

*F. Hilton Page*

### **William Lyall in his Setting<sup>1</sup>**

William Lyall can scarcely be said to occupy a prominent position in the histories of philosophy, but he has the distinction, not indeed of being the first to teach the Scottish Philosophy in the New Scotland, but of being the first to bequeath to us an original, detailed and substantial document, in the tradition of the Scottish School, in his book, *Intellect, the Emotions, and the Moral Nature*, which he published in 1855. We know that the Scottish Philosophy had considerable influence in France from about 1810 well into the nineteenth century, so much so that Sir William Hamilton (Hamilton, I, 399) thought it "ought in justice to be denominated the Scoto-Gallican Philosophy." The story of its spectacular spread and rise to an almost completely dominant position in the United States from before the Revolution up to about the time of the Civil War has been told in great detail (see, for example, the minutely documented account in Terence Martin's *The Instructed Vision*). S.A. Grave, our foremost contemporary authority, remarks (Grave, 1960, 4), "Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the philosophy of Common Sense was, with or without borrowed or invented modifications, the philosophy which professors of philosophy in America were as likely as not to be teaching." But of its earlier history, before Lyall, in Nova Scotia, where we might have expected it to take early root, we have only very sketchy information.

We can learn something from Library catalogues and some of what we learn is surprising. For example, I was able to borrow the four volumes of Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, in the original 1820 edition, from the Library of the Teachers' College at Truro, N.S. On the other hand, only the Library of the University of Victoria, B.C. was able to provide a copy of David Welsh's *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Brown, M.D.* (1825). We might have expected the Library at Dalhousie to be particularly rich in early editions of the writings of the Scottish School, but Dalhousie was a late bloomer. Although founded in 1818 "upon

the principles of religious toleration" (a well-deserved crack at the Anglican exclusiveness of King's College, founded in 1789) and "in imitation of the University of Edinburgh", it did not call itself a University until 1865 when the first Calendar and Examination Papers used the title "Dalhousie College and University". The first degree of Bachelor of Arts was not awarded until 1866, nearly half a century after its founding (see the "Historical Outline" in the Dalhousie Calendars of 1960 and several years following). Indeed the attitude to degrees in the earlier years of Dalhousie's history is strangely different from that of today. Lord Dalhousie did not intend his College to have degree-conferring powers. It was not to rival King's which had long enjoyed this right. It was later pointed out (*Gazette*, 20 January, 1903, 109) that at that time and for many years afterwards the students at Edinburgh (Dalhousie's model) did not care to pay the extra guineas for "the vain title". When one had already received all the benefits of the teaching and study what more could the letters B.A. (or, at Edinburgh, M.A.) add but a frivolous expense? Career opportunities were evidently not yet thought to be significantly related to the possession of the degree.

A Library at Dalhousie was only inaugurated in 1864, largely owing to the energy and generosity of George Grant's grandfather, the Rev. G.M. Grant, later Principal of Queen's (Harvey, 89; *Gazette*, 12 January, 1903, 98ff). While it has an 1805 edition of Beattie's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism* (1770) and an 1812 edition of Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) in its rare book collection, most of the materials are fairly late nineteenth-century American editions, or very recent facsimile reprints, or on microfilm. Curiously, the Library at the Anglican King's College is richer in original, or at least very early, editions, richer than the Atlantic School of Theology, the heir of a whole succession of earlier Presbyterian colleges from 1820 on.

It would be very natural to assume that the redoubtable and Rev. Dr. Thomas McCulloch, the founder of the famous Pictou Academy and the first Principal of Dalhousie College from 1838 till his death in 1843, would have discoursed on the Scottish philosophers. McCulloch taught Moral and Mental Philosophy as well as Logic, Rhetoric, and, at first, in addition, Greek and Political Economy. He also taught Theology and Hebrew in his own house on Argyle Street, conveniently near the old College building on the Grand Parade where the City Hall is now (Patterson, 43). He bequeathed part of his collection of

books to the Presbyterian College (Falconer, 5), which later became Pine Hill Divinity Hall and more recently the Atlantic School of Theology, but none of the Scottish philosophers is represented in the catalogue of the McCulloch Library established there in 1977. Evidence as to the contents of his classroom lectures is scanty. But there is one ray of light which connects him with the Scottish School. In the *Gazette* (2 December, 1887, 32-33) George Patterson contributes "some additions to the history [sc. his *History of Dalhousie College and University*, just published] which I intended making when reading the proofs: but was not given that opportunity." One of these Addenda concerns McCulloch's teaching: "Dr. McCulloch was thoroughly versant with mental and moral science, as these were taught in his day. With the discussion in either of these departments, up till, say the end of the last century, he was familiar. His mind was clear, so that what he knew he knew correctly and communicated clearly. His chief studies, however, had been in what has been called the Scottish school of Philosophy. He had written out an outline of both in notes which he gave us; and though independent enough to avoid servilely following any master, and acute enough to notice the weak points of each, he in the main followed Reid. Of modern German writers we were left in blissful ignorance, while the fame of Sir William Hamilton had not crossed the Atlantic." (I have to thank my colleague, Dr. James Clark of Dalhousie's Psychology Department, for this reference which I discovered in the manuscript of his chapter on psychology at Dalhousie, which will appear in the forthcoming *History of Canadian Psychology*.) This seems clearly to establish McCulloch as the first to introduce the Scottish Philosophy to Nova Scotia. Lyall remains, however, the first to provide first-hand, documentary evidence, detailed, substantial and in print, of the presence of the Scottish philosophical tradition in Nova Scotia, by the publication of his book, *Intellect, the Emotions, and the Moral Nature* and his use of it as a textbook in his classes.

William Lyall, or, to give him his full style and title, Professor the Reverend William Lyall, Doctor of Laws, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, was born on the eleventh of June, 1811, near Paisley, about ten miles more or less southwest of Glasgow. Paisley was then a busy and prosperous manufacturing town, famous for its shawls and its piety (McCosh, 185), and, until quite recently, the home of my favourite tobacco, Dobie's Four-Square. Contrary to my printed sources, it appears that Lyall was not born in the town itself but in the ancestral home of the Lyalls, "Garthlands", a Georgian house on a

landed estate in the countryside nearby, which is today, with recent additions, the home of a community of Roman Catholic lay brothers. (I have to thank Mrs. Fletcher Smith of Halifax for this and other information about her grandfather.) Lyall attended the Paisley Academy, then Glasgow, and then Edinburgh Universities. He entered the Presbyterian ministry and at the time of the Great Disruption of 1843 he sided with the Free Church party which split off from the established church. The issue was not doctrinal, however, but one of church management, and specifically patronage, mostly the patronage of the Crown. Did a congregation have the right to refuse to accept a minister it didn't want or like? was the burning question. Lyall became the minister of the Free Presbyterian Church at Uphall, near Linlithgow, about fifteen miles west of Edinburgh. According to the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890), while there he "published a volume of Sermons which were in repute for years, and which today would well repay perusal." Here he remained from 1843 to 1848 when he left Scotland to become a tutor at Knox College, Toronto. In 1850 he was appointed Professor of Classics and Mental Philosophy, "to give instruction in the ordinary Subjects of the Arts Course," at the Free Church College which had been established at the Gerrish Street Hall in Halifax two years before, a building which still stood, latterly serving for a time as a warehouse, until, deserted and derelict, it was destroyed by fire on July 20, 1972. The aim of the College was the training of a native ministry in place of one imported directly from Scotland. Professors King and MacKenzie were in charge, King doing the theological subjects and MacKenzie those in Arts. In addition lectures in natural science were given by Dr. Forrester, and in Hebrew by Dr. Honeyman (Falconer, 13). Lyall was brought to take the place of Professor MacKenzie who had died shortly after commencing his work. When we discover the almost unbelievable extent of the duties attached to the post, Professor MacKenzie's demise so soon after entering upon it does not seem altogether surprising. Lyall taught Latin, Greek, Logic, Rhetoric, Moral and Mental Philosophy and Mathematics. He was in fact the whole Faculty of Arts (*Gazette*, 20 December, 1893, 136).

Perhaps this would not have seemed so astonishing then as it would today. Thomas Reid, the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense, when appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, in 1764, besides dealing with "the intellectual and active powers", had to lecture as well on "the general principles of jurisprudence", politics and rhetoric (Laurie, 127). And, coming nearer home, the

Rev. James Ross, later the Very Rev. Dr. James Ross, second Principal, and later still President of Dalhousie, but then minister of the local parish, had all the teaching and all the management of the Presbyterian College established in 1848 at West River (now Durham), following the collapse of the Pictou Academy (Falconer, 9).

Evidently made of sterner stuff, or, at 39, retaining more of the elasticity and versatility of youth, Lyall survived this incredible teaching load for ten years. Not only this; in 1851, at the beginning of term, "he gave the opening address in Chalmers' Church, a beautiful and ingenious exposition of the philosophy of thought" (*The Missionary Record and Ecclesiastical Intelligencer of the Free Church of Nova Scotia*, volume 1, 357 (1851)). Again, in 1854 Lyall delivered an opening lecture at the Free Church College, on "Reason and Imagination" (*Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record*, November 1854, 83). Also in 1854, he delivered a long lecture at the Young Men's Christian Association on "The Advantages of Literary Studies—their Consistency with the Spiritual Life, with a brief sketch of English Literature" (*Presbyterian Witness*, 13, 20 and 27 May, 1854). Even more remarkable, just halfway through this period, in 1855, he brought out his book, *Intellect, the Emotions, and the Moral Nature*, a substantial volume of 627 pages, published by Constable at Edinburgh. The work "was favourably noticed by the reviewers at that time" (Rose, 233). It was to serve as a textbook in his classes for many years to come and was also used for the same purpose "in several other colleges" (*Gazette*, 30 January, 1890). Indeed the *Morning Herald*, in its front-page obituary of Lyall (20 January, 1890), goes further, declaring that his book "has long been used as a textbook in many colleges." At the same time he took his church duties very seriously. He attended the meetings of Presbytery and Synod with great regularity. He interested himself in works of charity, in "The Ragged School, The House of Refuge, The Poor's Asylum and Bridewell". In the summer of 1852 he voyaged by steamer to St. John's, Newfoundland, where he was supply preacher at Free Saint Andrew's Church. There it was said of him that he "possessed talents of a high order which have been carefully cultivated", and that he was "of mild and most unobtrusive demeanor" (*Presbyterian Witness*, August 14, 1852, 284). In Halifax, the *Morning Herald* (20 January, 1890) tells us, "thirty years ago or more, crowded congregations used to gather to hear him preach in what is now [1890] College Hall on Gerrish Street." According to the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890), "He was wont to commit his discourses to memory. His sen-

tences and periods were faultless and beautifully balanced. His voice was soft, clear and low, and full of pathos. His action was graceful in a high degree. His face glowed with emotion and with a light not wholly of this world . . . . When there was need he preached very frequently, often occupying the pulpit twice a day." Even the Sabbath day of rest, it would appear, could not curtail the activity of this remarkable decade.

In 1860 the Free Church and the Presbyterian Church united to form the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces. The Free Church College in Halifax and the Presbyterian College in Truro united their educational forces. The work in Arts was now to be located in Truro and Lyall was moved there, while the work in Theology was to be located in Halifax and the theologians from Truro were moved there. Then, only three years later, in 1863, the revival, reorganization, and reopening of Dalhousie College was brought about largely through the cooperative effort of the churches. The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces agreed to endow two chairs, the Synod of the Church of Scotland one other (Mathematics), while the Governors of Dalhousie College assumed responsibility for four more. The college at Truro was abandoned. The Truro Arts students were transferred to Dalhousie and the three Arts professors, Lyall, Ross and McCulloch, Jr., were moved with them. Actually Lyall was not just automatically transferred. He was chosen by the Board of Governors as "the first Metaphysician in British North America" (Patterson, 67), appointed to one of the Governors' chairs, and his stipend paid by them. But only a few years later he was transferred to one of the two Presbyterian chairs which he continued to hold till his death twenty-seven years later. The stipend was £300. In addition a professor received directly from each student in his classes \$6 for each class attended in the winter session (October to April) and \$4 for each summer class (late April to late June). For the degree of B.A. four winter terms were required or three winter and two summer terms.

According to George Patterson (Patterson, 67) Lyall's Chair was initially the Chair of Metaphysics. In the first Dalhousie *Calendar* (1865-66), Lyall appears as professor of "Metaphysics, Esthetics and Belles Lettres." In 1866-67 he is professor of "Psychology and Metaphysics." By 1872-73 he is professor of "Psychology, Logic and Metaphysics." In 1885-86, and thereafter, he is professor of "Logic and Psychology." After his death the Presbyterian Church withdrew its support and the Chair of Logic and Psychology was merged, over



the protests of the *Gazette* (20 February, 1890, 113), with James Seth's Chair of Metaphysics and Ethics. Seth became simply "Professor of Philosophy" until he left Dalhousie two years later to accept an appointment at Brown University.

In 1864, in recognition of his book, McGill conferred on Lyall the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (Rose, 233). When the Royal Society of Canada was founded in 1882, Lyall was one of the original Fellows, although "his failing health and advanced age prevented him from giving the Society the benefit of his presence and ability during the seven years he was a member of the Society." After his death he was replaced by Professor Charles G.D. Roberts, Professor of English Literature at King's College (*Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1890, xiii, xv).

In 1887 the University moved from the old stone building on the Grand Parade to a much larger home of spanking, new red brick on the Forrest Campus. Lyall, who had heretofore found it convenient to live in Dartmouth, commuting on the Ferry, and walking the short distance up George Street to the Grand Parade, now moved his household to Halifax. Here he set up residence at the corner of Sackville Street and Briar Lane until the new house he was about to have built on Tower Road should be ready. (I owe this information to Lyall's granddaughter, Mrs. Fletcher Smith of Halifax.) Unfortunately, two years before his death, "When," to quote the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890), "the streets were a glare of ice he fell and dislocated his right thigh. He recovered and grappled bravely with his duties and was able to walk his accustomed rounds till three days before his death." He died from a stroke at Briar Lane on Friday, 17 January, 1890 (*Morning Herald*, 20 January, 1890).

Though I gather that in fact it contained only a couple of very large, high, prosaic, urban-style houses, the name "Briar Lane", it might be thought, must have been a particularly appropriate address for Lyall. It evokes the picture of a cosy *rus in urbe*, or at least a semi-rural retreat well suited to be the dwelling of a philosophic recluse who enjoyed above all communing with the congenial minds of a seemingly simpler past in the seclusion of a book-lined study while the wild roses and brambles flourished, as in Scotland, outside the study window. Though the name remains, there is nothing romantic about Briar Lane today. It is a narrow, rather dingy, paved alley-way between two commercial buildings, a former General Motors garage now occupied by the CBC and a telephone building which was once the old Sackville telephone exchange. It leads to the vast Sahara of a

Dominion Store parking lot which, with others adjoining, now covers the land where there were gardens and where, I am told, cows were pastured until well on into the nineteen-thirties.

But was Lyall in fact a withdrawn recluse? I cannot imagine him, like a later professor at Dalhousie, putting his head out of his study window each morning and shouting, "To Hell with the outside world!", then shutting the window and sitting down at his study-table to immerse himself in the classics of a bygone age. True, the *Presbyterian Witness* said (25 January, 1890): "He was emphatically a typical student, a man of books, almost a recluse." It also said: "Dr. Lyall very often reminded us of the amiable, devout and accomplished William Cowper. He had the same super-sensitiveness, the same tendency to self-accusation, the same timorous distrust of himself—the same profound trust in God; the same confidence in the great verities of revealed religion; the same infinite scorn of meanness and unverity—the same unpractical attitude towards the "world".” And an anonymous writer in the *Gazette* (20 December, 1893, 136) said, "he loved the seclusion of his study and the society of the mighty dead." However, the very same article in the *Gazette* also maintains that "He was an enthusiastic student of philosophy and kept well abreast of the literature of his subject till the last few years."

The fact is that almost all the rather scanty material written about Lyall was put on paper by those who knew him only in his later years. We have to remember that he was already 52 when he came to Dalhousie and that he continued to teach till within a couple of weeks of his death when he was nearly 79. So he is depicted as an old man, venerable and rather charming but a little out of touch. He is "good old Dr. Lyall, poet and dreamer" (*Gazette*, 14 December, 1907, 86). He is "the sensitive Lyall, sweeping with tremulous touch the 'Intellect, the Emotions and the Moral Nature' " (*Gazette*, 12 January, 1903, 153). One writes of "his genial, gentle, almost appealing way of presenting the airy speculations that were to him of such positive moment" (*Ibid.*, 161-2). Another says, "Dear old Professor Lyall lectured to what I fear was often an unappreciative audience on Logic, Psychology and Metaphysics" (*Ibid.*, 118). But was this a criticism, we might ask, properly directed toward Lyall or towards his audience? The *Morning Herald* (20 January, 1890) said that "he was much liked by all his students. . . . Latterly his failing health hindered somewhat his powers of utterance, yet very few students will be found who will not affirm the excellence of his instruction."



Remember that he was reputed to be "the first Metaphysician in British North America" (Patterson, 67); that the year after his appointment at Dalhousie he received from McGill the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, in recognition of his book; that the book "was favourably noticed by the reviewers" (Rose, 233); and that when the Royal Society of Canada was founded he was one of the original Fellows. Think again of that amazing decade in his life, 1850-60, when Lyall was carrying that incredible teaching load, writing and seeing through the press his *magnum opus*, and in addition preaching to crowded congregations in the College Hall in Gerrish Street (*Morning Herald*, 20 January, 1890).

There is evidence that this remarkable industry had not, in fact, later declined. There is mention of his "numerous contributions to current literature" (*Gazette*, 30 January, 1890, 93). He is reported (*Halifax Evening Mail*, 1 February, 1890) to have been "the author of various literary and critical articles in magazines and reviews—theological, scientific and popular"; to have "contributed several papers on theological and philosophical subjects to Canadian and foreign reviews" (Rose, 233), and to have written "poems of great merit" (*Gazette*, 20 December, 1893, 136).

What has become of this apparently considerable output? The *Bibliotheca Canadensis* (1867, s.v. William Lyall) says he "has contributed an occasional paper on theological and philosophical subjects to the *Presbyterian Witness* (Halifax) and to the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*." In its obituary article the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890) remarks that "He published several series of essays in our own pages. . . ." Otherwise I have been unable to unearth any clue as to when and where the articles, papers and poems appeared in print. Apart from a copy of his Inaugural Lecture at the Free Church College on "The Philosophy of Thought" (Lyall, 1853), and the fragment of an article, "found in an old magazine" and reprinted in the *Gazette* for 8 April, 1891, lacking both the date and the name of the journal, I have drawn a complete blank.

James Seth had agreed to take over Lyall's classes for the remainder of the session, Lyall having died halfway through the academic year. On the first occasion of meeting with Lyall's students, Seth said: "The many conversations I had with him are among my pleasantest and most profitable experiences in connection with the University. . . . Only ten days before the end I was impressed by the almost youthful ardour and earnestness of his mind in dealing, not only with subjects within his peculiar province, but in the wider fields of human and

literary interest" (*Gazette*, 20 February, 1890, 113). Another writer in the *Gazette* (30 January, 1890, 93-94), just after Lyall's death, said: "Dr. Lyall inclined to the Scotch school. . . . Accordingly his philosophy was not Vocabular Philosophy: but an intelligible view of man in his relation to the Universe—and this, even if you did not agree with his postulates. . . . Hundreds of old students will be ready to confess the philosophical impulse which his lectures gave them, and the caution and moderation with which he taught them to form and express their opinions."

Obituaries are rightly suspect. They are often over kind and over enthusiastic and even, as we have seen, at times self-contradictory. But there is a solid core of evidence that Lyall, while gentle, peace loving and even self-effacing by nature, was no solitary and idle dreamer, no colourless non-entity, no easy pushover. We are told that his "one touch of nature would flash out at the mention of a name renowned in Scottish philosophy" (*Gazette*, 14 December, 1907, 86). The "name renowned in Scottish philosophy" I take to be Hume. MacDonald Oxley of the Class of 1876, giving his reminiscences of his former teachers, said of Lyall: "How true he was to the orthodox, conservative belief, and with what unction he marshalled the arguments in reply to the audacious sceptics!" (*Gazette*, 12 January, 1903, 161-2). Not only did he continue to be active as teacher and writer, but he evidently loved teaching, loved his students and his colleagues and spontaneously enjoyed their company and conversation. And there is one thing on which all my sources seem to be agreed. Lyall was a man of simple, transparent goodness: kind, gentle, genial, generous, patient, "not easily ruffled and easily pacified" (*Morning Herald*, 20 January, 1890). The *Herald* also mentions his unostentatious liberality, "far greater than would be expected from one of his limited means . . . but best and noblest, his Christian character." We may look askance at the intrusion of his evangelical fervour into the realms of philosophy, but we can hardly remain unimpressed and unmoved by this completely unanimous testimony that he was a man who not only praised, loved and preached goodness, but lived it.

If there is some little difficulty in establishing a totally coherent picture of Lyall as a person, it must be confessed that to be confident that one is capable of forming a just estimate of his stature as a philosopher is not easy either. What we have learned about him as a person comes mostly from those who knew him only fairly late in his life when he was "dear old Dr. Lyall." What we know of his thought

comes almost entirely from his book, published when he was forty-four and had been teaching for only five years. What we don't know is how he may have revised or developed his ideas, upon further reflection, in the remaining thirty-five years of his teaching career. There is a passage in the anonymous obituary in the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890) which helps a little to suggest how the picture might be rounded out: "As a Professor, Dr. Lyall did excellent work that commanded the respect of all. His system of philosophy was a modification of Brown's. In fact he is not to be classified with any particular school. His best service to students was to evoke in them a taste and a zeal for philosophical investigation. They at least gained some knowledge of the great systems of thought; they at least got glimpses of abstruse speculations as to being, and causation, and thought, and the relations of mind and matter. He utterly scorned physiological psychology. He saw in it the philosophy of mud. Herbert Spencer he had no patience with; and he was almost as intolerant of Hegel and his prophets. Some years ago he predicted with prophetic clearness the course of Hegelianism, and he lived long enough to see the beginning of the end." But by and large I can see no way now of overcoming this difficulty. We should, however, recognize it and acknowledge the limitation.

Lyall's book is very much a period-piece. I do not say this to belittle it as I am myself rather partial to period-pieces, especially those of Lyall's own period. In any case the problems of philosophy are perennial, though the clothing in which they present themselves and the furniture which lends support may vary with the fashions of the age. Anyone reading Lyall's book now has to be aware of the conventions and expectations of the time; otherwise his attention will be distracted from the matter to the manner of the writing. Lyall's exposition is not straightforward but closely intertwined with poetical description, theological affirmation, declamatory utterance, and pious exhortation. At times we are reminded of St. Augustine's *Confessions* as we are called upon to marvel at the wonders of the mind and exhorted to recognize the providential goodness of the Creator who has made the human mind in his own image. In his account of the mysterious power of memory with its recollections of the timelessness of childhood consciousness we catch an echo of Vaughan's *Centuries of Meditations* (*Intellect*, 114-115). Quotations from English literature abound and sometimes they are effectively deployed as in the treatment of Cowper's melancholy (*Ibid.*, 320ff.). The *Gazette* (30 January, 1890, 93) drawing attention to his poetical nature, his great

admiration of Wordsworth, and his very extensive familiarity with English literature says that had Lyall been more widely known "it is probably as a literateur [sic] that he would have been most esteemed", incidentally managing to make two mistakes in spelling the word. And nearly forty years earlier the *Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record* of the Free Church had said: "None, we think, can listen to Professor Lyall's prelections on Mental Philosophy without being persuaded that he breathes a literary atmosphere, and that he occupies the very position suited to his attainments and tastes" (November 1854, 83). But, in both cases, this is to fail to disentangle the style from the philosophical substance of the discourse.

Why do we not encounter this difficulty with, say, Bishop Butler or David Hume? Perhaps it is related to the Celtic temperament. Hume, though a Scot, was "le bon David", half-French in his sympathies and sentiments. Butler was English. But chiefly, I think, it is because neither was a Scottish professor publishing his classroom lectures. Lyall's book contains his lectures. If we were inclined to doubt this, a passage on p. 464 makes it clear. There was a time when almost every Scottish professor of philosophy published his lectures. Volumes of lectures were almost as popular as volumes of sermons. To understand Lyall it is necessary to understand the peculiarities of the Scottish philosophy lecture of this period, on which his own lectures were, if unconsciously, stylistically modelled.

A good example would be Thomas Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, published posthumously in 1820 in four volumes, each containing twenty-five lectures. They were enormously popular, going through nineteen editions in thirty years in Britain, not to mention the pirated editions and abridgements published in the U.S., there being no law of copyright then. Incidentally there is a curious error in the obituary in the *Presbyterian Witness* (25 January, 1890), which says, "He was a favourite student of the eminent metaphysician, Thomas Brown, for whom he retained an affectionate reverence, in which no other philosopher fully shared." This is repeated in the article on "The Late Dr. Lyall" in the *Gazette* (20 December, 1893, 136), where we read that "At Edinburgh he studied under the brilliant Scottish Metaphysician, Thos. Brown. To the last Dr. Lyall retained an affectionate reverence for his professor; and in his lectures gave more prominence to his system than perhaps it merited." This is difficult to believe, as Brown died in 1820 when Lyall was nine years old. We do know that in the eighteenth century students at the Scottish universities were often much younger than

with us today. John Witherspoon, who introduced the Scottish philosophy into the United States by bringing with him to Princeton Thomas Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* in 1768, had entered Edinburgh at the age of fourteen (McCosh, 184). Thomas Reid had entered Aberdeen at twelve (Laurie, 124). Dugald Stewart entered Edinburgh at twelve (Laurie, 217), Brown was fourteen and Hume and Adam Smith entered college at about the same age (McCosh, 275). But Lyall entering Edinburgh at the age of nine, especially after having already spent some time at Glasgow, seems to be clearly impossible. While Lyall refers frequently in his book to "Dr. Brown" and follows Brown's order of exposition fairly closely, especially that of volumes two and three, he also takes issue with him at several important points and there are also many references to Reid, Beattie, Kames, Dugald Stewart, Sir William Hamilton and others of the Scottish School. It was Sir William Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic* (1859-60) that Lyall was using at Dalhousie as one of his texts along with his own book.

Although Brown was an M.D. (not, like most of the others of the period, a D.D.), and made genuine contributions to an empirical psychology independent of mental and moral philosophy (an approach with which Lyall was not sympathetic), he shared many of the qualities which Lyall displays in his book. Stylistically they are much akin. Brown, too, quotes poetry and literature, he too has eloquent passages; taste, culture, moral and spiritual elevation are obviously as important to him as to Lyall. Both wrote poetry. While Lyall's has vanished into oblivion, Brown's was published. He was known as "the poet of woman" (Welsh, 424). His verse was modelled on the Augustans, but it is too flowery; it seems artificial and contrived, and too self-consciously "poetical".

Sometimes a professor was appointed for reasons other than his knowledge of the subject. Brown was succeeded at Edinburgh by John Wilson, perhaps better known by his pen name "Christopher North", who although never the editor, was a popular contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine* and the real power behind it which made it "the best literary magazine of its day" (McCosh, 411). Almost certainly it was Wilson's lectures that Lyall attended at Edinburgh. Wilson was a tremendous performer in the lecture-room and all sorts of people crowded in to listen to him. McCosh says (285): "The election fell on Professor Wilson, who, while the fittest man living for the chair of rhetoric and belles lettres, had no special qualifications for a

chair of philosophy." "He had no philosophy in himself and so could not impart it to his pupils. . . . But his true merit consisted in creating a literary taste in his students" (McCosh, 414).

I think one has to read a work like Hugh Blair's enormously popular *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783 and many later editions) to catch the atmosphere and flavour of the time, to grasp the importance attached to the acquiring of taste and the power of self-expression through the study of literature, and to understand how Wilson, with so little knowledge of philosophy, could yet be so brilliant a popular success in the Edinburgh chair of Moral Philosophy. For, as an aim of education, the development and refinement of taste had become something of a fetish. In his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) the Rev. Dr. Archibald Alison had defined taste as "that Faculty of the Human Mind by which we perceive and enjoy whatever is Beautiful or Sublime in the works of Nature or of Art. . . . The most pleasing Arts of human invention are altogether directed to their pursuit: and even the necessary Arts are exalted into dignity by the Genius that can unite Beauty with use. From the earliest period of Society, to its last stage of improvement, they afford an innocent and elegant amusement to private life, at the same time that they increase the Splendour of National Character; and in the progress of nations, as well as of individuals, while they attract attention from the pleasures they bestow, they serve to exalt the human Mind, from corporeal to intellectual pursuits." (I quote from the Third Edition, Edinburgh, 1812, vol. I, xi-xii. Lyall used this work as one of the textbooks in his classes at Dalhousie for at least twenty years, until 1885 (*Dalhousie Calendars* from 1865-66 (the first) to 1884-85)). Taste thus included the understanding and enjoyment of "culture", of literature, art and music. The emphasis on rhetoric and belles lettres was designed to develop powers of self-expression, written and oral, to create in others the impression of a cultivated mind, to be "polite" rather than "vulgar" in gesture, voice and idiom. Lyall was professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres as well as of philosophy and much else at the time he was writing his book. Even later at Dalhousie he was, in 1865-66, professor not only of Metaphysics but also of Esthetics and Belles Lettres (*cf.* p. 11 above).

It was customary for the Scottish professor (not for John Wilson, however, whose notes were "generally written on the most wonderful scraps of paper" (McCosh, 413)) to write out his lectures in full and



then to read them in the classroom with proper attention to the appropriate diction, expressive gesture, and elocution. The lecture was a formal affair. Gowns were worn by both the professor and the students, as they were at Dalhousie during Lyall's earlier years there at least.

Moreover the professor's lecture room, when Lyall was a student at Edinburgh, not only provided instruction in a specific subject but was considered to be an important purveyor of general culture; hence the classical and literary allusions, the generous quotations from Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth, the poetic descriptions, the careful choice of words and the attention to style. One writer has said (Brett, 16; *cf.* Robinson, 151f; McCosh, 281), "The spread of general culture was one of the objects at which the Scotch professors aimed; their classrooms were filled with eager listeners, lawyers and men of business, whose presence induced the lecturer to adopt methods foreign to the routine of classwork." Whether Lyall's classrooms in the Free Church College, or in the Presbyterian College at Truro, or in the old Dalhousie building on the Grand Parade, were ever filled with eager lawyers and businessmen is not known but seems somehow improbable. Yet something of the aim of imparting "culture", including history, literature and art, or at least of creating a "cultured" atmosphere, certainly seems to have been in Lyall's mind as he wrote the book which the *Morning Herald* (20 January, 1890) said was "crammed with quotations and in many parts a prose-poem."

Finally there is the very liberal admixture of pious declamation and moral exhortation with which Lyall's philosophical exposition is interspersed. It struck me as mildly amusing that in the one paper of Lyall's that I have come across, the one "found in an old magazine", on "Wordsworth—A Criticism", Lyall finds in the "Excursion" and the "Prelude", "too much of preachment—something too much in the sermonizing style"—"but," he adds, "who would from such an objection consent to part with those noble passages, which are certainly somewhat out of the run of ordinary poetry. . . . The poet takes this mode of proclaiming the great truths he inculcates, and who shall quarrel with him?"

It was said that Lyall "was evangelical in his religious views" (Rose, 233). The history of the Church in Scotland is marked by innumerable divisions, many of them over matters of church management. One division which arose following the restoration of the Presbyterian Church to Scotland in 1688 under William and Mary, after the fall of the Stuarts, was between the Moderates and the

Evangelicals. The Moderates were the more tolerant of philosophical discussion and more favourable to the freedom and independence of Philosophy from Theology. David Hume, a Moderate, was at one point a candidate for the Chair of Ethics and Pneumatic Philosophy at Edinburgh ("Pneumatic Philosophy" included the study of the human mind and the divine nature) and one of the requirements was subscription to the Westminster Confession. Evidently Hume was prepared to subscribe but, needless to say, "the Chair was bestowed elsewhere." He had another try at Glasgow with the same result (Laurie, 47-48). Lyall, on the other hand, belonged to the Evangelical wing of his day and, hence, his theological views tended to be conservative, orthodox and traditional.

Lyall's evangelicalism was probably influenced by the leader of the Great Disruption with which Lyall identified himself in 1843, the renowned Glasgow preacher, Thomas Chalmers, after whom so many Presbyterian churches in Canada have been named. Chalmers was made professor of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrew's and later Professor of Theology at Edinburgh. It has been said of his teaching that "The practical bearing of his doctrines was always present to his mind, and he spoke habitually as a preacher of righteousness. . . . His teaching represented the evangelical revival of his time" (Laurie, 246f). Like Lyall, he believed that moral philosophy left unresolved problems "for which an adjustment can be found only in the doctrines of Christianity" (*Ibid.*).

But, evangelical or not, Lyall's mode of proceeding was not only in line with the conventional Christian piety of the time, but something that came naturally and spontaneously to Lyall himself and met the expectations and ready acceptance of his readers and auditors. The Scottish Common sense philosophers were noted for the elevated tone of their lectures. Reid declared that he would "countenance nothing that degrades the dignity of Man" (Brett, 15). Grave (1967, 402) speaks of "the strength and elevation of Brown's moral sentiments." Lord Cockburn said of Dugald Stewart (McCosh, 281): "To me his lectures were like the opening of the heavens. I felt I had a soul. His noble views, unfolded in glorious sentences, elevated me into a higher world." The inevitable American visitor had heard Dugald Stewart "teaching from his Chair the most exalted philosophy in the noblest strains of eloquence" (Martin, 38). Even the vocabulary was different. Philosophy could be "high", a doctrine could be "exalted", views could be "noble", a conclusion "just", one could argue with "propriety", thoughts could be "worthy", sentiments "elevated"; ad-

jectives we would hardly think of applying in philosophy today. The line between education and edification, between philosophy and the zeal to influence manners, to form and develop taste, to improve morals and to inspire piety, was not so sharply drawn then as now. And for Lyall it was piety that was chiefly important, for, as he explains (*Intellect*, 281), "without piety, even virtue is of little account."

Lyall was a jealous defender of the values attaching to the study of philosophy. In his reminiscences, MacDonald Oxley remarked: "To him John Stuart Mill and Sir William Hamilton, Descartes and Cousin, not to mention Aristotle and Plato, were benefactors of the race beside whom even Watt and Stephenson, John Law and Cyrus Field were of comparatively small account" (*Gazette*, 12 January, 1903, 161).

But it was his belief, whose sincerity can scarcely be questioned, that, without theology, philosophy itself would be left with many rough edges and unresolved enigmas. It was this that enabled him to reinforce his undoubted enthusiasm for philosophy with all the zeal of his evangelical religion. Thus he could say that the spiritual and the moral natures of man "are very nearly allied, if they are not altogether one" (*Intellect*, 280). In finding the polarity of the emotions (love-hate, joy-sorrow, confidence-fear) inexplicable without the postulate of the Fall of man (*Ibid.*, 291f, 414ff, 427f) he comes close to identifying true philosophy with Christian belief. For "the whole aspect and character of philosophy is affected by this radical defect" (*Ibid.*, 418). "Philosophy has contented itself with an incomplete view, when that view is limited to the present state of man and is not carried up to one of prior superiority and perfection" (*Ibid.*, 291). "The prior state of man is a postulate in all moral questions" (*Ibid.*, 427). For Lyall, sound philosophy and true religion are so closely related that they become for all practical purposes one and the same. Thus an anonymous writer in the *Gazette* (30 January, 1890, 94) shortly after Lyall's death could record, without implausibility, and even with a sense of triumph and splendour, that Lyall "taught as if Philosophy were the one thing needful for the life that now is and for that which is to come."

## NOTE

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