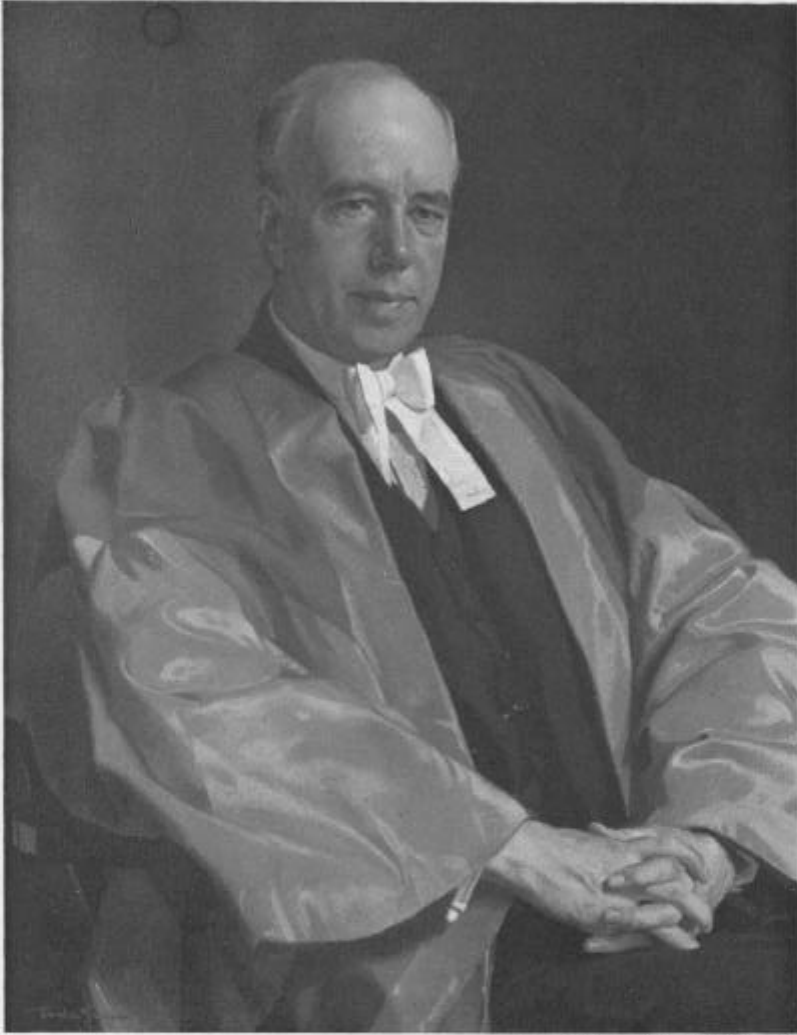


PLATE XL



*From a portrait by Sir James Gunn, R.A.*

SIR DAVID ROSS, K.B.E.

## SIR DAVID ROSS

1877-1971

AMONG the qualities which enabled Sir David Ross to render his many services in scholarship and in public affairs, it is perhaps natural to think first of his physical health, almost uninterrupted through a very long life, and of the powers of concentration and sheer industry, in which he was exceptionally favoured. Another quality was that he never found it difficult to work with other men, whether as superiors, subordinates, or equals. In ordinary conversation he was sparing of words, and he had no taste for personal gossip; but whenever he had occasion to write about men whom he had known, he revealed himself as a good observer, clear-sighted, never censorious or intolerant, and given to warm appreciation. This may be seen in the notices of three of his fellow philosophers, A. E. Taylor, J. S. Muirhead, and C. C. J. Webb, which he contributed to these *Proceedings*, or in his brief notices in the *Dictionary of National Biography* relating to L. R. Phelps, his predecessor as Provost of Oriel, and to four more philosophers, Shadworth Hodgson, J. A. Smith, Dawes Hicks, and H. A. Prichard. Of J. L. Stocks, a man younger than himself, he wrote: 'all in all, he was one of the best men of his generation, and I have never known a better.'<sup>1</sup>

He was not indeed one of those students of human nature who try to penetrate to intimacies, or to collect all the available data about their subjects. He valued information only when it could serve a reasonable purpose. He once went to an Oxford bookshop to look through the library of a friend who had recently died, and there he found offered for sale the mark-books which his friend had used as an examiner in the final honour school of *Literae Humaniores*. It is well known that the comments written in such books, often during *viva voce* examinations, throw a revealing light on both candidates and examiners. Ross's immediate reaction was to buy the books and put them in his dustbin. In the wrong hands they might have been used indiscreetly or maliciously; but in any case, it was not in Ross's nature to explore other men's secrets, and still less to write any

<sup>1</sup> In the note on Stocks's contribution to studies in Greek philosophy, in Stocks's posthumous book *Reason and Intuition* (1939), p. xxii.

introspective account of his own intellectual development. He does not appear ever to have kept a diary.

William David Ross was born on 15 April 1877 at Thurso, the most northerly town of Britain, but he spent his first six years mainly in the most southerly state of India, Travancore. His father, John Ross, was Principal of the Maharajah's College there, having begun his career as the very young schoolmaster of a village in Caithness. David did not altogether lose touch with the North; as a boy he once saw the midnight sun from the island of Unst in Shetland; but after he came back from India to Scotland for his education, his base was Edinburgh. He was the third of four sons who survived to manhood, and the only one who followed an academic career. His next older brother, Donald, became a minister in the Free Kirk, afterwards reunited with the Church of Scotland. David seems never to have gone through any religious or intellectual crisis of a kind to alienate him from the principles of his early upbringing. Later in life he became an elder at St. Columba's Church in Oxford. In June 1946 he gave the address (unprinted) at the annual Commemoration of Westminster College, Cambridge, and in this, like others before him, he cautioned his hearers against the temptation to reinforce religious apologetics by calling in aid the transitory fashions of philosophy. Some of his pupils regarded the determinism which he maintained in his writings<sup>1</sup> as a philosophical expression of Calvinism, and he seems not to have disagreed with them, though he does not refer to Calvinism in his writings.

In Edinburgh he attended the Royal High School as a Bursar, and then the University as Bursar and Scholar. In 1895 he took the degree of M.A. with first class honours in classics. In the preface to his first book,<sup>2</sup> he named as one of the two teachers to whom he owed most R. P. Hardie, who lectured on logic and metaphysics. Ross went on to Oxford, having won a Domus Exhibition at Balliol. There were many personal links between Balliol and the Scottish universities. The Master, Edward Caird, had been a professor of Philosophy in Scotland. One of the Tutors, the second of the two teachers to whom Ross acknowledged his greatest obligations, was J. A. Smith, who had both graduated and taught at Edinburgh. One year junior to Ross was a schoolfellow and cousin on his mother's side,

<sup>1</sup> Especially in his *Foundations of Ethics* (1939), pp. 208–51.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristotle* (1923).

Arthur Berriedale Keith, one of four remarkably gifted brothers. An exact contemporary was W. G. S. Adams, a Glasgow graduate and afterwards Warden of All Souls. Little is recorded of Ross's undergraduate life outside his studies. In these he did consistently well, winning not only first classes in classical Moderations and the final honour school of *Literae Humaniores*, but also the Jenkyns Exhibition, the principal college award for these subjects, for which a separate examination was held.

These successes opened the way for a career in Oxford, and Ross did not need to wait for an appointment. In September 1900 he became a Lecturer at Oriel. In the next *University Calendar* his subject is given as classics, but he was engaged to teach ancient history, in which he had little interest, and before long the needs of the college altered and he settled down to the congenial work of teaching philosophy. Meanwhile, a month after his appointment at Oriel, he was elected to a fellowship by examination at Merton, where his Edinburgh teacher R. P. Hardie had been an undergraduate and one of the Fellows was F. H. Bradley, the most admired philosophical writer in Oxford. Ross, however, did not hold this fellowship for the full period of seven years. After two of them a fellowship at Oriel fell vacant and he was elected to this, holding it in the event until 1929.

Oriel, with twelve Fellows, twelve Scholars (all in classics), and fewer than a hundred Commoners, was one of the smallest Oxford colleges. Its atmosphere and interests were changing as those of other colleges were changing under the influence of reforms from within and without. Half the Fellows were still in Anglican Orders; but, for the first time since its foundation, the college had a layman as Provost. This was the Homeric scholar David Binning Monro, a considerable figure in the world of learning, a Balliol man, a Scottish laird, and a Glasgow graduate, who had taught in the college for twenty years before becoming its head. His name suffices to show that in Oriel Ross did not enter an alien or unsympathetic society. It was an interesting and even a distinguished body; but ill fortune had prevented it from reaping the full benefits of the new liberties. The agricultural depression had reduced the income of the college, and compelled it to reduce the number of fellowships. Marked changes for the better began in the same year when Ross became a Fellow, with the munificent legacy of Cecil Rhodes. There followed a period of all-round improvement, with new buildings, larger numbers, and higher academic standards. But the pivot on which all the changes turned was the teaching provided by the college, and

all Oxford recognised that Oriel was uncommonly fortunate in its teachers for Greats, the final school of *Literae Humaniores*. Ross was in charge of the philosophical side, and Mr. M. N. Tod of the ancient history, a memorable partnership. In commenting on the essays of his pupils Ross was less apt to talk at length than most tutors, but he set an example of relevance and precision. He transmitted his conviction that philosophy was supremely worth studying, and one of his remarks which has been recorded by a pupil should be understood as a more than half humorous understatement. The pupil was taking leave of his Tutor after distinguishing himself in the schools, and said that in his chosen career he would not be able to keep up his philosophy. Ross replied: 'You will soon forget all you have learnt, but there is one thing Greats will have done for you. You will always know when a man is talking nonsense.'<sup>1</sup>

A college tutor might educate his pupils not only intellectually but in a much wider sense, and working with Ross had this value not only for undergraduates but also for his younger colleagues. One of these has written: 'he helped many of us with his kind and robust commonsense in the business of our daily lives, and with his encouragement in the early steps of our careers.'<sup>2</sup> Not overburdened with routine duties, he worked hard by choice. He took to playing golf and lawn tennis regularly and proficiently. He was a tall man and held himself well, with a natural dignity; his temper was hardly ever ruffled, and he never lost his self-possession. In 1906 he married Miss Edith Ogden, whom he had come to know through the sister of his Balliol friend W. G. S. Adams. Under the old-fashioned statutes of Oriel his fellowship lapsed, but he was re-elected immediately, and from that time his married home became a new centre in the college life. Many Oriel men remember playing charades there with his young family, or joining them on reading parties in the vacations. Two members of the family circle came afterwards to occupy leading positions in Oxford: Herschel Margoliouth, who married Ross's sister-in-law, became Secretary of Faculties, and A. R. W. Harrison, one of his sons-in-law, became Warden of Merton.

Ross was a liberal. In politics he spoke on liberal platforms in the city, and he signed the addresses of liberal candidates for the university seats in Parliament. His opinions on economic and social matters agreed with the British liberalism of the time,

<sup>1</sup> The Right Rev. F. R. Barry, *Period of my Life* (1971), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. R. W. B. Burton in *The Oriel Record* (1971), p. 23.

and they were rooted in his own disposition. Graham Wallas, in his book *Human Nature in Politics*, published in 1910, questioned the prevailing assumption of liberalism that political control could and should be entrusted to the reasonableness of the mass electorate. Ross was unmoved, and he continued to believe in spite of all the disillusioning events of the following years that almost all men were capable of acting rationally, not least in their capacity as citizens.

Between the simple public liberalism of party and the simple personal liberalism of confidence in human nature a web of practices and conventions shielded the innumerable freedoms which were valued in daily life. Oxford had its own home-grown practices, as had its equally free and self-governing sister Cambridge. In excluding religious tests from the selection of candidates for admission as undergraduates, the colleges went further than the University Tests Act of 1871 compelled them to go. There were no tests connected with race or nationality. A University Statute forbade examiners to take any matters into account which did not arise immediately from the examination. In appointments to teaching and administrative offices, the principle *detur digniori* was interpreted in the same spirit. Almost all university and college business was conducted by known standards which could be openly avowed. Not since 1877–81 had any government interfered with academic affairs. No one thought of the function of the Crown in appointing the Regius professors, or the representation of government departments in the electoral bodies of a few other chairs, as constituting such interference.

There was in existence a club, formed in 1889, with a printed programme of measures 'to maintain the character of the University as a home of Literature and Science', which took the professorial as distinct from the college point of view; but some of those who agreed with its aims were by no means better satisfied with the professors than with the colleges. In 1904 the club added to its programme the statement that it wished to proceed by co-operation with the colleges. In 1907–14 Lord Curzon, as Chancellor of the University, initiated reforms which marked some little advance in the direction of favouring study and improving finance and organization; but there was little effective pressure for more. The younger men in the university who wanted reforms were interested in new questions. They wanted to extend the opportunity of university education to wider social classes; to promote adult extra-mural education, and to make

the position of women in Oxford fully equal to that of men. For these purposes some were willing to divert existing endowments, and others to accept financial aid from the state. For the time being they formed no organization, but a good many of them supported these movements, and Ross was in sympathy with them.

When Ross wrote of the ancient schools of philosophy as 'bodies of men united by a common spirit and sharing the same fundamental views but following out their own enquiries independently', he might have included the Oxford philosophers of his time in the same description. For half the year, during the University terms, they all lived within an easy walk of each other's college rooms. Nearly all of them were teachers, teaching by lectures or by dialogue with their pupils or both. They constantly met for discussion among themselves. The movements of their opinions appear in outline in their published works, and with much detail in the minutes of their societies or in chance records of their informal discussions. In London the Aristotelian Society provided a meeting-place with other British philosophers, and from 1888 printed its *Proceedings*. Oxford also had its Aristotelian Society, which kept more strictly to the subject indicated by its name, and met weekly during term, numbering rather more than a dozen members, to read and discuss the texts of Aristotle. In Oxford the study of Aristotle had gone on continuously from the Middle Ages, if not without ups and downs; but it entered on a new phase of activity about 1880. When Ross was born Ingram Bywater was becoming the most prominent Oxford representative of an effort to bring Greek studies up to the best continental standards. He was President of the Oxford Aristotelian Society from 1885 until 1908. A close ally of his was Charles Cannan, himself something of an Aristotelian scholar, who became Secretary to the Delegates of the University Press in 1898. These two were the main promoters of the project of a translation of all the works of Aristotle. In the first year of publication there appeared the translation of the *Metaphysics* by Ross. For the first five years the series was edited jointly by J. A. Smith and Ross, but after that by Ross alone. This editorial work was exemplary, both on the side of scholarship and on the equally necessary side of organization. The task was completed by the publication of the eleventh volume (numbered iii) in 1931. Ross had contributed another volume to it, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and as late as 1952 he added a twelfth, supplementary, volume of *Select Fragments*.

The translation of Aristotle was a rope on which many studies were strung. First there were plain texts of the Greek originals in the series of Oxford Classical Texts. Of these, five volumes, the Rhetoric (1959), De Anima (1955), Physics (1950), Politics (1957), and Selected Fragments (1955), were edited by Ross alone, and a sixth, the Prior and Posterior Analytics, by Ross and Dr. Minio-Paluello, as late as 1964. The most substantial of the Oxford Aristotelian publications of this period were the full-dress editions of single texts with introductions and commentaries, of which Ross made no less than five, the Metaphysics (1924), the De Anima (1956/61), the Parva Naturalia (1955), the Physics (1936), and the Analytics (1949). The Eudemian Ethics, begun by Ross, and continued by Dr. Minio-Paluello, is still to be published.

The choice of contributors to the Oxford Classical Texts lay with the Delegates of the Press, and Ross would have been glad if the Metaphysics had fallen to his lot instead of Werner Jaeger's. By a coincidence Ross's first independent book, entitled simply *Aristotle*, appeared in the same year, 1923, in which the Oxford Press published in English Jaeger's *Aristotle, Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, the translator being Ross's former pupil Dr. Richard Robinson. In the preface to his own book Ross spoke handsomely of the German original as a book 'to which I should have owed much more had it reached me before mine was in the Press'. The two authors developed a friendship based on mutual respect. Ross's book was a plain summary of Aristotle's life and works, by no means without critical judgements, but without much speculation or extended discussion. It immediately took the place which it still occupies, as an indispensable handbook. In 1922 Ross became a Delegate of the Press, the Secretary by that time being another of his distinguished pupils, R. W. Chapman. From then until 1952, when he reached the statutory age of retirement, Ross did much valuable work for the Press.

As one publication succeeded another he came to be recognized as the leading authority on Aristotle not only in England but in the entire learned world. As a textual critic his strength was in a quality which he admired when he found it in other scholars, for instance Housman, straightforward good sense. He did not slur over niceties, but his aim was to provide the best possible working text and he was not interested in collating manuscripts or tracing their affiliations as ends in themselves. He was sparing of conjecture, and in deciding between alternative



readings he relied most on his accumulated knowledge of all Aristotle's writings. The Introductions to his major editions present this systematic knowledge with acute analysis, steady judgement, and lucid expression. They are his lasting monument. It has been written that at the right moment he codified the Oxford tradition of Aristotelian scholarship. No doubt he assimilated the tradition and did not break away from the limitations of its methods, but his work was fundamentally his own.

No change in the style or method of Ross's Aristotelian work suggests that his way of life was completely upset by the first German war, but there is a blank in the list of his publications from 1915 to 1923. In the former year he joined the army with a commission on the special list, and took up the first of a succession of posts, all of which had to do with the supply of munitions. When the armistice came he was a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Munitions, with the rank of Major, and an O.B.E.

The temporary public servants from the universities impressed the professionals favourably. Besides being clear-headed and good on paper they set an example of disinterested attention to business, not disturbed by personal rivalries. Some of them stayed permanently in the civil service after the war, and others, of whom Ross was one, were persuaded to accept part-time duties. He was never without some London engagements for the next thirty years, and fortunately many of them were of a kind in which his personal qualities were specially useful; that is to say they were quasi-judicial. He had early experience as a Deputy Chairman of the Made-up Textile Trade Board. Trade Boards existed to fix minimum rates of wages. They consisted of representatives of employers and employees, together with impartial appointed members, of whom, in the early 1920s, about a third were professors or university lecturers, most of them serving, as Ross did, on more boards than one.<sup>1</sup> He did so well in this and other public work that in 1928 he was made a K.B.E.

He had, as a matter of course, returned to his Oxford duties as soon as possible. The University filled up with men from the services, whose needs were less simple but more pressing than those of undergraduates in earlier times. Ross took his personal

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Sells, *The British Trade Board System* (1923), p. 14; G. D. H. Cole, *British Trade Unionism Today* (1939), pp. 133-42.

share, and he was also interested in the changes by which the University and the colleges adapted themselves to a new situation. For the first time the University had to apply for government money. It took the form of a grant of £2,000 a year to purchase foreign books for the Bodleian, a sum so modest, to meet a need so urgent, that it was unopposed. The next step was the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Ross was a member of the 'Oxford Reform Committee' which put the liberal proposals before the commissioners, with some recommendations about research and about the natural sciences, but without favouring any encroachment on the autonomy of the colleges. Among the twenty or so members of the committee there was not a single professor. Besides Ross there were four philosophers, Prichard, Stocks, A. D. Lindsay, and Walter Moberly. The commissioners printed the committee's four reports, all of which Ross signed, very prominently, and in general adopted its recommendations.<sup>1</sup> The final stage was the granting of new statutes to the colleges. Oriel obtained statutes less old-fashioned than those of some other colleges. It took no power to prolong the tenure of its future heads beyond the age of seventy. By a vote, in which Ross was with the majority, it decided that a Fellow might not be deprived of his fellowship by a simple decision of the Provost and Fellows, but only, after inquiry, by the Lord Chancellor.

For the time being little changed in the conditions under which the philosophers worked. Ross had come to stand high among them, and on the strength of his Aristotelian work he was elected a Fellow of our Academy in 1927. Very soon after that he acquired a notable reputation in another branch of philosophy. Oxford philosophers, unless they were tied down by the statutory duties of professorships, or gave way to established lecturers, were almost entirely free to choose the subjects of their lectures. Ross began early to give courses of lectures on ethics. He was not alone in this: the British moralists were the subject of a strong tradition in both Oxford and Cambridge. This interest had been refreshed in 1903 by G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*. In 1923, when J. A. Stewart handed over his duties as White's Professor of Moral Philosophy, for reasons of health, his choice fell on Ross. Ross carried out the duties much to the satisfaction of the college tutors, who advised undergraduates on their choice of lectures, and in 1927, when Stewart resigned, Ross's chances of election to the chair were rated high. It

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 1588 (1922).

happened that he had taken leave of absence to spend part of the winter in Rome. From there he wrote as follows<sup>1</sup>

Two possible candidates for the chair wrote to me some time ago, one pressing me to stand and the other saying that he would not stand if I did. I had therefore to come to a decision in time to let them make their arrangements if they were to stand; and after a good deal of reflection I decided not to stand myself. I had various reasons for this. One is that I consider Prichard a better moral philosopher (and philosopher generally) than myself, and as he is also a great friend I should like to see him elected. I feel this so strongly that if I could have *secured* his election by not standing I should have had no hesitation.

Another reason was a more general one. Though, of course, a Deputy Professor carries no claim to a permanent post, it is likely that some at least of the electors will approach the choice with a presumption in favour of the person who has 'done the work' (if he has done it for a considerable time). The question will then come to be, not perhaps 'Is the D. P. too bad to be appointed?', but 'Is X so much better than the D. P. that we should be justified in passing him over?', and so the University may not get the best man. I have reasons for knowing that this danger is a real one, and I therefore thought it was better that the electors should have a fair choice with the D. P. out of the way.

Thirdly, though I have been very glad to specialize on morals for five years, I was not very keen on doing so permanently. I seem to have rather exhausted my ideas on the subject in the book I have been trying to write here; and on the whole I prefer working on metaphysics, ancient and the most modern.

Fourthly, I was very reluctant to leave Oriel. When you have spent most of your life in the service of a college, the place itself becomes dear to you; and friendships made there are not so easily kept up elsewhere, nor new ones made in their place.

The election fell out as Ross wished: H. A. Prichard became White's Professor, and as long as he lived the friendship of the two men was unbroken. So were Ross's Oriel friendships. It was known that the Provost of Oriel, L. R. Phelps, had no fixed intention of staying in office, as he was entitled to do, for life; but his health was robust, and the possibility of his resignation had not influenced Ross's decision against competing for White's professorship. In 1929, however, Phelps did resign. Ross was elected to succeed him, and held office until, in 1947 at the age of seventy, he retired under the new superannuation statute.

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter to the present writer dated from Rome 27 Jan. 1928.

Although this promotion altered the character of his prescribed duties, it made little change in the amount of time that they required, and his work as a scholar did not suffer. The book on which he worked in Rome was well advanced. On 29 April he read a paper on 'The Nature of Morally Good Action' to the London Aristotelian Society, in which he submitted some of his main arguments for criticism, and in October 1930 he dated the preface to the book, which appeared before the end of the year. In this preface he acknowledges his obligation to G. E. Moore's writings; but he says that his main obligation has been to Prichard. He owes the main lines of the first two chapters to Prichard's *Mind* article of 1912 'Does Moral Philosophy rest on a Mistake?' and to unpublished work from the same hand. Prichard had read Ross's manuscript; they agreed about rightness, but to a large extent disagreed about what things were good. The title of the book was happily chosen: *The Right and the Good* indicated exactly what it was about, and, judiciously reviewing the current phases of what has been called the intuitionist doctrine, it became a standard work. When he wrote in the letter which has been quoted above that he seemed to have rather exhausted his ideas on morals, Ross did himself an injustice. The invitation to deliver Gifford Lectures prompted him to write another major book, which was published in 1939 as *Foundations of Ethics*. Its scope is wider than that of the earlier work, and in it he not only pursued his arguments with Moore and Prichard, but examined equally minutely the work of other contemporaries, including Professors Broad and Ayer. Even so his strict adherence to the line of his arguments led some readers to underestimate the width of his reading: he had, for instance, devoted much attention to psychological writers whose works he never discussed in print. His last ethical work, published as late as 1954, *Kant's Ethical Theory* was a commentary on the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*.

When Ross was elected Provost of Oriel in 1929 his attention was already turning towards ethics, and he published nothing on Aristotle for the next seven years or so. That by no means implies that he ceased to read and reflect about Aristotle. There was, however, only a short untroubled interval before his college work became more difficult as the world-wide economic depression came about. It had its effect on college finance, and on the ability of parents to educate their sons at Oxford or at the schools from which Oriel drew its undergraduates. In almost all British academic institutions research was curtailed

and new projects were postponed. And this shortage of resources cast new shadows on the prospects of academic freedom. The growth of natural science had been the main factor in an increase of the Treasury grant to Oxford, step by step, to more than a million pounds. The two older universities still carried on their internal affairs without any ministerial interference. An elaborately balanced system disguised their real dependence on the state. There were no apprehensions that in the future the Treasury, through its University Grants Committee, might impose its own wishes, overruling the joint or several deliberations of the universities. Meanwhile on the Continent, in one country after another, state control was crudely used to subdue university teaching to the dominant political notions. Displaced scholars began to appear in far greater numbers than had come after the Russian revolution. Ross had seen the surface of Italian fascism for himself in 1928, not, it should be admitted, with alarm or repugnance. In the nineteen-thirties he came into direct contact with students of his own subjects who had found life in Germany or Italy intolerable. He made several of them, with their wives, welcome in his home, doing all he could to help them to rebuild their lives. Happily his wife had been educated partly in Germany. Several of his guests became not only devoted friends, but closely associated in his work. Three who should be mentioned in this capacity were Dr. Richard Walzer, Dr. Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, and Dr. Raymond Klibansky.

The foreign scholars, men and women, needed personal advice and support, but they were so many that their coming raised major academic problems. These problems were less complicated in the humanities than in the natural sciences, especially those connected with national defence, or in professional studies such as medicine, where employment raised the question of qualifications to practice; but there was a need for a comprehensive organisation, and this was necessarily centred on London. The Society for the Protection of Science and Learning was created. The British Academy played a part in this admirable work, but it could only be a minor part. Its officers reported to the Society about individual scholars, and it made one small personal grant of money through the Society. When the Society was incorporated in 1936 the President of the Academy was *ex officio* one of the six trustees, the other two *ex officio* Trustees being the Archbishop of Canterbury and the President of the Royal Society. When the Society wound up its business, more

than twenty years later, it was noted that of the displaced scholars whom it had assisted seventeen had become Fellows of the Academy and six, who had either returned to their own countries or moved to America, had become Corresponding Fellows.<sup>1</sup>

In the years 1935 to 1939 inclusive Sir David Ross was one of the British Academy's representatives at the meetings of the Union Académique Internationale. At these meetings the disruption of central European learning was seen from a special point of view, that of its effects on the collective enterprises over which the Union kept watch. Ross showed exceptional skill in salvaging what could be kept afloat and at the same time trimming down ambitious projects which could no longer be expected to succeed. The project for a *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi* inevitably ran into difficulties, and it is evident, even from the arid *Comptes Rendus* of the Union, that Ross was largely responsible for the sensible arrangements which the *Aristoteles Latinus* and the *Corpus Platonicum* are still moving forward at the present time.

In the second of the years in which he represented it at the Union, he was elected President of the British Academy. The Secretary, Sir Frederic Kenyon, was a good deal his senior, and had himself been President. He had innumerable links with men and institutions at home and abroad, with Ross, for instance, the link that Kenyon had edited the one newly discovered work of Aristotle. No Englishman then living had done more for the international comity of learning. In those years when the opportunities of free study were abridged it seemed right to keep up all that could be kept up of the machinery of co-operation. In May 1937 the Union Académique accepted the British proposal for a *Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi*. In his presidential address for that year Ross spoke with feeling about the refugees. 'Our task is easier in this country than in some others and academic freedom is not threatened. All the more does it become us to hold out a helping hand to those who suffer from its loss elsewhere.' He was confident that even in countries where nationalism, racialism, communism, fascism

<sup>1</sup> Lord Beveridge, *A Defence of True Learning* (1959), pp. 26, 58, 64, 123. This book is a history of the S.P.S.L.; the Society's papers have been deposited at the Bodleian Library. In the Academy's Annual Reports for 1940-1 and 1941-2 are brief accounts of the tribunal set up by the Academy to advise the Home Office on the exemption or release of foreign scholars in its field who were interned or in danger of internment. Ross had ceased to be President but served as a member of this important body.

had reached their extreme forms, much good work was being done by quiet scholars. But there was no opportunity for the Academy or anyone else to oppose the barbarian advance.

It was indeed clear that where learning was oppressed by the deliberate action of governments, nothing less powerful than a government could resist with any effect. A small incident at Ross's first council meeting as President pointed in this direction. It was decided to take action to check the destruction of works of art in the Spanish civil war; but no action could be taken except through the Foreign Office. At the next council meeting another Foreign Office question came up. The British Council, after some years of activity under the authority of the Foreign Office, had applied for incorporation. It was to promote knowledge of the United Kingdom and of the English language and to develop cultural relations with other countries. This was a modest beginning of those kinds of cultural propaganda and cultural representation in which some Continental countries had long experience. The Academy was one of the bodies to which the Privy Council appropriately referred the application for a Royal Charter. Some idealists would have left as much of this work as possible to the League of Nations Committee on Intellectual Co-operation. Some thought that the semi-official status of the British Council would close doors against it, and believed that only the traditional internationalism of the universities could maintain high standards of academic quality. The whole project, however, seemed remote. There had been no correspondence between the two bodies, and the Director General of the British Council, formerly a cavalry officer and military attaché, had never heard of the British Academy. It offered no observations on the application for a Charter.

In the following year, 1937, it was decided to invite the Union Académique, which had intimated that it would accept such an invitation, to hold its session in London. The meetings were held in the Academy's rooms in May 1939. There were suitable relaxations, such as a government dinner and an excursion to Oxford, but the atmosphere of crisis hung heavy: some of the Fellows were embarrassed by the impossibility of discussing European affairs frankly with their guests. In May representatives had to be appointed for an International Archaeological Congress which was to be held in Berlin in the summer. Not because of the imminence of war, but because of the totalitarian and anti-Semitic policy of the German regime, no member of the archaeological section was willing to represent the Academy.

Even then, however, the Council agreed that the Secretary should go to Berlin rather than that the Academy should be unrepresented. In the end Sir John Myres kept Kenyon company. They attended the Congress, as late as August. They reported that they were 'very hospitably received but owing to the political situation they had been obliged to leave Berlin before the end of the Congress.'

The war came, but in London its effects were felt so gradually that the Academy, like many other bodies, was able to keep its regular activities moving, though with some limitations, and on the whole its work throughout the war (elections, lectures, sectional meetings, publications, and so forth) was surprisingly continuous. Many of the Fellows took up government work, but the Academy had neither staff nor premises that it could hand over for war work. It seemed a black day when in February 1940 the Chancellor of the Exchequer wholly suspended the Treasury grant of £2,000. Kenyon sent a strong letter of protest, and the Council agreed that in the event of an unfavourable answer the President should consider the desirability of a public protest in the press. No such protest was made, and it cannot be believed that it would have made any impression. The Academy did in fact find enough money to tide over the temporary stringency; the Chancellor invited it to apply for a renewal of the grant in 1941, and in the event it was then partially restored.

Ross handed over the presidency after his four-year term; but it is right to mention here a sequel which came after the war. The war had inevitably stopped all international academic representation, and it was not until 1947 that the U.A.I. could be reconstituted. At its first meeting Ross was not only a British representative but President of the Union. Once more he was able, in what might have been a moment of chaos, to do his characteristic work of singling out the viable plans for the future. According to Kenyon's emphatic testimony, it was due to Ross that the meetings, instead of losing themselves in talk, resolved on definite plans of action. This was his greatest service to the British Academy.

During the course of the war Ross was called upon for further public service, especially in the field with which he was most familiar. The war-time reorganization of the machinery for industrial relations included, as a sort of keystone, a National Arbitration Tribunal. Ross was chairman of this from its foundation in 1940 throughout the war and after it, until he reached the



retiring age of 75. When the Tribunal had sat for its first 18 months and disposed of 200 cases he wrote an article surveying its work. He was impressed by the enthusiastic co-operation of the Trade Unionists in the war, and by the confidence of the average Englishman and Scotsman that their temporary sacrifices of liberty would not prove to be permanent. No less was he impressed by the good temper, the common sense and feeling for justice, and the moderation of all concerned.<sup>1</sup> These were the very qualities which came naturally to him, and he reinforced them in all the bodies that he belonged to. By the time when he wrote this article there was another to add to the list of these bodies, and in this too he took the chair until he reached retiring age. It was the Civil Service Tribunal, and on it one of his two colleagues was Leonard Woolf, the husband of a celebrated wife. In his autobiography Woolf wrote a few lines divulging the curious fact that he sat on this tribunal for seventeen years, although he thought the whole system absurd and a waste of time. Instead of assessing separately the deserts of innumerable groups of civil servants, he would have preferred to divide all the government services into a small number of classes, each with uniform rates of pay and conditions of employment. We may be sure that Ross did not agree with this radical criticism. Nor is he likely to have felt that the Tribunal misspent the day in December 1944 (with German missiles about) in its office overlooking Regent's Park, deciding whether certain classes of officers in the prison service should receive 'time and a quarter' for all hours worked in excess of 88 hours a fortnight.<sup>2</sup>

By pure coincidence a few weeks after Ross ceased to be President of the British Academy, his turn came round to take office as Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University. The University had made its preparations for the eventuality of war in good time beforehand, and conditions were not confused as they had been in 1914-18. The government had taken over some buildings for its own use; others, especially laboratories, were doing work required for the war, with more or less of their own staff. Senior and junior members had been assigned in an orderly manner to national service according to their qualifications. During the first years of the war the main adjustments had been made, and the main lines for the future laid down, especially by two exceptionally able administrators, the Vice-Chancellor

<sup>1</sup> *Law Quarterly Review*, lvii (1942), 184-90.

<sup>2</sup> L. S. Woolf, *The Journey not the Arrival Matters* (1969), pp. 132-5.

George Gordon, President of Magdalen, and Sir Douglas Veale, the Registrar. Nothing was grudged to the state, but it was well understood that in the interests of the state itself the university should keep itself ready to resume its full duties as soon as the emergency ended. Ross had to apply this principle in dealings with government departments, and these might be inconstant in their purposes, or inexperienced, and so unable to work out satisfactory methods of co-operation. On several occasions delicate personal questions were involved, which he handled with much wisdom. There have been some references in print to disagreements in 1943 about the Nuffield College Social Survey, which was undertaken for and financed by government departments; but no one has professed to write with full knowledge of the story, and there is no reason to believe that any better solution of the difficulties could have been brought about than Ross actually achieved. Holding his office for more than half the duration of the war, he deserved well of the University.

Needless to say he received many honours in addition to those already conferred on him by universities, colleges, and foreign academies. Two may be mentioned which illustrate the variety of his duties. The Order of Polonia Restituta commemorated his work for the Polish University in exile, and the first class of the Order of St. Olav the conferring of a degree by diploma on King Haakon of Norway.

The end of his Vice-Chancellorship left him two years before he reached the age of seventy. The war ended; his colleagues came back to their college duties; vacancies had to be filled, scholars elected, and a new generation of freshmen, mainly from the services, installed. It was not until 1949, after an interval of ten years, that he once more came before the public with a book, this time his translation of Aristotle's *Analytics*. From then until he passed eighty the flow of his work went on, as has already been indicated by the dates given on the preceding pages; but there was a new line of interest. Between the two wars he was applying himself to the questions about Plato and Socrates which arise from the study of Aristotle. His other occupations prevented him from fulfilling his purpose; but he completed at least one article and a book, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (1951).

At the beginning of this final period of literary activity Sir David Ross was engaged for two solid years on a task which made him known to a wider public than ever before, as Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Press. During the war the British government had never forgotten the value of a free newspaper

press; but it had perforce subjected correspondence and publication to censorship, and controlled the supply of paper and labour. After the war these restrictions could not be ended immediately, and they added to the apprehensions which had been stirred up among journalists for a good many years by changes in the economic status of their profession. On 29 October 1946 the House of Commons passed with one dissentient a resolution asking for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the finance, control, management, and ownership of the Press, with the object of furthering the free expression of opinion and the greatest possible accuracy in the expression of news. Ross presided over a lively and keen-witted body of writers and men of affairs, who performed the apparently impossible feat of digesting an enormous mass of technical information and a chaos of confused thinking into a lucid and judicious report.<sup>1</sup> Besides collecting and critically reviewing information not available elsewhere, the report analyses many complaints and proposals. Its main recommendations were that a press council should be founded, and that something should be done to improve the education of journalists. Ross deserves the credit for the almost complete agreement which was reached, and for the reasonableness of the recommendations, of which the first has had some practical effect. Not all the commissioners were equally patient under his chairmanship. If he had a favourite among them it was R. C. K. Ensor, who had been in the same year with him at Balliol, but Ensor was one of the two who each appended a note of reservation to his signature. Altogether the report fulfilled its purpose, which was not that of an academic treatise, admirably.

A bare summary of Ross's activities, such as this has been, may well give the impression that he had a plurality of talents, and that he used some of them for study, others for teaching, and yet others for practical affairs. This was not so. He was a single and consistent character, showing the same clear mind, the same conscientiousness and the same sense of justice in whatever he did. Perhaps it was easier for him to accept so many responsibilities because he simplified questions which others found complex, and one way of simplifying them was to disregard emotional or personal implications. Later in life he thought that he had treated the making of appointments too much as a kind of business to be settled, as most business should

<sup>1</sup> Cmd. 7700 (1949).

be, by deciding quickly in the light of the available data. There are differences between some estimates of him made earlier or in middle life, as being unwilling to press his own views, and the opposite impression which he sometimes made in later years. In this, however, he changed less than most men. His life was that of a devoted scholar who grew up in such freedom as has seldom existed anywhere, and then, for many years, played his part in defending freedom against successive invasions.

G. N. CLARK

I am much indebted to the members of Sir David Ross's family for information and advice. Among the past and present Fellows of Oriel I must specially thank Dr. Richard Robinson. Others who have given valuable help are Lady Wootton of Abinger, Mr. R. B. McCallum, the Rev. Dr. Alan MacLeod, Professor H. H. Price, Sir Douglas Veale, Dr. Richard Walzer, the Secretary of the British Academy and his staff, Miss Doris Pearson, formerly Assistant Secretary. The obituary notice printed in *The Times* on 6 May 1971 was written in its earliest form by H. A. Prichard, but, after his death in 1947 it was not only brought up to date but altered in other respects. The best general account of Ross is in an address given by Mr. R. W. B. Burton, at a memorial service on 2 June 1971 in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, which has close historical associations with Oriel. This is printed, with two supplementary notices by Dr. Richard Robinson and Dr. Richard Walzer, in the *Oriel Record* for 1971. Earlier volumes of that *Record* contain articles by Ross and notes regarding him. Formal particulars of his earlier career are given in G. C. Richards, *The Provosts and Fellows of Oriel College* (1922).

It is hoped to publish in the next volume of these *Proceedings* a study of Sir David Ross's contribution to Aristotelian studies by Professor G. E. L. Owen, Fellow of the Academy.