

ADDRESS

by

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Mr. President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, there is, I suppose, a certain appropriateness in an Australian speaking on behalf of the visitors. From the point of view of most of my European colleagues, I find, an Australian is the visitor of visitors. If not quite the Platonic form of visitoricity he participates as perfectly in that form as it is possible in this imperfect world for anybody to participate. Perhaps, if we are some day an inter-planetary Institute of Philosophy with visitors from Mars and Venus, than I shall have to give up this right of mine to be regarded as the visitor of visitors. But for the moment, I stand firmly upon it. I am, in any case glad, so far as one can be glad, that this particular honor has been inflicted upon me, because it gives me an opportunity to speak of Professor Devaux. Professor Klibanski has pointed out how appropriate it is that this conference, with its present theme, should be held, of all cities, in Liège. I should like to say how appropriate it is that any meeting of our Institute should be held under the presidency of Professor Devaux, who, in so many ways, has set an example to us all. This proposition in spite of Professor Klibanski, I shall now attempt to demonstrate, verify and justify.

It is the great scandal of philosophy in our own time, that it is not, in the proper sense, international. Not international in the sense in which science is international, scarcely even international in the sense in which the United Nations is international. I do not mean, of course, that it is confined within particular national boundaries, but it is in confined, as science is not, within what one might call supra-national boundaries. So that one can speak, and people will know what one means, of continental or of Anglo-Saxon philosophy.

There are various grade of non sense, there is plausible non-sense, there is sheer nonsense, and there is damnable nonsense. I am now talking about a variety of damnable nonsense. This

variety of damnable nonsense is that philosophy is, by its nature, national, as heresy which arose like so many pieces of damnable nonsense, in the nineteenth century. It found expression in that division of philosophy into two streams which were taken to be wholly distinct from one another, namely British empiricism and continental rationalism. One has only to look, even in the most simple and primitive of ways, at the history of, let us say, British empiricism, to see what damnable nonsense this is. John Locke owed much more to Descartes than he did to Bacon and to Hobbes. Berkeley stands far closer to Malebranche than he does to Locke. Hume wrote the *Treatise of Human Nature*, not only literally at La Flèche, but metaphorically, also, on French soil. He wrote it, surrounded, not by the works of Locke and Berkeley, but by the works of Pierre Bayle, of Charron, of the French empiricists. On the other side, what student of Locke has ever examined him in greater detail than did Leibniz? What French philosophy, in the eighteenth century, owes to Locke, not only to Locke's *Essay* but to his writings on education and on political philosophy, is sufficiently apparent to the most superficial gaze. Nor need remind you who it was that awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumber. Even in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, it is easy to mention obvious pairs: Comte and Mill, Kant and Green, Herbart and Bradley, Hegel and Mac Taggart, Meinong and Russell, Croce and Collingwood. Here one sees, again and again, what close intellectual relations there were between British and continental philosophers. And in the thirties, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, London, Paris formed an undoubted community of minds, not to mention Warsaw.

It is only, I think, in the last thirty years that this break, and it is a break, has become so notable. In many ways Hitler, very fortunately, failed in what he set out to do, but there is one consequence of his actions which has persisted for quite a long time. And that was the destruction of what one might call the empirical network of philosophy through Europe and through England. Now, I think, there are some signs that, a bridge is being constructed to cross the channel. (While not wishing to deny that my British colleagues can be sufficiently insular, I would beg to point out that to be insular it is not necessary to live in an Island.) This

bridge is based I think, on the work of Wittgenstein. If I read the signs right, and there are indications of this in the papers being delivered in this conference, the study of the work of Wittgenstein is going to form a new bond of union between European and British philosophy. Of course, the bridge will not be quite the same at each end. To British eyes, the continental end might appear somewhat baroque and extravagant — perhaps the street to which it leads will be named “rue Schopenhauer”; at the other end of the bridge will it be simpler, more austere and will lead to “Russell street”. But, all the same, a bridge there is, I think, between these two.

Now to come back to Professor Devaux, he, as I said, has set an example to us all. First of all — I shall not mention his works in order in importance, I shall refer to his translations of Bertrand Russell and Whitehead. Translation is the most self-effacing, the least egoistic of tasks and one of the most valuable. It is not surprising that it is to Professor Devaux that we owe these translations. He has recently devoted a book on Russell's work, the first to appear in french up to now. And then there is his study, his very important study of the influence of Lotze on British philosophy, an influence to which I did not specifically refer before, because I wanted to make this mention of it now, and which was a very notable influence indeed. An Australian may be permitted perhaps, to draw special attention to Devaux's study of Alexander, the only philosopher of consequence who was born in Australia. And then also I must refer to his great historical introduction to philosophy ‘From Thales to Bergson’. He has set an example in this time of nationalism a constant example of bridge-building, which will still be necessary even if the Wittgenstein bridge is completed. And it is for that reason that it seems to me so peculiarly appropriate that we should meet here at Liège for a conference of the International Institute of Philosophy, which itself, is, of course, an attempt at bridge-building, but which can only serve in that way if it is supplemented, by those more considerable, those very considerable efforts of the kind in which Professor Devaux has engaged himself. Thank you.