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THESIS

ON

"THE PHILOSOPHY OF RUDOLPH EUCKEN"

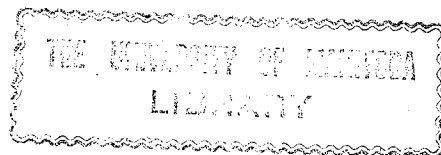
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Herbert Edwin Wise, B. A., 1892.

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF RUDOLPH EUCKEN.

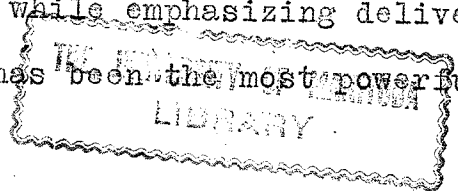
*Edward Murray  
Dr. Schott*

Rudolph Eucken was born at Aurich, East Frisia, on January 5, 1846. Losing his father when but a child, the boy was brought up under the tender care of his mother,—a daughter of a liberal clergyman,—a woman of deep religious experience and intellectual gifts. He early came under the influence of Reuter the theologian becoming deeply interested in the questions of religion and religious experience. At Gottingen, Lotze was his philosophical teacher but was too intellectual to wholly satisfy the religious interest of Eucken. Entering the University of Berlin, Eucken came under the religious spirit of Adolf Trendelenburg a great teacher and a noble idealist, under whom, his pupils entered into both the meaning and spirit of Plato and Aristotle. In 1874 Eucken received a call to succeed the late Kuno Fischer as professor of philosophy in the University of Jena where the atmosphere and traditions of Schiller and Goethe yet linger and where the Kantian philosophy found warm admirers and where Schelling revived modern mysticism.

Wendleband in his "History of Philosophy" describes Eucken as the "creator of a new Metaphysic, not of the schools but of life." The personality of Eucken may be inferred from his writings which contain a passionate setting forth of the fundamentals of the life of the spirit, and nowhere more emphatically than in his dissertations upon the value of the religious life, "yet to know the man is to discover the reason why so many persons from all over the globe have been attracted to his lectures and have become ardent devotees of his philosophy."

I. Eucken's Exposition and Criticism of Individual Systems of Life.

1. The Religious System. As an ethical religion of redemption, Christianity is unique. Its early history was characterized by flight from the world while emphasizing deliverance from guilt and suffering. As a whole it has been the most powerful influence in the life of history.



The modern age, Eucken affirms, is a change of thought through change of life and the different branches of the spiritual life - science and art, politics and economics - seek liberation from the domination of a religious system that they may submit to the sway of a universal system. Thus the whole content of reality is drawn into the new life.

It may be urged, in passing, fuller treatment being reserved till later, that Eucken's attitude toward historical Christianity shows that scant justice is given to normal Christianity as expressed in the New Testament. He says "that which to Christianity was the highest in life and dominated the whole, is regarded as a transvaluation of all values, as a mere accompanying appearance, indeed a danger to the energy of the truth of life." (Life's Basis and Life's Ideal pg.12)

Admitting the pertinency of such observations as "new needs need new forms of life and expression" and that "traditional terminology displeases" it by no means follows "that so far as the life of Culture is concerned, Religion has fallen into complete uncertainty."

2. The System of Immanent Idealism. Varied in its forms, venerable in its age, this form of Idealism presents a striking contrast to the former in that it conceives the two worlds - thought and sense experience - as aspects of a single whole. The Divine is considered as immanent rather than transcendent. Man sets himself in the depths of reality, turning all movements of life to things positive, and guides life from within. Creative activity is now at the centre. Idealism regards itself as superior to religion in that for it formulated conceptions are unnecessary, since the Divine is immediately operative in every sphere of life. Such creative activity is enhanced by the consciousness of an invisible order though accompanied by both a sense of greatness and of limitation.

Eucken regards the above system as inadequate. It is aristocratic, and produces false self-consciousness. Moreover, so easy a solu-

tion is at variance with modern experience as revealed in Realism. It describes the human in terms of the Absolute. Modern life particularizes and discriminates. It contrasts the substance of the spiritual life with that of the form of its existence in man. Then too, modern life presents manifold conflicts. How shall these be subsumed under reality? Either no radical evil, or indifference. Immanent Idealism is one great contradiction, a fascinating illusion.

3. The Naturalistic System. Its main features are:- it receives everything from its relations to the environment; ideas are but abbreviated sense impressions; the beautiful is subordinated to the useful; speculative thought is derided as illusory and the physical is the sole source of inspiration and achievement. Darwinism has been appropriated by the supporters of this view to confirm their contentions.

Several defects are pointed out by Eucken relative to this system. In the first place, naturalism is not <sup>an</sup> equivalent for natural science. The former finds its data in sense impressions, the latter is based on mathematics and physics. Naturalism would give but single sense impressions, while thought transforms sense impressions, and gives us the world as a whole. Naturalism sees in the struggle for existence nothing but the preservation of mere life, it leads to nothing but the starting point and all toil expended is futile. Especially in the two directions of love and work does Eucken show the inadequacy of Naturalism. Quoting Hegel that "love is the greatest of all contradictions and one which the understanding cannot solve," he asks, "into what a state of poverty humanity would fall if a genuine love of this kind were struck out of its possessions?" And referring to work as an aim in itself with what fine scorn Eucken flings down the following challenge! - "How low all educational endeavor, personal guardianship, all advancing of humanity would sink, how humanity would lose all self-forgetting devotion, all bold pressing

forward; how unintelligible the joy in a life's vocation would be, if the idea of utility, solely and entirely, determined conduct, if the chief concern were always how the work paid! Should we not sink in such a case, into a slavery which would enthrall men far more oppressively than any command which a tyrant could be capable of?" ( Life's Basis and Ideal pg.36)

Appeal is made to universal history as evidence of the truth that man extricates himself from dependence upon his environment by evolving a life conscious of itself and possessing a power of transforming the outer life to accord with the inner. The visible world becomes increasingly the expression of the inner one. Such was the case with Greek culture when it contrasted the beautiful with the useful, showing the former to be the only free life. Such was true of Christianity, when a new life was held superior to selfishness as is manifest in the glowing words of Clement of Alexandria, and Thomas A Kempis affirming that the knowledge of God was dearer than eternal bliss.

4. The Socialistic System. This system differs from the Naturalistic in that activity instead of knowledge assumes leadership. The former had breadth of vision, the latter warmth of heart. Eucken sees in modern Sociology a tendency to regard the individual as largely dependent upon social environment and as considering too little the growth of the individual. This is owing to the group principle of the Middle Ages and more recently to the modern organization of labor, and this, with vast accumulations of capital, has precipitated conflict. This was owing largely to the assertion of the individual who had been placed in the background but who saw no reason to believe that such was a fixed condition. The desire for added happiness was not alone but was accompanied by a spiritual striving. Such striving is more evident

in the lower than in the higher classes. In this system man is first and foremost a member of society. A new social culture has arisen. The standard of education has been raised. In life and suffering, men have expressed a greater degree of solidarity.

In criticism of this modern socializing of humanity, Eucken affirms that such procedure limits man to his environment. It is a return to the tribal period of development when the individual was bound up with the social organism and moulded by forms of tradition. But in the course of time independent thought in science, art and religion has dawned. This was owing to an immediate relative reality emerging in the soul of man making the individual feel superior to society and criticizing the prevailing condition of things. "All deepening of culture, all awakening to life, to self-consciousness, is a rising above the life of society, a summoning of the individual to creative activity. Only as an overcoming of intolerable conditions within our own being would a creative activity find a sure direction and a lofty self confidence in order to lead the whole of humanity along new paths." The realm of eternal truth reveals itself immediately to the soul of the individual who must convey it to society. Though the individual has at times felt distinctive and lonely, it is owing to the fact that he may have cut himself adrift from the invisible connections in which his greatness is rooted. (Life's Basis pg.54) Thus the spiritual culture transcends the social. Social culture requires individual subordination. But history reveals the fact that spiritual creations have resulted from vital power and character of a few men. Even Socialism itself, is the product of Marx and a few others. And even these have effected results because of an invisible humanity, because of a nobility in the depths of the soul, and not because of causes merely human. The more they have cut themselves adrift from these invisible connections and have placed themselves on

the basis of experience the more they have lost in spiritual content. "With the obscuring or the complete surrender of these spiritual foundations, a blind adoration of one's country, an increase of unfruitful pride of race, a passionate struggle for external expansion and power, inevitably accompanied by the surrender of humanity and justice, threatens us." The foregoing quotation is a fitting comment on Berhardi's "World Power or Downfall." That Eucken is not unmindful of the defects of his race is manifest by the following quotation which may be duplicated in other portions of his works. In Life's Basis p.368, he says: "We Germans show want of taste and form, a heaviness and formality, a tendency to occupation with detail, and in general with what is petty in life, and as a result of this, an uncultured 'Philistinism' in all spheres of society, and along with this the inclination on the part of individuals to insist on the correctness of their positions, and thus to cause division; finally,- and this is the worst of all - much envy and jealousy."

5. System of Aesthetic Individualism. This seeks to realize an artistic culture in opposition to all restraints of tradition and environment and comes into conflict with religion and morality. To religion, because it involves inner contradictions in our experience. Its blending, by aesthetics, of the spiritual and sensuous, leads to a monistic type of thought. To morality, because with the denial of spiritual activity, the distinction of good and evil loses its significance. Historically, it is seen in the Sophists, Epicureanism, Renaissance and Romanticism. Yet Aesthetic individualism is essentially a modern product. Its chief characteristic is the emphasis it places on mood or disposition. It is receptive, contemplative and appropriative. It is aristocratic and divided humanity into two classes, those having spiritual culture and those that are merely human. It commits the error of affirming that the

mean morality reached by average humanity constitutes the essence of morality.

Inasmuch as the above modern systems are derived from relations, whether it be by environment or by subjectivism, they deny an independent spirituality. But such an inner spiritual experience has evolved throughout history. Modern systems too, experience such, they must draw upon transcendent reality to achieve their tasks.

## II. Eucken's New Philosophy of Life.

The conclusion arrived at is, that we must strive for a new system of life and this arises from our own activity. A universal synthesis is needed. There is that which is involved in the depth of our being and also something to which we hope to advance. This is a task of the whole soul, nor merely of the understanding - a concern of humanity not of the individual alone.

Each system of life had its own kind of experience. Each saw of the infinite that in particular which corresponded to the main direction of its inner movements. A consideration of all the facts makes it quite clear that a decision depends neither upon externals nor upon individuals, but upon the inner life and the whole, and further that cognition does not give a solution to the problems of life, but that life itself has to reach a solution through its own organization and construction. Investigation into the various works of Eucken, now translated into English, gives the following interpretation, as to the meaning given to the much employed term "spiritual life."

It is immanent in man and yet transcends him. In the spiritual life we recognize a new world or realm of inwardness, which becomes independent. In genuine spiritual life, all movement should proceed from the whole and should be sustained by the whole, even when it is concentrated in the individual departments and tendencies. To the spiritual life a universal character is indispensable. Union of the spiritual life



with man, its being firmly rooted in him, is seen to be at the same time something old and something new. Something old in so far as it must have been existent and in some way effective from the beginning; something new in so far as its distinct emergence and its transition to a self-determining activity must alter the condition of things essentially, in fact must turn life as a whole into a problem. The chief impulse of the spiritual life is that it wills to liberate us from increasing conflict of man with himself. It is taking up of the whole into himself. If a vital whole, a common truth, did not exist within us, all our relations would be external; we could not follow common aims in life and endeavor, or have common experiences; we could not think and live for one another, or develop spiritual contents in different departments, such as those of law and religion, science and art,—give to them a cognate character. It is always the presence of a self-conscious reality that binds humanity together inwardly. (Life's Basis and Life's Ideal pp 79, 135, 141, 152, 155, 170, 178, 371) Also from "Main Currents" are the following: To spiritual life belongs absoluteness, infinity, complete control of reality. Man is in time and above time. It is a movement of reality toward freedom. It is before everything else, a whole. Through the participation in a spiritual world superior to time we can secure an eternal in the core of our life, and it becomes the task of tasks to take this up in our activity and convert that which our spiritual life indicates to us into our full possession.— pp.302, 304, 325.

In "Truth and Religion" are given the progressive stages of the spiritual life.

1. The Emancipation of life from the small self and the merely social order. Truth is a thing in itself. Morality is an unconquerable primal phenomenon of spiritual life.

2. The Inward antithesis is overcome. In definite spiritual activity

all individual actions are spanned by an aggregate living activity, and it is through reaching such, and in no other way that life can gain an inner unity and solidity - gain the character of a definite reality. Such a reality can never fall on us from without; it is obtained through a great struggle in the welding-heat of subject and object which results through a turn towards activism. This welding process, however, takes place not somewhere between the inner and the outer world but purely in an inner world which has taken up into itself the antithesis.

3. The Winning of a Universal Self. Reality can become our own life only if our activity transforms itself into a self activity, if it brings to expression a living self; and this can happen only when the encompassing unity remains no mere point of relation, but when, through the strenuous elaboration of a thorough-going and durable life within it, it wins a nature and a substance which affects all the remaining life. It is only when the encompassing Whole overcomes the scattered manifold and appropriates it by a gradual and thorough reconstruction, that there arises a reality resting within its own essence. (pp.122, 138, 151, 152)

"Eucken's Spiritual Life," says Dr. Tudor Jones, "is not, opposed to mental life but is contained in it as the bud is in the blossom. An entrance into the spiritual life is not something to know but rather something to do and be." Briefly we may summarize the foregoing selections from the various works of Eucken, as follows: Man belongs to nature and is more than nature. This is an inevitable result from the process of thought. Thought demands a whole and passes judgment upon the whole. In everything life seeks a deeper basis. An inwardness wins an independence of the environment, and exercises on the environment a transforming power. It is from the inner presence of a determining and moulding process of life that thought itself obtains a characteristic

form and is able to impress itself upon things, and so subject them to itself. A new life distinct from that of nature arises in the soul. But what is this new reality? The chief impulse of the spiritual life is that it wills to liberate us from the purely human to give us a share in the life of the whole. It becomes an urgent duty to break through the narrow limitations of the natural ego, and to conduct our life from the point of view of objective truth and comprehensiveness.

Associated with the "spiritual life" is that of "Activism" which Eucken terms a "profession of faith." Contrasting the term from Pragmatism and Voluntarism, to which it is similar, Eucken points out that Pragmatism is "more inclined to shape the world and life in accordance with human conditions and needs, whereas Activism seeks to elevate above mere man into a universal spiritual life." "If," says Eucken, "our life is so full of problems and tasks, if we do not find ourselves in a complete world of reason, but if we must with all our powers, work toward such a world, we shall turn to Activism as the only help possible. In opposition to the desultoriness and transitoriness of life it requires a powerful unification and organization; it advances to methods and laws of the object in opposition to a persistence in contradiction; to a further construction of the first impression in contrast to comfortable complacency; to a courageous continuation and building up of life in opposition to a complacent acceptance of destiny. It gives to life a dramatic character in contrast to a lyrical sentimental one and along with this it can acknowledge fully that a genuine drama usually contains much that is lyrical." (Life's Basis pg.261)

Resulting from the principle of Activism, a New Idealism is inevitable. Such an idealism does not stand on the defensive, it presses forward. It is positive and not merely critical. This idealism represents a new stage of reality. It draws its life from the spiritual world

as a whole. It is intrinsically superior to all human affairs, and makes reality a reality of true value.

In his "Main Currents" Eucken applies this Activism to the solution of the problems, - Thought and Experience, Mechanism and Organic, Monism and Dualism, Society and the Individual, Personality and Character, Immanence and Transcendence, Determinism and Freedom. It is in connection with the latter antithesis that Eucken opens himself to the charge of irrationalism. In referring to the origin of the spiritual life he says, "If it be asked how such a self activity is possible and how it can be explained in relation to things as a whole we must confess with complete frankness our inability to offer any answer." The synthesis that is effected by Eucken reminds one of the Fichtean solution along which it shall take place: but in "so far as the individual is spiritual it must be won by our own personal activity, separated from what is alien to it and recognized as central."

The gist of the matter of Activism is that life does not consist of ready made data; that man is not straight-away a personality there lies in him the power to become a personality. This principle holds true of nations as well as of individuals.

### III. The Place of Religion in Eucken's System.

Emphasis has been laid upon the fact that the Spiritual Life of Eucken is all embracing. It is superior to all manifestations of nature. It is independent and timeless. It is a new kind of reality and is possible to man only by the outgoings of his deepest Self. But this activity of man explains his religious life. Religion is not limited to any of the so called faculties of the soul for if it be but intellectual, or affective or volitional, only segments of his complex nature may be touched. Eucken shows that there is a point in the soul where the three are conjoined. This point reveals the fact of the soul's