

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

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XI. HISTORIC LITERARY SOLUTIONS.

While we have not yet considered all the fundamental positions that may be taken with respect to the problem of evil, we have considered a sufficient number to enable us to analyze and classify most of the complex attitudes usually assumed by those who discuss the matter. As examples we shall consider two well-known pieces of literature for both of which the mystery of evil furnishes the motive. Each of these examples has been held by various persons to contain a more or less complete and satisfactory solution of the mystery, and it will be interesting for us to examine them at this point.

The Book of Job.—The first of these is the Book of Job. Magnificent in imagery and diction, dramatic in style and setting, this book is well worth attention simply as a piece of literature. Its especial interest to us lies in the fact that the plot concerns itself with the problem of the suffering of the righteous. Job, a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, is suddenly visited by great misfortune. The motive for this is disclosed to the reader, but kept secret from Job and his friends. This motive, naively anthropomorphic, originates in a dispute between God and Satan relative to Job himself, Satan intimating that Job's righteousness is but skin-deep. To refute Satan, God gives him power over Job in all save his life, which power Satan promptly uses to Job's great misery, first removing his children and possessions, and later visiting Job himself with a loathsome disease. Under these afflictions Job's attitude toward God is described as scrupulously correct. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Yet after seven days and nights of the silent sympathy of his three friends Job breaks forth and curses, not God, but the day of his birth. His friends listen silently to his invective, bitter, vehement,

even majestic, and when he has finished begin an argument with him. Their theory is simple: Job is a great sufferer; he must therefore be a great sinner. Here we have an illustration of what has been discussed under the free-will position. Job meets this attack with sound logic, pointing out the well-known fact that many wicked persons escape punishment in this life, and defying his friends to cite one instance of sin in his own career. This they are unable to do, but are still unconvinced, and insist that Job must have sinned in some manner unknown to him and them to bring all this terrible punishment upon him. Both sides to the argument exhaust themselves fruitlessly. Finally God Himself speaks to Job in words of unrivaled majesty. Surely, here we are coming to the solution of the problem from the lips of the highest authority! But no; the speeches of Yahveh are devoted to humbling Job by pointing out his insignificance as compared with the Divine Majesty. Not once does he deign to refer even remotely to the solution of the problem. In common parlance, Job is subjected to the process known as "roaring down," and so successfully that he ventures no further word of complaint. In reward for Job's correct attitude throughout his sufferings and in vindication of his claim of innocence, God rewards him with a prosperity many times that which had been ruthlessly taken from him. Job apparently forgets the past and all ends happily.

Here we may see the argument of the Heavenly Reward in all its simplicity. Job's children and cattle are sacrificed ruthlessly for the greater glory of God, the confusion of Satan, and the ultimate blessing of Job himself. Which of us would willingly accept future happiness at such a price? And what force has the example of the reward of one righteous man, brought about at the expense of, and in contrast to, the sufferings of others of his own family, who, so far as we are informed, appear to have been righteous also? And as to the ultimate good to be obtained by the confounding of Satan, even this appears to have been but temporary, for centuries after we are told that he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The Book of Job leaves the mystery of evil exactly where it found it.

The Hermit and the Angel.—A monkish tale of the Middle Ages, found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and best known to moderns by Parnell's versified form, tells the story of a hermit and an angel who traveled together.

"The angel was in human form and garb, but had told his companion the secret of his exalted nature. Coming at nightfall to a humble house by the wayside, the two travelers craved shelter for the love of God. A dainty supper and a soft warm bed were given them, and in the middle of the night the angel arose and strangled the kind host's infant son, who was quietly sleeping in his cradle. The good hermit was paralyzed with amazement and horror, but dared not speak a word. The next night the two comrades were entertained at a fine mansion in the city, where the angel stole the superb golden cup from which his host had quaffed wine at dinner. Next day, while crossing the bridge over a deep and rapid stream, a pilgrim met the travelers. 'Canst thou show us, good father,' said the angel, 'the way to the next town?' As the pilgrim turned to point it out this terrible being caught him by the shoulder and flung him into the river to drown. 'Verily,' thought the poor hermit, 'it is a devil that I have here with me, and all his works are evil'; but fear held his tongue, and the twain fared on their way till the sun had set and snow began to fall, and the howling of wolves was heard in the forest hard by. Presently the bright light coming from a cheerful window gave hope of a welcome refuge; but the surly master of the house turned the travelers away from his door with curses and foul gibes. 'Yonder is my pigsty for dirty vagrants like you.' So they passed that night among the swine; and in the morning the angel went to the house and thanked the master for his hospitality, and gave him for a keepsake (thrifty angel!) the stolen goblet. Then did the hermit's wrath and disgust overcome his fears, and he loudly upbraided his companion. 'Get thee gone, wretched spirit!' he cried. 'I will have no more of thee. Thou pretendest to be a messenger from Heaven, yet thou requitest good with evil and evil with good!' Then did the angel look upon him with infinite compassion in his eyes. 'Listen,' said he, 'short-sighted mortal. The birth of that infant son had made the father covetous, breaking God's commandments in order to heap up treasures which the boy, if he had lived, would have wasted in idle debauchery. By my act, which seemed so cruel, I saved both parent and child. The owner of the goblet had once been abstemious, but was fast becoming a sot; the loss of his cup has set him thinking, and he will mend his ways. The poor pilgrim, unknown to himself, was about to commit a mortal sin, when I interfered and sent his unsullied soul to Heaven. As for the wretch who drove God's children from his door, he is, indeed, pleased for the moment with the bauble I left in his hands; but hereafter he will burn in Hell."

So spoke the angel; and when he had heard these words the hermit bowed his venerable head and murmured, 'Forgive me, Lord, that in my ignorance I misjudged thee.'⁸

It may be admitted at once that had the angel been merely an omniscient and benevolent human, lacking omnipotence, he might have been expected to act very much as he did; but to explain in this way the mystery of evil is to adopt the Solution by Retreat, yielding the omnipotence to save the benevolence. The doctrine of the Heavenly Reward also runs through the story; each incident is justified by a reference to a future of reward and retribution, when eternal justice, at present in abeyance, shall finally triumph and reign for ay. As a solution of the mystery of evil it is disappointing; and not the least surprising thing in this connection is that it should be cited with such approval by Mr. Fiske, who elsewhere was clear-sighted enough to see that "the more closely we invite a comparison between divine and human methods of working, the more do we close up the only outlet."⁹

XII. THE ATHEIST'S POSITION.

Returning now to the consideration of the different positions that may be taken with respect to the mystery of evil, we have yet to consider several important ones. The first is the atheistic position.

The atheist, confronted by this mystery, cuts the Gordian knot. While the theist puzzles his brains over the tangle, the atheist looks pityingly on. "Poor fool!" he says. "Poor fool! You have persuaded yourself that there is a God both omnipotent and benevolent, and when nature shows you clearly that these attributes are inconsistent you still cling to your fancied deity, and cudgel your brains to find a reconciliation!"¹⁰

⁸ Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, pp. 43f.

⁹ Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 123.

¹⁰ The position assumed by the agnostic must be carefully distinguished from that taken by the atheist. The latter holds, at least, a definite and positive opinion, while the former maintains that on certain questions we have not evidence enough to warrant definite conclusions, and consequently assumes an attitude of suspended judgment. There are cosmic problems of such nature as to justify this attitude, but the object of the present argument is to show that the problem of evil is capable of a definite analysis, resulting in a choice of alternatives with no middle ground (see below, "Striking the Balance"). If this be true there remains no excuse for an agnostic attitude toward this particular problem. Such a position, in the face of the evidence, would be simply a refusal to think at all.

XIII. THE THEIST'S ANSWER (1).

The atheist cuts deep at the root of the matter, and the question he raises must be squarely met and fairly answered. As best representing modern rationalistic theism we shall present two answers, made, not by professional theologians, but by scholars who hold no brief for God, and are free from any temptation to special pleading; answers which are the fruit of ripe scholarship and much thought. In these answers rationalistic theism may fairly be said to put its best forward.

The first of these is the answer of John Fiske, a theist of the modern scientific type, who recognizes all that logic and sentiment demand of God; who is broadly enough acquainted with nature's wonders (and horrors) to recognize how inconsistent is such a conception of Deity, but who is thoroughly at a loss to answer the atheist. Yet he replies, and what does he say?

"The only avenue of escape is the assumption of an inscrutable mystery which would contain the solution of the problem if the human intellect could only penetrate so far; and the more closely we invite a comparison between divine and human methods of working the more do we close up that only outlet."*

This is not an agnostic attitude, as it definitely postulates a God both omnipotent and benevolent, and clings to the conception under heavy fire, repeating in answer to all arguments: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" In this answer Mr. Fiske speaks for multitudes of others who probably could not give as good a reason as he for the faith that is in them. It is well worth our while to examine, broadly and generally, the foundations of a faith which can make so brave an answer.

XIV. THE THEISTIC FOUNDATION.

There is much about Mr. Fiske's answer which suggests Herbert Spencer and his famous doctrine of the Unknowable. It is not without significance in this connection that Fiske, who was probably the leading exponent of this type of scientific theism, and from whom the foregoing answer has been quoted, was the chief apostle of the Spencerian philosophy in America. In fact, to paraphrase Matthew Arnold, we might say that on this point Fiske is but Spencer touched with emotion. And it may well be that emotion or sentiment figures with most persons more largely than is consciously recognized as a reason for belief in God.

* Fiske, *ibid.*, p. 123.

Human Need.—Instead of this faith being founded upon a rock, so that the gates of Hell may not prevail against it, it may to a great extent be rooted, not in strength, but in human weakness, born of an imperious human need, of a feeling that without some such faith the ills of life would be too great to be borne. As evidence on this point witness the tenor of hundreds of hymns, some of them exquisitely beautiful, sung fervently by millions of devout souls throughout Christendom:

“Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live!
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.”

“But,” says one, “is not this imperious human need to a certain extent presumptive evidence in itself of the existence of something which would satisfy it?” There is no more imperious human need than the craving of the habitu  for opium.¹¹ Even the craving for alcohol cannot match it. And yet no one claims that this craving is the expression of a natural and proper physiological need, such as hunger. It is simply a vicious and deeply rooted habit, and life may be perfectly happy without it. In an unused limb the muscles atrophy until they are no longer able to bear the weight of the body; so it may be spiritually. Ages and generations of delusion may so weaken the spirit that it cannot sustain the loss of its cherished beliefs. To show that this craving is not a normal and indispensable matter like hunger, it is necessary to show that human life may be normal and happy without it. To this point we will return in the section on “Atheism at Its Best.”

Revelation.—There have been those, mostly in past ages, who have based their belief in God upon an alleged personal revelation of Himself to them. Such was the case with Saul of Tarsus, than whom, after his conversion, there was none more zealous in the King’s business. Such also, according to the old legend, was the

¹¹ Ross, *The Changing Chinese*, pp. 161-162. Speaking of the enforcement of the anti-opium edict among office-holders, he says: “The suspect was obliged to submit himself to a rigid test. After being searched for concealed opium he was locked up for three days. . . . and supplied with good food but no opium. If he held out he was given a clean bill of health, for no opium smoker can endure three days’ separation from his pipe. The strongest resolution breaks down under the intolerable craving that recurs each day at the hour sacred to the pipe. Regardless of ruin to his career the secret smoker, be he even a viceroy or a minister, will on bended knees with tears streaming down his cheeks beg the attendant to relieve his agonies by supplying him with the materials for a soothing smoke. Certain highnesses, princes of the blood even, were by this means literally ‘smoked out’ and summarily cashiered.”

case with the Emperor Constantine when he saw the vision of the flaming cross in the noonday sky. In modern times, however, such claims have fallen for the most part on incredulous ears.

Intuition.—We may pass with brief consideration those believers with whom assertion is equivalent to proof, and who rely on intuition for their belief in God. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Such may be classified properly among those whose faith arises from human need and weakness.

Argument from Design.—Turning now to those who base their faith upon ratiocination, we have first the famous Argument from Design. This is as old as the Psalmist, to whom the heavens declared the glory of God and the firmament showed His handiwork. More especially is this argument connected in later days with the name of Paley, whose *Natural Theology* gave it the vogue that it enjoyed in the early part of the nineteenth century. Briefly summarized, the argument is that "there exists" a "necessity . . . of an intelligent, designing mind for the contriving and determining of the forms which organized bodies bear." Suppose, says Paley, one should find in a desert place a watch; would it not be conclusive evidence that a man had been there before him?

The argument is an excellent one, but the trouble with those who use it is that they do not push it far enough. Suppose, after finding the watch, we look farther and find a kit of burglar's tools; there is no doubt that a man has been there before us, but what sort of a man?

The Argument from Design is of fundamental philosophical importance in that it must be reckoned with in considering any and every other argument for God that can be put forward, be it as subtle as that of Descartes, or as naive as that of the intuitionist. The essence of the argument is that Creation is plainly the result of a designing mind; but it must be remembered that the nature of this mind, if it exists, is to be judged by the nature of all of its works, both good and bad. Christian apologists have not always obeyed this canon, marshaling usually only such arguments as tend to show that the mind presumed to be responsible for the order of nature is altogether of an admirable type. Yet there is another class of evidence concerning which little is usually said, but which is entitled to equal consideration. The repulsive nature of much of this complementary class of evidence must be admitted, but it has its necessary place in any complete discussion of the problem of evil.

For a lack of acquaintance with it many fail to appreciate the gravity of the problem, and by a recognition of its co-equality in importance a far-reaching line of argument is opened to us; for in the light of this evidence the Argument from Design, far from being purely a theistic argument in itself, is seen to be a most searching criticism of all other theistic arguments. For example, it is often said that the existence of law in nature implies a Lawgiver. Well and good; but what kind of a lawgiver? Man has long since abolished attaint, but nature still visits the sins of the fathers upon the children; human law no longer countenances the rack, but tetanus still tears the muscles of its victims from their very fastenings; our law holds that it were better that nine guilty should escape than that one innocent should suffer, but nature's punishments are distributed with the blind impartiality of chance. And so with any argument for God that human ingenuity may propose; it must stand the merciless test of this *reductio ad absurdum*.

Again, it is sometimes argued that the frequently remarkable adaptation of living creatures to their environment illustrates the infinite wisdom that planned it. This argument is older than the principle of evolution, but those who uphold it have been in no wise disturbed by the advent of the latter principle, taking the ground that God may achieve His ends equally well by evolution or by special creation. In the domain of parasitism we meet examples of the most perfect adaptation to environment; but what an adaptation and what an environment! The disgusting cycle of the life history of the tapeworm, through pig and man, is familiar to all. Adaptation here is carried to such an extreme that a digestive system, being unnecessary, has disappeared completely even in the larval stage.

Among the crustaceans parasitism and degeneration probably reach their greatest luxuriance. In the cirripeds, or barnacles, some forms are doubly parasitic, the females upon the host and the male upon the female. The male is very minute as compared to the female, and is greatly degenerate as far as its brain, legs, and sense-organs are concerned, but the digestive and reproductive systems are unimpaired in function.¹²

Lest the free-will advocate should exonerate God from any responsibility in these matters, we will choose our next illustrations with special reference to this objection.

In human anatomy (Paley's especial mine of argument) we may

¹² Darwin, *A Monograph of the Cirripedia: The Lepadida*, pp. 55, 189, 207, 231, and especially summary, p. 281.

cite instances which it is only fair to interpret as showing carelessness or thoughtlessness on the part of the Designer. There is the vermiform appendix, now a useless remnant, remaining in such a position that it is always a potential and every once in so often an actual source of danger. What estimate would be placed on the intelligence of a factory superintendent who would allow a discarded piece of machinery to remain in its place until natural decay removed it?

Again, what would any rational man think of an artisan who had constructed an intricate and valuable machine, requiring months for its completion, and of such a nature that it would be ruined if taken apart, and had then discovered that it could not pass the doorway of the room in which it had been constructed, and that the doorway could not be enlarged without seriously weakening the building? A perfect parallel to this supposed case occurs occasionally in obstetric practice. An expectant mother may be perfectly normal in her and her husband's family history, with no reason to foresee trouble, and yet the skull of the fetus may prove to be so abnormally large that it cannot pass the opening provided for it by nature. In such cases the attending physician may occasionally find it necessary to resort to the revolting expedient of some form of embryotomy of the living fetus, possibly decapitation or cranioclasm; operations of the nature of which the mother-soul is mercifully spared all knowledge.¹³

In the light of these illustrations the Argument from Design may be recognized as a relentless *reductio ad absurdum* which no argument for God, of whatever nature, can escape. Granted that for any reason at all there is a God, what is His nature? To this question the problem of evil returns an unequivocal answer. Mr. Fiske himself was perfectly aware of this. He says: "The very success of the argument in showing the world to have been the work of an intelligent Designer made it impossible to suppose that Creator to be at once omnipotent and absolutely benevolent. For nothing can be clearer than that nature is full of cruelty and mal-

¹³ It is admitted that such operations are rare to-day, much rarer than even a decade ago; and for this there is a reason which is directly in line with the argument set forth in these pages. It is the increasing perfection of the human physician. Abdominal surgery has become so safe that the once-dreaded Cæsarean section now furnishes an approved and desirable alternative in such cases. Moreover, the modern practitioner would feel a keen sense of culpability were he to allow a case under his care to proceed to such an extreme for lack of timely interference on his part with nature. This practically limits the occurrence of such cases to those instances where, through human neglect, nature has been allowed to have her erratic way to the end of the chapter.

adaptation. In every part of the animal kingdom we find implements of torture surpassing in devilish ingenuity anything that was ever seen in the dungeons of the Inquisition."¹⁴ What then is the basis for the brave answer of Mr. Fiske?

Mr. Fiske's Argument.—The advent of the principle of evolution introduced an argument for God which forms the basis for a species of scientific theism of which Fiske was the leading exponent. Briefly it is that we have discovered a *dramatic* tendency in the universe, an orderly progression toward

"One far-off, divine event
To which the whole Creation moves."

And this goal appears to be one which we may reasonably expect to find within our comprehension when finally reached. Fiske regards this process as the working-out of a mighty teleology of which our finite understandings can as yet fathom but the scantiest rudiments. "Such a state of things," says he, "is theism. It recognizes an Omnipresent Energy which is none other than the living God."¹⁵

It is difficult for one not touched with emotion to the same degree as Mr. Fiske to distinguish clearly what is new in this argument. In so far as its conclusion is an induction from the facts of nature, even from a strictly scientific view-point, it is nothing but a new variety of the Argument from Design, and as such must take cognizance of both kinds of evidence as to the nature of the God it discovers. In so far as it looks to the future for compensation for present evils, it shares the weakness of those who explain the mystery of evil by the Heavenly Reward; and in so far as it personifies energy it suggests human need and human weakness. Stripped of the poetic beauty in which Mr. Fiske's splendid style clothes it, what is there in the argument that has not been said, and answered, before?

XV. THE THEIST'S ANSWER (2).

The second answer to the atheist which we shall discuss is that of Professor Royce. Speaking of the problem of evil, or, as he calls it, the problem of Job, he says:

"Job's problem is, upon Job's presuppositions, simply and absolutely insoluble. Grant Job's own presupposition that God is a being other than this world, that He is the external creator and ruler, and then all solutions fail. . . . The answer to Job is: God is

¹⁴ Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 121.

¹⁵ Fiske, *ibid.*, Preface, p. xii.

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. And here is the first truth: 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 suffers, precisely as you do, and has all your concern in overcoming this grief. . . .

"Why does God suffer? . . . Because without suffering, without ill, . . . 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. . . . He chooses this because He chooses His own perfect selfhood. He is perfect. His world is the best possible world."¹⁶

Royce is not easy reading, at the best, and this is a hard saying. It is clear that Royce, following Fiske,¹⁷ regards all the difficulty as arising from a false conception of God as remote from Creation, and considers the problem solvable if we regard Deity as immanent in the world of phenomena. That he not only considers the problem solvable but actually solved on this basis appears from what he says on the same question in another place:

"When once this comfort comes home to us, we can run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. For our temporal life is the very expression of the eternal triumph."¹⁸

We are not to suppose from the last sentence that Royce, like Fiske, adopts the solution of the Heavenly Reward. He distinctly disclaims this:

"Yet never, at any instant of time, is this (God's) perfection attained. It is present only to the consciousness that views the infinite totality of this very process of seeking."¹⁹

Royce's position in this regard is probably best expressed by the old line:

"Man never is, but always to be blest."

Just how the conflict between omnipotence and benevolence is settled by supposing Deity immanent rather than remote is not clearly made out. Fiske, who lays as much stress as Royce upon the immanence of God, admits, as we have seen, that even on this supposition "the only avenue of escape is the assumption of an inscrutable mystery." There are indeed signs that Royce fails to

¹⁶ Royce, *Studies of Good and Evil*, p. 13.

¹⁷ Fiske, *The Idea of God*, Chapters V and VI.

¹⁸ Royce, *The World and the Individual*, Vol. II, p. 411.

¹⁹ Royce, *ibid.*, p. 420.

measure up to the thunder of his index. The complete identification by Royce of God with the human soul amounts practically to an apotheosis of the latter. Now the human soul at its best is worthy of profound respect, but it is far from possessing the qualifications necessary for a God. It is benevolent but not omnipotent. Royce evidently recognizes the danger of thus falling into the Solution by Retreat, and in attempting to avoid it introduces the doctrine of Contrast. "Without suffering. . . . God's life could not be perfected." And again he follows Leibniz in saying that this is "the best possible world," a clear lapse, as we have earlier pointed out, into an abandonment of omnipotence.

For the word God, wherever used by Royce, substitute "Human Soul," and we have a picture easy to recognize and understand; that of the struggle of the soul with sorrow and evil, the overcoming of evil by good. In such a struggle the human soul commands our respect and admiration, but only because it is not responsible for the evils with which it has to struggle. Call it God, and the whole setting changes. Is Royce's God responsible for the established order of the universe? If not, let Him stand aside; our business is with His master. If so, let Him stand forth and face, if He dares, the outraged sense of justice, of mercy, of common decency with which He has endowed His creatures.

XVI. STRIKING THE BALANCE.

Among these various attitudes that may be assumed in the face of the mystery of evil, is there any refuge for the troubled soul?

Let us recapitulate. Man demands in his God both omnipotence and benevolence, the first for logical and the second for sentimental reasons. The free-will argument may explain as much of the contradiction arising from these two incompatible attributes as may be the result of personal sin, but is itself violently in conflict with man's sense of justice, and consequently reducible to the second Solution by Retreat, if it tries to go farther. The Solution by Retreat either violates logic by yielding the attribute of omnipotence or outrages sentiment by abandoning benevolence. This second alternative, however, is perfectly logical. The agnostic, by assuming an attitude of suspended judgment, leaves the problem where he found it. The atheist cuts the Gordian knot by denying the postulate of a God. These are the only fundamental and independent positions. All others may be reduced to these or to their combinations.

The cynic's position is a corollary to the second Solution by

Retreat. The doctrine of the Heavenly Reward and doctrine of the Devil reduce either to the free-will position or to the Solution by Retreat. The Christian Science position is the free-will position in a purely mental setting. The doctrine of Contrast reverts to the Solution by Retreat. All arguments for God, of whatever nature, are subject to the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Argument from Design. Even the brave answer of Mr. Fiske to the atheist is based, in its various aspects, upon the Argument from Design, upon the Heavenly Reward, and upon sheer human need; and Professor Royce's God, if a God indeed He be, cannot escape responsibility for the horrors of nature.

Where, then, is the troubled soul to find refuge? Much depends on the mental bias. Those who rate sentiment above logic have the greater freedom of choice; but those who hold the opposite view are limited to but two positions. It is obvious that the choice lies, broadly speaking, between atheism and theism; and the only form of theism which satisfies logical considerations is the horrible one which recognizes a God without benevolence.

Observe that our study of the problem of evil gives us no evidence for or against either of these two positions, but merely limits our choice. Both positions, as far as the problem of evil is concerned, are equally logical and satisfactory, but between them there can be no middle ground. The agnostic may say that he cannot decide which ground to take, but that is a different matter. If there be a God, His nature is definitely indicated by the problem of evil; and if the agnostic thinks this far, he should, if a normal being, be considerably assisted in making up his mind in the matter.

Granting that we could stifle our natural repugnance to a God of this description, the question arises, Whence this repugnance? Can ideals rise higher than their source? And if so, is not man, by just so much, the superior of such a God? And if we grasp the other horn of the dilemma, are we not met at once by the questions whence? whither? and why? Is the universe incapable of rational description? And if so, what are we strangers, with minds so out of joint with it, doing in its midst? And yet, barren of promise of comfort as this position seems to be, there are those who flee to it as to a city of refuge from the dreadful figure that overshadows the other ground. "Such a God," cried Ingersoll, "I hate with all the earnestness of my being!"

Here forks the road, both ways seemingly losing themselves in darkness.