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HORACE WILLIAM BRINDLEY JOSEPH

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1867-1943

AS I begin to write about H. W. B. Joseph, I remember that he often quoted to me the words *bene vixit qui bene latuit*, and he evidently thought that they applied to his own life which was so far fortunate. In thinking thus he showed a kind of simplicity which was characteristic of some of his judgements. A college tutor who resides in college rooms, sharing the life of the senior common room with his colleagues, dining always in hall, engaged day in and day out with his pupils, and holding offices which bring him into contact with all the junior members of his society, does not live a life which is concealed from his fellows. Even if he is a man who seems to be of rather ordinary mould, he is observed and long remembered by many; for in the minds of those who have formed successive generations of undergraduates in his college he is associated with the vivid years of their university career. Of Joseph, who through his lectures and his interventions in the discussions of the Jowett and other societies was known to all who studied philosophy in Oxford, it could never be thought that he resembled anyone else, and there were few amongst his contemporaries who excited so much attention or were afterwards so well remembered.

The outline of his life is soon told. He was born on 28 September 1867, and was the second son of the Rev. Alexander Joseph, Rector of St. John's, Chatham, and Honorary Canon of Rochester. For his parents he had a deep veneration, and particularly for his mother who was remarkable both for her character and her strong intelligence. When his father retired to Wimborne, he went to Wimborne Grammar School, thence to Honiton School, and afterwards to Winchester College with a scholarship. During the latter part of his schooldays his family lived at Malvern Link, whence they moved first to Clevedon and later to Holford in the Quantocks, and the surroundings and the simple life of the country were an important part of his upbringing. The life of great cities he disliked and mistrusted, and his ideal was always a small community, having an ordered and traditional pattern and inspiring an uncomplicated loyalty. To Winchester and to New College, to which he was elected as a scholar in 1886, his devotion was entire, and because of the intimate connexion of the two foundations it was undivided. At

Oxford, where he added to his first classes in Classical Moderations and Greats the winning of the Greek Testament Prize and the Arnold Essay, he was marked out from the beginning for a fellowship at New College. His election to it came in 1891, and immediately after a short residence in Germany he began his work as a tutor in philosophy. Thereafter, except for a year of travel in India and the Far East, which was prescribed for him in 1901 when he had been showing some signs that he had begun to overtax his great energy, his work at New College was unbroken until his retirement.

His work, however, was diverted, as it was bound to be, in 1914. The college was denuded of undergraduates when the war had begun, though at various times it was occupied by billeted troops, refugees, and then cadets, and there were also hospital tents in the garden. Joseph had held since 1895 the office of Junior Bursar which gave him responsibility for the domestic economy of the college, and during the years of the war he had many duties and cares. Besides other matters he undertook the keeping of the records of the college which involved unceasing correspondence with many generations of its members and the daily examination of the mounting casualty lists, and he also was one of the most ardent members of the Volunteer Battalion recruited from the senior members of the university which was often called on for heavy physical labours at Didcot and elsewhere. In all this period he found it hard to believe that the life of the college could be again what it was before.

But when the war ended and a generation of undergraduates, many of whom were returning from the Services and were more mature and no less eager than the best of their predecessors, again filled the college, some of the happiest years of his life began. He married in 1919 Margaret Bridges, the daughter of the Poet Laureate, and though he gave up his Junior Bursarship and no longer lived in his old rooms, his part in the affairs of the college was as large as it had ever been and not less strenuous.

My own recollections of him go back to the earlier years of the century. When I first came to New College as an undergraduate in 1902 it was inevitable that almost the first sight I should see was Joseph emerging, gown on arm, from his staircase and running rapidly across the quadrangle. His short, square, and strongly built figure, his powerful head, the frown of concentration on his face, and the pace at which he moved aroused immediate interest and I wondered who of the dons he was. Shortly afterwards I was due to go to the first of a course of

lectures on logic in the college hall, and I found that he was the lecturer. Here indeed was something to excite a young freshman; for he at once began an intricate discussion, taking as his subject the form and matter of thought, and his tightly locked hands and straining body, which became a familiar sight to me afterwards, seemed exactly to accompany the concentration of his thinking. A different and curious picture of him, which is characteristic of a college in the Edwardian era, remains from the same time. There were then many excuses for bonfires in college, and Joseph, who was nothing if not a careful Junior Bursar, hating waste, regarded it as his special duty to save what he could of the college furniture. On this occasion he had rescued from the fire one of the tin baths which were the regular equipment of college rooms in the days when there were no bathrooms, and there was soon in progress an heroic struggle seen in the flickering light of the flames between him and two very large undergraduates who clung also to the bath—a struggle from which it was Joseph who came out victorious amid the cheers of all the spectators. When later I took to him a paper on logic and he seized on the first sentence which I had written, I remembered the episode and had the feeling as I clung to my sentence that it was in the same powerful grasp. It was not long before I had to let it go.

His powers of endurance and disregard of comfort matched the toughness of his body. On reading parties he would outwalk his undergraduate companions, be the first to reach the top of a hill, and descend it always at break-neck speed. To save time he bicycled much in Oxford, where even in his later years he was a familiar figure as bending low against a head wind he passed all others, and he had the fancy that on his birthdays he would bicycle as many miles as the years of his age. I think it was on his sixty-ninth birthday that he found he had miscalculated the mileage of his journey and completed his task by bicycling three or four times up and down a stretch of the Banbury Road. He suffered from asthma and occasionally from severe toothache, but he never allowed his lectures or his other work to be interrupted, and I remember how his disregard of appearance was shown by lectures delivered without a trace of self-consciousness when one side of his face was swollen to twice the size of the other. There were tasks in matters for which the Junior Bursar was responsible which he would not ask others to do, and he might be seen on some afternoon, high on a ladder, precariously clearing an almost inaccessible gutter. But all this

was little in comparison with the strenuousness of his work as a teacher. The number of hours for which he taught during the week was prodigious; for he not only insisted on taking more than his share of pupils, but nearly every pupil was recalled, often more than once, until nothing was left in his essay which had not been examined and refuted.

His energy did not appear to be of the kind which is connected with exuberant spirits, nor to be light-hearted, but rather to be dictated by endless duties which he imposed upon himself. In teaching his pupils he did far more work for them than they did for him, and while the more conscientious of them came to understand and appreciate the standard which he set and thereby learnt from him something which was of inestimable value, the less conscientious found that they could leave to him the labour of unravelling the tangles of a careless essay, not worth the pains which he bestowed upon it. There were some whom he alarmed and discouraged not only by his relentless criticism but by the severity of his manner; but his manner would often change suddenly, and then his wit would enliven all his argument and he would show a characteristic eagerness and freshness of mind which to the end of his life, when he was in the mood, made him seem to be young. His insight regarding his pupils was somewhat uncertain but his interest in them was unfailing, and he helped many whom he found to be in need (though he always tried to conceal what he did) with unstinted generosity.

When I returned to Oxford as his colleague, I found that what I knew of his labours was far short of the full story. He was on every college committee, and on most of them he charged himself with drawing up the agenda, setting out the relevant facts and figures, and, if they were required, drafting reports, so that it often seemed that what was accomplished was his unaided work. When the 1923 Act which followed the Royal Commission made it necessary to redraft the college statutes and by-laws, he undertook the largest share of the redrafting, in which, as might be expected, he showed an extraordinary skill, and even this he treated as a minor incident in his work. In all discussions of college issues he was the foremost figure; nothing was too small for his careful scrutiny, and on every subject the expression which he gave to his views was exact, but his subtlety was such that on occasion his reasons might elude the comprehension of his colleagues. He could be difficult in the sense that he held tenaciously to his judgements and had little liking for

compromise, but he never said anything which was not to the point, and the liveliness and interest of our meetings seemed to have largely evaporated when he was no longer present.

It was a cause for wonder that despite his burden of teaching and administration he seemed to have unimpaired energy for his philosophical work. In the period from 1919 until in 1932 he retired from his official fellowship he produced at intervals of not more than two years fresh courses of lectures to which large audiences were drawn by his authority and reputation. Each course was a finished work, carefully thought out and containing an immense mass of material, so closely packed that it was difficult for his hearers to follow more than a portion of each lecture. In addition it was his habit to make analyses, accompanied with detailed criticism, of most of the books on philosophy which he read, and he wrote innumerable short papers of which some were communicated to one or other of his friends, some were read to philosophical societies or to the circle of his philosophical colleagues who used to meet in each other's rooms for weekly discussions, and some, a small minority, were published. All this was possible only because of the pace at which he worked. It appeared to be a characteristic of his mind that he gave precise linguistic form to his ideas with extraordinary rapidity, and few writers on philosophy can have rivalled him in this respect. His manuscripts have few erasures though sometimes as he wrote he crossed out a whole paragraph, substituting another which put the argument in a different form, and in speech he was always ready, if he were asked, to repeat what he had said in the same words. Perhaps his greatest feat was when, having finished a long and intricate sentence, he was asked by J. A. Smith to say it again 'in words of more than one syllable', and he did so without hesitation, substituting long and accurate polysyllables for almost every word which he had previously used.

When in 1932 at the full tide of his powers he retired from his official fellowship and was elected to a supernumerary fellowship instead, it was difficult to realize that his teaching life had come to an end. It was hoped by many that he would leave himself more time for writing, but though he did not relax his philosophical activity he was speedily absorbed in his work as a city councillor, and it became the more onerous when he was elected to the chairmanship of the education committee. His method of work by which he managed to do more of any task than others who shared it with him remained unchanged, and

so also did his style of speech whether in meetings or in public addresses. He often puzzled his hearers but he was regarded with immense respect, and his authority was such that even if what he said was imperfectly understood, it was almost always accepted as right. He was soon as notable a figure in the affairs of the city as he had been in the university.

The years of his retirement were full of useful work, but at the last he suffered more and more from arthritis and from an infection which it was found hard to diagnose, and all his strength and power of endurance seemed to be summoned in the effort not to relinquish his activity of mind and body. His friends had hoped that towards the end of his life he might allow himself a little ease. Perhaps it would have been in any case an idle wish, but, as it was, he was called on to show in full measure that fortitude of mind which was one of his foremost qualities. He died in the Acland Home at Oxford on 13 November 1943.

Joseph's strongly marked personality might well be expected to show itself in his philosophy. And in fact there is an individual character both of matter and of form in every sentence which he wrote, alike for his books and for his lectures, as there was in his smallest intervention in any discussion. The matter is the more important in his philosophical work, but I should not like to omit a reference to his style, which perhaps has not always been justly estimated. He wrote, as he spoke, with ease, but his readers have none. For he sought and achieved accuracy of statement with the utmost economy of words, and his closely knit sentences with their complex dependent clauses, while they express exactly the sequence and qualifications of his thought, allow the reader's concentration no respite. But even when his sentences are longest and most intricate, the secure and deft rhythm, the felicitous choice of words, and the wit of the illustrations and analogies, however much his reader may be perplexed by the whole, show his mastery of writing.

His illustrations, which are largely drawn from the classics, the Bible, and English literature, suggest vividly his combination of learning with ease and rapidity of thought. They would lose by quotation since their felicity depends on their context, but examples to which I may refer are the illustration drawn from the Crassus omen in *Some Problems of Ethics* (p. 40), the reference to Jonah's anger and the quotation from Housman's *Last Poems*,

both in the *Essays* (p. 66). The following passage from the *Logic* (p. 402) which recalls his love of natural beauty comes from the chapter in which he is explaining the principle of the uniformity of nature:

Watch the movements of a waterfall, how it breaks into a thousand parts which seem to shift and hang, and pause and hurry, first one, and then another, so that the whole never presents quite the same face twice; yet there is not a particle of water whose path is not absolutely determined by the forces acting on it in accordance with quite simple mechanical laws. No one would suppose that because these mechanical laws are unchanging, the waterfall must wear a monotonous and unchanging face; and so it is, on a larger scale, with the course of nature.

And for an example of his wit I think of his controversy with Miss Stebbing in *Mind*, where he so much enlivened a discussion of the logical properties of the individual unicorn by referring to him always as 'Hornboy'. Or take again this characteristic passage from a lecture: 'Plainly number cannot be a property of a unit as such. To say this is not to deny diversity in unity but to deny plurality of the one in that respect in which it is one. One cow may have many attributes; but to be two cows cannot be one of these.'

It is time, however, to turn to the substance of his philosophy. Most of Joseph's pupils and many of the philosophers who were his colleagues in Oxford or otherwise knew him and his work, were inclined to think first of his great powers of criticism. His pupils as they looked back on the fate of their own essays, hardly a sentence of which had not been shown to be confused or inaccurate, seldom felt that they had been taught a philosophic doctrine, although they had always the conviction that the criticism had not been applied for its own sake but was a task performed for their good and in the service of right thinking. What they valued afterwards was the experience of an intellectual discipline more rigorous than anything they had ever conceived, and the example they had had of an unwearied devotion to truth. Amongst philosophers many had the same view of his work, but there were some, especially of those whose philosophical beliefs were very different from his, who thought that the criticism was often eristic. But whether his powers of criticism were admired or distrusted, it was not perhaps the usual view that he was expounding a set of philosophical doctrines, tenaciously held and consistently applied throughout his work. Yet if his work is examined, I think it is difficult to resist the conclusion that this was so. The question at any rate deserves

consideration, and the answer to it is relevant to any judgement about the use to which he put his powers as a critic.

It would be strange if Joseph held no philosophic doctrine when so much of his thought was devoted to the study of Plato and, in a lesser degree, Aristotle, and he venerated them so greatly. The *Republic* of Plato in particular he knew almost by heart and for most of his teaching life in Oxford he was its foremost expositor. He was an accomplished classical scholar and had an excellent knowledge of the historical background of an ancient text, but his first aim in his lectures on the *Republic* was to expound the philosophic truths which he believed that it contained. His method is well shown in the chapters on Plato in his *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*. What is noteworthy about them is that they have the freedom of interpretation which marks the work of a disciple claiming not only to reproduce what his master taught, but to fill in what he left unsaid and to show how his doctrines should be developed.

It is worth while to illustrate this point in order to understand what was his way of interpreting Plato. A characteristic example is the turn which his thought takes when in the second chapter of the *Essays* he discusses Plato's concept of μισθαρνητική τέχνη. Plato, in using this term in Book I of the *Republic*, evidently intends to mark the mixture of motives which can be found in a man's pursuits and to allow that the notion of self-interest or gain, in the sense in which Thrasymachus might think of it, is present, though it is not all. But Joseph looks also to the kind of gain which the best men seek, and following this line of thought contends that the notion of μισθαρνητική τέχνη 'is really the same as that of what Aristotle afterwards called ἀρχιτεκτονική τέχνη—the art of so ordering one's life as to secure happiness or realize for oneself in it—so far as that can be realized in one man's life—good' (p. 26). Now it would be difficult to maintain that this is what Plato himself had in mind in the context, but none the less it is a legitimate and very subtle suggestion of the way in which Plato's term might be regarded in another context, and it fits with what, as Joseph argues later, is Plato's doctrine about self-interest.

In this free handling of Plato, Joseph follows in the footsteps of Aristotle, and it is interesting to observe how he often treats Aristotle as one disciple might treat another, who, as he thinks, has misinterpreted or spoilt some jealously guarded tenet of the master. In view of all that he learnt from him, his writings about Aristotle are indeed often oddly perverse. Thus in chapter vi

of the *Essays* he first treats Aristotle's account of moral virtue as if it represented all that he had to say on virtue (ignoring Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), and then, comparing it with Plato's analysis of justice, concludes that Aristotle in following and trying to improve upon this analysis 'in fact largely spoilt it' (p. 177). I think that Joseph was here in a mood when he thought that none without peril could add anything to a topic which Plato had handled.

It is not difficult to see how much of his philosophy was derived from Plato and Aristotle. His unflagging study of what Plato taught on the subject of the good and of justice determined his thought about the kind of unity which the philosopher should both seek and presuppose in every branch of his inquiry. From the same source he drew also his ideas about the motives of action and the particular unity which the mind aims at achieving. In reading Aristotle (though the germ of Aristotle's teaching is doubtless in Plato) he was stimulated to think about the notions of the potential and the actual, the implicit and the explicit, growth and development, and the final cause. It must be remembered, too, that these ideas were reinforced by the school of thought (itself more influenced by Plato and Aristotle than by Hegel) which in his early life was dominant in Oxford. At no period did he abandon the view that mind and the reality it knows were at least akin (*οἰκεῖα*), and towards the end of his life he wrote: 'My knowledge is of, and my opinion concerns, a reality which is independent of my knowing it or thinking thus about it; although I do not believe either that there is a real world independent of mind altogether, or that my mind is independent of that mind of which the world is not independent' (*Some Problems in Ethics*, p. 42). Again, in his review (in the *Oxford Magazine*) of Joachim's Inaugural Lecture on *Mediate and Immediate Inference*, he made it clear how much sympathy he had for the coherence theory of truth. I remember also in what generous terms of praise a year or two later he referred to Joachim's lectures on the *Regulae* of Descartes which he himself had made a point of attending. The same doctrine is referred to also in *Some Problems of Ethics* and again sympathetically:

The facts of good and evil apprehended separately may yet be connected. It may be as in mathematics. There a man may come to know, independently one of another, many facts between which he later discovers necessary connexions. Indeed in this field it is hard to doubt that all facts are mutually involved, though we cannot show this. Some have argued that, if this is so, the apprehension of the facts in their

isolation is not properly to be called knowledge of them; we do not really know anything unless we know it in all its linkages. Perhaps there is a parallel here between Ethics and Mathematics. . . . Yet in both fields some isolated judgments seem true, though the facts cannot be so independent of each other as the judgments are isolated (p. 108).

In all this the fundamental basis of his philosophy is, I believe, apparent.

I shall refer briefly to one other influence on his thought. When he had married Margaret Bridges, in the happy seven years which closed with her untimely death, he began to speculate much about poetry and music. He had always been devoted to poetry, but friendship with Robert Bridges turned his thought to the creative work of the poet. Margaret Bridges herself was a gifted musician, and through her he came to think of the processes of the mind, on the fringe of consciousness or beyond, which seem to be implied in the work of musicians, both those who are composers and those who are executants. His speculations here accorded naturally with the comparisons which he knew well both in Plato and in Aristotle between art and morality. But in particular his belief in Aristotle's teleological account of the concept of development was strengthened and clearly showed itself as a central tenet of his thinking.

What has so far been said might seem to suggest that Joseph's work as a philosopher was the teaching of certain doctrines which he drew mainly from Plato and Aristotle, combined with a remarkably acute and vigilant criticism of writings in which they were neglected or not understood. Even if this were held to be the whole truth, his critical work would be thus seen in a better perspective as the outcome of a body of connected philosophical principles. But such a view would still not do justice to his achievement. The problems to which he devoted much thought were not and could not have been precisely the problems which presented themselves to Plato and Aristotle, and his service to philosophy consisted in bringing to bear on those fresh problems a powerful and learned mind, equipped with principles which he had adopted after long meditation in entire independence of contemporary fashion. His extreme rapidity both in discussion and in writing which was one of his most remarkable characteristics was, I think, not simply a native gift but the outcome of the consistency and thoroughness with which he had assembled his chief doctrines and worked out their implications.

His doctrines had a natural bearing on biological topics, and

in the Herbert Spencer Lecture, which he delivered at Oxford in 1924 and reprinted later in his *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, he applied them with great mastery to the examination of the concept of evolution. This lecture can well be studied as a prologue to the rest of his work, since it clearly enunciates much that is essential also in his speculations on logic and ethics and is important for their comprehension.

The main task of the lecture, if I follow it rightly, is to consider whether the processes by which matter assumes new forms, a living organism grows, and a mind develops, are of the same order, and to consider also what is the nature of the process by which new species come to be. The first contrast to be drawn is between a physical process and the development of a mind. In the former, change is a rearrangement of unities (whether atoms or elements into which atoms are further resolved) and these unities 'have not come to be anything which they were not before' (p. 315). In this connexion it may be asked, 'whether there is anything physical which ever increases in size. A crowd is said to grow, but physically regarded what is bigger is not the same with what was smaller. In aggregation, no physical unit and no aggregate of the same physical units gets any bigger' (p. 316). In contrast,

A mind is not an aggregate whose components have been drawn from elsewhere. It does not develop at the expense of that on which it is said metaphorically to feed; for the mind's food is like the oil in the widow's cruse, of which if one partakes, no less is left for others. . . . The growth of a mind then is not aggregation; there is a real coming to be of that which, in the sense in which it exists when it has come to be, did not exist before. And yet in another sense surely it must have existed; for else the mind has not developed. There is no process of development unless that which develops is all the time that which it comes to be; and again there is no process of development unless it is not in the same way so in the earlier and later phases. This is not gratuitous paradox; it is, I am persuaded, the true account of what we mean by development, as it is the old account, put forward by Aristotle in the antithesis of *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*, the potential and the actual (pp. 314-15).

Of development again he says, 'it is a process in which what as yet in some sense is not brings *itself* into being' (p. 313).

If this distinction and the account given of true development are correct, it is possible to consider now the growth of a living organism. Since development requires an identical subject which is all the time that which it comes to be, it is necessary, if such growth is development, to find the identical subject which

grows. The argument is that clearly (in view of what has been said before) 'it is nothing physical—no physical unit, nor aggregate of physical units', and therefore it must be something immaterial, or, as is said elsewhere, a universal. Where there is growth and not only substitution, 'the form which comes to be displayed later was not displayed before' and yet it is the same form (p. 317). It is an immaterial unity 'though more adequately revealed at one time than at another in what is material'. The sole emphasis at this point on the form or universal in the definition of development seems to raise a difficulty which Joseph notices when he remarks that 'such immaterial unities are found also where there is no development', e.g. in the circularity of all circles (p. 325). The reference to the more adequate revelation of the form at one time than another perhaps hardly resolves the difficulty, as he presumably would not say that an imperfectly spherical body which by rotation came nearer to being spherical furnished an instance of growth or development. The exact relation again of the argument to the earlier statement that in development the undeveloped brings *itself* into being is not at this point made quite clear.

The next step is to consider the evolution of species, and he sets out on a thorough and tenacious criticism of attempts to base the unity of the process on something physical, which is the same throughout. The criticism reinforces the contention that here also we must look for a solution which is in principle the same as before.

There is clearly a difference between the development of the individual, in which one specific nature is gradually revealed, and that which has led to the revelation of all the types of plant or animal that now exist or have existed. Of the latter we shall have to say that what has developed is the generic unity, which requires for the revelation of all the diversity that it holds together not the detail of one organism, but of countless such (p. 328).

But this difference, to which he thus refers, should be viewed also in a wider context. In an earlier passage (pp. 324-7) he had speculated on the many forms which unity in diversity takes, culminating in the unity of mind. He now suggests in regard to these many forms of unity in diversity: 'Perhaps these forms are not merely juxtaposed in the universe, but themselves progressively manifest the fundamental nature of the universe, for the universe is itself the all-embracing unity that determines thereout its own diversity' (p. 332). On such a count the unity of an organism might be thought to be not wholly dissimilar to

the unity of a mind. (Such a view seems to be necessary if growth is to be regarded as complying with Joseph's account of development and it would meet the difficulty referred to above in connexion with his reference to immaterial unities.) But it is the unity of mind at a lower or less developed level, and because the undeveloped can only be explained from the developed (if it can be explained at all), it is from mind that we must start, if we wish to understand the all-pervasive character of the real (cf. pp. 332-4).

It is hard to summarize even the leading ideas of a piece of writing which, like all Joseph's work, is packed and compressed, and I have omitted much. In particular I have omitted the passages in which he explains in more detail the nature of the mind's unity, but to these I shall refer immediately in connexion with his work on ethics as they bear directly on that subject. It is significant and characteristic that a very large part of what Joseph has to say on biological topics is relevant also to his speculations on metaphysics and ethics. In this connexion, too, it may be noticed that a detailed account of the way in which he thinks that the process of natural selection might be conceived to operate is to be found in *Some Problems in Ethics* (pp. 122-4), where it takes the form of an analogy illustrating the purposive working of the mind.

Turning now to his writings on ethics we may begin with the passage on the unity of mind in the Herbert Spencer Lecture which we have not considered. It deals with the function in determining this unity which should be assigned to the conception of the good, and it is as follows:

There is a profound difference between a choice or rational act and action determined by a mere conflict of desires. In the second, the stronger desire prevails, and for a time suppresses the weaker, as when a hungry man insulted forgets his hunger until his desire is satisfied upon his enemy. But if he deliberate whether to risk the loss of his dinner in order to trounce his enemy, or to forgo this in order to appease his hunger, he asks himself which alternative is better. That question implies that he conceives, and desires, what is good; but this is not a third desire co-ordinate with his hunger and his desire to trounce his enemy, since a good alternative to and exclusive of all objects of particular desires would be void, nothing. It is realized in them, or in some selection of them; but it is not a mere sum of them. When a man thus distinguishes himself and his good from all his particular desires and their objects, plainly he and his good are unities displayed, but incompletely displayed, in these. Plainly too his action is comparable to nothing mechanical (p. 326).

In the ensuing paragraph he goes on to another point which is no less significant and important.

But there are [he writes] other manifestations of intelligence besides choice, and without considering them we do not understand what is meant by calling choice rational. Choice involves the thought of something good; but we all know that the thought of this outruns the articulate determination of its nature. How do we come to know what its nature is? This problem is fundamentally the same as how we discover the answer to many other questions. When we have discovered it, we should not know it to be the answer, unless the thought of that of which we are in search somehow accompanied and controlled the activity of the mind whereby we first arrive at the explicit recognition of it. So also in artistic creation some artists have described, and surely it must be so, how an implicit apprehension of what they are reaching after directs them in discarding any suggestion that is amiss, and developing their thought of what they seek. I say developing, because here we seem to have the true notion of development. That which comes to be was there from the beginning; but whereas then it was not developed, now it is (p. 327).

What lies behind both these passages is evidently the conception which he drew from Plato that the Good so operates as to bring about its own realization not only when it is consciously apprehended but also when it is related to levels of being where there is not consciousness of it.

It is easy to see that the line of thought in regard to ethics, which was begun by H. A. Prichard¹ and came to be strongly prevalent in Oxford from 1919 onwards, would seem to Joseph profoundly unsatisfactory. Taking the recognition of duties as the most fundamental factor in ethics, Prichard had argued that actions held to be obligatory could not always be regarded as conducive to good nor could they be regarded as intrinsically good unless performed from the motive of duty; but it was the act not the motive which was thought to be obligatory, and it could not be otherwise since motives were not at our command; and accordingly what was obligatory was not so because it was either conducive to good or intrinsically good, and no more could be said about it than that it was obligatory or right, and was recognized to be so. All this ran entirely counter to Joseph's convictions. He held that such a doctrine, by reducing the understanding of the way in which life should be lived to the perception of particular duties, in no way related, made morality irrational,² and that by separating acts from motives it attached

¹ See his contribution to *Mind*, 1912.

² Cf. *Some Problems in Ethics*, pp. 67-8.

moral predicates to what was not moral.¹ But most of all he believed that it was only by reference to the notion of good, which the doctrine eliminated, that life and morality could be shown to be intelligible.

The good is accordingly the dominant theme in his book *Some Problems in Ethics*, and he seeks to show both how he understands it and how it may be used to surmount the difficulties which Prichard had raised. The good, I think he would say, is that in virtue of which (or in reference to which) we call anything good. It might be held that we call one thing good because we recognize in it a quality which we recognize also in other things, and that things may therefore be said to be good because the goodness of each is an instance of goodness as a universal. Good may thus come to be conceived as a simple quality belonging to everything which is good. This conception Joseph rejects (pp. 75-80), and when he refers to the good he does not think of a universal thus related to its particulars. But it might again be held that particular goods are so called because they are means to the good. This view also he rejects because he thinks that the good, while it is not the same as the so-called means to it which we regard as good, is yet not (as the relation of end and means would imply) wholly other than they are; and what he wishes to maintain instead is that 'there is a good to be looked to, which in a sense is beyond the action, but yet not as are its consequences' (p. 35). He indicates perhaps his position most clearly when he writes, 'Though we do not find those simple factors each good because in each we can discern that form or structure of being of which I spoke, yet neither do we find them good without looking beyond them, and seeing them as characters in some whole which has that structure' (p. 87).

The passages just quoted show that the view which Joseph is advocating is not that the good is simply the aggregate or totality of the various factors which we call good. The expression, it should be noticed, which he most frequently uses in referring to the good is 'a form of life', and 'form' must evidently here be taken to have the implications which he would find in Plato's 'form of the good'. One of the chief of these implications is that the form is the ground or explanation of the development of the not fully realized particulars of which it is the form. It is doubtless this which he has in mind when he says, 'In any self-realizing process, that which is ultimately realized is somehow involved in the determination of the process by which or in

¹ Ibid., cf. pp. 38-41.

which it is realized' (p. 55). We should also remember that he did not think the form needed to be explicitly known in order that it should determine the process in which it is realized—indeed in natural processes, where he thought it was involved, there is no knowing. Thus in the same passage he goes on to say, 'When an artist designs, the thought of what is to be designed is at work, however inexplicitly, in completing the design'; and later, 'Just as there are artists (perhaps they are the majority) who only become fully aware of what they mean or are designing in executing their design so that others may see or hear, so men's purposes seem often unable to shape themselves except in action' (p. 57).

We can now see how these doctrines concern the difficulties (which he thought should be treated with great respect) raised by Prichard and those who followed him. In the first place they enable him to reject the sharp disjunction of what is conducive to good and what is intrinsically good, so far as it implies that anything which is conducive to good is not itself good and that anything which is intrinsically good is not related to any other good. For particular goods in which the form of the good is partly realized are good not because they are means to the good but because they partly realize it (and so are intrinsically good), and they are not unrelated to other goods because of the unity of the form which they partly realize. Secondly, when he is challenged to say what is the good which he finds in a given right action he is not bound to think that there is no good because he cannot give an explicit answer to the question; for the answer lies in the form of the good, and that, he believes, can work in the mind without being explicitly known. The last point is directly connected with the third, which we must now consider, namely, the bearing of his doctrines on the contention (of Prichard and others) that while there are actions which we are obliged to perform, we are not obliged to perform them from certain motives.

What Joseph thought about the form of the good in relation to action and the progressive realization of a way of living, led him to believe that there is a kind of motive not entirely identical either with desire or with the thought of obligation. It differs from a desire both because it does not terminate upon a particular object and because it can oppose a desire, and it differs from the thought of obligation because it may exist before the latter has become explicit. As regards the contrast with desire we may compare the passage quoted above from the Herbert Spencer

Lecture where he refers to the way in which a man distinguishes himself or his good from all his particular desires and their objects. He follows here a similar line of thought; for he thinks that the motive which he has in mind is close to the sense 'of a duty to realize a goodness connected with the particular principle of the action which is recognized as my duty now, though I may have no desire to do the action which this principle involves' (p. 48). But it is not an explicit sense of duty. 'Honest men', he writes, 'do not pay their debts because they feel obliged to, nor yet from any inclination to give money to the gentlemen who are their creditors. But if any contrary inclination should be stirred, then a man would begin to feel the obligatoriness of that the thought of which was moving him' (p. 57). Again he says of a man's motives: 'Provided that he is conscious of the facts determining a present obligation to a particular action, the thought of himself acting thus in this situation may work with a sort of urgency in him to the doing of the act, even without his saying to himself that he ought to do it, still more without saying to himself that he ought to do this now, because duty (or something universal) requires it' (pp. 50-1). Now this 'urgency' I think he conceives as the way in which the form of the good works in a man's mind, though it is not necessary that he should apprehend it, towards its own realization. Its presence in him marks him as a moral being, and unless it were present in him he would not be able to reflect about duties (cf. p. 47). But if this account of the matter is correct, it seems that Joseph is in a position to assert that when a man thinks about his duty, he is thinking about realizing in action a motive which he already has (just as he might equally think it his duty to realize in action a desire which he already had), and to those who ask what is the ground of the 'urgency' which thus precedes a sense of duty, he has the answer that the urgency is the working in a man's mind of the form of the good which he aims to realize, but yet cannot describe. Whether the argument is accepted or not, it is at least clear that it is implicated with all Joseph's central convictions, and I think that it stands or falls with them.

There are two other points in Joseph's doctrine to which a brief reference should be made. In the first place if the good is a system realized in individual lives which are different, in the realization of the good of each individual life the good (which is more than its good) is also being realized, and the individual's good is not other than the good, although it is not identical with it. So, too, in regard to motives, when we think of the pursuit

of the good or of our own good, or again of the motives of duty or interest, it is not necessary to hold that the alternatives are wholly distinct. Thus he writes: 'An interest in morality itself is . . . an interest in being oneself moral, though it does not exclude an interest in others being so too; and that interest cannot be ultimately separated from the conviction that one's own good lies in being so' (p. 111). The second point concerns the operation of particular desires. Though such desires need to be distinguished from the 'urgency' directed towards the form of the good, nevertheless since they are desires of a mind in which the good works as an animating principle, they and the urgency towards the good cannot be wholly dissociated. Joseph does not discuss this question explicitly, but he evidently is thinking of it when in a reference to lawless appetites, the indulgence in which at any time and in any degree was held by Plato and Aristotle to be bad, he writes: 'But perhaps even these are not specifically different impulses, but directions of some impulse which also prompts to acts of which we can approve into manifestations that can fit into no good form of life' (p. 126). And he often quotes without dissent Spinoza's dictum *Omnia appetimus sub specie boni*.

I should refer here, before coming to Joseph's work on logic, to his book on *The Labour Theory of Value in Karl Marx* (1923). The purpose of the book, which arose out of a course of lectures, is to examine and refute the theory that exchangeable goods have a definite or absolute value, that the measure of this value is the labour embodied in them, and that it is unjust that those who have laboured to produce them should be rewarded with less than their value. Joseph was disturbed by the 'embittering effect' of the theory; 'for, in those who believe it, to discontent is added the burning sense of a definite injustice; and the problem of a cure, which to others seems intricate and delicate, to them seems definite and simple' (p. 18). He wished, therefore, to show that Marx's theory was definitely false, and that there was 'neither any means by which to settle how much wealth each man creates, nor any rule of justice to determine what share of the total wealth each ought to have' (ibid.). In speaking of justice he had in mind that 'in distribution, justice is proceeding according to the recognized rule', and accordingly where there is no fixed rule we should not speak of justice and injustice (cf. p. 152). But despite this he thought that 'a wage which cannot properly be called just or unjust may be oppressive or mean or cruel; and a system may deserve these reproaches for

the effects which it produces and for the motives which lead men nevertheless to maintain it' (p. 173). He was disappointed that the book had not more influence, but perhaps he was, characteristically, a little ingenuous in his hopes; for to refute the charge that a system is properly speaking unjust, while allowing that it may be oppressive or mean or cruel, does not seem to contribute greatly to the relief of embittered feeling. Nevertheless, though the criticism of Marx is perhaps more detailed than it needed to be, the examination of the concept of value which the book contains is marked by all Joseph's acumen, and the passages on the philosophic topics of preference (p. 102 et seq.) and desert (p. 158) deserve to be studied. It would be a pity if so careful a piece of work were to fall into neglect.

It is time to turn to Joseph's work on logic. His *Introduction to Logic*, published in 1906, is a classic in its own sphere. It is the most carefully written of his books, and is remarkable alike for its impeccable scholarship, for the range, interest, and wit of its apt illustrations, and for its masterly completeness and accuracy within its defined limits. The aim which he proposed to himself was to set out the traditional doctrine of logic in its most accurate form, in the belief that it was a doctrine which no one who wished to be a philosopher could afford not to know. Neither the justice of his belief nor the success with which he performed his task can be in any doubt. But it was in his mind that there were 'higher and abstruser problems' (Preface, p. viii) for the study of which the traditional logic was the fit propaedeutic, and the great ability which his book displayed encouraged the hope that he would go on to this further task. Any such expectation, however, failed to reckon with contemporary factors which profoundly influenced his philosophical activity.

In 1903 Russell published his *Principles of Mathematics*, and Joseph must have begun to study it carefully when he had finished his own book. There were reasons why he might have turned to Russell's work with interest and the hope of enlightenment. The traditional logic, which he expounded, was concerned in its treatment of deduction most with the syllogism, and he recognized that mathematical argument was not syllogistic (*Logic*, pp. 294-5), though the syllogism might be used 'when we rely upon the results of a previous demonstration whose steps we do not realize in the case before us' (p. 311). But he had made no attempt to examine the nature of mathematical reasoning, and in a context where he was considering the difficulty of

separating the form and matter of inference he seemed explicitly to allow that there was here a gap in the traditional logic. For he writes, 'There is mathematical reasoning, of which we have only said that it is not syllogistic; this from its importance may claim rather fuller consideration. But perhaps more remains to be done in the way of showing how far inference of these different forms enters into the building up of our knowledge, and what other operations of thought enter into it' (p. 370). Again, despite his respect for the coherence theory of truth, he always thought that the judgements of mathematics were a difficulty for the theory; we have noticed already the passage in *Some Problems in Ethics* (p. 108) where he remarks that in this field 'some isolated judgments seem true, though the facts cannot be so independent of each other as the judgments are isolated'. And he would certainly subscribe to Aristotle's view that the abstractness of the science distinguished it from others and dictated its special method.

If, therefore, the mathematical logicians had considered mathematics to be a special province of thinking, which exhibited forms of argument requiring separate investigation because of the special nature of their subject-matter, however much Joseph might have criticized their work in detail, he would have thought that such an inquiry was legitimate and likely to be profitable. But the aim of Russell and his followers was the reverse of this. They desired first to set out the principles of inference in general (which they regarded as fundamental logical concepts capable of being studied apart from any subject-matter), and secondly to show that all the propositions of pure mathematics were deducible from them. What was implied was not that logic had neglected to examine some distinctive forms of inference, but that it was its business to eliminate or reduce, by means of more fundamental and more abstract logical concepts, such distinctions as there seemed to be. Yet while the purpose of the new logicians was thus to eliminate or ignore distinctions imposed by differences in the subject-matter of thinking, their formulation of the fundamental logical concepts and of the nature of logic itself came from reflection on forms of thinking distinguished from all others by their degree of abstractness. In this way the mathematical logicians undertook a complete revision of the fundamental doctrines of the older logic, and mathematical logic became not a part of logic but the whole.

There were two ways in which, holding the views which he did, Joseph might have responded to the new doctrines. He

might have thought and attempted to show that since mathematics is bound to treat of units as nothing more than units, and its concepts are unsuitable (not to speak of other forms of unity) even to the continuous in the physical world, though it may deal with it by a series of devices, a logic based on the study of inference in mathematics would inevitably be an insufficient account of the fundamental concepts of thinking and therefore also of the nature of the real; but that at the same time the concepts of the new logic perhaps illuminated the special nature of mathematical argument. Or alternatively (in the spirit of Peter Ramus) he might have felt it his duty to prove that all the propositions of the new logic were false. It may be regarded as unfortunate that he came nearer to the second alternative than the first, though it was natural enough that he should do so. For the extreme cleverness and self-confidence of the leaders of the new school were highly provocative, and on his side he was spurred on by the venerated Cook Wilson, who also was very clever and exuberantly pugnacious. Still there were those who might have found his arguments more convincing if he had allowed that there was merit in any part of the doctrines which he was criticizing.

But, what was more important, his method hindered, I think, in the result, the progress of his own speculation. He held steadily that when we reflect on unity and intelligibility it is to the immaterial unity controlling the development of a mind that we should constantly look, but he also thought that the forms of unity are different. In his Herbert Spencer Lecture he wrote:

Unity in diversity takes many forms; in some the diversity which the unity holds together is more profound, in others less; in some the unity seems displayed in a manifestation sensibly unchanged; in others though the manifestations change, yet we are helped by these, or some of them, to an apprehension of it; and in yet others nothing sensible can be taken to manifest it (*Essays*, p. 324).

But in his criticisms of the mathematical logic, although he makes it clear that there are forms of unity which this logic ignores, it is not easy to see what he himself thinks is the nature of the fundamental concepts by which mathematics is unified. Another way in which this lack of definition in his own doctrine appears is perhaps to be found in his references to universals ('a universal' being a term which in many passages he seems to use interchangeably with the term 'immaterial unity'). He regarded the unity which controls the development of an individual mind and is manifested in its different phases, as an immaterial unity

or universal; but he also recognized as a universal the same colour or the same geometrical form which is manifested in many instances. The first seems to be endowed with a teleological function, the second not; for though it might be suggested that there would not be two instances which were alike unless there were some law or principle by reason of which both came to be, the law by reason of which two like instances exist is not what we regard when we think they are alike. But he does not himself set out this and other distinctions in his usage of the term 'universal', nor indicate what is the relation between different kinds of universals. It seems indeed that on this subject, to which he might have contributed much, there is not in the writings which he has left a systematic exposition of his own doctrine. He was much preoccupied, as we have seen, with the idea of development and its teleological implications, and he tended to emphasize it at the expense of everything else. It might well have been that if he had tried to find in mathematical logic ideas which were applicable to other forms of unity than this, he would have been led to attempt a more comprehensive account of the forms of unity and of the relation of universals to the problem.

Nevertheless, although Joseph did not in the end work out a system in which he dealt comprehensively with the 'higher and abstruser problems' to which he had referred in his *Introduction to Logic*, others who will continue to investigate these problems will find, I think, in his writings material of very great value for their speculations. Besides his published work he left many completed series of lectures which it is hoped to publish in whole or part, and a very large number of separate papers. In three of the series of lectures, the ease and security with which he handled metaphysical issues are conspicuous. They are his lectures on the central books of Plato's *Republic*, on Leibniz, and on what he referred to as the 'Philosophy of Analysis'. In the last he is concerned to trace (in the work of Russell, Moore, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, and others) the repercussions of mathematical logic on the treatment of problems which are essentially metaphysical, and the continuity of his theme perhaps makes these lectures his most sustained work of criticism. Their argument, in its briefest outline, is that all attempts to regard the nature of thought (and thereby of the universe which it apprehends) as an aggregate or construct of simple elements misconceives its unity, and that in such attempts either the divers forms of unity are ignored or else they are covertly and

inconsistently assumed in what is alleged to be simple. The whole criticism is manifestly the outcome and application of his central philosophical tenets. In all, the unpublished writings which deserve publication can hardly be less in volume than those which he published in his lifetime, and when they are taken together, whether they produce agreement or dissent, it is hard not to acknowledge how powerful and impressive a body of philosophical work they form.

I have tried to recall some of Joseph's philosophical doctrines, but I cannot dissociate them from Joseph himself. There is one scene, doubtless remembered by others, which comes to my mind as I conclude what I have written. In the summer term of 1931, when Einstein was staying for a few weeks in Christ Church, he said that he would like to talk to the Oxford philosophers about the theory of relativity and discuss with them any questions which they wished to put. There was a large gathering in one of the Christ Church common rooms, and Einstein speaking with his habitual simplicity made, as he must have done in any company, a deep impression on his hearers. Discussion and comment seemed likely to be formal and desultory until Joseph intervened. He made a short statement, and he had his familiar frown of intense concentration as he listened to Einstein's answers and replied to them. Without either arrogance or humility he explained the reasons why he was not satisfied with the answers which were given to him, and I felt then, as always, that what he was determined to regard was the authority, not of reputation, but only of reason.

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