

purpose in the universe; because, in the first place, apart from what has just been said with regard to the limitations to which the guider of affairs may be subject, no one is sufficiently acquainted with the intentions of the Deity to make such a statement; secondly, since the existence of evil is compatible with the nature of reality, it is a question whether any particular evil is too great to be incompatible with existence; and in the third place, there are some who do not see any evil in the idea of a limited duration of human consciousnesses, at all events of some consciousness. Thoughtful persons with strenuous ideals will hardly consider an indefinite prolongation of life desirable, unless the future life is to be richer and fuller of achievement than the present one.

It is interesting to notice, as a matter of fact, that all theists have not upheld the doctrine of the indestructibility of human personalities as such. The refined theism of so notable a thinker as Lotze was averse from maintaining that all human beings were necessarily immortal. Lotze held, very plausibly, from his standpoint, that finite minds exist only to carry out some divine purpose, and when once this is fulfilled they are no longer required, and hence may easily cease to be. And, viewing the question from an ethical standpoint, surely a general indiscriminate immortality would seem to be incredible. It would be unintelligible how a rational reality to which the attribute of goodness is, in any comprehensible sense, ascribable (and if it is not, then *cadit quæstio*) must guarantee the indefinite continuance of all human beings, no matter how stupid or unworthy and incapable of change. Indeed, the belief in immortality seems all the less credible when we consider the character of some of the believers. Only if it could be shown that some or any human beings were of sufficient value to the universe to be conserved, would the idea of their eternal continuance seem probable from the standpoint of ethics. But it is not possible to put forward the criterion which would enable us to say just what gives one individual, in this respect, a commanding superiority over his fellow-men. Leaving out of account