

A SHORT HISTORY OF ETHICS: GREEK AND MODERN. By R. A. P. Rogers. London: Macmillan & Co., 1911. Pp. xxii, 303.

This work claims to give an historical account of the main ethical systems of classical and modern times in a short compass. It is intended mainly for students and does not pretend to enter into very great detail. The purely historical part is prefaced by an account of the kind of problems with which ethics has to deal; and each system that is described is criticized shortly by the author. As the title implies, mediæval ethical theories are hardly touched. On the other hand, the number of modern ethical systems described is large. I think perhaps the author devotes a disproportionate space to Hegel and Spencer. There is indeed little to object to in his account of Hegel's philosophy, but it could hardly be expected to make such a difficult system intelligible to the type of reader for which the book is intended. Spencer again hardly seems to deserve the attention which he gets here and in other English books. Surely we can be content to treat him now as an exploded superstition.

In criticizing other systems Mr. Rogers naturally betrays something of his own ethical opinions. I take it that in the main he inclines to Green and self-realization; 'sublime' seems to me a somewhat disproportionate adjective to apply to Green's metaphysical system even by one who accepts his ethics. Some statements of the author seem open to criticism. He says on page 7 that what is consciously approved by a person is good when considered by itself alone apart from its possible interference with other desires. Surely a bad man's approval of a bad end does not make that end good even though it does not interfere with the man's other desires. On page 89 Mr. Rogers seems to be a little hard on Epicurus in saying that his "artificial doctrine of free-will" was "plainly invented to avoid the unpleasant feeling that we are not free." I should have thought that since some uncaused changes are necessary for the physics of this school, nothing more was needed to account for their accepting the common belief that there are uncaused volitions.

In a note on page 196 Mr. Rogers says that Kant only intended the Categorical Imperative to show that self-love is not the universal criterion of morality. I do not see that this helps the principle. What contradiction to self-love is there in re-

fusing on selfish motives to develop one's talents; since presumably this means that one loves the self with undeveloped talents and whatever goes with them better than the self with developed talents and their accompaniments? On page 206 there is an argument that seems unfair to Kant's theory of the *Summum Bonum*. Mr. Rogers says that if happiness be a morally indifferent end, virtue cannot be improved by rewards. I do not think this is a conclusive objection to Kant's position. It might be the case (a) that the best thing is happiness + virtue; (b) that happiness alone has no value; and (c) that you cannot attain any virtue if you aim at happiness. The best result possible would be attained by your aiming solely at virtue and God supplying you *ab extra* with happiness.

On page 253 occurs what seems to me a mistaken argument against Sidgwick's Utilitarianism. It is argued that from "all good contains pleasure" the hedonist infers that good and pleasure are identical, and thus becomes liable to Plato's objection that good would be a self-contradictory concept, since different pleasures may clash. But no hedonist need hold, and Sidgwick certainly did not hold, that good=pleasure; he held that pleasures only are good, and are good in proportion to their pleasantness. And then the alleged contradiction comes merely to this, that the possession of some goods is incompatible with that of others; certainly not a peculiarity of hedonism.

Mr. Rogers is much exercised about the reconciliation of self-love with benevolence, and thinks that this is impossible with hedonism. He holds (p. 255) that if what is good in general is pleasure, my good must be my pleasure. In that case benevolence and self-love must conflict where my pleasure conflicts with other people's. Mr. Rogers thinks it absurd to give up the principle of self-love; hence the only solution is to prove that good is of such a nature that my good and other people's are identical. It comes to me that it is no solution of the ethical difficulty to prove that the nature of the existent universe is such that my good and other people's always must coincide as a matter of fact. This appears to me what is attempted by moralists like Green. The ethical difficulty could only be removed by showing that my good and other people's are strictly identical in any possible universe, that they are in fact two names for the same thing. And this seems to be clearly false. But I differ from Mr. Rogers in thinking that we must keep the

maxim of self-love. It may very well be our duty to make a real sacrifice of our own good for the sake of goodness in general; and there is no psychological impossibility in doing so.

I have noticed two misprints. On page 229 'Rationalists' is printed when 'Naturalists' is meant. And on page 262 'the *un*-conscious subject' should surely be 'the conscious subject.'

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MODERN PROBLEMS. By Sir Oliver Lodge, F. R. S., Principal of the University of Birmingham. London: Methuen & Co., 1912. Pp. 320.

These "essays on debatable subjects," as the author calls them, deal largely with social questions. With his practical views I find myself in all but complete agreement, both as regards spirit and details. Put in my own words, his position is that the freer and fuller life of the individual is the end of social life, and that this is to be attained not by restricting, but by developing State-action all along the line. This I also am content to accept as a working faith. What seems to me lacking is some theoretical doctrine that would raise it above empiricism. As illustrations of such a body of doctrine we may take, for example, Philosophical Liberalism, Positivism, or Socialism. Each of these, for those who can adopt it as a creed, furnishes some generalized basis of action. Instead, Sir Oliver Lodge has only the appeal to 'Christianity' in the sense of the ethical ideal implied in certain selected precepts of the New Testament not at all peculiar to Christianity, but common to pagan and Christian moralists in the second century of the Roman Empire. So in politics when he means the ideal State, he speaks of "the ideal Christian State." But in reality this, if we go to documentary authority, is not at all a combination of the best features of modern Liberalism and Socialism, as many imagine: it is the theocratic 'City of God,' where "every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts, iii, 23). Its maxim is not modern toleration, but exclusion from civic intercourse for those that will not "hear the Church." And the Church is a corporate body having power to declare doctrine: "no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation" (2 Peter, 1, 20). In such a city, Sir