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978-0-521-10821-8 - The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists: Selected Studies

Peter P. Nicholson

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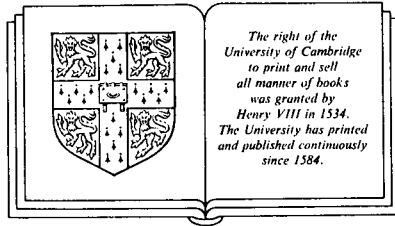
# The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists

## Selected Studies

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PETER P. NICHOLSON

*Department of Politics, University of York*



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## Preface

Among the most interesting features of a system of political thought are the claims and conclusions which appear to be paradoxical, odd, unacceptable, or plain wrong. Has the author really gone astray; or have we failed to understand his argument? Such puzzles can be very exciting and challenging, and investigating them can lead into the heart of a political philosophy. This book discusses some of the sticking points identified by commentators on the British Idealists. In dealing with them I have adopted no single method, but approached each problem analytically, historically, or by a combination of the two as seemed appropriate. The studies on Bradley and on Bosanquet could each be read separately, and those on Green as an independent group to some extent; but they are all connected (as indicated in the cross-referencing in the notes), and I hope that together they add up to a whole which is greater than the sum of the parts.

In writing a book of this kind over more than a decade, one accumulates many debts. At various points in my career I have benefitted greatly from working under three fine teachers and scholars, and I am indebted to them for their example, encouragement, and kindness: Derek Crabtree, Jack Greenleaf, and the late John Rees. John Rees is sorely missed. Parts of the book were presented at seminars or circulated to friends, so that I have discussed its material and ideas with many people. I am grateful to the following for their comments and other help: Tom Baldwin, Richard Bellamy, David Boucher, George Boyce, Stewart Candlish, Jim Crimmins, David Edwards, Bruce Haddock, Dale Hall, Paul Harris, Joanna Hodge, Terry Hopton, Peter Johnson, John Liddington, Rex Martin, Neville Masterman, Chris Megone, Sue Mendus, John Morrow, Howard Mounce, Warren Samuels, T. V. Sathyamurthy, Avital Simhoni, Richard Taylor, and Andrew Vincent. I owe special thanks to Stefan Collini for his extensive and informative comments; and to John Horton, whose fine critical judgment and good sense have frequently kept me straight. Jane Van Tassel's painstaking work as production editor has been indispensable. The experience of teaching courses at the University College of Swansea on the British Idealists, and at the University of York on Hegel and on the ancient Greeks, was valuable, and I am grateful to those who attended. The staff in many libraries eased the problems of searching out and consulting material, particularly at the Library of Balliol College, Oxford, the Bodleian Library, the British Library, the British Library of

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## P R E F A C E

Political and Economic Science at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Library of Merton College, Oxford, the J. B. Morrell Library at the University of York, the National Library of Scotland, the Library of the University of Newcastle, the Library of the University College of Swansea, and the University of London Library.

I gratefully acknowledge that permission to quote from unpublished letters and notes has been granted by: Mr Charles Jay Bosanquet, the Haldane family, Mrs Jean Hunt, Mrs Nancy Miall, the Master and Scholars of Balliol College, Oxford, the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford, the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney, and the British Library.

Of the authors whom I have read while preparing these studies, I think I have learned most from Bradley, Green, Bosanquet, and Ritchie themselves. Of the many commentators listed in the bibliography, it will I hope be clear from the notes where I have drawn particularly from their work. I should add that I have found much help in reading critics with whom I disagree. For example, although I usually argue that the objections of Prichard, Carritt, and Plamenatz cannot be sustained, I am in considerable debt to them; they are good guides to what is problematic and important in the British Idealists' thought, and they are a stimulus to providing an alternative reading and a defence. I have not, unfortunately, been able to make full use of the original and substantial recent studies of Green by Wempe and Thomas, and of Bradley by MacNiven, which came into my hands only as my book was under final revision.

Some of the research for this book was aided by financial support from the University College of Swansea and from the University of York. In 1978 I received an award from the Small Grants Research Fund in the Humanities of the British Academy.

Academic colleagues have to deal with one's ignorance and obtuseness, faults which at least have the prospect of being remediable. One's family have to cope with dilatoriness, procrastination, and other persistent and annoying failings. So, finally, I wish to thank Susan, Catherine, and Melanie. They have been patient and supportive.

P. P. N.

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## Abbreviations

- ASP *Aristotelian Society Proceedings*
- CE F. H. Bradley, *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1969)
- CW John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works*, General Editor John M. Robson (Toronto & London, 1963–). In the case of the *Autobiography*, a reference is given first to the World's Classics edition (WC), then to CW by volume and page. In the case of *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, and *Considerations on Representative Government*, a reference is given first to the Everyman Library edition (EV), then to CW by volume and page. In the case of *Principles of Political Economy*, a reference is given by book, chapter, and section of the *Principles* (7th edn, 1871); page references follow where appropriate and are to CW by volume and page
- DSF T. H. Green, "On the Different Senses of 'Freedom' as Applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man", in Paul Harris and John Morrow, eds., *T. H. Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1986)
- ES F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1927)
- EV John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism. Liberty. Representative Government*, ed. H. B. Acton (Everyman's Library, London, 1927; text revised by John C. Rees, 1976)
- IJE *International Journal of Ethics*
- LLFC T. H. Green, *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, in Paul Harris and John Morrow, eds., *T. H. Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1986). Page references are also given, in parentheses, to R. L. Nettleship, ed., *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, vol. iii: *Miscellanies and Memoir* (London, 1888)
- LPK T. H. Green, "Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant", in R. L. Nettleship, ed., *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, vol. ii: *Philosophical Works* (London, 1886)
- LPPO T. H. Green, "Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation", in Paul Harris and John Morrow, eds., *T. H. Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings* (Cambridge, 1986)
- Memoir* R. L. Nettleship, "Memoir [of T. H. Green]", in Nettleship, ed., *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, vol. iii: *Miscellanies and Memoir* (London, 1888)



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- MTS* L. T. Hobhouse, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State: A Criticism* (London, 1918)
- PE* T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, ed. A. C. Bradley, 5th edn (Oxford, 1907)
- PR* G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. with notes by T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1962). References are to sections, with Reflections indicated by R and Additions by A after the number of the section
- PSI* D. G. Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference: Four Essays on the Political Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer, J. S. Mill, and T. H. Green* (London, 1891)
- PTS* B. Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, 4th edn (London, 1923; repr. 1965)
- SII* B. Bosanquet, *Social and International Ideals: Being Studies in Patriotism* (London, 1917)
- SP* B. Bosanquet, *Science and Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. J. H. Muirhead and R. C. Bosanquet (London, 1927)
- WC* J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. H. J. Laski (World's Classics, Oxford, 1924)