

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

*Studies in Hegelian Cosmology.* By JOHN McTAGGART ELLIS  
McTAGGART. Cambridge, University Press, 1901.—pp. xx, 292.

In his introductory chapter, Mr. McTaggart defines cosmology as “the application to subject-matter empirically known of *a priori* conclusions derived from the investigation of the nature of pure thought.” He admits that Hegel “gives a very small part of his writings to cosmological questions,” and he does not, for the most part, “propose to consider the views actually expressed by Hegel,” but rather “to consider what views on the subjects under discussion ought to be held by a thinker who accepts Hegel’s Logic, and in particular Hegel’s theory of the Absolute Idea.” This frank avowal of an “endeavor to supplement rather than to expound” is certain to strike terror to the minds of such Hegelian students as feel, with a certain show of justice, that they have been treated to overmuch supplementation of Hegel and that too many of the so-called expositions contain a very dilute extract of Hegel’s own doctrine. It should, however, be remembered that Mr. McTaggart’s working out of Hegelian ideas is based upon a peculiarly close and critical study of the text of Hegel, and that it therefore deserves the respectful consideration of students. The present review departs from the order of the chapters, and concerns itself mainly with the question of the personality of Hegel’s Absolute.

1. Mr. McTaggart opposes the conception of Hegel’s Absolute as personal God, and replaces it by the conception of the Absolute as “a society” (§ 197)—in other words, an impersonal community “of related persons.” This conception has two important features in common with the view that Hegel conceives of the Absolute as person. By both interpretations, the Absolute is to Hegel “not . . . an external and mechanical unity, not even . . . an organic unity, but . . . the deepest unity possible (§ 63)”; by both interpretations also the Absolute is unquestionably spirit. But instead of conceiving the Absolute Reality as itself a person, manifested, yet not completely exhausted, in finite personalities, Mr. McTaggart teaches that just as “the parts have no meaning but their unity, so the unity has no meaning but the differentiations” (§ 21). More concretely, he holds that the Absolute Unity is itself a ‘community’ or ‘society’ of finite persons related to the unity by their consciousness of it. “The unity,” he says, “which connects individuals is not anything outside them, for it

has no reality distinct from them ;”<sup>1</sup> it is therefore, in a certain sense, within them. Moreover, it is neither in each of them when taken separately (else there would be no distinction between any individual and the Absolute), nor in all of them when taken together as an aggregate (else the unity would be a mere sum). In truth: “The unity must be completely in each individual. Yet it must also be the bond which unites them” (§ 14). Such a relating unity-in-the-differentiations is found, Mr. McTaggart teaches, in the consciousness which each individual has of the entire unity. In its intimate and fundamental nature, he believes, this “relation which binds individuals together” is love.<sup>2</sup>

This is an ingenious and a subtle attempt to solve the really insoluble problem: How obtain a unity which is neither an individual nor an aggregate, that is, a sum of externally related parts or aggregate? Mr. McTaggart, as has been indicated, answers: The unity is internal and yet not individual, in that it consists in the consciousness which each individual has of itself and of all the similarly conscious individuals. But this conception is surely inadequate. Granted that the relation of each individual to the others consists in its consciousness of all the others, the consciousness of unity, as possessed by any one individual, is certainly distinct from that consciousness of unity which each of the other individuals feels. In other words, we have not yet reached an absolute unity, but rather a sum of relations (consciousnesses of unity), which have need of still further unifying. Or, to put this criticism in another form — we have now an aggregate of internal relations, which themselves must be conceived as externally related, unless indeed they are unified by being object to the central or Absolute self-consciousness.

The failure of Mr. McTaggart’s positive interpretation throws us back upon the view that Hegel conceived of the Absolute Reality as personal God. Hegel’s own expressions in the most detailed and authoritative form of his metaphysical system, the *Logic*, fully bear out this interpretation. He defines the “Universal” — the “mediating universal” — as not merely “a totality of its members, but as a singular particular or exclusive individuality,”<sup>3</sup> and he characterizes the Absolute Idea as “*der vernünftiger Begriff*,” adding, in the sentence which follows: “*Der Begriff ist nicht nur Seele, sondern freier, subjektiver Begriff, der für sich ist und daher die Persönlichkeit hat.*”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> § 11, cf. §§ 14–15 and 64 *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Ch. IX, cf. esp. § 310.

<sup>3</sup> Encyclopædia, § 191.

<sup>4</sup> *Logik, Werke*, V, Vom Begriff, 3ter Abschn., Cap. 3, first paragraph. Italics mine.

The belief that Hegel conceives God as personal does not, however, rest on the interpretation, however unambiguous, of single passages. On the contrary, the whole trend of the *Logic* is toward this conclusion, and its most important teaching opposes the theory of Absolute Reality as a plurality of related parts, whether a merely mechanical combination or the unity of a system. For if one considers this conception of a unity which is deeper than that of externally related parts, it becomes clear that only an Absolute Individual will fulfill the condition, by being manifested in the parts instead of being composed of them. So long as, in Mr. McTaggart's terms, "the unity has no meaning but the differentiations," it cannot help being an aggregate — in other words, an externally related combination of parts. On the other hand, an Absolute Individual not only includes all the parts, but relates them by virtue of its own deeper unity; that is to say, the unity belongs more truly to the Absolute than to the particulars; it is no longer the superficial unity of a sum, but the fundamental unity of the "exclusive individuality."

Against this view Mr. McTaggart offers only two arguments. He holds, in the first place, that this conception implies a virtual regression to the transcended categories of essence, in that it conceives of the Absolute as behind the individuals, and, in a sense, more real than they. This criticism, however, rests on a misapprehension of Hegel's doctrine of essence. For Hegel never denies the rationality of the attempt to 'account for' finite realities. He objects to the interpretation of them as 'appearances,' and to the explanation of them through the fictitious conception of essence. For essence is regarded by Hegel as unknown reality which purports to be unrelated to phenomena and which yet has no meaning except 'unknown cause of precisely these phenomena.' Judged by this standard, the interpretation of Hegel's Absolute as person is far from conceiving of it as essence. For the Absolute person must be, like all persons, directly known; and it includes and relates finite individuals even though it is not constituted by them.

In the second place, Mr. McTaggart lays great stress on an important teaching of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion, which certainly suggests the impersonality of the Absolute. Hegel, as is well known, makes the Holy Ghost the synthesis in the triad of which Father and Son are thesis and antithesis. This, as Mr. McTaggart shows, is equivalent to the teaching that the Holy Ghost is the deeper reality of Father and Son. "The Father and the Son," he says, "are related to the Holy Ghost as something which is they and more than they" (§ 213).

But the Holy Ghost is explicitly identified by Hegel with the church, or community (*Gemeinde*). Since, then, Hegel identifies the Absolute with God, and furthermore teaches that the Holy Ghost is "not only the supreme reality, but the sole reality of God," and, finally, defines the Holy Ghost as a "community," it follows, according to Mr. McTaggart, that the Absolute, or God, is to Hegel a society of related persons, but itself impersonal.

Now it must be confessed at once that Hegel does, in many passages, identify the Holy Ghost with the church. But there are several statements which indicate that this is an abbreviation, as it were, from the fuller and more adequate definition, very explicitly stated by Hegel in the words "the Spirit of God, or God, as present, real Spirit, God dwelling in His church."<sup>1</sup> Now, "God dwelling in His church" means more than a mere community of related individuals. In other words, as the Father meant, to Hegel, God abstractly viewed as apart from the world, and as the Son meant sensible nature regarded as God revealing himself, so the Holy Ghost meant God, the Infinite Personality in his relation to the finite persons whom he encompasses and includes. The passages which identify the Holy Ghost with the church are, thus, either inexplicably opposed to that just quoted, or else the word 'church' or 'community' (*Gemeinde*) must be interpreted in them all by the fuller expression 'God dwelling in his church,' and the use of the term *Gemeinde*, with so full a meaning, must be regarded as a case of Hegel's tendency — admitted by Mr. McTaggart — to over-emphasize some one side of his teaching.

But to this interpretation of Hegel's assertion that the Holy Spirit (and therefore God) is the Church, Mr. McTaggart would object: Hegel's vocabulary is "rich with terms for a unity, which would suggest, or at least not exclude the suggestion of, a personal unity. He chose, however, a word — *Gemeinde* — whose ordinary meaning quite excludes any idea of personal unity. It is surely a fair inference that he wished to exclude that idea" (§ 218). But this argument proves too much. Hegel had not the remotest scruple in utterly perverting words from their usual meaning. Mr. McTaggart himself teaches that Hegel uses the terms 'God' and 'Father' of impersonal realities, and that he employs the word 'friendship' to mean something other than "affection which is fixed on the friend himself" (§ 220). The critic who admits that Hegel has so greatly altered the meaning of these familiar terms cannot consistently hold Hegel to the everyday significance of the word *Gemeinde*.

<sup>1</sup> Werke, II, 315 (Translation II, 107), quoted by Mr. McTaggart, § 216.

Besides elaborating this general argument, Mr. McTaggart quotes<sup>1</sup> the first paragraph of Part III in the *Philosophy of Religion* to show that Hegel does not conceive his God as personal. The passage certainly, in a sense, identifies 'the self-consciousness of God' with a consciousness which has finite selves as its object. Yet the passage also definitely speaks of the finite consciousness as 'distinct from God, from the Absolute,' and cannot therefore be cited to show that "Hegel regards God as a unity of persons . . . many persons, not one person, although really one Spirit."

It must, finally, be noted that the *Philosophy of Religion* cannot claim to be so authoritative an expression as the *Logic* of Hegel's system. Pieced together, as it was, from the notebooks of his students, and published after his death without his revision, it should not be used to oppose, but rather to supplement, the teaching of the *Logic*. Therefore, if the student of Hegel finds in the *Logic* the clear assertion of the personality of Absolute Reality, and if he acknowledges with Mr. McTaggart, that to Hegel 'God' and 'Absolute' are synonymous terms, he cannot admit the validity of any argument drawn from the *Philosophy of Religion* in opposition to this conclusion.

The conception of human immortality follows, Mr. McTaggart holds (Ch. II), from this doctrine of the Absolute Idea as unity of individuals. "Hegel," he says "does not appear to have been much interested in the question of immortality"; he asserts the truth of the doctrine, but gives no prominence to it (§§ V, VI). None the less the doctrine follows, Mr. McTaggart teaches, from the theory that finite selves are fundamental differentiations of the Absolute. For "absolute reality as a whole must be regarded as unchanging" (§ 33); and it is "the nature of the Absolute to be manifested in precisely those differentiations in which it is manifested." Thus "the Absolute re-

<sup>1</sup> § 224. (Abridged, from Mr. McTaggart's quotation. Italics mine.) "We defined religion as being in the stricter sense the self-consciousness of God. Self-consciousness in its character as consciousness has an object, and it is conscious of itself in this object; this object is also consciousness, but it is consciousness as object, and is consequently finite consciousness, a consciousness which is distinct from God, from the Absolute. The element of determinateness is present in this form of consciousness and consequently finitude is present in it; God is self-consciousness. *He knows Himself in a consciousness which is distinct from Him*, which is potentially the consciousness of God, but is also this actually, since it knows its identity with God, an identity which is, however, mediated by the negation of finitude. . . . We define God when we say that He distinguishes Himself from Himself, and is an object for Himself, but that in this distinction He is purely identical with Himself, is in fact spirit. . . . *Finite consciousness knows God only to the extent to which God knows Himself in it*, thus God is Spirit, the Spirit of His Church in fact, *i. e.*, of those who worship Him."

quires each self, not to make up a sum, or to maintain an average, but in respect of the self's special and unique nature" (§ 35). Because the Absolute, which consists precisely in the interrelated system of individuals, is eternal, each of these individuals must itself be immortal, for if any one perished the unity would be broken.

This is a strong and vivid presentation of the great argument of monistic philosophy for human immortality. But it does not preclude the conception of the Absolute as an individual rather than a society. Mr. McTaggart, it is true, denies this. "This line of argument," he says, "would not hold with a view" in which the Absolute is "something more and deeper than the unity of its differentiations. . . . In that case, a breach in the unity of the differentiations would not imply a breach in the unity of the Absolute, because the unity might be preserved by that part of the Absolute which lay behind the differentiations" (§ 35). In other words, the author maintains that only the conception of an Absolute whose "unity has no meaning but the differentiations" demands the conception of essentially eternal selves as its manifestations; and that an Absolute Individual could be "as a whole unchanging," even if the individual selves included in it ceased to exist. But the truth is that, if the finite selves are conceived, as by Hegel, to be essential manifestations of the Absolute, then they must be eternal even if the nature of the Absolute is not exhausted by them. For each self is, in Royce's words, "a unique expression of the divine purpose;"<sup>1</sup> and if, therefore, the individual selves could perish, the Absolute could no longer remain the same. Mr. McTaggart has, indeed, developed from Hegelian premises an argument for human immortality; but his argument holds as well, if the Absolute be conceived as personal, as if it be regarded, in his fashion, as system of related individuals.

The remaining chapters of the book may be more lightly passed over, though every one of them contains fruitful suggestion for the student of Hegel. In opposition to the traditional view, Mr. McTaggart argues (Ch. VII) that society, as it really is, is described by Hegel rather as mechanism than as organism. Hegel, as he says, never himself characterizes the nature of society as 'organic'; and Hegel's conception of social progress is of an oscillation between socialistic and individualistic tendencies.

In his interpretation of Hegel's doctrine of the Supreme Good (Ch. IV), Mr. McTaggart is more conventional; for he holds that the Supreme Good—that is, the harmony of individuals—coincides

<sup>1</sup>*The World and the Individual*, II, p. 286.

with the Supreme Real. In detail, however, he argues that the Supreme Good is undiscoverable; and he therefore believes that the calculation of the greatest pleasure is the practical moral criterion.

The discussion of punishment (Ch. V) is followed by a consideration of Hegel's view of sin (Ch. VI). Hegel is correctly represented as teaching that "where there is innocence there must necessarily follow sin, and where there is sin there must necessarily follow Retribution, Amendment, and Virtue." But this process, Mr. McTaggart points out (§ 178), is not, in life as we know it, universal. For, in the first place, in its higher stages, "virtue can be increased otherwise than through sin and amendment" (§ 177); and, second, many instances occur in which "innocence does not pass into sin" or sin into virtue (§ 179). Now it is highly unlikely that Hegel overlooked these cases; for "whatever the philosophical importance which he attributed to the facts of everyday life, his knowledge of them was profound and his practical interest in them was acute." Either, therefore, Mr. McTaggart concludes, Hegel attributes this process from innocence through sin to virtue, not to the individual but to the race (§ 180); or else he means to imply that the process is completed only in the life after death.

Finally, in the discussion of Hegelianism (and Christianity Ch. VIII), Mr. McTaggart defines his purpose as more "purely historical": the endeavor to determine the relation in which Hegel actually stood to the Christian religion. With entire accuracy, in the opinion of the present writer, he holds that Hegel's doctrine of the Trinity is the conception of the Father and Son as imperfect aspects of the Holy Spirit; that his doctrine of the Incarnation regards God as incarnated in all finite things, and Jesus Christ as a mere type of the unity of the divine and human; that Hegel treats sin as an element of good; and, finally, that his ethics lay no stress on sin, on humility, or immortality. In each of these conceptions, Hegel either opposes accepted Christian doctrine, or, at most, he agrees only with some one phase or aspect of Christianity.

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*Facts and Comments.* By HERBERT SPENCER. New York, D. Appleton and Co., 1902.—pp. viii, 292.

Mr. Spencer has brought together in this final volume a number of essays which have not hitherto been published. They concern a great variety of topics upon which he has meditated during a long life-time of reflection. The ideas here expressed the philosopher regards as of