



The Religious Conception of the World: An Essay in Constructive Philosophy

Arthur Kenyon Rogers

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This is a most excellent book. It is well and simply written, it abounds in common-sense, and on its every page it reveals the genuine philosopher, none the less genuine because thoroughly imbued with religious sympathies.

The aim of the volume is outlined by the author in his first pages. "I propose in the following pages to defend a view of the world which is frankly religious and theistic, in opposition to certain modern types of philosophical thought which are now widely prevalent. The results which I shall advocate do not therefore depart very far from the presuppositions which underlie the ordinary Christian consciousness, when these are interpreted not in a dogmatic, but in a broadly philosophical way." Professor Rogers has no sympathy with the attitude of the "disinterested spectator" in matters philosophical. It is not necessary to cease to be a man to become a philosopher. Indeed, "no man can philosophize rightly who has no personal concern in the common hopes and fears and ideals and beliefs of men, and the profession of this is either an affectation or a limitation."

As is only natural and fitting the first chapter is reserved for a discussion of the Foundations of Knowledge, since the author is rightly desirous of a secure and intelligible basis for faith in religious ideals; and ere long he is in close quarters with a philosophy all too prevalent in the present day. Professor Rogers has no dealings with Pragmatism; he holds that there are a "good many things beyond our experience which we can only know mediately, and that between them and our knowledge of them there is a gulf fixed which can never be bridged completely in terms of immediate experiencing." His main contention is that the Pragmatist attitude fails to satisfy all our normal human demands, it rests too exclusively upon the scientific motive. For him one great human demand forms a starting-point, as important in its own way as the Cogito ergo sum of Descartes—it is the demand for the existence of other selves made by the social aspect of experience. With such a demand satisfied knowledge has "in some fashion or other the ability to reach out beyond the experience of which it is an immediate part," and one has avoided the "most fundamental and most fatal perversion of the moral life" by treating human beings as ends and not merely means. In the opinion of the author experience implies an unexplored and vast beyond, experience in itself is not all that reality means for us; there is therefore necessary a discussion concerning the Validity of Knowledge, and such is the subject of the second section of the book. Professor Rogers crosses swords with Herbert Spencer and all likeminded philosophers, who use the doctrine of "relativity of knowledge" to discredit the knowledge of absolute reality; and though it is difficult to use new weapons or new tactics in such a fray, he has much to say that is both pointed and illuminating. "No man is a sceptic in every direction ... the skeptic has no more business to universalize his own attitude than a child would have to demand that everybody should stop playing because he himself is tired." But granted that knowledge is possible, what is the test of a true opinion? The author has his answer ready—it is clearness, not in a Cartesian sense, but the clearness of "an articulated system in which all distinctions stand in sharp relief." To elucidate this and also to guard against misapprehension, he proceeds to a discussion of the relationship of feeling to rationality, and he claims the right of feeling to be reckoned a factor in the search for truth. For rationality is merely the impulse to harmonize experience, and a harmony won by ignoring any data is not worth winning....

—*Review of Theology & Philosophy*, Volume 3 [1908]

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