ANDREW SETH PRINGLE-PATTISON

1856–1931

ANDREW SETH—he assumed the name Pringle-Pattison in middle life—was born in Edinburgh on 20 December 1856, the eldest of a family of seven. The next below him died in early childhood and then followed James, the brother who was to become his professorial colleague in the university which reared them both. They were the sons of Smith Kinmont Seth, a clerk in the head office of the Commercial Bank of Scotland, and of his wife Margaret, daughter of Andrew Little. On both the father's and the mother's side they came of country stock, the paternal grandfather, William Seth, being a well-to-do farmer in the east of Fife, while the mother's family had been connected for several generations with Langholm, on the Scottish Border, where they owned some land.[1]

Like many another distinguished Scotsman he attended the Royal High School and the University of Edinburgh. It was at school, in 1869, that I began to realize his ability and his worth, and the intimacy we formed as classmates endured and grew without fluctuation until his death. We lived not far apart and our evenings were often spent in coaching each other for examinations in which we were both to compete, all special knowledge individually acquired being thrown into a common stock. He was the ablest boy of his year and even then some of his schoolfellows began to wonder what he might achieve in the future. He passed to the university in 1873 with a mind sensitive to all the humanities and a special bent towards literature, and he took first class honours in classics almost as a matter of course. Of the seven Professors of the Arts curriculum three can be singled out for their influence upon

[1] Pringle-Pattison's Memoir of his brother, introductory to *Essays in Ethics and Religion*, by James Seth.

his expanding mind. The study of English literature under a man of David Masson's sincerity and sound attainments could not fail to have its effect, while Seth's inborn sense of style was trained and nourished through close association with 'the generous and high-souled Sellar'.[1] But the really determining influence upon his life was the teaching of Campbell Fraser, the distinguished Professor of Logic and Metaphysics. 'I entered the Junior Logic class', he afterwards declared, 'with a mind opening perhaps to literature, but still substantially with a schoolboy's views of existence; and there, in the admirably stimulating lectures to which I listened, a new world seemed to open before me'. In Fraser's teaching, he adds, the 'union of dialectical subtlety with a never-failing reverence for all that makes man man, and elevates him above himself, lives in the memory of many a pupil as no unworthy realization of the ideal spirit of philosophy'.[2]

In 1876 Seth took advantage of the long summer vacation of those days to visit Germany with a fellow student and, while making a serious study of German, to put in a semester at the University of Heidelberg, where he attended among others the brilliant lectures in philosophy of Professor Kuno Fischer. It was characteristic that, in a letter to a friend describing his new experiences, he gave an account of 'the state of religion in Germany', a topic of all the greater interest because Scotland at that time was in a ferment over the alarming researches of Professor Robertson Smith into the literature of the Old Testament. It is curious, too, to note in his correspondence that he was even then contemplating an essay on 'Personal Immortality', apparently for one of the weekly meetings of the University Philosophical Society, but was dissuaded by his friend A. M. Stalker, to whom he wrote, on the ground that the subject

[1] William Young Sellar (1825–90), Professor of Humanity. The words quoted are from the tribute paid by Seth to his old teacher, in his Edinburgh Inaugural Lecture, 1891, 'On the Present Position of the Philosophical Sciences'.

[2] Op. cit.

was too vast for treatment within limits so restricted. His Gifford Lectures of 1922 upon 'The Idea of Immortality' afford conclusive proof that this advice was sound.

It was now becoming clear where his life's work lay and the zeal with which he threw himself into the study of philosophy was stimulated by his surroundings. He has himself described[1] the 'active and growing interest in philosophical questions' which, under the impulse of Professor Campbell Fraser's teaching, distinguished the University of Edinburgh in the 'seventies of last century, and has remarked upon the number of students then passing through the classes who afterwards held Chairs in one or other of the Universities. It was his good fortune to be prominent in the most brilliant group of all. His exact contemporaries included (to name but four) R. B. Haldane (the late Viscount Haldane of Cloan); W. R. Sorley, now Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge; Seth's own old school friend, Alexander Mitchell Stalker, of Dundee, Emeritus Professor of Medicine in St. Andrews University; and a Canadian, Jacob Gould Schurman, now a citizen of the United States and former President of Cornell University, whose name is known to all the world for his distinguished services in diplomacy. The friendship with all of these was permanent.

It was rather earlier that Seth came under the influence of two writers who in different ways profoundly affected his outlook. Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* and its sequel *God and the Bible* appeared and made their teaching felt at a critical stage of his intellectual development. It can be traced throughout his works. Wordsworth he already loved with a devotion that drew him, in the spring of 1875, on a solitary pilgrimage to the English Lakes. The poet's fusion of noble verse and philosophic thought yielded the

[1] *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xiv, 'Memoir of Richard Burdon Haldane (Viscount Haldane of Cloan)'. Mr. Haldane was joint editor with Seth of *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* (1883) and contributed to its pages his own first independent philosophical paper.

very sustenance his mind required. For to him philosophy and the 'higher poetry' were closely akin. No reader can fail to notice the felicity with which he quotes from the poets of many lands—from Wordsworth most of all—to illustrate or enforce a philosophic argument.

> It is possible [he says[1]] that some readers may think that I have drawn too frequently upon the poets. That is perhaps a question of temperament. But my procedure was, at any rate, quite deliberate, for I accept Wordsworth's description of poetry as 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge', and I am even ready to be persuaded by Mr. Yeats that 'whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent'.

He graduated M.A. in the spring of 1878 with first class honours in philosophy as well as in classics and was soon afterwards elected to one of the Travelling Scholarships of the Hibbert Trust, in part through the good offices of James Martineau, whose attention had been called to his promising record. This involved a course of two years' study in philosophy and kindred subjects upon the Continent. A similar Hibbert Scholarship was conferred at the same time upon J. G. Schurman. The friends both went to Germany, but not to the same university. The last summer, however, they spent together at Göttingen. These two years formed the first great landmark in Seth's career. They determined his future course in more ways than one, and it may be well, therefore, to record them in some detail. The winter session of 1878–9 was spent at Berlin, the following summer at Jena, and the second winter at Leipzig —'it seems the next best town (with a university) after Berlin', he wrote me at the time, 'the theatre is very good.' Dr. Schurman has kindly supplied me with the following recollections:

> At Berlin Seth found Zeller and Paulsen and Dilthey (all of whom I came to know personally a year later), but I do not think he got much from them. And I doubt if he fared better at Jena or Leipzig. The fact is that Seth was interested in German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, and that period of speculation was wholly

[1] *Idea of God*, preface.

ignored in the German universities of that time. Lotze was in Göttingen, and we went thither with high expectations. But we were doomed to disappointment. Unfortunately the great man gave in the summer semester of 1880 only elementary courses for beginners and he had no *seminar*. After a short time we dropped out of the lectures, and concentrated on the writing of our theses for the Hibbert Trustees.

We were thrown on ourselves. Our circle embraced two Scottish students of theology—Lewis Muirhead, who died a year before Seth, and J. T. Ferguson, who is now a clergyman in Calgary, Canada. Those were the days of the Robertson Smith heresy trial in Scotland. How eagerly we all followed its course! But we also had our own intellectual problems; and in discussing them we travelled, as Dr. Johnson used to say, over one another's minds. On Sundays we generally met early in the afternoon at Muirhead's lodgings, and he supplied us with excellent tea, which we drank in deep potations. Then we sallied out into the suburbs for a walk of some hours, stopping, when the darkness fell on us, in some pleasant beer-garden where we ate abundantly of *Rührei* and washed it down with delicious beer! There was nothing on earth or in heaven which we did not discuss on those delightful outings.

We owed much to Göttingen—but nothing to the professors. Yet when Seth and Muirhead were my guests for a week or two at the American Embassy in Berlin and I took them to Göttingen the Rector and Faculty gave us a right royal welcome.[1]

In his report from Jena to the Hibbert Trustees Seth mentions having 'listened with great interest to Professor Hilgenfeld's "Historico-critical Introduction to the New Testament". Though not a brilliant lecturer . . . he gave a real and human interest to his subject, which one does not often meet at home'; and in writing to me he said, 'I have got a good deal of pleasure and I hope some instruction from Haeckel's lectures on evolution, but on the whole there seems less "content" in them than one would have expected. In my own work I have been going on with Hegel, which is naturally rather a slow process, sometimes satisfactory, sometimes not'. There are references also to

[1] This visit was in April 1926, when Dr. Schurman was the United States Ambassador to Germany.

excursions in various districts of Germany. The subject he chose for his Hibbert thesis was 'The Permanent Results of the Kantio-Hegelian Philosophy'. In a revised and expanded form it was published by the Trustees in 1882, under the title 'The Development from Kant to Hegel, with Chapters on the Philosophy of Religion'.

It was not only his studies that received impulse and direction from this residence abroad. In Berlin he became friendly with the family of Herr Albrecht Stropp, who had a daughter Eva. 'I read *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Winter's Tale* this winter with Frl. Stropp', he wrote me in April 1879; and appended to the letter, by way of literary exercise, were twenty lines of original verse, dated the previous February, which 'have', he says, 'a certain subjective value as being (to me) the truthful expression of a mood'. The 'mood' was unmistakable. It ripened into a lasting attachment, and when Seth felt his position secure Miss Stropp became his wife. Thus was started a most happy home.

'We have all felt it pretty dull in Göttingen and will not be sorry to leave. You know Heine's antipathy to the place of old.' So Seth wrote to me early in July, and the letter continues: 'If the essay [for the Hibbert Trustees] does not spoil my style it will not be the fault of the subject. I am occasionally sorry that it has turned out such a dull metaphysical investigation, as I had hoped to put some human life into it. But this skeleton was necessary in the first place for my own sake, if not for the sake of others. . . . I read Swinburne's "Songs of the Springtides" lately. They are disappointing as they utterly lack the concentration of true poetry. A man might go on piling up words that way for ever.'

He resolved to close his continental experience with a month or two in Paris. No change could have been more exhilarating. I joined him there in October and found him making full use of his opportunities and inhaling the Parisian atmosphere with delight. But before the end of the month

he was in London on his way back to Scotland. 'It was hard to leave Paris', he wrote to me, 'just as the Théâtre français was beginning its fête-bicentenaire'; and the letter passes on to his impressions of London:

> Adieu, ye pagan dreams—the pride and the desire of the life that now is. What strikes me most is the subjectivity and the wandering in by-ways of thought and action instead of dwelling on the breezy plateaus of objective enjoyment. The pale cast of thought and the shadow of a world to come seem subtly to interpenetrate things. 'Business' takes the place of this in the City. I was struck by the keen, thin-lipped faces that one met in the continual rush of the streets. O I assure you, dear friend, the first drive through London after Paris is unutterably depressing. Trafalgar Square after the Place de la Concorde is like a dozen oil lamps flickering on barrels.

The reference to the Théâtre français is an early indication of Seth's constant interest in the theatre, and also, it may be added, in opera and other forms of music. There was little of interest on the stage or the concert platform that he failed to see or hear right up to the end; and with his usual thoroughness he put away together the programmes of all theatrical and musical performances he attended. A huge bundle of them was found among his papers.[1]

Once back in Edinburgh he was not long unemployed. Professor Campbell Fraser was only too glad to secure him as his own Assistant at the university. Nothing could have met Seth's inclinations or served his interests better, and he held the post for three years, until he obtained a professorship of his own. Meanwhile he supplemented his income by an excursion into journalism. I had had relations with the *Scotsman* and he asked me for an introduction. The paper was at that time edited in fact, though perhaps not yet in name, by the late Charles Cooper, an able and discerning Yorkshireman, who was quick to recognize the

[1] Two or three years before his death he supplied me from his store with explanatory programmes of the whole of Beethoven's string quartets.

value of his new recruit. At first he gave him books to review, but soon promoted him to leading articles, and afterwards assured me privately that there was not a paper in the kingdom which might not be glad to have him on its staff.

The tenure of the Edinburgh post had one valuable and unlooked-for consequence in leading to a lifelong friendship with Mr. A. J. Balfour (first Earl of Balfour), who founded at the university a temporary lectureship 'for the sole purpose', as he afterwards explained, of giving to Seth 'an opportunity of producing original work in philosophic literature'. The facts are stated by Lord Balfour in his posthumous *Chapters of Autobiography* (chap. v):

> The publication of [*A Defence of*] *Philosophic Doubt* had one indirect result of philosophic value. Among its readers was Mr. Andrew Seth, better known to the world of philosophy and letters as Professor Pringle-Pattison. He was at that time assisting Professor Campbell Fraser in his work at Edinburgh University; and after perusing my volume he paid me the compliment of asking me to address his class.[1] I accepted, and a lasting friendship was the result. . . . Out of this Edinburgh episode there sprung not merely the personal friendship to which I have referred, but also an arrangement under which Professor Pringle-Pattison delivered two sets of 'Balfour' lectures, one devoted to Hegel, the other to the philosophers of the Scottish school. Since then he has made contributions to our philosophic literature, original in matter and admirable in style. But surely the full promise of this later harvest was already given in the two modest volumes with which he began the series.

The Balfour Lectures were delivered actually in three courses—in 1885, 1887, and 1891. The first two (to which Lord Balfour refers) were published in the volumes entitled *Scottish Philosophy: a Comparison of the Scottish and German Answers to Hume* (1885), and *Hegelianism and Personality* (1887). The third (on 'Realism') appeared in four numbers of the *Philosophical Review*.

[1] It was not 'his class' that Mr. Balfour was asked to address, but the Philosophical Society of the University.

Seth was naturally on the look-out for a position of independence and at one moment entertained thoughts of a professorship in California. But his opportunity came nearer home. In 1883 was founded at Cardiff the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire (now a constituent of the University of Wales) and he obtained the Chair of Logic and Philosophy. The following summer he was married in Berlin and brought his wife to her new country and her future home. Her adoption of British nationality was complete, and thirty years later endured without flinching the ordeal of the Great War, in which all her four sons and the husbands, actual or prospective, of both her daughters served at the front.

In 1887 Seth was appointed to the Chair of Logic, Rhetoric and Metaphysics at St. Andrews, and was thus transferred from one of the youngest foundations in the south to the oldest university of Scotland. This position also he held for four years; and then came his great opportunity. In 1891 Campbell Fraser, in his seventy-second year, resigned the Edinburgh Chair, which he had occupied since the death of Sir William Hamilton in 1856, and Seth of course became a candidate. His own past associations with the Chair, together with the prestige conferred upon it by the two great teachers who had between them held it for fifty-five years, made this professorship desirable above all others. In Fraser's own eyes he was the obvious successor, and extant correspondence shows with what affectionate goodwill he supported his pupil's claims. Writing to Seth in May 1891, Fraser mentions a singular coincidence, which might well be of good omen: 'I see the 15th of July named as the day of election. Curiously I was elected on the 15th of July 1856, and Sir W. Hamilton on the 15th of July 1836.'[1] The candidature was successful, and for twenty-eight years more the reputation of the Chair suffered no relapse. It remained what Seth declared it to have been under his predecessor, 'a training ground of philosophic

[1] It was also the anniversary of Seth's marriage.

thinkers who went out to fill Chairs' in the universities of the English-speaking world. At the opening of the ensuing session in October the new professor, in his inaugural lecture on 'The Present Position of the Philosophical Sciences', paid a moving tribute to the teaching of Campbell Fraser and expressed the 'hope that, in the days to come, the dingy but famous class-room will be distinguished as of old by searching intellectual criticism and impartial debate, not divorced from that spirit of reverence and humility which alone can lead us into truth'.

Seth's next two books appeared in 1897; a volume of essays with the title *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, of which an enlarged edition followed in 1902, and *Two Lectures on Theism*, which had been delivered by invitation at Princeton, New Jersey, on the occasion of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of Princeton University.

The Edinburgh professorship is the second landmark in Seth's career. A third, much more surprising, followed seven years later, with important consequences. The story reads like an invention of romance. The Haining, an estate historically famous and beautifully situated close to the county town of Selkirk, had descended in a branch of the Pringle family for many generations. John Pringle, the owner in 1729, took the title of Lord Haining when raised to the Scottish bench. During the nineteenth century the direct male line died out and the property passed, together with much land elsewhere, to a Miss Pringle, its remaining representative, who had married a Mr. Pattison and combined her name with his. There were no children of the marriage, and Mrs. Pringle-Pattison, having acquired testamentary freedom, bequeathed all her possessions to her husband in the event of his surviving her without issue. But what if he predeceased her? Now the Seths were distantly related to the husband, and young Andrew, the eldest boy, was showing fine promise. The lady must have watched him with interest, for she sent for him once while he was at school and gave him a diamond ring on parting.

Mrs. Pringle-Pattison in later life was long incapacitated by illness, but survived her husband for ten years and died in 1898. The fact was then disclosed that she had bequeathed the whole of her possessions to Andrew Seth, with the stipulation that he should assume the name of Pringle-Pattison.

This sudden and immense change of fortune brought difficulties of its own. The ill health of old Mrs. Pringle-Pattison had affected the management of her property, and things were not in the best of order. Had her successor been an experienced landowner he would have had enough to do. But he was wholly inexperienced, a student and teacher of philosophy, whose first duty was to his professorship. He was faced, therefore, with a formidable task. But his intimate friends had no misgivings as they watched him tackle it. He gathered patiently into his own hands the tangled threads and unravelled them. The explanation lay not in some special gift for managing estates, but in a quiet strength of will and a mind, powerful and sagacious, which could generally find the true solution of any problem upon which it was brought to bear. On another side, the change in his position appealed to his sense of humour, and he made a solemn expedition to a distant burial-place of the Pringles, to visit, as he told me, 'the tombs of his new ancestors'. His young family were of an age to profit to the full by their enlarged opportunities of country life and to grow up familiar with its society and pursuits; while they, in turn, brought sunshine into a mansion which had seen no children for a hundred years.

Those who enjoyed the intimacy of that delectable home have a memory stored with happy pictures. Freedom and affection were its ruling principles; the pressure of formality was unknown. The slight diffidence of manner which might sometimes be observed in Pringle-Pattison's first contact with strangers would melt into the most winning graciousness when he welcomed to the Haining even unfamiliar guests. He and his wife were proud of the place and loved

it. The young folk adored it and revelled in its pastimes. Nothing was hailed with more delight than the great joyous picnics of the summer, comprising the entire house party, when a wagonette filled with guests and seniors and provisions would make its way up Yarrow to St. Mary's Loch, or to some equally romantic spot, attended by a scattered company of juniors like camp followers on bicycles. No sedate acquaintance in city or university could form an idea of the droll humour that would in a moment light up the Olympian countenance of 'the Professor', or of the sudden shouts of hilarity with which he would greet a witty story or ludicrous remark. At other times a willing guest would be commandeered by his host to spend a morning with axe and saw among the trees, lopping dead branches or wayward growths which obscured a favourite point of view.

The years passed happily, with much occasional writing, sometimes anonymous, and the issue in 1907 of a further volume of collected essays, *The Philosophical Radicals*. The University of Durham conferred the honorary degree of D.C.L. in 1902. In 1904 Pringle-Pattison was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. In the summer of 1913 there was a family gathering in Switzerland. Then came the War. All the sons who were of an age to serve came forward at the call, and the youngest, Ronald, a boy beloved by all who knew him, followed later from Sandhurst with a commission in the Gordon Highlanders. He was killed on the Somme in September 1916, in his first engagement.

At the end of 1916 Pringle-Pattison prepared for the press his most important book, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*, in which he embodied a double course of twenty Gifford lectures delivered to the University of Aberdeen in the years 1912 and 1913, and brought together 'the reflections of many years'. A second and revised edition appeared in 1920. There is a passage in the preface which is a key to even more than is there suggested. 'The interest of the

book', he says, 'although it consists largely of criticism . . . is neither critical nor historical, but constructive throughout. This method of construction through criticism is the one which I have instinctively followed in everything I have written.' He followed a similar method in the successful conduct of his life.

In 1919 he resigned his Chair, and a number of his old students, with Lord Macmillan as spokesman, presented him with his portrait, amid indications of peculiar reverence and affection. The university conferred the honorary degree of LL.D., as St. Andrews had done in 1892. Soon afterwards, to his gratification and complete surprise, it paid him the further compliment of choosing him as its next Gifford Lecturer, notwithstanding the fact that he had already filled the same office at Aberdeen. It would afford him, he told me, the opportunity of completing what he wanted to say. It was in this capacity that he produced the last two of his more important works. In 1921 his old association with the Hibbert Trust was indirectly renewed; for, upon the invitation of Principal L. P. Jacks, he delivered in Manchester College, Oxford, a course of six Hibbert Lectures upon 'Immortality', which were afterwards refashioned with additions to form the first course of his Edinburgh Gifford Lectures in 1922. These last were published the same year with the title *The Idea of Immortality*. A second Edinburgh course followed in 1923 and formed the basis of the volume *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (1930), which traces in orderly succession from early beginnings the line of religious development that culminates in Christian theism. A minor offshoot from the Gifford course of 1923 took ultimate form in one of the annual lectures of the British Academy, published in its *Proceedings* for 1924 under the title 'The Philosophy of History'. Mention should also be made of a striking presidential address, in October 1920, to the divinity students of the Theological Society of New College, Edinburgh, on 'The Duty of Candour in Religious Teaching'. It was an utterance of characteristic

sincerity, and in response to a strongly expressed desire he consented to its publication.

Everything that Pringle-Pattison wrote was set down with a pen by his own hand. He never dictated or used a typewriter. His style has a singular ease and beauty and its lucidity could not be surpassed. A distinguished colleague once publicly described it as 'the envy and despair of most other people who attempted to expound abstract subjects'. It is lightened, moreover, from time to time by flickers of a peculiarly restrained and lambent humour, which is always so employed as to illuminate the matter in hand. It is not too much to say that, had he worked in a less secluded field, he would have been widely recognized as one of the finest contemporary masters of English prose.

In 1924 he paid a long-anticipated visit to Italy with his wife. In the autumn of 1928 Mrs. Pringle-Pattison died, after an illness of a few months. It was a blow of extreme severity, and although her husband bore it with his customary patience he never recovered from the shock. His physical powers slowly declined, and in the early morning of 1 September, 1931, he passed quietly away in the library of the Haining. 'No pain', he wrote me in pencil from his bed not long before the end.

It is not for me to discuss his philosophical position. I am not qualified. But of this I feel sure, that he would have brushed aside with a gesture of half humorous impatience any idea that it was his business to present a rounded, self-consistent scheme for solving the problems of knowledge and experience. His philosophy, in keeping with his life, was an unceasing adventure with reality; and at the heart of reality lay mystery, by whatever path he approached.

In the *Scotsman* the day after his death a former student, Professor Hugh R. Mackintosh, described his teaching and his personal character in words that are eminently just. A few of his sentences may fitly close this memoir. For myself, I need only add that I have not known, in seventy years, another man at once so noble and so able.

His mind [says Dr. Mackintosh] was preponderantly of a religious cast, though without the least prejudice on the side of orthodoxy, and in the last generation no distinguished philosophical thinker has given to the idea of God a more profound or liberalizing interpretation.

As a teacher, Professor Pringle-Pattison stands out in memory, at least for the present writer, on a nearly solitary eminence. To hear him lecture, as he did year after year to advanced students, on the history of modern philosophy, from Descartes onwards, opened a new world of inexhaustible living interest. That famous higher course, some of us readily own, was the best lecturing we have ever heard. He spoke conversationally, at times with a hesitation that added piquancy to the thing said, and he used no stale words. His method was to develop his own view by way of the exposition and criticism of the greater thinkers, the criticism being of that higher order which forces an author to review himself in the light of his own assumptions. The same delicate vigour and clarity marked his writing. . . .

There is no time to speak now of his character—his nobility, his largeness of judgement, his reverence for truth, his fundamental tenderness. Not only did he fan intelligence; he made goodness lovable. In manner he was extremely kindly, and even gentle; but behind this gentleness lay all the force of tenacious conviction, and for big things he could exhibit a passionate resolution. In no life lived in our time has there been witnessed a more complete allegiance to the ideals of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful; and over all arched the sky of the Divine.

J. B. CAPPER.

PRINGLE-PATTISON AS PHILOSOPHER

IN considering the philosophical position of Professor Pringle-Pattison it is impossible to dissociate his way of thinking and writing from the personality of the man. He was by nature as well as by profession essentially a teacher, with a lofty conception of the responsibilities of his vocation, and a deep sense of the dignity and value of the things of the mind. This gave a high seriousness to his philosophical work, both in the classroom and in his publications. For him, philosophy was no mere discipline of the mind, nor a

display of dialectical ingenuity: it was a gravely important enterprise of the human spirit, not to be entered upon lightly or inadvisedly but with a sober regard for the great issues at stake. He was impatient of trivial logomachy or intellectual flippancy in matters philosophical. Behind his thought, animating and inspiring his reflections, lay a strongly emotional religious attitude of mind. This is seen in his earliest writings; it is apparent to the end. One may say that his dominant interest in philosophy consisted in the bearing of philosophical ideas on the life and conduct of religious experience, including in this the principles of morality. Relatively to such eminently practical issues, philosophy was, as we shall see, rather a means to an end than an end in itself. He had a keen appreciation of the accepted religious outlook of his fellow countrymen; he was by training and by instinct in close sympathy with it, and sensitive to the obligations which this imposed upon him in his public utterances. At the same time he was acutely alive to the philosophical tendencies and problems of the day, and to the demand for clear thinking on philosophical questions. His aim always seemed to be to endeavour to reconcile the best that religion required with the best that philosophy could affirm. It was in the fulfilment of this object that his gifts as a teacher were most effective.

He impressed his hearers, as he impresses his readers, by his power of penetrating to the essential point of a theory offered in solution of a problem, and by his unfailing insight into the consequences as they affected commonly recognized experience. In this way he could make highly abstract ideas live or old ideas live again in the everyday world so that the average mind could realize their significance. He had a firm grasp of what the ordinary individual, the 'plain man', vitally believed, and would not surrender the convictions of 'common sense' or common experience, in whatever form, to the merely logical requirements of any abstract principle. On the other hand he was alive to the

difficulty of defining exactly what ordinary experience really contained, as well as to the dangers of overstatement or understatement of philosophical ideas. In his endeavour to reconcile the two he felt and manifested, in conversation and in writing, a constrained hesitation of thought, and expressed himself with a qualified moderation of statement which was often disconcerting in its apparent indecisiveness and might be mistaken for vacillation or timidity by any one who did not realize that it proceeded from a scrupulous regard for all the facts and the whole truth. There is no doubt that he preferred caution to confidence in his conclusions on great questions, and reserved restraint to forcefulness of expression.

While he had a singular facility in appreciating and stating the intimate intricacies of the most subtle philosophical system, he had a modest conception of his own limitations. He did not claim and certainly cannot be said to possess any originality as a thinker. He was a sympathetic interpreter and exponent rather than a creator of formative ideas. He rarely advanced a position of his own without quoting some one else who had either anticipated his statement or could be adduced in support of it. He would have made an admirable historian of philosophy, if he had had the keen interest in the details of systems which an historian must possess. But not only had he no system of his own to propound, he had no decided belief in the possibility of constructing a satisfactory interpretation of the Universe. And much as he valued philosophy and clearly as he apprehended its importance, he did not believe philosophy to be the main or final source of mental satisfaction. He maintained in one of his earliest essays and repeatedly declared that 'religion and the higher poetry' bring us nearer to the meaning of the world than abstract metaphysics. Indeed he goes so far as to say in one passage,[1] 'the truth of the poetic imagination is perhaps the profoundest doctrine of a true philosophy'. He was not only critical of

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 127.

all philosophical systems: at heart he was sceptical of any attempt to reach the last word of truth in that form. In one of his earliest publications he remarks, 'the Universe is not plain to us save by a supreme effort of faith—faith in reason and faith in goodness. . . . But if this faith be reduced to system and put forward as demonstration . . . it saps the springs both of speculative interest and of moral endeavour',[1] and is 'harmful' even though it may have served a useful purpose in other ways. Such views come strangely from an accomplished teacher of philosophy who spent his best energies in its service. He never justified them on any general grounds which explained the relation of philosophy to other kinds of experience. The explanation is temperamental. He probably would have held that personal experience was more than thinking. Certainly the dignity of personality was to him of far more importance than any single tendency of mind; and its worth was best maintained by a conscious balance of parts and a sense of proportion. Whatever gave emotional elevation to personal life had a worth of its own which could not be sacrificed without loss in the long run. In his case the 'higher poetry' and religion always made a strong emotional appeal. A philosophical system which claimed to be complete gave him, as he said, a sense of 'intolerable ennui'.

Such a mind is clearly not constituted for the passionate pursuit of knowledge for its own sake or for the concentrated devotion to thought for thought's sake which alone can lead to high achievement in philosophy. And in fact he had no particular interest in scientific knowledge; he was more concerned with the claims of science as a type of experience than with what science had accomplished. Even psychology or the science of mind rather repelled than appealed to him. His main spheres of intellectual interest lay in the logical foundations of knowledge and the general problems of metaphysics so far as these affected the major questions of religion and morality. His limitations as a philosophical

[1] *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 224.

thinker, however, were in certain respects the source of his profound influence as a teacher. He sought to guide his students, as he endeavours to guide his readers, through the labyrinthian ways of philosophical thought found in the history of philosophy, keeping before them the vital issues involved and bringing philosophical ideas to the test of ordinary experience. He put the whole weight of his personality behind his statements, which thus invariably impressed by their sincerity and gained authority from his personal conviction.

The value of his work as teacher and writer was enhanced and enriched by his exceptional literary gifts. His career as a writer covers a period of about half a century. His earliest volume, *The Development from Kant to Hegel*, appeared in 1881; his last, the *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, was published in 1930, the year before he died. From the first his style was that of a finished writer; and his style maintained its quality to the end. It was luminous in expression and intelligible to any one interested in philosophical literature. He never sought to write memorable sentences; but he never wrote a dull paragraph and seldom an obscure one. He could always say exactly what he meant with singular clarity and smoothness of statement. He was persuasive and attractive in his thinking, and was more concerned to deliver his convictions than to work out a connected theory. He wrote with an audience before him of intelligent ordinary people who accepted certain postulates and assumptions to which he could appeal, and with whom he was in the main in agreement at the outset. And his audience understood him; from such an audience his works will always receive a ready and willing response.

The method of procedure adopted in expounding his views which, as he says, he always 'instinctively followed', was described by himself as 'construction through criticism'.[1] It will be evident from what has been stated concerning his

[1] *Idea of God*, preface.

philosophical attitude that such a method was the natural one for him to adopt. Criticism is certainly characteristic of his work throughout: and as a philosophical critic he sought to be scrupulously just, though he was perhaps not always sympathetic. But construction in the usual sense it can hardly be called. There is no connected system in any of his works. Not even in his chief volume on *The Idea of God*, where he states his position most completely, does he furnish a system of thought. He maintains indeed that philosophy must necessarily be system or systematic connexion; but this is no more than a guiding ideal, which he affirms but does not carry out. His procedure consists in selecting particular problems of a fundamental character for discussion; he then examines representative theories offered by other past or contemporary thinkers in solution of the questions at issue, and adopts as the result of his criticism such of their positive doctrines as he is prepared to regard as true when modified or restated in his own terms. He rarely undertook a philosophical problem independently and at first hand.[1] A procedure of this kind can furnish a valuable eclecticism, but not, properly speaking, a constructive philosophy. His eclecticism is governed throughout by an idealistic conception of the Universe which for him is almost axiomatic in its certainty. In the light of this idealistic principle he seeks to co-ordinate different points of view and secures a relative consistency in the affirmative conclusions at which he arrives. Probably he means construction to be taken in this sense. But one misses in his work a thorough-going analysis of concepts and a grounded scheme of thought progressively developed to a final result. He tested theories not by reference to their internal con-

[1] The only conspicuous exception occurs in the third course of Balfour Lectures, where he sought to lay the groundwork of 'epistemology'. It is the least successful of his philosophical efforts, and led to no permanent result. He seems indeed to have abandoned the problem on further reflection, partly, perhaps, in consequence of difficulties raised by his critics.

sistency, but rather by reference to their consistency with certain fundamental positions accepted or assumed in advance as valid. Without a positive basis of criticism of this kind it is evident that it would not have been possible to select or reject as the result of criticism. His fundamental convictions were drawn from what may be broadly described as common sense on the one hand and from the highest expressions of moral and religious experience on the other. He does not, however, take 'common sense' at its face value, nor does he take it for granted that every claim of the moral and religious consciousness is to be accepted uncritically. He repeatedly insists that they must be illuminated and elucidated by criticism.[1] This creates an obvious difficulty which he nowhere clears up. They cannot be criticized by themselves, for this implies that their deliverances are both true and false. They cannot be criticized in the light of a theory, for he has no theory of his own, and all theories are tested by reference to them. In the result, therefore, the only positive affirmations he can make, and the only positive criterion by which he can assess the validity of any theory considered, are drawn from the personal convictions of the writer. And on these he repeatedly falls back at the crucial point of a discussion.

There seems little doubt that he would have defended this procedure to which his method inevitably leads him. Indeed, when one critic challenged his right to criticize a theory unless he could produce a theory of his own he replied[2] with some heat, in the words of Mill, 'If I am asked what system of philosophy I substituted for that which, as a philosophy, I had abandoned, I answer, no system; only a conviction that the true system was something much more complex and many-sided than I had previously had any idea'. The defence is characteristic of the writer and of his method.

[1] He remarks, *Idea of Immortality*, p. 201, 'our most peremptory judgements may often be the most fallacious'. [2] *Mind*, N.S. iii, p. 3.

It must be admitted that philosophical reflection pursued on these lines cannot carry us much beyond the range of commonly accepted judgements on fundamental problems as ordinarily understood. And beyond this probably he did not desire to go. He did not welcome novel ideas in philosophy and was not inclined to defend a lost cause. He had a great regard for generally received opinion, and did not willingly deviate from it, doubtless because he believed that the weight of experience was behind it. For similar reasons he sought, as a skilful teacher should, to keep himself *en rapport* with the audience listening to him, and thus gave authoritative expression or approval to what seemed familiar to them. The result was that his audience, on its side, could generally corroborate or support his conclusions. On this account as well as by the persuasiveness of his style his writings will always be sure to make a strong appeal to a wide circle of readers.

Turning from his method of procedure to the substance of his philosophical contribution to the thought of his time, this may best be presented by putting together the statements of his own position which he makes in the course of his criticism of the theories put forward by different thinkers to solve the fundamental problems discussed in his Balfour Lectures and in his Gifford Lectures.[1] A brief reference may also be made to an early essay on 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories', to which he always attached importance, and which he reprinted without alteration some twenty-five years after its first appearance. With the exception of the foregoing, most of his other writings were of an occasional character, and dealt with books or subjects which engaged his attention from time to time. There is

[1] While not a prolific writer he wrote extensively, and the list of his productions is considerable. Apart from his books he was for years a contributor to *The Times Literary Supplement*, where his literary skill and critical judgement were much appreciated. At one time he thought of adopting journalism as a career. His contributions were welcome copy to editors of periodicals.

little evidence of conspicuous change of view in his various works; though there appears not infrequently a change of expression or change of emphasis.

It is not easy to say which thinkers chiefly influenced his mind. He was unusually well read in the history of philosophy, and had a masterly grasp of the significance of historically important theories. In his earlier life there seems little doubt that Hegel exerted a profound influence on him, and to the last he owed much to Hegel's system. After Hegel, probably Locke and Lotze exerted most influence on his thinking: he owed much also to his friend Laurie. But he had a sympathetic appreciation of most theories, and maintained at the same time a singularly aloof detachment of intellect.

His most comprehensive work was the series of lectures given under the Gifford Trust in Aberdeen University, 1912–13, and published in 1917 under the title *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*. In this he gathered together the reflections of a lifetime on the main problems which interested him. Next to this in importance is the volume on *The Idea of Immortality* which contains the first course of his Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University (delivered and published in 1922). His last volume of *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, which contains in a revised form the second series of Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, is of less purely philosophical value than his other volumes, and consists in the main of a critical survey of historical religions and a fresh restatement of the conclusions of scholars in this field with whom he is in agreement. The early Balfour Lectures—*Scottish Philosophy* and *Hegelianism and Personality* are restricted in scope but contain some important indications of the views which he held on some fundamental questions. Excluding the *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* we may deal with the above in the order in which they appeared.

Before considering his main contributions, however, we may refer shortly to the early essay, already mentioned,

which he wrote for *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*—a volume edited jointly by himself and Haldane in 1883. This essay, entitled 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories', was a significant production at the time and may be regarded as a first formulation of his method and his main philosophical position.

His train of thought is carried on in the light of Hegel's *Logic* and of Hegel's criticism of Kant. He concentrates chief attention on Kant's theory and has no difficulty in showing (as in fact he had to some extent already done in his first book on the historical development from *Kant to Hegel*) that only when Kant's principle of self-consciousness is freed from subjectivism and formalism, with all that this implies, and transformed into an objective principle of self-revelation of experience, or knowledge in the concrete sense of the unity of mind and its object, can philosophy become fruitful of results. Self-consciousness in this sense 'as the implicate of all experience' he accepts as the clue to the interpretation of experience, 'the necessary point of view from which the universe can be unified—that is from which it becomes a universe'. The various 'categories' of knowledge, being functions of this central principle, are valid within their respective spheres and limits. It is the business of philosophy to arbitrate between the claims of the sciences and between their respective categories. 'Philosophy as Theory of Knowledge' is the 'critic not only of the special sciences but especially of all metaphysics and systems of Philosophy'. It is the 'watch-dog of knowledge'. At the same time, characteristically guarding himself from too great expectations of the achievements of philosophy, he says that while 'philosophy in the capacity of a science of thought should possess a complete survey of its categories and of their dialectical connexion' such a ' "Wissenschaft der Logik" will probably never be completely written'. It is indeed not clear how philosophy can be the critic of all 'systems of philosophy'. Knowledge is, however, equal to its task whether it be accomplished or not; though 'the

trustworthiness of knowledge is and must be an assumption'.

Here we have in outline some of his main contentions—the conception of philosophy as critical interpreter of experience, the aim of philosophy as systematic connexion of categories, the assumption of the validity of knowledge, the central position of self-consciousness with its corollary that the world is to be interpreted on idealistic lines. The essay, too, adumbrates his method of procedure, to which reference has been made, and states even thus early his belief that most people come nearer the truth through religion and poetry than if they went to metaphysics and 'professed philosophers'.[1] The essay, however, is plainly no more than an indication of a point of view, the value of which can only be tested if fully articulated.

The Balfour Lectureship, specially instituted by Mr. Arthur Balfour, the Chancellor of Edinburgh University, to give him the opportunity to expand his philosophical position—a unique compliment in the history of Scottish academic life—provided the occasion for giving three short courses of lectures which aroused much interest and the second of which exerted an important influence in certain philosophical circles. The first was a course on *Scottish Philosophy*and the second on *Hegelianism and Personality*.[2] The sub-title of the former describes its purpose as 'a comparison of the Scottish and German answers to Hume'. The lectures throw light on the lecturer's own views, and are of importance mainly on this account. Reid had no appreciation of system,[3] and his contributions were intended for the perusal of his 'old students', and the 'reading portion of his countrymen'. The attempt to substantiate the legend of a 'Scottish Philosophy' does credit to the patriotic heart of the lecturer, but is hardly a profitable undertaking. The

[1] *Philosophical Radicals*, p. 319.

[2] The third course, on epistemology, was not published in book form. It appeared in the *Philosophical Review* (1892–3). See above, p. 466 note.

[3] *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 196.

speculations of Hamilton, the only other Scottish philosopher considered in the lectures, are 'no genuine development of Scottish Philosophy'.[1] Indeed, if we are to believe Hamilton, the philosophy of common sense—the appeal to the immediate veracity of consciousness and the existence of self-evident first principles of the mind—had been put forward in one form or another by 'a hundred and six' thinkers of different times and nations, whom he adduces as 'witnesses' to the truth or universality of common-sense philosophy. It would seem, in fact, that so far as 'Scottish philosophy' is philosophy, it is not peculiarly Scottish, and so far as it is Scottish it is not philosophy but an appeal to the uncritical understanding of the 'ordinary man'.[2]

In discussing the subject Pringle-Pattison, after his usual manner, reviews the theories of the predecessors of Reid, recasts his examination of Kant, criticizing, correcting, and qualifying as he goes, in order to bring out the significance of the main principles on which he previously laid stress in the essay already referred to. It is not till he comes to the last lecture on 'The Possibility of Philosophy as System: Scottish Philosophy and Hegel' that he makes some self-revealing statements. He insists that in knowledge the difference of subject and object is transcended; there is no gulf separating the two: knowledge *qua* knowledge is 'a transparent relation', a relation in which, as Aristotle said, 'the two sides are one'.[3] 'Philosophy is just system': to despair of system is to despair of philosophy and of reason.[4]

With Hegel's fundamental principles the lecturer declares himself in agreement. 'In self-consciousness Hegel seems to hold a position from which in the nature of the case it is impossible to dislodge him.'[5] But the agreement in principle is at once qualified by considerations which lead

[1] *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 193.

[2] It seems curious to oppose 'Scottish Philosophy' to the philosophy of Hume, a highly characteristic and certainly the most original Scottish philosopher.

[3] *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 190.

[4] Ibid., p. 196.

[5] Ibid., p. 201.

him in the opposite direction. The real, he admits with Hegel, is the rational, but the real is also the individual, and the Universe 'may be usefully regarded as a vast individual'. The individual, however, is in its very nature 'inexhaustible in its predicates'. Hence the rational or 'systematic unity of things' is no more than 'an ideal to which we can never attain'. There is a background of ignorance of reality, an 'unexhausted remainder always present to our feeling'. This permanently restricts our knowledge. The 'insight' into the harmony or system of the whole partakes of the nature of 'divination and faith'. This faith is not opposed to reason, but to knowledge.[1] 'The system does not complete itself for me', but only for God; for man it is an 'object of faith'; man's knowledge is only true so far as it goes and it does not go the whole length of individuality.

These divergent positions on a fundamental issue are held together in the writer's mind, but they are never reconciled or thought out to a finish. They recur in his later books, as we shall see, and lead him into conflict not only with others but with himself. At one time we find him saying that individuality, whether finite or absolute, is unknown but not unknowable; and again that the knowledge of the 'systematic unity' is an unattainable though necessary ideal. At another time he says that faith appertains to the religious consciousness, 'the organ of religion' is faith;[2] but faith is also a necessity for philosophy, even though 'philosophy as philosophy demands proof', and 'insists on having its statements thought out'.[3] The individual feels he is a separate entity despite all processes of systematic connexion. A philosophy which does not do justice to this feeling in its treatment of the individual 'leaves untouched what we may call the individual in the individual—those subjective memories, thoughts and plans which make each of us a separate soul'.[4] It is evident that the root of this appeal to 'an individual

[1] Ibid., p. 210. [2] Ibid., p. 217. [3] Ibid., p. 217.
[4] Ibid., p 221.

within an individual', is a sceptical distrust which cannot be satisfied with any philosophy, because 'religion and the higher poetry' can better stimulate and sustain the emotional life of the individual.

The emphasis laid on the uniqueness of the individual life seems to have been due partly to a recoil from certain tendencies in the Hegelian system which had hitherto swayed the writer's thought, partly to the reaction against Hegel which had set in at the time of the appearance of Bradley's *Logic*, and partly, no doubt, to the deeply emotional character of Pringle-Pattison's personality. The importance of the single individual was also a point which could make appeal to a commonly accepted conviction held on moral and religious grounds by many whose views he shared. The value of human personality, its dignity and responsibilities seemed at stake in the question whether the individual could be 'resolved' into universals or must be accepted as an irreducible basis for experience and philosophy. In the form in which individuality was thus emphasized it set a serious problem: without careful interpretation it was little more than an assertion. The principle involved was one which he never lost sight of during his succeeding work.

It was the central point at issue in his spirited criticism of Hegel in the lectures on *Hegelianism and Personality*. The intensity of his conviction that somehow the self of personality must be accepted as 'impervious' and unique, accounts for the severity of his criticism, the language of which is at times strangely unrestrained.[1] The vigour of the discussion seems due to the desire of the writer to liberate himself once for all from the domination of a system by which he had been long influenced, and to recover from what he calls the 'intolerable ennui' of the conception of 'absolute knowledge'. Considered on its merits, the argument derives such value as it has from an insistent stress on points

[1] Cf. *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 205, where he speaks of the 'malign influences of Hegel's attitude'; cf. also, pp. 202–3 and 223.

which probably no one would dispute; and some criticisms are the result of an *ex parte* interpretation of a passage which is capable of interpretation in another way. In fact he admits that if Hegel means no more than he says when he declares that he is maintaining 'the ancient position that νοῦς rules the world', or, in modern phrase, that there is reason in the world, then the objections of the writer 'would certainly fall to the ground'.[1] It might perhaps have been better to have given Hegel the benefit of the doubt, more especially since the writer had in an article in *Mind*, in 1881, given a more sympathetic interpretation of most of the vital points which he produces as grounds of offence in these lectures.

In his desire to make out his case against Hegel for ignoring the uniqueness of individuality he is led to take up positions which involve not only an abandonment of his previous allegiance to Hegel but a departure for the moment from idealism as he had hitherto understood it. The individual, we are now told, 'alone is the real'. He admits that knowledge is of universals, but they are abstractions and do not even together 'constitute a fact'. 'There is a complete solution of continuity between the abstractions of knowledge and the concrete texture of real existence.'[2] 'Existence is one thing, knowledge is another.'[3] 'Reality can itself only be experienced, immediately known or lived.'[4] Again he says, 'we must touch reality somewhere, otherwise our whole construction is in the air'. 'The real must be given': 'that there is a world at all we know only through the immediate assurance, perception or feeling of our own existence, and through ourselves of other persons and things'.[5] He goes further. 'We are', he says, 'anthropomorphic and necessarily so to the inmost fibre of our thinking'. 'Everything down to the atom is constructed upon the scheme of the conscious life, with its multiplicity of states and its central interpenetrating unity.' No doubt 'our anthropomorphism

[1] Ibid., p. 132. [2] Ibid., p. 135–6. [3] Ibid., p. 133.
[4] Ibid., p. 127. [5] Ibid., p. 125.

must be critical'.[1] Here we have a profoundly subjectivistic view of knowledge, which is inconsistent with any form of constructive idealism. But as if hesitating at the consequences of such a step he immediately goes on to say that he still holds by Hegel's conception of 'self-consciousness as the ultimate category of thought', and that 'in its essence the relation of knower and known is, as it were, a transparent relation in which the difference of subject and object is and may be said to be overcome'.[2] It is, however, plain that the two positions if thought out are wholly incompatible. As to the individual self, 'each self is a unique existence which is perfectly impervious to other selves, impervious in a fashion of which the inpenetrability of matter is a faint analogue'.[3] 'The real self is one and indivisible and is unique in each individual. This is an unequivocal testimony of consciousness.'[4] It is a 'principle of isolation', independent and exclusive: 'I have a centre of my own—a will of my own—a centre which I maintain even in my dealings with God Himself.'[5] 'God too has a real self-consciousness', exists 'for Himself': 'we should be false to ourselves if we denied to God what we recognize as the source of dignity and worth in ourselves.'[6]

These assertions are nowhere vindicated; they are declarations of his own personal conviction. They form the basis of his criticism of what he takes to be 'tendencies' in Hegel's thought, into the details of which it is not necessary to enter.

We may now turn to his more elaborate discussion in the volume on *The Idea of God*, to which reference has already been made, where he attempts to come to terms with modern thought and to state his views in their final form.

It is plainly his purpose to state his findings on the ultimate nature of the Universe, and to present an argument for an idealistic view of the world. He was convinced

[1] *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 103.
[2] Ibid., p. 104.
[3] Ibid., p. 227.
[4] Ibid., p. 68.
[5] Ibid., p. 228.
[6] Ibid., p. 235.

in advance that only idealism could do justice to the claims of the higher life of man, as found in morality and religion and expressed in the finest poetry. He goes further and adopts with approval the saying of Yeats that 'whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent', and holds with Wordsworth that poetry is 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge'.[1] He may thus be regarded as temperamentally an idealist, and whatever philosophers may say to the contrary, he is resolved from the outset to defend this primary assumption. A thinker who proceeds on these lines is clearly not disposed to follow the lead of reason at any price and accept the truth which the intellect alone supplies: he is rather intent on doing battle *à outrance* for a faith which he holds in advance of his argument. Indeed, he goes so far as to say in one curious passage that 'the paradox of religion may be truer than the dilemma, the "either-or", of the logical understanding'.[2]

His position would have been more defensible if he had made clear to himself and his readers the limits within which philosophy must work, and the distinction in experience between the spheres of religion and moral practice and philosophical theory. But this he nowhere explains. His *Idea of God* is in all but name a metaphysical view of the Universe, and this again is indistinguishable from his philosophy of religion. Indeed, his last book *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* is, as already said, a critical review of historical religions, and not a philosophy of religion in the proper sense. But by leaving unexplained the lines of demarcation between philosophy proper and religion and morality the argument of the *Idea of God* is throughout an illustration of what may be called the philosopher's fallacy of confusing the findings of philosophy with the independent deliverances of the moral and religious consciousness. He seems to suppose that philosophy must look to the religious consciousness to find out what to say and that religion must look to philosophy to find out what to believe.

[1] *Idea of God*, p. vii. [2] Ibid., p. 338.

It is important to observe at the outset that in interpreting the relations of God to man and to the world the writer adopts a peculiar point of view, which qualifies the validity of his argument. He says[1] he has 'proceeded in these lectures throughout on the principle of analogy and it has been my contention that no other procedure is reasonable'. This is in accordance with the emphasis he placed on the essentially anthropomorphic character of human knowledge in the earlier work already mentioned. But 'analogy' is admittedly a precarious logical procedure and can at best only furnish a probable conclusion, not a demonstration. Whether analogy is appropriate at all in the sphere of metaphysics is a point which he does not discuss. He maintains that philosophy must aim at systematic thought. But it is certain that analogical reasoning is not the way to arrive at a system.

His aim is to provide an idealistic interpretation of what he variously names the 'Absolute', the 'Whole', the 'Universe', the 'ultimate Power', 'absolute Life', 'God'. The basis of such an interpretation is the actual conscious experience of the finite human individual.[2] The possibility and, in a sense, the necessity of an argument of the kind required must be sought in ultimate intrinsic values, or judgements of intrinsic value, which govern and sway man's life. These values are goodness, truth, and beauty, which are different but all equally necessary, and the demands of each and all must be satisfied. They may be opposed in form, but they cannot in the long run be severed. There can be no ultimate opposition between judgements of value and judgements of fact; and the claims of the intellect to furnish scientific truth cannot alone be accepted as final, least of all if they lead to results which seem to involve the suppression or denial of the claims of goodness and beauty, or to make them derivative and secondary to those of knowledge. It would be 'intolerable' if as the outcome of scientific knowledge no place were left for all that goodness

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 324; cf. also pp. 337, 343, and 411. [2] Ibid., p. 231.

and beauty mean for us. All our ideals and the judgements which express them have equally 'objective validity'. It would do violence to our very nature to abandon any one of them: to adopt such an intolerable position is 'of the same texture as to believe an intellectual contradiction'.[1]

When we ask for the justification for holding these values as final and objectively valid, for 'the certainty that the world of facts is unalterably and throughout intellectually coherent', for the belief in the ultimate reality of goodness and beauty, we are told that they are 'directly apprehended',[2] that in a sense our certainty is an 'unproved belief', 'a postulate of reason, a supreme hypothesis'.[3] That there is a circle in the argument is admitted by the writer, and he admits that it involves an assumption (or perhaps it should be said a further assumption)—the 'conviction of the essential greatness of man and the infinite nature of the values revealed in his life'.[4] 'The profound significance of human life' is the conviction implied in every form of philosophical idealism. He dismisses with impatience every contrary view: 'the man to whom life is a triviality is not likely to find a meaning in anything else'. This assumption is an 'absolute judgement of value';[5] without it we could not 'convince ourselves that in our estimates it is not we who judge as finite particulars, but Reality affirming through us its inmost nature'. It is not clear how this is to be made consistent with another statement that 'after all it is we who pronounce these judgements of ultimate value, and apart from such human valuations we possess no magical access to the secrets of the Absolute'.[6] He maintains that his view of man's relation to the Real 'has behind it the whole weight of a philosophical system'. But what or whose 'system' is not evident: not the system of the world because that is assumed; and not his own system, for that is not forthcoming.

The next point is to show how man's relation to nature and to God is to be conceived so as to do justice to those

[1] Ibid., p. 45. [2] Ibid., p. 231. [3] Ibid., p. 239.
[4] Ibid., p. 236. [5] Ibid., p. 236. [6] Ibid., p. 337.

absolute values. His procedure consists of two stages, negative and positive. The first consists in a refutation of scientific naturalism as conceived in the nineteenth century —the doctrine that nature can be completely interpreted in mechanical or mechanico-chemical terms, which leave no room for higher human purpose since man is but a part of nature, and which explain or explain away the higher (or the end) in terms of the lower (or its primordial elements). His criticism here partly turns on his view (adumbrated in his 'Philosophy as Criticism of Categories') that the categories of science are valid only within limits, and that in any case the category of purpose as realized in organic life is as valid a category as that of mechanism; and partly on the affirmation that the surrender of the ultimate values of goodness and beauty even to the claims of scientific 'truth' would be 'intolerable' to man's complete nature. Biology helps to 'liberate' us from this purely naturalistic position. The positive line of argument consists in distinguishing between two kinds of naturalism, the lower naturalism 'which seeks to merge man in the infra-human nature from which he draws his origin', and the higher naturalism which recognizes the 'emergence of real differences where it sees them, without feeling that it is thereby establishing an absolute chasm between one stage of nature's processes and another.[1] Man's distinctive characteristics—purpose, and ideals—is such a real difference which 'emerges' in course of time. The lower and the higher naturalism are thus continuous in the sense that they are manifestations of a 'single Power' realizing itself in and through all differences which emerge. The continuity, however, is not that of the theory of naturalistic evolution in time. 'Questions of historical origin or of transitional forms are philosophically irrelevant.' The continuity is that of a 'scale of qualitative differences', 'levels'[2] of existence, 'aspects of a total fact'.

[1] *Idea of God*, pp. 209 ff.

[2] A term used by Laurie in his *Synthetica*, a book to which Pringle-Pattison owed much.

The lower being continuous with the higher, and man being a 'child of nature', man, it is held, is 'organic to nature'. 'The world is not complete without man and his knowledge': 'the natural intelligence which characterizes him appears as the culmination of a continuous process of immanent development'.

The organic connexion of nature and man involves the 'essential relatedness of nature and mind' and thus guarantees 'the naturalness of the knowledge-process and the truthfulness of the result'. In this way what from one point of view is a postulate—the ultimate validity of human knowledge—is from another point of view a necessary consequence of 'man's rootedness in nature' which the principle of continuity affirms. A further link is, however, required to establish the idealistic view of the Universe as a whole. This is found in a statement of the 'ontological argument'. The 'best we think or can think must be'—or in Bradley's phrase, 'that which is highest in us is also in and to the Universe most real'. This is the presupposition of all thinking. The nature of the Universe substantiates and also reveals itself through our ideals; it confirms and supports the absolute values of human life. Ultimate Reality so constituted is what man means by God in the theistic sense. Transferring himself to the point of view of the Absolute, our author therefore says that the 'Single Power' at work in the whole, Nature, is a process of self-revelation, and the intelligent being (man) is 'the organ through which the universe beholds and enjoys itself'; man is the organ by which Nature becomes conscious of herself and enters into the joy of her own being.[1] This is the ultimate purpose of the world: 'the existence of living centres capable of feeling the grandeur and beauty of the Universe and tasting its manifold qualities is what is alone really significant in the Universe'.

This is the main theme of the volume. God is immanent in the Universe; reality is revealed in and not concealed

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 211.

within the system of its appearances; 'things are as they reveal themselves in their fullness to the knowing mind';[1] the 'principle of value' which expresses itself in our various judgements of value is to be found in the nature of the system (or reality) as a whole.

These are idealistic tenets. But the idealism Pringle-Pattison supports is of a composite character and draws elements from different types of thought as well as from many sources. It may be described as a conciliatory union of naturalism and idealism on the assumption of the ultimate reliability and permanence of human values. It is comprehensive enough and sufficiently persuasive to meet the practical demands of the religious and moral consciousness as well as the requirements of scientific knowledge. This 'larger idealism', as he calls it, is essentially anthropocentric, recognizing the limitations of finite knowledge and making up for these limitations by laying all the greater emphasis on the necessity for 'rational faith' as a condition of attaining as a complete experience what idealism implies, and what objective idealism claims explicitly to express. For idealism in Pringle-Pattison's sense, as for other kinds of idealism, end or purpose is the final category.

It will be evident, however, that the argument is rather a series of affirmations than a connected logical sequence of thought, or a 'proof' in the usual sense. The validity of the ultimate judgements from which he starts is not proved: such judgements are, as he says, assumptions, 'convictions' accepted by the individual 'at his best' to give meaning to life. The author regards them indeed as parts of a 'system': but the system is assumed and not articulated.[2] That these values are characteristic of Reality, revelations of the Absolute, is not proved even by the ontological argument, since the validity of this argument is another 'conviction'.[3]

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 130.

[2] 'Explanation' would involve system: but he says at one time that philosophy is 'explanation', at another time 'description'; *Idea of God*, pp. 91, 108.

[3] Ibid., pp. 200, 241.

Indeed, to say that these values hold for the Absolute is little more than another way of reaffirming at the end the position stated at the beginning, viz. that they are absolute values. The linking-up of man's highest values with nature by the principle of continuity of the lower and higher nature begs the question at issue, since the distinction of lower and higher rests on the judgement of value. Apart from this the term nature is ingeniously used in different senses to support the argument. Nature is in one context the finite realm of law-constituted fact independent of finite mind; in another, man's mind is the outcome of and organically related to nature; in another, Nature includes both man and the physico-organic realm of things—the Whole as such. These are obviously different concepts. For example, nature in the first sense can exist and has existed in the past independently of man and before man appeared.[1] It is only in regard to Nature in the last sense that the statement can be made that man is the organ through which the 'Universe' or 'Nature' 'beholds and enjoys itself'.[2]

He distinguishes his doctrine of the immanence of God, or the Divine, from the 'lower pantheism' by emphasizing the significance of the ideal as necessarily passing beyond the actual, and implying that the actual as we find it in finite experience does not by the very nature of desire exhaust the ideal. 'Perfection', or God, and man are 'two independent facts' which exist in and through one another. They are distinct in value and quality, though not separate in being from one another. In this sense God 'transcends' man, as well as lives immanently in man.[3]

A true doctrine of God must be based on a true doctrine of man.[4] But at the same time he explains what the individual is from the point of view of the Absolute which is

[1] Cf. ibid., p. 415.

[2] That the Universe beholds and enjoys itself through man seems to be no more than a hyperbole to express the simple proposition that man beholds and enjoys the universe or nature.

[3] *Idea of God*, pp. 255, 343, 411.

[4] Ibid., p. 254.

immanent in all appearances. He had formerly held that selves were 'exclusive' relatively to each other and even to God. He now seems to give up this description.[1] Individuals are unique, and impervious to each other as individuals, though capable of sharing an identity of content with one another as members of a society and of the one universe. Each is unique because each is a centre 'for itself', and this is revealed through active thought and feeling. This separate uniqueness is a 'direct experience', a 'primary conviction'.[2] Each is a 'unity for itself', a subject. The identity of content in different selves still leaves the separate 'existence' of each self unaffected. The self is a 'concrete existence'. Apparently 'existence' is not considered an identical quality in different selves. It would seem, however, the one element common to all selves; and the distinctive significance of the existence of a self as apart from its content would seem to vanish when he maintains that both the 'existence' and the 'nature' (content) of the self are 'derived'.[3] What he seeks to maintain is no more than that each self is a distinctive focus or organ of the universe, and the differences between selves are directly real for them and, by assumption, real for the Absolute as well. How they can be real both for themselves and for the Absolute, or whether they are 'real' in the same sense, he does not explain. In fact he expressly says we cannot understand the relation between the two.[4] The immediate experience of each self is excluded from that of any other finite centre. But there is no such exclusion between the self and God. It is incomprehensible how this is so, though he adds we 'know' that in whatever sense our thoughts and actions form part of a divine experience 'it is a sense which does not prevent them from being ours'. 'No speculative difficulties could overcome this primary certainty'.[5]

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 389 note: though he speaks of selves 'as separate and exclusive focalizations of a common universe', p. 264.

[2] Ibid., pp. 288, 289.

[3] Ibid., p. 259. [4] Ibid., pp. 292, 391. [5] Ibid., p. 391.

It will be seen that the course of his thought leads him to a reaffirmation of the fundamental certainties of individual experience from which he starts; and face to face with the problem of how to relate the self to God and God to the self he either falls back on analogy[1] or abandons the problem as incomprehensible. The claims of the religious and moral consciousness take priority of speculative considerations or even of logical exactitude, if these lead to conclusions which undermine the values on which those claims rest.[2] This is certainly a justifiable position to adopt, if immediate primary convictions derived from these forms of experience are accepted as finally decisive. But in effect such a procedure dispenses in advance with a philosophical system in the usual sense of the term, and leaves fundamental problems unsolved.

A question of the first importance for his argument still remains for consideration. The individual and the ultimate values which are taken to be paramount for human life form his starting-point. Is the individual himself an ultimate or a derived reality? The answer is partly supplied in the volume on the *Idea of God*, partly in his lectures on the *Idea of Immortality*. The problem is to some extent bound up with the reality of the time-process.[3] On this his view is not quite clear. On the one hand he maintains that time is an ultimate element of an Absolute Experience,[4] for process, with which the reality of time is inseparably connected, must be real in the Absolute. On the other hand he maintains that time is not ultimately real,[5] and is 'somehow transcended in the ultimate experience'; though it is only in analogies and metaphors borrowed from our time-experience that we can form any intelligible conception of the eternal.[6] If, however, time is not ultimately real it is difficult to see how the individual can be so; yet it is only

[1] *Idea of God*, pp. 294, 365.
[2] Ibid., pp. 291, 337.
[3] *Idea of Immortality*, p. 205.
[4] *Idea of God*, pp. 358, 361, 369.
[5] Ibid., pp. 364, 366.
[6] Ibid., pp. 343, 344.

for and in self-conscious beings that the Absolute takes on the lineaments of God.[1]

The individual, he says, is not necessarily immortal.[2] Nor is immortality a central tenet either for philosophy or religion.[3] The question is: what is the self which claims immortality and in what sense is it claimed as necessary for the conduct of life?[4] The self which claims immortality is the 'coherent mind and character which is the result of the discipline of time', a coherent self hood of which the individual is aware and which he feels instinctively to have a reality other than mere bodily existence.[5] The eternity of such a self, 'eternal life', is an experience realized by passing beyond morality to religion; an all-satisfying personal experience of the love of God enjoyed here and now; an experience attained in the apprehension of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness; one in which 'each moment has its own eternity'. But he who has tasted eternal life in this sense is not wont to be troubled about his personal survival.[6] The explicit consciousness of self may be said to disappear in religion in the absorbing consciousness of its object.[7] Yet he maintains this does *not* mean the disappearance of the personality: to represent this as the goal of the creative process would be 'little less than contradictory'.[8] These statements do not seem consistent and their convincingness is not increased by saying that the kind of reality which belongs to the self as we know it in the present life is such that 'the hypothesis of its survival' is one which 'may reasonably be entertained'.[9] The value and destiny of the individual must be based on our conception of the perfection of God in his nature as Love. We have no other standard of the divine than the best we can think or feel,[10] and God or perfect personality is therefore taken to be pre-eminently Love. Hence he regards individual immortality and the life of such a Per-

[1] *Idea of God*, p. 295.
[2] Ibid., pp. 44, 45, 317.
[3] *Idea of Immortality*, pp. 181, 185–6.
[4] Ibid., p. 57.
[5] Ibid., pp. 104–5.
[6] Ibid., p. 147.
[7] Ibid., p. 160.
[8] Ibid., pp. 163, 168.
[9] Ibid., p. 171.
[10] Ibid., pp. 186, 189.

sonality as reciprocally related. The value of the finite world to God 'must lie above all else in the spirits to whom He has given the capacity to make themselves in his own image'. The spirits themselves must be values to God,[1] and therefore immortal in the sense of sharing an eternal life. The desire for continuance is irrelevant to immortality and we cannot build on it. 'The belief in immortality is not based by the religious man on any personal claim for himself or even for others';[2] it seems rather an inference from the character of God. Thus we find Pringle-Pattison alternating between the opposite positions (*a*) of fashioning the Divine Perfection in terms of human life, in which case the ultimate reality of the individual must be assumed; and (*b*) of determining the claims of the individual in terms of the Divine Perfection, in which case the ultimate reality of the individual must be derivative and a matter of 'belief' or 'faith' or a 'hypothesis'. These two positions are not reconciled in the argument.

It is almost inevitable that he should introduce a further limitation of his conception of immortality. He has connected it with the experience of eternal life or eternal values. This is a lofty principle, but of limited application; for only those realizing these values can share in immortality. Hence, he says,[3] we cannot 'think of personal immortality as an inherent possession of every human soul'. Personality has to be won before the individual can claim conservation. 'Why should the universe be permanently burdened by the continued existence of those who made no use of life while they had it?' 'Those who have not known immortal longings are not wronged if that is not granted which they have never sought'.[4] 'Without the unity implied in some continuous purpose what prospect can there be of eternal life, or what meaning can it have?' And the unity can be easily lost: 'it is but the relaxation of central control and a process of dissociation at once begins'. So that all men are not

[1] *Idea of Immortality*, p. 190.
[2] Ibid., p. 193.
[3] Ibid., pp. 195 ff.
[4] Ibid., p. 203.

immortal. He had said that immortality belonged to the sphere of religion alone. But he affirms that the credentials needed for eternal citizenship are essentially moral,[1] and from this point of view we cannot define precisely the lower limits of qualification for such citizenship: and in any case it may be that no single soul 'shall be cast as rubbish to the void when God hath made the pile complete'.[2] He had stated that truth is an eternal value: but now he maintains 'intelligence', whose aim is the attainment of truth, 'carries with it no promise of a further life'.[3] Indeed, 'man if we look at him as entirely absorbed in his finite activities is no fit subject for immortality: there is no more call to raise the question in his case than in the case of other animals'. But though intelligence does not, reason does. The distinction is not clearly drawn; and in any case is indefensible since 'intelligence' and 'reason' in any sense of these terms are essentially continuous parts of the same kind of activity.

It seems impossible, from the above statements, to obtain a clearly consistent and unambiguous answer to the central question—whether the human individual is ultimately real as an individual person. The statement that those only are immortal who share eternal life is merely a truism and does not touch the main question. And a doubt is cast on his whole position by the strange admissions 'our most peremptory judgements may often be the most fallacious', and the 'destiny of a self-conscious spirit is committed to itself and depends upon a personal choice'.[4]

Consistency of argument apart, however, it will be evident that in the philosophical work of Pringle-Pattison we have a mind deeply conscious of the difficulties of the problem of human existence, and acutely alive to the fundamental importance of moral and religious experience both from the practical point of view and as regulating factors in the life of reason whether in science or philosophy.

[1] *Idea of Immortality*, pp. 198, 204.
[2] Ibid., p. 201.
[3] Ibid., p. 198.
[4] Ibid., p. 203.

His intellectual candour may have been greater than his belief in philosophical system: but it certainly adds to the value of his thinking as a critic, as it has been in large measure the source of his remarkable influence on his pupils and on the public acquainted with him only through his writings. There are some things doubtless more important than the achievement of a logically symmetrical system of thought, and one of them is the frank, dispassionate love of the truth in all its aspects and of the facts of life open to and shared by the natural understanding. To this his mind was instinctively loyal, and those who treasure them most will be most grateful to him for his high-souled devotion to the best that can be found in the pursuit of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness—the trinity of values to which his life was dedicated.

J. B. Baillie.