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Lecture III

“The Moral World as the Revelation of God”

Transcribed by Aaron Pratt Shepherd

At the last lecture I presented to this company a discussion which, as I know, had to be intensely speculative, and which, as I fear, seemed to many even unnecessarily difficult. I come tonight to a matter that is in itself of an immediate interest to everybody. How far I shall be able to make this interest clear to you, I cannot say. I only know that if I speak [2] tonight still as student of philosophy, I desire, if possible, this time to let you see, before I am done, that not a philosopher's abstractions, but your own life-interests are now our issue.

I

The conception of God—that was what, at the last time, I tried to define for you in philosophical terms. God,—so we maintained—is the being to whom alone, in the highest sense, you can apply the adjective real. Your reality and mine, the reality of all the fair world about us, the reality of the things that have been and that will be—these realities are all but fragments of the one reality, [3] God himself. In the opening lecture of the course I had tried to show you that God's nature has been conceived by Christians in three different ways, no altogether easy to reconcile. God, for Christian tradition, has meant (1) the righteous ruler and judge of all things,—the God of the ethical monotheism of the Prophets of Israel. God has meant, for the same tradition, (2) The First Cause as Aristotle conceived him, the one being whose perfection and rationality explain the order of the world. God has meant, for a less manifest yet none the less potent [4] Christian tradition (3) the being who is real as nothing else is real, so that in him we live and move and have our being. Now all these three meanings of the word God Christianity has known, and has endeavored, in the writings of its speculative theologians, to define, and, if may be, to reconcile. In the last lecture it was the third of these conceptions that I undertook to emphasize. I expressly postponed, without prejudice, the study of the others.

Our argument, at the last time, turned upon a certain pretty fundamental analysis of what you and I mean by the term Reality. It was only, we said, by knowing what we mean by calling anything real that we could hope to [5] find out what we mean by the reality of God. We dwelt for a good while upon our conception of reality in general. We found that the term reality, as it comes to us, is, for the first, a very stubbornly ambiguous term. We call anything real which is somehow present to somebody, as the present moment is real for you and for me, or as your feelings of love and hate are real for you when you have them. But, on the other hand, so we found, we mean, by the reality, that which outlasts any present moment, or which is deeper than anybody's private experience,—the enduring, the substantial, the deep, the object, not of our senses or of our feelings, but of our thoughts,—the [6] sought for, the remote, the deep the true. In this sense we call the physical world as a whole real, because, whatever its inner nature is, it outlasts all human experiences. We call the substantial nature of the universe real, because, while neither you nor I can experience it as it is, we suppose it all the while to be there.

Upon this ambiguity of the world real we pondered long. We tried to find why man thus stubbornly regards the real as at once present to our experience in so far as we have any, and absent from our experience in so far as we are endlessly led to look deeper than our experience has yet enabled us to look. After a good while we found this question taking upon our hands a pretty general form. [7] We found that whether you and I are thinking about nature or about God, about matter or about mind, we are always contrasting some experience that we have, in the world of our senses or of our feelings, with a larger, a more organized, a more connected and normal sort of experience that we think of as somehow genuinely possible, but as now, in its wholeness, remote from us. Of this possible unity of experience, we regard our own experience, on the one hand, both as a hint and as a fragment. We also regard our own experience on the other hand, as in some sense a revealer of truth, just because, even in its fragmentariness, it is a part of that conceived normal ex-

[8]perience, whose possible completeness would fill it out, but would not utterly annul it. In this sense, as we found, we inevitably say: “Whenever I experience anything, even a dream, I experience something that, as far as it goes, is present, is real.” But on the other hand we also inevitably say, “What I experience is only a fragment of the real. Genuinely, finally, satisfactorily real, is only that at which my experience hints, that which a complete, a normal, an organized experience, with which I contrast mine, would have present to it.”

Thus the very ambiguity of our term reality implies a contrast between two sorts of experience, each of which, in our minds, is in an inseparable [9] relation to the other. Unless we have some present experience, no reality beyond the present can be hinted to us. But, on the other hand, unless we are led to refer to some larger possible experience than ours, the reality that gets at any time presented to us in our feelings and in our sensations has for us no meaning. Real then, for us, must be at the very least what we experience, so far as our experience goes, taken together with what would be present, fulfilling our fragmentary facts, to an experience that we conceive as genuinely possible, but as transcending and including our own experience. We saw how science everywhere recognizes, at once the facts of our own experience, and the necessity of [10] viewing these facts as a mere fragment of what would be presented to a type of experience far higher than our own, more inclusive, more organic, more definite.

But thus we found ourselves in presence of a dilemma. Real, let us say, are the facts that you and I actually experience. Real are these lights and sounds, these pains and pleasures. Yes, but we mean nothing by the reality of these facts unless we regard them as limits of an experience that goes beyond them. Real are for us the lights and sounds as hints of the truths that science would find, presented to her more perfect experience, if we mortals could view things as science means us to [11] view them. If these facts of our own sense, then, are real in the full meaning of the word, their reality must exist only in relation to that other, that contrasted sort of reality, which in our minds, is

inseparable from their own kind of reality. In some way then the facts before us must truly be hinting at a larger system of facts which would be present to that possible larger experience. Our dilemma lies then here: Is our own experience a part of a system of experience that is a larger whole than ours, whose facts are as present to it as ours are to us, or is this not so? Is that larger whole of experience a merely possible whole, or is it more than possible? Is it as really in presence of its own system of facts as our pausing experience is in presence of the facts of sense? Is it real in the end in the [12] same sense as that in which our own experience is real? Or is that system of larger experience, of which ours is part, a mere ideal? In brief, is the ambiguity of our term reality a final and hopeless one, or can both meanings be included in a higher point of view?

Our answer to the questions involved in this dilemma was definite. In the end the only way of reconciling the two definitions of reality which, thus contrasted and inseparable, have expressed themselves in our dilemma, is to say that, if our fragmentary human experience has meaning only when contrasted with a possible higher experience, whose facts are a system whereof our facts are fragments, then, just in so far as the very possibility of this higher experience is a truth, this truth must mean that [13] the higher experience finds its facts really present to itself in as actual a sense as that in which we find our facts present to ourselves. Or otherwise put: Our experience must be a fragment of an absolute and inclusive experience, to which all facts are present, and all genuinely possible ideas are realized. For otherwise let us suppose that by actually real we mean simply the same as actually present in somebody's experience. And suppose that the whole world of experience contains only fragmentary facts, such as you and I find present to us. On this case, by hypothesis, although real now means the same as present to somebody's finite experience, the fragmentariness of these finite facts of experience leaves open, beyond these our facts, much possible experience; but (for so we now suppose) all such experience beyond the finite facts is to remain barely possible experience. Thus then, in this case, the world of finite experience, that we

have been supposing, [14] has its own constitution, its own limitations, its own determinate character; and yet this constitution, these limitations, are something which nobody actually experiences, but which merely is what it is. Now, mind you, however: this constitution, of the world of limited experience must be as real as that world of finite experience itself is. It cannot be an unreal constitution. So it too must be present to somebody's experience, if indeed real means the same as present to somebody's experience. There must be, then, so we must now say an experience, which so comprehends all finite experience as fully to comprehend the truth, the meaning, the nature, of every limitation. But what then? Is not such an inclusive experience once for all an [15] all inclusive, an absolute, a divine experience? Yes, there must be such an experience. For if all that we rightly call possible has an equivalent in actual fact, all the truth that our science seeks, is presented in actual experience, all the explanations at which we aim are tested and accomplished, all the contents at which our experience hints, are verified. For that experience the term Reality would have but one meaning. Our ambiguity would be harmonized in a system of facts which was at once the object of all [16] intelligible thought, and the datum of present consciousness. To such an experience far and forgot, the distant and the deep, whereof we think as we search for Truth, is near, immediate, completely possessed. For such an experience all Reality is present fact; and the Being whose experience this is, is at once, as his own object, a self-possessed, a self-conscious being, and is, in the highest sense, the only real Being. The world is not other than himself. The world, as we know it, is a fragment of his fulfillment.

II

Such, as expounded at the last time, is my own conception of [17] God. And now, this being our notion of God, where, may we ask, in our own region and confine of experience, do we come into the most immediate and personal relation to God? What aspect of human experience most directly manifests God to us?

Many have answered, at this point, by turning to the nature that our special sciences study. Nature, one says, everywhere shows marks of design, of order, of reasonableness, such as indicate to us the presence of a Being whose rationality, self-possession, unity of experience, and absolute power, would seem to agree in detail with the general conception of God maintained in the foregoing discussion. For reasons which I shall try to indicate in [18] our next lecture I regard this way of looking in what we call external nature for *special* manifestations of the wisdom of the powers and of the absoluteness of God, as a necessarily misleading way. It is true that nowhere in all of our experience can you miss hints of the divine. As God is simply the One Real being, and as even the most fragmentary experience contains hints of the unity of his own life, nature too, as we mortals see it, must indicate, in its own way, the riddles that God's insight solves. But our question is not now as to the general relation of all human experience to the Absolute. That was the relation that we discussed at the last [19] time. Our present question is, What aspect of our life brings us, even in its very fragmentariness, nearest to a glimpse into the divine fullness of life? *How* God possesses all facts in one insight, fulfills all true thoughts in the immediate presence of their experienced objects, answers all questions by the abundance of his omniscience—just how all this takes place we shall not, in our human weakness, aspire to see. What our philosophy in general assures us is that this divine fulfillment and self-possession are for God, realized fact—the proof lying simply in the observation, made in our last discussion, then the opposite of this assertion is self-contradictory. But at present we are leaving behind us that general assertion of God's existence as the Omniscient being, for whom and in whom is Reality. [20] We are going on to inquire after something that shall manifest to us more in detail, not indeed just how God's life gets its complete unity, but how some aspect of our own life hints at that unity more intelligibly than does the rest of our life. We are looking just now for a good, if partial manifestation of God in our own

experience,—for an unmistakable, if but inadequate indication of the relation between the divine life and our own life.

Well, I myself look for the best manifestation of God in what I should call the moral world.

By the moral world I mean a collection of facts that, by a very [21] familiar process of abstraction, we can all temporarily isolate in our minds, whenever we will, from the rest of the world that our experience reveals. Every such abstraction is of course somewhat artificial. As God sees the truth, all truth must be one. But as we mortals see the truth, in our stubbornly fragmentary way, abstraction is often the best preliminary to a grasping of the higher unity of our lives. To abstract one set of facts, involves of course putting that group in a relatively false relation to the rest of life, because to abstract is, for the time, to isolate. We need not fear such processes, however, where their explicit purpose is to throw light upon the deeper unity of the real world.

[22] When I look at the pavement, or at the stars, I get experiences whose relation, as fragments, to the rest of the world of the experience of man or God, is by no means dear to me. I study astronomy or physics, and perhaps such relations become clearer to me; perhaps too they remain in many ways dark. But in any case, mystery enshrouds every effort of ours to read the riddle of nature. But now, on the other hand, when I look within me, I often meet various interests and desires of my own, whose relation to at least a portion of my own life is at once perfectly clear to me. For instance, at a moment of weakness, I find myself feeling slothful, cowardly, discouraged. There is my life work yonder, and I am loath to do it—timid, cowardly, [23] weary, despairing. Well, I meet these experiences of my own weakness within me, and the question arises: What do these my feelings of sloth and despair mean? The answer at once is clear. They mean, as far as they go, that I want to give up, to abandon my life-task, to cease strenuousness, to be nobody,—to drift. Now, however, what am I to do, at least in my working hours, with these impulses, in so far as they hinder me? The moral answer seems obvious. I must down them if I am able. I must go about my

business. I must try to be a man! Here speaks the plain common sense of the everyday conscience, which is so far quite in its rights.

Now our present question is, does such a commonplace moral [24] experience as this manifest anything to me that has more than a passing import? The answer is, Yes. For what if, upon reflection, I ask myself, somewhat skeptically, "Is the everyday conscience right after all?" That is, Is it so sure that I shall do well to be strenuous about my life-task? Why not drift? Then comes the profounder speech of my deeper conscience, which speaks now of principles that it declares eternal. "If you give up here," it says, "when you might be strenuous, what principle hinders your caprices from ruling you altogether? Is not giving up the same as saying, I am no man, and will be no man. Where can worth be achieved in the world without strenuousness? It is manhood in general that you are here [25] betraying. As far as in you lies, you are, by the principle of your act, opposing all worthy doing that goes on in the world. For all worthy doing implies courage, and means strenuousness." "Nay," but I may next reply, "I grant your principle, in a way; but my feeling now is that even at my best, even if I devotedly toil till doomsday, value in the world at all. People who can really do anything of worth, people who have the power to be of any service, ought to be strenuous, and to serve patiently. That is the principle. I admit it. But what I now feel is that my own worth is uncertain. I can't make myself over again. I can't give myself an ability to be of service. I am not to blame if I [26] am essentially a failure. That is my physical defect. Let it go at that. I would serve if I could be of service. I am just now only noting the mere fact that probably I can't be of service."

Yet hereupon my conscience has a perfectly rational answer that at once transfers me, as it were, from a world of uncertainties to a world where I stand in the presence of ultimate truths. "The question is not," it says, "as to your natural powers, as your skill, your effectiveness, your might, your endowments. All those matters are enshrouded in mystery. But the real question is now as to

your loyalty. And that is something whose absolute worth you can know just as well as God can know it. For here is a worth that is wholly dependent upon your self-conscious act of choice. You have moral worth not by virtue of what has been given to you, but by virtue of your conscious and intended stewardship in your use of [27] the gift. If you loyally offer yourself, the act has just the same moral worth, be your powers those of a gnat or those of an angel. For whatever your powers, all that you can do with them is to offer them, now that you have them. There is no possible moral worth in possessing an angel's endowments, until the possessor willingly offers them in service. There is all possible moral worth in any conscious act of loyal giving of what you have to the god cause, however small your natural endowment makes the gift. Your moral value then is a matter concerning which you can have absolute knowledge. Here is, as it were, a free fragment of absolute truth, which you can know just as well as God."

Now, I say, this answer of conscience, whose truth, as an ethical principle I have not now to defend, but whose validity I regard as capable of a purely philosophical [28] defense,—this answer of conscience interests us here, not for its practical importance, but for the far-reaching insight into ultimate truth that it suggests. What question could be more interesting to most men than the question: What is my real worth as God knows it? Now ask the corresponding question regarding any other object than a man. What is the true worth of yonder stars? What divine purpose is fulfilled by the present known multiplicity of the chemical elements? Plainly such questions are shrouded in mystery. We cannot hope to read the world's secrets in any such fashion. Or ask the same question concerning the worth of any man's life-work, viewed from without. Did Alexander the Great do [29] more good than harm? Would the world have been better, or worse, without Cromwell? To try to answer such questions launches us at once upon a sea of special inquiries. Historical students do well to be cautious as to such problems. It is easy to be confident about them; but to be really certain—no that is another matter. Just so too, no man is any fair judge of the real value of his own

influence in his world. No man has a right to say: "My powers have proved to be worth so and so much to the world." No man may even dare to say, "Apart from my good or ill intents, I am sure that as a fact, my effect upon my world has been such, that I have done more good than harm." No, we know not ever what [30] the actual effect of our presence in the world has been. My words fall upon the ears of chance listeners. Perhaps this or that misunderstood speech of mine has already set some weakling upon thoughts that have led him to crime. My deeds fly from me into the world, like pebbles cast into the ocean. Perhaps the kindness that I meant to do has been only a poison to those to whom I dealt out what I called my good. Nobody knows, moreover, what some descendant of mine may not someday do in the way of mischief by virtue of this or that trait which he has more or less remotely inherited from me. No, it is never mine to say: "I have actually effected more good than harm by my presence and my doings in the world." Thus ignorant [31] are we mortals as to the worth of things,—yes, as to the effective worth of ourselves also. But lo! here I stand before a moral issue. The question is, "Shall I be loyal or not? Shall I be strenuous or not? Shall I be traitor to my trust or not?" Now I may indeed doubt, as much as my ignorance forces me to doubt, about the probable outcome of my acts. However, in any case where a trust is in my hands, life presses. I must act. To pretend not to act, is itself action. Even to flee from life is the most positive of interferences with my task. In all my ignorance, in all my weakness, in all my darkness still something must be done. Well: Shall I act as a traitor, or as a loyal servant? On my answer to this question turns not my externals, not my effective worth as the impartial observer of the [32] results of my acts would someday estimate it,—but my whole moral worth. If I did the deeds of a good angel, but with the traitor's intent, my moral worth would be just the same as that of Judas. If outwardly by fatal chance I seemed, like the ideal just man of Plato's Republic, the worst of men, but had the intent of the just man, my moral worth would be that of the angels. One sees, the truth here is to lie inside my own choice. My self-conscious choice, the meaning of my life as I alone can mean it, this alone so

concerned in the question: What am I morally worth? Then, I know, in advance, what constitutes the core of moral worth, for me, precisely as well as God knows. Of all else I am ignorant. But here I grasp what we have called a free fragment of the absolute truth, viz. a fragment such that no further knowledge, however vast would change our estimate of this fragment or give it another coloring. I know that to God also, to an omniscient being as to my own ignorant heart, absolutely the whole moral worth of me [33] lies in my loyalty of intent; so that whether I am of worth in this sense or not is something upon which God can be enlightened only just in so far as I also, at the moment of my sincere intent, am myself enlightened. I know the conditions of moral worth. At the moment when I fully mean to be loyal, I actually know my real and present, and at the same time my eternally significant, moral worth, as a being who offers what he can in response to the eternal demands of the moral law. Upon this matter, I repeat, God can know no more than I then and there know; for in knowing just this moral truth I know his own truth, and I know it precisely as it is for him. Here then, the instant of experience expresses an eternal truth; the fragment reveals what absolute knowledge could only confirm.

You see, I am not asserting that we mortals have any infallible knowledge as to the details of what are called the special maxims of morality. A man [34] can wisely doubt about many special points of the current moral code in which he may chance to have been educated. I affirm that we have absolute moral knowledge in one class of cases, and there only,—namely in so far as fortune forces us to act somehow—further pause, or deliberation, or effort to do nothing, no being itself an action—so that our one alternative is: “Shall I act loyally, according to my best light, serving the cause that I now see as the good cause, or shall I, as traitor, turn from that cause, and shirk the responsibility?” In this one case, so I here affirm, we have a knowledge of an absolute reality, which God even as omniscient cannot see otherwise than we do, when we say: What loyalty of intent is, what willing service is, what treason is, what moral worth is,—all this we here know.” [35]

And I assert that in knowing all this we now know God's mind in itself, and share the truth that omniscience sees. Here then God's mind becomes manifest to us; and that is why I say that in the moral world there is the manifestation of God. Moral facts, so I affirm, have, metaphysically speaking, this peculiar character, that, even in their fragmentariness, they reveal something of eternal significance, which no supplement can alter.

My statement has been summary, and dogmatic. I fully admit that there is here much involved that invites a closer theoretical scrutiny. But I have chosen facts that are by themselves very near to all of you, and very familiar. [36] I have tried to exemplify what I mean by the moral world. The moral world is as much a world of facts as is the world of science. That I exist, that I have intents, that my life means something to me whenever I act deliberately—all these are statements of fact. Whatever else God, as knower of the system of absolute truth, as possessor and constituent soul of all reality,—whatever else he is and knows,—he is at least in these moral facts, and he knows at least these moral truths. Now these are truths of a very peculiar sort. In order to know what yonder flower or star is, you would have to know countless other facts beside the flower that you see and smell and beside the star that glitters. [37] The physics of the stellar spectra, the biology of the flower's life,—these, in combination with all else that science can find out, bring you only to the threshold of wonder where philosophy, long pondering, queries:—"Of what vast complex of interwoven experience are these experiences of our senses and of our science a hint and a fragment?" On this threshold we wait for new light,—wait and find it—how slowly?

Well it is precisely so to, in one aspect, with our human nature itself. As student of psychology, I myself love to ponder and to wonder over the intricate and still, in so vast an extent, unanswered problems as to the origin, the physical conditions, and the destiny, of our [38] minds. They too are a part of the same multitudinous complex of experience whereof the phenomena of nature are a hint. From nature they came, to nature they are linked, into the dim forest of nature's

wonders their own constantly return, and are there lost again to our view. It is utterly unfair to prejudge questions of natural history upon ethical grounds; and what I have said about the absoluteness of the moral world, as known to man, gives me no right to prejudge any question about the evolution of mind, about the relations of body and mind, about the whole province which psychology on the one hand, and the philosophy of nature on the other hand, [39] undertake—not to explore, but cautiously to consider. But what I now maintain is that we have not to explore the ocean of mystery before becoming sure that this pearl which we hold in our hands not only shines, but is priceless. And I affirm that it is our moral self-consciousness which, rescuing this pearl from the depths, knows here the true mind of God himself. The moral fact I call a free fragment of the absolute truth, because I affirm that its worth can be made out by examining that alone.

III

Our moral self-consciousness, and the mind of God—these are the terms of that relationship to eternal truth which is asserted by our present proposition. I say that we here know an absolute truth as to this relationship. I must particularize still a little, as to both of these terms. How can [40] we know that the mind of God, as we have philosophically defined that mind, viz. as the Absolute Mind,—how can we know that this mind has any clear relation to our moral self-consciousness? Let me try to answer that question, first by briefly sketching an aspect of our conception of the Absolute which I have so far neglected; and then by trying to tell you what notion I have of the true nature of our human, and in particular of our moral self-consciousness.

God, we have said, must be a being who sees and clearly comprehends the whole constitution of the [41] finite world, so that this constitution exists only for, in, and through his insight. Well, the finite world obviously has a constitution. It is *this* world, and no other. And I must beg you to dwell a little on the fact thus presented. We have a right to ask, what principle in God, determines the world to be just this world, rather than any other? It is, in fact, logically impossible

that all the vain possibilities which a merely abstract thought could conceive, should be together realized in any world of concrete experience, since such abstract possibilities, taken merely as such, clash together. Abstractly it is possible that you should have had three eyes instead of two, or that your arms should have been wings, like a bird's. But in concrete experience you, being yourself and nobody else, have two eyes, and arms instead of wings. Well just so in general. Whatever world there is, for the concrete experience of the absolute being, may be idly regarded,—abstractly judged by [42] mere thought,—as a particular case amongst countless barely possible worlds. For an absolute being too, there would then remain a contrast between the abstractly possible worlds which are not, and the concretely actual world of his total experience, which is. And so the question always fairly arises, what makes the world of the absolute just this one concrete world, instead of any other possible world.

Nevertheless, as we maintained at the last time, it is equally true to reply to this question that for God, as the absolute knower, there can be no genuine, no well-founded possibilities of experience, that are not realized. For every true proposition with an *if* in it, is reducible to, or dependent upon, a proposition with a categorical *is* as its essential form of experience. Every *if*, as we said, implies an *is*. God cannot lack a knowledge (an experience) of the concrete truth expressed in any assertion [43] of possibility. Those other barely possible worlds then must be such that even if he experienced their presence, nothing would be added to his absoluteness, or to his insight. In other words they are, abstractly speaking, barely possible worlds, but, from God's point of view they are not genuinely possible worlds. Somehow, then, he does not need them, in order to be absolute. And that is why they are not, viz. because he does not need them present in his experience!

Now how can such a contrast between God's world that concretely is, and the conceivable worlds that, even for God, are not, except as bare and unreal possibilities,—how can such a contrast

be made comprehensible, and be reconciled with God's very absoluteness itself? How can a world be abstractly, or for mere thought barely possible, without being genuinely possible?

I answer simply by repeating, in terms that have long since been known to philosophy:— God's world, if one of an ideally complete experience, must in such [44] wise contain the fulfillment of all that thought conceives, as to ensure that any of those barely possible other worlds, even if they were experienced instead of this, would add no element of clearer or fuller insight. If you could hear a composition played, as often as you required, by the full orchestra, nothing could be added to your musical experience by hearing the same piece played on a hand organ. Just so, barely possible other experience, may not mean, to the truly enlightened, any possibility of more experience of any enlightening sort. Conceive God's experience as such that no supplement could add any true fulfillment, and then the possible worlds that one contrast with his become bare possibilities in so far as they [45] are essentially superfluous. In this way once more we reach the answer: God does not need those other possible worlds in order to be absolute.

But still one puzzle remains. That the other unreally possible worlds remain unreal for God's experience, and barely possible only for an abstract thought, by reason of their very incapacity to add to the effective fullness of the divine knowledge, one can in general see. But, on the other hand, it is surely conceivable that some other barely possible world might have been at least as complete a world as this one. Various possible worlds of equal rank can surely be conceived. What is the principle that determines, in the absolute truth, which one amongst all abstractly possible worlds gets presented to the absolute experience, as contrasted with any other possible world of equal completeness[?] One contrasts in vain the actual orchestra with the merely possible hand-organ as an example of a more perfect knowledge [46] rendering a less perfect knowledge superfluous. For there remains the fact that instead of this orchestra, however perfect, some other orchestra, equally perfect is always abstractly conceivable. And the question remains: What principle determines the

presence of this orchestra rather than another equally good? Or, passing from the similitude to the original, what principle in the Absolute corresponds to the presence of this, rather than of equally complete *other* worlds of the divine knowledge?

I answer at length plainly, what determines this selection of the concrete actual world is a principle in the Absolute Being that we [47] can only conceive after the analogy of our Will, and in particular after the analogy of our own attentive exercise of rational will in cases where we experience clearly by ignoring what the very clearness and fixity of our attention renders superfluous. God then must be conceived, not only as all wise, but also as freely and deliberately attentive to one concrete expression of his wisdom, viz. to this world of facts which now is. There must be, in God, a principle of free choice, which eternally ignores countless abstract possibilities, by virtue of the very realization of an individual and concrete content such as constitutes [48] the present world. But, once present, the world that is must indeed exemplify and express to the full the divine Idea. God's world, freely selected as it is from the indefinite range of possible worlds, must still, in its wholeness, fulfill, content, satisfy, all that the divine thought could consistently conceive or hope.

From this point of view one can say: God self-consciously wills the ideal, the complete, the perfect; and at the same time, in thus attentively willing, his choice finds present to him, not a fatally determined world of necessity, but a freely selected world of fulfilled experience. The divine [49] freedom of selection is as real an aspect of his absoluteness as is the divine wisdom itself. God loves his world, as well as sees his world; finds it present, but finds it also ideal; discovers it to be complete, but is not forced to accept this completeness as a merely external brute fact; determines by his attentive choice what world shall fulfill his ideal; realizes all genuine possibility by ignoring countless barely abstract possibilities.

This, in outline, seems to me to be the theory of the divine Will. The divine act of attentive selection, whereby this world is just this individual world, I conceive not as a temporal [50] deed, but as an eternally present aspect of the divine nature. And I conceive that this divinely free will, this attentive rationality of God, is to him in his wholeness, precisely what our finite freedom of individual moral intent is to the world of our own self-consciousness. Or in other words, our moral choice is, to my mind, itself a part of the divine freedom.

IV

From the Conception of God's Will, I turn to the definition of my own self-conscious Will. But here at once I come into a world of the most intricate special problems. Self-conscious choice, moral will in me, in order to define that I [51] must first know what I mean by the reality of my own Self as a finite being. The problem of the nature of my conscious personality, the philosophy of the individual self-consciousness,—this is notoriously one of the deepest problems of human thought. Yet we must not fear such problems. We are here for problems. You will, I hope bear with me while, in the time that remains, I sketch for you in outline my own theory of what an individual's self-consciousness is and means.