History of Modern Philosophy.*

The perfect historian of philosophy must unite in himself seemingly incompatible qualities. He must combine analytic acumen with patient erudition in a measure rarely found. Kant and Spinoza philology will avail him little if he has no genuine insight into the problems with which Kant and Spinoza struggled. And, on the other hand, there is in every philosophy a contingent and historical element which can be appreciated only by the methods of the historian and the philologian.

Professor Höffding of Copenhagen, author of the most recent of the many histories of philosophy that have been translated for the English public during the past two or three decades, perhaps more nearly fulfils these requirements than any of his predecessors. His "Elements of Psychology" is the sanest and clearest, as Professor James's is the most readable, comprehensive treatment of the subject put forth in the past twenty years. It shows him to possess the indispensable quality of a firm grasp on the essential presuppositions of modern science without its too frequently accompanying drawback — a hard, ignorant contempt for those who, in Aristotle's phrase, have disciplined the intelligence before us. "Consciously or unconsciously," he tells us in his Psychology, "philosophic speculation always works with psychological elements." And if this makes it helpful to a psychologist to have studied the history of philosophy, it makes it indispensable to the historian of philosophy that he should be a psychologist. On the historical side, Professor Höffding has prepared himself for his task by numerous studies published during the past thirty years, including monographs on Montaigne, Spinoza, and Kant. Lastly, pending the improbable advent of an English history of Philosophy, it is for us a distinct recommendation that Professor Höffding is a Dane, open to influences from London as well as from Berlin, and so prepared to preserve a juster perspective in the presentation of English and German thought than we find in the Erdmanns, the Ueberwegs, the Windelbands, and the Falckenbergs, on whom we have been compelled to rely. This is the first general history of philosophy in which there is adequate recognition not only of Eighteenth century but of Nineteenth century English thought. Here at last Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel are reduced to something like their true proportions, and receive considerably less space than that assigned to Mill, Darwin, and Spencer. It would be unreasonable to demand more, and regret that Professor Höffding could not emancipate himself from the Kantian superstition, that last infirmity of the philosophic mind. For another generation at least, scholars will continue to represent the "Critique of Pure Reason" as an epoch-making achievement, while deploring its artificial schematism, repudiating its most characteristic distinctions and classifications, rejecting most of its distinctive doctrines, and pinching into pilulous exiguity the slight residuum of psychological truth.

The history of modern philosophy has been written so often during the past sixty years that the story has become conventionalized. The transition from mediævalism to the Renaissance, the Italian forerunners of Bacon and Descartes, Cartesianism, and the other great constructive systems of the Seventeenth century, the critical and psychological school of English thought from Bacon and Hobbes to Locke and Berkeley and Hume, the relation of Kant to the problems which Hume raised, the speculative post-Kantian systems, and the new scientific positivism of Nineteenth century French and English thought, — on all these topics very much the same things are said with slightly varying emphasis and coördination in all of the chief histories now before the public.

Professor Höffding's distinctive merit is that he is throughout intelligible and sane. He is by no means lacking in sympathy and appreciation for modes of thought opposed to his own. But he writes consistently from the point of view and in the terminology of a scientific thinker and psychologist of to-day. He thus escapes the sheer "clotted nonsense" that results in some histories of philosophy from the partial and inconsistent adoption of the terminology of the system under discussion, or from the blending of that terminology with the language of some one of the modern post-Kantian systems of Germany. This may sometimes be a defect in the eyes of the professional student, who will learn more of the technique and the architecture of some of the great systems from Ueberweg or Erdmann. But it will be a great recommendation to the

*A History of Modern Philosophy. By Dr. Harald Höffding. Translated from the German edition by B. E. Meyer. New York: The Macmillan Co.

general reader, who wishes to get at the central thought of Spinoza or Kant, and who cares nothing for the precise relation of the "modes" to the "attributes," or for the mediating function of the transcendental schemata.

Before reaching Descartes in the first volume, Professor Höffding devotes some two hundred pages to the philosophy of the Renaissance and the new birth of science. In these chapters he treats of the "discovery of man" by the humanists and the accompanying growth of the ideas of natural law and natural religion, of the new conception of the universe in Copernicus and Bruno, and the new methods of scientific investigation created by Kepler and Galileo, and with many misunderstandings heralded by the rhetoric of Bacon. Notable is the emphasis laid on the political speculations of Machiavelli and the psychology of the great humanist Vives. Indeed, one of the chief merits of the work is the attention paid throughout to the progress of psychological analysis and the ethico-political theory of the state. The long chapter on Giordano Bruno is evidently a labor of love. Bacon, as is the fashion of the day, receives something less than justice. The chapters on the new conception of the world are introduced by a clear account of the Aristotelio-Mediæval world-scheme. This is well as far as it goes. But the sharp contrast thus presented between the least valid part of the philosophy of Aristotle and the most brilliant achievement of the new science leaves an entirely exaggerated impression of the originality and independence of the fifteenth and sixteenth century thinkers. To prepare for a correct estimate in this matter, the history of modern philosophy should be prefaced by similar *résumés* of the Aristotelian psychology, of the ethico-political philosophy of Plato's "Republic" and Aristotle's "Politics," of the Stoic and Epicurean ethical and religious polemic as presented in Cicero,— of everything, in short, which the great humanists took over from the philosophy of antiquity. Höffding frequently discusses the claims of Galileo, Hobbes, Gassendi, and Descartes to priority in ideas or problems which must have been the common possession of all scholars who had read the *de Anima*, Lucretius, Plato, and Diogenes Laertius. The chapter on Gassendi would have been a convenient place for such a treatment as we miss of the contribution of ancient atomism to modern thought. This chapter is strangely inadequate. Höffding does not, like Erdmann, in lofty superiority to the chronology, exclude Gassendi from the list of modern philosophers. He assigns him a chapter by the side of Descartes. But it consists of two pages, while Descartes receives forty. Yet, unless we are to hold that history makes no mistakes, and that the value of a philosopher is precisely proportional to the figure he has made in the history of letters, it is certain that Gassendi deserves no less consideration from the thoughtful historian than Descartes. He was right, and Descartes was wrong, on nearly every question with regard to which they differed. He states more clearly than Descartes many ideas for which Descartes and Hobbes are praised by Huxley and Höffding. And his penetrating criticism completely overthrew the speculative house of cards which Descartes erected to divert the attention of the church, and which is his chief claim to a place in the history of philosophy. But Gassendi's work is hidden away in ponderous Latin tomes, while Descartes' "Discourse of Method" caught and kept the ear of the public, and his cleverly advertised system, by the very transparency of the artifices of its construction, provoked and facilitated the logomachies which gave it notoriety. It may be observed, in passing, that the statement for which no authority is given, that Gassendi attributed sentiency to the atoms, is apparently based on the first edition of Lange's "History of Materialism." In the second edition Lange withdrew it.

Professor Höffding gives an excellent untechnical description of the great seventeenth century systems of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, whom he evidently admires more than any other group of speculative thinkers. That is a matter of taste. They do gratify the commonplace metaphysical instinct for ingenious system building, and Spinoza in addition to this appeals strongly to some minds on the ethical and religious side by his peculiar "blend" of mathematical austerity with cosmic emotion. But apart from the specific scientific achievements of Descartes and Leibnitz, the seventeenth century systems are worth to us precisely what they may contain of sound psychological and ethical analysis — and no more. And it may be a paradox, but it is hardly an exaggeration to say that they might all be eliminated without seriously affecting the progress of genuine philosophic thought through

Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and their nineteenth century successors. What engages the attention and arouses the enthusiasm of the student here is precisely what impressed Cicero in the artificial constructions of the Stoics — the ingenuity of the terminology, "the admirable coherence and consecution of ideas, the correspondence of beginning, middle, and end." The Stoic system and terminology dominated in the literary world for five centuries. But it was embodied in no book that the world would not willingly let die, and now it survives merely as the memory of a mood, a temper in the reception of experience on the part of its later nominal Roman disciples. And such will be the fate of all systems of philosophy as such. It is the great book that lives, not the ingenious system.

Professor Höffding's admiration for the Cartesians does not prevent his doing ample justice to the English and French thought of the eighteenth century. The long chapter on Rousseau shows how far he is from identifying philosophy with metaphysical system building. For the great post-Kantian constructive systems, he evidently feels an imperfect sympathy —partly, perhaps, because he holds that there is no excuse for further dogmatizing about the Absolute after Kant. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, I cheerfully abandon to him. But I must protest against his treatment of Schopenhauer, though it is fairer than that found in the ordinary history of philosophy. Professor Höffding here forgets the principle laid down in his preface, that an inconsequence in a great thinker is often nothing but the natural consequence of the fact, that his genius displays itself in several lines of thought. Schopenhauer was only thirty years old when he wrote *Die Welt als Wille;* and the example of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel made it inevitable that the ambitious young man should throw his own ideas into the form of a systematic construction. A good dialectician can drive a coach-and-four through the system; but the book is none the less a masterpiece of literary architectonics. This framework Schopenhauer used for the setting of all his subsequent thought and writing. But this in no wise detracts from the infinite wealth and suggestiveness of his thought.

M. Brunetière said, several years ago, that when the literary account of the century was summed up, Schopenhauer would be found to have influenced the higher thought of the age more than any other one philosopher. If we leave out of account the body of thought which English readers associate with the names of Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley, which can hardly be appropriated to any one thinker, the prediction is in a fair way to be verified. There are whole ranges of ideas with regard to the life of the emotions and the will in which we are all disciples of Schopenhauer. And if anything could justify his cynical view of the philosophic guild, it would be their persistent habit of appropriating his essential thoughts while diverting the reader's attention to the flaws in his character and the external inconsistencies of his system. Schopenhauer's fame, however, will take care of itself. There are fundamentally just two classes of philosophers — those whom posterity can read, and those whom it cannot and will not read. He belongs to the first class, whose influence is cumulative, while the others exist only in the histories of philosophy.

Of the thought of Mill, Darwin, and Spencer, Professor Höffding gives an excellent analysis, equally removed from the slavish adhesion of the disciple, and the wilful misunderstanding of the Oxford neo-Kantian who undertakes to demolish the philosophy of evolution. A short book on modern German philosophy from 1850 to 1880 concludes what is, taken all in all, the sanest and most readable History of Philosophy yet written.

The translation of this work is no worse than the average performance in this kind, and seems perhaps better because no process of "upsetting" can convert Professor Höffding's comparatively short and lucid sentences into the "pure, definite, and highly finished nonsense" which results from the attempt to english Erdmann's account of Hegel. It presents several baffling mistakes, such as "finite" for final (Vol. I., p. 231), "barred the way" for prepared the way (p. 473), and the use of spiritualistic (p. 235). Misprints are altogether too frequent. "Memotechnical" *(sic)* (p. 131), "*inventionum*" for *inventionem* (p. 265), "fractum" for *pactum* (p. 283), "citus" for *citius* (p. 198), "Telsio" for Telesio (p. 100), "Plautinus" for Plotinus (p. 519), "Trivlens" for Tvivlens (p. 503). The dates also are too often wrong. Kant's first publication was in 1755, not in 1775; Schelling was called to Berlin in 1841, not in 1861, and Schleiermacher was not delivering addresses or writing letters in this world in 1881–2.

PAUL SHOREY.