

## V.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

*A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz, with an Appendix of Leading Passages.* By BERTRAND RUSSELL, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1900. Pp. xvii., 311.

THE exposition of Leibniz's philosophy is peculiarly difficult, because of the mass of material and the gradual way in which it has become available. One must appeal for some guidance to earlier commentators, and the value of the commentary depends not merely on the skill and accuracy of the commentator, but on the amount of Leibniz's writing that was accessible to him when he wrote. The *Discours de Métaphysique* and the correspondence with Arnauld were not published when Erdmann wrote his exposition, and it seems to Mr. Russell that their importance as throwing light on the real foundations of Leibniz's philosophy has not been sufficiently recognised by later writers. Mr. Russell tells us that the reading of these writings enabled him to see "how the foundations of Leibniz's philosophical edifice were laid and how its superstructure rose out of them. It appeared that this seemingly fantastic system could be deduced from a few simple premisses, which, but for the conclusions which Leibniz had drawn from them, many, if not most, philosophers would have been willing to admit." And the result of his investigation is, he thinks, to show that "Leibniz's value as a philosopher is very much greater than that which would result from the customary expositions". Mr. Russell's book as a whole, however, leaves one with the impression that the value of Leibniz as a philosopher is mainly of a negative kind, and that the chief service of his philosophy is to provide materials which enable an acute critic to show that certain principles, accepted by Leibniz as well as by "many, if not most, philosophers," are really inconsistent with one another.

Mr. Russell's method, then, is purely logical, as distinct from historical. His object is not to expound Leibniz's doctrine in its historical relations and to estimate its value with reference to other systems, but to examine its direct logical worth. Accordingly, instead of beginning, as is usual, with Leibniz's *Monadology*, he examines in the first place the logical principles of the system. The direct consequences of these principles raise the problem of the nature of matter, and Leibniz's philosophy of matter leads to the conception of the *Monad*. These three subjects are discussed

in the first eleven chapters of Mr. Russell's book, while the remaining five chapters deal with the problem of soul and body, theory of knowledge, and the doctrine of God and ethics. "In these last chapters we shall find that Leibniz no longer shows great originality, but tends, with slight alterations of phraseology, to adopt (without acknowledgment), the views of the decried Spinoza." Leibniz's views on these matters are accordingly more briefly treated than "the earlier and more original portions of his reasoning". It would be difficult to speak too highly of the skill and accuracy with which Mr. Russell has laid bare the logical articulation of Leibniz's system, although the cleverness and minuteness of the analysis make one feel that the logic is somewhat clearer to the expositor than it was to the author. But the combination of criticism with exposition makes the book a hard one to read. It is one of the inevitable disadvantages of any purely logical study of a philosophical system that the critical expositor (whether or not he is clearly aware of it) must expound and criticise from a logical standpoint of his own, with the result that the author sometimes gets less, and sometimes more, than justice. Usually, however, the reader, knowing the expositor's point of view, can make a rough allowance for "windage". But Mr. Russell has a logic of his own which he indicates from time to time, but which he nowhere fully expounds and justifies. This adds greatly to the difficulty of understanding and discussing his book. It would no doubt be absurd to complain that Mr. Russell has not here given us a full exposition of his own principles; but the task of the reader would have been considerably lighter if (for instance) Mr. Russell had somewhere told us what he means by a "proposition".

Mr. Russell finds that there are five principal premisses of Leibniz's philosophy, some of which were "definitely laid down by him, while others were so fundamental that he was scarcely conscious of them". These five premisses are: "(1) Every proposition has a subject and a predicate. (2) A subject may have predicates, which are qualities existing at various times. (Such a subject is called a *substance*.) (3) True propositions not asserting existence at particular times are necessary and analytic, but such as assert existence are contingent and synthetic. The latter depend upon final causes. (4) The Ego is a substance. (5) Perception yields knowledge of an external world, *i.e.*, of existence other than myself and my states." "The fundamental objection to Leibniz's philosophy will be found to be the inconsistency of the first premiss with the fourth and fifth: and in this inconsistency we shall find a general objection to Monadism" (p. 4). Mr. Russell proceeds to summarise the argument of Leibniz, by which, from the first four premisses, together with the empirically assumed fifth, the doctrine of Monads is reached. To summarise this excellent summary is impossible, and it is too long to quote. I shall therefore make some notes on Mr. Russell's criticism of the

positions implied in it. He begins by denying that all propositions are reducible to the subject-predicate form. "The plainest instances of propositions not so reducible are the propositions which employ mathematical ideas. All assertions of numbers, as, e.g., 'there are three men,' essentially assert plurality of subjects, though they may also give a predicate to each of the subjects. Such propositions cannot be regarded as a mere sum of subject-predicate propositions, since the number only results from the singleness of the proposition, and would be absent if three propositions, asserting each the presence of one man, were juxtaposed" (p. 12). Besides there are "relational judgments," expressing a "relation" which "is something distinct from and independent of subject and accident". Leibniz recognised these, dealt with all the main types of them, and endeavoured to reduce them to the subject-predicate form. Relations and aggregates, according to Leibniz, have only a mental truth. But they are not groundless or unreal. In the case of a supposed relational proposition, "the true proposition" (as Mr. Russell expresses it), "is one ascribing a predicate to God and to all others who perceive the relation". Now Leibniz admitted that there are relations which are not reducible to qualities of one or other of the things related, and, if these relations are perceived by God, then either God perceives something which is not a proposition (not having subject and predicate) and is therefore meaningless, or there are relational propositions, which are true independently of His perception. Mr. Russell proceeds to point out that "judgments of subject and predicate are themselves relational, and include, moreover, as usually understood, two fundamentally different types of relation. These two types are illustrated by the two propositions: 'This is red' and 'red is a colour'" (p. 15). This contention Mr. Russell does not further justify; but apparently he holds that all propositions are "relational" and that in an ultimate analysis they cannot be shown to have a subject and a predicate. Both the predecessors and the successors of Leibniz, however, are at one with him in believing that "propositions must, in the last analysis, have a subject and a predicate". And Mr. Russell roundly declares that "any philosophy which uses either substance or the Absolute will be found, on inspection, to depend on this belief". "Philosophers have differed, not so much in respect of belief in the truth of the doctrine, as in respect of their consistency in carrying it out" (p. 15).

We have here, then, a criticism not merely of Leibniz's philosophy, but of the fundamental principles of all the great modern systems. It is a pity that in making so comprehensive a charge Mr. Russell has not given us a more complete account of his own position, for if his contention be just, his relational theory of the proposition must be of incalculable importance in philosophy. If every philosophy "which uses the Absolute" is to go down before it, the theory can hardly be explained too fully or argued

too thoroughly. Yet Mr. Russell leaves us in uncertainty about a great many important points. So far as I understand his position, it is based on the contention that the category of relation cannot be reduced to that of substance and accident, that there are relations which are not qualities either of a single all-comprehensive substance or of one or other of a plurality of substances. So far his criticism of Leibniz seems just. But when he extends the criticism to Leibniz's successors as well as his predecessors, it must be pointed out that it has meaning only against those who use substance and accident as the highest category. Mr. Russell's argument implies that there is no form of the subject-predicate view of the proposition which is not bound up with a substance-accident view of the world, a monism or a monadism of substance. But is this really the case? It is certainly not self-evidently so: otherwise Kant and his successors could hardly have imagined that they were transcending the substance-accident view of the world, which had been the foundation of preceding systems. Mr. Russell faces this difficulty. He gives us a new account of the meaning of Kant's Copernican revolution. "A large part" of this revolution, he says, consists in the view "that propositions may acquire truth by being believed" (p. 14). This somewhat startling statement is explained by a theory which Mr. Russell propounds in chapters xiv. and xv., where he contends that truth cannot depend upon knowledge, because "knowledge is a complex conception, compounded of truth and belief" (p. 182). "As a psychical phenomenon, a belief may be distinguished by its content, but not by the truth or falsity of that content. Thus, in discussing knowledge, *i.e.*, the belief in a true proposition, we presuppose both truth and belief. The inquiry is thus hybrid and subsequent both to the philosophical discussion of truth and to the psychological discussion of belief" (pp. 160, 161). A proposition, then, is always one thing, and a knowledge of the proposition is another. And the proposition is always prior to any knowledge of it. Accordingly Mr. Russell argues against the "view commonly held that, as Leibniz puts it, the eternal truths would not subsist if there were no understanding, not even God's. This view has been encouraged by Kant's notion that *a priori* truths are in some way the work of the mind, and has been exalted by Hegelianism into a first principle. Since it is self-contradictory to deny all truth, it has thus become self-contradictory to deny all knowledge. And since, on this view, nothing can be true without being known, it has become necessary to postulate either a personal God, or a kind of pantheistic universal Mind, from whose nature truths perpetually flow or emanate" (p. 181). Evidently, if Mr. Russell's account of the relation between knowledge and truth is correct, the Kantian revolution is reduced to absurdity, and the highest category (whatever it may be) cannot be mind or self-consciousness or anything that suggests knowledge. For truth is represented as essentially independent of all knowledge,

though in some unexplained way it comes, by being believed, to be an element in the constitution of knowledge.

Is Mr. Russell, then, right in his view of truth and knowledge? I have tried hard to understand what can be meant by a "truth" which is entirely independent of knowledge, a "proposition" which no one believes or disbelieves (for to disbelieve is to believe the opposite, and there is knowledge in either case), and I must confess that I have failed utterly. As it appears to me, Mr. Russell's argument amounts to an assertion, not indeed of things-in-themselves, but of relations-in-themselves. For apparently all propositions are relational and all true propositions are prior to knowledge. Such a view seems to me to be open to most of the objections that may be adduced against a theory of unknown things-in-themselves, while it has in addition certain difficulties of its own. For instance, when Mr. Russell speaks of knowledge as "a complex conception, compounded of truth and belief," does he mean that knowledge is a psychical phenomenon, like belief, or that it is a "conception" as distinct from a psychical phenomenon or that it is a compound of both? If it is merely a psychical phenomenon, how does it differ from belief in general and how are we entitled to define it as *truth* plus belief? If it is a "conception" as distinct from a psychical phenomenon, how can *belief*, as a psychical phenomenon, enter into it? And if it is a compound of both, we may ask how such a compound is possible on the supposition that there is so sharp a distinction as Mr. Russell maintains between the "logical" and the "psychological," between the nature of a proposition and the belief in it. Again, if there is a truth which is independent of knowledge, is there also an error which is independent of knowledge? Such an error is surely unthinkable, and if so the word "truth" is ambiguous. In ordinary use it has error as its correlative; but as used in Mr. Russell's definition of knowledge, it has no such correlative. Accordingly, Mr. Russell's definition, when expressed unambiguously, seems to be that knowledge is unknown reality (relation-in-itself) plus belief. But it is necessary (unless we are to fall into pure scepticism) to explain how an unknown reality or a relation-in-itself comes to be believed. The only hint of such an explanation which I have found in Mr. Russell's book is that it is a matter of intuition. "The problems of philosophy," he says, "should be anterior to deduction. An idea which can be defined, or a proposition which can be proved, is of only subordinate philosophical interest. The emphasis should be laid on the indefinable and indemonstrable, and here no method is available save intuition" (p. 171). If this is Mr. Russell's solution of the difficulty, I can only regard it as an expression of the unreasoned faith, which is the constructive side of scepticism.

One might similarly point out the ambiguities in the term "knowledge" as it is used by Mr. Russell on the one hand, and by some of those whom he is criticising on the other. Knowledge, for instance, would seem, on Mr. Russell's definition of it, to have

no degrees distinct from degrees of belief. A true proposition must be either fully known (when it is accompanied by the psychical phenomenon of belief) or completely unknown (when it is not accompanied by belief). If this be so we are at the mercy of the old 'sophist dilemma which sought to prove that we can never begin to know. But, without developing this point, I would merely notice that Mr. Russell apparently regards knowledge as something entirely separate from its object, so that it is impossible for the two to be in any way identified. He thus seems to me to do away with self-consciousness. "If we were to say that truths actually constitute God's understanding, and if this is what makes them true, then, since we must always distinguish between a proposition and the knowledge of it, the impious consequence follows that God can have no knowledge. Truths *are* God's states of mind, and *we* know these truths; but God cannot know them, since knowledge is distinct from what is known. And generally if a truth be something existing in some mind, then that mind, and another which knows the truth, cannot be aware of the *same* truth. If we once admit that there is one and only one Law of Contradiction, which is the same whoever knows it, then the law itself is something distinct from all knowledge, and cannot logically depend upon God's mind. Unless truth be distinct from God's knowledge, there is nothing for God to know" (pp. 180, 181). But knowledge is always "some one knowing," and if what is known can never be the same as what knows, God (for instance) can never know Himself, for God knowing must always be different from God known. Is it not possible that knowledge may be distinguishable from what is known, without a complete separation between the two, such as Mr. Russell's argument seems to imply? Is not Mr. Russell using the law of contradiction as a law of pure identity to the exclusion of difference? The passage I have just quoted throws considerable light upon the presuppositions of Mr. Russell's main arguments. It manifestly implies that there is a multiplicity of quite independent minds, each mirroring or "believing" truth, and that there is no way of reconciling this variety of individual minds with the unity of a universal mind. Mr. Russell may possibly be right in this; but it is a position which requires to be proved. It is a direct denial of the fundamental principles of modern idealism, and therefore to assume it as the basis of a criticism of idealism is to beg the question.

From what has been said it is evident that Mr. Russell cannot admit that there are any analytic propositions. All judgments (I gather from what he says), are fundamentally both necessary and synthetic. For an analytic judgment is one in which the predicate is in some way contained in the subject, and no proposition is ultimately of the subject-predicate form. Accordingly he argues with much acuteness that "Leibniz's theory of definition, as consisting of analysis into independent simple ideas, is inconsistent

with the doctrine that the 'primary principles' are identical or analytic; and that the former is correct, while the latter is erroneous" (p. 19). Leibniz is clearly inconsistent; but it would have been interesting to know on what grounds Mr. Russell assumes that, if no judgments are purely analytic, all must be purely synthetic. May not all judgments have an analytic as well as a synthetic side? In order that there may be a system of knowledge, in which we can pass by an apparently analytic process from one element to another, is it necessary to assume a multitude of indefinables external to the system and on which the system depends? The difficulties of such an atomist epistemology seem to me much greater than those of a thoroughly idealist position; and I should be inclined to hold that a solution of the difficulties which, it must be admitted, modern idealism has not completely met, is to be found rather in carrying out idealist principles more thoroughly than in departing from them. In this connexion I would suggest that the controversy regarding analytic and synthetic propositions (as well as that regarding the import of the proposition, which is much the same question in another form) has been due in great part to the tendency to treat the proposition as the self-sufficient unit of thought. Mr. Russell's arguments seem all to tend in the direction of regarding the concept as the true unit, while I should prefer (in what seems to me the spirit of idealism) to insist that every proposition has a thought context, and is to be conceived as an element in one all-comprehensive rational system. Propositions would thus be conceived as abstract elements in a rational system and concepts as abstract elements in propositions, the part in each case presupposing the whole, rather than the whole the part. It is impossible satisfactorily to discuss the question whether the subject-predicate or the relational theory of the proposition is the true one, until we are clear as to what is meant by the (supposed) subject of a proposition. And it is too often assumed (as I think, erroneously) that the subject of a proposition can be known apart from the thought context. This is the case, for instance, when it is supposed that the subject is determined by the principal grammatical substantive in the sentence, and some such supposition seems to underlie Mr. Russell's argument on page 12 (quoted *supra*).

For the distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions Mr. Russell substitutes that between non-existential and existential propositions. "Eternal truths" are non-existential, while existential propositions are those which involve a reference to parts of time. "The law of contradiction or the proposition that two and two are four or the truths of Geometry . . . are wholly incapable of existence, and what exists is only the knowledge of them" (p. 180). "This principle" (the existential and non-existential principle of division) "leads to the same division of propositions as that to which Leibniz was led, and may, by examination of his words, be shown to be the true principle on



which his division proceeded" (p. 25). It is in connexion with this distinction that the chief confusions and inconsistencies of Leibniz's philosophy appear, and Mr. Russell develops this with very great skill, especially in his chapters on "The Law of Sufficient Reason" and "The Proofs of the Existence of God". According to Leibniz "existence is unique among predicates. All other predicates are contained in the notion of the subject, and may be asserted of it in a purely analytic judgment. The assertion of existence, alone among predicates, is synthetic, and therefore, in Leibniz's view, contingent" (p. 27). Yet, as Mr. Russell points out, the ontological proof of the existence of God, urged by Leibniz, depends on the view that existence is a predicate contained in the subject, a view inconsistently expressed in one passage by Leibniz himself. To discuss the validity of this distinction between existential and non-existential propositions is impossible within the limits of this notice, but the question is in another form the problem already touched upon, whether or not the distinction between "truth" and "knowledge," the "logical" and the "psychological" is so complete as Mr. Russell makes it.

Mr. Russell's book from beginning to end is full of points suggestive of discussion; but this review would be interminable were I to consider in detail the various matters I had noted for comment. It must be sufficient to notice that Mr. Russell's theory of knowledge inevitably colours the whole of his exposition and leads him to attribute very slight importance to certain elements of Leibniz's philosophy (*e.g.*, the law of continuity), which have been insisted upon by other expositors. And in the same way, although he does not minimise the function of Sufficient Reason in Leibniz, he seems to me hardly to do full justice to its meaning. In thinking thus, I may, of course, be reading more into Leibniz than is really to be found in him; but what one does find in him depends a good deal on the point of view from which one regards his philosophy. On the exceedingly difficult question regarding Leibniz's views of space and matter and on the relation of his dynamics to his metaphysics Mr. Russell's exposition throws more light than does any other commentary I know of, although there are many points in his criticism which seem open to discussion.

In this notice I have thought it best to confine discussion mainly to Mr. Russell's fundamental position, which may be put briefly in his own words: "Spinoza had shown that the actual world could not be explained by means of one substance; Leibniz showed that it could not be explained by means of many substances. It became necessary, therefore, to base metaphysics on some notion other than that of substance—a task not yet accomplished" (p. 126). Whatever may be one's opinion as to the truth of this contention, one cannot but be glad to have so able an argument for it as that which Mr. Russell has given us. He is to be congratulated on having written a remarkably clever book, which, owing to



its thoroughness of investigation and acuteness of argument, will be of the utmost value to the careful student of Leibniz.

R. LATTA.

---

*The English Utilitarians*. By LESLIE STEPHEN. In three volumes. London : Duckworth & Co., 1900.

It would have been difficult to find any one better fitted than Mr. Stephen to write the history of "the compact and energetic school of English Utilitarians"; and it is superfluous to praise his achievement. He knows the school from within, and with their attitude to the controversies of their time he has the sympathy of a disciple. When the Utilitarians were still an intellectual and social force, he seems, like "the majority of the more thoughtful lads" of his generation, to have been attracted by their clear-cut theories, their vigorous polemic, and their philanthropic spirit. As he himself tells us in the preface to his *Science of Ethics*, "J. S. Mill was the Gamaliel at whose feet" he sat in youth. But Mr. Stephen had his "day of Damascus" when he felt the impulse which Darwin gave to philosophical thought. The new light has inspired most of his published work. It may be an imperfect guide in philosophical and ethical questions: that is matter of controversy. But it has at least enabled him to appreciate the limitations of Bentham and his school, without losing a certain fundamental sympathy with them at almost every point of their varied activity. The influence exerted by the Utilitarian school, and the high character of its leaders, justify the labour which Mr. Stephen has bestowed upon them; and the characteristic features of their doctrine make them an interesting study. They proclaimed a universalistic doctrine of morality; but they founded it on psychological egoism, and constantly confused it with ethical egoism. They were empiricists by profession, and held strongly to the view that all knowledge comes from sense-experience; but they preferred the deductive method in politics and economics, and argued from first principles which they hardly gave themselves the trouble to verify. They were sensationalists, but they wrote and thought as if men were mere reasoning machines; they made pleasure and pain the sole motives of human action, but they constantly overlooked the power of the emotions; they were strict determinists, and held with Hume that reason is the slave of the passions, and yet they seemed to think that they had only to state an argument in order to reform the world.

The present work, as the author describes it, is a sequel to his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*; but it deals with one school of writers only, and they receive more elaborate treatment than any of the eighteenth century thinkers. The omission from the earlier work—which Sidgwick drew attention to in a striking article in the *Fortnightly*—of any adequate