistakably? See those celestial globes chilling from their first-form vapors; they know, each of them, how, in time to find their places. One must become a sun of a future system, others the planets of it, each of its particular size, weight and attributes, even to its climate. So the plutonic rocks follow the same undeviating laws, hardening from their molten elements; diamonds too center in the same way as the bubbles ball and dance. Every object, though it may be inanimate even, from the most enormous to the most minute, seems also to be inter-adjusted to all others.

The very animals know from instinctive miracle things hid from man, though he too has his innings. Wild herds forestall the floods; the albatross knows exactly where to fly, when man does not even know his own interests. How does the butterfly find his mate? or the calf his mother's teats? The crocodile, so they tell us, knows just where to lay her eggs beyond the reach of Nilus—even the young elephant shelters himself in his mother's lee; how does he know that he is safe there? All being seems to throb with intellectual intercommunications.

This is all stored experience, of course, and collected from past ages—but where did it all originate? Man too, let us not underrate it, can measure the heavens and the seas, tracing all things to their sources, even soul. Not only mind, but moral mind, is everywhere: recall that miracle of sweetness once named above, the mother-love; see too the hate, and the revenge:—incomprehensible, all of it, because so original. Attractions of gravitation have reason in them, obviously; see above, and below. The universe because of them seems one vast breathing fabric of sympathy and power, a very cosmos eternally unfolding itself in myriad forms, infolding itself again. The very microscope reveals systems as intricate as the telescope. Such is the Mind Force in All-nature.

ITS ADORATION.

We simply do not adore it because we can only, as it seems, adore a person, and we ought only to adore a supreme person; and

this Reason is not a person, nor a hyper-person, nor yet a sub-person;—we do not supplicate it again, because *we are parts of it* (see below); and how can we supplicate that whole of which we are ourselves consciously constituent parts? Supplication would seem then to be mere fixed self-resolve. We do not supplicate it also because it is *immovable*, for so it seems to be. Never has it varied from all a past eternity, for so we believe, nor shall it change by one iota to all an unending future; but, and most of all, as already implied or said (see also on below) we did not aforesaid adore it because we thought it to be itself the thought of Our Great Conceived-of Human-Deity, Our “Heavenly Father.” His mind in fact we thought it, and we have ever through life adored it as a part of Him; so only. But if He be in super-nature, a God-for-Faith, we have no right at all to identify this Nature-mind with His, for of His Super-intellection and its workings we have no definable concept whatsoever or at all; while this Nature-Reason, though we can as little hope to fathom it, we ever observe it closely in its effects at least, and so at every step.

A SENTIMENTAL CLAIM.

Yet this Nature-Reason has also some deep sentimental religious claim upon us, as we may in passing mention,—claims on the score of sentiment and tender days gone by, as well as upon self-reverence, with its indelible and vested rights, for in it we should indeed reverence our very selves which should be a truest worship; for it, this Reason, is our attribute, and we are its:—yes, there is the *reminiscence*, and a dear and holy thing it is.

We are orphaned now, the most of us, that is, if only for a moment, until we can find our one true Faith-God again in His defined supernal being, not to speak indeed of his transcendent spiritual character and life. For we loved our Nature-God as we adored Him; and this Reason was indeed to us once His mind, as so we once imagined this Nature-Reason—this Mind-Attribute. There is a sweetness in that past thought of it which lingers on still, none the less though it was sometimes rather trivial, and occasionally somewhat low. We can not fail with delight to recall its joys, as we do our boyhood’s visions.

THIS REASON IS YET THE WORLD-SOUL.

But yet this Reason, though no longer the super-exalted, nor yet the Person-Mind of the Supreme Ideal Faith-God, is yet the

great soul of all reasoned life and life's reasoning, involving in its effective applications all strengths, joys, hopes and sorrows. Morals, too, are also there in it, and sovereign purpose with them, but above all there is esthetics; for we are parts of a world all calm with beauty, and throbbing with bright wishes based on truth and love; strange that we did not think it more out before, for the reasons given. But whatever be the cause of our deficiency just here, we have driven this neglect through inadvertence, if not through misapprehension, quite too far on. For this Thought as it exists, is the grandest force in all the Nature-universe; not to revere it is most certainly to err. If this Reason in the world be like that of man in so far as that it makes the world non-maniac (see below), and non-imbecile,—then we have no need to recall it as a basis for our profound future reverence that we once believed God made it as a human thing and as Himself a quasi-human Person. We need only to *look at it as it is*; for if God be separate from nature, as spirit is separate from matter, and if this Nature be thus inspired, as we have shown above, then do we think it decent of us to suppose that Our Divine Spirit-Lord will ever turn His back upon it!

Our Faith-God Ideal turn His back on Reason! the Holy One of All Holies, turn His back on all that holds the world in sanity, indifferent to all that love is nourishing, to all that truth is defending, to all that mercy is redeeming! Ah no, the Faith God Ideal, our One ever supremely to be adored, is not indifferent to this; nor is He to be thought adverse to it. He in fact stands ideally related to it; in shutting out poor nature's realm from His as profane I only mean to shut out its identities from His.

His whole Supreme Heart, although ideally beyond our ken or intellection, still yearns to it (as, with devout speech-figure, we may say)—still yearns in a sub-sense over it. He adores it too, if so we can imagine of it, just as Ahura burned sacrifice to Mithra,—as kings call nobles "Lords." It is the all-in-all left in our poor nature of power and truth, and as Our Ideal-Faith-Supreme-One reveres it, so should we!

THE WORD IS NIGH THEE.

It does not hold itself aloof in awful impressiveness far from us and aloft; it is close around us as a sweeping sea, or touching each of us with lightest finger, while it stares us in the very face. Why should we indeed not in a sub-sense adore it, as our great Ideal One so doubtless does? But to adore it we must define

it from all else, separating it even from the Great Ideal totally, the August One from the less august other, else we profane Him; for to touch Him with our intellection is to insult Him, just as to look at Nature-Reason mixed with Him is to lose its point. This latter awes us totally, while it subdues us for our good; its only mystery is alas that it does not shut out infamy, but, whether Hyper-Demon or sub-divinity, no one doubts that it is sublime; for it is that alone which makes our universe be-souled.

THOROUGHNESS INEXORABLY DEMANDED.

In fact it is that alone which makes it sentient cosmos. And surely as we differentiate it from our Ideal One-God in our all-hallowed reverence, we should do so for the moment *thoroughly*; for every instant that we leave it inevitably constituent with Him, we are resting in *irreverence*. Thought is the first circumstance in the entire Nature-Objective All-World aside from Him; and yet He is beyond all its bounds of circumstance. Yes, we can revere it, this Nature All-World with its Nature All-Soul, not idolatrously—may God forbid! We can yet even in a certain sense adore it as the All-thought in our great world-system directing the incessant combinations of destined effects in the unfolding and infolding of a vast mass of nature as a reasoned universe of atoms vivified; and this is the very next thing in power to that endeared old idea of a great human God-person in the sky; for it is the most solemn as well as the most tender of all things thinkable.

TO INTERPENETRATE AND SEARCH IT OUT.

Why then should we not collect our points of thought against it? for it is susceptible of apprehension, if not of comprehension. It is a great mystery of mysteries, but are not all things else the very same? See even the great known force of gravitation; where did it come from? Yes, like that last, or first, great power just briefly named above, it was *beginningless*; its effects, however, are, like that of the great inclusive Thing just mentioned, obvious to us on every side and at every instant in space and time, and its mystery consists ever thus alone in *origin*; but this is thus the same with all things natural. Absolute origins are for ever inexplicable, the simplest as the greatest. Why should we indeed for one instant ask why all material particles gravitate towards all other, a stone falling to the ground? Can there be indeed anything more help-

less to explain? That it is "simple fact" is our only answer, adding that it is "rational" fact, which last however we could not in some cases say.

Like the Nature-Universe itself, explanation is merged in "non-origin," in its recognition of course I mean; for "origin" is the chief theme of explanation or discussion. Yes, we should collect our points of thought against it, this mystery in nature. It is meet and right for us, nay, it is our bounden duty so to do; but there are hindrances and many,—and above all one chief one.