

Review

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“The orthodox moralist does not understand,” says our author, “that I do not propose to suppress good impulses, but that my plea is solely for a purification of morality.”

And likewise Dr. Wille’s frequently passionate polemic against the idea of “the ought,” is not meant to be taken absolutely, since he himself gives currency to it more than once. Near the beginning of the book he says,—*e. g.*, “You glory in the intellectual side of man, his ability to reflect the world in his soul; actually or through his understanding to grasp everything having a real existence. And you do so with justice. But do not underestimate another side of our nature, our power to set bounds to the world, to *will* what *ought* to be” (p. 2 *et seq.*).

And again, “If we wish to attack a form of immorality we *ought* not to apply local treatment to the diseased members, to bring to bear upon them legal and moral recriminations, but we should aim to improve the general condition of the whole body, to remove the original cause of the symptoms of disease” (p. 255).

“Moral priestlings!” thus does he stigmatize those who make imperious demands but give no reasons for them, and he claims to have discovered representatives of this tendency in the ethical movements in America as well as in Germany. In this belief he opposes Professor Felix Adler’s assertion, that “it is the duty of the teacher of ethics to lay before his pupils the teachings of morality, but not to engage in a discussion of the principles upon which they rest.” Dr. Wille holds that in the domain of ethics, as elsewhere, the child’s inclination to ask after the why and wherefore should not be suppressed, but should rather be stimulated as a manifestation of growing reason and independence.

With much in this volume we shall find ourselves at variance. This fact, however, in no way alters our opinion as to its value.

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THE ETHICS OF HEGEL. Translated Selections from his “*Rechtsphilosophie*.” With an Introduction by J. Macbride Sterrett, D.D., Professor of Philosophy in the Columbian University, Washington. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1893. Pp. xii., 216.

Professor Sterrett’s expository “*Studies in Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion*” have already creditably connected his name with Hegel’s. In the present volume (one of the “*Ethical Series*,” edited by Professor Sneath, of Yale) Professor Sterrett undertakes

the difficult and necessarily rather thankless task of the translator of Hegel. The introduction, after a brief bibliography, sketches Hegel's life, summarizes Hegel's ethics, indicates his relation to previous systems of ethical doctrine, and makes some technical remarks on his vocabulary. Hereupon follows a partial translation of the "Rechtsphilosophie," with summaries of omitted portions of the original text, and with the insertion of a few supplementary passages from Hegel's other writings.

Of the execution of such a task it is almost necessarily unkind to say anything at all severely critical. The job undertaken is one of the hardest of its kind. That one man's translation of Hegel cannot wholly please another man is almost axiomatic. And, on the whole, this translation is certainly conscientious and literal. Yet Professor Sterrett's work is blotted by a few unnecessary failings here and there, some of which might be corrected in a further edition. Of these but two or three instances can here be cited. On page 110 the translation runs: "An old proverb says, 'A stone flung from the hand is the very devil.'" Although the text hereabouts is referring to the fact that a man must not excuse his mischievous acts by saying that they have resulted in more mischief than the doer had intended, the reader may wonder what the precise point of this proverb may be. But as Hegel quotes it, "Rechtsphilosophie," p. 157, the proverb runs: "Der Stein, der aus der Hand geworfen wird, ist *des Teufels*." Surely a word (here even the case of a noun) makes much difference for a translator. Nor can this easily be a mere misprint. If so, why was the word "very" inserted? Or again, in the immediately following paragraph of the translation, § 120, we have an example of an unnecessary obscuring of Hegel's meaning. Professor Sterrett translates: "The right of *Intention* is that the universal quality of the act be not only implicit, but be fully known to the one doing the act, as having been the real purpose of his will. On the other hand, the right, as regards the external form of the act, is the right of its being considered as something known and willed by a *rational* being." Now, what student would soon gather from this translation the thought that is pretty obviously present in the original? Hegel simply means to point out to us that whoever wants his acts to be judged by the intentions which they embody (and not by their accidental effects) must be also prepared to remember the reciprocal truth that a man of sense, who is capable of having any intentions at all, must prove the fact precisely by

virtue of his responsibility for what his acts really effect. The unquestionably crabbed and barbarously condensed passage in German runs ("Rechtsphilosophie," p. 158): "Das Recht der Absicht ist, dass die allgemeine Qualität der Handlung nicht nur an sich sey, sondern von dem Handelden gewusst werde, somit schon in seinem subjektiven Willen gelegen habe; so wie umgekehrt, das Recht der Objektivität der Handlung, wie es genannt werden kann, ist, sich vom Subjekt als Denkendem als gewusst und gewollt zu behaupten." One may, with the insertion of two or three explanatory parentheses, translate thus: "The intention [*sic*. of any responsible agent] has this right [the right, namely, to be judged by the fact], that the character of the act, on the whole, shall not be a mere external fact, but shall have been known to the agent, and shall have been premeditated by his subjective will. But on the other hand, the act [once done] has the right, as one may say, of its objectivity,—*viz.*, the right to declare itself to be the deliberate deed of the subject; who *meant* it." The sense of all this is perfectly clear. A man pleads that you must judge him by his intent, not by his outward deeds. Hegel answers to such a man: Do you want to be treated as a responsible agent? If so, then your deed must have its rights as well as your intent. Your intent, on the one hand, pleads its rights. But the "objectivity of the deed" must equally maintain its own rights, saying to the responsible subject, "I am what you meant, if you were *denkend* and meant anything."

Perhaps this meaning is actually expressed by Professor Sterrett's phraseology, but the present reviewer finds the English, at this point, a little harder than the German.

Again, on page 189, Professor Sterrett translates: "The State has its immediate existence in the ethical life and in the self-consciousness of the individual; in his knowing and doing (in his knowledge and activity) it has its mediated existence, just as the individual has his *substantial freedom* in the State as in his own essence, seed, and product of activity." The German passage runs (§ 257): "An der Sitte hat er [der Staat] seine unmittelbare, und an dem Selbstbewusstsein des Einzelnen, dem Wissen und Thätigkeit desselben seine vermittelte Existenz, so wie dieses durch die Gesinnung, in ihm, als seinem Wesen, Zweck, und Produkte seiner Thätigkeit, seine substantielle Freiheit hat." The translation is inaccurate in three places, and unintelligible in one. Hegel's statement is: "The State has its immediate expression in

the corporate ethical life; and its mediated expression in the self-consciousness of the individual, in his knowledge and in his activity. Just so, the self-consciousness of the individual [*dieses* can only refer to *Selbstbewusstsein*], by virtue of its sentiment [of loyalty], gets its substantial freedom in the State, which is the essence, the end of this self-consciousness, and the creature of its activity."

These passages are certainly not specimens of Professor Sterrett's best work, and one does not wish the translation to be judged by them alone. On the whole, the principal difficulty of this volume lies in the deliberately-chosen plan of a literal rendering, which Professor Sterrett has, in the main, pretty closely followed. But a literal rendering of Hegel must needs occasionally seem too much like a translation from the speech of Gog into the tongue of Magog. A class that shall use such a text will in some passages need a teacher who can once more translate the translation. How many of us can find it easy to do this? On the other hand, this obscurity does not by any means *always* beset the text of the "Rechtsphilosophie." Extended passages of it are, indeed, quite intelligible to any sufficiently prepared student. And Professor Sterrett's introductory discussion is lucid and well stated. The modest devotion of the earnest disciple is everywhere apparent. But the present reviewer is moved to express the cordial hope that Professor Sterrett, who has labored so self-sacrificingly for Hegel, may ere long be moved to speak more fully in his own name. One is led to anticipate that when he does thus more fully speak, his self-expression will prove even more admirable than his previous self-abnegation.

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ETHIC: Demonstrated in Geometrical Order, and divided into five Parts, which treat (1) of God; (2) of the Nature and Origin of the Mind; (3) of the Nature and Origin of the Affects; (4) of Human Bondage, and of the Struggles of the Affects; (5) of the Power of the Intellect, or of Human Liberty. Translated from the Latin of Benedict de Spinoza by W. Hale White; translation revised by Amelia Hutchinson Stirling, M.A. (Edin.). Second Edition, Revised and Corrected, with New Preface. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894. Pp. cv., 297.

Elia once made the confession "that the names of some of our poets sounded sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear,—to mine,