

Creation, and the Origin of the Soul.

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IN the cosmogonies of early religious thought, the idea of creation proper does not emerge. Accounts of the 'creation' of the world are rather descriptions of the 'making' of a cosmos out of pre-existing matter or chaos, the void and formless earth and primeval darkness; of man out of the dust of the earth, woman out of man, and the human soul out of God's breath. Nor did the greatest philosophers of ancient Greece attain to an idea of creation, at least not when they were expressly dealing with cosmology. Both Plato and Aristotle recognized a primitive *ἄλη* or *materia prima*, more or less intractable, which itself was never made, but which was fashioned or moulded into form by God. Thus Nature, at least in its formless state, was regarded as eternal or self-existent, and we are presented with a dualism—God and an independent sensible world.

It was partly to repudiate this dualism, and partly to avoid the unilluminating Gnostic theory of emanation, which is equally an example of inadequate physical analogy, that Christian theologians affirmed creation to have been 'out of nothing.' This phrase, however, though negatively of value as expressing a denial of the eternity of matter, is positively of little worth; and, indeed, it suits the pantheistic or absolutist types of philosophy better than Theism. For if 'out of nothing, nothing comes' be accepted as true, then the finite world must be regarded as the aforesaid philosophers do regard it, namely, as nothing but 'appearance.' Among modern philosophical interpretations of the world, pluralism dispenses with the notion of creation altogether; indeed, it has no place for it. It regards the world as a society of spirits of all ranks (when it is spiritualistic), all of which are self-subsistent, and no one of which is the ground of the existence of the rest. But for Theism, as distinguished from non-creational pluralism on the one hand, and from emanationist pantheism on the other, the notion of creation is indispensable. It is, however, like the idea of God, altogether transcendent, and cannot be derived from experience.

Nor do *analogies* from human experience carry

us far towards a rational conception of creation. 'Making' is a metaphor that is quite irrelevant. And, indeed, any origination in time for the finite world is as difficult to conceive as an unoriginated existence: we are always liable to be asked what determined the Creator to call the world into being when He did, and how we are to conceive the life of God before the creation of a finite universe. Hence the tendency to interpret creation as something involved in God's very essence, rather than as the outcome of His will; so that, as Hegel said, God without the world is not God. Creation, if we adopt this line of thought, is a term which only gives expression to the fact that the world is *dependent upon* God, and without Him could not be. Causation is an inadequate or irrelevant category to apply to the world as a whole; it applies rather to change in the already existent, and to parts within the whole rather than to the world as a whole. The idea of 'ground'—of which that of cause is but a special case—is therefore preferable. But Spinoza, who identified God and the world, could speak of God as the immanent cause or ground of the world: this notion, therefore, is not sufficient to define the theistic position as to the relation of the world to God.

We are carried a little further by the analogy of what we call 'creations of genius'—works of the highest art which are sometimes spoken of as 'inspired,' and even as 'divine.' Here we have a case of a product in which the creator may be said to embody himself and to live, while at the same time he is distinct from and transcends his work. But this analogy fails us at the important point: there is a great gulf between our 'relative' creations of something new within the world, presupposing experience previously acquired, and the 'absolute' creativeness of God, in which world and experience are coeval, if not co-eternal. Creation in the latter sense is a conception which perhaps can only be approached at all if we regard it as what Professor Ward has called 'intellective intuition,' in which God 'posits' His objects, while in our experience they are only given and passively received. But into the mysteriousness of that process we cannot in-

quire further ; we here reach the limit beyond which analogies from human experience cannot help us. We can only add that, in creating, God is not externally limited, though He necessarily limits Himself. Creation, again, is a hypothesis which can never be verified—science knows of no absolute beginnings ; it is resorted to by Theism because it carries us further than otherwise we could advance towards an interpretation of the world as a whole ; and, in so far as this advance is successful, the hypothesis is rationally justified. We have, indeed, finally to admit that the idea is transcendent, and attempts to minister to thought where conceivable-ness or imaginableness is out of the question. But, at the same time, it is precisely because the process of creation is inconceivable by us that, inasmuch as that process is beyond our experience, the concept of creation serves a purpose.

The foregoing exposition follows in the main the lines laid down by Professor Ward in his *Realm of Ends* ; and it does so because that work seems to the present writer to contain the most helpful treatment of the problem with which he is acquainted. And the same guide will be followed when now we turn to the equally difficult and transcendent problem of the creation—or, not to foreclose the question, the origin—of the human soul. In his recently published *magnum opus*, *Psychological Principles*, Professor Ward deals with this issue from the psychologist's point of view ; and what he says is of some interest for theology.

We have already seen that 'creation out of nothing' is not a wholly satisfactory conception, and have hinted that 'creation out of God,' or a Divine positing of His own experience, affords a better description of what we mean by 'creation' as applied to the physical world. And, as Lotze taught,¹ 'no necessity of reason constrains us to shun the thought of a beginning for the soul.' Pre-existence or an eternal past for human souls is a hypothesis for which our present life yields no evidence, and one which does not contribute to the better interpretation of either the ontological or the moral realm. Lotze held that the organic body does not educe the soul from itself ; and certainly there is no more reason for embracing such a view to-day than there was when that philosopher was active. He, indeed, was definitely a creationist. His own theory of the world-process as the immanent movement of one world-ground, enabled

¹ *Microcosmos*, Eng. tr., i. 399 ff.

him to speak of the Divine Being as letting Himself be stimulated by the event of the physical development of an organism to produce out of Himself a soul appropriate to that organism. 'The soul,' he says, 'originates neither in the body nor in nothing ; it goes forth from the substance of the Infinite with no less fulness of reality than all actual Nature brought forth from the same source. And neither do soul and body come together by chance, nor is it the work of the body by its organization to make itself a soul corresponding to the possible form of its vital activity ; nor does the Infinite arbitrarily distribute ready-fashioned minds to infant germs. But as with free consistency it makes every bodily organism the necessary result of the parent organisms, so also in the creation of souls it doubtless follows a self-imposed law, that weaves their succeeding generations into the gradations of an inherent affinity. The soul of the parents cannot be split up by division into the souls of the children, but we are left to the dim conjecture that the creative hand of the Infinite reproduces in the latter the mental image of the parents. . . .' Thus Lotze definitely repudiated the traducianist theory that the soul is derived from the souls of its parents, as taught by Tertullian (who derived the idea from Stoic philosophy) and by theologians from time to time in the history of the Church.

Professor Ward agrees on this main point with Lotze ; and the interest of his contribution to the subject lies in his critical inquiry as to what can strictly be meant by the heredity of the soul, or the inheritance of mental characters. In legal affairs, whence the idea of heredity is borrowed by science, the heir and his inheritance are two distinct entities ; the one is a person, the other a thing in no way constitutive of, or indispensable to, the existence of its inheritor. But in biology this is not so, though the fact is apt to be overlooked. There, what is inherited is never a thing or a property ; it is a likeness to the parents *said* to be transmitted, and a likeness of which the heir cannot divest himself : heir and inheritance, in fact, are one. The analogy involved in 'heredity' is thus superficial, and psychology must inquire more closely. When we speak of the inheritance of minds, we may mean by 'mind' either the subject of an experience or the objective content of an individual's experience or mental *βίος*. Now, there is no evidence for continuity between the subject or experient and

any other subject, as there is for continuity between the parental and the filial cells in bodily reproduction. Such continuity between subjects Dr. Ward pronounces 'inconceivable,' and its inconceivability has led some to deny the reality of the subject. That, however, is a line which psychology cannot take. Physiological generation will not account, then, for the origin of subjects; and Dr. Ward repudiates traducianism as decidedly as did Lotze. On the other hand, we have said, 'mind' may mean the content of experience which is 'given' to the subject or experient; and in this case connexion with the germ-plasm which is continuous from parent to child is conceivable. But now we distinguish between heir and inheritance; the subject is only called an heir because his 'mind'—*i.e.* the objective side of his experience—manifests, as it develops, considerable resemblance to that of his parent. Then how arises the soul's *peculium* or property? Creationism asserts that it is created by God. This transcends the limits of scientific inquiry, but, says Dr. Ward, 'at least involves no contradiction, and recognises the two cardinal principles of psychology as we understand it, the individuality of the experient and the duality of experience.' We may not commit ourselves to the 'piecemeal occasionalism' in terms of which creationism is sometimes propounded (*e.g.* as by Lotze, in the passage cited above); but we must reject the traducianist view, because it does violate those cardinal psychological principles, and because, further, it cannot be stated

without materialistic implications—the divisibility of a soul as if it were a thing in space like a germ-cell.

What on the side of mind is inherited, then, is the experient's 'objective continuum' when experience begins—that is, the individual's body *as it is for him*, with its instincts, etc. : the 'how he feels,' the germ of temperament and talent. Dr. Ward separates, it is interesting to observe, genius from talent so far as to assign the former to the subject, the heir as distinct from the inheritance, and the latter to his inherited *Anlage*. It follows that genius is not inherited, though innate.

There are difficulties for the creationist view as to the origin of the soul, apart from the mystery necessarily involved in the idea of creation itself. There is the fact that so many bodies born into the world are unfit habitations, from our point of view, for souls: those, *e.g.*, which condition the mind so as to produce abnormal and insane mentality. And if this is to be looked upon as but a particular case of the general problem of evil, it nevertheless differs from other instances of physical evil in the fact that, according to creationism, the creation of a soul for a given body is an event which is not wholly conditioned or determined by that uniformity of law which must obtain in the physical realm if the world is to be an ordered cosmos and a theatre of moral life. But certainly the difficulties attaching to the alternative theory of traducianism are greater, and, indeed, insuperable.

Contributions and Comments.

The Sumerian Epic of Paradise.¹

PROFESSOR LANGDON'S new publication is a good deal more than a mere translation of his work on the *Sumerian Epic of Paradise*, published by the University Museum of Pennsylvania in 1915, in which he first brought to light, and translated from Sumerian, one of the most important Babylonian documents yet discovered relating to the origin of man. Readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES may

¹ *Le Poème Sumérien du Paradis, du Déluge et de la Chute de l'homme*. By S. Langdon. (London: Luzac & Co., 1919.)

remember certain articles which both Dr. Pinches and myself contributed to it on the book, and since then the newly discovered texts have excited a considerable amount of animated and sometimes acrimonious discussion in America. In the French translation of his work which has just appeared, Professor Langdon takes advantage of the various suggestions and emendations that have been proposed since his book appeared; his translations have been revised throughout, the interesting Sumerian Poem of the Glorification of Istar has been added, and the Introduction and Notes have been much enlarged. His American critics