

In Memoriam

CLARENCE IRVING LEWIS  
(1883-1964)

WILLIAM TUTHILL PARRY

Clarence Irving Lewis, philosopher and logician, was born in Stoneham, Massachusetts on April 12, 1883.<sup>1</sup> His father, a shoemaker, was black-listed for trade-union activity. Young Lewis worked on farms and in shoe-factories till he entered Harvard College in 1902; he worked his way through college in three years. At about the age of thirteen, Lewis had fallen into philosophic wonderment without instruction, and discovered for himself the flux of Heraclitus (without the Logos), and the paradoxes of Zeno (without mathematical conceptions of infinity). Two years later, he began to read the Greek philosophers who had anticipated him, and Spencer's *First Principles*.

In college, Lewis divided his time between English, economics, and philosophy. In his final year, he took a course in metaphysics which William James and Josiah Royce divided between them. Lewis appreciated James's "swift way of being right", but Royce, with his "ponderous cogency", became and remained his ideal of a philosopher. After graduation, Lewis taught English in high school one miserable year; and spent two happy years at Boulder, Colorado, teaching English, assisting in philosophy, and beginning married life with his high-school sweetheart, Mabel Graves. He returned to Harvard for graduate work in 1908. He studied Plato with Santayana; and with lasting effect, Kant with Ralph Barton Perry (who required weekly summaries of the reading). He took metaphysics with Royce, and Perry's seminar in epistemology. With fellow-students and in his own mind, he fought out the battle between Perry's New Realism and Royce's absolute idealism. He rejected idealistic metaphysics, but felt the new realists and pragmatists did not do justice to the rationalistic arguments of the absolute idealists. He thought James and Royce had more in common than they recognized; he believed the "conceptualistic pragmatism" of his later *Mind and the World-Order* developed out of the same roots as Royce's "absolute pragmatism". Royce com-