

The charge of libel has two specifications, viz:

(1.) That Prof. Royce warned the general public against Dr. Abbot as a blatant and ignorant pretender in philosophy.

(2.) That Prof. Royce accused Dr. Abbot of plagiarizing Hegel at second hand.

From the point of view of propriety of conduct in a student of philosophy, the only adequate excuse for the first of these acts would be that the fact proclaimed was so unmistakable that there could be no two opinions about it on the part of men qualified by mature study to pass judgment on the merits of philosophical writers. In case the act were not so justified, the offence would be enormously aggravated if it were dictated by malice. The first question, then, is: Did Prof. Royce, as a matter of fact, so warn the public against Dr. Abbot? He certainly did, unequivocally and with full consciousness of what he was about; that is the unmistakable import of his whole article in the *International Journal of Ethics* for October, 1890. The next question is whether it is so plainly true that Dr. Abbot is a blatant and ignorant pretender in philosophy that it is impossible competent men should think otherwise? So far is that from being the case that philosophers of the highest standing, such men as Kirchheiss in Germany, Renouvier in France, and Seth in England, have drawn attention to the remarkable merit of his work. I am not personally intimate with Dr. Abbot, and am far from being a partisan of his doctrines, but as an humble student of philosophy, endeavoring to form my estimations with the eye of truth, I recognize in him a profound student and a highly original philosopher, some of whose results are substantive additions to the treasury of thought; and I believe that the prevalent opinion among competent men would be that Prof. Royce's warning is an unwarranted aspersion. Next, what excuse was there for such conduct, what motive prompted it? Prof. Royce and Dr. Abbot have their rival ways out of agnosticism. Both start from the same premises to come in the main (at least, so Royce says) to the same conclusion. Shall we say, then, that a passer-by cannot loiter near Dr. Abbot's shop, attracted by the placard, "THE WAY AND THE TRUTH," without Prof. Royce's rushing out and shouting from across the street that he can offer the same article at a lower figure? No; for how far a spirit of rivalry may have influenced him no man can know, Prof. Royce least of all.

Passing to the second specification, we ask: Did Prof. Royce accuse Dr. Abbot of plagiarizing Hegel? No; he only accused him of giving a maimed version of Hegel's theory of universals, naïvely supposing it to be a product of his own brain. That was no libel in the sense now considered. But, says Dr. Abbot, I have stated so clearly the antithesis between Hegel's view and mine that Prof. Royce cannot be sincere in saying they are identical. No matter; the more absurd the accusation, the less injurious; the less the truth, the less the libel. On this count Dr. Abbot is entirely in the wrong.

Passing to the second charge, we ask whether Prof. Royce used unfair means to stifle Dr. Abbot's reply? The ex-parte evidence indicates that he did contrive that Abbot's reply should be first postponed (as postponed it was over two numbers of the quarterly), and at last, as the third quarter was drawing to a close, should be excluded; in which performances Dr. Adler, the editor-in-chief, does

not appear as very strong in the practical department of ethics. Afterwards Prof. Royce, through a lawyer, threatened Dr. Abbot with legal proceedings if he published his proposed reply at all.

All this would be abominable to the last degree in the case of a philosophical discussion. But then it must not be forgotten that the contention had never had that character. Prof. Royce's article was written with the avowed purpose, clearly and openly conveyed, though not by direct declaration, of ruining Dr. Abbot's reputation; and what little discussion there was was merely to subserve that purpose, not to ascertain or prove any truth of philosophy. Thus, it was a brutal, life-and-death fight from the first. Prof. Royce clearly perceived this, for he ends the article *by saying that he shows no mercy and asks none!* That's ethics. And his subsequent proceedings make it, in my judgment, as plain as such a thing can be, that his cruel purpose never left his heart. Dr. Abbot, on the other hand, stood like a baited bull, bewildered at such seemingly motiveless hostilities.

It is quite impossible not to suppose that Prof. Royce conceived it was his duty thus to destroy Dr. Abbot's reputation, and with that the happiness of his life. A critic's stern and sacred duty, and all that! Besides, it must be remembered that he is a student of ethics; and it is not to be imagined that a person can study ethics all his life long without acquiring conceptions of right and wrong that the rest of the world cannot understand.

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NOTES

This note is surely by Peirce, inasmuch as it is a continuation of the "vis viva" dispute that began with his review of Spencer. This is unassigned in Haskell's *Index to The Nation*, vol. 1.

—Prof. Hoskins sends us a rejoinder on *vis viva* too long and irrelevant to print, nor is the discussion, by its nature, exactly suited to our columns. Instead of showing how he could maintain that growth is not an irreversible process in the sense in which the action of viscosity is irreversible, he holds that an irreversible process does not violate the law of *vis viva*. But an irreversible process is such that if the final velocities have their signs reversed, the equations of motion will not be satisfied by the movement of all the particles back over their previous paths with the same (reversed) velocities. Now the equations will be so satisfied unless the forces are changed by this reversal of the velocities—that is, unless they depend on the velocities. Further, if the accelerations depend on the velocities, it is easily shown that the *vis viva* cannot always be the same in the same configuration, and thus the equation of *vis viva* is violated. Therefore growth, so far as it is an irreversible process, violates this principle. It is true that the kinetical theory explains not only irreversible processes (for which it was needed), but also reversible ones (which is supererogatory). But our correspondent is surely mistaken in saying that a similar apparent violation of the law of *vis viva* admits of any acceptable explanation not based on probabilities. Friction, viscosity, diffusion, conduction, in all states of matter must be so explained.