

## INTRODUCTION

The most important questions of our time are philosophical. All about us we see the clash of ideas and ideologies. Yet the formal study of philosophy has been losing rather than gaining ground. There is increasing interest in the issues, but up to the present there has been no corresponding increase in their systematic study. In many American colleges the work in philosophy attracts fewer and fewer students.

Because philosophy is in the doldrums, I have wondered for some time what should be done to breathe into it fresh life. One idea that appeals strongly to me is to invite brilliant teachers in other fields to become students of philosophy and thus encourage a marriage of economics and philosophy, political science and philosophy, art and philosophy, and last but not least, literature and philosophy. This book is a kind of Exhibit A of this approach to the problem.

Julian Lenhart Ross is one of the most gifted undergraduate teachers I have known. He is a graduate of Allegheny College in the Class of 1923, and he returned to the faculty of that institution after taking his doctorate at Harvard in

1927. He is now Professor of English. Because of his remarkable success as a teacher, I felt confident that if he could be persuaded to teach a course in philosophy, his classroom would be crowded. When we first discussed the matter, he volunteered the suggestion that if I would teach the history of philosophy, he would join the class as an auditor and, if all went well, might then try his hand at a course introducing students to certain perennial problems of philosophy through the eyes of literature. I still remember my attempts to make the history of philosophy interesting not only to a number of very superior students, but to the brightest member of a distinguished faculty. What is more memorable, however, is that the following year Professor Ross offered for the first time his course in philosophy and literature. The hundreds of students who have been privileged to sit at his feet treasure the memory of this course as the richest intellectual experience of their undergraduate years.

We have encouraged Professor Ross to put some of his material in book form, and we are pleased with the result. This is a book that should appeal to thoughtful men and women. It is an appropriate text for departments of philosophy, but it will probably reach more readers and inspire more interest in philosophical ideas if it is introduced by a particularly talented member of the English department.

There are many roads to "that dear delight" which is the study of philosophy. This is by no means the only one. For our generation it is not a well-traveled road, but it is a highway through a countryside rich in history. It leads us through the territory of the classics. It has unusual vistas. It has enduring interest. Its charm will be felt by many who have resisted the lure of other paths that lead to truth and wisdom.

WILLIAM P. TOLLEY

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