
To all concerned with the continuity of the classical tradition, this biography will be of absorbing interest. Written by Lindsay’s daughter, with supplementary chapters on his early life contributed by his brother, and on his philosophy, in the formal sense, by Dorothy Emmet, the work reveals the great diversity of Lindsay’s activities. Translator of Plato’s *Republic*, Master of Balliol, founder of Keele University, apostle of adult education, upholder of Christian ideals: these are only some of Lindsay’s undertakings. But the biography is more than a narrative. The author has succeeded in conveying something of the still centre of Lindsay’s character, the *theoria*, which gave meaning and coherence to all he did.

Calvinist rigour, the unshakeable conviction of being one of the elect, the aspirations of the classical morality, the steady observance of Rainborough’s dictum, ‘The poorest he that is in England hath his life to live as the greatest he’: these qualities in combination made Lindsay as near to one of Plato’s guardians as this century is likely to produce. Along with the religious apostolate, the persistent thought of his career was how best to hand on to the rising generation the perennial virtues, both intellectual and moral, which the ancients had set out so discerningly. As Master of Balliol for a quarter of a century, he worked tirelessly to this end. But the conviction gradually grew upon him that the University of Oxford was no longer capable of performing this office with the effectiveness which had formerly distinguished that great institution. And this for two reasons: increasing diversity of background at entry, and increasing specialisation of studies within the University. Keele was his hope of doing what Oxford used to do in the days of Pattison and Jowett.

Mrs Scott writes (p. 337): ‘It should be clear from previous chapters that Lindsay loved and respected a great deal in the Oxford tradition. He distrusted the single Honours Schools but he thought that “Greats” in its time had given an incomparable education, when the Latin and Greek component was not a barrier or a burden because of the classical tradition in the schools from which the undergraduates predominantly came; the study of the classical Greek and Roman civilisations had provided a manageable frame in which to see the perennial problems of government, morals and society. Also, the philosophy which was studied in “Greats” in his time linked well with this because it was concerned with large and
enduring problems of knowledge, ethics and politics, so that the School could within its limits give a real training in judgement and general understanding. "Judgement" is the important word. One of Lindsay's frequent criticisms of the kind of "clever fool" liable to be produced by the wrong education was that such a man had no judgement; did not believe in judgement as faculty that could be trained, but thought things could only be proved by statistics. ‘Prudentia dicitur genitrix virtutum’, so wrote St Thomas Aquinas in commenting on the Sentences of Peter Lombard; Aristotle would have endorsed the phrase; and Lindsay, tacitly, made it his own. Whether the new universities can in fact achieve the culmination in the cardinal virtue of prudentia which Lindsay so desired, it is too early to say.

To almost every field on which he touched, Lindsay brought a fresh insight: on W.E.A. classes (p. 160); on determinism (p. 165); on power and freedom (p. 185); on leadership (p. 272); on the classless society (p. 306); on natural and supernatural hope (p. 308) – these are but a selection of the topics which Lindsay raised above the conventional formulae in which they are so often entrapped.

This is a biography of real substance, and a vindication of the worth, in the direction of affairs, of a truly liberal mind steeped in the eternal verities.

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