DISCUSSION AND REPORTS.

THE METAPHYSICAL METHOD IN ETHICS.¹

In his preface Mr. D'Arcy defines his essential point of view and aim. It is to give *briefly* 'an account as well of the metaphysical basis as of the ethical superstructure' of conduct. Referring to Mr. Muirhead's *Elements*, Mr. Mackenzie's *Manual*, and my own *Outlines of Ethics*, he says of them that their ethical contents is much the same as that of his own work, 'but all three build without a foundation.' This foundation he takes to be Green's method and main results as reached in his *Prolegomena to Ethics*,² and he proposes to do in small space what Green did in a more extended way.

It should also be noted that Mr. D'Arcy declares his inability "to accept in its entirety the Hegelian³ conception of the spiritual principle as presented" by Green. And as matter of fact, Mr. D'Arcy accepts the doctrine of Green only up to a certain point, and then supplements it by quite other considerations, derived, as a rule, from the real or supposed needs of man's religious consciousness, and sometimes from 'common sense.'

It is this effort, then, of Mr. D'Arcy to give the metaphysical

¹ *A short Study of Ethics*. D'Arcy. London and New York, Macmillan & Co., 1895-6.

² As silence is supposed to give consent, it may not be impertinent for me to say that while I have always recognized my own great indebtedness to Green, yet his metaphysical method seems to me far from affording any adequate basis for ethical doctrine; on the contrary, all the serious weaknesses in Green's specifically ethical discussions seem to me to flow from his metaphysical assumptions.

³ Mr. D'Arcy seems to accept *in toto*, as does Professor James Seth, Professor Andrew Seth's identification of Green's doctrine with Hegel's. I never have been able to see any basis for this identification. Hegel protests continuously and consistently against the Kanto-Fichtean ethics, and Green's standpoint is essentially the latter. The logic of the identification of Hegel and Green seems to be: Each is 'unsound' as to the relation of the human and divine self, and, therefore, both teach the same doctrine.

foundations of ethical theory, which, affording the distinctive feature of his book, calls for especial attention.

The primary condition of all experience is the relation of the subject and object. The subject eludes our grasp, when approached by itself. The not-self or object is divided into an inner and an outer region, the former including sensations, emotions, thoughts, etc.; the latter contains all the things we know in the world around us. The inner experiences, of course, presuppose the thinking subject. The following course of reasoning shows that the outer region is also dependent. Every *thing* is constituted by relations. The world of things in space and time is simply a vast complex of relations. But it is 'of the very nature of a relation to have no existence, no meaning, except for a thinker.' A relation is a "unifying of the manifold, and is, therefore, an impossibility apart from a subject, which can pass from one member of the relation to the other, and combine both in a single apprehension." Hence "things exist only so far as they are due to the synthetic activity of the knowing subject." Moreover, since the thing is always constituted by relations to everything else in the universe, it is really a 'cosmic object,' so that the self is the unifying principle in the whole cosmos of experience.

The self is thus a unifying principle, and it is also the ultimate principle of unity. It is not simply the correlative of object, for it can make itself its own object, being self-conscious. It is a real unit, not a logical principle of a unity.

So far the language and the method remind us of Green, although Green, I think, would hesitate at this extraordinary identification of the self with subject apart from object, and at the ruling out from the self of all sensations, emotions and thoughts. As the method is nominally derived from the Kantian, it is perhaps worth while to note that Kant urged not only the necessity of the synthetic activity of the subject, but equally urged that the subject could be conscious of itself and of its unity only through its synthetic activity upon the manifold. But Mr. D'Arcy knows a better way than that. This theory might lead to the doctrine of the correlativity of the subject and the cosmos of experience—which appears to be an objectionable doctrine, leading to Pantheism—and consequently having affirmed the synthetic activity of the self in the constitution of the objective world, Mr. D'Arcy affirms that since it is self-conscious, it can also abstract itself wholly from the world which it constitutes. As Mr. D'Arcy simply affirms this as given in the fact of self-consciousness, wholly apart from any examination of the na-

ture or method of self-consciousness, I can only affirm from my standpoint that this way of giving 'foundations' for ethics seems to require more foundations for itself than it succeeds in supplying.

Were the doctrine of the correlativity of subject and world affirmed, the self would obviously secure a certain universality; it would not be a merely particular self, if its essential being were found in the constituting of an objective world. But since Mr. D'Arcy holds that the subject exists in essential distinction from this constitutive work, and engages in it as it were only as by play, or as supererogation, the problem comes up: What sort of existence does the constituted world have? Is the universe a private possession of my own? Are we not committed to the doctrine of subjective idealism? Mr. D'Arcy implies, this would be the result if it were intended "to identify the cosmos of the individual experience with Nature. Nature must be accepted as a great fact, a mighty universe." Having thus secured from the simple 'common sense' affirmation (see p. 18) a world independent of the subject's consciousness, Mr. D'Arcy has also obtained a basis for the affirmation of an eternal self, free from all the pantheistic leanings of Green's doctrine. Since *our* world of natural things depends upon *our* synthetic activity, then surely this big world of Nature depends upon *its* constituting spirit—God.

I am forced to stop once more in my exposition to raise the question: What founds these foundations? Upon Green's doctrine—no matter what objections may be brought upon other grounds—there is one self and universe. There is no question of subjective idealism, because the subject is defined by reference to the permanent and objective work of constituting a universe; the particular individual knowing is a process of reproducing the eternal constitutive action. But this seems to Mr. D'Arcy pantheistic, and for reasons which he has not explained to the reader (save as indicated in deference to the opinions of Professor Seth and Mr. Balfour) pantheistic implications are to be avoided at all hazards, including those of logic. Hence this sudden break into a cosmos of my experience, and another bigger cosmos, with two spirits, the individual for my cosmos, God for the big one. Two questions can hardly be kept back. If we accept, because we cannot help believing it, the existence of this larger cosmos, it must also be remarked that common sense equally denies the dependence of *our* cosmos upon our subjective activity. Common sense is not particularly alarmed about the existence of the sun, moon and stars in the big cosmos, but objects with great vigor to

making the sun, moon and stars which are individually known dependent upon our individual thinking power. I doubt very much if Mr. D'Arcy can satisfy the realist by handing over to him a world, however big, which is unknown, while allowing the subjective idealist complete proprietary rights in the cosmos of individual experience.

But it may be said this is quite unfair to Mr. D'Arcy. Does he not say that the "cosmos of experience must be recognized as identical with a part of the great cosmos of Nature?" This brings me to my second question: Why then is not the individual self-identical with God so far as the identity of worlds goes? How, indeed, do we know there is a bigger unknown world, save as a projection, an extension, out of our present experience? Is it our 'own' self,¹ or is it the absolute spirit which really constitutes our cosmos? If the former, how shall we account for its coincidence with the cosmos of the absolute subject, and for the continuity between the two, as the individual cosmos extends itself? How shall we account for this remarkable capacity on the part of a uniquely individual self to construct a world having its own objectivity and relative permanence? But if the latter, then the whole theory of the ultimate and irreducible distinction of the two selves breaks down.

This same method, viz: the following of the Kantian analysis of knowledge up to a certain point and then the contradiction of its logical conclusion in the interests of religion and common sense—appears in the discussion of volition and of the common good. Will is treated as self-determination, and as indeed, only the more explicit recognition of the constitutive process found in all knowledge. "Every act of self-determination, every volition, is a determination, not simply of one thing, but of the whole cosmos of experience. Self-determination must be world-determination." This principle of determination recognized from the standpoint of the whole is freedom; while necessity is the principle of the articulation of the parts. They are thus correlative and imply each other, instead of being contradictory. That is to say, each fact or event taken as particular is necessitated; but that it is determined at all and determined in relation to other facts is due to an act of self-determination on the part of the subject. (P. 29; pp. 39 and 49 also.)

¹ Nothing could exceed Mr. D'Arcy's conviction of the 'ultimateness' of the individual self. "Self is for every man unique and ultimate. The identification of the self in every man with God involves the identification of all human selves. But since each self is for itself unique and ultimate, this identification amounts to a denial of the essential nature of selfhood." P. 46.

Why the self and the world should not be correlatives, while self-determination and world-determination, freedom and necessity, are correlatives, Mr. D'Arcy does not explain. It is difficult to see why one principle should hold for thought and another for volition; or why, if one is objected to on the ground of pantheistic tendencies, the other is not equally 'dangerous.' The pressure to make self-determination and world-determination correlatives is obvious. Without this correlative, self-determination would occur in a purely transcendental, and, so far as we are concerned, empty region; will would have nothing to say or to do with the details of conduct. But the demand for correlativity on the side of knowledge is certainly none the less real altho' not quite as obvious. What the self-consciousness is which is found neither in consciousness of objects, nor yet in sensations, thoughts or emotions, Mr. D'Arcy does not explain, and we have only his word for it that it is not formal and empty.

The contradiction is still more glaring when we deal with the question of the End or Good. Mr. D'Arcy having settled that the subject is purely individual—for it must not get too closely implicated with the divine self for fear of pantheism—is quite consistent in holding that the end of self is egoistic. "Will is by nature egoistic. . . . No other individual can stand on a level with the self. . . . Reason is essentially anti-social. . . . Self, unless mastered by some superior principle, must wage unceasing war against all who would pretend to equal authority." (Pp. 58, 59; the same doctrine also on p. 124 and p. 147.) Hence every moral system independent of religious ideas breaks down. It cannot explain why a man should love his neighbor as himself; it cannot justify the idea of a common good.¹ On the same line of thought, Mr. D'Arcy questions whether society is really an organic whole, since the individual is so very individual, and refers to it as an 'amorphous mass of tissue' (p. 73).²

¹ Mr. D'Arcy seems a little hard on the individual self. In the first place, it must be purely individual and unique, since otherwise it will get mixed up in a most pantheistic fashion with God and other selves. On religious grounds, in other words, it is quite shut up in itself. Then the interests of religion being duly secured, the self is gravely rebuked for its self-centred and self-seeking nature, and assured to be greatly in need of the assistance of religion to give it an end common with that of others. It is a little hard, I repeat, to refuse and to demand at the same time participation with other selves to the individual self, and both in the name of religion.

² Mr. D'Arcy nevertheless holds that there is no other idea save that of organic unity, which can be applied to society, and yet that the truth is not fully represented in that idea (p. 74).

But on the other side, religion is going to help out the egoistic nature of the self. We cannot stop short, after all, with the unity of the self. In this case "God himself would be simply one unit in a multitude and isolated from his creatures. But it is impossible to end in a disconnected multitude." The mind is forced to suppose some principle of unity deeper than the unity of self-consciousness. There is in God a transcendent principle by which he forms the ultimate bond of union among the multitude of persons. The fact of the union of spirits must be assumed as the ultimate basis of all coherence, speculative and practical. (Pp. 47-8.) Hence the common good for all persons. "All persons are naturally exclusive (*i. e.*, they limit one another), yet are they one in God. Hence the good for the whole is the good for every separate member. The true good for every man is a common good and an absolute good." (P. 102, see also p. 124.) Man and God have a common end. The end of conduct is identified with the end of the universe (p. 126).

We have precisely the contradiction here between the isolated, egoistic end of the self, and the common end of the self through its transcendental union with others in God that we met before as regards the constitutive action of self in *our* cosmos, and of God in *the* cosmos, except that here it is most explicitly recognized that We must not exclude the working of the divine end from the constitution of the human end. Mr. D'Arcy might, indeed, attempt to bridge the gulf by holding that the natural self is wholly given to evil; and that only by supernatural grace, initiated wholly from without, does the natural self come to such social ends; but there are no traces of any such doctrine in him. He seems to hold that in the moral life as such there is the immanence of the common end through the union of all selves in God. Were it not that the contradiction obviously escaped Mr. D'Arcy himself, I should think it wholly unnecessary to point it out. As it is, I must be pardoned for saying that if there is one self, named the divine self, in which all selves are united in a common end which is also the goal of the evolution of the universe, then the doctrine regarding the isolated, exclusive character of each individual self must be radically modified. It certainly is not legitimate to insist on the purely individual character of the self from one point of view; and then, when different considerations are in view, insist upon the community of selves. That the two ends of the contradiction are both set up in the name of religion does not make it any the less a contradiction; although it may make one suspicious of the particular type of religion represented.

Thus far the tendency of our examination has been to make us question whether Mr. D'Arcy's metaphysical foundations do not of themselves require more grounding than any ordinary ethical theory is likely to call for. I shall take space for just one application of his metaphysical to his ethical doctrine, seen in the question of the end, with a view to determining whether the ethical superstructure stands any the more firmly for the foundation put under it.

The ultimate end is the idea of a social universe in which every person's capabilities shall receive their full realization, and in which every person's realization shall contribute to every other person's realization. It is impossible, however, to give any further definition of the ultimate end, because it is impossible to know what are the possibilities of selfhood (pp. 104-5). Whence it is a fair inference that the end though not formal in itself is purely formal for us. "It must be granted at once that the Ideal End, or Ultimate Good, is relative to a set of circumstances at present non-existent¹ (p. 107)."

Mr. D'Arcy then goes on to deal with the proximate end, this ultimate end being obviously useless for the immediate guidance of conduct. 'Every collocation of circumstances has its best.' 'The good is perfectly individualized.' 'It is no rigid standard.' 'Its unit is the concrete act.' (Pp. 108, 112 *Passim*.) In other words, the real end is always the content of some special act, performed with its own space and time considerations involved in it. This strikes me personally as excellent ethical doctrine; but what demand is there then for the ultimate goal furnished by metaphysics? How does that give foundation in any sense for the concrete ideals with which man is actually concerned? Mr. D'Arcy gives two answers, or two perhaps reducible to one: the thought of the far away goal helps us to read the special instance; and we judge by the *tendency* of the proximate to realize the ultimate end.

As to the first answer, it is of great advantage to the individual to be aware of what he is really about in a special case, and any principle, however formal and abstract, which aids him in doing this is justified thereby. But it is not the *remote* goal, but simply a larger view of the *present*, which thus helps one. It is the reference of an act to the present society which it maintains or furthers that helps one

¹ To which Mr. D'Arcy adds, "But this is a defect attaching to every ideal"—yes, to every ideal metaphysically established, but to *no* ideal psychologically, or socially, determined, because in the latter case the ideal always is a certain set of present circumstances viewed in certain new relations and therefore no more requiring reference to some ultimate goal of the universe as a whole than does a scientific discovery or an industrial invention.

see its true content; not its reference to a society distant an infinite length of time. So far is the conception of a perfectly realized community at the extreme goal of progress from helping us read the present that, on the contrary, we can only read, or put any meaning into, that conception by reference to the present. As to the other answer, that the present may be conceived as means, it simply removes all value from the present. If the present exists simply as one stage in bringing about an infinitely remote goal, it presents no imperative claims and affords no ends. Such a doctrine simply denies the doctrine that every collocation of circumstances has its *own* best. It makes rainbow chasing the essence of the doctrine of moral ideas. For my own part, I believe that an ethical doctrine with less 'foundations' under it is likely to go farther and last longer.

In discussing Mr. D'Arcy's book from this one standpoint of the relation of his metaphysical to his ethical theory, great injustice would be done Mr. D'Arcy if I failed to recognize his own acuteness, subtlety and frequent suggestiveness. No one can read the book without stimulation. Mr. D'Arcy's personal attitude and method as distinct from that of his philosophic position, is straightforward and ingenuous. But the use of religious presuppositions to direct philosophic doctrine, first this way, then that, seems to me essentially disingenuous. Let us either explicitly hold that philosophy has no distinct right to be, but is always a form of theological apologetics; or let us give it the same intellectual freedom that we now yield to mathematics and mechanics. Let us not, even unconsciously, give philosophy the appearance, without the substance, of an independent position. More specifically, the results of Mr. D'Arcy's investigations seem to me to give at least a negative support to the hypothesis that what ethical theory now needs is an adequate psychological and social method, not metaphysical one.

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INVESTIGATION OF CUTANEOUS SENSIBILITY.

In spite of the recent increase of our knowledge of that most general of our senses—cutaneous sensibility—the experiments hitherto made leave one difficulty only partially solved. This difficulty is, in the first instance, of a technical nature, but it occasions secondary