The Reality of Perfection

J. Prescott Johnson
Professor Emeritus of Philosophy
Monmouth College
Abstract

This work is an argument for the reality of perfection. There are two phases of the argument.

First, there is an analysis of ethical perfectionism, or self-realization. There is some introductory historical material. The main thrust of the argument is to delineate the nature of ethical self-realization. This is done by discussion of two recent ethicists of the school, namely, the British idealists T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley. It is shown that ethical perfectionism involves a self-contradiction that disables it to realize its own imperative, and that, therefore, it must give way to the religious, specifically, the Wesleyan view of evangelical perfection.

The second phase of the argument comprises three rubrics: the consciousness of God, the condition of sinfulness, and the perfection of experience. The primary consciousness of God is not determined by intellectualist, logical norms, but is a valuational-laden emotional apprehension of radiance from perfection. Sin involves more than the “bad self” of ethics; it involves reference to God. Sinfulness must be conceived, not in substantive terms, but in functional terms. It is the inherited inorganic condition of the individual. The perfection of experience consists in two factors: sanctification and the perfection of love. Holy love is productive of the ever-enriching process of organic personhood, or, in Wesley’s language, “a constellation of glorious graces.”

As these topics are developed, attention is given to the writings of Wesley and, further, to certain philosophical elements that coalesce to affirm the validity of evangelical Wesleyanism.
Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48).
The Authorized Version reads as an imperative: "Be ye therefore perfect." In the original Greek the verb is the future indicative, which reads: "Ye shall therefore be perfect." The Master enunciates the promise that, consequent upon the proper motive and behavior, the children of God may realize an experience of perfection.

Now what is of special importance for this study is that the norm of perfection for the Christian is the divine perfection. In this respect, certainly, the reality of perfection is the divine perfection. And this is the ideal that humanity may touch. In some significant sense, the Scripture asserts that human perfection may be reached, that is also in that respect a reality. These considerations are the parameters that define the subsequent discussion.

The idea of perfection is, to be sure, a Christian and evangelical concept. But it is also a philosophical concept. More specifically, it is a subject falling within the scope of ethical theory. The ethical theory that addresses the question is the theory of "self-realization." Here perfection consists in the realization of the potentialities and capacities of human nature.

Our present study, therefore, will begin with a consideration of self-realization ethics. We shall then consider the bearing of self-realization ethics upon the religious—specifically the Wesleyan—view of perfection.

Aristotle specifically and explicitly proposed a self-realization ethics. The keynote of *Ethica Nicomachea* is the opening words in the treatise: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim" (1094a1-3). He points out that there are many different activities in which humans engage, and that in all of them they gain their value by the ends they serve. For example, "the end of medicine is health" (1094a8). The end of a given
activity may be but a means to a further end. But this series cannot be
never-ending, a process that would result in the emptiness and futility of
life itself. Thus Aristotle writes:

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire
for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this),
and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at
that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would
be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good.
Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life?
Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to
hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to
determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is
the object (1094'17-25).

Politics is the intellectual discipline that is to ascertain the
ultimate end of human life, “the good for man.” The question as to the nature
of this ultimate end is, for Aristotle, more difficult to answer. This end,
he continues, cannot be ascertained with certainty. One cannot reason
downward from self-evident first principles, as one does in mathematics, to an
indubitable conclusion. Instead, one must reason “dialectically” from
commonly accepted viewpoints, refining them so as to reach some understanding
of the nature of the ultimate goal of life. In the main he accepts the views
of the Platonic Academy.

He accepts, then, the view that the end is εὖδαίμονία.

Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men
and the people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and
identify living well and doing well with being happy . . . (1095 '14-20).

The conventional translation of εὖδαίμονία as “happiness” is misleading
and unsuitable in the Ethica. “Happiness” means a state of feeling.
Εὖδαίμονία is a kind of activity. The term “well-being” is a more appropriate
translation.

Now, just what sort of life is εὖδαίμονία? Aristotle rejects pleasure,
honor, and wealth. The question of the highest end of human life is deferred
to Book X, where it is argued that this end is the life of contemplation (1095
b14-1096 a10)

The object of this contemplation, Aristotle argues, is not the Platonic
Form of the Good. The Good has no meaning, he says, apart from its applications. Yet he cannot rest with this equivocal conclusion. For, he says, all goods point to and are derived from some single Good. And this Good must have two indispensable characteristics: it must be final (that which is always chosen for its own sake) and self-sufficient (that which makes life worthy of being chosen).

This single and final Good is the goodness of reason, and, finally, the goodness of God. The “best thing in us,” Aristotle argues, is reason. The life of reason, of contemplation, therefore yields our well-being.

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue, and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be reason or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said (1177 '12-18).

In the same vein he writes in the immediate sequel: “this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects).”

The ultimate end may also be designated as the goodness of God. The contemplation of the ideal objects of thought is an activity consonant with the activity of God. Aristotle admits that such a life is “too high for man.”

But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue. If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life (1177 '26-30).

The life of εὐδαιμονία, then, is the contemplation of truth, and, indeed, the contemplation of the truth as contemplated by God. In this respect, the contemplative life is the contemplation of the Divine.

But this is only a suggestion in the Ethica Nicomachea. It is, however, made explicit in the Ethica Eudemia. There the life of contemplation is the worship of God.
And so it is with the theoretic faculty; for God is not an imperative ruler, but is the end with a view to which prudence issues its commands . . . . What choice, then, . . . . will produce the contemplation of God, that choice or possession is best; this is the noblest standard, but any that through deficiency or excess hinders one from the contemplation and service of God is bad . . . .

So much, then, for the standard of perfection and the object of the absolute goods (1249 16-25).

In sum: for Aristotle the activity of the highest life, the realization of the self, consists in the contemplative life. But it is a life that is ruled by the norm that transcends human life, by the reference to God. There is the standard of perfection.  

In addition to the intellectual virtue of contemplation, there are the moral virtues. The soul, Aristotle says, contains an irrational part alongside the rational principle. Nevertheless, the irrational part, at least an aspect of it, shares in the rational principle and may be responsive to its control of the passionate nature that is dominated by the feelings of pleasure and pain. Here, in the control over the passionate nature, lies the moral virtues. And here the “ought,” which is the defining mark of the ethical, emerges. For the rational principle imparts an urgency upon the individual to obey its imperative.

There seems to be also another irrational element in the soul—one which in a sense, however, shares in a rational principle. For we praise the rational principle of the continent man and of the incontinent, and the part of their soul that has such a principle, since it urges them aright and towards the best objects . . . . Now even this seems to have

---

Thomas Hurka has attempted to formulate an Aristotelian self-realization ethics that eliminates metaphysical reference. There is no norm above and beyond the individual and the world by which to achieve or ascertain self-realization. Thus he writes:

"Likewise, for practical perfection what matters, quality aside, is just the world’s matching our aim, whatever aim we had. Just as there are no intrinsically favoured belief contents, so there are no intrinsically favoured ends, just the same requirement for a relation with formally high-quality terms" (138).

Hurka assumes that because factual statements do not have an intrinsically favored belief content (their meaning and verification are governed by sense observation), valuative statements likewise have no reference to intrinsic ends, but must be governed by the individual and society. To the extent to which the parallelism of the two universes of discourse is merely assumed, it begs the question. Valuative statements are not on the same logical level as factual statements.

The theory espouses the relativism of individuals and society. This account displays the result of the modern horror metaphysicus.
a share in a rational principle, as we said; at any rate in the continent man it obeys the rational principle—and presumably in the temperate and brave man it is still more obedient; for in him it speaks, on all matters, with the same voice as the rational principle (1102 13-27).

Now, we have observed that, according to Aristotle, there are the two classes of virtue. The moral virtues, which are instituted by means of the control of reason over the passionate nature, fall within the province of “the ought.” The intellectual virtues, consisting finally in the contemplation of God, are the ultimate and final virtues that humanity may achieve. Without the moral virtues the intellectual virtues would not be realized. The final import, then, of the moral virtues is their service to the realization of the worship of God. In some sense, their nature and meaning lie beyond them.

Now, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there emerged in Britain a school of thought designated as “the British Idealist Movement.” Its founder was Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882), the son of a rector. His writings give evidence of a religious influence upon his life. His book, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, is a significant treatise on self-realization ethics. Many undergraduates whom he taught at Oxford later achieved fame: Bernard Bosanquet, R. L. Nettleship, F. H. Bradley, Henry Scott Holland, and Edward Caird. Bradley, the son of a famous Evangelical preacher, and who edited Green’s *Prolegomena*, became the most famous and influential of this group of students. His book, *Ethical Studies*, is an important exposition of self-realization ethics.

The writings of Green and Bradley are concerned with two questions that become the concern of this article. The first question is that of the meaning and nature of the ethical, and the second question is that of the relation between ethics and religion with respect to the imperative of ethical perfectionism.

It was the German philosopher Kant who exposed and corrected the simplicity of the sensationalism of British empiricism. Kant saw that self-consciousness is not a sequence and collection of sensory elements. If this
were the case, systematic knowledge of the world could not be achieved. Sense items are, indeed, given to consciousness, but they must be informed with relation and structure. And this formation is procured by the activity of a constituting and unifying agency, which he termed “the transcendental unity of apperception.” He no doubt believed that this agency in constituting a knowable world is the transcendental self, but, since it is a noumenal rather than a phenomenal reality, he professed no knowledge of its nature and reality. British idealism accepted this Kantian position and developed it in metaphysical context.

A key concept—indeed, perhaps the key concept—in Green’s work is what he termed “the eternal consciousness.” The concept figures crucially both in his view of knowledge and morality.

To begin with, there is, Green argues, a spiritual principle in both knowledge and nature. It is, perhaps, better to approach the subject of a spiritual principle in knowledge by a consideration of what is involved in the perception of an object. When we experience a sensation, we may suppose that the sensation is all that is involved in the perception of an object. But that is not the case. A sensation has but a flash of duration, is soon gone and replaced by another. That is, sensations occur as individuated in a time series. They must be placed in a pattern of relation before they occasion the perception of an object. They must be brought into a unifying synthesis. This, contrary to the view of British sensationalism, they cannot themselves produce. The necessary synthesis that produces the perception is not passive. Rather, an active agency is required. That agency is the mind, a principle of consciousness that is outside the time series in which the sensations occur. As outside the temporal series, the consciousness is, in Green’s designation, “the eternal consciousness.” He writes:

Now, if the foregoing analysis be correct, the ordinary perception of sensible things or matters of fact involves the determination of a sensible process, which is in time, by an agency that is not in time,—in Kant’s language, a combination of ’empirical and intelligible characters,’—as essential as do any of those ’higher’ mental operations,
of which the performance may be disputed. The sensation, of which the presentation as a fact is the nucleus of every perception, is an event in time. Its conditions again have all of them a history in time. It is true indeed, that the relation between it and its cause, if its cause is understood strictly as the sum of its conditions, is not one of time. The assemblage of conditions, 'external' and 'internal,' constitutes the sensation. There is no sequence in time of the sensation upon the assembled conditions. But the assemblage itself is an event that has had a determinate history; and each of the constituent conditions has come to be what it is through a process in time. So much for the sensation proper. The presentation of the sensation, again, as of a fact related to other experience, is in like manner an event. A moment ago I had not so presented it: after a brief interval the perception will have given place to another. Yet the content of the presentation, the perception of this or that object, depends on the presence of that which in occurrence is past, as a fact united in one consciousness with the fact of the sensation now occurring; or rather, if the perception is one of what we call a developed mind, on numberless connected acts of such uniting consciousness, to which limits can no more be set than they can to the range of experience, and which yield the conception of a world revealed in the sensation. The agent of this neutralization of time can as little, it would seem, be itself subject to conditions in time as the constituents of the resulting whole, the facts united in consciousness into the nature of the perceived object, are before or after each other (75-76).

The development of knowledge as a system of objects related in various ways also requires and evinces the eternal consciousness. The system of nature does not obtain as nature devoid of mind. As do the sensations, so the relations in the system of nature are not self-constituted; they are produced by the agency of a consciousness that is not itself the relation of facts.

Now, it is quite evident that no individual consciousness, or any collection or even generation of those individuals, creates the system of nature. This circumstance has often given rise to the supposition that, therefore, that system is, to employ Kant's expression, a system of things in themselves. But, as we have just observed, such a view is incorrect. Therefore, we can but affirm that the eternal consciousness, in which we as individuals share, is the agency that is creatively active in the production of the world. There is, in sum, the spiritual principle in nature. And that principle is the eternal consciousness:

May we not take it to be in a similar way that the system of related facts, which forms the objective world, reproduces itself, partially and gradually, in the soul of the individual who knows it? That this system implies a mind or consciousness for which it exists, as the condition of the union in relation of the related facts, is not an arbitrary guess. We have seen that it is the only answer which we have any ground for giving to the question, how such a union of the manifold is possible. On the other side, our knowledge of any part of the system implies a like
union of the manifold in relation: such a presentation of feelings as facts, and such a determination of the facts by mutual relation, as is only possible through the action upon feelings of a subject distinguishing itself from them. This being so, it would seem that the attainment of the knowledge is only explicable as a reproduction of itself, in the human soul, by the consciousness for which the cosmos of related facts exists—a reproduction of itself, in which it uses the sentient life of the soul as its organ (82-83).

A comparable function of individual consciousness, as individuation of the eternal consciousness, is found in the ethical sphere. Here, however, the initial data are not sense items, but, rather, wants and desires that arise from our animal nature. As consciousness distinguishes itself from sense impressions, so does it distinguish itself from wants and desires:

These wants, with the sequent impulses, must be distinguished from the consciousness of wanted objects, and from the effort to give reality to the objects thus present in consciousness as wanted, no less than sensations of sight and hearing have to be distinguished from the consciousness of objects to which these sensations are conceived to be related. . . . In like manner the transition from mere want to consciousness of a wanted object, from the impulse to satisfy the want to an effort for realization of the idea of the wanted object, implies the presence of the want to a subject which distinguishes itself from it and is constant throughout successive stages of the want (87-98).

These impulses of our animal nature are never in themselves motives to action. While, of course, they figure in the institution of motives, motives are created by the rational assessment of the import and significance of the impulses in the context of a higher and wider human experience. Crucial in this rational assessment is the identification of the objects and their worth in the context of that higher and wider human life experience. Motives, then, consist in the direction and activity of the will with respect to the objects of desire. Further, since the reason is free to make this assessment, i.e., is not under the coercion of impulses, the entertainment of motives and the decision to pursue objects of desire are free from any empirical causal coercion. This is the respect in which the will is free. Green summarizes:

But it is contended that such appetite or want does not constitute a motive proper, does not move to any distinctively human action, except as itself determined by a principle of other than natural origin. It only becomes a motive, so far as upon the want there supervenes the presentation of the want by a self-conscious subject to himself, and with it the idea of a self-satisfaction to be attained in the filling of the want (101).

Now, the entertainment of both impulses and objects of desire is a
cognitive activity. It is here that the spiritual principle in knowledge assumes an ethical import. Just as the entertainment of sense items requires the eternal consciousness—a mental activity outside the time series—so does the entertainment of impulses and objects of desire require, precisely, the activity of that very same consciousness. Here Green remarks:

Thus the world of practice depends on man in quite a different sense from that in which nature, or the world of experience does. We have seen indeed that independence is not to be ascribed to nature, in the sense either that there would be nature at all without the action of a self-distinguishing subject, or that there could be a nature for us, for our apprehension, but for the further action of this subject in or as our soul. It is independent of us, however, in the sense that it does not depend on any exercise of our powers whether the sensible objects, of which we are consciousness, shall become real or no. They are already real. On the other hand, it is characteristic of the world of practice that its constituents are objects of which the existence in consciousness, as wanted, is prior to, and conditions, their existence in reality. It depends on a certain exercise of our powers, determined by the ideas of the objects as wanted, whether those ideas shall become real or no (99-100).

It is at this point that what is peculiarly distinctive of the ethical appears. The idea of the ought emerges. The unreal object of desire ought to be made real.

It is this consciousness which yields, in the most elementary form, the conception of something that should be as distinct from that which is, of a world of practice as distinct from that world of experience . . . (99).

Thus far we have considered the rudimentary desires that arise from our animal nature. Green observes, however, that most of our desires are not dependent on our animal susceptibility. They emerge from the conditions of our self-conscious humanity and social intercourse. They emerge "out of a state of things which only self-conscious agents can bring about" (141). To quote Green:

The most formidable forces which 'right reason' has to subdue or render contributory to some 'true good' of man are passions of which reason is in a certain sense itself the parent. They are passions which animals know not, because they are excited by the conditions of distinctively human society. They relate to objects which only the intercourse of self-conscious agents can bring into existence (141-42).

Now, it is correct to say that the moral life is one in which the person’s motivation is to realize an object of desire. This is, however, but the first stage. There is more to ethical decision than merely reference to
the object of desire. Indeed, the object is not the terminus of the desire or of the motivation. The final goal is not the object, but the self-satisfaction that the object promises and, to an extent, fulfills when appropriately realized. Self-satisfaction is the good. "... the common characteristic of the good is that it satisfies some desire" (194). This is the wider meaning of the good.

Now, the distinguishing nature of the true good, or the moral good, is that which satisfies the desire of a moral agent, or that in which a moral agent can find the satisfaction of himself which he necessarily seeks. The true good we shall understand in the same way. It is an end in which the effort of a moral agent can really find rest (195,96).

It should be noted here that the actual moral life of the individual is one in which self satisfaction is sought and found, ad seriatim, in many and varied objects of relative value. While they may, and indeed do, yield a measure of self-satisfaction, they do not, and cannot, fill the full measure of rest for the soul. They may presage the final end of moral endeavor, but they can never, either individually or collectively, yield that final self-satisfaction. Here Green says:

We may convince ourselves that this realization can only be obtained in certain directions of our activity, not in others. We cannot indeed describe any state in which man, having become all that he is capable of becoming—all that, according to the divine plan of the world, he is destined to become—would find rest for his soul. We cannot conceive it under any forms borrowed from our actual experience, for our only experience of activity is such as implies incompleteness. Of a life of completed development, of activity with the end attained, we can only speak or think in negatives, and thus only can we speak or think of that state of being in which, according to our theory, the ultimate moral good must consist. Yet the conviction that there must be such a state of being, merely negative as is our theoretical apprehension of it, may have supreme influence over conduct in moving us to that effort after the Better which, at least as a conscious effort, implies the conception of their being a Best (196-97).

The norm that "defines" the Best, the ultimate moral good, "the last thing to be seen and hardly seen" (so says Plato in Rep. 517c), is the eternal consciousness.

Green gives various descriptions of the eternal consciousness. The most abstract designation is in terms of the etymology of the expression. That the consciousness is eternal means that it is the non-temporal precondition of the
temporal process. That the eternal is a consciousness means that the consciousness concerns mental entities. The expression is here employed in its epistemic connotation.

Yet Green regards the eternal consciousness as a metaphysical reality. First, it is definitive of the finite self. To the question, “what is it exactly that we mean by this self,” he replies:

We mean by it a certain reproduction of itself on the part of the eternal self-conscious subject of the world—a reproduction of itself to which it makes the processes of animal life organic, and which is qualified and limited by the nature of those processes, but which is so far essentially a reproduction of the one supreme subject, implied in the existence of the world, that the product carries with it under all its limitations and qualifications the characteristic of being an object to itself (110).

Again, he speaks of the self as an agency:

Now, if the foregoing analysis be correct, the ordinary perception of sensible things or matters of fact involves the determination of the sensible process, which is in time, by an agency that is not in time . . . as essentially as do any of those ‘higher’ mental operations . . . (75).

In short, the spiritual principle exhibited in the cognition of nature is grounded in the metaphysical reality of the self.

Second, the eternal consciousness is, as the above quotation indicates, metaphysically real as “the eternal self-conscious subject of the world.” In contrast to Kant, Green argues that nature derives, not from a world of “things in themselves,” but from thought. It is not, and cannot be, however, our thought. The condition of the world is the eternal consciousness, the “supreme subject” of the world. Thus he writes:

. . . then nature implies something other than itself, as the condition of its being what it is. Of that something we are entitled to say, positively, that it is a self-distinguishing consciousness; because the function which it must fulfill in order to render the relations of phenomena, and with them nature, possible, is one which, on however a limited scale, we ourselves exercise in the acquisition of experience, and exercise only by means of such a consciousness (58-59).

Beyond this positive statement that there is such a supreme experience, we must speak of it in negative terms.

As to what that consciousness in itself or in its completeness is, we can only make negative statements. That there is such a consciousness is implied in the existence of the world; but what it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience
There is thus an identity, albeit partial, between the divine consciousness and the finite consciousness. Our consciousness is “a limited mode” of the divine consciousness. It is for this reason that knowledge of the world is possible. And it is for this reason that our lives as moral agents, in which we seek, and to some extent realize, the true good, is possible.

While we do not realize and thus know the full measure of self-satisfaction, or self-realization, we are assured that divine perfection is real and operative in the world and the lives of individuals. It becomes, accordingly, a lure that urges us onward and upward in our effort to realize more adequately and fully its imperative. Further, we are able, progressively, to catch glimpses of it. It is evident that in the personal and social experience of humanity it has been operative.

And when the speculative question is raised as to what this Best can be, we find that it has not left itself without witness. The practical struggle after the better, of which the idea of there being a Best has sprung, has taken such effect in the world of man’s affairs as makes the way by which the Best is to be more nearly approached plain enough to him that will see. In the broad result it is not hard to understand how man has bettered himself through institutions and habits which tend to make the welfare of all the welfare of each, and through the arts which make nature, both as used and contemplated, the friend of man. And just so far as this is plain, we know enough of ultimate moral good to guide our conduct; enough to judge whether the prevailing interests which make our character are or are not in the direction which tends further to realize the capabilities of the human spirit (197).

The above quotation shows plainly that, for Green, self-realization is not merely individual. It is social, i.e., involves others. Our own individual self-satisfaction necessarily implicates the self-satisfaction of others.

The idea of the absolutely desirable, as we have seen, arises out of, or rather is identical with, man’s consciousness of himself as an end to himself. . . . Now the self of which a man thus forecasts a fulfilment, is not an abstract or empty self. It is a self already affected in the most primitive forms of human life by manifold interests, among which are interests in other persons. These are not merely interests dependent on other persons for the means to their gratification, but interests in the good of those other persons, interests which cannot be satisfied without the consciousness that those other persons are satisfied. The man cannot contemplate himself as in a better state, or on the way to the best, without contemplating others, not merely as a means to that better state,
As we have earlier indicated, F. H. Bradley is generally regarded as Green’s most outstanding student. His father, Charles Bradley, was an evangelical preacher. He was a member of The Clapham Sect, named after the town then south of London, where most of the members of the group lived. These people were Wesleyan in persuasion, believing in the sanctifying efficacy of the Holy Spirit. They remained, however, in the established Anglican Church. They were significantly influenced by the writings of John Fletcher. A prominent member of the group was William Wilberforce, who used his influence in Parliament to abolish the British slave trade. John Newton, a former captain of a slave vessel and author of “Amazing Grace,” was also a member. When Wilberforce considered leaving Parliament, Newton encouraged him to remain there and use his influence for good. It cannot but be the case, therefore, that Bradley was conversant with Wesleyanism.

Before we consider in detail Bradley’s ethical view, it will be helpful to consider summarily the salient features of his later work on metaphysics, *Appearance and Reality* (1893, 1897). The earlier chapters of the work are a discussion of terms (qualities) and relations. The point made is that terms without relations are unintelligible, and that, further, with relations they are likewise unintelligible. Also, relations, with or without terms, are equally unintelligible. What this means, then, is that discursive thought, which is necessarily relational in form, yields self-contradiction. This thesis is substantiated in detail in later chapters, which consider space and time, motion, causation, activity, and things. These are both non-relational and relational. There is no way in which thought can escape this contradiction and dilemma, when it is restricted to a consideration of appearances. The self-contradictory nature of appearances is evident without question.

Chapter nine of Book I, *Appearance*, deals with the nature of the self. While at first glance, it seems that the self is a unity without relations,
such in fact is not the case. Bradley discusses various theories as to the nature of the self, affirming finally that the self is relational as implying a unity that it does not and cannot have and a diversity that it cannot abide. The self is located in appearances, and is, as are all appearances, unreal as self-contradictory.

A brief word about the second book, Reality. Its basic argument is this: while the nature of thought, as discursive, is relational, and is thus caught in the self-contradictions of terms and relations, it nevertheless, despite its generic nature, yields its own remedy. This remedy is evident in the nature of the judgment. The judgment $S$ is $P$ is relational, in that the predicate is asserted of the subject, or the ideal quality of the immediate fact. But underlying this judgmental relation is the implied affirmation of the unity that embraces the relation: reality is such that $S$ is $P$. When this lead is followed to its conclusion, thought may catch glimpse of the one reality, a systematic unity that comprises, without disruption of that unity, all diversity. This is the Absolute.

Reality is one in this sense that it has a positive nature exclusive of discord, a nature which must hold throughout everything that is to be real. Its diversity can be diverse only so far as it is not to clash, and what seems otherwise anywhere cannot be real. And, from the other side, everything that appears must be real. Appearance must belong to reality, and it must therefore be concordant and other than it seems. The bewildering mass of phenomenal diversity must somehow be at unity and self-consistent; for it cannot be elsewhere than in reality, and reality excludes discord. Or again we may put it so: the real is individual. It is one in the sense that its positive character embraces all differences in an inclusive harmony. And this knowledge, as poor as it may be, is certainly more than bare negation or mere ignorance. So far as it goes, it gives us positive news about reality (Appearance and Reality, 140).

As did Green before him, Bradley proposes self-realization as the meaning of morality. That is, his ethical theory is that of self-realization. But once this thesis is asserted, there remains both the proof that the moral end is indeed self-realization and the specification of the nature of self-realization:

What remains is to point out the most general expression for end in itself, the ultimate practical 'why'; and that we find in the word self-realization.

How can it be proved that self-realization is the end? There is
only one way to do that. That is to know what we mean, when we say 'self', and 'real', and 'realize', and 'end'; and to know that is to have something like a system of metaphysics, and to say it would be to exhibit that system. Instead of remarking, then, that we lack space to develop our views, let us frankly confess that, properly speaking, we have no such views to develop, and therefore we cannot prove our thesis. All that we can do is partially to explain it, and try to render it plausible (Ethical Studies, pp. 64-65).^2

Bradley develops his thesis that the ethical end is self-realization by appealing to two considerations: the moral consciousness and psychological fact.

The moral consciousness discloses the fact that morality implies an end to be accomplished. In this respect, morality is a means. But it is not a mere means, divorced from the nature of the end. This occurs, for example, in art, where the act of artistic creation is a mere means to the result. But it cannot occur in morality. Here there is not only something to be done, but that something to be done is something to be done by the individual. In that the ethical act is to be done by the individual, the act becomes the act in which the individual achieves self-realization.

There is not only something to be done, but something to be done by me—I must do the act, must realize the end. Morality implies both the something to be done, and the doing of it by me; and if you consider them as end and means, you can not separate the end and the means. If you chose to change the position of end and means, and say my doing is the end, and the 'to be done' is the means, you would not violate the moral consciousness; for the truth is that means and end are not applicable here. The act for me means my act, and there is no end beyond the act. This we see in the belief that failure may be equivalent morally to success—in the saying, that there is nothing good except a good will. In short, for morality the end implies the act, and the act implies self-realization (Ibid., 65-66).

When the question is considered from a purely psychological standpoint, it is evident that "... what we do, is, perfectly or imperfectly, to realize ourselves, and that we can not possibly do anything else; all that we can realize is (accident apart) our ends, or the objects we desire; and all that we can desire is, in a word, self" (Ibid., p. 66). In desiring an object or end, the person feels himself or herself as affirmed, or realized, in the

^2The first edition of Ethical Studies appeared in 1876. It was not until 1893 that the first edition of Bradley's "system of metaphysics," Appearance and Reality, was published.
desired object. There is thus more than the feeling of pleasure in the transaction, and that more is the self and its affirmation.

The self to be realized is not the self of a particular feeling or of a collection of feelings. Indeed, Bradley writes, "... the whole self is present in its states, and ... therefore the whole self is the object aimed at; and this is what we mean by self-realization" (Ibid., 68). He continues, to enlarge this point:

And, if we turn to life, we see that no man has disconnected particular ends; he looks beyond the moment, beyond this or that circumstance or position; his ends are subordinated to wider ends; each situation is seen (consciously or unconsciously) as part of a broader situation, and in this or that act he is aiming at and realizing some larger whole, which is not real in any particular act as such, and yet is realized in the body of acts which carry it out ... and so far we may say that the self we realize is identified with wholes, or that the ideas of the states of self we realize are associated with ideas that stand for wholes (Ibid., 69).

Further, these wholes are ultimately included in one whole:

What I am saying is that, if the life of the normal man be inspected, and the ends he has in view (as exhibited in his acts) be considered, they will, roughly speaking, be embraced in one main end or whole of ends. . . . [The] ideal life, is not something straggling, as it were, and discontinuous, but is brought before the mind as a unity, and, if imagined in more detail, is a system where particulars subserve one whole (Ibid., 70).

Thus the moral aim is consistency of the ends so as to form the unity of system. However, consistency is but one aspect of self-realization. Taken by itself alone, it is not constitutive of self-realization. A harmonious life may be but a consistent system of limited, even, trivial values.

But is this all? . . . Is an harmonious life all that we want in practice? Certainly not. . . . It is no human ideal to lead 'the life of an oyster'. We have no right to find out just what we happen to be and to have, and then to contract our wants to that limit. We cannot do that if we would, and morality calls to us that, if we try to do it, we are false to ourselves. Against the sensuous facts around us and within us, we must for ever attempt to widen our empire; we must at least try to go forward, or we shall certainly be driven back (Ibid., 74).

So diversity must be combined with consistency. Richness of experience must be combined with consistency of experience. Kant put forward these two principles under the names of "specification" and "homogeneity." Thus . . . the ideal is neither to be perfectly homogeneous, nor simply to be specified to the last degree, but rather to combine both of these elements. Our true being is not the extreme of unity, nor of diversity,
but the perfect identity of both. And ‘Realize yourself’ does not merely mean ‘Be a whole’, but ‘Be an infinite whole’ (Ibid.).

But what does it mean to realize oneself as infinite? That is, what does infinite mean? Bradley rejects two incorrect views as to the nature of the infinite. First, infinite does not mean endlessness. The endlessness of a finite quality projected indefinitely is still the finite. Second, infinite does not mean “something else, which is different in quality.” If this were the case, the infinite would be contrasted with the finite, and this would render the infinite finite (Ibid., 76-77).

In neither of these two senses is the mind infinite. What then is the true sense of the infinite? As before, it is the negation of the finite; it is not-finite. But, unlike both the false infinities, it does not leave the finite as it is. It neither, with (1), says ‘the finite is to be not-finite, nor with (2), tries to get rid of it by doubling it. It does really negate the finite, so that the finite disappears, not by having a negative set over against it, but by being taken up into a higher unity, in which, becoming an element, it ceases to have its original character, and is both suppressed and preserved. The infinite is thus ‘the unity of the finite and infinite’ (Ibid., 77).

The “infinite whole,” which is the true self, is comparable to Green’s “eternal consciousness,” has the function of the eternal consciousness as the norm of perfection. The finite self is progressively realized under the aegis of the ideal of the true self as infinite whole.

Now, for Bradley, the infinite, as suppressing and preserving the finite self, is the supreme individual that comprehends its own self-distinctions, with no other beside itself, and is thus the “concrete universal,” the absolute. However, for the actual finite consciousness there is an inescapable indetermination and vagueness that must attach to the ethical imperative to be an infinite whole. This Bradley admits.

Thus I am to be infinite, to have no limit from the outside; and yet I am one among others, and therefore am finite. . . . We admit the full force of this objection. I am finite; I am both infinite and finite, and that is why my moral life is a perpetual progress. I must progress, because I have an other which is to be, and yet never quite is, myself; and so, as I am, am in a state of contradiction (Ibid., 78).

In the fifth essay, "My Station and its Duties," of Ethical Studies,
Bradley suggests a possible remedy to the abstractness of the ethical imperative. His point is that the individual may realize himself or herself in the performance of the duties attached to one’s station in the community.

. . . here is a universal which can confront our wandering desires with a fixed and stern imperative, but which yet is no unreal form of the mind, but a living soul that penetrates and stands fast in the detail of actual existence. It is real, and real for me. It is in its affirmation that I affirm myself, for I am but as a ‘heart-beat in its system’. And I am real in it; for, when I give myself to it, it gives me the fruition of my own personal activity, the accomplished ideal of my life which is happiness. In the realized idea which, superior to me, and yet here and now in and by me, affirms itself in a continuous process, we have found the end, we have found self-realization, duty, and happiness in one—yes, we have found ourselves, when we have found our station and its duties, our function as an organ in the social organism (Ibid., 163).

Bradley develops this thesis with such rigor and precision that many have supposed that he subscribed to this view. The use of this essay, out of context, in textbooks of selections has even furthered this opinion. But Bradley rejects this suggestion, criticizing it on two counts.

First, even within the context of one’s station and its duties, the opposition of the actual self and the ideal self is not completely resolved. There is always a discrepancy between the two, and each is in some sense one’s real self.

I feel at times identified with the good, as though all my self were in it; there are certain good habits and pursuits and companies in which perhaps I feel no less at home. And then again there are certain bad habits and pursuits and companies in which perhaps I feel no less at home, in which also I feel myself to be myself . . . (Ibid., 276-77).

Second, the ethical imperative cannot be limited to any actual social order. (a) No actual social order is as it ought to be; there are always conditions to be deplored and, if possible, to improve.

Again, the moral man need not find himself realized in the world. (i) It is necessary to remark that the community in which he is a member may be in a confused or rotten condition, so that in it right and might do not always go together. And (ii) the very best community can only ensure that correspondence in the gross; it cannot do so in every single detail. (iii) There are affictions for which no moral organism has balm or physician, though it has alleviation; and these can mar the life of any man. (iv) The member may have to sacrifice himself for the community. In none of these cases can he see his realization; and here again the contradiction breaks out, and we must wrap ourselves in a virtue which is our own and not the world’s, or seek a higher doctrine by which, through faith and through faith alone, self-suppression issues in a higher self-realization (Ibid., 204).

And, (b), there are cases when the ethical imperative does not involve
relations with others. The search for beauty and truth is an imperative, but does not arise out of a compulsion within society.

To say, without society science and art could not have arisen is true. To say, apart from society the life of an artist or man of science cannot be carried on, is also true; but neither truth goes to show that society is the ultimate end, unless by an argument which takes the basis of a result as its final cause, and which would prove the physical and physiological conditions of society to be the end for which it existed. Man is not man at all unless social, but man is not much above the beasts unless more than social (Ibid., 223).

Finally, the norm of self-realization is the ideal self.

And, finally, against this ideal self the particular person remains and must remain imperfect. The ideal self is not fully realized in us, in any way that we can see. We are aware of a ceaseless process, it is well if we can add progress, in which the false private self is constantly subdued but never disappears. And it can never disappear: we are never realized. The contradiction remains; and not to feel it demands something lower or something higher than a moral point of view (Ibid., 205-06).

“Something higher than a moral point of view.” Is there something higher than a moral point of view, and, if so, what is that higher point of view? To this question we now turn our attention.

Thus far, in our consideration of Bradley’s ethic of self-realization, we have been largely concerned with the contradiction between the actual self and the ideal self. But there is, according to Bradley, another form of contradiction. It is a self-contradiction that lies in the ethical itself.

There are two respects in which the ethical is self-contradictory. First, it demands that which cannot be realized. It requires one to realize that which can never be realized. Second, if the ethical imperative were realized, the ethical would destroy itself. The essential meaning of the ethical is the "ought," and if the ought were achieved, it would, obviously, no longer exist. Since, then, what is essential to the nature of morality would cease, the category of the moral would of necessity cease and thus be as such eliminated. The category of the ethical is self-destructive and must yield to another.

Morality does involve a contradiction; it does tell you to realize that which never can be realized, and which, if realized, does efface itself as such. No one ever was or could be perfectly moral; and if we were, he would be moral no longer. Where there is no imperfection there is no ought, where there is no ought there is no morality, where there is no
self-contradiction there is no ought. The ought is a self-contradiction. Are we to say then that that disposes of it? Surely not, unless it also disposes of ourselves; and that can not be. At least from this point of view we are a self-contradiction; we never feel what we really are; we really are what we know we are not; and if we became what we are, we should scarcely be ourselves. Morality aims at the cessation of that which makes it possible; it is the effort after non-morality, and it presses forward beyond itself to a super-moral sphere where it ceases as such to exist (Ibid., 234-35).

The super-moral sphere is, according to Bradley, the religious. The final essay of Ethical Studies is devoted to this subject. We shall not develop Bradley's thesis in detail. Suffice it to remark that, for Bradley, the essential feature that distinguishes religion from morality is that religion asserts, as the ethical does not, the reality of the ideal self enjoined by the ethical imperative. The demand of self-realization is achieved. It is achieved in that higher unity of the divine and human, in which the finite selves, while not real in themselves, find reconciliation in the divine, in which they subsist, and thus find self-realization. The content of this realization is the demand of the ethical, and not any separate content. But it does have a final dimension of its own: it removes the problematic of the ethical and gives the certainty of already accomplished victory, and in this magnifies the importance of success.

. . . What is the object with which the self is made one by faith? For our answer to this question we must go to the facts of the Christian consciousness. . . .

The object, which by faith the self appropriates, is in Christianity nothing alien from and outside the world, not an abstract divine which excludes the human; but it is the inseparable unity of human and divine. It is the ideal which, as will, affirms itself in and by will; it is will which is one with the ideal. And this whole object, while presented in a finite individual form, is not yet truly presented. It is known, in its truth, not until it is apprehended as an organic human-divine totality; as one body with divine members, as one self which, in many selves, realizes, wills, and loves itself, as they do themselves in it (Ibid., 330-31).

We are now led to the question concerning the transition from the ethical to the religious. There are several aspects of this question. First, is there a direct transition of continuity from the ethical to the religious. Second, what, in Bradley's language, are the "facts of the Christian consciousness?" Third, what do these facts tell us about the perfection that is, first, the deity, and, second, the inheritance of the religious
individual? Here we must consider the claim of evangelical perfectionism and assess its significance in reference to perfectionism considered in more philosophical terms.

We have earlier observed that, according to Aristotle, the moral virtues subserve, and issue in, the intellectual virtue of the contemplation of God. The moral virtues so "steady" the soul as to enable it to contemplate the Eternal One. The transition here appears to be marked by continuity. However, the perfection that is visioned is a remote and abstract one. God is far-removed from the world, which longs after Him. God neither knows or feels for the world. Bradley’s view, that God is "not an abstract divine which excludes the human" diametrically opposes the Aristotelian thesis.

Kant, too, proposes a rather direct transition from the ethical to the religious. The moral law, which is founded in and arises out of, the individual’s freedom, commands us to promote the *summum bonum*, the supreme or highest good. The term, however, is ambiguous: it may mean either the good that is unconditioned or the good that is complete, i.e., a whole that is not a part of a greater whole. Now, for Kant, the supreme and unconditioned good is virtue. The complete good, however, is the union of virtue and happiness. This the moral consciousness demands. But the facts are that there is, in this world, no such necessary connection. We must, therefore, Kant argues, postulate the existence of God as the guarantor of the union of virtue and happiness. In this regard, then, ethics requires transition to religion:

Now Christian morality supplies this defect (of the second indispensable element in the *summum bonum*) by representing the world, in which rational beings devote themselves with all their soul to the moral law, as a *kingdom of God*, in which nature and morality are brought into a harmony foreign to each of itself, by a holy Author who makes the derived *summum bonum* possible. . . . In this manner the moral laws lead through the conception of the *summum bonum* as the object and final end of pure practical reason to religion, that is, to the recognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions, that is to say, arbitrary ordinances of a foreign will and contingent in themselves, but as essential laws of every free will in itself, which, nevertheless, must be regarded as commands of the Supreme Being, because it is only from a morally perfect (holy and good) and at the same time all-powerful will, and consequently only through harmony with this will, that we can hope to attain the *summum bonum* which the moral law makes it our duty as the object of our endeavors (Critique of Practical Reason, 226).
Now, it is quite evident that here the transition from ethics to religion, albeit a direct one, is a tour de force. God becomes a deus ex machina. Further, the content of religion is, as for Bradley, precisely and only the content of the ethical: "Religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands" (Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, 142). This Kant amplifies in a footnote:

By means of this definition many an erroneous interpretation of the concept of a religion in general is obviated. First, in religion, as regards the theoretical apprehension and avowal of belief, no assertorial knowledge is required (even of God’s existence), since with our lack of insight into supersensible objects, such avowal might well be dissembled; rather it is merely a problematical assumption (hypothesis) regarding the highest cause of things that is presupposed speculatively, yet with an eye to the object toward which our morally legislative reason bids us strive—an assertorial faith, practical and therefore free, and giving promise of the realization of its ultimate aim (Ibid.).

Hegel, the greatest of German idealists, develops the transition from morality to religion in a very different way than that discussed in the foregoing. Morality, Hegel says, is entirely subjective, an affair of internal consciousness. Its true nature, or, as Hegel puts it, its notion, is its universality. When the individual’s will is in harmony with its notion, i.e., with the universal will, the individual is moral.

There is, however, a deficiency that characterizes the ethical. It is purely subjective. It is never actualized in the objective institutions of family, society, and the state. When it is actualized, it ceases to be morality and becomes social ethics.

Social ethics, however, is equally one-sided. It is merely external, and thus lacks the inward genius of subjective consciousness. These two extremes are overcome, according to Hegel, in a transcendence in which they are united in the infinite and absolute spirit.

Now, the first mode of apprehending absolute spirit is the aesthetic. The aesthetic object unites the idea, its meaning, with sensuous content. Yet, even here, the unity of idea and object, or internal and external, is not achieved. For the sensuous object, while essential to the display of the
intelligible idea, is never adequate to the idea. Self-contradiction is not yet overcome in the unity of subjective and objective.

It is here that the transition to religion occurs. In religion, idea and object are not external to each other, as they are in all the previous stages, but are brought together in a form of unity. Unlike the aesthetic, which represents the idea in sensuous imagery, religion thinks the idea. But it does not think the idea at the level of pure thought. It thinks by means of imagery. Hegel calls this pictorial concept Vorstellung. Vorstellung is a pictorial concept.

As proximate to each other as the extremes of subjectivity and objectivity are, the resolution of these extremes is not yet achieved. That achievement is realized in purely rational terms, that is, in philosophy. For example, the popular idea of creation is a Vorstellung. The rational truth for which it stands is that Absolute Idea puts itself forth into externality and otherness and becomes the world. The idea of the incarnation is likewise but a vorstellung. The rational truth of the imagery is that the finite individual is a moment in the life of the infinite Spirit.

This science [philosophy] is the unity of art and religion. Whereas the vision-method of Art, external in every point of form, is but subjective production and shivers the substantial content into many separate shapes, and whereas Religion, with its separation into parts, opens it out in mental picture, and mediates what is thus opened out; Philosophy not merely keeps them together to make a total, but even unifies them into the simple spiritual vision, and then in that raises them to self-conscious thought. Such consciousness is thus the intelligible unity (cognized by thought) of art and religion, in which the diverse elements in the content are cognized as necessary, and this necessary as free (The Philosophy of Mind, 181).

What may be gathered from this cursory examination of the views of certain philosophers is that, in the end, the transition from morality to religion is really the reduction of religion to morality, or as in Hegel, to pure thought. Put somewhat differently, the religious consciousness, particularly expressed conceptually does not, in its own right, possess
authentic and self-sustaining status.\(^3\)

But we must return to the view of Bradley concerning the movement in thought from morality to religion. We have seen that, for him, the substantive content of the religious consciousness is precisely the content of the ethical. These contents constitute “the facts of the religious consciousness.” There is, however, as we have further observed, a coloring, or perhaps transformation, of the ethical. The ought that defines the ethical is dropped and replaced by the value of reality.

However, one wonders whether this analysis can be sustained. The problem concerns the view, adopted by Bradley, that the ethical is self-contradictory and hence self-destructive. “Morality, . . . if realized does efface itself as such” (Ethical Studies, 234). One can readily understand how a particular ought, or obligation, ceases to be such when it is achieved. But when it comes to the level of the category of the ethical, it is difficult to understand how the ethical may be destroyed but yet instated in a new and different context. Bradley makes it clear that the ethical is grounded in, depends on, the category of ought. “Where there is no ought there is no morality,” he says (Ibid.). How then, can the ethical, its contents, be preserved in the religious context? For here we have, not a particular context, but a universal context. In short, the transition from the ethical to the religious, on Bradley’s terms, may present an insuperable difficulty.

One might argue, however, that the affair is but an affair of mental perspective. From the viewpoint of ethical thinking, the realization of the ethical is an impossibility. But from the viewpoint of religious thinking, this realization is conceivable. But Bradley wants more than mental visions; he wants two different sets of facts—sets that do not seem to reconcile.

\(^3\)John McT. Ellis McTaggart, who himself was not a Christian, wrote that Hegelianism is “. . . an enemy in disguise—the least evident but most dangerous. The doctrines which have been protected from external refutation are found to be transforming themselves till they are on the point of melting away . . .” (Studies in Hegelian Cosmology, 1901 ed., 250).
The second subject of our present inquiry concerns the nature of experience. We must go, as Bradley rightly suggests, to the "facts of the Christian consciousness" to learn the nature of "the object with which the self is made one by faith." This question, however, presupposes an answer to a deeper question, namely, "What is the nature of consciousness, or experience?" To this deeper-lying question we now turn.

In brief, according to the idealists, in this discussion specifically Bradley, consciousness, or experience, is what we may term assimilative, rather than intentional. It will be a help here to refer to Bradley at some length. In his most important work, Appearance and Reality, he writes:

Our result so far is this. Everything phenomenal is somehow real; and the absolute must at least be as rich as the relative. And, further, the Absolute is not many; there are no independent reals. The universe is one in this sense that its differences exist harmoniously within one whole, beyond which there is nothing. Hence the Absolute is, so far, an individual and a system, but, if we stop here, it remains but formal and abstract. Can we then, the question is, say anything about the concrete nature of the system?

Certainly, I think, this is possible. When we ask as to the matter which fills up the empty outline, we can reply in one word, this matter is experience. And experience means something much the same as given and present fact. We perceive, on reflection, that to be real, or even barely to exist, must be to fall within sentience. Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real. We may say, in other words, that there is no being or fact outside of that which is commonly called psychical existence. Feeling, thought, and volition (any groups under which we class psychical phenomena) are all the material of existence, and there is no other material, actual or even possible. This result in its general form seems evident at once; and, however serious a step we now seem to have taken, there would be no advantage at this point in discussing it at length. For the test in the main lies ready to our hand, and the decision rests on the manner in which it is applied. I will state the case briefly thus. Find any piece of existence, take up anything that any one could possibly call a fact, or could in any sense assert to have being, and then judge if it does not consist in sentient experience. Try to discover any sense in which you can still continue to speak of it, when all perception and feeling have been removed; or point out any fragment of its matter, any aspect of its being, which is not derived from and is not still relative to this source. When the experiment is made strictly, I can myself conceive of nothing else than the experienced. Anything, in no sense felt or perceived, becomes to me quite unmeaning. And as I cannot try to think of it without realizing either that I am not thinking at all, or that I am thinking of it against my will as being experienced, I am driven to the conclusion that for me experience is the same as reality. The fact that falls elsewhere seems, in my mind, to be a mere word and a failure, or else an attempt at self-contradiction. It is a vicious abstraction whose existence is meaningless nonsense, and is therefore not possible (144-45).

Now, a fact, or object, is relative in some sense to sentient experience. Whatever it is outside experience, it is amenable to sentient
experience. And, further, for us it is nothing outside of that experience. This Bradley represents in the statement: “Try to discover any sense in which you can still continue to speak of it, when all perception and feeling have been removed; or point out any fragment of its matter, any aspect of its being, which is not derived from and is not still relative to this source.”

But the circumstance that for us the object is, and must be, relative to our sentience, does not constitute an identity of the object with sentience. If we but reflect on our experience, we are aware that we do not refer the perception and feeling to the object experienced. Yet Bradley asserts that this is what really occurs, i.e., the object is, nevertheless, the sentient experience: “Find any piece of existence, take up anything that any one could possibly call a fact, or could in any sense assert to have being, and then judge if it does not consist in sentient experience.” That is, Bradley makes sentience the absolute property of the object.

The relativity of the object to sentience, when it is being experienced, does not signify that sentience is the absolute property of the object. A condition of the object as experienced cannot be translated into the essence of the object as experienced. If we say that the object experienced consists of the experience of the object, then what, precisely, is that object? This question remains unanswered, even for Bradley. To answer to it, on Bradley’s term, would no doubt lead to a meaningless tautology, that sentience is sentience.

Our conclusion thus far is that consciousness is not such as to assimilate the object to consciousness, so as to identify it with sentience. We turn to a different interpretation of consciousness, which is one that coincides with the evident awareness of what occurs when we perceive or feel an object.

In 1874 the German philosopher Franz Brentano published his important work, Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunktdt (Psychology from an Empirical
His purpose in writing the work was to develop a new basis upon which to construct the science of psychology as a foundation for scientific philosophy. Rejecting as a basis the method of conscious introspection, he argued that the only satisfactory and adequate basis is inner perception, the immediate awareness of one’s own psychological phenomena. He ascribed to it infallible self-evidence. It could be observed, however, “on the margin,” while attention is directed toward external objects.

His first task was to distinguish between psychological and non-psychological or “physical” phenomena. He found the distinguishing criterion in “intentionality”. This is the passage in which he introduced the term:

Every mental [i.e., psychological] phenomenon is characterized by what . . . we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, and so on.

This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves (Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint, 88-89).

There are two critical phrases in this passage: “intentional in-existence” and “reference to a content.” He employed the phrase to mean “intentionality,” and by this he meant that the act of perceiving, for example, is directed to an object that is not that act. “Intentional in-existence,” however, is a Thomastic conception that implies the existence of an “intentio” in the intending being, as if it were something actually embedded in the mind. Brentano did not share this conception and soon dropped both the phrase and its associated term, “intentionality,” in favor of the phrase “reference to a content.”

This reference to a content is the decisive mark of psychological phenomena. Physical phenomena lack any such reference, they are not directed to anything beyond them.

Now both the act and the content to which the act is directed are within
the structure of consciousness. The "objectivity" of the content is, to use Brentano’s term, an "immanent objectivity." It is not the real object of the space-time world. Nevertheless, as an immanent objectivity the content cannot be identified with, or reduced to, the act directed to that objectivity. Thus, for example, the act of thought does not, cannot, assimilate to itself the content that is thought. In this regard, the assimilation of content to thought is prohibited.

This situation raises the question of just how the immanent object is related to the real object. Brentano’s answer is in terms of his concept of "double reference." The primary reference is to the real object to which the psychological phenomenon (act-content) refers. The secondary reference is to the psychological phenomenon itself.

Now it is also the case that the real object of the primary reference cannot be identified with, assimilate to, the secondary reference. That is, the existing object is not, as for the Hegelians, absorbed in thought, in the Idea.

Some further light may be thrown upon the thesis that the real object of intentional consciousness cannot be identified with sentence. Perhaps this light derives from a somewhat strange source, namely the conceptual pragmatism of C. I. Lewis. But, again, perhaps an association is tenable, for Brentano’s mission was a scientific reformulation of philosophy. The first part of Lewis’ book, Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation, is devoted to eliciting the structure of empirical knowledge. Its basis, as we know, is sense experience, however much it may be associated with instrumentation. The certification of the truth of a belief in a real object, is, and must be, made in terms of sense experience. A judgment that something is real, in Lewis’ terms a non-terminating judgment (objective judgment), is certified as true in terms of terminating judgments. These judgments are hypothetical, that if a test in terms of sense experience is made a certain expected result in terms of
further sense experience will occur. Given a sufficient number of favorable
tests and outcomes, the truth of the objective judgment may be established
within a range of probability. However, there is something further that is
required in order to ground belief in the objective reality of an object. It
is that we must be assured, again within the scope of acceptable probability,
that if the tests were made in the future, even though they are not actually
made, the same favorable results in terms of sense experience would occur.
These judgments Lewis terms contra-factual conditionals. In short: given a
criterion in mind as to what may constitute relevant verification, the non-
terminating judgment of objective fact is certified, as probable, in terms of
terminating judgments and, finally, of contra-factual conditionals.

Now all this procedure is anchored in, limited to, sense experience and
sense meaning. It is a procedure of sentience. Sentience is the only medium
by which we may be assured that we are in the presence of something
objectively real. But this "ego-centric predicament" does not mean that
objective existence is nothing more than our subjective experience. It is in
the careful control of subjective experience, and only in this control, that
there is any evidence of an objective world. And it is illegitimate to reduce
objective fact to the subjective conditions of its disclosure. If we do so,
we are inescapably locked into the confines of solipsism and all intercourse
with reality is rendered illusory. And that is a price that sensible humanity
cannot pay.

Having affirmed the thesis that consciousness is intentional, or
referential, such that the object cannot be assimilated to sentient
experience, we now turn to the subject of the religious consciousness, with
particular reference to the experience of perfection. We shall develop this
phase of the present argument under three rubrics: the consciousness of God,
the condition of sinfulness, and the perfection of experience. Our especial
concern will be with perfectionism as a Christian and evangelical concept.
The Consciousness of God.

We have seen in the foregoing that, for the idealists, God cannot be regarded as reality individuated as other to the world. Bradley, for example, has argued that this would involve God in relations to an other, and, therefore, God would become an appearance, fraught with the self-contradictions into which appearances fall. The reality of God, then requires that God be the single Absolute in whom all distinctions are but self-distinctions. It is the force of logic, particularly the force of the principle of identity, that rules this conclusion. Accordingly, the value experience of God must conform to the dictates of logic. All this is made quite clear in the last essay of Ethical Studies, as well as in Appearance and Reality.

Faith involves the belief (1) that the course of the external world, despite appearances, is the realization of the ideal will; (2) that on the inner side the human and divine are one; or the belief (1) that the world is the realization of humanity as a divine organic whole; and (2) that with that whole the inner wills of particular persons are identified. Faith must hold that, in biblical language, there is 'a kingdom of God', that there is an organism which realizes itself in its members, and also in those members, on the subjective side, wills and is conscious of itself, as they will and are conscious of themselves in it (Ethical Studies, 331).

There is, to be sure, a logical factor involved in the consciousness of the Divine. Whatever be the root of that consciousness, there is inevitably the attempt to formulate that consciousness in intellectual, logical, terms. But this does not mean that the logical element is the constitutive or determining element in the value consciousness of God.

We shall take note of two references in which it is denied that the logical intellect is the determining condition of all consciousness.

In the Phaedo Socrates discusses the stages of his philosophical development. The first stages are an attempt to understand the world in terms of natural science and, secondly, in terms of mind. He finds difficulties in these approaches, and then turns to the logoi, to thoughts, concepts, definitions. That is, he turns to "pure reason." He writes:
So I thought I must have recourse to conceptions and examine in them the truth of realities. Now perhaps my metaphor is not quite accurate; for I do not grant in the least that he who studies realities by means of conceptions is looking at them in images any more than he who studies them in the facts of daily life (99e).

Socrates devoted himself to the discovery of the defining concepts of the realms of human experience: science, aesthetic, morality, ethics, and religion. In Phaedo 75d he gives a representative list of the logoi: equality, beauty, goodness, justice, and holiness.

For our present argument is no more concerned with the equal than with absolute beauty and the absolute good and the just and the holy . . . .

He terms these logoi Ideai. They are the intelligible constructs through which experience and the experienced world are constituted and organized. The specific Ideai are grounded in and derived from The Idea of the Good, the supreme Idea.

Nevertheless, the Ideai are not self-fulfilling. They do not provide conceptual knowledge as to just how they are embodied in reason or just how they inform the structured cosmos. It is for this reason that Plato asserts that reality is finally unavailable to us in concepts.

Plato’s retraction as to the import of the Idea has puzzled Plato scholars. Part of the reason for this puzzlement is a one-sided view of Plato’s thought, in the direction of a thorough-going intellectualism. But Plato is not a rationalist. Plato employs two terms to designate the logoi. In Euthyphro 6d he asks Euthyphro to identify “the essential aspect, by which all holy acts are holy.” The Greek for “essential aspect” is οὐχὶ τὸ ἔιδος (the eidos itself), which is “always the same with itself (οὐχὶ οὐτῷ) in every action.” The second term is the one previously noted, i.e., Idea. This term is used, among other places, in Republic vi. 505a, where Plato says “that the greatest thing to learn is the idea of good (ἡ τοῦ ἀγάθου ἴδεα) by reference to which just things and all the rest become useful and beneficial.” Both terms have a basic intuitive signification. Both have their root in ἴδος, to see. Idea may have originally referred to the act of seeing, in which the act and
object are combined. *Eidos* refers to what is seen. Thus this primary intuitive import of the terms, which became practically synonymous, is essential to the character of the Ideai. To disregard this intuitive meaning is to misconstrue Plato’s thought.

Some further attention should be given to this subject. In *Phaedo* 100b Plato asks his hearer to “assume that there are such things as absolute beauty and good and greatness and the like.” The use of the term *absolute* is misleading and tends to further the extreme intellectualist interpretation of Plato. The Greek text for the English, *absolute beauty*, reads: καλὸν ὑπὸ καθ’ αὑτὸ. The expression is “beauty itself according to itself.” The expression points up the fact that the *idea* is a unity endowed with a perfect internal homogeneity, a purity and constancy of character. It is “its own self according to itself.” Since *Idea* and *Eidos* are marked by singleness of individuality, and since they are the *logoi*, it would be better to translate the latter term as *thoughts* rather than as *concepts*. The term *concept*, from the Latin *concipio*, *to take together, to hold together*, gives the erroneous impression that the Logoi are complex in connotation and are thus amenable to definition and understanding in logical terms. But such is not the case, for the Idea is a simple and single individual, finally indefinable.

The other reason for a rationalist interpretation of the *Idea*, at least for English scholars unfamiliar with the Greek language, is the phrase, “looking at them [i.e., realities] in *images*.”

This translation is erroneous. Plato does, to be sure, employ the term *image*, but he restricts it to *sense imagery*. In *Republic* 509d-511e, where he uses the figure of the divided line to represent the four stages of cognition, the first stage is imagining (*eikasia*). The sense datum entertained is an image (*eiōv* - *eiōv*). The term in the *Phaedo*, translated as *images*, is not the plural of *eiōv* - *eiōv*. Here it is helpful to note that the Hamilton and Cairns edition of the Dialogues uses the term *images*, as does the Loeb
edition, but, unlike the Loeb, places it in quotes. This an indication that it is used with reservation and that it is in some way inappropriate as so employed. The difficulty lies in the circumstance that the wrong term is noted by these scholars. The term in the Greek text, which is in the dative, is ἐικός (eikos). Its root is ἐικ (eik), which means to be like. The logoi, the ideai, Plato is saying, do not possess a likeness to the realities to which they bear a reference. They are not, in short, self-fulfilling.

The supreme reality, the Good, which is perfection, is shrouded in mystery. It cannot lend itself to the powers and norms of the logical intellect. This Plato makes unquestionably clear in the seventh book of the Republic. He wishes to say something important about the Good. He knows that he cannot say this in the medium of the logoi, and this because the Good is neither a factual referent nor definable in concept. Yet he has a vision of the Good. The vision, however, is a dream-vision:

... my dream as it appears to me is that in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of the good, and when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, ... itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this. (Republic vii. 517c)

If the Ideai are not self-fulfilling, what yields this dream-vision of perfection? How may this consciousness be characterized? Plato’s answer to such questions as these is to turn to the myth. He knows, and indeed says, that the myth is not true, but that something like it is true. The myth that is significant for this discussion is the myth of the god Eros, the god of passionate love. Eros is the guide to and beyond the Idea and yields the longed-for ineffable vision of the Real. Nowhere in Plato’s writing is this upward journey so eloquently displayed as it is in the Symposium.

What is important for our present consideration is not the details of the myth of Eros, but what it says about our human situation. Eros is μετα(ύ) (between) the human and the divine. He is thus the bond between human life
and the beyond. He is the greatest daimon (δαίμων), a fiery passion that
“lifts us from earth to kinship in heaven” (Timaeus 90). He first brings the
soul towards immorality by reference to physical beauty. The physical
yearning to beget is a form of the yearning for immortality. Here Eros is the
passionate love of a beautiful body, seeking procreation in beauty: “. . . the
conjunction of man and woman is a begetting for both. It is a divine affair,
this engendering and bringing to birth, an immortal element in the creature
that is mortal . . . (Symposium 206c). The offspring, the child, does,
indeed, satisfy the parents’ desire for immortality, but only to a limited
extent. For the child is an individual external to the parents, and therefore
cannot confer preservation and immortality upon them. And the life and beauty
of the child are destined to fade and die.

There is now a higher love. It is dialogic passion, the loving converse
of soul with soul, which is an “engendering and begetting upon the beautiful”
by means of words (logoi). This act of love on the part of the teacher
engenders in the student the immortal ideas. Yet even here, as we have
previously seen, the longing for immortality has not been realized. For the
logoi, the Ideai, do not yield communion with the immortally real. There is
yet a further, and final, stage in the pilgrimage of the soul.

This is the vision, not of beauty in the physical or even the purely
intellectual form, but of beauty itself, the beauty that is the fountain of
all forms of beauty. Plato calls it “the main ocean of the beautiful.” The
vision is of the inner nature of beauty itself, and it is therefore also the
Idea of the Good. At this last stage

”... he describes a certain single knowledge connected with a beauty
which has yet to be told. . . .
"... suddenly he will have revealed to him, as he draws to a
close of his dealings in love a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature .
.(Symposium 210e-211).

Now, this beauty is both immortal and complete, “divine beauty itself.”
What a great daimon is Eros. The desire for beauty, the immortal flame in our
nature, is the motivating power. *Eros* catches this in sensual love, leads the soul ever upward, through the observances and the sciences, to the vision of unsullied and everlasting beauty. The work of *Eros* is now complete. He has brought the soul, in love, to that wisdom which "... is almost able to lay hold of the final secret. ..." (Symposium 211b). "'So when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to win the friendship of Heaven; he, above all men, is immortal!'" (Symposium 212a).

Thus Plato has made it clear that the vision of the "really real" is no purely, or exclusively, intellectual exercise. Instead it is an emotional beholding of the supreme reality, the Good.

There are certain corollaries that merit consideration and emphasis. First, this emotional vision is intentional. It refers to an object that is other than the subjective act. In the Symposium the object of love is, finally, eternal beauty. Brentano, whom we have earlier considered, might be of help here. His view is that all psychical acts are intentional. There are three basic classes of such acts. The first class, which we have considered in the foregoing, comprises "representations" (Vorstellungen). The second class comprises "judgments" (Urteile). Judgments are as referential as are representations. The third class he called acts of love and hatred (Lieben und Hassen). We may say that this class comprises "emotive acts." Thus, for both Plato and Brentano, there can be no such thing as "love as such." Love is also intentional, a psychical act directed to an object.

Second, the object intended in the emotional act is value, or in language more nearly approximating the terms of this article, the value ultimate, or, in religious terminology, God as perfection.

Again, some help may be forthcoming from a source outside the distinctively Christian source. In 1926 the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann published *Ethik*, which was translated in English in 1932. He argued that the cognition of value is emotional rather than intellectual. What is
known about value in intellectual terms is the fact that value "ought to be."
Intellectual apprehension of value is restricted to the relation between value
and fact; it does not, and cannot, disclose value itself. Thus he writes:

The primal consciousness of value is a feeling of value, the primal
recognition of a commandment is a feeling of that which unconditionally
ought to be . . . .
This priority of feeling has nothing to do with empiricism. The
valuational hall-marks which it communicates to things and events are not
derived from the things and events, not to mention the pleasure and pain
which these induce. On the contrary, the marks are impressed by feeling
upon the things and events. Herein consist the aprioristic determination
of these emotional acts and indirectly the apriority of the marks which
the practical consciousness discerns in the real. The apriority of
emotional acts is just as "pure," original, autonomous and
"transcendental" an authority as the logical and categorical apriorism in
the domain of theory.

The Platonic notion of "beholding" well fits that which material ethics
designates as the "sensing of value," . . . . The apriority of the
knowledge [of value] is no intellectual or reflective apriority, but is
emotional, intuitive (Hartman, Ethics, I, 177-85).

The upshot of the present discussion is that the value consciousness,
and in our context the consciousness of God, does not consist in, is not
dominated by, an abstract intellectual process. Rather, it is a rich, value-
laden emotional apprehension of radiance from perfection. And, as an
emotional beholding, it is truly intentional, the awareness of a reality that
"confronts" the psychical act.

In Tolstoi’s Anna Karenina, Levin, who abandons the city in favor of the
land, says:

The only knowledge that I and all men possess that is clear, indubitable,
absolute, is here. It is not by reason that we have reached it.
And this knowledge I did not acquire. It was given to me . . . given, I
could not know where to get it (750-752).

It may be advisable to consider, briefly, the thought of the German
philosopher Rudolph Otto. His book The Idea of the Holy is devoted to a
consideration of the consciousness of God, in the context of Christianity.
Otto accepts the Platonic limitation on intellectualism, or, in Ottos’
terminology, rationalism, and the emphasis on feeling as the primal
consciousness of supreme reality. He also rejects the immanentalism that
characterizes the thought of the British idealists, insisting rather that the
religious consciousness sustains an intentional reference to the divine.

Christianity is, Otto asserts, a rational religion. Concepts, drawn from our human experience, are analogically attributed to God as completely fulfilled. But symbolic conceptualization is not the primal religious consciousness. "For so far are these 'rational' attributes from exhausting the idea of deity, that they in fact imply a non-rational or supra-rational Subject of which they are predicates" (The Idea of the Holy, p. 2).

The primary consciousness of God is a "feeling-response." Otto characterizes this response as a "numinous state of mind." He invented the term, deriving it from numen, which, in its reference to deity, signifies might and majesty. He writes:

I shall speak, then of a unique 'numinous' category of value and of a definitely 'numinous' state of mind, which is always found wherever the category is applied. This mental state is perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined. There is only one way to help another to an understanding of it. He must be guided and led on by consideration and discussion of the matter through ways of his own mind, until he reach the point at which the 'numinous' in him perforce begins to stir, to start into life and into consciousness (Ibid., 7).

A first concomitant of the numinous experience is the element that Otto names "creature-feeling." It is an immediate feeling of our status in existence. That is, our primal consciousness of God involves as an immediacy of experience our sense of creature-hood. And this immediate experience of creature-hood carries with it an intentional reference, reference to God, or the objective Numinous, as outside the self. In his experience there is no conceptualization or inference; the experience is wholly a feeling response:

Rather, the 'creature-feeling' is itself a first subjective concomitant and effect of another feeling-element, which casts it like a shadow, but which in itself indubitably has immediate and primary reference to an object outside the self (Ibid., 10).

Otto names the object of the feeling response "mysterium Tremendum." He first analyzes the adjective, "Tremendum. It involves, he says, three elements: absolute unapproachability, overpoweringess, and energy. The noun, "Mysterium" connotes the "Wholly Other." He speaks of this in these words:
Taken in the religious sense, that which is ‘mysterious’ is—to give it perhaps the most striking expression—the ‘wholly other’ (ὁρροπόρ, ἀνυάδ, ἀλλιον), that which is quite beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar, which therefore falls quite outside the limits of the ‘canny’, and is contrasted with it, filling the mind with blank wonder and astonishment (Ibid., 26).

The consciousness of the Mysterium also carries the element of fascination. The numinous experience shows Him who is also uniquely attractive. There is thus strangely harmonized the two qualities, the daunting and the fascinating.

Bradley, we have earlier noted, pointed out that in order to identify “the object with which the self is made one by faith” it is necessary to “go to the facts of the Christian consciousness.” In Lecture II of The Varieties of Religious Experience, “The Reality of the Unseen,” William James records the experience of a person:

“...I remember the night, and almost the very spot on the hilltop, where my soul opened out, as it were, into the Infinite, and there was a rushing together of the two worlds, the inner and the outer. It was deep calling unto deep—the deep that my own struggle had opened up within being answered by unfathomable deep without, reaching beyond the stars. . . . I did not seek Him, but felt perfect unison of my spirit with His. The ordinary sense of things around me faded. For the moment nothing but an ineffable joy and exultation remained. It is impossible fully to describe the experience. It was like the effect of some great orchestra when all the separate notes have melted into one swelling harmony that leaves the listener conscious of nothing save that his soul is being wafted upwards, and almost bursting with its own emotion (66).

And another writes:

It was rather as if my personality had been transformed by the presence of a spiritual spirit. But the more I seek words to express this intimate intercourse, the more I feel the impossibility of describing the thing by any of our usual images. At bottom the expression most apt to render what I felt is this: God was present, though invisible; he fell under no one of my senses, yet my consciousness perceived him (68).

The Condition of Sinfulness.

In the opening remarks of Chapter II of his The Idea of the Holy, Otto insists that “‘Holiness’—‘the holy’—is a category of interpretation and valuation peculiar to the sphere of religion. It is, indeed, applied by transference to another sphere—that of ethics—but it is not itself derived from this” (p. 5). Substantially the same may be said of the idea of sin: it too is peculiar to religion. Further, it is an idea that has no place in
ethics. Ethics knows nothing of sin. It does, of course, know something of "the bad self," but it does not call this sin, for here there is lacking any reference to deity. Bradley, for example, discusses this question:

In the field of religion we hear of an inward man delighting in God’s law, which would have me do what I do not do, and of another self which takes pleasure in what I abhor; but in morals we have nothing to do with these. We can not consider either the good or bad self in its relation to the divine will, because that would be to pass at once beyond mere morality. But apart from religion, the good and bad selves no doubt exist, and everyone knows what they mean (Ethical Studies, 276).

According to Bradley, the good self is essentially a unity, according to which the single aim of the self is to take pleasure in the morally good, and thereby to find self-realization:

The good will is the will to realize the ideal self; and the ideal self we saw had a threefold content: the social reality, the social ideal, and the non-social ideal. We need say no more, then, but that the good self is the self whose end and pleasure is the realization of the ideal self (Ibid., 279).

On the other hand, the bad self lacks any such organizing unity. It lacks any end to which its content is subordinated:

All that we can say is that the content of the bad self in a man is the habits and pursuits which are antagonistic to the good; the bad will is the will which is identified with the bad, and the bad is whatever is willed against the good. . . . The content of the bad self has no principle, and forms no system, and is relative to no end. . . . The content can be generally described only by reference to the good self, as what contradicts and opposes it, and cannot be defined except against it (Ibid., 279-80).

These references to Bradley are contained in the final essay of Ethical Studies, entitled "Selfishness and Self-Sacrifice." He devotes considerable attention to the question of the origin of the bad self. He rejects any hereditary theory, on two grounds: (1) it does not address the fact to be explained, namely, the double self, and this because it ignores the self altogether and regards it as but a self-conscious collection; and (2) it ignores the "natural basis" on which the bad self, as well as the good self, are developed (Ibid., 278).

The natural basis of the bad self is the morally neutral ground of natural capacity to find pleasure in sensuous objects and the ideal construction of ends in which satisfaction may be felt. The child learns to
find pleasure in objects and ends approved of by a superior will, a parent for example, and calls these good. When they are not in harmony with the superior will, the child learns to call them bad. Thus Bradley writes:

The natural material of the bad self is consequently supplied partly by sensuous appetite, partly by other tendencies which oppose the good system (such as violent irascibility, jealousy, laziness, &c.), and, further, by natural inclinations to activities and pursuits which lead to collision with the superior (Ibid., 295).

The development of the bad self is, Bradley says, inevitable. The natural dispositions of the child are at first a chaos of propensities and appetites. As they are, they cannot be brought into a unifying system. They must be made into a system by a process of habituation. Yet, notwithstanding this process, it is impossible that bad satisfactions should not take place. As this process continues, the affirmation of the self in the bad takes place, and, accordingly, the permanent bad self is developed.

The result of self-conscious volition of this [the bad self] against the good is twofold: it gets a unity; and the particular bad is brought under that unity; it is now done as bad. The collection of evil habits and desires, which before had no identity, beside the feeling of self-assertion, is now thought of as one, and gets a general character. It does this of course by its antagonism to the good (Ibid., 299-300).

Since the development of the bad self, organized in terms of opposition to the good, is inevitable, there is, according to Bradley, no release from the evil in human nature. At the ethical level, all that can be hoped for is the increasing subordination of the interests of the bad self to the good self. The motivation governing this process is the increasing realization that in this is obtained the true interest of the self, the realization of the ideal self.

The noted German philosopher Immanuel Kant develops his view of the bad self, in some contrast to Bradley, for example, solely by means of philosophical analysis. He does this in Book One of his work Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, which appeared in 1793, after the dates of his three great Critiques. The Book is entitled “Concerning the Indwelling of the Evil Principle with the Good, or, On the Radical Evil in Human Nature.”

Thomas Kingsville Abbot appended the Book at the close of his 1873 translation
of Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*, on the ground that the Book was crucial to an adequate understanding of Kant’s ethical theory.

Kant readily accepts the scriptural view that “there is none righteous, no not one.” We are conscious, even from our earliest years, of an evil bias within us. It is found both in those living nearest to the state of nature and those living in so-called cultivated societies. On the one hand, this bias presents itself as existing in us beyond any conscious effort of our own. Yet, on the other hand, it presents itself as something that ought not to be, and, since ought implies freedom, therefore as something that we could have prevented. Accordingly, Kant’s task is to make understandable this inconsistency between the consciousness of guilt and responsibility.

Kant maintains that the evil nature lies neither in our sensuous nature nor in our practical reason. Sensuous impulses are neither good nor bad. We are therefore not responsible for them. And the evil does not inhere in our practical reason. Practical reason affords the idea of moral obligation, and lacking that idea we could not be guilty or conscious of guilt. Thus Kant writes:

In seeking, therefore, a ground of the morally-evil in man, [we find that] sensuous nature comprises too little, for when the incentives which can spring from freedom are taken away, man is reduced to a mere animal being. On the other hand, a reason exempt from the moral law, a malignant reason as it were (a thoroughly evil will), comprises too much, for thereby opposition to the law would itself be set up as an incentive (since in the absence of all incentives the will cannot be determined), and thus the subject would be made a devilish being. Neither of these designations is applicable to man (*Religion*, 30).

If the evil in human nature lies neither in the sensibility nor in the reason, where then does it lie? It lies, not in the substance of the motives of conduct, but in the relative form of those motives. He says:

Hence the distinction between a good man and one who is evil cannot lie in the difference between the incentives which they adopt into their maxim (not in the content of the maxim), but rather must depend upon subordination (the form of the maxim), i.e., which of the two incentives he makes the condition of the other. Consequently man (even the best) is evil only in that he reverses the moral order of the incentives when he adopts them into his maxim. . . . he makes the incentive of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas, on the contrary, the latter, as the supreme condition of the satisfaction of the former, ought to have been adopted into the universal maxim of the
will as the sole incentive (Ibid., 31-32).

Kant next turns to the task of reconciling moral evil, which presents itself as something not due to our own action, with our responsibility for its inherence in our nature. At first glance it might seem that we could explain a given immoral act as the result of a previous immoral act. This, however, would place evil acts in an empirical nexus of effect and cause, ultimately a series of events and causes. The nexus of causal determination would, therefore, absolve us from all responsibility. But if this were the case, there would then be no moral evil, for, Kant argues, moral evil can exist only as a misuse of freedom. It must, therefore, be that for which we are responsible.

Now, this original act of misuse of freedom cannot be an act in time. It is a contradiction to think of freedom under the conditions of time and temporal causation. Thus the free act in which moral evil originates must be a timeless act of freedom. Every evil act stems from an original and timeless use of freedom.

If an effect is referred to a cause to which it is bound under the laws of freedom, as is true in the case of moral evil, then the determination of the will to the production of this effect is conceived of as bound up with its determining ground not in time but merely in rational representation; such an act cannot be derived from any preceding state whatsoever. . . . To seek the temporal origin of free acts as such (as though they were operations of nature) is thus a contradiction (Ibid., 35)

Further,

In the search for the rational origin of evil actions, every such action must be regarded as though the individual had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence. . . . hence it can and must always be judged as an original use of his will (Ibid., 36).

If one ask just how the individual can fall out of the state of innocence into evil, no answer can be given. The free self, the free act, are both timeless and subsist in the unknowable noumenal reality. To this realm the categories of conceptual understanding are foreign. The origin of evil is unsearchable.

In his ethical work, The Critique of Practical Reason, God is a Deus ex machina whose place it is to combine happiness with moral goodness. Here
Kant’s view of God is external. In the later work, *Religion*, he attempted, none too successfully, to make God less transcendent and an immanent principle in humanity and nature. Thus in the later sections of *Religion* Kant appeals to the Biblical account of the origin of moral evil. The account expresses the philosophical truth that the origin of evil is a mystery. On the one hand, it comes from without, from an evil spirit. To that extent we are absolved from responsibility. On the other hand, the account of the fall of the first parents expresses the philosophical truth that sin is the result of an original act of freedom.

We have pointed out in the foregoing that ethics knows nothing of sin. Here it must be observed that Kant’s reference to God does not involve the concept of sin in ethical theory. The original and timeless act that originates moral evil is the act of freedom. As such, it is not transgression of divine command. It is a transgression of the imperative of moral reason. It is a transgression of the moral law that issues from reason.

In New Testament Greek there are two words translated in English as *sin*. The term ἁµαρτία (*hamartía*). It is a compound term, derived from the privative α (a) (not) and νόµος (*nomos*) (law). This is the primary idea of sin. It signifies the lack of conformity to law, a transgression of law, doing that which is forbidden or neglecting to do that which is required. The law that is transgressed is not, as, for example in Kant, the law of human reason, but the law, or requirement of God. The theistic reference is essential to the concept of sin.

In a secondary sense, the term *sin* applies to character, to what one is, and not to what a person does, to what one thinks, desires, and wills. This want of conformity in character is expressed in Greek by the term ἁµαρτία (*hamartía*). It derives from the privative and (indirectly) µέρος (*share, or mark*). It literally means to be without a share in. Properly, it means to miss the mark. It signifies a missing of the mark as regards to character.
That is, it denotes, not the act of sin, but the principle of sinfulness itself, as an impregnation of character.

In 1757 Wesley engaged in a controversy with John Taylor over the question of original sin. There is a statement, made by Wesley, that points up the relation between sin as act and sin as character, between sin as ἀνομία (anomia) and as ἁμαρτία (hamartis). It is a significant statement:

From this infection of our nature (call it original sin, or what you please) spring many, if not all, actual sins. And this St. James (i.14) plainly intimates, even according to your [Taylor] paraphrase on his words: "'Every man is tempted,' is overcome by temptation, 'when he is drawn away by his own lust,'—his own irregular desire; where the Apostle charges the wickedness of men on its proper cause,—their 'own lust.'" Very true. And irregular desire is (not so much a fruit as a) part of original sin. . . . Another proof that actual sins spring from original, is, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. XV.19) (The Works of John Wesley, 9:274).

There are two questions concerning the principle of sin in human nature: its origin and its nature. Our primary question is that of the nature of sin. Precursory attention, however, may here be given to the first question, the origin of sin in human nature.

The traditional view, both the Arminian/Wesleyan and the Calvinistic, traces sin to the fall of Adam. The chief controversy between the two groups is over the question of penal retribution. The Calvinistic group, particularly the High Calvinism of Charles Hodge and W. T. Shedd, argue that depravity is a punishment inflicted upon the human race because of its guilt in sharing, either literally or seminally, in the sin of Adam. The doctrine is constructed upon the principle of scholastic realism, namely, that there is a generic human nature, apart from the individuals, that underwent depravity and guilt in the fall of the federal head of the race. The view of the Arminian/Wesleyan group is that depravity is genetically transmitted to the descendants of Adam without punishment and guilt. Here appeal is made to the law, or process, of genetic transmission, as sufficient to account for the transmission of depravity.

However the origin of the sinfulness of character be treated, the fact
is that individuals possess a bad self (ethics) or a sinful self (religion). We have earlier discussed the views of certain ethicists concerning the bad self. We are now to carry the discussion forward into the religious sphere, to questions concerning the nature of the depraved, or sinful, self, and the promise of the sanctification of the self and the saving resolution, never achieved at the ethical level, of the human malady.

To a large extent, Wesleyans have designated inward sin as corruption.

Thus Wesley writes in his "The Doctrine of Original Sin:

. . . that our nature is deeply corrupted, inclined to evil, and disinclined to all that is spiritually good; so that, without supernatural grace, we can neither will nor do what is pleasing to God. And this easily accounts for the wickedness and misery of mankind in all ages and nations; whereby experience and reason do so strongly confirm this scriptural doctrine of original sin (Works 9: 273).

John Miley, in connection with dismissing the theory that attaches personal guilt to sin in individuals, also designates human sinfulness as corruption:

There can be no true definition of sin which includes the guilt of an inherited nature. A mere nature cannot be the subject of guilt. No more can it be sinful in the sense of penal desert. Only a person can be the subject of guilt; and a person can be a responsible sinner only through his own agency. There can be no true definition of sin which omits a responsible personal agency. Arminianism can admit no definition which omits such agency or includes the guilt of an inherited corruption of nature (Miley, Systematic Theology, 1:527).

The question arises as to just how, in what terms, this corruption of human nature is to be characterized. R. Newton Flew, whose father was a minister in the British Wesleyan Church, suggests, in his book, The Idea of Perfection, that Wesley viewed depravity as an entity. Flew writes:

Inheriting as he did the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, Wesley tends to speak of sin as a quantum, or hypostasis; as a substance which might be expelled, or rooted out, or as an external burden which might be taken away. As Dr. Sugden has pointed out, he never quite shook off the fallacious notion 'that sin is a thing which has to be taken out of a man, like a cancer or a rotten tooth'. In the 1768 Minutes he says: 'From the moment we are justified there may be a gradual sanctification, or a growing in grace, a daily advance in the knowledge and love of God. And if sin ceases before death, there must in the nature of the thing be an instantaneous change. There must be a last moment wherein it does exist, and a first moment wherein it does not’ (334-35).

This interpretation of Wesley is open to serious questioning. In the first place, careful attention to the text of Wesley’s Minutes should give
pause. It is true that he refers to sin in terms of the neuter pronoun. That
in itself, however, does not necessarily mean that he took depravity to be an
entity. Wesley, as we all, is bound by certain conventions of language.
The term *thing* in the phrase “the nature of the thing” certainly does not
refer to sin. Wesley is not advocating that the change he recommends is a
change in sin. What he is advocating is that there must be a change in the
nature of the situation—the situation in which the individual is sinful.

In the second place, Wesley consistently designates sin in functional,
not substantive, terms. This is clearly the case in his sermon “On Sin in
Believers”:

> By sin, I here understand inward sin; any sinful temper, passion, or
affecton; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or
degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the
mind which was in Christ (Works, 5:146).

Richard Watson (1781-1833), the Wesleyan theologian close to the time of
Wesley, refers, in his *Theological Institutes*, to Arminius. He quotes from
the “Private Disputations of Arminius,” where Arminius defines the sinfulness
of character as *privation*.

> “... hence it followed, that all men, who were to be naturally
propagated from them, have become obnoxious to death temporal and
eternal, and have been destitute of that gift of the Holy Spirit, or of
original righteousness. This punishment is usually called a privation of
the image of God, and original sin.

> But if we allow this point to be made the subject of
discussion—besides the want or absence of original righteousness, may not
some other contrary quality be constituted, as another part of original
sin? We think it more probable, that this absence alone of original
righteousness is original sin itself, since it alone is sufficient for
the commission and production of every actual sin whatsoever” (Watson,
Theological Institutes, 2:78-79).

Watson accepts this account of the depravity:

> This is by some divines called, with great aptness, “a depravation
arising from a deprivation,” and is certainly much more consonant with
the Scriptures than the opinion of the infusion of evil qualities into
the nature of man by a positive cause, or direct tainting of the heart. .
. . The depravation, the perversio, the defect of our nature is to be
traced to our birth, so that in our flesh is no good thing, and they that
are in the flesh cannot please God; but this state arises not from the
infusion of evil into the nature of man by God, but from that separation
of man from God, that extinction of spiritual life which was effected by
sin, and the consequent and necessary corruption of man’s moral nature
(2:79).

Later Wesleyan theologians have consistently followed this line of
thought. Thomas N. Ralston (1806-1891) writes:

The doctrine of the native depravity of man, as taught in the Scriptures, does not imply a direct infusion of positive evil from the Almighty. The positive evil here implied is rather the necessary consequence of a privation of moral good: as it has been aptly expressed by some, it is "a deprivation resulting from a deprivation" (Elements of Divinity, 140).

Miner Raymond (1811-1891) points out that sin frustrates the law of righteousness as the governing motive of life:

For those acts of will by which essential character before God is determined, the race are disqualified by inherited depravation—by an enslavement of the voluntary power. This enslavement may consist in either or both of two facts. The will itself may be constitutionally weak, the man may be deficient in what is sometimes called decision of character. When solicitations to evil are present the man has not power of will, decision of character sufficient to say no; or the passion, appetite, or desire, which prompts to evil is so strong, that though ordinarily he be a man of positive character and strength of purpose, in this case he is too weak for resistance; the temptation too strong for his strength. The same is true when he strives to form a purpose of holiness; his will is too weak for so high a resolve, or opposing tendencies are too strong, difficulties are too many and too great. Though he would do good, evil is so present with him that, of his own unaided strength, he can not volitionate a determining choice for the good. He is carnal, sold in sin—a slave to his appetites, passions, lusts, and habits. . . . The view above taken furnishes a ready answer to the question, Is original sin, natural depravity, an entity, an actually existing thing, a created substance implanted in the human mind, or infused therein? Certainly not; it is a derangement, an enfeeblement, "a deprivation from a deprivation" (Systematic Theology, 2:78-80).

John Miley (1813-1895) notes in his Systematic Theology:

As the result of sin there was a deprivation of the Holy Spirit, and in consequence of this loss a depravation of man’s nature. In addition to the more direct effect of sin upon the sensuous and moral nature, there was a loss of all the moral strength and tone immediately arising from the agency of the Holy Spirit. The detriment was twofold, and in consequence the depravation was the deeper. In this view we still find depravity as a disordered state of the sensuous and moral nature (1:444-45).

William Burt Pope (1813-1895) states that “Separation from the Supreme Will was consummated within before it was exhibited in act. The inmost principle of sin is the severance of the self from God . . . (A Compendium of Christian Theology, 2:15). Further on he reiterates the point:

The essence of that mystery in the created spirit which we call sin is its voluntary separation from God: that is and must be the root and reality of all evil in the creature. . . . It may be questioned whether any Scriptural term expressly indicates this ultimate secret, behind the act of disobedience to law imposed. But more than one of them seem to point towards it. Thus פָּרַע and ἁτασωμα, sin and iniquity, united in the iniquity of my sin, both signify deflection from the true aim: the former rather denoting the missing of the mark, the latter the perverseness in aiming wrong. So the
leading Greek term ὑπαρτία means also the missing of the mark, with the idea of deviation from it, as is seen in ὑπαρτίζω, intransitively to become separate, and thus to fail of its object. Still, the primary and fundamental quality of sin, that it is voluntary separation from God, is not absolutely expressed; it is everywhere implied as the hidden fountain of all the rivers that make sad the life of man (2:29-30).

A. M. Hills (1848-1935) states in his *Fundamental Christian Theology* that

There is also a spiritual death, as distinguished from the spiritual life which man originally had, and which comes back only through grace. The Scriptures speak of a moral death of being “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). It consists in a separation of the soul from communion with God, and is manifested by the corrupt dispositions and habits and carnal tendencies of the soul, as utter aversion to spiritual and heavenly things (1:384).

H. Orton Wiley (1877-1961) is in substantial agreement with the tenor of evangelical Wesleyanism:

Original Sin or Inherited Depravity are terms applied to the subjective moral state or condition of man by birth, and therefore express the moral condition of man in his natural estate. This depravity must not, however, be regarded as a physical entity or any other form of essential existence added to man's nature. It is rather, as its name implies, a deprivation of loss (Christian Theology, 2:119).

We thus see that the Wesleyan theologians agree in concert that sin of character, far from being an entity, consists in deprivation: the separation of the spirit from God. In existentialist language, sin is a state of being: being isolated, thrown into existence alone, in the absence of the experienced reality of the God-relationship.

There is a signification statement in Miley’s work that warrants consideration. It is to the effect that sin, as a state of deprivation, is “below consciousness.” It is not manifest to consciousness. It is manifest only in its activities:

Depravity is within us and of us, not, however, as a physical entity or any form of essential existence, but as a moral condition or state. As such it is below consciousness, and metaphysical for thought, but reveals itself in its activities. These activities are conclusive of both its reality and evil quality. In its purely metaphysical form it is not easily grasped in thought, but this fact does not in the least hinder the mental apprehension of its reality. Many things are beyond apprehension in their mode, yet fully certain in their reality. (1:442).

For us who live in the era of psychoanalysis, the question must arise as to whether our awareness of sin is limited to the awareness of its overt
results. May not sin obtain at the level of the unconsciousness, and may it not by analysis be disclosed to consciousness? May we not cognize the form of its reality?

This is not a fanciful or trivial question. It is obliquely addressed by R. Newton Flew in his book, *The Idea of Perfection*. He rejects, and rightly, the narrow view of sin as voluntary transgression of a known law. That is, he rejects the view that sin always obtains at the conscious level.

He says:

Indeed the narrower sense is not even desirable. Our worst sins are often those of which we are unconscious. The stress on the consciousness and deliberate intention of the agent is the most formidable defect in Wesley's doctrine of the ideal. If only those transgressions are overcome which are recognized to be transgressions by the agent, the degree of sanctification attained by him will depend on his previous moral development, on his own insight into motive, and on his knowledge of himself. And γνώθι σεαυτόν is an infinitely difficult ideal. Many otherwise good people are unconscious of their own selfishness. The quarrelsome man genuinely thinks that everyone is unreasonable but himself. The revengeful man believes that he is animated only by a proper self-respect. 'Moral evil', says Martineau, 'is the only thing in the creation of which it is decreed that the more we are familiar with it, the less we know of it.... The blindness which is induced by all deliberate injury to our moral nature, and which thickens its film as the habit grows, is one of the most appalling expressions of the justice of God.' Such blindness may affect a whole community, accustomed to a moral evil which no conscience has ever challenged (333).

The implication here is that innate depravity must be amenable to elevation from the unconsciousness to consciousness, if one is to experience sanctification. Will not psychotherapy be an aid in this process?

This is a difficult, and in our age, a pressing question. It cannot here be adequately treated. But it may be observed that a general appeal to the psychoanalytic school of psychology is not feasible. In the first place, there are different psychoanalytic schools: Freud, Adler, Jung, neo-Freudianism. Which school should constitute the proper psychoanalytic procedure to disclose the hidden subtleties of sinfulness?

Probably when most people think of psychoanalysis they think of Freud. The concept of the unconscious was known before Freud. But he gave a new dimension to the concept. He held that the unconscious consists essentially of motives. But the motives are factors that once obtained at the conscious
level but became repressed and hidden. It is the function of psychoanalysis to recover these hidden motives and their attendant feelings and bring them to the light of consciousness. Obviously, this has no relevance to the question of human sinfulness. Innate sin is not a hidden motive, a conscious factor transferred to the unconscious. Memories of events that occur in one’s time and history, suffused as they are with emotions and unfulfilled wishes, have nothing to do with sin of character. In short, psychoanalysis has no place or function in addressing the evil of human nature.

In the second place, psychology—be it whatever school—claims to be an empirical science. Whether it is or not is a legitimate question. Many of Freud’s great psychoanalytic concepts are drawn from Greek myth! Any empirical science is a symbolic construct. Its symbols represent the given elements and structures of sense-experience. Sense-experience is the indispensable base of the science, and to that base it must return for any validation of its findings. Again, there is no way in which empirical science can reach the metaphysical, non-sensuous, reality of sin, or for that matter, reach any metaphysical reality.

Flew says that Wesley is guilty of an inadequate conception of sin, restricting it to a voluntary transgression of a known law. One cannot, then, be sure that one is sanctified, cleansed from sin, since sin may obtain in the unconscious. But, as the preceding has clearly shown, Wesley did not restrict sin to the narrower view. “From this infection of our nature (call it original sin, or what you please) spring many, if not all, actual sins.” There is sin in the sense of sin of character. Remedy is no human remedy. Salvation does not “... depend upon on his previous moral development, on his own insight into motive, and on his knowledge of himself.” Were these the pre-requisites, human-kind would indeed be left, inescapably, in moral ruin. As we hope to show in the sequel, salvation from moral ruin, which can never be achieved in ethical or empirical terms, is conditioned by a grace beyond the scope of our human endeavor. There is, we hold, a divine intervention,
and that intervention is enabling beyond anything within the scope of our competency.

The above reference to Miley indicates that, according to him, the essential feature of inward sin, or depravity is deprivation. But, he maintains, there is the added factor of the disordered state of the sensuous and moral nature.

John Taylor argued that the individual’s “free and explicit choice” is sufficient to make one righteous or holy. He justifies this assertion on the ground that “. . . righteousness is the right use and application of our powers.” While sensual appetites and passions, good in themselves, may be, and often are, evil by excess and abuse, they may be controlled and set right by reason.

To this proposal Wesley replied:

This sounds well. But will knowledge balance passion? Or are rational powers a counterpoise to sensual appetites? Will clear ideas deliver men from lust or vanity? or seeing the duty to love their enemies, enable us to practise it. What are cogent reasons opposed to covetousness or ambition. A thread of tow that has touched the fire (Works, 9:302).

The argument here is, then, that while, indeed, there is a disordered condition of sensual appetites and passions, the condition is so ruled by inward depravity that they become intrinsically evil, and therefore cannot be properly regulated by reason. This means, in effect, that the surface malady is beyond repair by human effort. Sin, the deeper-lying affliction, frustrates any human attempt to achieve salvation.

Now, Olin Curtis (b. 1850) proposed a theory of individual depravity in terms of the natural characteristics, some physical and some psychical, of the individual. In this respect, he has some positive affiliation with the thought of Taylor. On the other hand, he argues that the individual is not able to regulate those characteristics so as to achieve righteousness or holiness. In this respect, he disagrees with Taylor and aligns himself with the Wesleyan view, that only divine grace may procure the healing of the individual. Olin’s theory is worthy of our attention, because it is situated
at the point where depravity is expressed, namely, the feelings, desires, and passions of the individual. And the view gives a plausible account of just why the individual cannot effect the necessary adjustments and ordering of the physical life.

The subject with which we are here dealing is found in Curtis’ *The Christian Faith*, the second part, the first doctrinal division of the Christian religion. The first part of the work, Man, includes several sections on ethics, or morality. Some attention must be given to his thought on this subject, for his theory of morality bears on why ethics is limited in regard to salvation, and why the imperative of morality must give place to the promise and fulfillment of religion.

Formal morality is morality based on self-advantage or based upon inherited disposition. These are but empty forms of morality, "which look moral, but do not spring from right motive" (59). True morality obtains when the motive is in conformity with the moral demand. A deed done on this basis is an intrinsic moral deed.

Whenever a deed, whatever its form, is done, not because it is at the point of least resistence, not because it receives commendation in society, not because it gains money or votes of influences, but directly and only because to us it is right, that deed is intrinsically moral. This statement I refuse to modify by so much as a stroke (61).

Further, there are two levels of morality: sporadic morality and personal morality. Sporadic morality is morality lacking in moral bearing. Intrinsic moral deeds are done only to meet the demands of a specific occasion. Personal morality advances beyond situational morality to the absolute allegiance to the moral ideal.

The individual is now the servant of the moral law. "If we try to find the dominant feature of personal morality we shall most certainly perceive it to be the realization that one is the servant of the moral law" (64). As a servant of the moral law, the individual "... demands that his deed shall express the very spirit of righteousness" (64). From this demand, the individual finds a new test:
In getting a deed adequate to express the very spirit of righteousness, the servant of the moral law must have a new test. Of course, he still uses his own moral judgment, as he used in doing his first, isolated, intrinsic deed; but he uses it in this new spirit of service; with a most righteous ambition, namely, to glorify the totality of moral concern, to make the moral law absolutely supreme among men (65).

There is further required of the moral individual a new conception of motive.

The ethical demand upon him now is to keep the whole complex motivity of his action as clean as blowing snow. This is saying no more than that he must be loyal to his ideal through the entire reach of his personal intention. . . . But we are not done. This new demand as to motive really means an absolutely righteous man (66-67).

Here morality has reached its farthest extent, and, indeed, its limit. The moral task is impossible for the individual.

But can we precisely locate the cause of the impossibility? Why is it that a servant of the moral law cannot satisfy his own ideal? Why is it that he cannot be a righteous man through and through? The theologians are ready with an answer. The failure, they say, is due to inherited depravity. Later we shall see that this answer has some truth in it. But this truth lies on the surface, and does not expose the deep root of the failure (67).

Thus our task is to ascertain both the nature of depravity and the “deep root” that explains that depravity.

We have earlier seen, in our study of Green and Bradley, that the moral carries a self-contradiction. Morality depends on the “ought,” and were the “ought” to be achieved, the “ought” would cease to be and hence morality would be eclipsed. As an objective category, the moral is self-destructive.

From the subjective standpoint, the experience of obligation, of the “ought,” also entails an essential limitation. The limitation is that the individual cannot fulfill the demand of the “ought.” The limitation concerns the inability to realize given specific moral demands. But the limitation reaches much further. For, ultimately and finally, moral obligation is the demand that the person become righteous and holy.

From the standpoint of ethics, the moral life is a never-ending approximation to an unreachable ideal. Here Curtis argues:

This is true, and yet it does not strike the definite reality. Man’s moral weakness does not, exactly speaking, spring from his finitude, nor from his finitude under an infinite requirement; but precisely from this: Man cannot become an organic moral person under the moral law. As a
self-conscious moral person, a man keeps yielding to conscience until he 
has a moral ideal to which he gives allegiance. With this personal 
allegiance, his task expands until he must, to satisfy his own standard, 
be righteous through and through. He tries to meet this demand, but he 
cannot organize himself about his main intention. He cannot control the 
deeps of his individuality. He cannot gather all his moods, all the 
flaying moments of desire, all the dim, basic longings of his nature, all 
the subtle interlacement of body and soul—he cannot get together (69).

The reason for this moral failure is that the moral experience is 
dominated by the emotion of fear. The fear is not like the animal fear of 
pain. It is not merely the fear that specific moral demands may not, and 
cannot, be met. It is that, of course. But it is much more. It is the fear 
that the ultimate and final moral demand that one become righteous and holy 
cannot be met.

If now we can succeed in keeping this taproot of moral concern free from 
Christian and theistic interlacing, we can, I think, perceive that the 
primary moral feeling is essentially a feeling of fear. Under recognized 
supernatural authority the truly moral man fears to do wrong. But we 
must be extremely discriminating here, or we shall plunge into a cheap 
utilitarianism. This moral fear is not like the animal fear of pain. 
(Remember our discussion of Conscience.) It is not, primarily, an 
asociational fear of results. It is an intuitive fear of the 
supernatural authority. The man has no reason for it. He is made to 
fear conscience, that is all. The fear is just as immediate, just as 
constitutional, as the sense of moral distinction itself. Inasmuch, 
then, as the simple, unenriched moral bearing is one of fear, the man of 
bare morality is a slave; a slave not in the sense that his volitions are 
necessitated, but in the sense that his motivity is charged with fear. 
"The crack of the moral whip never ceases." Personal morality never can 
be anything better than the most noble slavery (72).

Why is it that the emotion of moral fear frustrates the moral ideal? It 
is because fear is not an organizing motive. On the contrary, it is a motive 
of disintegration. Disintegration of one’s individuality blocks the purity of 
intention that makes for righteousness.

Now, the above considerations leads us to the subject of depravity, 
which explains the experience of moral fear and moral disintegration.

Curtis approaches the question of the nature of depravity by making a 
distinction, crucial to his thought, between the individual and the person. 
The individual, he holds, is the existing individual as a complex of physical 
and psychical characteristics. In their native condition these 
characteristics are, in Curtis’ terms, inorganic. That is, they are 
disorganized and are thus an assembledge of fragmented elements. The person
is the individual become organic, i.e., whose characteristics are brought into ordered and coherent pattern. "And the ultimate man is . . . the individual personalized by the self-decisive rejection and endorsement of original traits" (200). Further:

A man, as we usually find him, has two kinds of character: First, he has his character as a bare individual. This individual character comprises all his individual traits, the entirety of his native characteristics. For this individual character as such no man is responsible any more than a walrus is responsible for having tusks. All argument to the contrary is a contribution to chaos in ethics. Second, a man has his characteristics. This is his personal character; or, if we are regarding it from a moral standpoint, it is his moral character. Personal character does not necessarily comprise all of a man's individual traits, but comprises those traits merely to the extent of their actual personalization; or only in as far as they have been indorsed by the person when self-conscious (47).

Depravity is the inorganic condition of the individual.

By depravity we mean that this basal individual life of a man is inorganic... but there is a profound sense in which a man is, as he comes into the world, totally depraved. The point was brought out in our study of morality, and is this: No man can organize his individual life under the demand of conscience. He is totally unable even to start an organism. And the greater his development in moral personality the greater the impossibility of that adjustment which secures wholeness and peace in manhood. It is this inorganic condition of a man's fundamental, individual being which I understand to be depravity. Every man comes inorganic into the world. Concerning this inorganic condition of depravity, there are two things so patent that they require no proof whatever: The first is the fact that depravity is universal. The second thing is that depravity is inherited. The person is a new creation, personality is never repeated, no man receives ability for self-consciousness and self-decision from his ancestors. But the individual has his complex of traits under the law of heredity. In other words, individuality is a racial matter and personality is not. Thus, inorganic individuality is inherited.

This, though, only raises a larger question: "Why is it that the free moral person cannot organize his individual being under his moral ideal?" This question, you will remember, we answered thus: The natural moral life is one of fear, and fear is not an organizing motive; the man needs to have for organization the motive of moral love. In a simple word, no man can be complete unless he actually loves the Holy God. Now we must push the discussion into a further recess. Why does man have this fear under moral authority? Because, I say, man now lives under the dominion of conscience alone, and he was not made so to live. Conscience itself is a ragged, unfinished item. Man was planned to live in constant personal intimacy with God, and to have his moral life perfectly saturated with that blessed holy fellowship. . . . This, then, is my understanding of depravity; Man's entire individual being is inorganic in its relation to the moral person. It is thus inorganic because the moral person lives under moral fear. And he lives under fear because he has been banished from the divine fellowship and is but a lonely slave under the moral law (200-02).

Thus it is depravity that holds the moral person in the throes of fear. The motive of fear, controlling as it does the moral concern, can never create
the organic moral person.

The Perfection of Experience.

Father in Heaven! What is man without thee! What is all that he knows, vast accumulation though it be, but a chipped fragment if he does not know Thee! What is all his striving, could it even encompass a world, but a half-finished work if he does not know Thee: Thee the One, who art one thing and who art all! So may Thou give to the intellect, wisdom to comprehend that one thing; to the heart, sincerity to receive this understanding; to the will, purity that wills only one thing. . . . Alas, but this has indeed not come to pass. Something has come in between. The separation of sin lies in between (Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing, 31).

But there is a concerned guide, a knowing one, who attracts the attention of the wanderer, who calls out to him that he should take care. That guide is remorse.

From the point of view of the Eternal, repentance must come instantaneously, indeed there is not even time to utter the words. But man is in the temporal dimension and moves along in time. Thus the Eternal and the temporal seek to make themselves intelligible to each other (Ibid., 39-43).

We have shown, in the previous discussion, that perfection is real. In Green’s terms, the perfect reality is the eternal consciousness. In Bradley’s terms, the perfect reality is the Absolute, comprehending in its unity the finite individuals. We have also shown that, for these ethicists, the ethical task bears a reference to the reality of perfection. For Greene, self-realization is governed, not by finite self-satisfactions seriatim, but by the norm of final and complete self-satisfaction as given by the eternal consciousness. And for Bradley, the final ethical norm is the true self, i.e., the infinite whole.

Real perfection, then, is the lure that draws humanity forward in the never-ending task or authentic self-realization. Yet, as we have also observed, the task cannot be completed at the ethical level. There is, in Bradley’s language, the bad self that forever frustrates the moral journey. There is also, according to Bradley, the fact that there is a serious self-contradiction in the ethical itself, as category, that would, were the ought realized, be self-destructive to the ethical. If there is, for humanity, a subjective perfection, it cannot be realized at the ethical plane. The ideal
must be abandoned, or, alternatively, a movement must be made to the religious sphere.

In the terminology of Curtis, the fear that dominates the moral sphere, and prohibits the personal and social righteousness that the moral calls for and yet cannot provide, must be replaced by a holy love that so organizes personal and social reality as to yield the experience of salvific release. Thus, the question is raised: Just how shall the transition from the moral to the spiritual be effected?

Here there are two conditions that must be met: (1) the reality of sin must be acknowledged, and (2) the reality of saving grace must be affirmed. Neither condition can be satisfied at the moral level. The acknowledgment and affirmation occur only in the religious sphere.

We are here addressing the subject of perfection as obtaining in subjective experience. Is this a possibility? Are there means by which this may be secured? Is there such a state of being as the experience of perfection. And, if so, what is this state?

Evangelical perfection, particularly the Wesleyan form, addresses the subject of personal and social holiness (perfection) under two distinct, yet related, considerations. The first consideration is negative: sanctification as deliverance from the sinful nature. The second consideration is positive: perfect love as the experience of perfection.

(1) Sanctification.

Our concern in this essay is primarily the second consideration. But some attention should be given to the first consideration, for sanctification is the procuring condition of perfect love.

The term sanctify (ἁγιάζω - haiszō) "... belongs almost exclusively to biblical Greek or Greek influenced by the Bible" (Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:111). It derives from ἁγιός - hagios, which means an awful thing. The root idea is awesomeness. The awesomeness
itself derives from the radical separateness of the awesome from the ordinary. Thus the root idea of both terms is the sacred and the holy.

Thus the root idea of the verb sanctify is to separate, set apart, render or declare holy.

John 17:19 reads:

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

In sanctifying Himself, Jesus ratifies the sanctification he received from His father in preparation for his redemptive ministry. The verse suggests a parallelism between Jesus’ sanctification and that of His disciples. They too are to be set apart in devotion to the redemptive ministry. Thus, the import of the term sanctify in this verse is that of setting-apart or consecration.

The verb is used in many places in the New Testament to signify the internal purification of the soul. This is Paul’s use of the verb in 1 Thess. 5:23: “And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly . . . .” The term wholly is, in the Greek, Óλοτελεις (holoteleis). The term is a plural predicate adjective, combining the Greek terms ὅλος (holos, whole) and τέλος (telos, end). It means complete in all respects. It occurs only here in the New Testament. And it is the only place in the New Testament that suggests the term, employed by the Wesleyans, entire sanctification.

In 1 Cor. 1:2 Paul writes to the Corinthians:

Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints . . . .

The term sanctified is, in the Greek, ἡγιασμένοις (hēiasmenois). It is the perfect passive participle of the Greek verb for sanctify. The term describes the Christians as those who have been freed from the impurity of wickedness and have been brought near to God through their faith and sanctity.

In post New Testament times, the term sanctify was employed by the
Fathers and later writers. In a passage near the close of The City of God, Augustine writes eloquently of those who are sanctified. He describes sanctification as a Sabbath-rest:\(^4\)

There shall be the great Sabbath which has no evening . . . . For we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God’s blessing and sanctification. Then shall we be still, and know that He is God . . . . But when we are restored by Him, and perfected with greater grace, we shall have eternal leisure to see that He is God, for we shall be full of Him when He shall be all in all (Book XXII, Chapter XXX).

Luther also registered the truth of sanctification:

The soul through faith alone, without works, is, from the Word of God, justified, sanctified, endued with truth, peace, and liberty, and filled full with every good thing, and is truly made the child of God ("On Christian Liberty").

Ritchl’s comment on the passage is significant:

In his view, ‘the gospel . . . while it awakens faith, does not limit itself to the task of bestowing upon that faith forgiveness of sins through Christ, and, by assurance of this, by pacifying the conscience. It proceeds further to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost, in order that the soul may exhibit that reciprocity of love towards God which evinces itself in the fulfilling of the law’.

Calvin’s view is similar:

‘They we are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally, the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, by His word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, . . . and they are more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Westminster Confession (1647), ch. xiii).

Thus Wesley stands, with respect to sanctification, within the mainstream of Christianity. In no sense can it be said that he is the author of the doctrine of sanctification. But he did make a distinctive contribution to the doctrine. He emphasized the experiential relevance of the doctrine in Christian life. This is his unique place in the history of Christian thought.

In 1766 Wesley wrote his Plain Account of Christian Perfection. The treatise is a summary statement of his views on sanctification and Christian perfection. It represents his mature thought on these subjects, and, therefore, may be regarded as definitive of his views.

\(^4\)“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb. 4:9).
The Plain Account refers to the first London conference, June 25, 1744, when Wesley met with his people to discuss the subject of sanctification. He writes (Plain Account, 31-32):

"What is it to be sanctified?"
"To be renewed in the image of God, 'in righteousness and true holiness.'"
"What is implied in being a perfect Christian?"
"The loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul (Deut. vi. 5)."
"Does this imply, that all inward sin is taken away?"
"Undoubtedly; or how can we be said to be 'saved from all our uncleannesses?' (Ezek. xxxvi. 29)."

Wesley also defined sanctification in the preface of his third volume of hymns (Ibid., 27).

(4.) But whom then do you mean by 'one that is perfect?' We mean one in whom is 'the mind which was in Christ,' and who so 'walketh as Christ also walked;' a man 'that hath clean hands and a pure heart,' or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' one in whom is 'no occasion of stumbling,' and who, accordingly, 'does not commit sin.' To declare this a scriptural expression, 'a perfect man, 'one in whom God hath fulfilled his faithful word, 'From all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you: I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.' We understand hereby, one whom God hath 'sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit;' one who 'walketh in the light as He is in the light, in whom is no darkness at all; the blood of Jesus Christ his Son having cleansed him from all sin.'

Wesley speaks of a gradual and an instantaneous phase of sanctification. It begins at the time of conversion and justification, proceeding in the life of the Christian until a crisis point is reached when the individual, on the condition of complete dedication to God, receives the inward cleansing from sinfulness. In the words of the second London conference, August 1, 1745 (Ibid., 32):

Our Second Conference began August 1, 1745. The next morning we spoke of sanctification as follows:—

"When does inward sanctification begin?"
In the moment a man is justified. (Yet sin remains in him, yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout.) From that time a believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace.
"Is this ordinarily given till a little before death?"
"It is not, to those who expect it no sooner."
"But may we expect it sooner?"
"Why not? For, although we grant, (1.) That the generality of believers, whom we have hitherto known, were not so sanctified till near death; (2.) That few of those to Whom St. Paul wrote his Epistles were so at that time; nor, (3.) He himself at the time of writing his former Epistles; yet all this does not prove, that we may not be so to-day.

We have discussed what Wesley called the substance of sanctification or
Christian perfection. He also spoke of the circumstance of sanctification. This concerns the human condition in regard to the experience of sanctification.

Here he referred, not to theological doctrine, but to the facts of human experience. He insisted that sanctification was a second decisive experience subsequent to justification. He came to this conclusion through his observation of the experience of those who professed the experience:

"Neither dare we affirm, as some have done, that all this salvation is given at once. There is, indeed, an instantaneous, as well as a gradual work of God in His children; and there wants not, as we know, a cloud of witnesses, who have received, in one moment, either a clear sense of the forgiveness of their sins, or the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit. But we do not know a single instance, in any place, of a person's receiving, in one and the same moment, remission of sins, the abiding witness of the Spirit, and a new, a clean heart (Ibid., 22).

The necessity of the second experience comes, not from the side of redemptive grace, but from the side of human incapacity to embrace the full extent of the great salvation. As the new convert progresses in the experience of justification, he is led to a consciousness of the remaining sinfulness of his nature. This cannot be disclosed to him at the time of his justification, for it would overcome him in a sense of hopelessness:

"And now first do they see the ground of their heart; which God before would not disclose unto them, lest the soul should fail before him, and the spirit which he had made. Now they see all the hidden abominations there, the depths of pride, self-will, and hell; yet having the witness in themselves, 'Thou art an heir of God, a joint heir with Christ, even in the midst of this fiery trial;' which continually heightens both the strong sense they then have of their inability to help themselves, and the inexpressible hunger they feel after a full renewal in his image, in 'righteousness and true holiness.'

Then God is mindful of the desire of them that fear him, and gives them a single eye, and a pure heart; he stamps upon them his own image and superscription; He createth them anew in Christ Jesus; he cometh unto them with his Son and blessed Spirit, and, fixing his abode in their souls, bringeth them into the 'rest which remaineth for the people of God'" (Ibid., 24-25).

(2) Perfect love.

The scriptural passage noted in the Front-piece, "Be ye therefore

---

5Is it not astonishing, that while this book is extant, which was published four-and-twenty years ago, any one should face me down, that this is a new doctrine, and what I never taught before? — [This note was first published in the year 1765 EDIT.]
perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect (Matt. 5:48),” indicates that divine perfection is the norm of human perfection. The context makes it clear what the passage means: individuals are perfect when they exercise impartially love to all men, even as God loves and cares for all men.

Here it may be proper to consider the subject of the divine norm in a philosophical context. This is important, not only to an understanding of the nature of subjective perfection, but to an appreciation of what Christian perfection does signify.

We must observe that Christian perfection is not a static state. And it is not an absolute condition of personality. The circumstance that subjective perfection is defined in terms of the divine norm does not justify the view that Christian perfection is either static or absolute.

In our discussion of the topic, “the consciousness of God,” we argued that the logical intellect cannot determine the nature of God, and that the attempt to do so by this means, so as to assimilate finite individual in the divine nature, is inappropriate. The emotional and valuational apprehension of divine reality preserves both the real identity of individuals and the transcendent reality of divinity.

Now, both Green and Bradley, in their discussion of the eternal principle, refer to this as “system.” The system is the eternal consciousness or the all-embracing unity that comprises, without disruption of that unity, all diversity.

We have argued against the “Hegelian” view of God as the Absolute. But it is true that the concept of system is a valid one. It is valid both for divinity and humanity, and this because the concept of system is an appropriate defining characteristic of personality.

In 1934, Professor A. A. Bowman gave the Vanuxem lectureship at Princeton University. The lectures were later published in book form, as A Sacramental Universe. The concept of system is fundamental to the argument of
Bowman defines system as follows:

These considerations are of decisive importance in determining the concept of system as I intend to apply it to our metaphysical problem. That is to say, the formula \( y = F(x) \) must be interpreted as founded upon the formula \( y = F(xy) \). The expression \( xy \) denotes a system, and the special truths which the basic formula is intended to convey are (a) that every term which is a function of the system must have a place within the system, and (b) that every term within the system is a function of the latter. The systems with which I shall have occasion to deal will be such that within their unity one term may be rightly described as a function of the other, but only in a sense which presupposes that every term is a function of the system as such (\textit{A Sacramental Universe}, 22).

Bowman makes a distinction between systems that function in nature and those that function in personality. A system of nature is marked by uniformity. That uniformity must be kept intact, otherwise the system itself is destroyed. Even a slight departure from the uniformity of the processes of the solar system would mean its destruction. In the case of an atom, as the displacement of an element by its isotope, the change would be destructive of its identity.

With regard to personality, or the self as subjective system, the situation is radically different. Here the incitement to the assertion of selfhood is not uniformity, but vicissitude. The changes and disruptions, which would be destructive of a physical system, are handled differently by the self as subjective system. The self is able to assert its identity, even in spite of the vicissitudes that pose a challenge to that identity. Thus vicissitude is of the essence of selfhood.

Now we must proceed with caution. Our metaphysical thinking about God is unavoidably circular. However, the circularity is not disastrous to our thinking about God as ontic perfection. For the circularity, which is inadmissible logically, is tempered by the circumstance that our thinking is analogical.

We are aware of ourselves as personality, as subjective system that maintains its identity through the vicissitudes of its episodes. While we cannot affirm decisively that divine reality is personal in the exact sense in
which we are personal, yet our only means of gaining cognitive appreciation of God is through the medium of knowledge of ourselves as personality. We may affirm that God, while perhaps more than personal, in our terms of personhood, is certainly subjective system, the eternal consciousness, the supreme experience.

Further, as there is process and change in our selfhood as subjective system, marked by the property of *vicissitude*, so we may reasonably assume that there is process and change in the supreme experience, that God is not static Absolute. If, as we have claimed, God, or divine perfection, is the norm of our subjective perfection of experience, He is not the norm in the sense of static Absolute. And this means that whatever perfection is for us, it is not static, but dynamic process and growth.

The concept of God as static Absolute has been the plague of much theological thought. Nowhere is this concept more audaciously expressed than in Anselm’s *Proslogium*:

> For if thou art passionless, thou dost not feel sympathy; and if thou dost not feel sympathy, thy heart is not wretched from sympathy for the wretched; but this is to be compassionate. But if thou art not compassionate, whence cometh so great consolation to the wretched? . . .
>
> Truly, thou art so in terms of our experience, but thou art not so in terms of thine own. For, when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling. Therefore, thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched, and spare those who sin against thee; and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness (13-14).

But it is inconceivable that God is static Absolute, with no dimension of process and change. It is inconceivable that God should take cognizance of our condition and yet not appreciate it with feeling. Further, Anselm asks us to believe that, if we respond to the divine overture and are saved, this, too, has no affect in the quality of the Divine Life.

However, the Bible speaks with a truer, richer voice. Surely, it must be said of the eternal One that he is affected in the transaction, of which Isaiah speaks, when the great prophet looks forward to the redeeming immanence of God in the Savior:
He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: . . .
Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes are we healed. . . .
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth (Isa: 53:3-7).

If our knowledge of God is dependent upon grace, it is also dependent upon what is best in our humanity. And the best in our humanity cannot accept the view that the Father of unbounded love stands in an eternal impassivity, unaffected by, unmoved by, that divine transaction that supremely brings the eternal into time. Nor is the Father unaffected by the salvation that results from the great work of the Savior: “He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied . . . .” The satisfaction is in heaven:

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them. Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth . . . (Luke 15:6-7).

Charles Hartshorne writes eloquently of all this:

. . . God has nowhere to hide himself from any sorrow or joy whatever, but must share in all the wealth and burden of the world. The cross is a sublime and matchless symbol of this . . . .

Only a mind completely free of selfish prejudice, ready to enter with instant sympathy into all existent forms of experience, to participate without reserve in every last fragment of feeling and thought anywhere, and able to harmonize all this variety of experience into one tolerable aesthetic whole, can constitute the subject of all change. Precisely this is also the religious idea of God, to whom all hearts are completely open because his sensitive sympathy is absolute in flexibility (Man’s Vision of God, 198, 265).

Is there, in divine personality, an inevitable vicissitude?

In the chapter “Our Lord’s Strange Hesitation in Approaching Death,” Curtis argues that Jesus’ words at the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou
forsaken me?”, mean that “The Eternal Father abandoned his own Son and allowed him to pass through death alone” (322). Yet there is even more involved. It is that the fellowship and harmony of the divine life was interrupted. Curtis writes:

For a long time . . . I had been growing dissatisfied with all the little things which modern theologians were saying about the death of Christ. It must be lifted totally out of the world of humanitarian mitigation. It must be made a boundless agony in the experience of God himself. It must become such a finality in awful self-sacrifice that no Christian man, and no saint in all eternity, can ever think of it without suffering (324).

If there is “boundless agony in the experience of God,” there is certainly process. Perhaps we may be allowed to suggest that there is, in the divine life, vicissitude beyond the agony of the divine experience. Does not the Resurrection itself extend beyond the borders of time, through the gates of glory, into the eternal? Is not this the restoration of the harmony of the divine life, and to the eschaton in which “God is all in all?”

Certainly, then, there is nothing about the divine norm of perfection that endorses the view that Christian perfection is something static, final, and absolute. Wesley himself subscribed to the dynamic and process of Christian perfection. In writing of sanctification, he says:

By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as "a grain of mustard-seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds," but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed, from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we "grow up in all things into him that is our Head;" till we attain "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Works, VII, 509).

Thus Christian perfection is process and growth. It is the dynamic of a new affection inwrought in the soul by the reception of redemptive grace.

Perhaps the most concise and yet all-inclusive definition of Christian perfection given by Wesley is contained in his “Thoughts on Christian Perfection, also included in the Plain Account:

“What is Christian perfection?
“The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.
This implies, that no wrong temper, none contrary to love, remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words, and actions, are governed by pure love (40-41).

But the unalloyed love that is definitive of Christian perfection is not, Wesley insists, a merely personal matter. It is also social. He writes of this in his sermon “On Perfection”:

I. 4. What is then the perfection of which man is capable while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command, "My son, give me thy heart." It is the "loving the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is the sum of Christian perfection: It is all comprised in that one word, Love. The first branch of it is the love of God: And as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" These contain the whole of Christian perfection (Works, VI, 413).

The social import of Christian perfection is, to be sure, time-bound. But it has wider implications. Here we need but recall A. N. Whitehead’s description of the action of love. There is, Whitehead says, the eternal aspect of God’s nature. In Whitehead’s terminology, this is the “primordial nature” of God. This is the absolute nature of God. But God has a relative nature. There are two aspects of his relative nature: his “consequent nature” and his “superjective nature.”

God’s consequent nature is the relativity that receives and saves the value that has been accomplished in the world. The love that has refreshed the world passes into the divine life and qualifies that life.

The consequent nature of God is his judgment on the world. He saves the world as it passes into the immediacy of his own life. It is the judgment of a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved. It is also the judgment of a wisdom which uses what in the temporal world is mere wreckage (Whitehead, Process and Reality, 525).

The superjective nature of God is the reissuing of that value and love into the historical world. The content that is provided him from temporal entities is made available to the new, emerging entities in the processes of the ongoing world. Whitehead writes:

In the fourth phase [superject] the creative action completes itself. For the perfected actuality passes back into the temporal world, and qualifies this world so that each temporal actuality includes it as an immediate fact of relevant experience. For the kingdom of heaven is with us today. The action of the fourth phase is the love of God for the
world. It is the particular providence for particular occasions. What is done in the world is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands. . . . Throughout the perishing occasions in the life of each temporal creature, . . . is the transformation of Itself, everlasting in the Being of God (Ibid., 532-33).

While Wesley defines the essence of Christian perfection as love, yet he does employ other designations. One such designation is taken from aesthetics. He writes in his sermon "On Perfection":

I. St. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, places perfection in yet another view. It is the one undivided fruit of the Spirit, which he describes thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity," (so the word should be translated here) "meekness, temperance." What a glorious constellation of graces is here! Now, suppose all these to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection (VI, 413-14).

It is now necessary to ascertain the respect in which love is the determining ground of experienced perfection. The above characterization of perfection as a constellation of graces is helpful in this regard.

Referring again to Curtis, we have observed that the individual is by inherited nature inorganic, i.e., under the domination of disordered and unorganized physical and psychical forces. Notwithstanding this condition, the individual is under the absolute injunction of the moral law, which ultimately requires a personal righteousness. And this means that the individual must become personal, i.e., become organic. This requirement, however, cannot be met at the moral level. The reason for this is that morality is dominated by the emotion of fear, and fear is not an organizing motive. It cannot institute and maintain, in Wesley's terms "a glorious constellation of graces."

It is only holy love, made possible by sanctifying grace, that enables the individual to become a person, to become organic, and thus to enjoy the experience of perfection. To quote Curtis:

*Italics mine.*
Only one motive is there which is capable of organizing a man, and that one motive is holy love. We must have love. It is not enough to have "morality touched by emotion." Many a moral man can take fire at bare thought of the supremacy of righteousness. It is not any emotion, it is not any great emotion which we need, but the one peculiar kind of emotion, the creative passion of love. This—love in the heart—is the organizer paramount. It will dominate every mood, make all idiosyncrasies coalesce, bring every wandering element of manhood into organic simplicity and beauty. It is not merely love's power of fusion, the fire, the intensity of the passion by which other emotions are transformed into blended urgencies, all driving toward the same object; neither is it the fullness of love, its oceanic occupancy of self-consciousness; it is these, fusion and fullness, with the addition of psychic endurance, the staying-power of love in consciousness—it is these three qualities which make love the organizer it is. But, further, it is not any sort of love which can organize a man. He must have holy love. Man is a moral person, and he can be fully organized only under moral terms. The love must be just as ethical as that great fear which the moral loyalist has. You must not throw that fear away. You must take that very fear and make it over into a holy love, a boundless passion for all moral concern, a passion so ethical that it would be an awful fear were it for an instant to stop throbbing with the joy of personal fellowship. But how, pray, can this be done? how can moral fear be made over into moral love? In some way the moral law itself must be transformed into a personal Friend (Christian Faith, 73-74).

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

We have remarked earlier that Wesley's contribution to the doctrine of sanctification and perfect love is his bringing the doctrine into a practical relevancy in the lives of the people. We close this discussion, then, by referring to two significant passages from the Plain Account:

"For he is 'pure in heart.' Love has purified his heart from envy, malice, wrath, and every unkind temper. It has cleansed him from pride, whereof 'only cometh contention;‛ and he hath now 'put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.' And indeed all possible ground for contention, on his part, is cut off. For none can take from him what he desires, seeing he 'loves not the world, nor any of the things of the world;' but 'all his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name.'

"Agreeable to his one desire, is the one desire of his life; namely, 'to do not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him' . . . He hath a single eye . . . . God reigns alone; all that is in the soul is 'holiness to the Lord.' There is not a motion in his heart but is according to His will. Every thought that arises points to Him, and is in 'obedience to the law of Christ' (11).

Again:

"But whom then do you mean by 'one that is perfect?' We mean one in whom is 'the mind which was in Christ,' and who so 'walketh as Christ also walked;' a man 'that hath clean hands and a pure heart,' or that is 'cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;' one in whom is 'no occasion of stumbling,' and who, accordingly, 'does not commit sin.' To declare this a little more particularly: We understand by that scriptural expression, 'a perfect man,' one in whom God hath fulfilled his faithful word, 'From all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you: I will also save you from all your uncleanliness.' We understand hereby, one whom God hath 'sanctified throughout in body, soul, and spirit;' one who 'walketh in the light as He is in the light, in whom is
no darkness at all; the blood of Jesus Christ his Son having cleansed him from all sin' (27).

Finish then Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in thee:  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

—Charles Wesley
Bibliography


----- Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. Translated by Theodore M. Green and Hoyt C. Hudson. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., c1934.


