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THE REIGN OF RELIGION
IN
CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY
THE

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IN

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

BY

S. RADHAKRISHNAN, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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This book attempts to show that of the two live philosophies of the present day, pluralistic theism and monistic idealism, the latter is the more reasonable as a leading to the spiritual being of man full satisfaction, moral as well as intellectual. It is my opinion that systems which play the game of philosophy squarely and fairly, with freedom from presuppositions and religious neutrality, naturally end in absolute idealism; and if they lead to other conclusions, we may always suspect that the game has not been played according to the rules. The current pluralistic systems are the outcome of the interlacing of religious prejudice and the genuine spirit of speculation. In this volume an examination of contemporary philosophy is undertaken with a view to showing how its deviations from the "high road" of absolutism are all due to "the reign of religion in philosophy."

Since it is not possible to take each individual thinker or system for examination, I have taken some representative views. Even in their evaluation, I have set to myself the limited task of exposing, through criticism, their absolutistic implications. It may be said that I am open to the charge of lacking in appreciation for, or being unjust to, the good services they have rendered to the progress of philosophy. But I take shelter under Green's statement that "puling a philosopher to pieces is a true
way of showing one’s reverence for his greatness.” I have put in a discussion of the monadism of Leibniz since it is so “new” in its characteristics and since it was the model for so many systems of a later day. The discussions of pragmatism and eco-realism are fragmentary and inadequate since I believe they are not so much metaphysical systems as logical methods. The technical sides of these systems I thought it best to drop out of commend here.

It is the misfortune of the present undertaking that it has to face a world which has already formed its judgment about the merits of the question discussed in it. Rightly or wrongly—if what I say here is true, then wrongly—it is thought that philosophical absolutism is as mischievous in its effects as political absolutism. The great war came to confirm this view. But it is a mistake to regard philosophical idealism as exalting the state at the expense of the individual since it recognizes that the only end in itself is the true freedom of the spirit. Secondly, the systems which absolutism has to fight against enjoy a great reputation in the world of philosophy. It is said that for the first time in the history of thought we have popular metaphysics. The bold severity and the emphasis the structure of the classical systems of Kant and Hegel, and, in a lesser extent of their disciples in England, are displaced by an ease of style andiness of texture which are the wonder of the world accustomed to think that philosophy cannot speak the language of the plain man. We now feel that philosophy “is not harsh and crammed as dull folks suppose, but musical as is Apollo’s here.” Most of the thinkers here presented have a very distinctive style which helps to make their philosophies real and alive. The speculative efforts of James, Bergeon, and Bertrand Russell, and in a lesser degree of Bahr,
Howison, and Schiller, are so attractive and imposing that we are sometimes tempted to rank them as works of art. They are undoubtedly the romances of Philosophy. The task of criticizing the conceptions of such great minds is painful and perhaps foolhardy; but it will not be unprofitable if it helps us to see vividly whatever of philosophic strength there is in them. That is some small service to the better understanding of these systems themselves which this criticism, if it is not altogether beside the mark, may render.

The last chapter is put in to rescue the book from the charge of being wholly polemical and negative in its results. There is a definite view running throughout the book conditioning the manner of approach. Indications of a positive idealism which are found scattered in the course of the book are brought together in the last chapter. There is no establishment of the system as such. This must wait for another place and occasion. The main lines are suggested by the philosophical pilgrim's progress on his voyage of discovery, where he passes from each prejudice to metaphysical conclusions through the natural dialectic of the soul.

I request those who may do me the honour of reading what I say, to remember that the book is to be taken as a whole, so that statements in one chapter might be understood as qualifying those in another. I know there is repetition here and there, which I hope will be excused, as it may serve to remind the reader of the unity of purpose.

My deepest obligations are due to Professor J. H. Muirhead of Birmingham for the great trouble he took in reading the proofs and making many valuable suggestions, and to my old teacher and friend, Professor A. G. Hegg of the Madras Christian College, who found time,
in the midst of much other work, to read more than half of the proofs and make several valuable criticisms. My thanks are also due to Messrs. Bertrand Russell, F. C. S. Schiller, and Hastings Rashdall for reading the proofs of the pages dealing with their views.

The following articles, which have already appeared in various periodicals, have been made use of with the kind permission of their editors: 'The Vedantic Approach to Reality' (Minds, 1916); 'Bergson's Idea of God' (Quest, 1916); 'Is Bergson's Philosophy Monistic?' (Minds, 1917); 'Bergson and Absolute Idealism' (Minds, 1919); 'James Ward's Pluralistic Theism' (Indian Philosophical Review, 1918–1919).

I owe the trouble to my publishers.

In conclusion, I have to express my gratitude to the University of Mysore for the facilities and encouragement it gave me in connection with this work.
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