

“The Personalism of
J. M. E. McTaggart Under Criticism”

4 December 1951
[Boston, Mass.]

Writing for DeWolf's course on Personalism, King presents and criticizes the views of J. M. E. McTaggart, whose ideas King had contrasted with Edgar S. Brightman's six weeks earlier.¹ King takes issue with McTaggart's atheism: "We shall also notice that many of McTaggart's arguments against an omnipotent God are far from adequate. Indeed, the reader gets the impression sometimes that McTaggart is simply indulging in logical trifling, that the discredited theistic doctrine is unworthy of serious consideration and may be caricatured to any extent." Throughout this paper King rejects many of McTaggart's views, concluding: "We have also seen that McTaggart is usually negative on the idea of freedom. For these and many other reasons, we have found it necessary to reject most of McTaggart's views. Any system which seeks to establish itself on the unreality of time seems to me rationally unsound and empirically unverified." DeWolf gave King an A for the paper and commented: "Excellent, incisive criticism. A superior paper."

Personalism is usually thought of as being theistic in nature. Indeed, the very word was used in the beginning as a general term descriptive of theism, by way of distinction from pantheism. This, however, must not lead one to assume that all Personalism has been theistic. While it is true that most Personalistic philosophies have remained true to their theistic origin, it is also true that there have been exceptions to

1. King took a course on the philosophy of religion from Brightman during the same semester. King's two essays for Brightman included sections on J. M. E. McTaggart. The outline of McTaggart's philosophy in this paper is closely related to King's earlier essay for Brightman. See "A Comparison and Evaluation of the Views Set Forth in J. M. E. McTaggart's Some Dogmas of Religion with Those Set Forth by Edgar S. Brightman in His Course on 'Philosophy of Religion,'" 25 October 1951, MLKP-MBU: Box 112; and "A Comparison and Evaluation of the Philosophical Views Set Forth in J. M. E. McTaggart's Some Dogmas of Religion, and William E. Hocking's The Meaning of God in Human Experience with Those Set Forth in Edgar S. Brightman's Course on 'Philosophy of Religion,'" 6 December 1951, pp. 76–92 in this volume.

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the rule. We have both an atheistic personalism and a pantheistic personalism.² In the present paper, it is our purpose to present and criticise the atheistic personalism of J. M. E. McTaggart. To speak of McTaggart as a personalist is by no means thrusting upon him a label that he would have denied. Says he, "I am also, in one sense of the term, a Personal Idealist. For I believe that every part of the content of spirit falls within some self, and that in part of it falls within more than one self; and that the only substances are selves, parts of selves, and groups of selves or parts of selves."³*

John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart was born in 1866, and was educated at Clifton and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1888, he was placed alone in the first class of the Moral Sciences of Tripos. In 1891, he was elected to a prize-fellowship at Trinity. Soon after this, he paid a long visit to New Zealand. In 1897, he was made College Lecturer in the Moral Sciences, an office which he held until 1923. Two years later, after a short but painful illness, he died in London, at the age of 58.⁴ While he lived, he published the following books: *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, *A Commentary to Hegel's Logic*, and the first volume of *The Nature of Existence*. At the time of his death, he was in the midst of the third draft of the remaining volume of *The Nature of Existence*. This volume was published a few years after his death.⁵

* Muirhead, J. H. (ed.):
CBP, 249³

2. Albert C. Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1927), pp. 21–22: "One would expect, then, that a philosophy, bearing the name of personalism or that might properly be called such, would be theistic; and, on the whole, the history of thought does not disappoint this expectation. The personalistic philosophies have, for the most part, been true to their theistic and Christian origin. But there are exceptions to the rule. We have both an *atheistic* personalism and a *pantheistic* personalism."

3. The citation should be J. M. E. McTaggart, "An Ontological Idealism," in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, ed. J. H. Muirhead (New York: Macmillan, 1924), p. 251.

4. C. D. Broad, "Introduction" to J. M. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1930), p. xxv: "John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart was born in 1866, and educated at Clifton and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1888 he was placed alone in the first class of the Moral Science Tripos. In 1890 he became president of the Union Society. He was elected to a prize-fellowship at Trinity in 1891. Soon after this he paid a long visit to New Zealand. In 1899 he married Miss Margaret Elizabeth Bird of Taranki. In 1897 he was made College Lecturer in the Moral Sciences, an office which he held until 1923. . . . After a short but painful illness, borne with admirable courage and patience, he died on the 18th of January, 1925, in a nursing home in London at the age of 58."

5. Broad, "Introduction," p. xxvi: "While he lived he published the following books: *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, *A Commentary to Hegel's*

As stated above, the purpose of this paper is to present and criticise the views of McTaggart's personalistic system. We may conveniently discuss his system under two main headings—Epistemology and Metaphysics.

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Epistemology

McTaggart's epistemological position is well summarized in the following statement:

I should say that epistemologically I was a Realist. I should say that knowledge was a true belief, and I should say that a belief was true when, and only when, it stands in a relation of correspondence to a fact. I do not think that this particular relations of correspondence can be defined further, but it may be remarked that it is not a relation of copying or of similarity. Of facts, I should say that whenever anything is anything, using both "anything" and "is" in the widest possible sense, it is a fact that it is so.*

* Ibid, 249.⁶

This is another way of saying he is an epistemological dualist. The thought series and the thing series are "numerically two" and not "one." One wonders how such an ardent disciple of Hegel can come to such a radically different epistemological position. Hegel is an epistemological monist. For him, the identity of knowing and being is a basic principle. The Absolute is himself Thought or Experience, and beyond Thought or Experience, there is no reality. But not so with McTaggart. For him, there is an otherness to individual consciousness which implies a distinction between knowing and being.

At this point, McTaggart is much more in accord with typical personalism than he is at many other points. The dualism of thought and thing, or idea and object is one of the main articles in the epistemological creed of personalism. Typical Personalists would insist, contrary to "pan-subjectivists" and "pan-objectivists", that if personality is to maintain its integrity, it must be kept "a handbreath off", both from the

Logic, and the first volume of *The Nature of Existence*. At the time of his death he had completed the second draft of the remaining volume of *The Nature of Existence* and was engaged in writing the third draft."

6. "Ibid" in fact refers to McTaggart, "Ontological Idealism."

4 Dec Absolute and from things; and this means epistemo-
1951 logical dualism.

Yet it must be stated that although McTaggart and typical personalists are in accord as to the validity of epistemological dualism, they are at variance as to how this dualism is to be explained. The typical personalist finds the only satisfactory explanation of it in a theistic monism. He would argue that if an intelligent Being is the ultimate source both of the thing series and the thought series, it is possible to understand at once their dualism and their parallelism. McTaggart's anti-theistic bias would cause him to immediately reject this explanation. How he explains this dualism, I have not been able to discern. It so happens that McTaggart's predominant concern is with metaphysics and only occasionally does he refer to his epistemology.

McTaggart's failure to accept theistic monism can certainly serve as a valid criticism against his epistemological position. While he is basically sound in his starting point, viz., in accepting epistemological dualism, he is basically unsound in his explanation of this dualism. Apart from an intelligent Being who is the ultimate source both of the thought series and the thing series, the parallelism of thought and thing remains an insoluble riddle. McTaggart's epistemological dualism requires a theistic monism for its completion.⁷

Metaphysics

We turn now to a consideration of McTaggart's metaphysics. Indeed, this is the most important phase of his philosophy. Some philosophers are concerned primarily with epistemology, while others are primarily concerned with metaphysics. McTaggart belongs to the latter class. He is one of the few English thinkers who is the author of a truly original metaphysical system.⁸

For the last half century or so, the labours of philosophers have been devoted rather to the investiga-

7. DeWolf commented in the margin, "Good criticism. It would apply also to [Roy Wood] Sellars, and, indeed more pointedly."

64 8. Hastings Rashdall, *Philosophy and Religion* (New York: Scribner, 1914), p. 96: "I cannot here undertake a full exposition or criticism of one of the ablest thinkers of our day—one of the very few English thinkers who is the author of a truly original metaphysical system."

tion of the nature and certainty of alleged scientific knowledge than to the attempt to determine the nature of Reality as a whole by abstract reasoning. This limitation has been mainly the result of bitter experience of the futility of previous attempts at speculative metaphysics. A distrust of elaborate philosophical systems has always characterized England in general. To all of these, McTaggart is an eminent exception. He always held that important facts can be proved of Reality as a whole by processes of deductive reasoning.

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We may conveniently discuss McTaggart's metaphysics under four headings: 1. The nature of the Absolute, 2. The nature and destiny of the finite self, 3. The doctrine of freedom, and 4. The infinite value of love. Each of these principles will need to be carefully studied if we are to fully understand McTaggart's metaphysical system. In the following discussion, they will be taken up in the order just given.

The Nature of the Absolute

It has been stated above that McTaggart would readily qualify as a personalist on the grounds that he held that ultimate reality consists of a society of persons. But his personalism is atheistic since he does not recognize the necessity for one all-embracing or controlling Person. He recognizes in the traditional language of Philosophy, an Absolute, but this Absolute is not a Person. {The} Absolute is spiritual, is a unity, and is a harmonious whole, and yet is still not a person. It is a unity of persons, not a personal unity. It consists of conscious individuals, but is not itself a conscious individual. McTaggart comes to this conclusion by a somewhat peculiar process of argument. The Absolute being concrete, is a unity of differentiations. But differences may exist in the unity, and the unity may be in and for the differences without that unity being personal. For this it is necessary that the difference exist for the unity. Now, in the Absolute, unity and differences are identical only in the sense that these two aspects are also distinct, the one would be the other, and the nature of the Absolute becomes meaningless, because barren and inexpressible. But if the differences exist for the unity as the unity exist for the differences, there is no distinction of content between the two aspects, and, hence, it is impossible to speak of one being for the other at all; In that case

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4 Dec 1951 not merely the Absolute but the individuals which make it up cease to be intelligible, for they can have no relation unless by being in some way distinct. Thus, says McTaggart, while we may in virtue of the validity of the "category of teleology," assert that the unity exist in and for the differences, we cannot maintain that the differences exist for the unity, and therefore, must abandon the claim to regard the Absolute as itself personal.

Although this is McTaggart's main argument, he supplements it by further consideration. He points out that for personality "as we know it", the consciousness of a non-ego is essential. But a non-ego is in some sense outside the ego; on the other hand, nothing in any sense can be outside the Absolute. In McTaggart's own words, "such a consciousness the Absolute cannot possess. For there is nothing outside from which it can distinguish itself."* Hence, for the Absolute, there is no non-ego of which it can be conscious, and thus no personality.

* S.H.C., 68

From this discussion on the nature of the Absolute one can easily see that McTaggart's attitude toward the existence of God is essentially negative. He sees the doctrine of an omnipotent and creative God as metaphysically unsound. He is willing to admit the possibility of a non-omnipotent God, whom he styles "the director of the universe", "a person of appreciable importance when measured against the whole of the universe", but such a belief is not at all necessary. The only reason why we should not believe in the existence of such a God, he says, with a dash of cynicism, is that there is no reason why we should believe in it. The ultimate outcome of McTaggart's God concept is found in this phrase, "the Absolute is not God, and in consequence there is no God."†

† Ibid, 94

In spite of its acuteness, and in spite of its novelty, this view of McTaggart seems to me open to insuperable difficulties. First, it fails to satisfy the mind's demand for unity. No system can explain itself. Beneath the "harmonious system of selves", there must be a unitary being that binds the selves together. This unitary being must be more than a mere concept; such a being must be a person.⁹ As Knudson laconically

9. Knudson, *Philosophy of Personalism*, p. 24: "Beyond the harmonious system of selves there must be some unitary principle that binds the selves together, and this principle must be some-

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states, in a criticism of McTaggart at this same point: "His theory of a 'harmonious spiritual system' thus requires for its completion a personal God."*

* Knudson, POP, 24

There is a second point in this view which leads to further difficulties/. As an Idealist, McTaggart has to admit that the material world exists only in and for Mind. It is quite apparent that no human mind knows the whole of this world. What kind of existence then have the parts of the universe which are not known to any mind. To follow his view to its logical conclusion, McTaggart would have to admit that they do not exist at all. This would represent a subjective idealism of the most extreme kind.¹⁰ Again we must conclude that McTaggart needs a supreme mind which both knows and wills the existence and the mutual relation of the spirits to complete his system.†

† For an elaboration of this criticism, see Rashdall's, PR, 123-6

We shall also notice that many of McTaggart's arguments against an omnipotent God are far from adequate. Indeed, the reader gets the impression sometimes that McTaggart is simply indulging in logical trifling, that the discredited theistic doctrine is unworthy of serious consideration and may be caricatured to any extent. What other impression is possible from such paragraphs as the following:

An omnipotent person is one who can do anything. Now suppose that God had willed to create a universe, and had not willed that the law of Identity should be valid. It seems that we have no alternative but to be inconsistent or to be completely unmeaning. To suppose that the universe would not have been created, although God had willed that it should, would be inconsistent with his omnipotence. But the assertion that the universe could be created without being a universe, and without being created is unmeaning. And yet, how can the universe be the universe, or creation be creation unless the law of Identity be true. Again, is there any meaning in the

thing other than the selves and something more than a mere concept. To interpret unity as a 'system of differentiations' does not satisfy the mind's demand for unity. To meet this demand there must be a unitary being deeper than the system, and on McTaggart's own principles such a being must be a person."

10. Rashdall, *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 123: "It is admitted that the material world exists only in and for Mind. There is no reason to think that any human mind . . . knows the whole of this world. What kind of existence then have the parts of the Universe which are not known to any mind? It seems to me that Dr. McTaggart would be compelled to admit that they do not exist at all. The world postulated by Science would thus be admitted to be a delusion. This represents a subjective Idealism of an extreme and staggering kind."

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supposition that God could create a man who was not a man, or that he could create a being who was neither man nor not man. But, if he could not, then he is bound by the law of Contradiction and the law of Excluded Middle, and, once more, he is not omnipotent.*

* McTaggart: SDR, 202,
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Certainly few, if any, modern theologians believing in the omnipotence of God would take omnipotence in such an absolutely abstract sense.¹¹ When God is said to possess omnipotence, the meaning is that there is nothing which can prevent Him realizing any purpose His wisdom and goodness, e.g., decided Him to attempt. Evidently, McTaggart completely overlooked this.¹²

The Nature and Destiny of the Finite Self

In order to understand McTaggart's views on the nature and destiny of the finite self, we must turn immediately to his doctrine of immortality. At this point, McTaggart is thoroughly positive. He never wearies of pointing out the validity of this doctrine. He is convinced that the presumption against immortality, produced in many people by supposed results of physical science, should be discarded. Science is concerned solely with uniformities in the routine of our perceptions. Physical science can have nothing to say, for example on the questions of the independent existence of matter, which is only one theory about the causes of our sensations, and a theory which, on examination, is found to be ~~invalid~~ {involved} in inconsistency. The "self", therefore, cannot be treated as an activity of the body. Its conscious existence is, on the contrary, a primary reality.

As McTaggart continues his argument, he attempts to connect the belief in immortality with the belief in pre-existence. He says in an interesting passage:

The present attitude of most Western thinkers to the doctrine of pre-existence is curious. Of the many who

11. DeWolf underlined "modern" and asked, "Why say modern only? Even Anselm took account of such rational limitations of God, though he declined to call them limitations."

12. In the margin by the last two sentences of this paragraph DeWolf commented, "Good."

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regard our life, after the death of our bodies, as certain or probable, scarcely one regards our life before the birth of those bodies as a possibility which deserves discussion, and yet it was taught by Buddha and by Plato, and it is usually associated with the belief in immortality in the Far East. Why should men who are so anxious today to prove that we shall live after this life is ended, regard the hypothesis that we have already survived the end of a life as one which is beneath consideration?*

* Ibid, 112

McTaggart himself believes that any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence.

McTaggart has no use for the ethical argument for immortality. He feels that we must fall back on "purely metaphysical arguments". These turn out to be based on abstract considerations as to the nature of substance. The perdurability of substance naturally refers just as much to the past as to the future. McTaggart believes, accordingly, that our present existence has been preceded by a plurality of lives, and will be followed in like manner by a plurality of lives. The obvious objection to this theory is the fact that we retain no memory of those previous lives, and McTaggart, it is to be noted, does not imply that in the lives to come we shall have any memory of our present existence. "An existence that is cut up into separate lives, in none of which memory extends to a previous life, may be thought to have no practical value."† McTaggart labours hard to prove that this is not so, the most important argument being that though the actual experiences are forgotten, their results in the training of mind and character may be carried forward into the next life, so that the man will be wiser and better in the second life because of what has happened in the first. He will, as it were, have a better start; he will build in the new life upon the foundations in the old.

† Ibid, 127.

This argument sounds far more plausible than it really is, and depends upon the ambiguity of the word "person". "In spite of the loss of memory", says McTaggart, "It is the same person who lives in the successive lives".¹³ Now it is exceedingly difficult to

13. The quotation is from J. M. E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), p. 130.

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determine precisely what we mean by personal identity, and what its limits are/. Obviously, within the present life, countless items of our experience lapse from conscious memory and survive only in aptitudes, dispositions, and tendencies. Yet they play their role in training the mind and tempering the character. Still, although much may persist only in the subconscious fashion, it seems clear that a continuity of conscious memory within certain limits is involved in the ordinary notion of personality, so that a complete break of such continuity would make the assertion of personal identity in the two lives unmeaning. It seems that Locke is much nearer the truth than McTaggart when he (Locke) argues in his well-known chapter that "personal identity consists not in the identity of substance, but in the identity of consciousness".¹⁴ So with Rashdall we must conclude that "the theory of pre-existent souls is opposed to all the probabilities suggested by experience"*¹⁵

* Rashdall: PR, 134

We may also criticise McTaggart's argument for the validity of the doctrine of immortality. As was stated above, he cast out the ethical argument with the contention that we are forced back "on purely metaphysical arguments". But these, as partially revealed in Some Dogmas of Religion and more fully in Studies in Hegelian Cosmology† turn out to be based on abstract considerations as to the nature of substance. They are indeed curiously pre-Kantian in character, and it is strange to find so profound a student of Hegel using substance throughout as the ultimate category in speaking both of the self and of God.

† See McTaggart, SDR II, and SHC III.

McTaggart's casting out of the ethical argument for immortality was somewhat ineluctable because of his anti-theistic bias. At this point, however, he was casting out what seems to me the only vigorous argument for immortality, viz., the goodness of God. As Brightman has succinctly put it, "If there is a supreme Cosmic Person, then there is an infinitely good being committed to the eternal conservation of values."‡ Certainly, God the conserver of values must be God the conserver of Persons, since Persons are of highest

‡ Brightman: POR, 401.

14. The quotation is from John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book 1, chap. 27, sec. 19.

15. DeWolf wrote in the margin, "Good use of sources." The quotation is actually from p. 124.

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value. At bottom, faith in immortality is faith in the goodness of God.¹⁶

A theoretical as well as a practical basis for the belief is to be found in the nature of God. Every argument for his obligation to conserve Persons as intrinsic values. To him, we may therefore safely trust the future, confident that he will conserve the highest values. As Carlyle puts it, in one of the pathetic outbursts of the Autobiography: "Perhaps we shall all meet yonder, and the tears be wiped from all eyes. One thing is no Perhaps; surely we shall all meet, if it be the will of the Maker of us. If it be not His will, then is it not better so?"

One wonders how McTaggart can hold so firmly to a doctrine of immortality and at the same time deny theism. Certainly, this is an enigma to me. Apparently McTaggart is unique in this position, for no other well-known philosopher has held such a view. We may be safe in saying that every other philosophical believer in immortality has affirmed theism.¹⁷ So we might conclude that theists are much sounder than McTaggart in affirming that arguments for God are at the same time arguments for immortality.¹⁸

Doctrine of Freedom

On the question of the freedom of the will, McTaggart is almost exclusively negative. Not only does he set himself to demolish the ordinary arguments by which the doctrine is supported, but he holds that an metaphysical grounds it can be shown to be untrue. There is no reason, according to McTaggart, why human volitions should be exceptions to any law of the complete determination of events.

16. Edgar S. Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1940), pp. 400–401: "There is only one vigorous argument for immortality (which reduces to the argument for a theistic philosophy). If there is a God—a supreme, creative, cosmic person—then there is an infinitely good being committed to the eternal conservation of values. . . . God, the conserver of values, must be God, the conserver of persons."

17. Brightman, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 402: "That the arguments for God are at the same time arguments for immortality is indicated by the fact that there has been only one well-known philosophical believer in immortality who denied theism, namely, J. M. E. McTaggart, and the correlative fact that substantially every theist has accepted immortality."

18. DeWolf commented, "Good."

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McTaggart's views on freedom of the will seem to be far below his usual level of freshness and incisiveness. He attacks a "freedom of indetermination" which I do not think any champion would enter the lists. What upholder of freedom, for example, would accept the statement that "according to the indeterminist theory our choice between motives is not determined by anything at all"?* And when McTaggart says that "on the determinist hypothesis an omnipotent God could have prevented all sin by creating us with better natures and in more favorable surroundings", and that "he cannot see what extraordinary value lies in the incompleteness of the determination of the will, which should counterbalance all the sin, and the consequent unhappiness caused by the misuse of that will",† the answer is that creatures so turned out would not be moral beings at all; they would be things and not persons.

* McTaggart, SDR, 143

† Ibid, 164

Freedom is the central and essential foundation of ethics. As Brightman has cogently put it: "If choice is not possible, the science of ethics is not possible. If rational, purposive choice is not effective in the central of life, goodness is not possible."‡ It is this necessity of moral freedom that McTaggart constantly overlooked. So at times his arguments remind us of the words of Thomas Huxley: "If some great Power would agree to make me think always what is true and do what is right on condition of being turned into a sort of clock, I should instantly close the bargain. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong, I am ready to part with".§¹⁹ But no "sort of clock" can do what is right or think what is true, or indeed think at all. Nor can any man learn without the possibility of going wrong, any more than a child can learn to walk without the possibility of falling. If we are to be persons rather than mere ~~autonom~~ {automatons}, freedom must be maintained.

‡ Brightman, ML, 74

§ CE, I, 192

Not only is freedom necessary for moral choices, but it is also necessary for the act of reason. To quote Brightman again, "Without freedom, we are not free

19. The quotation is inaccurate; it should read: "I protest that if some great power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning before I got out of bed, I should instantly close with the offer. The only freedom I care about is the freedom to do right; the freedom to do wrong I am ready to part with on the cheapest terms to any one who will take it of me" (Thomas Huxley, *Collected Essays*, vol. 1: *Method and Results* [New York: Appleton, 1898], pp. 192-93).

to think, for the power to think means that the individual can impose on himself the ideal of logic or scientific method and hold it through thick and thin.”²⁰ Certainly without freedom, reason would go shipwreck. It was probably Bowne who, more than any other, stressed the significance of this point. For him, freedom has both epistemological and metaphysical significance. I believe that a more sympathetic study of the great masters in ethics and thinkers like Bowne would have made McTaggart’s chapter on “Free Will” more adequate to its theme. In rejecting freedom, McTaggart was rejecting the most important characteristic of personality.

The Metaphysical Significance of Love

It is plain to the reader of McTaggart that one of his fundamental connections was that the love of one man for another is of infinite value and profound metaphysical significance. He sets out on his journey to establish the metaphysical significance of love with the attempt to determine the nature of spirit. Since human consciousness has only three modes, Knowledge, Conation,²¹ and Feeling, it must be in one of these ways, or in some kind of combination of the, that the ultimate form of the activity of spirit is to be found. Now, both knowledge and volition postulate a perfection which they can never attain unless by losing themselves in what transcends them.²² For they are distinct, and as they stand opposed forms of activity; one accepts facts, the other judges them. But no such opposition can exist in absolute perfection. Hence, neither knowledge, nor volition, nor the two together gives us the true nature of spirit. Similarly, feeling must be rejected as the ultimate mode of spirit, for it is “pure self reference of the subject;” it

20. A footnote number appears in the text without a corresponding citation at the bottom of the page. The quotation is from Edgar S. Brightman, *Moral Laws* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930), p. 282.

21. King means “Volition” rather than “Conation.”

22. J. M. E. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), p. 262: “If we look close enough we shall find, I think, that both knowledge and volition postulate a perfection to which they can never attain.”

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“has nothing to do with objects”, and cannot therefore fully express the nature of spirit, which necessarily implies an “appreciation of an object”.* The only state left to reveal spirit in its perfection is one which will involve all three elements, Knowledge, Volition, and Feeling. This state is Emotion. This is the “concrete unity” in which spirit is fully realized, and for which those three elements are “abstractions”. Now emotion made perfect, i.e., in complete harmony, is Love. This, then, is what gives “interest and value to knowledge and volition”; “this resolves their contradictions;” this is the “concrete material of the life of spirit.” It is not “benevolence”, nor “Love of Truth and Virtue and Beauty, or anything else whose name can be found in the dictionary. It is passionate, all-absorbing, all-consuming love.”† It is again not love of God, for love is of persons, and God is not a person.‡ Nor is it love of mankind, for the human race is an aggregate, not an organism; and we cannot love “an indefinitely extended post-office directory.” And the same is true of nations, churches, and families.²³ “The nearest approach to it is the love for which no cause can be given, of which we can only say that two people belong to each other—all the love of the *Vita Nuova*, and of *In Memoriam*”§

Closely connected with this is his view that all good is inclusive perception. So when one perceives a person as he is, he really loves him. The more perception, the more love; the more love, the more good. Because this inclusive perception always is on the increase, the future is always better than the past and the distant future will be better than the near future. Here is a doctrine of inevitable progress that outspencers Spencer.

As I read McTaggart’s views at this point, I could not help but wonder how an atheist could find so much meaning in the universe. McTaggart contends that the Universe constitutes not merely a physical but also a moral order. He would not deny that the universe means something; that the series of events tends toward an end, an end which is good. And yet, this purpose exists in no controlling mind whatsoever.

* McTaggart seems to have forgotten this when discussing personality where the difference between personality and spirit turned on the fact that while the former involved reference to an object, the latter, it was said, need not.

† McTaggart, SHC, 260

‡ Ibid, 289

§ Ibid, 291

23. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 290: “If we cannot, properly speaking, love God, it is still more impossible to love mankind. . . . The human race, viewed as such, is only an aggregate, not even an organism. We might as well try to love an indefinitely extended Post Office Directory. And the same will hold true of all subordinate aggregates—nations, churches, and families.”

ever, and is due to no controlling will. I confess I do not understand the idea of a purpose which operates, but is not the purpose of a Mind and a Will.

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We come now to the end of a study of McTaggart. I have tried to point out what seems to me to be weaknesses in his theories, although I may be, to some extent, disqualified as a critic.²⁴ We have seen that he is totally negative on the idea of a Personal, creative God. To affirm the reality of a creative God would mean to affirm the reality of time, and this McTaggart will not do. Says he, "It seems to me that one empirically known characteristic which cannot really belong to anything that exists is the characteristic of Time."* We have also seen that McTaggart is usually negative on the idea of freedom. For these and many other reasons, we have found it necessary to reject most of McTaggart's views. Any system which seeks to establish itself on the unreality of time seems to me rationally unsound and empirically unverified.

* Muirhead (ed.): CBP,
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24. DeWolf asked, "Why?" in the margin.