Moral Government and Providence.

The word 'providence' means the power of foreseeing what will or may happen in the future, and making arrangements beforehand which will prevent anticipated evil, and bring about good. The phrase 'moral government of the world' means that there is a superior power which takes into account the moral qualities of actions and characters; and which controls the operations of nature and developments of human society in such a way as to ensure the ultimate triumph of righteousness over iniquity, and promote the development of moral character—such government as will make the world to be a sphere of moral 'probation' and culture, in which character is made possible, developed, tested, and strengthened.

Hence, when we say that there is a moral government and providence working in the world, we mean that the creative power has so constituted the world that righteousness is vindicated, and rewarded, and wickedness is punished. In what ways there can providence accomplish this? In the first place

1. We may suppose that providence works in such a way that virtue is rewarded and wickedness is punished in the present life. For it may be the case either (1) that the absolute power has so co-ordinated beforehand the physical forces of nature with the actions of men, that righteous conduct shall result in happiness and success, and vicious
Either by pre-established harmony of the forces of nature,

Or by Miraculous interference,

Such as to justify goodness and defeat wickedness in the present life;

Which was the common opinion when there was as yet no belief in a future life;

conduct shall end in failure and misery (which is assuming a pre-established harmony, goodness and happiness); or (2) that, without having co-ordinated the forces of nature so as to work out this result of themselves, it interferes, as need arises, with the normal working of natural forces, and suspends or modifies them occasionally, in order to make them vindicate goodness and defeat or punish guilt (which is the theory of miracles). From this it will follow that virtue is rewarded and vice punished in the present life.

This belief underlies the religion of the ancient Hebrews embodied in the writings of the Old Testament. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." It forms the subject of a special discussion in the book of Job. Job, a righteous man, is suddenly overwhelmed by calamities to his property, his family and his person. His friends ("Job's comforters") try to reconcile him to his lot by assuring him that these misfortunes must be owing to some radical vice in his own character and life, so that he has none to blame except himself. "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent? or where were the upright cut off?" Job cannot believe that there is any proportion between his own sin and his misfortunes. And in the end, he is compensated for his sufferings by having his family, health, and property restored to him, and his enjoying greater happiness than he had dreamt of before. In this way, however, the old Hebrew faith of the "friends," that the righteous are never allowed to suffer long, is justified in the end.

But the belief in providence in this form waned in course of time. Jesus asked: "Those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Even so, in modern times the question has often been asked: "Those who perished by the earthquake of Lisbon and the eruption of Martinique, were they more wicked than other men?" The difficulty of answering such questions caused the old belief of reward and punishment in this life to
be supplemented or superseded by the belief in a future life. In other words,

2. We may suppose that moral providence works in such a way that righteousness is rewarded and vice punished in a future life. Such equity cannot be realised fully in this life. This world is a sphere of moral education and probation. For this end, the forces of nature must be allowed to go on working according to their own uniform laws without regard to distinctions of right and wrong—nature must remain indifferent to moral distinctions. Men must be allowed to work out their own free wills without check, however wicked they may be, and however much injustice they may cause in this life. The good must be allowed to suffer or prosper according to the circumstances in which they are involved. It is only in this way that moral character can be evolved, confirmed and tested. The free rational soul can rise to moral excellence only by exercise of its own rationally directed effort, i.e., by self-realisation; and this is possible only in a world where there are difficulties to be overcome, and sufferings to be borne. Moral providence is sufficiently manifested in the world if the world be so constituted that finite minds can, by their own effort, raise themselves to higher levels of worth, and realise their own affinity with the divine nature. The argument of the ancient Stoics went thus far. Virtue, they said, is its own sufficient reward.

But it may be thought that justice requires more than this. Goodness of moral nature must be supplemented by goodness of external circumstances. If there is a moral providence in the world, it must manifest itself in the outward justification of goodness, viz. by making it to result in happiness. If it

Or to make compensation to the good and punish the wicked in the future life;

Though some have argued that rectitude is its own sufficient reward,

While some hold that the necessity of future compensation for unmerited suffering in this life is the chief argument for a future life;
does not do so in this life, then it must provide another life in which it will be done. The present world, therefore, can be nothing more than a preliminary stage in the development of moral life; that life must be prolonged into other spheres of being in which goodness will find its reward. This is the Christian belief.

This necessity of moral compensation has been to many, e.g. to Kant, the principal argument for future life. If God exist, he must manifest his existence especially in moral providence. But moral providence is not sufficiently manifested in this life. Therefore there must be a future life in which righteousness will be fully justified.

And to some it has been at the same time the chief argument for the being of God, because without God there can be no certainty of such compensation.

§ 89.

Liberty and Necessity.

The world is a system in which all the parts exist by reciprocal interaction with one another and with the whole. We call this interaction by which changes are produced, causality, and say therefore that all events are determined by causes. But human volition is an event. Therefore volitions also must be determined by causes. This is the argument used to establish the theory of necessity. But there is confusion of ideas here. When we use this argument, we are using the word cause to include two very different ways of producing change. These two ways may be distinguished as efficient causality and final causality (or end). But though they agree in producing change they produce it in such different ways that they had better be distinguished by different names. The name cause had better be restricted to efficient cause, and final causes had better
be called *reasons*. Let us consider then the difference between a *cause* and a *reason*, and this will open up more fully the meaning of freedom and necessity.

(a) *Causes* are tendencies to change which are put into thing from the outside, so that the things only acts as they have been acted on. They are only reservoirs and bearers of energy, giving out the force which has been put into them. The things which manifest such causality, therefore, are passive products, produced things, and instruments of production, and therefore not ends in themselves, but means for the benefit of other things. Thus suppose the thing *A* has in it an impulse to motion which has been put into it from some other source. It strikes against *B* and transfers its motion to *B*, and so on. In this way the series and systems of changes going on in the physical world are produced, and this is causality. Nature, therefore, is the sphere of causality in the proper sense of the word, (efficient cause). It is therefore also the sphere of *necessity*, because things subject to such causality are only passive instruments; their causality is put into them, not their own; and they are subjected to uniform laws not of their own making, and made means to ends other than their own good.

(b) *Reasons* (final causes), on the contrary, suppose a thinking principle and work from within the thinking principle itself. A reason for doing anything is the idea of a higher good. The rational being discerns the idea, identifies himself with it, and concentrates his energy in its realisation. The idea of good determines his action. But his highest good is his own highest self. Therefore determination by the idea of highest good is self-determination; and action proceeding from self-determination is *free* rational action. The self in so far as it deter-
mines its actions for its own good and makes other things subject to it as its means, is free, because the activity is not put into the self by something else, but springs from its own nature. On the contrary, that which is determined by other things, and thereby made to be a means to other things, is thus far subject to necessity. Thus determining energy has its ultimate spring in idea within the rational self, but proceeds from the active self outwardly into things, and from one thing to another thing, thus becoming efficient cause.

And indeed we found before that reason or end is the ultimate origin of all change, and ultimately therefore of physical motion and causality as well as of volition—that the source of all change is the absolute energy realising an absolute good by evolving the world of finite things, and giving them motion and co-ordination as means to that end.

Cause and reason therefore correspond to the two kinds of relation already pointed out—relation between finite things among themselves, and relation between finite things and the absolute power which evolves them. Finite things act and react, and occasion changes in one another causally. The absolute power gives embodiment to absolute idea in the system of finite things and relations. The relation between the absolute and its products is not the same as that between finite things among themselves. The latter is a relation of external mechanical causality; the former is one of immanent self-realising purpose, i.e. reason.

Thus in self-determination—in free will—the finite self shares in the nature of the absolute. But only the absolute is absolutely free—determined directly by the highest good. The finite soul is only relatively free. Its highest good is determined by its function and purpose in the system; and it is liable to be diverted from its highest good by
influences operating as efficient causes from the outside. Autonomy of will, or complete self-control is liable to degenerate into heteronomy or determination by impulse other than its highest good and therefore other than the highest self. But the full discussion of motive and volition belongs to psychology. Hence contrast between

Materialism and Idealism.—The above distinction brings clearly before us again the difference between the materialistic (naturalistic) and the idealistic theory of the world. Both seek to go back to the beginning. The materialistic theory goes back as far as matter and motion, and stops there; these, it assumes, are self-existent realities, and therefore the absolute beginning behind which we cannot go; these are beyond all derivation and explanation, all things being derived from them, but they, from nothing. Idealism, on the contrary, goes beyond matter and motion, and seeks to explain them by finding something more ultimate; and finds the ultimate to be the Good existing as yet only as Idea or End—the Idea passing into desire, desire into will, and will into energy, and thence into matter and motion, and natural causality. It thus assumes will, desire and idea as we know them in the human mind, to be a finite reproduction and analogue of the ultimate power which evolves the world.

§ 90.

Future Life and Eternity.

We have come to the conclusion that the world is a system, pervaded by universal reason, and by providential plan and purpose. It follows that every finite soul, as a 'real,' has its place and function as a factor in the evolution of the world-system. And from this it follows that the individual can attain his own perfection and good, the end of his being, only by fulfilling his function in the plan and purpose of the whole.
(a) We may conclude, therefore, that the individual soul will continue to exist as long as it fulfils the function for which it is needed as a factor of the system, and by so doing realises the possibilities of perfection inherent in its nature—the end for which it exists. For the function and end for which it exists constitutes the essence of its being—that which makes it to exist—and the fulfilment of its function, is what sustains it in existence. And we can understand from this that, if it fail to fulfil its function, to approximate to its end and realise its good, it will by that failure, eliminate itself and cease to exist as a factor of the system. For to live as a free rational being, is to participate in the life of the absolute. But to participate in its life, is to participate in the working out of the plan and purpose of the absolute. Therefore, to fall away from all share in the working out of that purpose—to become concentrated in self—is to cease to live.

(b) But again, there is every reason for believing that the soul cannot exhaust its function, fulfil its purpose, or attain its ultimate end completely in this present life; that, as a rational spiritual principle, having the root of its being, so to speak, within the absolute itself—in the evolving power which is above time and space—its purpose and function must extend beyond the present life, into other forms of being for which the present is only a preparation;

(c) And for believing that, as thinking, productive, organizing, self-developing soul,—i.e. as a productive power and not a merely passive product—it is, in essence, above and independent of the series of events in time. This appears evident from the nature of intelligence and will. The
power of thinking and understanding successive finite things in time—as in remembering the past, conceiving the distant, anticipating the future, and discerning the inner causes and relations of things, which are beyond reach of sense—this implies the activity of a thinking subject which is itself above time and place—a subject which is, in essence, independent of the immediate conditions under which it works for the time being, and can view all things sub specie aeterni—from the standpoint of the whole.

From this it seems to follow that the soul is not dependent for its continued existence on particular conditions of time and place—on the outward series of physical phenomena—but can survive these outward phenomenal changes, and enter into new systems of outward relations in order to fulfil its function as a member of the system, and factor of the world-plan.

(d) Finally many things in the constitution of the mind itself tend to show that soul is a being in process of evolution, that its evolution is not completed in this present life; and that therefore, if it is to attain its end and fulfil its function, its development must be prolonged into a future life. This fact, that soul is not a finally completed thing, but a ‘real’ in process of evolution, is shown:

(1) By the nature of its intelligence—which is to strive after higher and higher spheres of comprehension to which it cannot fully attain in this life, hereby manifesting the incompleteness of its present stage of development; and

(2) By the nature of its moral constitution, which manifests its own present incompleteness in two ways—

And is therefore an active producing principle, and not a merely passive product.

And therefore above physical causality.

And still further, the nature of mind reveals the fact that it is a principle in process of evolution from lower to higher, which is not completed in this life.

This is implied both in the intellectual.

And in the moral constitution of mind—e.g., in
(i) In the aspiration after higher ideals of moral excellence—its being so constituted as to make us strive after higher and higher levels of moral perfection, though these moral aspirations, like our intellectual ones, cannot be satisfied in this life;

(ii) And in the demand of our whole moral nature for justice—the ineradicable conviction that moral rectitude should find its sanction in happiness though there is no essential connection between virtue and happiness in this world.

It follows that this life must be prolonged into another sphere of being, in which these demands of both intelligence and conscience will be satisfied. (p. 381).

Arguments for immortality used to be drawn from the “simplicity” of the soul. It was assumed to be a concrete thing, and to be a perfectly simple and indivisible thing, as an atom of matter was supposed to be. And to be indivisible, is to be indestructible and immortal. But it is not usual now to conceive the soul as a thing after the analogy of a material atom. Yet this argument was the favourite one from Plato to Butler.

§ 91.

Conclusion: We now see that all philosophies, are reducible to two:—

(a) The naturalistic philosophy, called also positive, which assumes that the ultimate forces, or forces working in the world, with all their degrees and tendencies, are self-existent, and antecedent to all idea, reason or intelligence, and therefore operate blindly without any end or purpose, so that mind, with its national powers and ideas of good, is only an occasional, accidental and inessential product, without any meaning or value in relation to the whole. This doctrine commonly
takes a pluralistic form, as in atomistic materialism. The philosopher Schopenhauer gave it a monistic form in his doctrine of 'the world as will,' giving the primacy to will over reason, (i.e. making it to precede and be independent of ideas, and to make ideas instead of being made by them). In this form it has been called voluntarism. But such voluntarism, by making will and activity to be antecedent to idea and reason, makes it to be merely another name for blind self-existent force. It is therefore identical with the anti-intellectualism or irrationalism referred to above. And if the originating and guiding influence of reason is taken away, and reason made to be but a chance product in the evolution of things, then the evolving forces of the world will be identical with the physical forces of materialism. Thus all anti-rational systems resolve themselves into materialism, and are founded on the supposed predominance of evil in the world (pessimism).

(b) The idealistic philosophy, called also rationalistic or intellectualistic, which makes the world to be the working out of a good, and the good to be present through the whole history of the world as idea; and makes idea to have the primacy, and to be the spring of desire, will, energy, causality, change, and the whole process of the world. This will include the different views of God called monotheistic, because these agree in making the whole evolution of the world to be the working out of an end, and to be therefore a manifestation of reason—the power of discerning and realising what is good.

We are therefore compelled to say with Hegel that the truly ultimate is Idea, and with Plato that it is the Idea of the Good; because idea is materialism,

Anti-intellectualism and voluntarism,

And is non-theistic

And idealism which is theistic.

Making reason to be the determining power,

But which is objective and not subjective.
what transforms itself into will, and thereby into personality, and thence into a world of things in which person realises itself and its good. This therefore is absolute Idealism (ideal-realism), which supposes that evil is ultimately subordinated to good.

Thus all the 'Problems of Metaphysic' may be said to lead up to this final problem: Is Materialism or Idealism the true theory of the world?