

THE NEED FOR ETHICS

BY OLAF STAPLEDON

IT IS A commonplace that ours is an age of disillusionment, and that we follow on an age of complacency. In the days before the war optimism was maintained only by setting the telescope to the blind eye. For, apart from the social problem, which few even in those days could entirely shun, three less urgent but more subtly disturbing troubles were becoming widely noticed.

First, even by the plain man it was beginning to be suspected that the universe was indifferent to human desires. Man, it seemed, must outgrow his trust in a celestial protagonist, and must depend on himself alone both for his daily comfort and for the achievement of his ideals.

Second, it was already rumored that man was doomed not only to failure but also to insincerity. He was charged with being at heart careless of everything but the satisfaction of crude animal instincts. He valued his ideals, we were told, only so far as they afforded "symbolical fulfillment" to his primitive cravings.

Third, and most unsettling, if this view of human nature were true, all judgments of ethical good and evil were vitiated. For when ever we judged anything to be objectively good, our value-judgment was determined (it was said), not by the objective character and relations of the thing itself as a whole, but by some superficial and irrelevant feature which happened to stimulate instinctive or childhood cravings. Thus the considered judgments from which the ethical distinction was derived appeared invalid as data for ethics. And this view, that the distinction between good and bad was after all meaningless, was also strongly suggested by the chaotic state of ethical theory itself. For some writers defined "good" in one way, and some in others. Some on the other hand, said it was indefinable; and some explained it in such a modern and "scientific" manner

that they explained it away. Thus the very distinction on which any ideal must be based, the distinction which religion and common sense alike had assumed to be objective and universal, was beginning to seem arbitrary. All causes, all ideals, all obligations and enthusiasms were suspect in the suspicion that "goodness" itself was after all meaningless.

Such were the three doubts, cosmological, psychological, and ethical, that were creeping into the minds of thoughtful persons even in that distant age which ended in 1914. Today they are more prevalent.

Now the first of these questions is perhaps of no great importance. During the rise of modern science there was much anxiety among the intelligentsia as to whether the world was really good, bad or indifferent; or as to whether it was "on our side" or not. When the more intelligent were as yet only beginning to wake from the dreams of the more naive religious orthodoxy, this issue was bound to seem urgent. Today we are perhaps no nearer an answer than in the days when Huxley first opposed the ethical to the cosmical; but we are more ready to shelve the question and tackle other matters. For it becomes clear that, if by "world" we mean "the whole of being", the answer must wait until we know something of the real nature of that whole. Moreover, the *ultimate* fate of our race and our ideals seems now more remote and less important than in the days before we realised the vastness of the future. But if by "world" is meant the natural world, we are becoming reconciled to the knowledge that Nature, our ever-fascinating mother, is more resourceful than virtuous. We begin to cease from looking to her either as a model or as a protagonist. True to the modern fashion in filial piety, we are prone rather to correct than respect her. It is for us, not for her to say what it is that is good, and to discover if possible whether or not goodness is but a delusion. As to her maternal protection, we are alternately braced and grieved to find that we must depend on ourselves alone. But we are no longer appalled.

The cosmological question thus deserves less attention than perhaps it gets. For, granted that the good-bad distinction is valid, Nature, as our intellectual and moral inferior, must simply be brought to heel,—animal that she is. But as to the Whole, whether it is "on our side" or not, how dare we pass judgment on it? For, granted the validity of the ethical distinction, none but a universally informed mind is entitled to judge the universe. It is

possible that, though in our ethical distinction we truly grasp a universal principle, yet *that which* in the cosmical view must be seen to be good is far beyond the appreciative powers of our little minds. Much that seemed to Queen Victoria very bad is judged by us to be very good. Yet (though some of us easily forget it) the difference between the Queen's horizon and our own is perhaps less than the difference between ours and the span of all being. Who are we, that we should judge the heavens by our childish values? Shall we, because the "gods" neither please us nor make themselves intelligible to us, dub them insensitive or stupid? Parents, it is said, are justified in fulfilling, not merely in pleasing their children. And the "gods", if there be such, are to be justified not by the sweets they give us, who indeed are very simple children, but by the judgment of the fully enlightened mind, which may (conceivably) be theirs, but very surely is not ours. For these reasons it is as well to leave the cosmological question untouched.

But the other two questions rightly become more insistent in the plain man's mind every year. In the days when the teaching of the churches was accepted at least intellectually by the congregations (and even by the great uncongregated) there was no ethical problem in the plain man's mind. Spiritual advisers told him what was good, and he accepted their verdict, in theory, if not in practice. Love was the good; and the plain man accepted it as good, not because he saw that it was so, but because the churches said that God had said it was so.

Even before the war, however, very many had already ceased to take their professed religion seriously, even on the side of theory. The startling and bracing discoveries of science began to make us incredulous of the old teaching, even if also far too credulous of the new. But perhaps the main effect of science was that it made the old hopes look trite and even childish. For the doctrine of science was austere; while the doctrine of the old faith was by now padded over with comfortable devices. Comfort cannot stir us to loyalty. Thus, while to some the orthodox view was merely unbelievable, to others, though they had accepted it as true, it had ceased to be commanding. Consequently, while in some quarters there was a purely intellectual scepticism, in others there was a purely emotional disillusionment. Elsewhere these two dissatisfactions were combined. And so the ethical questions began to whisper themselves in many minds. Those who felt most strongly the objective validity of the good-bad

distinction, but had lost the old faith, craved most eagerly an ethical theory not incompatible with their new cosmology. Those who were still intuitively convinced that love was the best thing in the world sought some justification other than the word of a God whose existence they were beginning to doubt.

Then came the war. It gave us something large to do and vivid to think. It pushed those doubts from the focus of our attention. Already in the years before the war the only vivid ideal was nationalism, and patriotism was the only compelling religion. The one thing bigger than themselves which most men could both believe in and care for was their "country"; and they readily accepted the war as the supreme religious rite of sacrifice to their romantic god.

It is true, of course, that the motives that led men to fight were diverse. Not in all, perhaps not in many, was this strictly religious impulse the main factor. Many, no doubt, went simply to stamp out a conflagration that seemed to threaten their homes and all whom they loved. Some, on the other hand, went to escape the tyranny of the economic mill; some to escape mere boredom; some to be quit of their families or their friends; some to assert their manhood in the eyes of women. The white feather flicked their self-esteem, and drove them to accept without enthusiasm the sacrament imposed by the only living orthodox faith, the faith in nationalism. But these, who fought primarily for their own good name and not for the romantic ideal, would never have been herded into khaki had they not *assumed* that to shirk this ordeal was in fact shameful. Self-pride alone will not force normal persons to swim Niagara or swallow poison. They must feel that the deed is expected of them, and rightly expected. They must expect it of themselves. In fact, they must feel that to serve in the cause really is obligatory on all self-respecting persons. They must *admit* the "ought", even though they fulfill it only for self-pride. Of course, there were many who went to the front for no reason whatever, but in response to herd-suggestion,—with no more loyalty than sheep who follow their leader. But how did that suggestion ever come into being? It arose amongst those for whom "duty" was a meaningful word, who judged, however reluctantly, that there is *something* other than the person of each that has a "claim" on each because of its intrinsic goodness.

Some of us, perhaps, are over cynical about war, or at least about the motives of those who fought. For we incline to forget that, in

an age when the spur and the comfortable promises of religious faith were both of them less compelling than of old, when the objectivity of good was doubted and the hope of immortality fading, men freely gave themselves for the only ideal which seemed to claim them. As the religious faiths waned, the national faiths waxed. Traditions of national dignity, righteousness and might seemed less improbable than the doctrines of the churches, and far more vivid. Moreover, patriotism was well within the capacity of the schoolboy culture which alone was general, even among the educated. For the appeal of nationalism was two fold. It was easily assimilated to our egoism; yet it offered us something to serve, something other than, and greater than, our private selves. This was just what we craved; on the one hand salvation for our self-esteem (so crippled in the petty round of life), and on the other hand a clear obligation, a duty of service, however humble, in a great and vivid cause. Had the war offered satisfaction to one only of these impulses, its hold would have been less constant. But it fulfilled now the one and now the other as our need varied; and in no mood could we escape it.

Had the peoples been able to take Christianity to heart, they would not have needed the psychical "release" afforded by passionate nationalism. Their egoism would have found fulfillment in the certainty of eternal salvation; and their loyalty might have found in the Christ-god an object both vivid and universal. But since this could not be, the nation was taken as a substitute, and war was the great rite. And the war, even if it has done nothing else of value, has, I should say, underlined in red two facts of human nature. It has shown, on the one hand, how subtly egoism can disguise itself even from itself, accepting even agony and death for mere pride. But, on the other hand, it has shown that self-disregarding loyalty is a quite normal capacity of man, and a capacity which can become active even on a superb scale when a clear call comes. "Cant!" says the sceptic. But is it cant? Looking back to those days, remembering the details of the behaviour of our friends, and for that matter our own heart-searchings, can we deny that each of us was determined to a greater or less extent by the cognition of values in relation to which our private needs were seen to be irrelevant.

But the nation is a sorry substitute for the God of Love; and the war disillusioned many. Nationalism, of course, is not yet seriously in decline. Even today most of us but seldom and hesitatingly

transcend it. Indeed on the fringes of our Western civilization it spreads alarmingly; and now it threatens to inflame even the East. But, in the regions where it was born, patriotic zeal is perhaps tempered slightly. We may hope that in time it may be reduced from a conflagration to a wholesome warmth in our hearts.

But the failure (or impending failure) of nationalism as a faith, and of the nation as the supreme object of practical loyalty, forces once more on the attention of thoughtful persons those ethical problems which they had sought to ignore in a period of urgent action. Those who are consciously troubled about these questions are indeed few. Most folk consider ethical inquiry a priggish and futile occupation. Yet these questions lurk in the background of all minds; and so they tend to get themselves answered inattentively, and to become the secret source of prejudice and savage behaviour.

Consider the outstanding movements of the day. They seem to be Facism, Bolshevism, and a recrudescence of the more superstitious and preposterous "religious" sects. Fascism is accepted by those who, still paying respect to the older religion of Europe, but finding in nationalism the only commanding ideal, can only conceive loyalty in terms of fear and hate of rival nations and parties. Fascism assumes its ideal uncritically. It also uncritically assumes the validity of the fundamental ethical concept. It offers a faith, and exacts devotion; and therein lies its power. Bolshevism equally makes ethical assumptions. Although it affects to despise ethics and metaphysics, and to reduce obligation to egoism, yet it is evidently *felt* as a faith, and as an ideal which has an absolute claim on the faithful. Thus in the days of widespread disillusionment any ideal, however crude, however rationally indefensible, is felt to be better than no ideal at all.

Both these movements owe their strength in part to a dread of doubt that increases as doubt becomes more insistent. Both satisfy the craving for activity in a cause conceived as objectively important. This phobia of uncertainty is perhaps also one source of the increase of the cruder kinds of religious fanaticism. In this case, of course, as in the others, one motive is the desire for mere personal salvation, in this world or another; but it can scarcely be questioned that the average fanatic, of whatever persuasion, does honestly feel that it is supremely important, not for him, but *for the world*, that the flood of doubt be dammed, and that his policy be followed as the only means of world salvation. And thus it happens that an age of in-

creasing scepticism is also an age of increasing fanaticism. Very many persons have desperately shut their eyes and swallowed whole whatever comforting or commanding creed was available. They have willingly exposed themselves to religious suggestion, or political suggestion, till in time they have attained a real, but artificial, state of faith. On the other hand an increasing number have definitely freed themselves from every kind of theological allegiance; while on the political side also there are signs of a growing disillusionment with established social ideals. Thus in both spheres, religious and political, it is lip-service that wanes; faith and frank un-faith alike increase.

It is not surprising that in an age of intellectual perplexity men should take refuge either in irrational dogma or in a hand-to-mouth pursuit of pleasure. And mere pleasure-seeking is evidently an increasing fever today. The old-fashioned unreasoned restraints are being removed; and there is an unabashed claim to free life, free thought, free love, in short for the free "creative" exercise of all human faculties. And this is wholesome as a reaction from an age of stuffy clothes and stuffy morals. But is freedom an end or a means? To the released captive it indeed seems for a while a sufficient end. And to those who lack pleasures, pleasure seems the end. Yet this pleasure grows stale; and an aimless freedom becomes a prison. It is being well proved in these days that a life of *mere* impulse-satisfaction leads nowhere, and moreover is strangely unsatisfying. In our present disillusionment the only freedom to be sought is, it seems, a free fling before the crash. Surely it is this conviction of the futility of all things that is at the root of our fever to snatch joy before we die.

Some indeed have assumed a very different attitude in the general disillusionment. They have devised a stoical ideal, which, by emancipating man from all passing impulses, should enable him to gain a kind of tragic triumph over the universe. They have said: "Man himself creates the distinction between good and evil. We will take as our ideal (just because it pleases us to do so) freedom from the tyranny of desire, and fearless contemplation of reality." Clearly if pessimism is intellectually justified, this is the only sane attitude. And even if the pessimistic view is mistaken, the stoic's is a wholesome error. It was very necessary that we should learn not only the irrationality of the older optimisms but also their banality. The only way to an optimism of finer mood, if it be intellectually possible

at all, is perhaps through heartfelt acceptance of pessimism.

What, then, is the most significant feature of our age? Shall we be remembered chiefly for our social conflicts, for our international confusion, for the brilliant adolescence of science, or for our disillusionment? These are the features that we, who are immersed in today, see most clearly. Yet there is a more memorable fact about the modern world, a fact which we scarcely notice. Ours is the age, not simply of disillusionment, but of the vindication of man's capacity for loyalty even in the teeth of disillusionment. For what has been happening since the days of secure faith? First, when the ancient fear of hell was removed, men were discovered on the whole not less but more responsible. And when later all the old beliefs began to seem legendary and even petty, men did not plunge into individualism light-heartedly. Desperately they made of individualism itself a kind of topsy-turvy ideal, and tried to be loyal to it; or at the very least they found excuses for it, as being a means to some universal end. But presently they began to tire of it, and to look round for some more commanding object of loyalty. And so today, alongside of the old religious objects, and the old uncriticised individualism, thrive the cults of nationalism, bolshevism, fascism,—movements which, though deeply infused by man's self-regard, would none of them be what they are, were they not also irradiated by his unquenchable capacity for loyalty. But of these faiths bolshevism is the most glorious example of devotion in disillusionment. Sown in contempt of human nature, it has flowered into a self-forgetful enthusiasm by which, in spite of its intellectual wrong-headedness, human nature is vindicated.

None of these faiths can withstand dispassionate criticism. Each in turn must sooner or later seem incoherent and petty. And so, in conflicting waves of disillusionment and devotion to new objects, and again disillusionment, we live out our stormy age. Never before, perhaps, have the objects of loyalty been subjected to such keen criticism. Never before has loyalty been driven so desperately from object to object in search of that which, of its own nature, can command allegiance. Even when, in the last extremity, men try to live without any devotion whatever, they prove their essentially loyal nature by a sense of futility and guilt that they cannot explain away. On the other hand the stoic, disillusioned with all other objects, is driven to conceive in his own mind an ideal of conduct, and to achieve a precarious peace by *pretending* with all his might that

this, which he believes to be a figment of his personal taste, is yet somehow of intrinsic and universal excellence.

Thus on all hands man's loyalty is vindicated. But to see that loyalty is a real factor in human nature is not to answer those ancient ethical questions which all thoughtful persons needs must face today. Indeed, the mere prevalence of devotion to causes does not itself prove even that loyalty ever is, as it purports to be, called into being by the intrinsic value of its object, and not merely by some secret and primitive itch of the experient himself. Still less is it clear that the ethical distinction between good and bad, on which loyalty claims to rest, is an intelligible distinction. What do we really *mean* when we speak of things as good and bad absolutely or universally? What, if anything, *can* we mean intelligibly by such phrases? Has "good" ultimately no meaning at all but "good *for*" some conscious being or other? Or is our delight in the goodness of a thing, not prior to its goodness, but consequent on it? And in what sense "ought" a man to act so as to bring goods into being and abolish bads? What does it mean to say that he ought to do so whether he wants to or not, and even that the act itself ought to be done whether anyone admits the obligation or not?

And further if the ethical distinction is not simply a delusion, what *kinds* of things is it that in this actual world are good, and what bad? And what is it that would be the ideal, the best of all? What is the end for which we all ought to be striving? These latter indeed are the really interesting questions; but clearly the others are more fundamental. And perhaps the true answer to these fundamental ethical questions might turn out to be after all simply that they are meaningless.

Such briefly are the well worn theoretical problems which, I suggest, have today become practical problems. Just because no ethical theory is now taken for granted, a sound ethical science is needed, whether its findings be positive or negative. Ethics has not hitherto been a live issue; and so the works of ethicists have mostly been abstract and remote. Only lately has ethical scepticism been not merely propounded but deliberately put into practice. Only lately has it begun to break down well-established habits of behaviour. For today, while much human conduct is still based on the old assumption of the universality of good and bad, much also springs definitely from the conviction that this distinction is invalid. Now that theoretical differences are carried into practice, our practice becomes more

radically and bitterly discordant than ever before. May our theory in turn be revived by its new practical import!

Not all of us, indeed, are aware of the ethical problems explicitly, but all our lives are influenced by the fact that there is no agreement about them. And probably every intelligent person is at some time or other painfully conscious of them. They have, of course, been faced many times in the past, and many times answered in terms of successive cultures. Yet they remain for most of us still unsolved, and we cry out for a solution of them in our modern speech. For just as physical science is finding itself no longer able to avoid philosophical questions, so politics, social reform, and even the private life of each man and woman, are being influenced by doubts whose nature is philosophical. In fact, there lurks in the background of every mind today a profound ethical perplexity.

Of all these problems, one which is not strictly ethical, demands consideration before the others. Since ethical theories must be founded in our everyday ethical experience, they must seek a true psychological account as to the nature of that experience. It is suggested by some psychologists that though to himself a man seems to judge things good and bad intrinsically, and to render allegiance to his ideals without reference to his private needs, really he does nothing so simple. His ideal, whatever its form, appeals to him, not because he sees that the world needs it, but because it "symbolically satisfies" primitive or instinctive needs of his own which consciously he would probably dismiss as irrelevant, puerile, and perhaps even base. Thus our most admired "good" is displayed as but a pale approximation to the sweets of our childhood, or to the simple pleasures of the instinctive animal. Who defends the oppressed does so, not because it really is "good" that these oppressed should be freed, but because, meddling thus, he satisfies his secret itch for the "feel" of revolt.

If this account is the whole truth about our ethical experience, further ethical inquiry is a waste of time. For ethics derives from our value-judgments about things. And if, when we judge a thing good, our judgment is determined not by that aspect of it which we consciously declare to be good, but by some unnoticed and superficial similarity between the present situation and some situation forgotten and irrelevant, clearly our value-judgment is no ground for a science of ethics. For every value-judgment that claims to be dispassionate, and rationally determined in relation to the objective

world, is condemned as mere "rationalization" cloaking some instinctive prejudice.

Instinct psychology, however, in claiming to be a complete account of human behaviour, falls into the same extravagance as the rationalist psychology which preceded it. For it claims that all behaviour is of one type. Now possibly very much of our behaviour and our valuing is as the instinct psychologists declare; though we might be more readily persuaded by them if they could agree amongst themselves as to what an instinct is, and what instincts are. Waiving this protest, however, we may grant that many value-judgments are formed "automatically", not in relation to *all* the tendencies of the field of experience, but in relation only to an instinctive or primitive core of *organic* or *personal* tendencies. It is, indeed, very evident that every man often values and behaves, not in relation to the greatest need which he himself cognizes in the real world, but only in relation to needs cognized in a certain part of the real world, namely in his own organism or in that system of objective needs which constitutes his private self.

But we have attended lately too much to the abnormal and to the primitive vestiges in man, forgetting his distinctively human attributes. We are not justified in regarding intelligence as *solely* a purveyor to instincts. Even the purest instinctive conation involves an environment, organic and extra organic, and involves cognition of some tendency objective to the conative act itself. At *every* stage, then, tendencies which are conated are tendencies cognized in an objective environment, private or public. At every stage conation presupposes cognition of an objective tendency. We have no reason, then, to declare that one mode of cognition, and in fact the most developed mode, is alone unable to determine conations. The office of intelligence is, not merely to find means for the satisfaction of the more familiar tendencies (apprehended by a more primitive cognition), but to penetrate further into the environment and discover new tendencies which, *in their own right* shall be accepted as grounds of conation.

Thus it is that the goals of instinct are progressively criticised and subordinated to wider ends, which in no significant sense are simply "derived" from the ends of instinct. But, of course, it may well be, as was admitted above, that established automatic modes of behavior often resist control by newly cognized tendencies. Similarly, it may well be that many value-judgments are mere "auto-

matisms", in that they are valuing of things merely for unessential characters that happen to afford instinct satisfaction. But to suppose that all value-judgment is necessarily determined only by cognition of innate organic tendencies, or by innate "psycho-physical dispositions", is to misunderstand the essential nature of conation, and to misrepresent human behaviour for the sake of a theory.

Of the three grave doubts which were noted at the opening of this discussion we have dismissed the cosmological problem as irrelevant, and the psychological attack on ethics has now appeared invalid. We are left with the strictly ethical questions as to the status of goodness and obligation, and the concrete nature of the ideal. All that has been done is to show on the one hand that these questions are urgent and on the other that they do not appear meaningless when we look closely into the psychological nature of the experience which gives rise to them. It is clearly impossible to discuss these problems here. But there is a task preliminary to such a discussion, and it may now fittingly be undertaken. Ethicists have often strayed, I think, through making false assumptions as to the character of the fundamental ethical experience. They have distorted their data to fit their theories. The only hope of advance seems to lie in a more careful introspection of the ethical situation as it appears to the ordinary man when he is not sophisticated by any doctrine. I venture, therefore, to summarize my own experience as follows, and to suggest that it is typical.

To be faced with a moral choice, I find, is to be forced to choose between fulfilling one tendency cognized as in the world and fulfilling another tendency cognized as in the world. For instance, it may be that on the one hand my person, which is one factor in the world, cannot freely act and develop without a certain thing, and that on the other hand my having that thing would prevent the free activity of another person, or of society, or the world as a whole. In such a situation, I find that I call that course the better which would (I believe) result in the objectively most complete fulfilment of the world as a whole, whether the seat of that fulfilment be within my private person or elsewhere. What I *mean* by "good" thus turns out to be simply the fulfilling of objective tendencies. And by "the ideal" I find that I *mean* the most complete fulfilment of the capacities of the universe.

I certainly do not mean by "good" the pleasant feeling that I have when I am aware of the fulfilment of some tendency of my

person or of the world at large. I mean the fulfilment itself. Nor do I suppose for a moment that the ideal is simply that all folk should be pleased always. Everything depends on what it is that pleases them. If they are pleased with the fulfilment of petty tendencies only, the ideal is not realized. A universal tipsy beatitude would not be ideal.

Nor do I mean by "good" simply the fulfilment of my own personality, unless by "my personality" be meant the real of which my mental content is but a fragmentary and distorted appearance. But to call this "my personality", and its tendency toward fulfilment "my real will" is confusing. Of course, *I* can only judge that to be the ideal which would constitute the greatest fulfilment of *my* mental content; but I call it so, not because it is *my* fulfilment, but because it purports to be *the world's* fulfilment.

Faced with a moral choice, I may see quite clearly which course would lead to the better result, and yet I may choose the other. I may, that is, cognize tendencies that are more important objectively than those which alone determine my conation. On such occasions there may be a painful discord in me. But I do not suppose that the wrongness of my choice *consists* in my having produced this discord in myself, or in my having violated my own "real will" for self-fulfilment. The wrongness of my choice is experienced as consisting in the fact that certain objectively minor tendencies of the world have fulfilled themselves through my will at the expense of certain objectively major tendencies.

The moral experience, then, is less truly expressed by the proposition, "I feel that I ought to do so and so", than by the propositions, "I judge that so and so ought to be done; and further that it ought to be done by me". The "ought" is experienced as deriving not from my nature as a "moral agent", but from the world's nature as pressing toward fulfilment. Or, lest this phrase should seem to imply some theory as to the nature of the world as a whole, perhaps it were better to say simply that the "ought" is experienced as deriving from the nature of whatever objects are cognized as pressing toward fulfilment.

In some such terms as these the moral experience must be described. And whatever difficulties are thus raised, the essential features of this description must be respected by any theory that claims to solve those difficulties. For instance, we must of course ask how the tendency of the world, or of objects in the world can

have any "claim" on me unless it is in some sense *my* tendency, unless in some sense *I* really will it. And we must answer in the first place that indeed the tendency of the world has no "claim" on *me* unless *I* cognize it as "demanded" by the world. But whether it is a claim "on me" or not, it is a claim; that is to say it is a tendency of the world. And when it is felt as a claim on me, it is so felt simply *because* it is cognized as a tendency of the world. There is really no more mystery in my being moved to conate a tendency of the "external" world than in my being moved to conate any "private" tendency, say the tendency of my body to rest when its tissues are exhausted. In conating at all I accept a tendency cognized in some part of the world. Were there no such cognition I should have nothing to conate. It is the objective tendency itself which arouses me to conate at all, and sets the direction of my conation. Thus the true mystery is, not that I should ever conate the greatest fulfilment of my cognized world, but that I should ever conate anything less. Anyhow, whatever be the true solution of the difficulties raised by moral experience, no solution can be true which mis-states the data found in the plain man's daily life.

These problems as to the abstract form of goodness and the logical ground of obligation constitute only the first and least interesting task for the ethicist. Having arrived at some solution of them we should be entitled to pass on to discover, so far as in our present naive ignorance we may, the concrete nature of the objective ideal. Taking into account all that we know of our world, and all that we have good reason to surmise, we must try to fashion, as precisely as may be, an image of our goal. Such an image, vivid, believable, all comprehensive, is very urgently needed today. When idols were accepted there was no will to seek the gods. But when the idols rot, and despairingly we find no good in anything, then at least there is hope that we may glimpse true values.