

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LOYALTY

BY

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PREFACE

IN 1906 and 1907 I gave, as a part of my regular work at the Summer School of Harvard University, an "Introduction to Ethics, with Special Reference to the Interests of Teachers." A few lectures, summing up the main principles that lay at the basis of this ethical course as it had been given in the summer of 1906, were delivered in January and February, 1907, before a general academic audience, during a brief visit of mine at the University of Illinois. In several other places, both in the West and in the East, I have also presented portions of my views upon ethics; and in the summer of 1907 four general lectures on the topic were repeated before the Summer School of Theology at Harvard. In November and December of 1907 the lectures that constitute the present book were delivered for the first time before the Lowell Institute in Boston.

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In preparing this new statement of my case for the Lowell Institute course, I thus had the opportunity to use the experience and the criticisms that had resulted from several previous efforts of mine to set forth my views about the topics treated in this "Philosophy of Loyalty." The Lowell Institute lectures were, in fact, substantially a fresh presentation of the material, — only Lecture V, on "American Problems," retaining any large portion of the text of any of my former lectures. But, as the reader may see from the foregoing statement, the general doctrine contained in "The Philosophy of Loyalty" here worked out has been discussed, in various forms, and with a good many friends, pupils, and critics. I hope, therefore, that this book bears marks of the aid that I have gained from such contact with many sorts of minds, in widely different places.

During the present academic year, 1907-1908, the doctrine here presented has also been put into the form of a regular college course, which I have been permitted, as

visiting lecturer, to give to undergraduate students at Yale University in weekly class-meetings.

The present book, although in this way related to present and past academic tasks, is, nevertheless, not a text-book, and does not mean to be an elaborately technical philosophical research. It is simply an appeal to any reader who may be fond of ideals, and who may also be willing to review his own ideals in a somewhat new light and in a philosophical spirit. Loyalty is indeed an old word, and to my mind a precious one; and the general idea of loyalty is still far older than the word, and is immeasurably more precious. But this idea has nearly always been confused in men's minds by its chance social and traditional associations. Everybody has heard of loyalty; most prize it; but few perceive it to be what, in its inmost spirit, it really is, — the heart of all the virtues, the central duty amongst all duties. In order to be able to see that this is the true meaning of the idea of loyalty, one has to free

this idea from its unessential if somewhat settled associations with this or that special social habit or circumstance. And in order to accomplish this latter end, one has indeed to give to the term a more exact meaning than popular usage defines.

It is this freeing of the idea of loyalty from its chance and misleading associations; it is this vindication of the spirit of loyalty as the central spirit of the moral and reasonable life of man, — it is this that I believe to be somewhat new about my “Philosophy of Loyalty.” The conception of “Loyalty to Loyalty,” as set forth in my third lecture, constitutes the most significant part of this ethical task. For the rest, if my philosophy is, as a theory, more or less new, I am still only trying to make articulate what I believe to be the true spirit and meaning of all the loyal, whoever they may be, and however they define their fidelity.

The result of conceiving duty in terms of the conception of loyalty which is here expounded is, indeed, if I am right, somewhat deep-going and transforming, not only for

ethics, but for most men's views of truth and reality, and of religion. My own general philosophical opinions have been set forth in various works some time since (most elaborately in the volumes entitled "The World and the Individual"). I have no change to report in my fundamental metaphysical theses. But I have not published any formulation of my ethical opinions since the brief review of ethical problems in the first part of my "Religious Aspect of Philosophy" (published in 1885). One learns a good deal about ethics as one matures. And I believe that this present statement of mine ought to help at least some readers to see that such philosophical idealism as I have long maintained is not a doctrine remote from life, but is in close touch with the most practical issues; and that religion, as well as daily life, has much to gain from the right union of ethics with a philosophical theory of the real world.

At the moment there is much speech, in current philosophical literature, regarding the "nature of truth" and regarding "prag-

matism." An ethical treatise very naturally takes advantage of this situation to discuss the relation between the "practical" and — the Eternal. I have done so in my closing lectures. In order to do so, I have had to engage in a certain polemic regarding the problem of truth, — a polemic directed against certain opinions recently set forth by one of the dearest of my friends, and by one of the most loyal of men; my teacher for a while in my youth; my honored colleague for many years, — Professor William James. Such a polemic would be indeed much out of place in a book upon Loyalty, were it not that my friend and myself fully agree that, to both of us, truth indeed "is the greater friend." Had I not very early in my work as a student known Professor James, I doubt whether any poor book of mine would ever have been written, — least of all the present one. What I personally owe him, then, I most heartily and affectionately acknowledge. But if he and I do not see truth in the same light at present, we still do well, I think, as friends,

each to speak his mind as we walk by the way, and then to wait until some other light shines for our eyes. I suppose that so to do is loyalty.

Meanwhile, I am writing, in this book, not merely and not mainly for philosophers, but for all those who love, as I said, ideals, and also for those who love, as I may now add, their country, — a country so ripe at present for idealism, and so confused, nevertheless, by the vastness and the complication of its social and political problems. To simplify men's moral issues, to clear their vision for the sight of the eternal, to win hearts for loyalty, — this would be, in this land, a peculiarly precious mission, if indeed I could hope that this book could aid, however little, towards such an end.

Amongst the numerous friends to whom (whether or no they agree with all my views) I am especially indebted for direct and indirect aid in preparing this book, and for criticisms and other suggestions, I must mention: first, my wife, who has constantly

helped me with her counsel, and in the revision of my text; then, my sister, Miss Ruth Royce, of San José, California, with whom I discussed the plan of the work in the summer of 1907; then, Doctor and Mrs. R. C. Cabot of Boston; Doctor J. J. Putnam of Boston; and, finally, my honored colleague, Professor George H. Palmer.

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I

NATURE AND NEED OF LOYALTY

LECTURE I

THE NATURE AND THE NEED OF LOYALTY

ONE of the most familiar traits of our time is the tendency to revise tradition, to reconsider the foundations of old beliefs, and sometimes mercilessly to destroy what once seemed indispensable. This disposition, as we all know, is especially prominent in the realms of social theory and of religious belief. But even the exact sciences do not escape from the influence of those who are fond of the reëxamination of dogmas. And the modern tendency in question has, of late years, been very notable in the field of Ethics. Conventional morality has been required, in company with religion, and also in company with exact science, to endure the fire of criticism. And although, in all ages, the moral law has indeed been exposed to the assaults of the wayward, the peculiar moral situation of our time is this, that it is no longer either the flippant or the vicious who

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are the most pronounced or the most dangerous opponents of our moral traditions. Devoted reformers, earnest public servants, ardent prophets of a coming spiritual order, — all these types of lovers of humanity are represented amongst those who to-day demand great and deep changes in the moral standards by which our lives are to be governed. We have become accustomed, during the past few generations, — during the period of Socialism and of Individualism, of Karl Marx, of Henry George, of Ibsen, of Nietzsche, of Tolstoi, — to hear unquestionably sincere lovers of humanity sometimes declaring our traditions regarding the rights of property to be immoral, and sometimes assailing, in the name of virtue, our present family ties as essentially unworthy of the highest ideals. Individualism itself, in many rebellious forms, we often find asserting that it speaks in the name of the true morality of the future. And the movement begun in Germany by Nietzsche — the tendency towards what that philosophical rhapsodist