

VI.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic. By JOHN M. E. McTAGGART, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. 8vo. Cambridge. 1896. Pp. xvi, 259.

HITHERTO, with slight exceptions, the studies in Hegelian philosophy published in this country have been chiefly in the line of exposition. Criticism has in the main been incidental, and found in works dealing with Hegel's views on special questions whose discussion engaged the chief attention. Mr McTaggart's book marks a distinct advance. It is a thoughtful and acute attempt, conducted with marked good taste and ability, to determine what Hegel actually tried to effect and how far he succeeded, to clear away misconceptions as to his method and its relation to ordinary experience, to point out problems which Hegel suggests to reflection but cannot be said himself either to see or to give a solution to, to indicate some directions in which his system seems to need supplement or correction, and to examine the value of his philosophy in general, as well as of certain applications he made of it to the several departments of sociological history. Even for those who are unable to accept all its conclusions it is a stimulating and enlightening book, full of quiet reflectiveness and penetrating remark, and high-toned in its conception of the problem of philosophy.

The seven chapters conjoined under the title of *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*, if they do not exactly form an organic unity, offer at least a fairly continuous discussion of certain difficulties and corollaries which sooner or later present themselves to the student of Hegelianism. They fall, it may be said, into three or four tolerably distinct groups. In the first of these groups will go the three chapters (I.—III.) entitled 'The general nature,' 'Different interpretations,' and 'The validity,'—'of the dialectic.' Too much should not of course be expected under these somewhat comprehensive headings. The three chapters are written with, on the whole, a definite reference to views taken of Hegel's work by critics of the two generations since his death (e.g. by Trendelenburg, Herr v. Hartmann, and Prof. A. Seth), and offer a line of arguments narrowed (even if it be also pointed) by the occasionally accidental and personal qualities of the objections against which they are

directed. Such objections to a large extent are but symptomatic of the course of development in the individual soul which makes them, and to deal with them in a satisfactory way would require (as, obviously, one cannot hope to traverse the endless multitude of single censures) either to assure ourselves that they may safely be taken as typical of the dubieties raised by Hegelianism in the average human mind, or to seek to discover the fundamental views as to the problem of philosophy, as to the relations or no-relations of thought and reality, to discover (—to put it roughly) the *idola* of the den and the theatre, which underlie and give growth to the incessant efflorescence of cavils. Instead of this all but impossible method of dealing with objectors, Mr McTaggart takes the praiseworthy course of testing general demurrers by a patient confrontation of them with the evidence of the original texts, by distinguishing what is valid in their remarks from what is exaggerated for the sake of a thesis. Probably there are other and more penetrating criticisms of the Hegelian principle and method which it would have been desirable for him to tackle. Those of Trendelenburg were written too much in the shade of that re-action which made asceticism in speculation a positive, and perhaps the sole intellectual, virtue, and looked back on the speculative epoch as a time of philosophic paganism: Von Hartmann's essay on the 'dialectical method' is but a hasty spoil of the times when he was scouring the domains erewhile held by the three kings of thought who reigned before him, and trying to carve out for himself a new realm; and as for Prof. Seth, perhaps one may venture the hope that he will yet employ his eminent conciliatory talent to bridge over the gulf between the deep-rooted instincts of 'personal' life and the 'meditation of death' which seems to take their place when life is viewed 'under a certain species of eternity,' instead of intensifying the inevitable conflict between them by an appeal *ad populum*.

Chapters iv. and v.—which have been already published, 'nearly in their present form' in *Mind* (N. S. 1, 2, 8, 10)—form a second group of different aspect. Ch. iv., entitled 'The development of the Method,' taking the phenomena as presented first in Hegel's *Logic*, and then in the whole cycle of his philosophy, endeavours to show that in the progress of the Hegelian system the method undergoes a continuous alteration—like an instrument which acquires new capabilities by being used—: that in its beginning the element of negation and contradiction takes a more prominent position than it holds later, so that a period of struggle gives place finally to an easy evolution: that, in a way, the conclusion thus serves to show the incorrectness or 'subjectivity' of the process by which it was reached, or, in other words, that 'the dialectic does not give a fully adequate account of its own nature.' This, it must be owned, sounds at first hearing a very awkward doctrine for the 'dialectic': even though Mr McTaggart is careful to circumscribe its consequences. He further points out that Hegel might, if he had chosen, have adopted for the relations of Nature and Mind to pure Logic a scheme of

movement, analogous to that adopted in the transitions of Being and not-being, rather than that suggested by the relation of subjective and objective in the 'idea.' To the thesis of this chapter, that Hegel had not himself realised or seen what was implied in the gradual but decisive change from the inadequacy of the earlier categories to the increasing truth of the later, Mr McTaggart attaches much importance: 'it is only,' he remarks, 'by the aid of some such theory' (of a subjective element in the dialectic) 'that we can regard the Hegelian system as valid at all.'

Chapter v., 'The relation of the dialectic to time,' will be to many the most difficult passage in the book. The author is always acute and subtle in argumentation, and the discussion of the place of time in the system of ultimate reality is not a less fertile field of ambiguity now than it was in the days of Augustine. That the development in the dialectical system, both pure and applied, is *not* a development in time (*i.e.* the story of a growth), may be taken as settled: Hegel distinctly negatives the suggestion of so treating it; and indeed the confusion between a record of events and an exposition of meaning seems too gross to be deemed possible. But, it is argued, this technical treatment of it does not really abolish the difficulty. If philosophy is the comprehension of what is, if it aims at 'discovering the ultimate nature of all reality,' and does so by showing 'reality' ordinarily so-called to be an inadequate stage or partial truth of what in its fullest 'realisation' is an 'idea,' it seems not unnatural to say with Mr McTaggart that the purpose of philosophy is to 'establish the rationality of the universe,' and that all idealism (and Hegel's system is confessedly and professedly a complete or 'absolute' idealism) declares the world or universe to be 'fundamentally rational and righteous throughout.' Does not the veriest tyro know that Hegel asserted that whatever is real is rational, and whatever is rational is real? And if so, is not the actual fact, present anywhere, justified; and is not the 'must be' and 'ought to be' of the 'rationalist' invested with a title to existence? Yet 'if all reality is rational and righteous,' how are we to explain the notorious facts of unreason and wrong everywhere protruding? We are, it is obvious, confronted by the 'problem of the origin of evil.' According to Mr McTaggart the solution of the problem lies in accepting both the opposed propositions—that the universe is eternally rational, and that imperfection does exist—and hoping that in some as yet unknown and unsurmiseable way a reconciliation may be found in a higher synthesis. Perhaps this is to throw too hard a task on the divine might of Higher Synthesis, and it may more profitably be asked whether the universe which is eternally rational and righteous is directly identifiable with the universe in which imperfection prevails. Or it may even more profitably be considered what is to be understood by 'eternally reasonable and righteous,' and how far these epithets are clear and unequivocal.

The two concluding chapters (vi. and vii.) treat of 'The final

result of the dialectic' and 'The application of the dialectic.' The 'final result' or the terminus of the dialectic is made by Hegel to be Philosophy, and one hardly sees how he could do otherwise in an encyclopedia, where philosophy is alpha and omega. But philosophy, urges Mr McTaggart, must be considered to be 'merely a state of knowledge.' Deduct the 'merely,' and the equation seems no great error: but what is the force of the 'merely'? It is the separation of knowledge, *first*, from the thing known, from the 'this' which we know, and then we have before us the thing-in-itself *named* knowledge, but to which neither gods nor men can attach any meaning or allow any reality; and, *second*, its separation from volition and from pleasure and pain,—that pure, disinterested knowledge, which human beings at least neither desire nor care for. Philosophy—so understood as a state of knowledge—cannot (it is further inferred) be regarded as the 'culminating point of reality,' or as the 'supreme activity of spirit'; it cannot even form a part in that supreme activity, for it is for ever vitiated by its antithesis to volition, and by its dependence upon an 'immediate' and a 'given' which is alien to it. Philosophy is not 'capable of acting as a synthesis between art and religion.' It, like them, is 'endeavouring,' (says the author) 'to find a harmony between the individual spirit and the rest of the universe.' But all three alike fall short of their aim. A new synthesis is required: 'some state of conscious spirit,' 'as direct as art, as certain and universal as philosophy,' in its faith, vision, and assurance that all things (ourselves included) are in harmony.

Of the essay on the application of the dialectic the drift is briefly to show that the dialectic itself is worth much more than its applications. 'The really valid part of Hegel's system is his Logic, and not his applications of it.' And if we farther ask what the *value* is of what is thus pronounced *valid*, an answer comes that 'the value of philosophy lies more in the domains of religion than in those of science or practice,' and that that value consists in the 'general determination of the nature of true reality' and in the certainty Logic gives that 'all reality is rational and righteous.' The application of the method to portions of the concrete historical field in religion, law, or art is invalidated, according to Mr McTaggart, by three considerations, *first*, that we have there no fixed beginning or end as in the Logic, no bare rudiment or 'complete realisation' of the 'absolute idea' where we can set our foot down; *second*, that all real life and history is more than logic, that the dialectic process is continually disturbed by external causes; and *third*, that a philosopher cannot possibly have the extensive and thorough knowledge of particulars, which the 'rationalisation of reality'—particularly if understood to be the 'reconciliation of it with our aspirations'—must demand as a pre-requisite. In consequence of the last deficiency it is suggested that a more promising field in which to apply logic will be found by taking abstract (moral) qualities and considering them as thesis, antithesis, or synthesis of other qualities (or *mixed modes*) of the same abstract stamp.

It is a commonplace that every age has its own difficulties and prejudices; and that each individual also has his own. The thoughts and interests of a period, a class, a single person, are set in a particular direction, and reflect or construct the world in a special way. An age which in the gross may be called idealistic is replaced by a period where realistic currents prevail. Faith fastens at different dates on widely diverse *foci*, or calls them at least by widely disparate names. New catchwords are abroad, new aims pursued, new gods worshipped. We ask the philosopher of other days questions which imply a standpoint he would find it difficult to assume. We want to see him from the outside, all round, as a single object, to be, as it may seem desirable, appropriated or rejected, according to its adaptability or inadaptability to our needs. What to him was at least an effort to reconstruct the world in the light of the Absolute, his readers will for practical purposes treat as only a petty contribution to a task (that of rationalising the mass of things) which each reader must *de novo* undertake for himself. But so to take stock of themselves—to put themselves in a nutshell—to adjust themselves for consumption by the public jaws—is what the great thinkers have not done, and could not do without self-derogation and self-destruction. Hegel, in the introductory chapters of the *Encyclopædie*, made an attempt: but it was not more successful than Wordsworth's exposition of the theory of the relations of Nature to Art and to Man which governed his poetry. He had not studied his own method from without: it was not—for him—detachable from its subject-matter, just as, conversely, the subject-matter was not detachable from it. Such a subject-matter, detached and made a body of dogma, would be but dry bones, suitable for a museum: such a method, reduced to an abstract trick of manipulation, would be but an instrument of logomachy.

Hegel has spoken more than once of the movement of thought in his argument as that of the matter or fact itself (*der Sache selbst*). He did not mean that the abstractly objective did or could move: that a selfless world could exert the life of change. The *fact itself* of which he speaks is the real world which is a unity of subjective and objective: it is a thought-permeated objectivity, and a subjectivity which has made itself at home in external body, and is no longer a floating will-o'-the-wisp of opinion. When Hegel's Logic begins its dogmatic march and enters on the *sicheren Gang der Wissenschaft*, the processes of nature and history—and especially that of mental history (and Mind is always and *par excellence* the Historical process—*das Historische*) have been already traversed. It is a fundamental hypothesis of his system that philosophy as self-contained knowledge is a circle—that it returns into itself—and that the beginning has its full force only for him who has gone already through what is called its end. The mind which logicises is a mind which, if it at its one end grows out of the organised concretion of space and materiality known as *homo sapiens*, attempts at its other to raise itself up to, and seek a higher firmament in, that

spiritual structure of the Idea, which is the intangible and inapprehensible God, as he may be said to exist (if such being can be called existence) before the realm of nature and the realm of history (which is freedom and humanity) had emerged. If this be kept in mind,—and it is implied in Mr McTaggart's phrase that the process of Hegelian logic is a reconstruction, rather than construction,—it seems to cut away the ground from some loose talk about 'pure thought,' about the passage from Logic to Nature, and about the relation of philosophy to religion and art. A parallel case may set this in a clearer light. Just as Kant is sometimes estimated on the basis of an arbitrary restriction of his teaching to the more palpable features of the Criticism of Pure Reason, so Hegel has suffered by the subordination of his philosophies of Nature and Mind to the Logic. Nor is it sufficient to say that the Logic presupposes experience: that it is based upon the general nature or 'common characteristics of all experience,'—an experience which contains within it the 'nature of pure thought' to be elicited or ascertained by dialectic. 'Experience' is but a vague, much-worn word; and, like its neighbour 'reality,' it is employed perhaps a little too much as a conjuror's cry. The specific experience which philosophy always, according to Hegel, presupposes is an experience which has in it the characters of morality, art, and religion: and the still more specific experience which Hegelianism presupposes is the concentrated ideal life in the *Geistesreich* or World of Soul, Mind and Spirit, which is the abiding fruit gained from the historic movement of art and religion, and above all of philosophy. The bare shell of experience is and gives nothing: we must know what it is an experience of: for experience is not a reality, a self-subsistent, nor on the other hand is it so much 'pure thought' combined with so much 'data of sense' or 'matter of intuition.' Data of sense which are 'indispensable and yet negative,' which are 'not positive causes, but conditions' shrivel up into something very hard to talk about,—at least if they are to be talked about with profit.

Mr McTaggart has entitled these interesting and suggestive chapters essays in the Hegelian *dialectic*. He has spoken freely of *categories*. He has used as descriptive of the three steps of the logical movement the names *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis*. He may plead great example for so doing, and may urge the convenience of distinct terms. But something may be said on the other side. The three last names are the literary property of Fichte, and oust a multitude of very untranslatable Hegelian terms, such as *setzen* and *aufheben*, *an und für sich*, which, with their various shades and—as some may even think—ambiguities, constitute (may one say?) the charm and the stimulus of Hegelianism. The others, I think, give a mechanical regularity and discreteness to the process which, as Mr McTaggart well points out, is or would be continuous and organic. *Synthesis*, in particular, is misleading. No doubt in some modern uses it denotes a finer, ideal composition—an inner and intimate union of hearts and bodies; but it may be doubted whether

the word can fairly bear this meaning, and it is unadvisable so to treat it, in the face of Hegel's relegation of it to a lower level than that of a 'speculative' unity. 'Category,' again, is a name Hegel occasionally introduces: but it is only to facilitate the way of the historical student—(in a similar way to Kant's so calling the *Stamm-begriffe* of intellect), and tends to mix up matters of diverse origin and purport. An elastic term like this has its disadvantages.

The case is somewhat different with Dialectic. In Hegel's primary use it designates a real, though frequently unnoted, phenomenon in life and knowledge, whereby the thing and concept, which temporarily or ordinarily seemed stable, definitive, and simple, turns out to be unstable, multiform and contradictory. Common practical life rests upon the assumption of temporarily ultimate points, absolute principles, and the like. It may, if probed, own them to be relative and abstract, but it deals with them as if they were absolute and total. And it is natural and good for it so to act, so long as it is immersed in the necessities of practical life which insensibly and gradually call up the complementary re-action. It is otherwise when it philosophises and rests in reflection on the single step. Then the context and the complementary is lost sight of; and a series of independent atoms of thought seem to be left as severally real. Theory in its first stage tends to give independent fixity to elements which life keeps flexible and organic. It is the business of a higher philosophy to find a more adequate expression of concrete experience than the ordinary efforts of reflection, divorced from life and action, are able to supply.

The business of dialectic, therefore, in its most legitimate sense, is to be the bridge which continually throws itself out to span the abyss between the land of so-called common sense, or first impression of ordinary reflection, and the land of reason or philosophy. It serves to demonstrate that the irrefragable data and solid ground of the theorising practician are not really so solid and impregnable as they seem. In practice no doubt the impermanence and the interdependence of things is again and again flashed upon even common observation. But in the world of theory which is for ever being built up by man, this truth of observation is forgotten, treated as an extrinsic and accidental phenomenon of things, instead of being recognised as what Plato has called a *πάθος θάνατόν τε καὶ ἀγήρων*. 'To be a philosopher,' says Nietzsche in his drastic way 'is to be a mummy.' That at least is the common danger of the hasty theorizer. His ideal world leaves out the pathos and the action of life, and converts it into a statuesque collection or a mechanical conjunction of what are called ideas. This is where Hegel pressed his dialectic into service,—to shew that these ideas, even when hardened into the stability of things, have intrinsic and intestine life and motion. It is directed against the half-and-half measures of popular philosophy—of the philosophy which seeks a comfortable pillow of sound principle to sleep again, and which perhorresces nothing so much as seeing a 'bacchantic intoxication' convulsing the old stolidly

respectable ideas. The human mind in its unregenerate nature craves for a $\pi\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$, some solidly apprehended reality, some impregnable rock of experience, whence it may possibly seek to move other things, or where it may itself rest in tranquillity. Such a rest Hegel does not give:—or if he gives it, he gives it in the ‘absolute idea,’ where there is room in ‘identity’ and ‘unity’ for all transitions and correlations and developments through negation and contradiction; or he gives it in that absolute philosophy which includes all that is true in art and religion, and, in including, transcends and transmutes. But the absolute idea and the philosophy are both unlike the rest of sleep: and if they are to be called reality, then reality is that immeasurably far-off divine event to which all things in their finitude move, as from it in their finitude they proceed.

The function of the dialectic is therefore mainly introductory. It is none the less eternally necessary. Here and there, in every tongue and tone, some reflective spirit cries that he has found the solid bit of fact, reality, experience, out of which he will (—if you allow him time enough, and operations sufficiently multiple of memory, construction, generalisation, abstraction, and so on—) build you up the real round world you know. Only let him sit on his patch of the solid earth of present reality and primitive apprehension, —even though his datum, or given, be a very little one—, and he will be at ease. Hegel’s whole energy is engaged in a contest against this belief in a *datum*. Make it as small as you like—call it pure being: and his argument tends to shew that you have got nothing. You say you do not want a pathological process of knowledge; a knowledge which grows through disturbances and tempests and morbid states: you would like ‘pure health,’ a normal and natural development. Hegel replies, you are crying for the moon: pregnancy and birth have their morbid features: all life is tainted with sickness: nay, all life is lived only through the victory over perturbing elements; and if the conquest be too thorough, and the struggle collapse through want of antithesis, the life itself is at an end. You would like positive, out-and-out positive, truth. But truth only lives by the side of error: it has its value and validity only in the error which it serves to refute, i.e. to explain: remove the error it lives upon, and the truth hangs flaccid and sere. In ordinary every-day experience this dialectic, as we have seen, goes on quietly enough. But it assumes more terrible proportions on the field of history, when ideas have, by causes not here to be discussed, grown into great concrete powers, and summed up in a single term the result of long processes. Then the phenomena are called disease. But there is no absolutely normal health—except in a visionary standard which only youthful impatience can expect to see realised in his own sturdy growth.

But Hegel has not used the term ‘dialectic’ as the supremely descriptive name of his method, or made it, as Mr McTaggart does, serve to cover the whole process of introducing order and connection into the mass of terms and forms of thought which are built into the

fabric of reality. Dialectic proper perhaps belongs most to the field of what Hegel at one time called *Objective Logic*. Objective Logic deals with a number of 'categories' or 'kinds of nameable things' which are taken as, in a way, part of the 'external' universe of fact, bits of reality. There are other categories—more commonly taken as 'forms of thought'—which fall within the scope of what Hegel once called *Subjective Logic*. These, such as final cause, and the formulae of judgment and conception, are treated as ideal vestments on reality: ways the human mind has of putting together or disjoining facts which are in the last resort independent of this dressing. Hegel's purpose may be said to be to break down the absoluteness and ultimateness of this distinction. It was not a new step, but only a systematic prosecution of a view which had come out decidedly in Kant, been deepened and extended by Fichte and Schelling, but had never been absent when philosophy went vigorously to work in its effort to unify the theory of life. That view had been that the so-called objective is essentially a subjective-objective: that not merely in the modal or properly logical terms, but also in such as put forward a claim to metaphysical, and even materialistic value, there is the pulse and life of subjectivity. With being, you suppose yourself to be on the ground of reality: you fancy that on given qualities you can build as on primitive rock. Causes are valid, you say, even if final causes are foibles: there is power in number, even if organism be an ill-compounded mode of synthesis. But the Hegelian logic claims to shew that if you are safe on being, it is only because it is one plank on the deck of the ship of thought, and that the single solid plank involves and postulates the concrete complexity of the whole structure. If you are in earnest with being, or trust the data of intuition (apprehension), you are committed to the absolute idea, *i.e.* to the concrete system of correlativity, transition, and development, which is the god of the abstract logical world: and in the long run you are committed to something larger still, to an organic natural realm, and to the omnipresence of intelligent and volitional life. It was this conviction which in partial and therefore paradoxical shapes led to the Berkeleian theory of vision, to the analysis of the more abstruse ideas by Locke into simpler co-adjusted elements, and to Hume's much maligned interpretation of causality in things as connection between thoughts. It is the same principle which in Descartes appears in the personal form, *cogito, ergo sum*, and in his finding the safeguard of each single perception in their coherence with that supreme harmony of all true or 'perfect' reality which he called God. What merit Hegel has is perhaps only the persistent exploitation of this idea throughout the whole range of terms in which blank and bare reality emerges into name, inter-relation, and value. The real world in its essential fabric is a work of ideas: while the admittedly ideal terms are only the development to a further stage of what has come to be commonly taken as real and constitutive of reality.

But dialectic is after all only the negative side of his philosophy: and Hegel does not rest content with the demonstration of the power of negation, even in the highest. His own name for his method would be Speculative: and as Speculation he designates the positive and unificatory operation of intelligence which holds contradictions in unity and identity. But the 'unity' and 'identity' of contradictions does not, however crassness or perversity may assert, mean that it is all the same whether we say yes or no. It means rather that the meanest of God's creatures boasts at least two soul-sides, one to show to the world and the enemy, another to show to the self and the friend. It means that in the view of science or fuller knowledge, the simplicity which is the assumption of practical life is an illusion. The plain man and the practical judge expect a plain answer, yes or no, to a plain question. But the investigator and the criminologist have learned that plain questions and plain answers are only possible for those of hurried and blunted senses; guilty and not-guilty are terms of a limited province and are conditioned in their application by a social convention. The plain answers are neither quite unreal nor quite untrue, be it added: but they are not expressive of the whole truth or the whole reality. The problem which is strictly called speculative is to find a more adequate expression, to formulate the question in terms which will allow a more equitable answer. But it must not be supposed that the speculative simply undoes the effect of the dialectical act: or if we say that it reconciles, reconciliation does not consist in glossing over or ignoring the opposition. We may declare that the disruption is overcome, or cancelled, or suppressed, or transcended: but we shall misinterpret these terms if we think that thereby that which once was has been made as if it were not. The 'new life which rises upon the ruins of the old' is a phrase which, as is the way of metaphors, makes us forget that the new life owes its structural grace and wealth to the fragments and jarring elements which it reconstructed. Mr McTaggart remarks that 'if we find contradictions in our notion of a thing, we must give up its reality.' This seems an unnecessarily hard saying. No doubt contradiction is a symptom of incompleteness and therefore of comparative unreality or defective 'truth.' It is a sign that you are not on the absolutely solid ground. But the ground may be fairly real ground for all that. A pure unreality would hardly be worth the trouble of contradiction. It is only the 'concrete notion,' says the author, which is 'found in the world of reality,' and he tells us that according to Hegel 'thought can only *exist* in its complete and concrete form' as *absolute idea*. Surely there is exaggeration and misconception present or suggested here. The world of reality in which the concrete idea is found existent is not the world known as real to ordinary mortals: for them its light is not visible on sea or land: it is a world which for him who has eyes only for the actual (*das Wirkliche*) is a veiled world. The full and concrete notion — the 'absolute idea' — surely only *exists* (if the word is even there appropriate) in the

totality of nature and of mind, in the universe natural and spiritual. But the absolute truth ('truth' and not 'reality' is the Hegelian term of supreme sweep) does not annihilate partial truths, and seat itself in their place. Apart from their partial reality or truth, it itself were the emptiest reality and the poorest truth, just because the most pretentious. The Absolute must not merely have room for, but must contain, all the Relatives: the concrete, contain all the abstracts: the harmonious unity, all the contradictories.

Mr McTaggart remarks that in the Logic we have fixed points at the two termini: Being at the commencement and Absolute idea at the close. He speaks, it often seems, as if they were two points as realistically defined and located as the two ends of a road. But this may be misleading if we forget that the road leads across the infinite and eternal. The start with being is equivalent, he thinks, to the postulate that 'experience really exists,' or that 'something is': the dialectic '*assumes the validity* of the idea of being.' What precisely is meant by 'validity,' I hardly feel sure: but in any case I do not think the philosophy which characteristically asserts that 'Being and Nothing is the same thing' can have a very high estimate of the idea of being and its validity. It would be truer to say that the dialectic *demonstrates the invalidity* of the idea of being (—that impregnable stronghold of those who fear the eddying tides of thought) until it has been supplemented by factors which are decidedly idealistic, subjective, thought-born. And 'Is' which is no more than a bare 'Is,' being in its blank purity, far from serving as a solid standpoint, is a tight-rope from which you are incessantly rolling off into nought. It is the beginning of the dialectic, not because it is warranted by the common nature of experience, —(the common nature of experience, if it can warrant anything, can warrant a great deal more than the bare pin-point of being), but because as mere or pure being it is the pole of truth in closest contact with nonentity, and at an inappreciable distance from it.

But if *pure* Being is the minimum of reality, what shall be said of the Absolute Idea? One may have the highest respect for the serried array of the dialectic, and feel unable to detect a serious flaw in the links of its chain; one may be amazed at the incompetence which allows some of its critics first to mistranslate and then to misconceive its argument; and yet one may not be clear that here is the absolutely fire-proof structure of thought, embracing all details, and complete for all time to come. Even a disciple may regard his master as human, and be content if he finds in him a light to lighten the past and to convert its chaotic voices into harmony or at least coherent speech, though he fails to prophesy unambiguously of the after times. As Hegel approaches the terminus, —the absolute idea (in Logic) and philosophy (in Mind), —he grows terse, and enigmatic. And why? One may say with Mr McTaggart that the 'Idea' is 'the idea of the human mind, acting theoretically or (and ?) practically.' But this is but a piece of verbal information; till we *know* the human mind — know it, as Plato says, not in its crushed and degraded or

'degenerate' form on these shores of time, but in its pristine or perfect (eternal) nature as revealed in philosophy. And when that knowledge comes, shall we be anxious to retain the epithet 'human' as distinct from 'superhuman' and 'divine'? The 'absolute idea' can have little said of it, because it represents a postulated maximum,—just as the other terminus (being) represented a minimum,—of truth. Once we get beyond 'Object' in the Logical order and enter on 'Idea' we cross the Rubicon which separates the philosophic movement, as it was directed by Kant and his successors, from all the past. Up to that point Hegel had been reproducing what may, not irreverently, be called ancient history. In the rest of the Logic he is engaged on the modern field—a much more complex and concrete field. The relation between life and intelligence, between intellect and will, the problems of Schelling and Schopenhauer, the questions of evolution theory, emerge and come to the front. But even if 'organism' and 'vitality' were clear and assured conceptions, (and they are far from being so, they are rather battle-grounds of the advanced sciences), it is difficult to surmise how we are to go beyond them, and where we shall find ourselves if we do. We may say with Mr McTaggart that 'the universe is a super-organic unity.' But just as 'organic' gets most of its meaning by its antithesis to 'mechanical,' so super-organic is only a *plus ultra* sort of word, tending to indicate that 'organism' is not the mountain summit, but only a subordinate height of truth. 'Absolute idea' therefore can only be regarded as a name for the problem of philosophy, not as a solution: it emphasises the need of a synthesis. The very title itself (with its epithet *absolute*) suggests this: and Hegel's (like Kant's) use of 'knowledge' as a genus embracing the two species of theoretical and practical reason hints the same approach to 'undiscovered territory.' When the idea is absolute, it ceases to be only idea.

I cannot agree with Mr McTaggart therefore when he speaks of the highest category as 'without contradictions.' A nursery rhyme tells of the tumultuous and interesting scenes of life and death that were transacted in relation to the House that Jack built. This House so built is in its way a supreme category: but I think it would be a rather lame affair if all the contradiction and negation of which it was the centre were removed. The pith of the story would be gone. So when we are reminded that in the advance of thought and knowledge 'the presence of negation is a mere accident, though an inseparable one, and that its importance continuously decreases,' one may in a way admit that the later chapters have less of it, and yet seek the causes in other quarters. These causes are partly that this part of the Logic had been treated in the 'Phenomenology of Mind' and comes up again in the discussion of organic and mental phenomena: partly that the battles on this field were largely yet to fight, and that not even a Hegel can anticipate the debates of the future in their detail.

It is Mr McTaggart's conviction that 'reality is not in its truest nature a process, but a stable and timeless state.' I pass over the

antithesis of a process and a timeless state, and its implications: they are perhaps scarcely in accordance with the statements of chapter v. I must note that Hegel speaks not of reality—which to him is a very subordinate category—but of the Absolute, when he describes it (if and when he does describe it) as a process. But I think it is impossible to accept the description given by Mr McTaggart as true to Hegelianism. The absolute—the Hegelian God (if we for a moment adopt language of accommodation which will not improbably mislead)—is at least Life, at least Ego: and if these are not process, self-surrendering, self-renewing process, it is difficult to see where we are to look for examples of process. To speak of Him or It as the ‘supreme being’ or ‘ultimate reality,’ as the ‘reality which underlies all finite things’ is to use expressions, capable perhaps of profitable interpretation, but which certainly lead, by their obvious suggestions, towards the cave of Spinozan substance, rather than to Hegelian Subjectivity,—which is Personality, or rather Tri-personality. And there is in Mr McTaggart’s language if not in his thought, a recurrent proclivity in this direction. It shows itself in the pre-supposition of an irreducible minimum of being as datum, an undeduced and given This; a reality which lies behind and which ‘the inadequacy of our finite thought’ never permits us to express completely; a reality ‘supplied by sense,’—sense without which ‘we can perceive nothing of the nature of thought.’ It shows itself in the dictum that it is the office of thought to mediate, and *only* to mediate: to ‘relate’ alien elements, given and apprehended somethings. When it is added that ‘thought actually exists, or it could not mediate,’ we are face to face with the old mythology of ‘efficient’ causes, powers which mediate like persons, and are entangled in the inextricable confusion between thought, the thinker, and his thoughts. As against it, here is only space to say that a thought, ‘which *only* mediates, must presuppose and postulate another (if it be another) thought which calls for mediation and submits to it: a thought which, to use language we have already demurred to, is synthesis, antithesis, and thesis,—which

Creates, creator and receiver both.

Thought mediates: but to do so, it has to be more than a mediator, and must have in it the natures of the two extremes which it reconciles, otherwise its would-be mediation is waste and nullity, or accident. The only ground for holding otherwise would seem to lie in a confusion of terms. Say that an unrelated being is as good as nothing, and you are immediately supposed to have been refuted, if it is pointed out that by your own admissions the being must *be* before it is *related*. The refuter does not take ‘unrelated’ in all its bitter truth, its absoluteness and utterness: he still leaves it in its comparative sense, indicating the absence of those relations without which the being may still exist and perform its function.

There is however another feature in Mr McTaggart’s conception of the dialectic process which has to be noted in this connection.

We have seen already how he supposes negation to be banished from the bosom of ultimate reality and contradiction to be removed from supreme truth. He prefers, it is evident, the faith and the historical event of religion to the triplicity of syllogism into which philosophy dissolves the tale. If it be the declaration of religion, as he says, that 'all things are dependent on a reality' in which our ideals find their embodiment, if religion, as Hegel suggests, keeps in the view of suffering humanity the prospect of a glittering rest which lights up the scene of present toil, philosophy certainly endeavours to 'secularise,' i.e. to reduce to an immanent law of life what revelation presents as an event and a drama. But does philosophy supervene as a new stage, utterly differing from what has gone before? Is it, as we have heard it called, a state of knowledge only? To say so of Hegel's conception of philosophy, is,—one need not put it more, and one dare not put it less, bluntly—seriously to misconceive Hegelianism. When Hegel says (*Ency.* § 554) that 'religion is the general title of the supreme sphere' of intelligence, he only expresses his prevailing tendency to accentuate that religious tone and aspect of the higher mind which he accused even Kant, and still more his predecessors, of unduly neglecting in their systems. Philosophy no doubt is knowledge; but even distinguished critics have failed to show that it is *only* knowledge. It is the knowledge of religion: the *credo* as *intelligo*. Philosophy (to Hegel) is that stage of truth—the highest, if evanescent, vision of reality—which is called religion—turned, or attempted to be turned into the grip of a pervading principle of immanent life and conscious action, not set in antagonism and relief to the present actuality, but read more and more into it, and in its turn steadied and interpreted by it.

I do not think the dialectic intended to teach us that 'matter must be reduced to spirit,' unless that means that in vulgar matter (so to call it) there are promises and potencies which call for revelation or manifestation. It is not the case, I submit, that, in Hegel's view, 'explanation by a higher category relieves us from the necessity of finding a consistent explanation by a lower one.' Hegel had read his Anaxagoras and his Leibniz to better advantage than that, and knew that the supreme *Noûs* never works without the instrumentality of machinery, and that final causes never supersede, but only complete, the laws of mechanical causation. The higher categories are not thus ungrateful. If theirs is the glorious prerogative of crowning the edifice, it is a prerogative which only the patient and laborious co-operation of many minor craftsmen made possible. No doubt we all feel sympathy with the critic who complains that the three volumes of Hegel's *Logic*, with their recurrent demonstration of the inadequacy of concepts whose practical reality and use we all accept, are a weary pull up barren steeps. But it is—according to Hegel—only on the partial truth of these materials of which dialectic proves the partial inefficiency that the higher and distant stages of the pyramid of knowledge can be reached. And each later category has to keep—transmuted and

adjusted—the earlier, not leaving them behind. It is therefore questionable policy to declare that ‘philosophy can tell us *a priori* that nature and spirit do exist.’ When it so speaks, philosophy perhaps reveals no more profound secret than M. Jourdain heard when he learnt he had been talking prose all his life. Phrases, like ‘*a priori*,’ and ‘deduction,’ are out of place in this phase of method, and serve only as stumbling-blocks. If philosophy can predict nature and spirit, it is because nature and spirit have produced or grown into philosophy.

Lastly, a word on some phrases by which the purpose of philosophy is here described. It ‘aims at discovering the ultimate nature of all reality’: and its final conclusion, we are informed, is, at least for Hegel, that ‘all reality consists of spirits which are individuals’ or of self-conscious beings existing only in their connection with one another,—a connection which is closer than an organism. Such is the ontology; and it has beside it a theology which declares God to be ‘the reality which underlies all finite beings.’ It would have been desirable perhaps to give more definite justification from Hegel for the assertion that he had arrived at the former conclusion, and to supply some indication as to the relation between the reality which *underlies* appearance and finitude, and the reality which *consists of* individual self-conscious beings. But when it is stated that, according to Hegel, philosophy is the ‘culminating point of reality,’ we fall into an almost grotesque bundle of equations, to correlate which will require an interpretation of God, philosophy, and reality involving a portentous effort of reconstructive thought. ‘Reality’ at least will not help us much in these latitudes, when it has become as empty a term as *thing* or *being*. But I do not linger long on these ontological dogmas: for—as Kant long ago remarked in his ‘Dreams’—it is not easy to say how much you commit yourself to when you cross the boundary into Spirit-land.

Philosophy however has its less metaphysical side. It ‘establishes the rationality of the universe’: and Hegel himself is said to show that ‘the universe is fully rational,’ ‘altogether rational and righteous.’ A German poet, Novalis, I think, is reported to have said that though philosophy can bake us no bread, she can give us God, freedom, and immortality. Not on one side only, but on both, this aphorism smacks of the enthusiasm and pseudo-idealism of the Romantic epoch. Directly philosophy can do the second as little as the first: in her place in the organism of intellect she can help much both towards better bread, and a worthier life in the light of these three ideas. But let us not be in a hurry to suppose that a discovery of the harmony of the universe, its rationality and righteousness, will reconcile it with our aspirations or with our ethical needs, at least unless we first make our aspirations and our ethical needs both rational and righteous. Our aspirations are no doubt legitimate in their way, and our ethical needs are possibly even ‘daughters of the voice of God’; and so are in another way the harmonies of art and the consolations of religion. But the righteousness of the true

and rational world—of the kingdom which is, in a practical sense, to come, if it be also the kingdom which is within us—exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. And we are all perhaps in our lower moments to be found in the camp of the Scribes and Pharisees. We are proud of our justice and our benevolence. But *Fiat justitia, ruat caelum* is but a relatively-worthy flaunt cast at weak-kneed pity. The righteousness and rationality of the world intelligible may not entirely square with our notions borrowed from our earthly jurisprudence and our practical aims. If philosophy therefore seeks to rationalise the world, it does so in continuation of those efforts which in all ages have been made in the direction of realising the unity and coherence of all being, in carrying ever further the process of discovering and constituting the truth of things, the harmony of mind and nature, the synthesis of all the aspects and appearances of experience. Of ultimate and absolute reality it will say positively and dogmatically but little, though it may hint much of what we have to do in temporal and relative service to further the coming of the kingdom of truth.

W. WALLACE.

Histoire de la Philosophie Atomistique. Par LÉOPOLD MABILLEAU.
Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895. Pp. vii, 558.

It would be ungracious in the extreme not to recognize with approval the diligence and wide range of information testified to by Mr Mabillean's work; at the same time, it would be futile to overlook the fact that the book, even in its best parts, is little more than a clear and pains-taking compilation from well-known authorities, and that where the author departs, as he does from time to time, from his general rule of dependence on predecessors, it is commonly for the worse. Hence it is almost unavoidable that a reviewer, the nature of whose task compels him to dwell rather on those points in which Mr Mabillean errs by diverging from Zeller or Lange than on those in which he rightly agrees with them, should appear to be doing less than justice to a work which, with all its mistakes, contains a great deal more truth than error. To guard myself in advance against the charge of undue censoriousness, I should like therefore to say something at once about the general merits of the book. It may be freely conceded that Mr Mabillean's exposition is, as a rule, lucid and straightforward; if he is occasionally obscure, the fault seems to be due more to a certain incapacity for profound philosophic thought than to difficulty of expression. I will go further; Mr Mabillean's most serious mistakes are, after all, in the main, mistakes in detail; if we put on one side certain somewhat baseless and fantastic speculations about the influence of Indian systems on Greek, and Arab systems