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OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM; OR THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

THE difficult problem to which the following inquiry is to be devoted has recently come into great prominence, especially in Germany, through the decided and very prevalent Pessimism of the philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer. Because of the manifold sorrows and calamities of life, and the universal reign of death, he has maintained that this is the worst of all possible worlds. He says that it is even so bad that non-being is better than being, and that the consummation most devoutly to be wished is total annihilation, or the entire loss of conscious existence. This extreme Pessimism is not without favour among the general public in Germany. It might indeed be said that to it chiefly is due the lively interest with which Schopenhauer's philosophy has been received by some classes of society to whom otherwise all philosophy is indifferent. We do not say that the most zealous of these are practically in earnest with their pessimistic conception of the world; in fact, Schopenhauer himself is not. The discussion of Pessimism leads naturally to the consideration of the opposite principle—that of Optimism. This, as expressed by Leibnitz, is that this world is the best of all possible worlds, and that therefore it was created as it is. Between these two extremes we have an abundant choice of intermediary or modified views of good and evil, according to which various conceptions of the world may be formed.

It is not, however, the mere whim of an eccentric philosopher which in the present day has raised a renewed attention to this problem. Other and more important circumstances have united to press it forward as important, and to justify new efforts for its solution. To reconcile the imperfection of the world—its suffering and death—with faith in an almighty, all-wise, and infinitely perfect God, has been long aimed at by the dogmatic theology of the Christian Church. It has tried to show that the imperfection is not due to the Creator, but has been brought on by the creature. The entire creation, and especially man, is said to have been created good and pure. From an absolutely perfect Creator this was to be expected, and this is expressly declared in the Mosaic record of creation. Depravity, suffering, and death are ascribed to the transgression of our first parents. The life of sorrow began when the world ceased to be a paradise. This mode of reconciling the imperfection of the world with the perfection of the Creator was chiefly urged by St. Paul. Five hundred years later it received a fresh impulse from St. Augustine. There have been many controversies on subordinate points, but the solution of St. Paul and Augustine has for centuries satisfied the Christian world. In the present day, however, it is found inadequate. It cannot stand before the lessons of philosophy and the discoveries of natural science. The purified moral sense forbids us to believe that because of the sin of our first parents all mankind became liable to suffering, to death, and even to everlasting destruction. But besides this, discoveries in geology and palæontology not only do not confirm the belief that nature and humanity began in a state of perfection or paradise, but they really make such a belief impossible. That suffering and death are the consequences of sin, introduced into nature as something abnormal and depraved, is contrary to our present knowledge. Everywhere throughout nature they show themselves as necessary. Matter in its chemical processes exhibits such a perfect adjustment as forbids us to regard it as something abnormal and depraved.

The old problem of the imperfection of the world comes up afresh for the consciousness of our time. And now it is not merely the theoretical question whether the world be good or evil, but how the actual condition of the world is to be reconciled with the belief in a perfect Creator. The prevalence of the inductive method in modern science seems even to necessitate the conclusion that as the world is bad, it could not have had a Divine Author. It demands that the original cause, in itself unknown, be determined by the known effects, and not, as on the principle of deduction, the known effects inferred from the unknown cause. It does not allow us to say that because there is a God the world must be good, however bad it may appear.

Thus Pessimism and Atheism are closely allied to each other. Schopenhauer and his disciples are decided in their profession of Atheism. The primordial being, the "Will," which they acknowledge, they describe as blind, unconscious, or absolutely unintelligent. Under these circumstances a renewed inquiry into this subject seems necessary. In the present paper we can only treat the question historically, passing under rapid review the various attempts at a solution of the question by religion and philosophy, but reserving for a second part our own speculative discussion and the solution we have to offer.

I.

If we pass before our minds the original history of humanity, we shall meet somewhere a stage of development in which men came to self-consciousness, and in some measure began to think of their existence, their destiny, and their duties. This moment of human existence we can scarcely conceive to have come in the ordinary even flow of life. It must have been at some crisis, excitement, or convulsion, when the dull dream-like life and the mere animal feeling of existence were disturbed, that the light of human consciousness first began to dawn. As steel struck by a flint produces fire, so difficulties, dangers, and catastrophes may have first elicited from human nature the deeply-hidden sparks of the conscious spirit. In the same way religion may have had its origin in the awakening of a clearer consciousness of the world and of God. This first consciousness must have been eminently pessimistic. It is when men are disturbed in their usual mode of life that they think of the world and its phenomena, and especially of its first cause. But for such an interference with the routine of existence, all would be allowed to pass as something ordinary—something of which nothing further was to be thought or said. It would be regarded as we ordinarily regard health, as something which does not require any special attention. It is when health is disturbed by sickness, and its restoration earnestly desired, that men begin to think of it as the gift of a Power above us. It is this disturbance of health which first leads to the belief of higher unknown causes or mysterious forces, before whose will and power men appear as weakness and vanity.

Let us think of men as yet possessing no historical tradition and no doctrine, but developed to a conscious life, living under a perpetually serene sky and an equal sunshine. These men would have as yet no clear sense of the importance of the sun and its rays. They would scarcely have come even to the stage of offering divine worship to the sun or to any other object. But let there break forth suddenly a terrible tempest, with thunder and lightning, storm and rain, work-

ing destruction on the earth, and then all hearts will be deeply moved. Then thoughts will arise, not merely of their own weakness, but also of a higher hostile power, filling them with fears and anxiety, and calling forth the effort in some way to appease it and to obtain its favour. When the sun shines again, it will be regarded with eyes and feelings altogether different from what it was before. It will no more appear as ordinary and indifferent, but as a propitious and beneficent power, which, by its greater force, has triumphed over the power of enmity and evil. The thought of a good Divine Being has thus arisen and been developed through this very disturbance of the hitherto even course of human life, that which first evoked the thought of a mysterious evil power. This is an important moment for the significance of evil in the world. We can here understand how it is that, in the earliest times of humanity, a greater influence over men has always been ascribed to the evil power than to the good. Even according to the Bible narrative, Satan exercised a greater influence than God over our first parents. He knew how to seduce them to transgression against God. With many nations the evil powers are still supreme. Wherever the idea of a good Divine Being has been derived from nature, the thought or belief in a wicked being, and its influence on nature and nature-life, has not been put aside. On the other hand, in a theoretical sense, the existence for men of so many dangerous evils, and the manifest imperfection of the world, appear only the more mysterious in proportion as we form a correct idea of God as a wise, good, just, and almighty Being.

With such a difficulty, it is not surprising that, in the ever-increasing mental development of men, very different religious and philosophical systems have been formed, with very different estimates of the value of human life. To explain the dualism, some think it necessary to believe two original principles—one good and one evil. Some place an original estrangement of the world from God in the very act of its creation. Others suppose evil to arise from the creature, or regard it as a necessary means to advance and realise good. There are even those who say that the root of evil must be sought in the good Divine Being Himself. As to the value and happiness of human life, different views also prevail. Some are decidedly pessimistic, the aggregate of the sorrows of life being regarded as far surpassing the sum of its joys, and the end of all, annihilation or loss of conscious existence. Others unite Pessimism and Optimism, regarding this life as pessimistic, but having an optimistic compensation in the life to come. Perfect Optimism is also maintained. There are people who regard the good and the happiness of this life as a long way surpassing its evils and its sorrows, and these as only

means for the furtherance of the good. To this is added the belief of a compensation for all present sorrows in a life to come. We shall try briefly to set forth some of the characteristics in this respect of the most celebrated systems of religion and philosophy.

We may properly begin with the view that there are antagonistic supernatural powers concealed behind the phenomena of nature, which influence nature and men. It is supposed that there are good and bad, divine or demoniacal, beings. From the one come the pleasures of life, and from the other its sorrows and misfortunes. This conception is confessedly most complete in the religion of the Persians, or the religious system of Zoroaster. Two hostile spirits—the good, Ahuramazda, and the destructive spirit, Angramainja (Ormuzd and Ahriman)—stand over against each other, and with their subordinate spirits wage perpetual warfare. Creation was brought forth by the good Spirit. It was corrupted by the evil, and it is now the scene of the great conflict between the two powers. To the human race it specially belongs to share in this conflict, and, in union with the good Spirit, to overcome the evil, so that at last Ahuramazda with his followers will conquer, and be sole ruler over the universe. This dualism is then, at least so far, not absolute, since the kingdom of evil and its ruler shall be perfectly overcome, and the warfare ended. Concerning these two powers, whether both, with their followers, came originally from one single Divine Essence, and, if so, from whence it arose, nothing more is determined. One original unity, however, appears probable, the final conqueror being continually regarded as the sole and highest Divine Being. The system of Zoroaster manifestly inclines to Optimism. This is evident from the fortunate issue of the strife, and the final blessedness of those who fight for the kingdom of the good. To the Parsees the earth is not a vale of sorrows, but the stage of the great conflict with evil. They look forward to victory and a triumphant reward.

A similar dualism was also formed by degrees among the Egyptians. It was never indeed so decided as with the Persians, nor did it take such a marked ethical character. It was more naturalistic, embracing the great powers of nature as they were useful or hurtful to the Egyptians. It is also evident that less value or significance was ascribed to human life than among the Persians, and, therefore, so much the more prominence was given to its continuation after the death of the body. The true goal of existence was reached when the brief earthly pilgrimage had come to an end. The bodies of the dead shared as much as possible in the life beyond. For this reason they were embalmed and concealed in well-built tombs or mausoleums. This life was the time fixed for trial and probation. On it depended the destiny of the life to come. After

death came the judgment, when every condemned soul was given over to the torments of hell. It is, however, worthy of notice that this judgment is more concerned with the violation of religious and moral prohibitions, and not so much, as in Christianity, with positive moral conduct.

Still nearer to Pessimism is the religion of the Brahmans—although, indeed, here we do not find so clearly a positively wicked power as in the Parsee dualism. The world takes its origin from one sole Original Being, and that by way of emanation. Its relation to the Original Being is as that of the developed to the undeveloped, as that of the plant to the seed, of the stream to its source. But though it be an emanation from the Divine Essence, it is, nevertheless, imperfect, undivine, impure, and this in proportion as that which has emanated is estranged from its Divine Original. This world is a place of punishment, suffering, and purification. With the doctrine of emanation is united contempt for matter and the sensuous life, and at the same time the doctrine of transmigration of souls into animals and men for purification and final restoration to the Original Essence. How the pollution of souls began, and how material existence, which is an emanation from the Divine Essence, should be something bad, is never clearly explained. In Brahmanism purification and assimilation to Deity take place, not merely through practical moral acts, but mainly through passive conduct, through prayer, and asceticism. Prayer is the highest power—even that by which the gods themselves are overcome. Yea, it is itself divine, or absolutely God over all gods (*Brahmanaspati*). Through asceticism, or the mortification of the sensuous existence, come chiefly purification and restoration to the Divine Essence—or, at least, salvation is obtained in the life to come. The Brahmanical religion is, by its doctrines, a religion of priests, ceremonies, purifications, and prescriptions; but the ascetics are, in reality, above the priests. The highest thing for man is mortification, or contempt of the joys of life; and yet this religion is not directly pessimistic. It leans rather in its foundation to Optimism. The goal of life is still the salvation of the creature; and thus, in any case, being is preferable to non-being.

We find a more decided Pessimism in Buddhism. The religion of Buddha confessedly arose as a reformation of Brahmanism. Buddha chiefly opposed the outward ceremonialism and the trifling ritualism of the Brahmanical religion. But he opposed also the principle of caste, denying the supposed differences of classes, and maintaining the universal brotherhood, or equality of men. He preached a pure, simple, moral doctrine, that he might lead men to govern their passions, to love their neighbours, and thereby to lessen

the miseries of life. To the practical part of Buddhism was soon added an esoteric doctrine, which gave it the character of Pessimism or Nihilism. For the initiated it appears to have been simply Atheism; while the people had preached to them only that which was practical or moral. The theoretical part was already found in the speculative, and of course heretical, theology of Brahmanism. This theology was divided as to its most important questions into two antagonistic systems. The one was the Vedanta, and the other that of Sankya. The former maintained the reality of the Original Being, Brahm, and regarded the world of multiplicity or change as merely phenomenal. The Sankya system, on the other hand, regarded the manifold as the real, but denied the reality of Brahm or the Original Essence. In the Buddhistic theory the two systems were united. From the Vedanta system was taken the nothingness of the world of change and multiplicity, and from the Sankya system the nothingness of the Original Essence. The result was a complete Nihilism. This world essentially is a place of sorrow and wretchedness. Evil is not a corruption or deterioration of being, but being itself, and sin is nothing else but the striving or longing after being. Freedom, therefore, from misery can only be reached through the renunciation of being, by passing into Nirvana, which is either directly nothing, or, at least, non-being, and the loss of conscious existence. Thus, according to Buddhism, existence itself is wretchedness, and its annihilation is the goal to be desired. Non-being is better than being. This is the most decided, and the most complete Pessimism.

The conception of the world most opposed to Buddhism is that of the Greeks. We might call the old Hellenes the chief advocates of Optimism. Doubtless there are Greek philosophers and poets who have taken a very dark, in fact a pessimistic, view of the world, not far removed from that of Buddhism. But these are exceptions, and their words to be regarded rather as the expressions of a momentary experience than as a settled conception of the world. It may be said that, generally, the Greeks regarded human life as a valuable gift from the Deity. They enjoyed it as much as possible, and tried to look only at its brighter sides. They did not reckon upon another life as the complement of this. To them existence after death was but the existence of shadows, and not any proper continuation of being. The present life alone was real, and much to be preferred to any other life. This was expressed sadly by the shade of Achilles in Homer, where he says to Ulysses that he would rather be "the meanest day-labourer on earth than the supreme ruler of the shades below." This conception, however, did not prevail universally. The Greeks were not strangers to the thoughts and the hopes of a

blessed life beyond the grave. But the future life was not allowed to disturb the pleasures of this. If the world beyond was an existence of shadows, that was only a further reason why the present pleasures should be more eagerly enjoyed.

The Greeks were more free from the troubles and torments of the earthly life than any other people, not even excepting Christians. They did not live in fear of a wicked or devilish power continually threatening evil to mortals. For them the dark powers of wickedness were, at any rate during this era, restrained by the all-powerful Zeus, who thrust the mighty Titans into Tartarus, and allowed no room for their operation in the normal order by which his kingdom stands. In this the Greek conception of the world differs from the Christian, and not without advantage on the side of the Greek. The supernatural powers or gods of the Greeks could indeed be hostile to men; but they were not therefore peculiarly wicked or devilish. There was, of course, a background for the Greek consciousness—a dark, inexorable power, that fate from which nothing could be obtained, to which all was subject, even the reigning gods. But just because it was dark and inexorable, and because even the gods must bow to it, men could more easily be resigned, and not suffer themselves to be disturbed in the joyful pleasures of existence by cares and anxieties that avail nothing. We cannot at present examine the optimistic or pessimistic character of all religions, and their relation to the solution of the problem of evil; but it will be necessary briefly to look at some aspects of the religion of Judaism.

It is difficult to say whether the Jewish religion be Optimism or Pessimism. In it we have a union of both conceptions, sometimes the one prevailing, sometimes the other, and often a wavering between the two. The Jewish tradition concerning the beginning of the world, and in particular of the human race as it is recorded in the Books of Moses, is quite optimistic. The world and all that it contains was created "good." Men especially were to live in paradise in innocence and bliss. As soon as they fell by the temptation to disobedience, hard labour was their lot, and they became subject to the miseries of existence and to death. It is specially to be noticed that this did not come upon men from any evil hostile power, but directly from God Himself as a punishment for transgression. The wicked or devilish power is very much in the background in the earlier times of the Jewish people. This forms a very definite distinction between the old Hebrew conception of the world and that of the later Jews, which was also adopted by Christianity. The old Hebrew view of the condition and end of the earthly existence, notwithstanding the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise and the Divine infliction of punishment, is pre-eminently optimistic.

The patriarchs, indeed, utter lamentations concerning the sorrows of this earthly pilgrimage, and at last, old and weary of life, they longed for death. But this earthly life is always with them a Divine good. The worshippers of the true God are rewarded with happiness and prosperity. Well-doing and obedience to the Divine laws are the sure way to riches and length of days. Compensation through the immortality of the soul, or a future existence, is never mentioned in connection with this optimistic view of human life. In later times, in the days of the judges and the kings, the people seem to have had but one supreme object. That was the possession of the land of promise, which was connected with the fear of the Lord. All the goods and blessings of life are promised to them who keep the commandments. But these are to be taken away if the people are disobedient. They are to be given over to the dominion of strangers, and to sufferings of various kinds if they go after other gods. Human life is ever regarded as a blessing to be continued because of obedience, or taken away because of unfaithfulness.

In the Book of Job, which is specially devoted to the problem of evil, we have a deeper and more ethical conception of life and its sorrows. In the introduction, Satan appears before God Himself, and plays the part of the tormentor and tempter expressly by Divine permission. There the misfortunes and the sorrows of life appear as a trial, and as the means of a higher religious and moral probation. Job stands the trial in so far that he submits with devout trust to misfortune as a dispensation of Providence. In this devout faith he is never shaken. His friends come to comfort him with their reasons and exhortations. These are grounded on the old Hebrew conception that suffering is always a punishment for sin. Job is indignant, and denies with decisive firmness that he is suffering any punishment for transgression. He even vindicates himself, and maintains his entire innocence. The affliction he can bear, but the cause assigned, and the confession of grief required from him, he cannot bear. He rejects sharply the pretended wisdom of his friends, because he knows nothing of transgression against God or His commandments. They had expressed nothing more than the principle of the old Hebrew religion that sin and suffering are necessarily related to each other. By the discourse of one of the speakers we are reminded of a like doctrine in the religion of Confucius, where it is said that to every man is given in part an external gift corresponding to his moral condition. It is not altogether impossible that by means of caravans travelling through Central Asia a similar solution of the problem of human existence had been reached by nations widely removed from each other. Job rejects this solution, at least so far as it could be applied to his own case. He does not say that the mean-

ing of suffering set forth in the introduction is his view, yet he actually bears his misfortunes in that sense. He gives no theoretical explanation except that God is to be trusted. Without complaining, we should submit to every Divine dispensation, because in all things God shows Himself to be infinite, almighty, and all-wise. By this Job rejects the consequences which would follow from the theory of his friends if applied to him, that God is unjust, and also the doubt concerning the existence of God, which might be inferred by an inductive experience. The conclusion of the book; however, falls again into the ordinary Jewish conception. It is not shown that Job stood the trial, and came out of it with the religious and moral sense purified and elevated, having the reward in his own consciousness. There is nothing indeed said of a reward beyond the grave, but Job is again blessed with sons and daughters and an abundance of earthly goods. If, then, the object of the sufferings of Job was not something external in order to punish him for some transgression, his inner religious and moral preservation is an external reward, and so far this agrees with the optimistic world-conception of the Jewish people.

But a pessimistic view of life is not altogether foreign, at least to later Judaism. It is particularly expressed in the Book of Ecclesiastes. The "preacher" finds all which the earth can offer vain and unsatisfying. He even concludes that it is better to be dead than to live. He has no certainty of a life after death; he doubts if it is not then the same with men as with beasts. He knows not whether the soul goes upwards or downwards. There is not, indeed, in this book any decided doctrine. The pessimistic view, that all labour and all pleasures which life offers are vain, is changed into earnest exhortations to enjoy the pleasures of life so long as it lasts. The expressions of doubt concerning immortality, or at least a happy existence after death, are followed by the words that the soul returns to God, from whom it came. This certainly may be interpreted in different ways; but it does not necessarily mean that the soul shall have a personal immortality. In any case, this little writing shows that the pessimistic conception of the world was not unknown to Judaism, after the mind of the nation was so far developed that it could reflect with judgment on human life.

As to Christianity, the modern Pessimists do not hesitate to represent at least the Author of it as a very decided Pessimist. They appeal to passages in which Christ inculcates contempt of the world, little estimation of earthly goods and pleasures, even the giving up of all earthly things for the kingdom of heaven's sake. But so little is there in this of a really pessimistic conception of human life, that He reckons happy the unfortunate, the suffering, and the wretched, because their sorrows will be the cause of their coming to a higher

joy after this life—even to an everlasting happiness in the kingdom of heaven. This, however, is not the only way in which the apparent Pessimism of the Christian doctrine is changed into a real Optimism. It is effected in a higher and more definite way, by the devout frame of mind, the unconditional trust in God, as the Father of all men, which Christ himself diffused and strove to inculcate on all mankind. By this the world has already become a kingdom of God, which is set up, not externally, but in the hearts of men. It exists in the soul, and from thence it purifies and enlightens the whole being. By this the problem of earthly evil is solved in a higher way than if it were regarded merely as a punishment from God, or as the work of the devil. The sufferings and the evils of life can thus be conceived as only means for the religious and moral probation of men, and for a higher spiritual perfection and divine purification than could otherwise be attained. And this accords precisely with the lesson of the preamble to the Book of Job. To the truly Christian soul, to devout faith, and unlimited trust in God, the evils and sorrows of life will not, indeed, appear as nothing. Yet they will be regarded as nothing. They shall vanish away when brought into comparison with the possession of God or of the kingdom of God in the soul. On the other hand, the goods of life need not be cast away. The owners may possess them, but they must live as if they possessed them not.

These deepest thoughts of Christianity, this true spirit of the doctrine and life of Jesus, was, alas! soon forgotten. The old Hebrew view of evil in the world, and of God's relation to it, became current, and was the special foundation and source of the most important dogmas of the Church. On it was specially founded the dogma of original sin, which supposed that physical and moral evil were necessary results of guilt, and were either inflicted by God as punishment, or brought on by the devil through hatred and wickedness. But for this we must, as Augustine showed, ascribe unrighteousness to God, since without a sufficient reason He had given so many sorrows to men. The higher significance of suffering which is mentioned in the proem of the Book of Job, and which appears in the conclusion as the solution of this difficult problem, was ignored. The Church dogma is rather founded on the doctrine of Job's friends, that misfortune and suffering imply guilt, as otherwise they could not be inflicted by God. From the universality of physical and moral evil in the world and in man, a universal guilt and a universal Divine displeasure, with the corresponding punishment, are inferred. But as the dogma-framers did not wish altogether to deny the Divine goodness, and held that some men were ordained to eternal life, so they came to the fearful thought of the condemnation of the mass of mankind (*massa damnata*). Out of predes-

tion to salvation came naturally the predestination of multitudes to condemnation. This entirely contradicted the idea of God as the Father of all men, and excluded or made impossible that perfectly unlimited faith and that devout trust in God which constituted the very essence of Christianity. In the same way, and on a like foundation as the doctrine of original sin, was formed the Christological dogma of redemption, or the theory of satisfaction. The relation of this doctrine to the spirit of Christ may be seen clearly and at once by comparing it with the classical parable of the prodigal son and his reception on his return to his father's house. But parables of this kind, and indeed the entire doctrine of Christ, are explained according to this theory, while men ought rather to test the justness of the theory simply by His doctrine and parables. Here, in my judgment, is the starting-point for the reform of modern Christianity and the restoration of the Christianity of Christ.

We come now to the philosophical efforts to solve the problem of evil. Here our inquiries must be limited to the most important. Plato, notwithstanding his idealism, or rather because of it, was by no means an Optimist, at least in relation to this life. In his judgment, the condition of the human race on earth was essentially one of punishment and suffering for sins committed in a former state of being. He vindicates the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, though in a more dignified form than this doctrine was held by the Hindoos in India. The sensuous body appeared to him as the prison of the soul, from which it is to be freed by death. Matter is not any true existence, but the nothing, that which is impervious to true knowledge, the irrational. But, notwithstanding all this, Plato is not to be regarded as a Pessimist. He does not limit human existence to this earthly life, but supposes it to continue, and therefore to be capable of higher perfection or likeness to what is divine. This is evident from the proofs of the soul's immortality which he puts into the mouth of Socrates.

Aristotle was less an idealist, and still less a Pessimist, than Plato. He regards the present existence as justly arranged in itself, without having recourse to the idea of compensation by the Deity. It is however true that on this subject he does not speak with any clearness or decision, nor does he use any special arguments for the immortality of the soul. The chief philosophical schools after Aristotle, as well as the Cynics before him, took altogether a practical character. Their object was to discover how to overcome the sufferings of life, and to enjoy happiness. This cheerful goal was the aim of the Cynics, the Epicureans, and the Stoics. The Cynics sought elevation over want and suffering, that they might freely renounce all which other men praise and desire as the joys or the pleasures of life. They wished to show that the real happiness of human life

did not consist in external goods and pleasures, but in the soul, and that happiness and misery were not to be estimated by outward circumstances or sensuous joys and sorrows. The early Greek conception of the world gave place to higher thoughts. The spirit awoke, and, claiming its freedom, asserted its superiority over nature. The beautiful balance of the sensuous and the spiritual in human nature, which men found pre-eminently among the Greeks, was certainly disturbed, but it was succeeded by a higher stage of the historical development of the human race. The elevated spiritualism of Christianity was not indeed reached, but the work of preparation for it was begun. To the same end Stoicism was working, but with a deeper and nobler spirit. The wise man, that is, the Stoic, tried by insight and the power of will to rise above the things of life. These could prevail nothing with him. Neither sorrows nor pleasures, neither poverty nor riches, could break his peace or disturb the equilibrium of his soul. He lived according to nature, and did not suffer his conduct to be guided by external circumstances, but by reason and will. In this way the Stoic was a man of great worth. He was wise by insight, which alone guided him, and a king by the moral force of will, which raised him above all things, and made him independent of all things. The wise man even became equal to the Deity through the power of his soul. As in Brahmanism, he that prayed was assimilated to God, or rather produced God, by his prayer, prayer itself being regarded as God (*Brahmanaspati, Logos Verbum?*), so the Stoic by moral force became God. According to this, the conception of the world was naturally optimistic. The practical tendency of the Epicureans was also to discover the best side of existence, yet not by means of moral or spiritual elevation over the evils of life. They rather tried to mitigate them by art, and to find as many pleasures as possible. This effort was certainly more pleasant than that of the Stoics, and required less expenditure of mental power, but its results, in consequence, were more questionable.

The Neo-Platonists, who arose after the establishment of Christianity, sought to renounce the sorrows and the nothingness of life, and to obtain blessedness by a mystical and magical union with the Deity, or a plunging of themselves into the Godhead. This also was not a theoretical philosophy, but a practical striving, having for its goal not knowledge or truth, but happiness. And this was sought, not as with the Stoics, through elevation of the innate powers to an infinite energy of moral and practical self-assertion in all the relations of life, and by the attainment of a Godlike sublimity of character, but through the giving up of self into the Divine Essence. The Neo-Platonists renounced their own being, not merely to come into contact with the divine, but to be absorbed in Deity. It might

indeed be said that with Neo-Platonism Greek philosophy also gave up the ghost. Wearied with the struggle which had lasted for ages, in obedience to the divine purpose, it retired, and gave up its earthly calling. The spirit of energetic and independent inquiry had disappeared. There remained behind nothing but the lifeless body, or the mere letter. With the establishment, however, of Christianity, the seed was sown for a new intellectual life. This developed in time, and appropriated to itself whatever was suitable from the lifeless body of Greek philosophy. It assimilated or worked up the old materials into the new organism of Christianity, even as in nature the new organisms appropriate the remains of what is old and lifeless, assimilating them and using them as nourishment for growth.

In the first centuries of the Christian era arose what is called Gnosticism, which was a mingling of Indian emanation, Persian dualism, and Greek philosophy with the Jewish traditions of creation and legends concerning the origin of men. Of these varied elements sometimes one and sometimes another had special prominence. For long centuries the Church fathers had to maintain a severe conflict with the Gnostic systems and their supporters. Not only had they to defend the Church doctrine and Christianity, but even ordinary mental clearness and logic, with the ethical value and independent individuality of human nature. There were two principal sects of Gnostics, both of which bore a decidedly pessimistic character, at least as to the world and human existence. One is related to the Indian doctrine of emanation. According to this doctrine, the first impulse towards the creation of the world was given by the desire for manifestation arising within the Divine Original Essence. Through this arose the world of phenomena, of imperfection, and of guilt, which is again to be given up through annihilation and restoration to the bosom of Brahm. In like manner the Gnostics said that this world originated through a separation or division in the Divine Original Essence or kingdom of light. This emanation from the Divine Original constituted not only the world, but dark, impure matter, which with the light formed a dualism. A part of the kingdom of light was united to matter, from which arose the vegetable kingdom, but chiefly that of animals and men. Existence is regarded as essentially a state of suffering, and its problem is restoration to the kingdom of light. In this the Manichees and other kindred sects agree with the Gnostics. The other Gnostic party held indeed to the dualism, but did not believe in an emanation from the Divine Original Essence or kingdom of light. They approached nearer to the Persian dualism, and thought of this life more as a time of warfare and of victory over the forces of evil, but not as a time of mere suffering and penance, in order to be restored to the eternal kingdom of light or the Original Essence.

For the solution of the problem of evil the Christian Church had recourse to the doctrine of the fall of our first parents, with original sin, guilt, and punishment for all their posterity. The perfection of the Creator required that the creation be regarded as perfect, at least in its beginning. But it was also necessary, to reconcile as far as possible the present sad condition of the creation with faith in a good, wise, and almighty God as the Creator. With this solution, which in its main features was formulated as the Church doctrine in the fifth century, the Church remained satisfied through all the middle ages, even to the present time. But occasionally a man arose who, pressed by a deeper metaphysical necessity, sought to go beyond the fixed boundaries, to bring the subject again under discussion, and to obtain a deeper and more comprehensive solution. Such a man was John Scotus Erigena, who flourished in the ninth century, and lived for a time at the court of Charles the Bald. His chief work (*"De Divisione Naturæ"*) inclines to the emanation doctrine, and does not distinguish so definitely between the Creator and the creature as was generally done by the Church. It was therefore rejected as heterodox, "full," as a pope expressed it, "of the worms of heretical depravity" (*Scatens vermibus hæreticæ pravitatis*).

In the later middle ages it was chiefly the so-called Mystics who felt after a solution of the problem in question, while the Scholastics proper held fast by the decrees of the Church. Thus, for instance, the Mystic "Master" Eckhart, whose ground thought is the union of the human soul in will and reason with the Divine Being. The world, according to him is a unity, an eternal idea in the Divine mind, but it was necessary that it should be manifested or created out of nothing to satisfy God's desire to communicate and reveal Himself. But it is only the universal, that which has its foundation in the divine Being himself, which has any real existence, not that which is created, manifold, individual. This is null and transitory. The problem of the world and of men is restoration to the Godhead. The soul of man, that is, his highest power or most inward essence, the peculiarly divine spark in human nature, can strive after this restoration in the present life chiefly through intelligence, immediate intuition, and an intellectual absorption into the divine. The practical effort of the will and positive faith are put only in a secondary place. The world in its multiplicity, manifoldness, and individuality appearing only as an essenceless nothing, its qualities and relations can have no real significance. Suffering and evil do not exist. They arise only from the finite and the external. Sufferings are good and wholesome for men, and so far necessary. Through them is awakened the longing after God, and the desire for restoration to the Divine Original. Even moral evil, sin, and temptation are necessary for men that they may reach the ultimate goal. They humble a man, break his self-will,

and thus effect complete resignation to the Divine Will. Physical and moral evil thus come from the nature of the creature, and are at the same time the means of advancing its progress towards the final goal. Of the original fall of man, of birth, sin, and guilt, there was no need for further explanation. Eckhart, however, takes some account of Church doctrine, that he might not pass it by altogether in silence. But this did not save his own doctrine from censure. As to the redemption of men through Christ, he could not give his consent to the theory of satisfaction. Redemption, he said, and restoration to God did not take place through the sufferings and death of one individual historical person, but through the universal sufferings of creation, and especially of men. So far it may be said that the world, as a phenomenon, was regarded as pessimistic. But notwithstanding this pessimistic feature of the earthly destiny of humanity, Eckhart's doctrine was decidedly optimistic. His genius had been influenced by Orientalism, Neo-Platonism, the writings of the Areopagite and others of that class, but it was kept in balance by a great clearness of reason. Mystical extravagance was checked by a scientific and well-disciplined intellect.

With still greater boldness has Jacob Böhme essayed the solution of our problem. This poor shoemaker, notwithstanding his want of classical education, was a deep-thinking philosopher. He is sometimes, indeed, fantastical, and his language is not elegant, but his thoughts are often profound. The results of his inquiries concerning physical and moral evil are found in the "Aurora," and his later writings. He places the deepest source, or original root, of evil in the Divine Nature or Essence. To him God is not a pure abstract, natureless spirit, but an infinite fulness of Being, in which the original ground (*Urgrund*)—or, as he calls it, the un-ground (*Ungrund*)—is distinguished from the personal Divine Spirit. In this Original Divine Being, besides the Divine goodness and perfection, there is a Divine source of wrath, an eternal negation side by side with an eternal affirmation—over against the "yes" in God there stands a "no." There is placed, then, in the Divine immanency itself a wicked principle, but eternally conquered and kept in subjection by the good principle. By this God eternally preserves his Divine actuality. Without the principle of opposition He could not discover Himself, and be perfect. He could not come entirely to self-consciousness. The Persian dualism is here placed in the Godhead itself, in the very midst of the unity and fulness of the Divine Essence, and in this Böhme approaches the doctrine of the Brahmans. In Brahmanism, desire for extension first arising in Brahm, shut up in himself, led to a passive deprivation and emanation. But with Böhme the dualism, eternally active, has to be overcome, and when a world is created it is the work of an active creating power. But as the world, in any

case, is the image of the Deity, and arises by Divine power, it is not surprising that the principle of opposition lies at the foundation from the beginning. It is at least potentially present, and comes to reality at the same time as the creation. According to Böhme this happened first in the spirit world, where Lucifer, at the head of a host of fallen angels, rose in rebellion against God. On that account his dominion over that part of the world subject to him was taken away, and Lucifer himself punished. But this dualism is realised in the development of nature and humanity. In this the Divine wrath again appears. But humanity is capable of redemption, and the gross material world arose in obedience to the Divine decree for the purpose of mitigating the severity of this antagonism, of preparing the way for its abolition, and of making redemption possible. As to the essence and importance of matter, Böhme departs widely from the old Oriental conception which regarded it as essentially evil, or as the source of evil and suffering. He adhered to the doctrine of the fall of our first parents, with, however, important modifications. The fall, the conflict, and the suffering of the creation in his theology are perfectly normal, and do not require any catastrophe. Strife and suffering are the law and fate which have their foundation in the Divine Essence itself, as in the doctrine of the Brahmans suffering is as universal as existence. God Himself not being excepted. With Böhme, however, the active principle of conflict predominates, and not the passive one of suffering.

On this subject by far the most celebrated work is the "Theodicy" of Leibnitz, or "An Inquiry concerning the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil." The doctrine of Leibnitz was elaborated with special reference to the pessimistic scepticism of Bayle. It is considered the most decided Optimism, as he maintains that this world, having been chosen and created by God, is the best of all possible worlds. By a common misunderstanding of Leibnitz's doctrine, it is often made the subject of cheap and useless banter. His Optimism is construed as if he meant that the world, as it is, is thoroughly perfect, free from evil and suffering. What he really maintained was that the world, with its evils, was the best world that could have been created. The good really far surpasses the evil, while the significance of the evil is the realization of a yet higher good. To Leibnitz it seemed impossible that a world could exist without moral and physical evil, at least potentially, especially if in it so much happiness, perfection, and blessedness was to be aimed at as exists in the present world. He does not, like Böhme, place the root of moral evil in the nature of God Himself, but he considers it as having a necessary foundation in the essence of creation, and as therefore inevitable. The nature of the finite necessarily involves imperfections. But, on the other hand, a higher per-

fection is made possible. The possibility of physical and moral evil is thus placed, not in the Divine will, but in the divine wisdom. The imperfection of the world is called metaphysical evil, as out of it is produced moral and physical evil. The world must have been created imperfect; for if it had been without all imperfection, then it must have been created absolutely perfect, and thus entirely like God Himself, or a duplicate of Deity, which is impossible.

The necessary imperfection of the world is, however, only privative, not positive. It is only the want of perfection, and the imperfection is only a less good, not a positive substantial evil. In this Leibnitz agrees with Augustine and other orthodox theologians. He considers the question of moral and physical evil only from the standpoint of metaphysical evil. But he does not omit to notice the imperfection of our knowledge. By regarding things as units, we take many things to be imperfect which are yet portions of a perfect whole, as the parts of an organism, incomplete in themselves, form a complete union. As the solar system must be studied from the sun as its centre, so, to understand the world, we must place the eye, as it were, in the sun, and from thence, as the central point of creation, survey the whole. Leibnitz wishes that the world be viewed from the Divine standpoint, or rather from the standpoint of the Divine idea. The standpoint of the world-centre is, for us, impossible, unless we can regard the centre which man occupies as that of the world. And this in its foundation is God's centre, as the human mind includes in itself the idea of God and is developed to a God-consciousness. Physical and moral evil are hereby justified as being inevitable in the best world possible. They have an important meaning in their relation to the existence of nature and of men. They are as the shadow on the picture, as the discord which adds to the harmony. They are the bitter over against which the sweet appears agreeable. For the human race, suffering is a necessary means of progress. All physical evils lead a man in the end to what is best, if he really desires it. In any case they may be conducive to his spiritual perfection. Moral evil Leibnitz also explains as necessary for the best world, and this evil is also grounded in God or His creative activity—at least as to its being possible and admissible. If only the least evil which is in the world had been wanting, it would not have been that world which was invented by the Creator as the best possible. He adds, however, the caution that we are not on that account to take pleasure in sin. Over against the power of sin stands the stronger power of Divine grace. As Christians we have received grace because sin existed. Here we have a development process by which we may see that a world in which sin entered may be better, and in fact was better, than another without sin. If God's great object was to create the best world possible, it was necessary to

permit sin. And if He had not wished to create the best, He would have failed in his duty. God's permitting sin is illustrated by an officer leaving an important post committed to him, that he may settle a fight between two soldiers of the garrison, and prevent them killing each other. His wisdom, goodness, and perfection determine Him to allow the evil, for only thus could He have chosen the best of all possible worlds.

We cannot further at present discuss the views of recent philosophical thinkers. It may be said generally, that the pessimistic conception of existence is adopted by many. David Hume, for instance, concludes his treatise on Natural Religion in words which point in this direction. Kant, in his earlier days, adopted in a treatise on Optimism the views of Leibnitz; but later he inclined manifestly to Pessimism, at least as regards this life. This appears in his doctrine of radical evil in human nature, and in a remark he once made that there could scarcely be a rational man who had passed through this life that would be willing to begin it again. Baader and Schelling return to Böhme in their speculations concerning evil in the world, giving for a foundation partly Böhme's doctrine of a dark "Ungrund," or negative moment in the Divine Essence, and partly adopting his views of the fall of the spirit-world and the consequent rising of material nature to hinder the development of evil, or at least to make restoration possible for man. Hegel might be regarded as an Optimist, as he declares that the actual is rational, and the rational actual. This, strictly taken, would exclude the necessity of progress or perfection. This Optimism, however, is only dialectical. All is, as it must be according to a dialectical process, and is even on that account, destined to non-being. Everything stands under an eternal dialectical fate, or logical reason of this process, which considered in itself may be absolute, perfect, or necessary, but considered from the human standpoint it must appear as bad as it is good.

Arthur Schopenhauer has at last become quite in earnest with the most complete Pessimism, at least in theory. His philosophy, as set forth in his chief work, "The World as Will and Conception," rests chiefly on the Kantian philosophy, according to which the bounds of time and space are mere forms of the conception of our minds, *a priori* conditions of our sensuous external and internal experiences. On this philosophy Schopenhauer establishes his doctrine of the world as our conception ruled by the law of causality. On Kant's doctrine of an intelligible act in a past time by which radical evil arose in human nature, he engrafts the principle that the true essence of the world, behind time and space, is the "Will," a blind inexperienced agent, which is at the same time the true Kantian "Thing in itself." He draws, however, the chief feature of his system from the Buddhist doctrine of the nothingness of all being

and the going into Nirvana, the unconscious being or non-being which is the true goal of all human endeavours. As a reason Schopenhauer sadly and explicitly describes all evil in nature and history, and all the misery of existence, in the fourth book of his work, which treats of the affirmation and negation of the will to life. In nature he sees nothing but suffering and misery. These are chiefly manifest in the animal kingdom, where a continual warfare goes on for mere existence. The lives and pleasures of beasts of prey depend entirely on the suffering and destruction which they cause to others. That the pain of the sufferers is greater than the pleasure of those which inflict it, Schopenhauer thinks may be easily shown by comparing the condition of the beast which eats with that which is eaten. The human race do not appear to him in a better state.

Human existence is nothing but a round of sufferings, cares, and troubles. It were better, he says, not to be, but to go back into the nothing. He divides men into two principal classes—the one is the poor harassed by labour and necessities, the other the rich and idle to whom life is tedious. The greatest pleasures of life are of no real value. When they are reached they never give the satisfaction which they promised. Mental pleasures stand higher, and help to overcome many an earthly sorrow, but of these the uneducated is deprived. Beyond all stands death with his terrors, not suffering man to enjoy any true pleasure even if he were free from other sufferings. Schopenhauer, however, does not recommend self-murder as a lawful “Negation of the Will to Life.” Like Hamlet, he longs for an eternal unconsciousness—

“To die—to sleep,—

And by a sleep to say we end

The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to ;—’tis a consummation

Devoutly to be wished.”

He is not, however, like Hamlet, restrained by thoughts of a personal immortality and a personal God. He has no fear of anything beyond and no hope of compensation for the sufferings of this life in a heaven of blessedness. Such a Pessimism has Schopenhauer taught, and, as we have said already, not without success. He has disciples and followers who imitate him in their delineations of the wretchedness and the worthlessness of being, who, in fact, try to surpass him, and even succeed. The present appears to us the period of “World-suffering” for young philosophers, which is happily past for young poets.

This historical review will be followed in a second part by the solution of the problem which we have to offer.

J. FROHSCHAMMER.



