

CHAPTER IV

PHILOSOPHY AND THE PROBLEM

THE attitude of early man to the world was instinctive and uncritical. He took things as he found them, and was not troubled by the need of explaining them in our sense of the word. But curiosity is an ancient quality, and curiosity linked with the feeling of wonder begets the germ of the philosophic spirit. Man, however, had to attain to a developed self-consciousness, and to be delivered from the tyranny of animal wants and desires, ere he was capable of a free development of reflective thought. Philosophy in the full meaning of the word enters on its task when man rises to a view of the world as a whole, and strives to understand it. He asks himself what the great system within which he lives signifies, and what is his place in it. Is he the goal of created things, or merely their accidental product?

When men began to speculate on the meaning of things, it was natural that they should take up the problem of the soul and try to understand its

nature and destiny. In so doing they were not dealing with a new and strange subject; for long before the advent of systematic reflexion a body of traditional opinions and beliefs had gathered round the soul. These beliefs, as one would expect, were not coherent or consistent; but they were kept in life by the religious consciousness, and they were more or less seriously accepted by many. The incoherency of these ideas was itself a challenge to thought. The first task of philosophy was to sift and test this material, and to purify what was gross and to eliminate what was inconsistent. Even though philosophy failed to develop a constructive theory of the soul, even though its office in this reference was merely critical, it would still have performed a useful duty. To introduce order, harmony, and method into human ideas is always helpful; it is a stage on the way to systematic insight.

Speculative thought has not, however, remained content with the limited task of criticism, but has sought to reach positive conclusions. In this instance it has boldly tackled the chief problem, that of the nature and destiny of the soul, and has endeavoured to reach valid and final conclusions. But here as elsewhere philosophy has not always delivered the same message; indeed its utterances have sometimes been perplexingly

at variance one with another. In some instances, as the outcome of reflexion, philosophy has rejected the idea of immortality, and has sought to confine man's outlook to the present world. In other instances, however, it has spoken hopefully on the subject, and has even offered a reasoned argument for the immortality of the soul. Of course it is only a spiritual or idealistic line of thought that is in a position to endorse the human claim to a life after death. But every form of idealism does not countenance this conclusion, and some idealistic systems definitely reject it. Much, as we shall see, depends on the value a system of philosophy assigns to the individual whether it comes to a positive or negative decision on the question of immortality. Thus pantheism, which sacrifices the claims of the individual to the claims of the Absolute, has, if consistent, no room for personal immortality.

Our aim in this chapter must be a limited one. We cannot attempt to give even an outline of the development of philosophical thought on this important topic; nor is it necessary for the purpose in view. It will be enough to consider briefly one or two of the more influential philosophical systems in their treatment of the problem. In this way we shall learn where the stress of the problem lies, as well as the special difficulties which attach to it. Perhaps the discussion will

serve to make clear to us the lines which an attempted solution should follow. In the result we may come to the conclusion that ultimate certainty in this matter is not to be reached by metaphysics. But even though this prove to be the case, it will be a gain to know just how far the speculative reason can take us in our quest, and to realise its limitations in this respect.

Beyond doubt the most important treatment of the question by pre-Christian thinkers is that of Plato. This is true alike on account of its intrinsic merits and because of the great influence which it exercised on later thought. At the time when Plato wrote, the nature of the soul and its destiny had become a source of perplexity and a subject for discussion among the Greeks. Especially was this so among the Pythagoreans, who had espoused certain ideas about the soul which they had derived from Orphicism. The doctrine of transmigration was taken over by Pythagoras and his disciples from the Orphics, and they sought to give a more philosophic form to this and other current beliefs in regard to the soul. A common idea of the School was that the soul was a kind of 'attunement' of the body, and with this they combined a theory of metempsychosis. Plato was influenced by the teaching of the Pythagorean School, and strove to purify and

elevaté it by infusing into it an ethical meaning. He seems to have believed in the doctrine of transmigration in some form; it was, at any rate, 'a pregnant myth' for him which contained a serious moral truth. Of a future retribution for the deeds done in the body Plato was assured, and this assurance was prior to the proofs he gave of the soul's immortality. In other words, the determining element in his conviction is ethical rather than metaphysical. To put it differently, the various 'proofs' Plato offers for immortality are ways of justifying the verdict of the moral consciousness. I shall return to this point in the following chapter.

Plato sharply distinguishes the soul from the body. In the *Timæus* he spoke figuratively of the Supreme Creator fashioning the human soul out of the same cup from which he made the world-soul. The body and the mortal part of the mind were made by the created gods. Here, as often elsewhere in Plato, the postulate is the high worth and the dignity of the soul: the soul is the divine element in man, the element he derives from the Supreme God. Just as all ideas are referred to the idea of the Good as their ground and vitalising principle, so all souls are traced to the Creator as their source. In the *Phædrus* the entrance of souls into bodies is said

to be a decline from their destiny. The soul is at first overwhelmed by the body and loses the memory of the past: it resembles the sea-god Glaucón, whose form is all crusted over by weeds and shells and stones. For Plato the notion of immortality is essentially related to that of pre-existence. Nor is the soul so hopelessly plunged in forgetfulness, that significant tokens which point to its pre-existence cannot be elicited. In the *Meno*, Plato develops his theory of knowledge as 'recollection': on this view it is because we have known and then forgotten that we are now able to learn again. The doctrine of 'recollection' in Plato's eyes is scientifically valid: it explains such things as our intuitive perception of mathematical truths and their non-empirical nature.

In the *Phædo*, *Republic*, and *Phædrus*, Plato offers us a demonstration of immortality founded on the conception of the soul. In the *Phædo* he shows that the soul is not a harmony of the bodily elements. It is simple, not a *σύνθετον*, and so cannot be supposed to disintegrate. In the second place, it is so bound up with the ideas, in particular with the idea of life, that one must think of it as essentially living. The former argument, even were it valid, would not prove more than indestructibility: the latter proceeds, like the ontological proof, from the idea to

reality, and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that there is something purely verbal about it. The soul is immortal because we must conceive it to be essentially living, in other words, immortal. In the *Republic* the nature of the argument is moral rather than metaphysical. Anything, we are told, can only be destroyed by its own proper evil: the evil incident to the soul is sin.¹ But if the soul could be destroyed, vice would have already destroyed it.

More convincing is the line of thought which Plato develops in the *Phædrus*. He shows there that the soul is distinguished from outward objects by the fact that, while they are moved from without, it is self-moved. The things of the external world are conditioned and perishable, but the soul is raised above them as an ἀρχή or first-principle. As we might put it in modern language, the soul is self-active and self-determining, and so is differentiated in principle from all external objects. The soul, then, is a source of activity in itself, and also for other things. It is neither begotten nor destroyed; for if, as Plato thought, the soul ceased to move, then movement would die out of the universe; and this is plainly impossible.² The primacy of activity in the soul is the positive and complementary truth to the negative argument in the *Republic* which con-

¹ *Republic*, x. 608 D ff.

² *Phædrus*, 245 C, D.

cludes, as we have seen, that the soul cannot be annihilated by any external evil.¹ Underlying Plato's arguments is the conviction that the soul is not the outcome of the bodily elements: it is in principle prior to the body, and so shapes and governs it. Hence the inference that it is not dependent on the body. Put in this way, the argument has still a real bearing on the question of the survival of the soul after death.

As strict proofs, Plato's arguments for the soul's immortality will hardly be found convincing. They really express the suggestive thoughts thrown out by a great mind which is striving to find a justification in the nature of things for a profound ethical faith. But about the character of the future life Plato only speaks tentatively: on this he is not disposed to dogmatise. That some good thing will befall the just soul after death is a great and uplifting hope.² This is the impression which is borne in on us by the wonderful picture of the last hours of Socrates drawn for us by his greatest disciple. The serenity of mind, the simple strength, the inner superiority to the harsh blows of fate which Socrates displays, bring home to us in a way that no dialectic could do the right of the human spirit to transcend the limit set by death. If Plato does not prove to

¹ *Vide* Caird, *Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, i. 213.

² *Phaedo*, 114 C, καλὸν γὰρ τὸ ἄθλον καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς μεγάλη.

us the doctrine, he makes us feel that some of the deepest human needs are linked with faith in a life hereafter.

We may pass from Aristotle with a brief reference. He does not share Plato's belief in the pre-existence and future pilgrimage of the soul, and his attitude to immortality is critical and negative rather than positive. He speaks, it is true, of the immortal part of the soul, the active reason. But it is clear that this universal and impersonal reason carries with it no implication of a personal survival after the dissolution of the body.

With the rise of modern philosophy in Descartes the immortality of the soul comes again into the foreground as a philosophical problem. According to Descartes the soul is a spiritual substance: it is the support of mental qualities, just as the body is the support of material qualities. The mental and material are set in sharp antagonism, and the physical organism is regarded as a purely mechanical system. Soul and body have no common ground, for their specific attributes, consciousness and extension, are totally disparate. For Descartes the soul really coincides with consciousness, which was supposed fully to express its nature: the idea of the sub-consciousness lay outside his purview. This clear-cut separation of soul and body lends an artificial character to

the Cartesian conception of human nature, and makes a satisfactory view of experience impossible. Mind and body come together in experience we know; and to explain the interaction of mental and material substances, Descartes supposes the soul has its seat in the pineal gland, from whence it acts on the body and is acted upon by it. But how two mutually exclusive substances could, by this arbitrary device, be co-ordinated and associated one cannot understand. In the end, Descartes is obliged to admit that we cannot think together the difference and the union of soul and body.

The manner in which Descartes defined the soul and set it in contrast to the body, made it easy for him to hold that it was simple, indestructible, and immortal. For obviously, on this hypothesis, there is nothing in the dissolution of the body which could affect the soul, which is essentially an independent substance. But the conclusion fails to bring conviction, because it proceeds on a dualism which is inconsistent with the plain facts of experience. It is just the close interaction of soul and body, as seen in the constant influence they exercise on one another, which makes the problem of justifying the survival of the spirit after death difficult. Any failure to recognise this initial fact must impair the value of our conclusions:

In Descartes we find a plurality of substances which are related and co-ordinated by the will of the Supreme Being or God. In this there is foreshadowed the problem of the relation of finite substances to the Absolute, of the many to the One. Historically this question comes before us in different forms, but ultimately the issue to be faced is this: Are the plurality of finite substances real, or do they, in the last resort, fall within the one real Being? In other words, Is plurality a fact, or is it merely a provisional point of view which cannot be maintained when we think out the deeper meaning of things? Are the many only an appearance, or are they real? In the one case we have a monistic, in the other a pluralistic theory of the universe. The way in which the problem is solved has an intimate bearing on the conception of immortality. A thoroughgoing monism which reduces all individuals to passing appearances of the One, logically precludes any hope that they will persist as identical centres of experience. On the other hand, a pluralism which recognises the ultimate reality of individual beings at least leaves room for immortality, if it does not necessarily imply it. But pantheism has no place for individuals who continuously maintain their identity over against the one real Being. The truth of this contention is illustrated in

the system of Spinoza, to which we turn for a moment.

For Spinoza, as is well known, there was only one real Being, the Absolute Substance, which is apprehended by us under the two attributes of thought and extension. Individual minds and objects are the modes in which the Infinite Substance is particularised. In themselves they have no independent reality: they only appear to have a being for themselves when they are apprehended by that lower form of mental activity which Spinoza designates *imaginatio*. By this term he denotes thought which works through sensuous images. In the fuller light of reason this appearance of independence vanishes. Spinoza, no doubt, speaks of the mind's 'eternal part,' but what he means here is the impersonal and non-individual reason in man, and this is just the divine reason in so far as it forms part of the human mind. Like the 'creative reason' of Aristotle, it can have no personal quality; and Spinoza definitely includes memory in the sphere of *imaginatio*, which is the fallible and mortal part of the mind. By implication, therefore, he clearly excludes the possibility of personal immortality. The general character of his system forbids any other conclusion, for a philosophy which has no room for real individuality has no place for personal immortality.

As opposed to the rigid monism of Spinoza, the philosophy of Leibniz is pluralistic and individualistic. He is, therefore, better able to do justice to the idea of immortality. The core of reality, according to Leibniz, is at once individual and spiritual; in other words, the being of things is not matter, but a multitude of spiritual individuals or monads. The monad is by no means identical with the atom of the physicist; for it is a psychical not a physical substance. The monads are not identical one with another; they represent the most diverse degrees of spiritual development, and extend from the lowest sub-consciousness to fully developed self-consciousness. Each monad mirrors the universe in its own specific way. The system of monads is a graduated whole, and each monad is a unity whose internal development is teleological, not mechanical. These spiritual substances are the ultimate elements of reality: they combine in very various ways to form compound substances or things, but they themselves are neither created nor do they perish. On this theory physical death is not destruction, but metamorphosis. Birth is a process to which the change of the caterpillar into the butterfly is analogous, while death is not cessation of being, but involution.

How, it may be asked, does the conception of Leibniz bear on immortality? The reply in-

volves a statement of his view of the relation of the soul to the body. The mind or rational soul is a monad which has been promoted to self-consciousness: it is the *dominant* or supreme monad in the bodily organism or subordinate system of monads. In keeping with his idea that monads are indestructible elements of the world, Leibniz held that the human soul or 'dominant monad' pre-existed. Yet it did not pre-exist as a *rational*, but as a *sensitive* soul, and it attained the higher degree when "the man whom the soul was to animate was conceived."¹ The rational soul thus understood is not created by the particular group of elements called its body, and when the combination dissolves, the soul does not perish. The significant movement by which a sensitive soul becomes a rational soul, Leibniz is inclined to regard rather as the unfolding of the immanent character of a monad than as 'an extraordinary act of God.' He differentiates the human soul from the animal or vegetative soul by the fact that, while the sensitive soul merely mirrors the world of things, the rational soul mirrors the Deity or author of Nature Himself. Despite the importance of the principle of continuity in his philosophy, Leibniz is anxious to emphasise the distinctive character and value of the human soul,

¹ *Vide* the letter of Leibniz quoted in Latta's edition of the *Monadology*, p. 116.

and to contrast it with lower forms of psychical life. In virtue of this he sees his way to maintain a doctrine of personal immortality, and he suggests that the assemblage of immortal spirits constitutes the 'city of God.'

The individualistic strain in the philosophy of Leibniz made it possible for him to do justice to the conception of immortality in a way which was impossible for Spinoza. Especially is the notion of the soul as 'dominant monad' an illuminating and fruitful one. On the other hand, the principles which led Leibniz to deny that there could be any interaction between monads made his conception of the relation of soul to body a difficult and an artificial one. For this meant that the dominant monad, while it harmonised with the group of lower monads, could neither directly influence nor be influenced by them. A theory which does justice to the facts of experience must accept the principle of interaction between soul and body. If the idea of the soul as dominant monad is to be fruitful, it must be taken to mean that the soul organises and informs the group of elements which are subordinated to it.

After Leibniz, the next important contribution to the subject came from Kant. His treatment has two aspects, a negative and a positive. In the former he submits to a searching criticism the metaphysical proofs for immortality, and in the

latter he develops his own ethical argument in support of the idea. In his criticism especially Kant did much to clear away misconceptions and to expose fallacies, and thus to set the problem in a fuller light. Students of the Kantian philosophy will remember that for Kant the self is only another name for a unity which manifests itself in determining a given manifold of sense-data. But this self-conscious principle is a unity which we only *think* in relation to the process of synthesising the manifold. In and for itself it is not an object of knowledge, and to hypostatise it as an independent reality is illegitimate. If we speak of the self as substance, we are using a category by which the ego determines objects, but a category which can have no relevancy to the ego itself as subject.¹ The way in which Kant uses the ideas of the empirical, the logical, and the transcendental self raises many difficulties, and is a source of confusion rather than light. Moreover, these subtle distinctions contribute nothing to the question of the nature of the soul. On the other hand, Kant's criticism of the old rationalistic notions of the soul as a kind of substance or metaphysical entity was valid and helpful, and went far to discredit this type of

¹ "The subject no doubt thinks the categories, but that is no reason for saying that it can have a conception of itself as an object of the categories."—Watson, *Selections from Kant*, p. 154.

thought. The Kantian arguments taught men to see, as they had not hitherto seen, that the forms of thought used in outer experience could not be uncritically applied to the self as a centre of inner experience. The notion of a simple and therefore indestructible entity or substance is a mere abstraction from external experience, and has no relevancy when applied to the soul. And, as Kant himself recognised, it is a fallacy to base immortality on simplicity; for though simplicity excludes the notion of an external disintegration of parts, in the case of consciousness it does not exclude the possibility of its gradual extinction through diminution of intensity.¹ The Kantian criticism was effective in finally banishing from modern thought the conception of the self as a kind of metaphysical entity, which was a lingering survival of Scholasticism.

On the other hand, although Kant was successful in brushing away the cobwebs spun by an older metaphysic, his own account of the self was thoroughly unsatisfactory. If the self is only a transcendental idea to which we are in the habit of referring all possible experiences, but which we can never affirm to be real, then any assurance of the individuality and permanence of the ego vanishes, and experience itself becomes illusory. As Professor Ward has pointed out, personality

¹ *Vide* Caird, *Philosophy of Kant*, vol. ii. p. 33.

on this theory could be no more than a bundle of accidents, and there could be no guarantee whatever for its conservation.¹ Surely the self as real is the necessary ground of the self as idea, and makes it possible: if we had no experience of a real self, we could not form the artificial notion of a transcendental self. The self, in fact, is an active substance: it is a spiritual individual which unifies its own changing states and is a living centre of action and reaction. No doubt we cannot, as Kant saw, regard the soul as an inert metaphysical substance or entity. But we mean something entirely different when we speak of substance as in essence spiritual, active, and individual. On the latter view the notion of substance is primary and fundamental, not a mere abstraction from experience, but the centre and ground of experience.² And it is easy to show that it is the experience of the self as a spiritual substance unifying its changing states which is the source whence we derive that notion of substance as the supposed ground of qualities in the external world. Against this conception of the self, Kant's criticism has no point. On the other hand, Kant's warning against a hasty identification of the empirical unity of self-consciousness with the metaphysical

¹ *Realm of Ends*, p. 390.

² As Professor Ward puts it, if we divorce substance from individuality, it becomes a mere matter or stuff which cannot define the soul. *Op. cit.*, p. 392.

unity of a thinking substance was perhaps needed.

Kant's contribution to the speculative problem of immortality was mainly negative. He finally dissipated some old prejudices and superstitions which gathered round the subject. He made thinkers realise, as they had not hitherto done, the difficulties that beset any attempt to offer a metaphysical proof of immortality. Those who have learned of Kant are aware that a proof that the soul is simple and indestructible, even were such proof possible, would come far short of guaranteeing the soul's spiritual destiny.

Passing from Kant, let us turn to Hegel. His attitude to the question of immortality is interesting, for he illustrates the standpoint of a speculative monist whose fundamental principle is spiritual. His position, however, is ill defined, and he has been interpreted in different senses. He points out that the ideas of God and immortality are necessarily related, and speaks of man knowing himself in God, and thereby knowing his imperishable life in God.¹ In keeping with this, he refers to immortality as a present possession of the spirit to which belong freedom and universality. In its inner nature the spirit is lifted above time and mortality.² It is plain, however, that there is no

¹ *Phil. der Religion*, ed. 1840, i. p. 79.

² *Op. cit.*, ii. 268, 313.

definite assertion of immortality in the personal sense: the essential thing is the eternity of the spirit, which is divine and universal. In fact, a monistic idealism in which God, or the concrete universal who unifies all differentiations, is an all-inclusive unity, has hardly room for the persistence of the personal spirit after death. For it gives no adequate recognition to human personality at the outset. On this theory the soul can be no more than a function of a divine or universal reason which is specialised or differentiated by its relation to the human body. With the disintegration of the body the differentiating factor would vanish, and the spirit fall back into its pure universality. Nothing would remain to conserve even the appearance of individuality. It has indeed been asserted that the individual somehow survives as an individual in the universal consciousness. But Hegel's own language is not sufficient to warrant this interpretation; and even if it did, it is hard to see how the principles of his system admit of such an inference. I ought to add that the difficulty is not peculiar to the Hegelian philosophy: it is present in every system of pantheistic monism. It comes out plainly in Spinoza's system, and is also apparent in modern monistic theories.

The difficulty to which I am referring will also be found in the philosophy of Lotze. This writer

in one phase of his thought makes a very full and frank admission of the claims of personality, and he is impelled thereto by ethical considerations which are perfectly intelligible. Man as a centre of moral activity and value must, he urges, have a being *for himself*. In harmony with this, Lotze found in the idea of spiritual individualities or monads the key to interpretation of the realms of nature and mind. But this pluralism which his first survey of reality yielded is finally transformed under pressure of speculative reflexion into a monism, where all subordinate centres of activity are reduced to moments in the life of the one real Being which comprehends and absorbs them. So far, Lotze concedes, as the soul shows itself an independent centre of action and reaction, it may claim the title of substance.¹ But the concession is provisional, and it is withdrawn when he comes to think out the implication of the interaction of substances: it turns out then that there can be only one all-embracing substance. In an ethical interest Lotze postulates that finite centres of moral and spiritual activity must somehow be real for themselves, while his ultimate metaphysical analysis appears to allow no scope for this. This lack of consistency between the ethical and metaphysical aspects of his world-view renders Lotze's attitude to immortality doubtful and hesitating.

¹ *Metaphysik*, Eng. trans., vol. ii. p. 181.

Yet some of his remarks on the problem are suggestive and valuable.

Lotze points out that if our analysis of reality yields a fundamental pluralism, then the ultimate elements of reality must be eternal and indestructible. This would apply to the soul. But while the rights of the soul as a pre-mundane substance ensured its persistence, there is no assurance that a persistence, the nature of which is undecided, would satisfy our desires. Moreover, the idea of pre-existence seemed to Lotze 'strange and improbable.'¹

In his view all we could say is, that a soul would persist if, and in so far as, its persistence belonged to the meaning of the world. For these reasons Lotze concluded that the problem of immortality was one which did not fall to metaphysics to settle. This, as we shall see, is true, if it be taken to mean that metaphysics cannot supply a proof. But it is inaccurate to say that metaphysics is not in a position to discuss the question. Certainly metaphysics ought to have something to say on the possibility of immortality and the conditions involved in it. And this it may do, even though it cannot offer a demonstration either positive or negative. On the other hand, Lotze's grounds for holding that reasoned proof on the subject cannot be produced are good.

¹ *Op. cit.*, ii. 182. Cp. *Microcosmus*, Eng. trans., vol. ii. p. 390

He points out that only if man stood at the centre of the universe, and had a full vision of the complex whole and its parts, would he be in a position to foretell the destiny of individuals. To determine these destinies one would require to know the supreme end of things, and this knowledge we do not possess. The question whether, in the absence of a clear knowledge of man's destiny, there may not be a legitimate faith, is one with which Lotze does not deal. His undecided attitude on this question is explicable, when we call to mind the lack of coherency between his ethical postulates and his speculative conclusions. In fact, the speculative unity in which Lotze absorbs the elements of experience stands in the way of a frank acceptance of the ultimate persistence of human personalities.

The view entertained of the possibility of immortality is closely connected with the conception of personality which is the outcome of philosophical analysis. If, as British thinkers like Messrs. Bradley and Bosanquet contend, the human self is not ultimately real, if, that is to say, it belongs to the realm of appearance merely, then the grounds for expecting its survival after death must be slender. If the notion of the finite self involves contradictions, and if the pathway to reality is found by the rigorous application of the principle of non-contradiction in virtue of

which everything to which a contradiction attaches is condemned as a mere appearance, then in the last resort all finite centres of experience must be dissolved in the Absolute. For these centres have in the end only an adjectival existence, and the truth of the finite is to be taken up into the Infinite. If human personality is ultimately an appearance, the dissolution of the body would seem to remove the last ground for the lingering persistence of the appearance. Nothing can escape absorption in the Absolute. Hence we find Dr. Bosanquet insisting that the human self is beyond escape an element in the Absolute here and now, and consequently it is an 'inconceivable abstraction' to place eternity and perfection in a future beyond time.¹ While it is true that man desires the conservation of values, it is urged that it would be unjustifiable to identify this with the conservation of persons. What we really desire, if we make our desires consistent, is the conservation of 'our main interests.' These interests are affirmed, and finite selves are lifted beyond the region of perpetual failure, through their continuity with the Absolute. The eternal Whole is the ultimate reality and satisfaction of finite selves.

The outcome of this interesting line of thought is distinctly antagonistic to the notion of immortality in the commonly accepted sense of the

¹ Vide *The Destiny and Value of the Individual*, p. 258 ff.

word. Yet we are asked to believe that our main interests, the values on which we set store, are somehow maintained in the Absolute. How this should be so is not apparent. In what way can value be conserved if the personal lives which make value real are not conserved? Surely it is an 'inconceivable abstraction' to speak of impersonal values! Eliminate the personal reference, and values as such cease. If it be said they are preserved in the Absolute, the answer must be that the interests at stake are human and personal, and they stand or fall with the maintenance of the personalities with which they are bound up. Granted, for the sake of argument, that they could somehow be preserved in the Absolute, then in the Absolute they would be transmuted into something quite different from what they are for *us*. But I should deny that an impersonal Absolute can in any true sense be a guardian of values at all.

If one accepts the premises of the philosophical theory before us, the conclusions certainly follow. It is just the premises, however, that many will feel compelled to challenge. Neither individuality nor personality as a centre of value and ethical responsibility, can be reduced to mere appearance. From a logical point of view the principle of identity is fully as important as that of non-contradiction, and must not be ruthlessly sacri-

ficed to it. If individual selves are not real, experience is not real; and to deny the reality of personality is to deny the validity of the judgments of the moral consciousness. I venture to think that any apparent difficulty in developing a consistent conception of finite personality ought not to be made a ground for so transforming the conception, that it no longer corresponds to the facts of life. For the facts of life have a greater claim on our acceptance than a subtle dialectic which resolves them into unreal abstractions.

A metaphysical proof of immortality, like a metaphysical proof of God, will always fall short of demonstration. The conclusion will always go beyond what is established in the premises. On the other hand, it is quite competent for us to criticise a metaphysical system which excludes the possibility of immortality; and we are entitled to show, if we can, that it involves inconsistency or does some injustice to the data of experience. And in the case of a pantheistic philosophy, this, it seems to me, can be accomplished.

But the function of philosophical reflexion in this matter is not, of necessity, purely negative and critical. If philosophy cannot offer logical proof, it can at least indicate possibilities and throw out suggestions; and in this way it may do something to cast light on the problem. Now I believe that along one line of thought philosophy

has developed ideas which will be found helpful, because they enable us to see a way in which personal survival after death is possible, not to say probable. I refer to the type of thought which finds in individuality the key to the meaning of reality. On this theory individuals have a being *for* themselves : they are real, even though it should turn out that this reality is dependent and not ultimate. According to this view, the universe consists of a multiplicity of monads or spiritual substances essentially active, and in constant interaction with one another. In other words, the inner bond which unifies what we call the attributes or qualities of an object is spiritual, that is to say, it is conceived after the analogy of the self which unifies the changing states of a conscious individual. The spiritual individuality revealed in man is the high level of a principle which extends downward into the realm we call nature. Self-conscious mind is only one phase of mental activity : it is the ripe fruition of a spiritual process which runs back to the wide region of the sub-consciousness. That there is not more in the external realm of nature than a multiplicity of interacting individuals or spiritual reals we do not assert ; but the point is, that the organised and qualitatively differentiated world of things is made possible by a vast multiplicity of monads systematically connected and

infinitely graduated. As distinguished from atomism this is a spiritual, not a mechanical theory of reality: for on this hypothesis matter in its ultimate nature is akin to mind, and even the lowest grade of being is something far different from dead mechanism. To put it otherwise, mere matter and mechanism are abstractions, and the lowest level of being is at root living and teleological. From this point of view the various grades of existence would represent the monads or elements of reality as they enter into more or less complex systems—systems ruled by final causes or by ends which are immanent. Just as the different organs of a body in their dispositions and functions conspire to realise the ends of the organism to which they are subordinated, so are spiritual substances or monads grouped and organised teleologically in the interests of developing reality. On this view the nature of things is at root spiritual; for even on its lowest level being is akin to mind, and matter in the sense of the materialist does not exist. Nor can the old idea of a sharp contrast and an essential antagonism between the nature of the soul and of the body be maintained. On the contrary, there is an inner affinity between them; the soul has kinship with the elements that compose the body, but it stands for a fresh and higher stage of development. If we follow the

suggestion of Leibniz, the soul or spirit is the 'dominant monad' which organises the elements composing the body into a teleological system or whole in which each element is determined as a means to an end.

If this theory be accepted in its main outlines, it will follow that there are different grades of soul just as there are different levels of organic development. The human mind or spirit reveals the highest form of soul, for, in the self-consciousness of man, the process of spiritual evolution reaches its highest point on earth. It is important, however, to bear in mind that, when we speak of personality and personal survival, we mean more than the persistence of a separate spiritual substance. For the nature of personality is complex, and it is made possible by the body, and by those connexions with the world and other personal selves which are mediated by the body. To some extent at least the system of memories which goes to form a concrete personality is associated with the body and its relations. And the problem is how far these are involved in the doctrine of personal immortality. I content myself at this point with indicating the problem, and at present will consider how the conception here developed stands in regard to the question of pre-existence.

It is obvious that we cannot speak of a con-

crete human personality, which is a centre of specific relations and memories, as pre-existing. On the other hand, may not the essential self have existed prior to its setting in a particular material and historic environment? It may be true that there is no empirical evidence that the individual's existence began with his present body.¹ But a negative proposition like this of necessity determines little, though it may be useful as a caution against a prejudice. It would follow, of course, that, if the human soul is inherently imperishable, it must have pre-existed, since that which came into being might also pass out of existence. But this intrinsic imperishability is what is not proved. And if the self in some form existed prior to its association with the earthly body, it can hardly be the self as we know it. That, we may agree with Lotze, would be 'a strange and improbable idea.' None the less, on the monadistic hypothesis, there is a sense in which pre-existence is conceivable. Let me explain.

The ultimate elements of the body, as monads, existed before their combination in this particular body. The teleological principle of the corporeal system, the dominant monad, also pre-existed as a monad, if not as an organising conscious soul. But this plainly is not equivalent to personal pre-exist-

¹ Cp. Ward, *Realm of Ends*, p. 394.

ence. Theological thinkers, when confronted with the issue whether the human soul was in being in some form prior to this bodily life, or whether at a point in time when the body was in process of formation it was created, have spoken with an uncertain voice. On one side there is the theory known as Traducianism—the theory which has it that the soul as well as the body is transmitted from the parents. On the other side, the theory called Creationism contends that the soul was created independently of the body; in the case of each individual person it was infused into the foetus from an external source. The latter theory came to prevail; and it had the support of Anselm and Thomas Aquinas. Neither hypothesis, as it stands, is free of difficulty. To suppose that the soul can somehow be transmitted by procreation from the parents is only to substitute one mystery for another. Is the soul derived from one parent or from both? The one alternative is as open to objection as the other. Moreover, it seems a strangely materialistic and unspiritual idea of the soul, that it can be passed on from parent to offspring in this mechanical and arbitrary fashion. The Creationist hypothesis, again, does not harmonise with the commonly accepted principle of evolution. In the form in which the conception has been usually held it implies a break in the development of animal life; because, *ex hypo-*

thesi, when the human stage was reached a process of creation *ab extra* began. Undoubtedly there is an awkwardness in presuming the intrusion at a particular point of an entirely new principle which interrupts the continuity of development, and at a point which is not readily fixed. Nor on this view is it easy to explain how the principle of heredity should operate in bringing about mental qualities in the offspring resembling those of parents and ancestors.

In dealing with this question I am conscious how much more readily one can criticise attempted solutions than offer one which is even relatively free from objection. There is no theory which is entirely satisfactory, and man will perhaps never achieve a full understanding of the mystery. Still, on the monadistic hypothesis already sketched, certain suggestions can be made.

Between the soul, or organising principle of the body, and the spirit, or self-conscious mind, it seems right with Leibniz to draw a distinction. Spirit is soul raised to a higher power or level of development, and the soul is the mediating element between the body and the spirit.¹ On this theory we should hold that the soul or dominant monad pre-existed before it built up out of lower elements this particular human body.

¹ So I. H. Fichte, *Seelenfortdauer*, p. 156.

But as it did not previously exist in the form of self-conscious mind, the fact of its pre-existence does not imply that it carries with it into its new state memories of the former state. At most the dominant monad might be the bearer of 'organic' memories associated with the body which it had previously informed; and it is through some such persisting element that one would try to explain the factor of heredity in evolution. To put it concisely, the hypothesis amounts to the assertion that the basis of personality pre-existed, but not the self-conscious personality itself.

How then, it will be asked, are we to interpret the development of the dominant monad into the self-conscious personality? We cannot consistently think of it as a new creation somehow superimposed on the monad from without; for this would be open to the criticism levelled against the Creationist theory. It must rather be due to a quickening of the monad from within, so that it blossoms into a self-conscious and spiritual life. In dealing with this question Leibniz suggested it was possible the elevation of the soul (*âme*) to rational mind (*esprit*) might be due to an extraordinary act of God. He adds, however,—and more in harmony with his philosophical principles—that he prefers to consider the process as the unfolding of the germinal possibilities with which souls destined to become rational were originally

endowed.¹ The trouble here is that Leibniz introduces an original difference of kind between rational and other souls, when, on his own law of continuity, there should only be a difference of degree. And to trace developmental differences back to germinal differences is an apparent rather than a real explanation. In fact, the purely 'preformative' conception of evolution is now widely recognised to be inadequate. Development is discovered to reveal features that are not to be traced to implicit qualities in the elements involved. If we study the stages of a development, and especially in the case of mind, the process discloses at points the emergence of something specifically new. Such a point is the transition from the lower level of sense to the higher level of intellect. At this point we note the emergence of a new form of synthesis due to the creative activity of mind. A new form like this is related to the past but it is not explained by it. Hence the old preformation theory is being replaced by the conception of *creative evolution* or epigenesis, in which fresh beginnings are possible. As an epigenesis, then, we may interpret the emergence of the rational soul. But, of course, this creative activity of mind requires itself to be accounted for. So one is brought back in the end to the question why

¹ *Théodicée*, section 397 ; cp. *Monadology*, section 82.

there should be a spiritual development in the world—a development which has issued in the self-conscious spirit of man. If, as we believe, it is not possible to discern the ultimate explanation in the elements of the process itself, the explanation must be found in the immanent quickening and conserving activity of God, the final Ground of the world and spiritual life. The divine activity is not arbitrary but continuous and pervasive, and is the sufficient reason of the development of soul into self-conscious spirit. On this view we shall trace the supremacy of the human self-consciousness, not to some intrinsic germinal characteristic, but to the quickening of the Divine Spirit 'through whom all spirits live.' In other words, man owes his specific character to God, and if the human soul is immortal, its immortality is the gift of God.

At this stage it may be well to ask if there are features in the spiritual or self-conscious personality of man which encourage us to believe he is the heir to an immortality which is denied to souls of lower form. Why should death be the end of the animal and not of the man? It is, of course, easy to point out various characteristics which differentiate the human from the animal intelligence. But without enlarging on these, let us note the presence in man of a new independence of mental and spiritual life. We see in him

the culmination of the process by which the inner life has gradually liberated itself from the material conditions from which it emerged. In this process reflex and instinctive actions have passed into deliberative will: tied ideas have become ideas freely moving: passive memory has been transformed into active and purposive recollection. And with this advance are associated fresh powers of initiative and of self-conscious reflexion. It is a long way from the purely sentient individual up to the self-conscious person. The movement is one of steadily growing mental power. While mind in developed man has still close relations to the body, it exercises powers of inhibition and control over the body, and even gains a degree of freedom from and independence of bodily conditions. The tie which binds soul to body, in the case of man, if it has not been broken, has at least been loosened. The conclusion might appear easy, that this degree of independence is a pledge of survival after the death of the body.

But here a difficulty emerges. The rational spirit has issued, we have supposed, from a divinely quickened soul; but it retains no memory of its former condition. Can we believe it will be otherwise with the spirit when its connexion with the present body has been dissolved? Is to die not to pass through the waters of Lethe? It has been argued that the value of immortality does

not depend on the mind retaining a memory of the past. Loss of memory does not mean annihilation, and the past continues to influence us though we do not remember it. So the personal relations of our life here may have much to do in determining our condition hereafter, even though the two states are not linked by the bond of memory.¹ In reply, I should contend that, though it is true "Everything is not lost with the loss of memory," yet so much is lost that the conception of immortality is thereby emptied of most of its significance. Granted that, despite the failure of memory, there would still be a kind of continuity between the present and the future life, yet it would be the continuity of a sub-conscious substance, not that of a personal spiritual life. And, say what you will, an unconscious identity means little. That we do forget a good deal in this life without disrupting the continuity of our personal interest and purpose is not really relevant to the issue. For, apart from the activity of memory linking together the conscious spaces of our life, our existence on earth would not be a personal existence at all. And if all our mundane experiences were swallowed up in the gulf of forgetfulness, the future existence would in no true

¹ For a statement of this view, *vide* McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 49 ff. Also *Human Immortality and Pre-Existence*, p. 100 ff.

sense be *our* personal existence. A life after death which had no conscious connexion with the life before death is not a life for which we could own ourselves responsible. We could not regard it as an object of hope and expectation, nor would it stand for a spiritual goal which was the consummation and completion of our earthly endeavour. After all, what man needs is an ethical and spiritual self-fulfilment, not the mere persistence of a metaphysical identity. *Per contra*, it may be granted that it is not essential that the whole body of earthly memories should be carried over into our after-existence. As we have noted, we forget much in our earthly life without disrupting our personality: it is enough that we should recognise ourselves in the different stages of our history, and realise a continuity of meaning and interest between the mundane and supra-mundane phases of our being.

On the question how a degree of memory may be preserved after the dissolution of the material organism, I have already touched in an earlier chapter.¹ It may suffice at present to remind you that, while memory has a physiological basis, it is not purely a matter of cerebral structure. To explain its working one must postulate the existence of psychical dispositions, which stand in a

¹ *Vide* pp. 89-90.

more intimate relation to the mind than to the cerebral areas. This psychical basis of memory may function apart from the physical basis. In this way a degree of memory which will ensure a conscious personal continuity may be possible, even after the dissolution of the particular bodily organism with which the mind has been associated. On the other hand, there appear to be limits to this possibility. Memory, with the psychical dispositions through which it functions, has developed in relation to a definite bodily organism and a specific material environment. With reference to these the self has evolved the qualities and habits which have gone to form its character as a member of society. And the problem is, whether the self could maintain a continuity of personal life, if *all* continuity between its present environment and its future were broken. In other words, would the group of memories which are involved in personal survival possess adequate meaning in an environment so changed that they had ceased to have any relevancy to it? One would suppose that some continuity of organism and environment is requisite, in order that the one group of experiences should be known to be related to the other.¹ But we have no means of determining how much is necessary. If we lay stress, as we feel entitled

¹ So, for instance, Professor Ward is disposed to allow. Vide *Realm of Ends*, p. 395.

to do, on the relative transcendence of the self-conscious ego with the psychical dispositions which are intimately related to it, then memory might be conserved despite great changes brought about in the body and its environment by death. But how great the changes are which ensue on death we cannot say, and conjecture in the circumstance is unprofitable. On the other hand, it is certainly difficult to suppose that the organism and the environment, closely linked together as they are, could pass utterly away, and the personality which had developed in them and through them remain in the fullest sense *one* personality. To put it differently: it is hard to imagine that a pure disembodied spirit could sustain and express the self and character of a man in a way that would make it possible for us to claim that it represented his *personal* survival after death. On the other hand, it is still more evident that immortality is not conceivable under the present conditions of life on earth. Mundane life is in its essence transitory; it contains from the first the seeds of decay and dissolution. We cannot consistently think of it as prolonged indefinitely. Nor would its mere repetition in other circumstances solve any of the spiritual problems at issue. Some transformation of the organism and the environment there must be, if the soul is to enter on a new phase of existence enriched by the experiences and memories

of the past. The future life, if it is to be of value, must be a higher stage of being which is the development of the present life, and not simply its recurrence.

The conditions which appear to be involved in a spiritual doctrine of immortality would be fulfilled, if the organism and environment were transfigured so as to become the medium of a higher development of soul, without at the same time making an absolute break of continuity with the past. If a pure disembodied spirit is an abstraction, we must replace it by a more concrete notion. Such would be the idea of a developed self, no longer thwarted and impeded by the body, but fashioning for itself an organism to be the more perfect instrument of the spirit. It may be asked if there is any evidence which would incline us to accept an idea like this. We confess there is no evidence at our disposal which would form a sufficient basis for the conclusion. The view we are developing is meant to be tentative: it will not compel assent. At most we can say this hypothesis gives in some ways a satisfying answer to the problems at issue, and we can suggest one or two considerations which may help to commend it.

The bodily structure, we have seen, is a teleological system, and in the development of this system function determines structure and not *vice*

versa.¹ For example, an animal develops eyes that it may see; it does not see because it happens to have developed eyes. Hence in man the bodily character has been developed in reference to his function as a thinking and rational being. The teleological principle which organises the elements of the body is the soul as dominant monad. In man the soul assumes the form of a self-conscious ego, and it has organised a complex body and a highly articulated brain structure in its service. The great development of the association areas in the cortex must be understood as an evolutionary response to the needs of the growing intelligence and the increasing demands of reflective thinking. Now there is no convincing reason for supposing that the mundane development of the human soul is the ultimate limit of its development; and some considerations encourage us to believe that it is not so. If the possibility has to be conceded, as we think it must, we can at least suggest how it may be realised. The self-conscious soul is an active and a constitutive principle. The upbuilding activity which it manifests in the terrestrial sphere is an indication how it may organise for itself a higher kind of body in order to meet the

¹ The latter opinion was already advanced by Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, iv. 830. Though the theory does not lack support in modern times, the biological facts cannot be interpreted in this way with any probability. Bergson's treatment of the point in his *Creative Evolution* is very suggestive.

conditions of a higher stage of existence. The conception of creative evolution will recur to us in this connexion. An analogy to this transition from a lower to a higher stage of being may be found in the developmental process by which the animal soul has risen to the realm of self-conscious spirit. And the organism it has formed for itself corresponds to its heightened activity and its enlarged needs. True, the analogy is not perfect: for in the one case we are considering a process which falls within the mundane sphere, and in the other we have in view a development which, in its issues, transcends that sphere. Yet this disparity may not mean more than a difference of degree: it may only point a more radical transformation of the organism which is to be the instrument of a nobler form of spiritual life. I need hardly remind you that a thought very similar to this was put forward by St. Paul, in his doctrine of the resurrection body. The apostle realised very clearly that the risen body could not be the mere resuscitation of the earthly one, for, as he exclaims, "flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The new life of the spirit demands a more perfect instrument. Hence the apostle speaks of a spiritual body, which he contrasts with the natural or fleshly body. What he meant by a spiritual body, and how he conceived it to be related to the earthly body, we do not clearly understand. It

is not at all likely that Paul had developed a definite theory on the subject. But at least it is certain, that the notion of the spiritual body involves the idea of an organism somehow transfigured and fashioned to be the appropriate instrument of the purified spirit. Nor do we ourselves know how the process of transformation is carried out. But the essential factor in its accomplishment must be the formative power of the soul, which builds up for itself an organism adequate to its needs. On this view death is not a term: it is only an episode or transitional point in the development of the spirit. In no sense would it mean the extinction of the soul, but rather the sleep from which it emerges to greet the dawn of a new day. The analogy of sleep suggests to us that death, though it involve a temporary lapse into the region of the unconscious, need not on that account imply any complete break of continuity between the new life and the old. The persisting self can link in memory the two phases of existence.

Nevertheless death stands for a great change, and of this there can be no manner of doubt. With the organic change which death brings there appears to be implied the transformation of the present temporal and material environment. The new development of the spirit calls for such a transformation, and it must have far-reaching effects. The slightest reflexion shows how closely

the functions and structure of the earthly life, with its impulses, emotions, and desires, are related to the bodily organism and the environment with which the organism interacts. The alteration of the material medium of life by death consequently carries with it a change in the personal life after death. Popular thought commonly fails to realise this, and tends to read the old into the new. A familiar illustration of this failure is the question which long ago the Sadducees addressed to Christ. A consequence has been the persisting tendency of ordinary people to make the after-world a kind of glorified copy of this world. The corrective to this habit must be found in a fuller recognition of the far-reaching change brought about by death. For it means much that the familiar body of flesh should be dissolved, and the soul should clothe itself in a new and celestial apparel. The former needs and desires, as well as the temporal and spatial relations in which they are set, lose their old significance and are transformed. It is common to speak of the state after death as an eternal state, and the future world as the eternal world. The phrase emphasises the contrast of old and new. Yet, if it be taken to mean that the future existence wholly transcends time, so that even the notion of change is excluded, then the idea is certainly open to criticism. A purely static conception of soul, a conception that is to

say which left no room for changing mental states, is unintelligible to us; and it could have no real and living relation to our mundane experience. At the higher stage of spiritual development the earthly time-order is most probably transcended; for the present time-span is left behind and time gains a new meaning, while the old division into days and months and years no longer counts. But behind time as concrete duration is change, and the notion of change is fundamental; for change forms the indispensable basis on which our time-constructions are raised. Not even from the Divine Mind can we consistently eliminate the idea of changing states. Hence the objections which can be urged against the common opinion that the eternal world is the changeless world, and eternal life an absolutely static condition. It may well be that after death the soul is raised above the separations and uncertainties incident to the time-process on earth. Yet a fixity of condition that left no room for development is a transformation so radical that it is hard to see how the line of continuity with the earthly life could be maintained. Nor would a life where the door was closed to all possibilities of change be, so far as we can see, a truly spiritual life.

In this discussion, it ought to be said, we are dealing largely with possibilities, not with truths which can be regarded as proved. From a

philosophical standpoint certain ideas have been advanced which indicate the principles on which a life after death might be realised. But these ideas are tentative: they cannot be taken for a proof that the life in question will actually be realised. Nor are they evidence that immortality in any form is a true belief. The fact is, I think, that metaphysics cannot yield cogent conclusions on this subject. In saying this I am aware some speculative thinkers of eminence take and have taken a different view. Thus the late Professor Royce of Harvard and Dr. McTaggart of Cambridge cherish the conviction that a metaphysical proof of immortality can be given. Dr. McTaggart, for instance, will be found arguing, that the Absolute has eternally differentiated itself in finite centres, which neither come into being nor pass away. The human ego is one of these finite differentiations, and therefore is eternal and immortal. The trouble is that the writer does not prove that the Absolute must be differentiated in the manner he supposes, nor, even if this were so, that the human self is one of these differentiations. A hypothesis, more or less questionable, differs *longo intervallo* from a demonstration. Our insight into the universe is neither wide enough nor deep enough to admit of our giving a rational deduction of the destiny of human souls. 'We know in part,' and just

because of this metaphysical proofs of immortality will fail in cogency. The wise metaphysician will recognise his limitations, and be content to develop suggestions and indicate possibilities. If a solid conviction is to be won in this field, it must be the fruit of reflexion on moral and spiritual experience rather than the outcome of speculative discussion. Here, as in the other ultimate problems of the universe, the patient and ever-searching reason gives place at the last to the upward vision of faith.

Meanwhile, if the possibilities of immortality with which speculative reason deals are to be crowned by a more sure and certain hope, the way to this will lie in a candid study of the moral issues which are involved. The case for immortality will be greatly strengthened, if it can be shown that it is strongly supported by ethical considerations. The failure of speculative thought to demonstrate immortality will be adequately atoned for, if it can be made clear that immortality is a valid postulate of the moral consciousness.