

KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

A CRITICISM OF MR. F. H. BRADLEY'S
"PRINCIPLES OF LOGIC"

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PREFACE.

THE present volume consists of a series of logical studies, based for the most part upon ideas propounded in Mr. F. H. Bradley's recent work, "Principles of Logic." I have not attempted an exhaustive criticism of his views—a larger book than this might be devoted to the psychology alone—but have aimed at expounding a few definite aspects and results of his position, by means of free re-statement and illustration.

It may be convenient that I should explain in a few words my conception of the present philosophical situation, so far as it affects my attitude towards Mr. Bradley's speculations. It appears to me that English logic, under the influence of the idealism on which science inevitably rests, has almost outgrown the narrow traditions of its one-sided and, so to speak, pre-scientific schools; and that there are signs of a philosophical

movement in this country which may assimilate what is really great in European philosophy, without forfeiting the distinctive merits of English thought. But with this forward tendency in England there coincides in time a philosophical reaction in Germany—a reaction partly determined by those very influences of English speculation, which we hope that the present generation has in some degree outgrown. In the country of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, such a reaction will do much good, and can do little harm. It does not imply that their work is being undone, but only that the plan of the great masters is being handed over, to be carried out piecemeal by the journeymen.

In England, where constructive idealism has never yet had free play, the prospect is very different. It would be a misfortune if sympathy with the German reaction should restore the rule of traditions which we are just beginning to lay aside. Adherents of commonplace empiricism would in such a case simply imagine that their German neighbours had regained a sound mind, and had admitted idealism to be a blunder.

In such a state of the philosophical world Mr. Bradley's work has a twofold significance. In essentials, he belongs to the movement in advance, and is an effective pioneer of that English philosophy which

we hope for—a philosophy distinct and national, not from sheer ignorance of foreign thought, but by the characteristic appropriation of the world's intellectual inheritance. But in some external matters, and in some which are more than mere externals, he attaches himself, to an extent which perplexes me, to the writers of the German reaction; who, in spite of their extraordinary good sense, knowledge, and industry, appear to me to be fatally deficient in philosophical thoroughness.

It is my object in the following pages to show how Mr. Bradley's essential and original conceptions might be disengaged from some peculiarities which he apparently shares with reactionary logic. Whether I may succeed in this attempt or not, I shall at least have done what I can to call attention to the leading ideas of a work which deserves to be epoch-making in English philosophy.

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