
The alchemy of thought

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THOUGHT

BY

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PREFACE

THE following essays deal with the belief that logic system is only one among countless forms in the expression of the universe. I have endeavoured to do justice to the claims of system; at the same time I have resisted these claims in so far as they threaten to usurp the whole field of human experience.

To say that the universe is a Rational Whole appears to me true. But to treat this as an adequate account of Reality appears to me false. I am equally averse to regarding the rationality of the universe as the fundamental or all-inclusive or even the dominant form of its self-expression.

What does form a Rational Whole and is adequately described by this term is the movement of thought throughout the ages—in a word, the History of Philosophy. To equate this movement with the universe to which it refers, to make the History of Philosophy into a History of Reality, appears to me an error.

We are constantly tempted to make this equation and constantly prevented from seeing its falsity, by the habit of treating speculative thought as a form of knowledge into which all experience must manage to fit itself. An important step towards liberation from this habit was taken by Spinoza, who treated Thought as one among the infinite and eternal forms of the

benefits of this liberty, which relieve the mind from a very great burden, were largely sacrificed in the subsequent developments of Spinoza's doctrine.

In much that follows I have repeated what is a common doctrine among Pluralists. But Pluralism has lost much of the strength it would otherwise have by denying, or seeming to deny, that the universe does express itself as a Rational Whole. This denial, however, is by no means involved in the affirmation that Reality expresses itself in many ways other than those which fit into the forms of conceptual thought. It is certainly true, as the Pluralists contend, that if the universe were *nothing but* a Rational Whole—rational in its strict sense—the richness and variety of life would vanish and freedom would be impossible. On the other hand, if the universe were not rational and were incapable of expressing itself in that form, if, that is, Reality were forbidden by its inner constitution from taking that one among all the forms of possible self-expression—it is equally plain that there would be no place for beings constituted as we are.

It will be said, no doubt, that this last statement is itself an appeal to rationality. This rejoinder, common as it has now become, merely serves to remind us once more of the saying that logic is a "dodge." James has pointed out, the word "rational" is a dimensional term, and the constant effort of rationalists to confute all critics out of their own mouths and to succeed only because rationalists expand the meaning of the term "rational" with every step in the process of their opponents' argument, and thus make it

the changing purpose of their own. The rule "thought cannot go behind its own principles" of great importance, so long as we are dealing with experience exclusively as a Problem-to-be-solved, and have not hesitated to make full use of it in the on "Self-defeating Theories" and elsewhere. But the rule is strained into meaning that experience be taken as a Problem-to-be-solved, and as that it appears to me unfair and inadmissible; in neither more nor less than a logical "dodge." Once we have fallen into this trap there is, of course, no escape; all issues are foreclosed. If it be said the very process by which we avoid the trap is a rational process, and only a more roundabout way of entering the toils, I must again protest against the fast-and-loose usage of the term "rational"; for the "reason" which avoids the trap is by no means the same "reason" which laid it in the first instance.

I confess it is only after some hesitation that I venture to include in this volume the allegorical piece which I have called "Devil's Island and the Island of Omniscience." If any trained student of philosophy should read my book I trust he will not take offence at this somewhat unusual method of exposition. My object in that piece is to express the dissatisfaction and rebelliousness which every attempt to fix experience into the form of a logical system provokes in the human personality. I found myself quite unable to effect my purpose by the method of direct exposition. That I have succeeded by indirection I am far from certain, but I shall be well content if the piece calls attention to certain by-products of philosophical teaching which are too little regarded.

Philosopher," "The Alchemy of Thought," "Moral Supremacy of Christendom," "Religion," appeared in substance in *The Hibbert Journal*. the first two I have introduced some modifications due to changes, or, as one always ventures to hope, the growth of thought.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Henry and to the Rev. Charles B. Upton for their help in revising the proofs. The criticisms of Professor have been all the more valuable because of his readiness to dissent from some of my main positions. My gratitude to Mr Upton is deepened by the circumstance that I owe to him my first interest in philosophical studies. I should be proud to think that you may recognise in these pages some trace of his influence, as well as of that of his master, who was also my own teacher, James Martineau.

L. P. JACKSON

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