CHAPTER IV

THE PROBLEM OF VALUES

The treatment of the problem of the Good as a special problem presupposes a separation between understanding and evaluation, which has not always been recognized, and has not yet been fought to a finish. Philosophy has been inclined to permit their intermingling. So Plato’s ‘Ideas’ and Spinoza’s ‘Substance’ express by the same term how those two thinkers understood Being and how they estimated its worth. At least there has been a tendency to make appreciation only a consequence of understanding, while, conversely, mystical and theological schools have been inclined to treat understanding as dependent on appreciation. In any event, they are by no means entirely independent of one
another. The understanding has its value, and without value it would be non-extant, since men would then cease to strive after it. To some the joy of knowledge is indeed the very highest; and the principles of our evaluation of goods can become an object for psychological and historical understanding because all worth rests on the relation of events and of conditions to life at its different stages, to the existence and evolution of life. It is now evident that the problem of values exhibits an analogy with the three earlier theoretical problems. In the sphere of value, just as in that of personality, of knowledge, and of Being, it is the principle of continuity that leads to the momentous problems.

Whatever conduces to satisfaction or supplies a need has worth, or is a good. Sometimes it is through the arising of a satisfaction that we first notice that there has been a lack in our existence. Sometimes we notice this lack in advance, and it gives rise to want, or breeds impulse and desire.
If the worth-possessing thing cannot be immediately grasped, we erect it into a purpose and seek means whereby to attain it. Whatever appears to us as a means of winning a thing of immediate worth, possesses mediate worth for us. In our estimation of worth and our purposes, the inner nature of our feeling and will is revealed. As the concept of purpose depends on the concept of worth, so also the concept of the norm depends on the concept of purpose. The norm is the rule for the activity which is necessary to attain the purpose. It was a fatal thing for the treatment of the problem of worth when Immanuel Kant reversed the relation and tried to derive the concepts of purpose and of worth from the concept of the norm (of law). This is a psychological impossibility.

Experience shows that different standards of worth have validity for different individuals and for the same individual at different times. I have already men
tioned the worth of knowledge; besides this, we must especially mention the worths which are bound up with the demand for self-preservation and with the organization and development of life in greater or smaller ways,—with movement and activity, with imagination (whether fanciful or of reality), etc. If different standards of value are to be compared with one another,—and every known standard of value is subject to such a comparison,—then a primordial value must be presupposed, by which the rank of other values can be fixed. A definite standard must be laid down as an ideal measure for all other values, if consistent thought and study in the realm of value are to be possible. Then, with a given fundamental standard—supposing we have sufficient experience—we can construct a system for estimating values, in which every particular good will hold its place according to its relation to this fundamental standard. But thought, 'practical reason,' is needed in order to determine
this relation; and in order, at the same time, to find ways and means of producing or discovering particular values under particular conditions. In a vacuum no estimation of worth (or unworth) is possible. The concept of the primordial or ideal standard-good is in the problem of values (in Ethics, therefore, and in the philosophy of religion) what the concept of the type-phenomenon is in the problem of Being (in metaphysics therefore).

The problem of estimating values divides itself into two problems, the ethical and the religious. Ethical worth is concerned with human affairs, property, and institutions; religious worth reaches farther and appraises Being according to the fate of values in the world of reality. It will become evident that in both problems—as in our earlier problems—the relation between continuity and discontinuity is of decisive importance.
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A. The Ethical Problem

(a) Ethical Work

As the discussion of the problem of Being showed, there is room for work being done by means of which Being develops itself. Such work is done in all human culture, but especially in ethical endeavor. This latter may be designated as an effort to produce greater continuity, partly in the single personality, partly among different personalities. We shall find that the measuring rod of ethical endeavor, and the principle of ethical good, are determined by the principle of continuity.

Personality presupposes, coherence, or continuity; and this, again, demands as a condition that there should be a single primordial value that determines the value of single instants, periods of life, abilities, and impulses. The development of true personality presupposes a striving to get
away from the momentary and the sporadic,—an overcoming of the tendency to isolation and tyranny on the part of single moments or demands. It is a process of harmoniously incorporating the single moments and elements with the personal life as a whole. Here is a task to perform, a battle to be waged, that demands different degrees of energy in different individuals.

There are, it is true, moral attitudes which, in opposition to the whole of life, contend for the rights of the single instants and impulses, of the successive and simultaneous differences. But that is not inconsistent with the fact that the principle of continuity is the standard of measurement. Such attitudes may be justified so far as they insist that the subordination of moments and particular impulses shall be grounded. Continuity signifies, not absence of distinction, but the ordering of differences in a graded series. Life as a whole can always be called to account by single
elements in it. It will always seem an imperfection, when an instant, a period, a capacity, or an impulse is treated as a bare means to something other, without independent value of its own. The art of life consists in conferring immediate and mediate worth upon things at the same time. When the Ethic of the instant and the particular steps out in absolute form and proclaims the sovereignty of the single moment or element, one often finds at bottom a presupposition that all life is represented by the single instant or demand, or is concentrated in it, so that all other considerations fade away. This happens in great moments of self-sacrifice, when a man, as Aristotle says, would rather perform a single great and noble deed than many small ones; and it also happens when a man hears the summons of his whole life in the special development of a single talent. Or one may believe in such a harmony among all the different moments of life that complete absorption into one of them
is possible without the satisfaction of that moment robbing the other moments at all. This appears to have been Aristippus's view. Or the highest state may be that of floating above single moments and employments, with the power to let one's self down at will and without being bound for any length of time to a single point, as in the 'aesthetic' view of life depicted by S. Kierkegaard in the first volume of his 'Either—Or' (Entweder-Oder). All these views evidently are not without regard to the whole of life as their background.

When an opposition of the momentary or the sporadic to the demands of the whole occurs, there arises a more or less conscious and energetic striving to develop the personality into a work of art, such that every single moment and every power shall have its appointed place and its due right. In such a personality, no element is considered purely and simply as a means; it is also at the same time an end. That which acts as a means or transitional factor in the
development of the personality, must also as far as possible possess worth in itself. This is the *ever memorable basic idea of the Greek (Platonic-Aristotelian) Ethics* of the harmonious unfolding of the soul as the supreme end, a basic idea which has peculiar importance in view of the tendency of modern culture to isolate or to mechanize the single elements of life. Rousseau and Schiller revived this ancient doctrine in opposition to the modern slavery to work, no less than to sentimentalism and decadence.

But the problem of continuity crops out again, and in a very acute form, in the question as to whether a single person can create for himself a rounded and completed world, and whether, if so, it would be valuable. Not only must the individual always stand in reciprocal relations with other personalities in order to have means for his own development, but there is also a need of devoting oneself that may appear under various forms, and that may lead
one to attribute immediate worth to other personalities. Hereby the individual is drawn into the great kingdom of personalities, and as, previously, the question was whether the individual elements can coordinate themselves harmoniously within a single personality, so now the wider question is, how far individual personalities can develop themselves independently and yet in reciprocal harmony, so that there may be a social organism (soziale Lebenstotalität) analogous to the individual organism. A continuity of continuity is thus striven after. The test of the perfection of a human society—by virtue of the principle of continuity which here clearly shows its connection with the principle of welfare—is: to what degree is every person so placed and treated that he is not only a mere means, but also always at the same time an end? This is Kant's famous dictum, with another motive than that given to it by him.58 Stoic and Christian ethics and modern social and political evolution bear in
the same direction. The proclamation of the ‘rights of man’ (whether we consider them as a symptom or as a programme) issues from this assumption; and the sting of the social question arises from the fact that the assumption has not been fulfilled. This principle also furnishes the standard for the discussion of special ethical and jurisprudential questions. For example, this principle can be laid at the base of monogamy, and of the evolution of punishment.

Ethical work thus shows itself to be a peculiar continuation of the great process of Being. The whole course of thought by which I have sought to establish this point of view meets, however, unexpected difficulties which intensify the ethical problem. So here again we run up against the irrational.
3

(b) The Rationality of our Ethical Evaluations

Ethics would be a more complete science than it is if the carrying out of the principle of continuity did not encounter so many difficulties as it docs.

Every ethical reasoning has validity only so far as the disputants recognize a definite primordial value which determines all more special goods. One may take the standpoint of the single instant, or of the single impulse, or the standpoint of the isolated personality, or that of the family, the class, the state, or of mankind. The question is, whether all such standpoints can be brought into real harmony with one another, as we have above assumed; and, especially the question arises, whether it is possible by means of argument to convert to one of the other standpoints those who consistently and imperiously hold fast to a single one of them.
Probably a rational relation might be demonstrated between the standard of value and the special values, so that a person who recognizes a certain standard and is sufficiently acquainted with the actual conditions under which it holds good, could also be logically compelled to grant whatever conclusions might be deduced from that standard. Thus self-assertion and abnegation have each its logic, as well as family-feeling and national feeling. But how about the transition from one standard to another? Here inner consistency does not suffice; for consistency can only unfold and bring to consciousness what, under given actual conditions, should follow from the standard. Socrates became the founder of Ethics by his demand for self-knowledge, which, in fact, was only a demand for a clear understanding of one's own standard of good and of the results consistently flowing from it. But he did not closely examine how the standard is obtained, or whether there are not really several standards
which might each lay claim to be the fundamental one.

A standard of value grows up by means of psychological and historical processes that involve other factors than logical consistency and knowledge of facts. Through experience and association, motives and values get supplanted and displaced, so that one standard may pass over into another; but while the change in the feelings and will is going on, it will be useless to argue from principles which will appear to be such only at the end of the process. In education, one cannot argue with a child on the presuppositions of an adult; the child must first have worked out those presuppositions. And so it is in the great educational process taking place in history. During education and evolution, there are naturally other vital motives at work than those which come out as the result of the whole process. The pupil will therefore never rationally understand the system according to which he is being educated. "Who can speak of its
future food to the caterpillar crawling in the dust?"

In history there is no gently advancing education from primitive to higher standards of worth, *i.e.* to standards which *will be called* higher by those who shall have attained to them. History is the great voting place for standards of value. In it, individual stands against individual, the individual against society, and one society against another; and a new standard often establishes itself in the hearts of men only after fierce struggles. A pertinent example is afforded by the way in which the conquests of Alexander the Great and of the Romans paved the way for the advance of a more universal humane feeling. During great conflicts, ethical reflection can only indirectly take a hand, by drawing the distinctive consequences of each point of view, and illustrating their meaning by as many experiences as possible, — in a word, by furthering self-knowledge in the Socratic sense. In war or in education, we have to do with art;
science is not enough, however important its contributions may often prove to be.

Because we reach the boundary where scientific ethics stop, still we by no means on that account abandon the principle of continuity. Where it is not possible to follow continuity farther in its purely ethical form, we attempt to track it down in its psychological and historical form. Ethics at this point passes over into psychology and sociology.

In my own 'Ethics' I have sought to show that *justice*, conceived as an inward harmonious relation between self-assertion and self-surrender, and also between feeling and thought, is the highest trait of character. But this has been contested by philosophical thinkers on the ground that self-assertion and self-surrender are such opposite tendencies (or, as I should say, primordial values), that it is impossible to combine them in any one unifying conception.66 And in popular literature self-surrender (altruism) has been as uncompromisingly proclaimed by Tolstoy
as self-assertion has been by Friedrich Nietzsche. This is an example of a conflict between standards of worth which are both urged simultaneously. In our actual human life, there is apparently a constant oscillation going on between these two antagonistic poles. In the species as a whole, self-assertion no less than altruism has its function to perform. The worth of the single oscillation toward the one direction or the other will always depend upon whether it conduces to an order of life in which every personality can develop as characteristically and independently as possible, so as to thereby render the most aid in the similar evolution of other men. In single individuals, self-assertion and altruism stand in the most various relations to each other, and their harmonization—in which, in my opinion, Justice consists—will therefore present the most divergent shades and tones in different men and at different times. But this variety also belongs to the richness of life—and to its con-
tinuity. The multiplicity of shades of difference is a condition of relation and connectedness, and distinguishes the system in which these prevail from that dead uniformity which neither from an ethical nor from any other standpoint possesses any worth whatever.

Another difficulty bound up with discontinuity springs out of the fact that the conclusions, which under certain conditions are deduced from a standard of worth, must be applied to individuals who present the most diverse inner and outer facilities for the fulfilment of demands based upon such deductions. Endowment and impulse are not the same in all individuals, either in kind or in degree. One and the same demand applied to different individuals may enjoin upon each of them an entirely different ethical task. The starting point and initial velocity are different. Some individuals may be well on the way to the involuntary fulfilment of the de-
mand, before they are even conscious of its existence; while others must laboriously struggle in order barely to start. The law, the demand, must therefore be differentiated according to the different individuals, if it is really to be identical for all. Each one should be taxed according to his ability. There must be a thorough-going individualizing of the ethical demand, lest Ethics itself transgress the dictum that personality is always an end, never a mere means. The ethical demand must be no abstract or external command, but should correspond to the ethical possibilities of the individual person, and be adapted to develop them. Legislation and pedagogics cannot at this point be absolutely sundered. But in individual cases this makes ethical decisions difficult. Here again the world — the world of personalities — is great, and our mind is small. Ethical thought can formulate no law that could be applied offhand to all the manifold emergencies of life. Nevertheless, we must
assume that in every individual case only a single decision can be the completely right one. "Wide is the world and narrow is our brain:" our ethical thought courses along the narrow path which leads to ethical truth, and presses toward it amid continual battles with the irrationality that we seek to outflank and elude by ever nearer approaches to our goal. Here, as in the problem of knowledge, we end with no absolute conclusion, but we hear still an 'excelsior!' — even after our thought has strained itself to the utmost.

B. THE RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

5

The very fact that a religious problem exists shows the importance of continuity. For the fact that religion has become a problem is connected with the fact that a division of labor, a differentiation, has taken place in the realm of the psychic life. During its classic times religion appears as the sole, concentrated
form under which all demands of the mental life find satisfaction; religion as such is not only succor and consolation, but also poetry, morals, and science, or at any rate, it is in a position to take these interests organically into itself. Since these different interests have emancipated themselves and have developed according to their own laws, the question has arisen, whether the mental life—as far as it has to do with values—has preserved its continuity during this passage from concentration to differentiation. We have no reason to doubt that there is in the process a psychological and historical continuity; but by the transition has not some value been lost out of human life?

The replies to this question are extremely varied. Some are "satisfied with the fact that the same dogmas are taught now as in former times. In other circles it is retorted that this dogmatic continuity signifies nothing; the essential thing is whether life is lived in the same way, whether there is
an ethical continuity, whether 'the Christianity of the New Testament' still exists. Finally, some think that with the cultural-historical division of labor the times of religion have been left behind, and that, far from indicating a loss of worth, this is a real gain for our inner life. In addition to these opinions, which again may take on various shadings, there is a series of still other points of view.

The answer to the question naturally depends on what we hold to be the essential thing in religion. Continuity cannot consort with traits that divide the various religions and religious attitudes from one another. One must search out the deepest underlying tendencies, which may reveal themselves under extremely different forms, and which perhaps are able to operate even after the cultural-historical division of labor has come into force. This is the task of the philosophy of religion; and it seeks to discharge it chiefly in two ways. First, it institutes a comparison between religion
and the other sides of our mental life, in order to find out in which region of life religion makes its home; it seeks to determine the psychological location of religion. Secondly, it institutes a comparison between the most important historical forms of religion, in order to find out whether the ascertained psychological definition is confirmed by experience.\textsuperscript{62}

In both comparisons we shall have occasion to see, not only that the principle of continuity is concerned with setting the religious problem, but also that the notion of religion itself is very intimately bound up with this principle.

6

Religious feeling can be brought into a simple enough relation to other feelings, if one conceives it as determined by the experiences which man has as to the fate of values, of the various things that he regards as having worth, in the world of reality. By thus considering it, its difference from, and at
The same time its connection with, the other feelings are set in relief. Every one of our feelings answers to some value. Thus the feeling of life, the intellectual, the æsthetic, and the ethical feelings express the worth of different kinds of things. The conservation and development of life, truth, beauty, and goodness are realms of value in which man can participate without religious feeling. But if it becomes evident that life, truth, beauty, and goodness must fight in order to maintain themselves in the world, then there arises a peculiar feeling, no longer determined by these ideals *per se*, but by the more general question of whether these and similar ideals are destined to be preserved and cared for, or are doomed to decay. The experiences which man has in this regard may create a desire to believe that the values remain, even when they no longer disclose themselves in the world visible to man, or even if they no longer appear under the same forms as hitherto.

Man will at first be most inclined to sup-
pose that the enduring thing of worth is the same which he has hitherto enjoyed; but in his evolution he may come to the conviction that some of the goods of his experience must go under, in order that a higher and more comprehensive system of goods may be secured. From the ideas of men about a world of Gods and about a future life, we ascertain which goods have been most valued by them, and to what degree they have reconciled themselves to the thought that particular values must undergo a metamorphosis in order that a general preservation of value itself may be attained. Finally, what is supposed to persist and be preserved may take a form that no eye hath seen nor ear heard. Religious faith asserts a continuity in the realm of ideals that may go beyond any and every possible experience. The continuity thus asserted may be of diverse content and compass. But there will be a tendency in us to extend its sway beyond the human world and to treat our mundane existence as a nursery
for the evolution and the conservation of ideals. This religious doctrine of continuity is formed analogously to the intellectualist presupposition of the rationality of Being (Chapter III), and has similar difficulties to encounter.

Religious faith will especially display a certain similarity (and a certain sympathy) with metaphysical idealism (IV, 4). But they do not stand or fall together. The essence of religious faith is not the intellectual satisfaction which it may bestow. The ideas by means of which religion expresses itself do not belong to its innermost psychological nature. If our psychological definition is correct, the core of religion is an interest of feeling and will. Intellectually, we only ask about the classification of things, their mutual consecutiveness or rationality, and their causal linkage (III, 1). Faith is only an object of science, is not itself science. It arises from the harmonious or inharmonious relation between the realities which our understanding shows us to be actually given
and the goods which appear to man to be
the highest.

Possibly the distinction which we are com-
pelled to make between the real and the
good, only holds from a human point of
view. But, for the present, we can take no
other point of view.

The faith in the conservation of values
may itself acquire a value, both because it
braces the spirit of man during the strug-
gle for life, and because it spurs him on to
find new goods as equivalents of vanishing
ones. Even one who is of the opinion
that the times of religion have gone by—
an opinion which must be epistemologically,
psychologically, and ethically grounded, if
it is to be more than an assertion or a
wish—will still feel the necessity of find-
ing equivalents for the loss of belief in those
goods which the vanishing of religion en-
tails. In this sense there exists a religious
problem even for one who thinks that the
kernel of religion disappears along with its
shell. Religion, in other words, because
it maintains the conservation of values, has a value itself, a value of the second order. It is one of the most concentrated forms of psychic life which experience exhibits. Where it is genuine and original, it appears as the combined result of human feeling and will; and it bodies itself forth by means of the most powerful and exalted forms of imagination of which the mind of man disposes. Probably this concentrated vital process will always be revealing itself in new forms,—one may then continue to use the name religion for them, or not, as one pleases.

7

A confirmation of the characteristics of the essence of religion, as depicted above, is to be sought in the fact that the differences of religions or of religious points of view can be simply and readily explained by those characteristics. These differences, in fact, rest in part on differences in the ideal goods whose conservation is believed in; in part on differences in the underlying con-
ception of reality; and in part on differences of experience as to the relation between the ideal goods and reality.

The differences respecting ideal goods show themselves in historical religions in what is considered to be the task of the Gods,—in what they are thought of as battling against; or else, to use a saying of Plato, in that which makes God godlike. This may be the purely physical preservation of life along with its accompanying enjoyments or it may be the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. The historian of religion holds up the transition from natural religion to ethical religion as the most important step in the history of religion. This transition, however, rests directly upon a transition from the more elementary to the more ideal standards of worth, as what we suppose particularly to underlie our relation to the gods,—what the gods protect and what gives to them their very divinity. At the same time, the more external relation between man and the powers
which, as he believes, protect him, gives way, and the gods themselves become immediate representatives of the goods placed under their surveillance, — become, indeed, one with them. In the evolution of religion, there can be traced an even more intimate connection of religion with Ethics, and religion consequently tends to become increasingly a projection of our ethical ideals.

When advancing knowledge entails changes in our beliefs concerning reality, there must also be changes in the character of religion no less marked than when the fundamental standards of value change. The most striking religious crises proceed from new conceptions of reality. Religion has in these cases usually held herself aloof from knowledge developed in other ways, but has afterward sought to absorb it and use it for her own symbolic purposes. Thus, little by little, animism, astronomy, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, the Indian and Greek philosophies, Copernican-
ism, and modern natural science and philosophy have each in turn been seized, now as welcome forms of religious thought, now as expansive impulses, or, again, as hostile tendencies.

But the decisive point will always be the relation between the ideal goods and reality. According as this relation is harmoniously or inharmoniously adjusted in the experience of man, religion assumes a different character; in the highest religions the discords as well as the harmonies of life find place; in these religions, the religious sentiment attains sublimity and firmness only if it has worked up through struggle and suffering to blessedness. The strength of the discords accordingly only measures the strength of the triumphant harmony. And here yet another consideration enters. Religion possesses a different character according as that which possesses highest worth is thought of as eternal and exalted above all becoming and all change, so that the temporal life is in the end only
an illusion; or as that which possesses supreme worth is itself held to evolve in the course of ages and to battle for its own preservation during the changes which take place. On this distinction rests the antithesis between the Indo-Grecian and Perso-Christian types of religion.

Thus it appears to be no external standard which we apply when we characterize and appraise religions according to the manner and the degree in which the principle of the conservation of values appears in them. Such a standard naturally emerges from a comparative consideration of the history of religions and of religious points of view.

The second of the two religious types named has come off victorious in history. But assuredly it has not yet reached its definitive form. If it is to take on new forms, then in the future, as in olden times, we shall be indebted to prophetic personalities; only such as they can weave a new garment for Deity.
To the philosopher, it is of the greatest interest that the religious problem, so long as it exists, stands in such close connection with the demand for continuity, with the notion of time, and with the question of ideal goods. The affinity and intimate connection with each other of the great problems of the human soul, practical no less than theoretical, stand out here in bold relief.

In all our problems, we end — if we view the antithesis in its acutest form — with an interminable conflict into which the mental powers of man must ever plunge anew. But while we cannot solve definitively these great problems, still we can descry the road that leads onward and forward, so that the rights of both our thought and our life are safeguarded. The insolubility of the problems really only means that, no matter how far we may penetrate in our research and thought, new horizons, new goals, and new tasks always rise before us.