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James W. Allard, THE LOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BRADLEY'S METAPHYSICS: JUDGMENT, INFERENCE, AND TRUTH

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Logical Foundations of Bradley's Metaphysics: Judgment, Inference, and Truth, by James W. Allard. Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xviii + 241. $75.00 (cloth).

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James W. Allard's book, *The Logical Foundations of Bradley's Metaphysics: Judgment, Inference, and Truth*, is, in one obvious respect, a straightforward historical work. Viewed as such, it provides a significant and worthwhile contribution to the study of F. H. Bradley, the often misrepresented but nevertheless influential nineteenth-century idealist, and in particular his lesser-read work, *The Principles of Logic*. In his opening chapter, "Faith, Idealism, and Logic," Allard sketches the social and intellectual conditions from which the tensions between the deep-rooted Christianity of Victorian Britain and the emerging fields of evolutionary biology and scholarly analysis of Scripture brought forth the manifestation of idealist philosophy in the likes of Green and Lotze, who drew from Kant and Hegel. From here Allard demonstrates why Bradley's treatise on logic was a crucial contribution to the developing idealist philosophy, and then through subsequent chapters reconstructs Bradley's conception of logic. What emerges is a clear and intricate path from his logic to the well-known metaphysical positions of monism and holism found in his more widely read work, *Appearance and Reality*. This aspect of the development of Bradley's philosophy has been under-acknowledged, and as well as remedying this Allard's book provides a clear and systematic reconstruction and analysis of Bradley's notably unclear and unsystematic *Principles of Logic*.

Viewed merely as such, Allard's book would be essential reading for those interested in nineteenth-century British Idealism. And of course it is. Yet its readership should be wider than this. For who, it may be wondered, takes absolute idealism seriously in anything other than a historical sense? To declare oneself as such, to be actively engaged with the sort of 'speculative' metaphysics that preoccupied the idealists, would be more likely to prompt an incredulous stare than any defence of Lewisian modal realism, for example. Furthermore, aside from the outmoded metaphysics, Russell's well known critique of Bradley's apparently coherence-based account of truth, in which truth is on the one hand a matter of degree, and on the other hand identical with the whole of reality and thus unattainable,

would seem to set him outside the realm of acceptability in the eyes of many philosophers concerned with truth and logic.

Allard notes the unfortunate and inaccurate view of Bradley's philosophy as a "weedy exotic" (p. ix), and sets out to present his views as highly sophisticated and relevant. In Allard's reconstruction of Bradley's analysis of conditional judgments, he notes that although the "standard textbook analysis" (p. 89) of universal judgments such as "All animals are mortal" takes it as given that they are devoid of existential import, it was Bradley who propagated this view against the traditional Aristotelian understanding. The necessary arguments for what is a given in standard contemporary logics can be found, it seems, in Bradley's *Principles of Logic*. Moreover, the seed for what has become the contemporary debate over the nature of truth, developing through the likes of James, Russell, Quine, Strawson, and so forth, were sown there too. As Allard repeatedly suggests in the lead up to the final chapter, "Truth," before Bradley, the traditional Aristotelian view of truth as correspondence with fact was accepted uncritically, as if a truism.

Through his detailed reconstruction of Bradley's views, Allard gives enough critique and defence to show how important his work is to anyone considering an analysis of judgment, inference, and particularly truth. Thanks to Russell, Bradley's coherence-based account of truth is generally viewed as worthy of some historical interest, but essentially incoherent. Yet in Allard's exposition, Bradley's account comes across not merely as acceptable but in parts positively persuasive. His discussion of Bradley's analysis of singular categorical judgments such as "Caesar crossed the Rubicon," for instance, sounds strikingly modern, providing clear and substantial reasons for accepting that the truth value of any statement such as this is a matter of degree, and never simply true or false (pp. 182–191).

In this instance, Allard explains that this judgment is incomplete, since it is intended to be about a particular individual. Yet the proper name, "Julius Caesar," is only meaningful due to its association with descriptions of the intended individual, such as "the man named 'Julius Caesar.'" Descriptions, however, range across possible worlds. So any description that lends meaning to the proper name, insofar as it is intended to pick out an individual, will fail to do so, since the description can by nature apply to different individuals. One can extend the level of description, and narrow the range of individuals picked out, but the ideal limit at which one and only one individual is picked out by a description cannot be reached.

Of course, we can see that there is a difference between asserting that the statement "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" is true, and asserting that it is false; to assert the latter would be to err. Bradley agrees. It is the notion that the difference involves any correspondence between the judgment and fact, or lack thereof, and further that the distinction is a bivalent one, with which Bradley takes issue. It is not that judgments are not explicit enough, but that they never could be. Crucial to Bradley's position is the claim that all judgments are abbreviated inferences, a conclusion Allard brings us to over chapters 3 to 5. So not only are judgments by their nature too general to possess a single truth-value, but their truth is dependent

upon further conditionals, which can never be made complete. So there is no statement which can be made unambiguously true. Judgments thus have degrees of truth, but only as compared to other judgments, since the ideal limit is infinite and unreachable and hence the degree of truth in a judgment cannot be given anything like a percentage value. A judgment cannot be made more true simply by making the description more explicit, or revealing the layers of implicit inference. What instead emerges is a holistic system whereby judgments derive their truth-value via comparison with other judgments, rather than in and of themselves. Allard states Bradley's criterion thus: "One judgment is more true than another if it is more completely specified than the other in terms of what the person making it knows" (p. 190).

From this, Bradley's monism should be apparent, since for him the only complete, unambiguous and therefore wholly true judgment is identical with the whole of reality. Yet this does not mean that thought and reality are identical for Bradley. The opposite is true, and Allard shows how the arguments in *The Principles of Logic* are intended to construct a system of logic that avoid what Bradley saw as the "cheap and easy identification of thought and reality" (p. 149).

This emerges in Allard's presentation of Bradley's approach to the 'problem of inference.' The problem appears as follows: if deductive inferences are valid, they can state no more in the conclusion than they do in the premises, and so they are uninformative; if they are informative they must state more in the conclusion than they do in the premises, and so they are invalid. Chapter 6, "The Problem of Inference," examines Mill's expression and approach to the problem, viewing deductive inference as subordinate to inductive logic, in comparison to Hegel's solution insofar as it requires the identity of thought and reality. Neither, of course, emerge as satisfactory, yet it is not until the end of the chapter that Allard brings in Bradley, represented as introducing an approach to logic distinct from other idealists such as Green and Bosanquet.

It is in the following chapter, "The Validity of Inference," that Allard delivers Bradley's positive approach to the problem, building upon his account of judgment, developed in earlier chapters. Through this it emerges that the notion that, "If an inference is legitimate, then its conclusion is asserted in its premises," is rejected by Bradley (p. 165). In the case of the familiar syllogism regarding all men, Socrates, and mortality, the premise that "All men are mortal" is given the familiar modern interpretation as a universal conditional. Its content does not derive from any existing men, of which Socrates is one. Since Socrates is a man, the term "man" acts as a unifier, revealing "a new quality of Socrates" (p. 164) and yielding the conclusion through synthesis of ideal contents rather than mere re-statement of what is already implicitly known.

Of course, while inferences can be informative and valid in this sense for Bradley, there is a further sense in which he denies their validity. The process of inference has no counterpart in reality, so there is no correspondence between judgment and reality, since all judgments are abbreviated inferences. Because inferences all have ideal contents and are incomplete, they are not identical to reality, since reality is concrete, complete, and wholly real.

It may not be the case that many will be persuaded, by Bradley's arguments, into accepting the notion that truth has degrees, and that the only genuine individual is the whole of reality. There remains, by the end, a lingering suspicion that Russell's accusations of incoherence may not have been as far off as Allard seems to suggest. But to swell the ranks of absolute idealists is not Allard's goal. What the book does achieve is to present Bradley's metaphysics as far from abstruse, fanciful, meaningless, and easily dismissed, but one rigorously grounded in a theory of logic. Avoiding his holism and monism cannot be satisfactorily achieved by simply ignoring Bradley, but rather by engaging with his solutions to the problems in the philosophy of logic and, to an extent, the philosophy of language. It hardly needs to be stated that the natures of inference, judgment, and truth are of central concern to modern philosophy. Re-engaging with Bradley in the way that Allard does in this book not only affirms his position as one of significant influence, but also provides insights and challenges still relevant and important for metaphysics and the theory of logic.

Evidence and Faith: Philosophy and Religion Since the Seventeenth Century, by Charles Taliaferro. Cambridge University Press, 2005. xi + 457 pp. $75.00 (cloth), $29.99 (paper).

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This book is a volume in the Cambridge University Press series entitled "The Evolution of Modern Philosophy," edited by Paul Guyer and Gary Hatfield. Each volume of this series examines the historical development of a current subdiscipline of philosophy from the standpoint of a contemporary practitioner. In this case, the subdiscipline is the philosophy of religion and the practitioner is Charles Taliaferro, whom readers of this journal will recognize as a philosopher eminently qualified to produce a work of this sort. Taliaferro has combined his wealth of knowledge about the history of modern and contemporary philosophy with his expertise as a careful and creative philosopher to produce an excellent contribution to this series.

In the introduction Taliaferro articulates four main features of the philosophy of religion: it raises fundamental questions about human existence and the nature of reality, draws on almost every area of philosophy, is relevant to practical human concerns, and contains important issues addressed by most modern philosophers. Throughout the book, he provides numerous examples of each of these aspects of philosophical thinking about religion.

Though the book is encyclopedic in scope, Taliaferro attempts to provide it with an organizational unity by treating the concept of evidence, broadly conceived and systematically characterized, as a reference point. This and related concepts, together with philosophical argumentation about religious issues, is the primary focus of the book, though Taliaferro does include accounts of historical events, especially at the beginning of most chapters, for some contextualization of the philosophical movements,