

## INSTITUTE NOTES

At the Annual Meeting of the Institute, held on July 17th, the President, Viscount Samuel, gave a short address, of which the following, with some omissions and expansions, is a report.

### THE INSTITUTE IN THE WAR PERIOD

During the six years of war the national life has suffered in a multitude of ways: there have been many restrictions, many discomforts, many deficiencies. The physical blackout has been strict; but happily there has been in Britain no blackout of culture. Institutions, for example, such as our own, although their activities have been reduced, have not been obliged to suspend them altogether.

The mental life of the nation has, indeed, suffered a real injury through the excessive restrictions imposed upon the supply of paper for books; continuous protests, from the most authoritative quarters, were of little avail. On the other hand, there was much appreciation of the action of the Government in making available a substantial sum of money, entrusted to the British Academy for distribution, to help to keep alive the Journals and other publications of Learned Societies, which otherwise might have fallen victims to the combined effects of falling memberships and rising costs.

By grants from this source our Journal, *PHILOSOPHY*, has been helped to continue publication. Though reduced in size, and appearing only three times a year instead of quarterly, I think you will agree that in quality it has maintained its standard. For that we have to thank, as always, the discrimination, energy and care of its editor, Mr. Hooper.

The Institute has arranged lectures from time to time, in spite of the great difficulties and damages that often hindered the holding of any kind of meeting in London during the war years. For next autumn and winter a full programme has been prepared. As with similar societies, we have suffered a serious fall in membership—from 1,400 to less than 1,100. It is of vital importance that that loss should be made good, and we must appeal to all our present members to play the part of recruiting officers. Next year will be the twenty-first since the establishment of the Institute, and it is intended to celebrate the anniversary by a special campaign to strengthen its membership, and thereby to enlarge its influence and promote more fully the purposes of the Founders.

During the year British Philosophy has been honoured by the conferment of the Order of Merit upon Professor A. N. Whitehead, by general recognition the most eminent living philosopher in the English-speaking world, and a worthy successor in the ranks of the Order to F. H. Bradley and Samuel Alexander.

We miss from this meeting with much sorrow one of our most regular and devoted attendants—the late Dr. Garvie; and another of our members, Professor Susan Stebbing, for many years active on the Executive Committee. Sir Arthur Eddington and Professor de Burgh are other leading figures whose deaths we record with deep regret.

### A WAR OF IDEAS

In the early months of the war—which now seem so far away—the Institute organized a series of eight Addresses, delivered in the Hall of the Royal Empire

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Society, under the title "The Deeper Causes of the War, and Its Issues." Delivered by some of our best-known members they attracted large audiences; and, published as a book, they may have helped to give guidance to public opinion in realizing how vital were the issues at stake in the colossal struggle that was then opening.

Of the innumerable wars that have blotted with blood the annals of human history, some have been dynastic; others have been merely struggles for enlarged frontiers, colonies or trade. The principle expressed by Voltaire was accepted as the normal view—"Such is the condition of human affairs that to wish for the greatness of one's own country is to wish for the harm of its neighbours." But some have been essentially Wars of Ideas. The Crusades: the religious wars that followed the Reformation; the American and other Wars of Independence, and those that arose from the French Revolution, were clearly in that category. Marxism also might easily have resulted in international, as well as civil conflicts. The Trotsky policy in Russia, and the participation of Italian and German forces, and of an International Communist Brigade, in the Spanish Civil War, might have proved to be precursors. Unquestionably the European and world cataclysm through which we have just passed was in essence a War of Ideas—the outcome of Fascist and Nazi philosophy. We might have said with Burke, "It is with an armed doctrine that we are at war."

If those principles had taken hold in this country, in the British Dominions and in the United States, they would surely have triumphed. That they did not do so is because other, and opposite, ideas were already deeply rooted, through their political and religious histories, among the English-speaking peoples. From the practice of liberty had been evolved the theory of democracy. Knowledge and study of the Bible had implanted an ethical system which inculcated and sustained justice, mercy, goodwill and national righteousness. It left no room for the opposite doctrine that became dominant in Germany, Italy and Japan.

### THE MORAL

The main conflict is over, and the moment has come when we may try to discern the lessons.

The first—plain to the eyes of all men in the fate of the three States which had embraced aggressive militarism—confirms, more strikingly perhaps than any previous experience, the truth of the conclusion which Arnold Toynbee drew from his great survey of all the civilizations in all the ages—"Militarism is suicidal." It has been said that "he who makes many afraid of him has himself many to fear." The conqueror of one day, if he is a conqueror and nothing more, is sure to be the conquered of the next.

Second: the outcome being what it has been, the war gives no reinforcement to pessimism. The very occurrence of two world wars, causing suffering and destruction beyond all measure, together with the many failures of statesmanship during the period between them, might indeed well have justified the gloomiest views on the present position and future prospects of mankind if the war had ended in a victory for Nazism. But since the opposite has happened the conclusion to be drawn is the opposite. The nations forming the vast majority of the human race rose in resistance. They banded themselves together in an alliance, which remained absolutely solid under the heaviest blows and through the gravest perils. They showed that, even in warfare, democracies can beat dictatorships. At the cost of immense sacrifices, their armies, navies and air-forces, established an absolute supremacy. And at the end they have instantly set themselves to create a lasting organization that shall

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endeavour to prevent the recurrence of such catastrophes. These things are indeed a striking vindication of the virtue that resides in the spirit of Man.

Third: the experience has taught us the enormous power of political and ethical ideas. And it has brought home to us the need to be on our guard against wrong ones. We cannot accept the authority of intellectuals at its face value. Herder, Fichte, Treitschke, Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Nietzsche, Spengler, were also among the intellectuals. Hence the responsibility of the merchants of ideas, that is the philosophers, to test and to choose, and to bring to the market-place only the sound ones. So the conclusion, for us here in Great Britain, is that one task that lies ready to our hand, and one duty by no means unimportant, is to maintain the numbers and the strength, the activities and the influence, of our own Institute of Philosophy.

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## OBJECTS OF THE INSTITUTE

The British Institute of Philosophy exists to bring leading exponents of various branches of Philosophy into direct contact with the general public, with the purpose of satisfying a need felt by many men and women in every walk of life for greater clearness and comprehensiveness of vision in human affairs.

With this broad educational purpose in view, the Institute—

- (1) Provides at suitable times in the day and evening courses of lectures by leading exponents in the more important subjects coming within the scope of Philosophy. All branches of Philosophy are represented—Ethics and Social Philosophy, the Philosophy of Law and of the Sciences, of the Fine Arts and of Religion, as well as Logic and Metaphysics and Psychology.

These lectures are free to members.

- (2) Issues a quarterly philosophical journal (free to members).
- (3) Proposes to form a philosophical Library.
- (4) Gives guidance and assistance to individuals in their philosophical reading.
- (5) Encourages research in Philosophy.

There are Local Centres of the Institute at Bangor, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Durham, and Sheffield.

Further information and forms of application for membership may be had on application to the Director of Studies at University Hall, 14 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.

[Suggested]

## FORM OF BEQUEST

I bequeath to THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY the sum of ..... free of duty, to be applied to the purposes of that Institute, and I declare that the receipt of the Honorary Secretary, or other proper officer for the time being of that Institute, shall be sufficient discharge for the same.