

INSTITUTE NOTES

It is appropriate in the first number of the Journal to say a few words about the genesis of the British Institute of Philosophical Studies.

About three years ago Mr. Hooper advocated the formation of a school of philosophical studies, but discussions of the idea were confined to academic circles. Then early in 1924 he approached one who has been described as a philosophic industrialist, to whom he explained his proposal and who, having taken some weeks to consider the matter, replied: "I believe that if the study of philosophy were more generally pursued, much good would follow, and the idea of an organization with the object of inducing the plain man to think philosophically has often occurred to me. But there are difficulties: (a) the philosophers are not in touch with the people who are most in need of a philosophical outlook; (b) the so-called practical man is shy of philosophy because he does not understand how philosophy can be of service to him in his work; (c) it will require a great effort to bring the two sides together and large finance to launch the scheme. The difficulties, however, are not insuperable. I believe that there are many men and women who devote their lives to making money, and to striving for position, who, when successful in the attainment of their object, ask themselves: Is it worth it? Is there nothing better, higher, and nobler to live for? The first step to be taken is for academic men and women to show a willingness to apply philosophic thought to practical everyday problems; and the next step is to induce specialists and industrialists to respond to this gesture by the philosophers. If both sides agree to make a combined effort towards better coalescence of theory and practice, I think the necessary finance for the initiation of the scheme can be arranged."

Thereupon Mr. Hooper brought together a nucleus of savants who expressed their sympathy with the proposal, and a few statesmen—including the Premier and four past Prime Ministers—many professional men and captains of industry gave their adhesion. Thus an influential Council of over a hundred members was formed. The correspondence was voluminous, and the following extracts from letters received may be of interest as indicating the diversity of views and the nature of the obstacles that had to be overcome in the initial stage.

FROM LEADERS OF THOUGHT, STATESMEN, PROFESSORS, EDUCATIONISTS, ETC.

I think your draft relative to popular philosophical teaching admirable. The real difficulty will be to secure a common basis for such teaching. The leaders in philosophical thought are riven to-day by differences as to fundamental principles.

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No message has delighted me so much as yours for a very long time. I believe such a school would be likely to prove a great success.

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The Institute seems to me to be most desirable and may help to get philosophical teachers (or some of them) back into channels which have more touch with life than some of the paths which they are exploring.

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I concur without reservation in the purposes you mean to pursue in the British Institute of Philosophical Studies, and I am as anxious as anybody to study the character of the body politic and to ensure such conditions as will enable us to work for better things all round.

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Anything calculated to extend the influence of philosophy has my sympathy; but I am sceptical as to whether you will be able to circumvent the mystery-mongers and pious frauds who have deliberately made it unintelligible.

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I think the idea is an excellent one. I hope that it would seek to attract the specialists rather than the layman, and that where it sought to interest the general public it would be by lectures explaining (a) recent progress in special departments of philosophy; (b) the relation between philosophy and contemporary social problems.

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Your Committee certainly includes a great many very distinguished names, and an immense number of very diverse opinions are represented.

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My doubt is whether the idea, valuable as it is, can be carried into effect. I will help in any way that is possible to me.

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I am wholly in sympathy. How is the school to be financed?

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There is an immense scope for the work of making the practical world realize the place and need for philosophy in life (perhaps never so great as at the present time) and providing greater opportunities for learning what philosophy means.

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If you are forming a library I will send books.

FROM PROFESSIONAL MEN AND WOMEN, SPECIALISTS, LAWYERS, BANKERS, ETC.

Whilst I am naturally inclined to favour generally the ideals set out in your memorandum, I am afraid I am a little doubtful as to the practicability of raising the necessary funds and of launching such an enterprise at the present time.

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I am sorry to say that I find philosophical discussions quite beyond my range.

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The mere fact that you have been able to get such a list together shows that your proposals will have wide academic support.

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I have not sufficient knowledge, nor have I sufficient interest in a school of philosophical studies to join.

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While approving generally of your objects, I am quite clear that the matter is not sufficiently within the scope of my own work to enable me to take any active part.

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I am afraid that the subject is so entirely outside the range of my knowledge and experience that I should feel it quite inappropriate to figure in such an intellectual company.

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It is a movement with which I have much sympathy, as I am convinced that the way to help us all to act rightly is to help us to think rightly.

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My impression is that the line of success will be that indicated by the word "synoptic." People wish a synthesis—now more than ever.

FROM MEN OF ACTION, ENTREPRENEURS, INDUSTRIALISTS, MERCHANTS, ETC.

Alas! my humdrum occupations of life preclude my being one of the sponsors of the Institute.

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I should be very pleased to take part in your scheme; certainly anything that will help to disperse the cloud which is over this country I should only be too glad to help in.

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It is not any dislike to philosophical study, which is a glorious thing for those who have time. Just at present I find it quite impossible to be philosophical.

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The underlying principles quite appeal to me.

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I feel that with my present activities I would not be able to afford any time to take an interest in the matter.

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The first formal meeting was held by the courtesy of Sir William Beveridge, the Director, at the London School of Economics, on November 10, 1924, at which an Organizing Committee was appointed.

The Institute was incorporated "as a Company not for profit but limited by guarantee" on April 6, 1925, and the first meeting of the General Council was held by the courtesy of the Master Treasurer of the Middle Temple in the Parliament Chamber of the Middle Temple Hall. There were present: Professor Muirhead, in the Chair; Mr. L. B. Atkinson, Dr. Ginsberg, Mr. E. Garcke, Professor Jevons, Sir Lynden Macassey, The Rt. Hon. H. B. Macmillan, Professor J. S. Mackenzie, Mr. H. Sturt, Miss May Sinclair, Miss L. S. Stebbing, Professor C. Spearman, Dr. F. C. S. Schiller, Dr. F. W. Thomas, Professor D'Arcy Thompson, and Mr. Hooper. At this meeting it was announced that the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Balfour, K.G., O.M., F.R.S., had consented to be President of the Institute; Professor Hobhouse was appointed Chairman of the Council; and the Master of Balliol was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Council. An Executive Committee was appointed with Sir Lynden Macassey, K.C., M.A., D.Sc., as Chairman, Mr. E. Garcke as Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Sydney Morse as Hon. Solicitor, and Mr. Hooper Director of Studies and Secretary to the Council. The following letter from Lord Balfour, the President of the Institute, was read:—

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“ I am exceedingly sorry that I cannot be present at the first meeting of the British Institute of Philosophical Studies which is to take place in April, but at that time, if all goes well, I shall be in Palestine, and shall therefore be unable to take any part in our preliminary proceedings. I have always taken the deepest interest in the studies which it is the business of the Institute to encourage, and though I can hardly hope to take an active part in its transactions, it has my most earnest wishes for its success.”

A letter from Professor Hobhouse was also read, in which he expressed his disappointment at not being able to be present owing to an accident, and his views as to the aims and policy of the Institute, which were incorporated in the Statement of Objects issued by the Council. He concluded his letter by saying :—

“ The more recent developments in Science have greatly accentuated the need for philosophical treatment of scientific method, and it is to be hoped that the Institute will recognize from the outset the enlarged opportunity which this situation gives for the future and more concrete treatment of questions of the principles and methods of thought which in the past have suffered from excessive abstraction.”

During the eight months which have elapsed since the incorporation of the Institute upwards of 1,300 members have been enrolled. A list of the members is in course of publication. Those who are desirous of becoming members of the Institute are invited to apply for forms of application to the Director, 88 Kingsway, London, W.C. 2. The subscription is 10s. for the period ending April 1, 1926, and £1 1s. per annum thereafter.

The courses of lectures for the Session 1925-26 are as follows :—

- Problems of Philosophy*, by the Hon. Bertrand Russell, F.R.S.
- Present Tendencies in Political Theory*, by Mr. Harold J. Laski, M.A.
- Psychology*, by Professor T. H. Pear, M.A., B.Sc.
- Science and Philosophy, The Conception of Matter*, by Professor Leonard J. Russell, M.A., D.Ph.
- Life and Mind*, by Professor James Johnstone, D.Sc.
- The Philosophy of Religion*, by the Dean of St. Paul's.
- Topics in Æsthetics*, by Professor Lascelles Abercrombie, M.A.

About two hundred students have entered for the first term's lectures.

The evening meetings arranged for the Session are as follows. Subjects of Discussion :—

- The Idea of Responsibility, Legal and Medical*, Openers, Sir Travers Humphreys and Dr. William Brown, M.A., D.Sc.
- Do We Need a Philosophy of Law in England?* Opener, The Rt. Hon. Sir Frederick Pollock, K.C.
- The Theory of Sovereignty and the League of Nations*, Opener, A. D. Lindsay, C.B.E., M.A. (Master of Balliol).
- The Problem of Colour in Relation to the Idea of Equality*, Openers, The Rt. Hon. Sir Frederick Lugard, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O., The Hon. H. A. Wyndham, and Morris Ginsberg, M.A., D.Litt.

Lecture : *Artistic and Cosmic Creation*, by Professor S. Alexander, M.A., LL.D., D.Litt.

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Members of the Institute have the privilege of attending all lecture courses at half-fees, and the monthly meetings of the members for discussion of various philosophical questions of general interest.

The nucleus of a library has been formed, and the Executive Committee have under consideration its enlargement.

Preparations have been made for the issue of a quarterly Journal by the Institute. It will be issued free of charge to all members of the Institute.

The next important matters receiving the attention of the Executive are the provision of a permanent home for the Institute, where lectures can be given, a Library collected, and where members can meet for discussion.

The Executive have also under consideration the formation of local centres and other services to be rendered by the Institute to members residing too far away to be able to attend meetings in London.

For all these purposes funds are necessary, and although the Institute has been fortunate in obtaining some generous donations and substantial support from the membership, which have enabled the Institute to be formed and its work to be started, the full objects of the Institute cannot be achieved without further financial aid.

With regard to the administrative and clerical work of the Institute, it is believed that probably there are many members who have the desire and are able to spare time to render voluntary service in the promotion of the objects of the Institute. The work of inauguration has been very heavy, and could not have been carried out with the limited funds at the disposal of the Institute if it had not been for voluntary work undertaken by some of the well-wishers of the Institute. But further help would be much appreciated. Any member who is willing to respond to this appeal is invited to communicate with the Director.

E. G.

CORRESPONDENCE

READERS are informed that when a sufficient number of requests for bibliographical information upon a particular philosophical topic have been received, an endeavour will be made to deal with them collectively in the Journal by means of a short critical note.