

**THE WISDOM AND
RELIGION OF A
GERMAN PHILOSOPHER**

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The Wisdom and Religion of a German Philosopher by G. W. F. Hegel

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G. W. F. HEGEL

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HEGEL.

THE
WISDOM AND RELIGION
OF
A GERMAN PHILOSOPHER

BEING SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF

G. W. F. HEGEL

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

ELIZABETH S. HALDANE

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PREFACE

IN bringing before the public a collection of extracts from the writings of a philosopher noted as much for his obscurity as his depth—a philosopher respecting whom his followers themselves appear to dispute—some apology is perhaps necessary.

No one who is acquainted with the trend of modern thought will deny that Hegel's influence is not only great, but that it tends to become greater as time goes on. And this influence is not only manifested in the higher region of speculative thought, but is also evidenced in the more ordinary relations of life—in our popular religion, in our political or social relationships, and in our views respecting education and its aims. Of course, such influence has not been directly exercised: it has come down to us through many teachers, who have drunk from the original fountain-head, and who have endeavoured to work out the ideas thus derived in manifold directions. That the work done in such a way has been of inestimable value cannot for a moment be denied; and yet the fact remains, that in this working out something has been lost from the original inspiration, and that in Hegel himself we find points stated with a direct simplicity

and freshness that are wanting in the writings of many of his disciples. Hence it might seem not unfitting that we should endeavour to gather together some of the more notable of his sayings regarding the various spheres of human interest.

As far as Hegel's system of Philosophy is concerned, little or no assistance can be obtained from this collection. We cannot hope to grasp his doctrine of knowledge, of absolute reality, without penetrating his depths more fully. But we may be able to determine the key-note of his system, and apply it, each in our several ways. We may recognise something of the truth of what he teaches respecting the reality of what is rational, and the rationality of that which in verity is real; and, without trying to escape from out of our skins, from the surroundings in which we are born, and which influence us as we influence them, we may try, with Hegel, to understand these surroundings as we try to understand ourselves. We may learn that, though indeed it is requisite in the affairs of everyday life to abstract, it is surely possible at the same time to remember that we *are* abstracting, and not to take what certainly is an abstraction for absolute reality. We want, as Hegel tells us, differences, variety, in our lives, because the Absolute is richer for every difference which it embraces; but we must remember that these differences are not intelligible if taken in themselves, and without reference to the whole, which, in comprehending them, explains them.

The fact is that Hegel is so helpful just because he is so living and so concrete: it is the greatest error to suppose that he dwells in a region of abstraction remote from ordinary life. His terminology may be strange to those unaccustomed to philosophic reading, but we have only to break through the husk to find how full of meaning are his *dicta*. They differ from the brilliant half-truths—the *apperçus*—of many men of genius, which have their place, no doubt, in calling to our minds a point of view overlooked, but which will not bear a closer scrutiny. Hegel's sayings live with us, and Joy and Sorrow, Comedy and Tragedy, Life and Death, all find in him their reality as complementary factors in one great universal whole.

The pity is that an arbitrary arrangement of selections such as these gives so little idea of Hegel's riches to those who make his acquaintance for the first time. The context, which does so much to explain the meaning, is wanting, and we are reminded of a stone without its setting. But, in spite of this, a good purpose may be surely served by bringing these isolated fragments before an English-speaking public. Those who have not tried to read Hegel before may be induced to turn to the original, in order to discover the full meaning of what perhaps they rather vaguely guessed at; and those who know and value him may be reminded of passages they had forgotten; or passages which they had not specially observed may be brought before their notice. Of course, a small collection such as this is not exhaustive.

Some passages which are valued by Hegel's students will be found to be omitted, and others may be inserted which they think should be excluded. This it is difficult to avoid. I have merely taken these passages which seemed to me most likely to be useful, omitting many as repetitions, or as not comprehensible without a fuller context. Where a translation exists I have given a reference to it in brackets; but in all cases I have referred to the original, and in some cases, mainly for consistency's sake, made some slight alterations in the translator's wording. The German references are quoted from the second amended edition of Hegel's works.

I am indebted for considerable assistance in my work to the kindness of Miss Frances H. Simson, M.A., Warden of the Masson Hall, in Edinburgh.

E. S. H.

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