

G. Lowes Dickinson has very aptly expressed the essence of real religion, and real religion embodies true virtue and morality, in the following words: "The bottom of his belief is that the impulse in him to love and to create is the divine impulse; that that is the core and meaning of the world. And whatever he may believe or may not believe about a world beyond, that spirit working in this world is the spring of his religion. That is why Christians and atheists may, and often do, have the same religion. For the essential thing is the common spirit, not the theology." Ruskin further amplified this thought when he reminded us that we are in any case bound to do our best while on this earth; for if there be no life beyond we must at all hazards make the very most we can of this interval of light between two eternities of darkness. With the poet of Sanskrit we must

"Look to this day!
For it is life, the very life of life!"

MISCELLANEOUS.

"THE MYSTERY OF EVIL."

To the Editor of The Open Court:

I was much interested in Paul R. Heyl's excellent review of "The Mystery of Evil" (*The Open Court*, Jan., Feb., Mar., 1920), and let us hope, his solution, in a distant future, may come to pass.

Assuming certain interpretations of evolution, there seems possible a mathematical solution of the problem of good and evil, and the late Paul Carus suggested it at various times in his writings.

For instance, he makes comparison with the old and new ideas of "heat" and "cold." We now know them as different degrees of one kind of motion. We name all degrees above an assumed point as "heat," and all below as "cold." The surveyor assumes an average level as zero, and calls distance above that, "plus," and distance below, "minus," though all is one vertical space.

Assuming the "enjoyments" and "sufferings" of life to be all made of "feelings," we arrive at a similar solution. All feeling above a certain standard is "happiness," and all below, "suffering."

A certain philosopher has devoted a chapter to "wave-motion" in life and evolution. A flag, in a steady wind, waves. A branch of a tree waves in the stream. The great electric current about the earth gives waves of variation to the magnetic needle. We have waves of health and energy. "All things are good and bad by comparison." We call the upward sweeps of the waves of

feeling, "happiness," and the downward sweeps, "sadness." And yet it is all one sweep of feeling, life, evolution.

Assume your datum-line of life high or low, and you add or subtract for your happiness.

According to this supposition one solution for perfect happiness consists in having a wave of life forever upward in its sweep. This should be the condition in "Heaven." Yet here the law of conservation might limit us!

Change is the condition of feeling. Without change the world would be frozen. No change—no feeling, no happiness, no sorrow. If the change is in wave-motions, we are sure to call the downward sweeps "evil," by comparison, even in a "Heaven." And even in a Heaven, should we not look upon the lower part of the "ever-upward wave" as "evil"? In this case "perfect happiness" would necessitate eliminating memory. Other solutions suggested involve stimulants, narcotics or illusions to tide over the downward sweeps!

We have assumed all enjoyments and sufferings of life to be made merely of "feeling." I feel better now than a while ago, and so I am happier. But is there a "quality" in certain deeds that would make our mathematical formula insufficient? Is injustice a degree of justice? Is hatred a degree of love? Is pain a degree of normal health? Is lying a degree of truthfulness? Can we imagine any beneficent being drawing a datum-plane below all the "horrors" of murder and robbery and torture, and then giving the plus sign of "good" to all life? And yet the appreciation of all seems to lie in the assumed "feeling" of our formula, and our value of x is still the apparent answer!

Those human beings who have "evolved" toward Mr. Heyl's "free soul" abhor these "evils," and it seems impossible to include such evils as mere "degrees" of a universal life of evolution or creation. Were the waves of life smaller, so as to eliminate the most abhorred features, would not the remaining, lower parts of waves have the same effects on good hearts? Would there not still be things to abhor? Paul Carus has said that the greater the intelligence and culture, the greater the capacity of feeling, both joyful and sorrowful. In the case of smaller waves, life would merely be slower, more clam-like.

What could "The Creator" eliminate from our lives to insure perfect happiness? What is the definition of perfect happiness? Is the nearest approach to it the well-cared-for ox?

It appears impossible to ignore the "elements of feeling" in all nature, as suggested by Dr. Carus, and we can imagine a certain enjoyment of the Grand Architect in the swirls of the nebulae, and in the making of suns and worlds, out of eons of quiet ether, electrons or quartels, and a delight in evolving "feelings" and wondering "souls" to appreciate it all, as suggested by Mr. Heyl.

"In Him we live and move and have our being," and perhaps we are enjoying a part of His life and enjoyment, needing only His vast point of view for the right understanding. The child tires of its beautiful playthings, and enjoys wrecking them, and perhaps we enjoy making and wrecking worlds!

Shall man, made in the image of God, be a beggar and a coward, or shall he be just, and fear not, ever aiding to make the "free soul" which evolution seems to indicate, as so well shown by Mr. Heyl?

Definitions are generally necessary in excursions into the unknown, but

we leave plenty of latitude for the application of modern ideas of mental or other activities of the cosmos. The people who live in "Flatland," or a plane, are zero in thickness, and multiplying them into a fourth dimension would leave them zero still. The fourth dimension is a mathematical convenience merely. Yet we shall ever dream of possible combinations to carry us along in "eternal life," so let us "dream," if we do not harm our neighbor, or his freedom of mind!

The solutions are sure to be found in Carus's form and formal thought, or reason, and their "laws," which are the Eternal in the ever-changing.

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To the Editor of The Open Court:

Mr. Paul R. Heyl's admirable article in your issues from January to March on "The Mystery of Evil" seems to me to assume to deny almost without argument the answer to his problem. The usual argument runs like this, "God is the Supreme Being. If, then, God is controlled by anything, that which controls Him is God instead of Him." Which is the same as to say, "The Dreadnought is supreme on the sea. If the Dreadnought is controlled by anything else, then that which controls it is the Dreadnought. Therefore, the Rudder is the Dreadnought." The fallacy is in postulating power as the criterion of Godship.

The God of the dog is his master. If what controls the master is God in His place, then the dog ought to worship the Baby or the Bank instead of the Master. I see no reason to take it for granted that a God must be all-loving, all-knowing or all-powerful. Such an interpretation of Deity as that of the Hindus implies a loving God, and will probably be concurred in by most spiritual teachers. Natural philosophy has taught us that the Life Force, whatever it is, pervades all things that we know about. So pervading all things, it may be assumed to have more knowledge than a mere Maker has of what He creates.

But granted a loving and wise God, it does not appear why we should consider it necessary or probable that God is omnipotent, much less deny that a God of powers limited in some ways is a God at all.

No creed but our own asserts, as far as I know, that its Divinities are all-powerful. Even the Jews, from whom we seem to have gotten that incomprehensible idea, called Jehovah "almighty" only as nations generally called their kings.

Most of our difficulties of the "problem of evil" and the existence of pain come from this unwarranted claim of omnipotence. Granted a loving and all-wise God, there can be no explanation of any pain nor any excuse for Him who knew how to prevent it and was able to do so—but refrained.

As we advance in knowledge, we can see that we learn more and more through our pleasures and have less and less need of pain as a teacher. For a commonplace example: we learn to take care of our teeth and to enjoy having them clean, and so avoid much needless toothache. The primitive man without such knowledge can do nothing but bear the ache, or knock out the tooth.

All diseases appear to be the results of ignorance or neglect of some

natural laws—if not, then clearly the Creator, if all-wise and all-powerful, has a streak of malignancy in Him. Why should He bring beings into life who must suffer, if He knew how to produce the same results without suffering and was able to do it?

If you or I, with such love as we have, were able to make two varieties, say of clocks or of pictures, equally good, one kind which would suffer agonies, the other the common kind which does not, no one of us would hesitate which kind to make.

It may be that in some of the countless millions of worlds God has installed creatures who are always joyous, like the angels or devas of which we have traditions and ideas. They may be there for a good purpose of which we know nothing, but if that Creator could have accomplished through us the same purpose without our tears and groans, he is certainly brutal not to have done so.

It seems evident to the unsophisticated mind that we make whatever we are making as well as we, being such as we are, can make it. Why should we imagine an all-wise God who is stupider in that respect than we are?

I do not suppose this explanation will appeal to many persons; it is too simple; we like mysteries and love to tie our minds in knots for the fun of unraveling them.

For an all-wise and loving God to make replicas of himself only less powerful would be without any object that we can think of. But we can easily imagine Gods experimenting with creatures to see how they could best be made. Hear now a fable from the *Independent*.

“And God rested on the seventh day and He saw that ‘it was all very good.’ But the Devil said, ‘It is pretty good; but it would have been better if you had made men of cement instead of red clay.’”

“And God said, ‘I have plaster saints enough already. I want *men* that can mould themselves.’”

Pain and pleasure are the necessary stimulants to men so to mould themselves into the perfect God-likeness, fitting companions for God.

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