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## EXEGESIS AND SUCCESSION IN BRITISH IDEALISM<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

I announce the apparition of the book *Anglo-American Idealism. Thinkers and Ideas*, edited by James Connelly and Stamatoula Panagakou. There are sixteen authors contributing to the book with consistent articles on the writings of the Anglo-American Idealists. Among the Idealists that are discussed here I name: Francis Herbert Bradley, Edward Caird, Bernard Bosanquet, Thomas Hill Green, Robin George Collingwood, Michael Oakeshott, and Leslie Armour. I dedicate my review to succinctly exploring the studies of Efraim Podoksik and of Leslie Armour, the former a well-known commentator of the work of Michael Oakeshott, professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the former a successor of the British Idealists such as Bradley or Bosanquet, Research Professor of Philosophy at the Dominican College of Philosophy and Theology, Ottawa, a true thinker of our times.

Review to *Anglo-American Idealism. Thinkers and Ideas*, edited by James Connelly and Stamatoula Panagakou, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, Switzerland, 2010

**Keywords:** Absolute Idealism, Michael Oakeshott, Francis Herbert Bradley, Absolute, Leslie Armour

The book under review here reunites a collection of articles that were initially some of the conference papers at the *International Conference on Anglo-American Idealism* at Pyrgos (Greece) in 2003, that have not been published yet.

The editors are James Connelly, Professor of Politics at the University of Hull and Stamatoula Panagakou, Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Cyprus.

The major objective for publishing the book is the reassessment of the work of the Anglo-American Idealists of the nineteenth and twentieth

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centuries, such as Francis Herbert Bradley, Edward Caird, Bernard Bosanquet, Thomas Hill Green, Robin George Collingwood, Michael Oakeshott, and Leslie Armour.

The studies of the book are: James W. Allard, *The Idealistic Transformation of Logic*, Elizabeth Trott, *Is the Absolute Obsolete? Idealism in Transition in the Philosophy of Leslie Armour*, Leslie Armour, *Rethinking the Absolute*, Joseph P. McGinn, *The One, the Many, and the Infinite: Royce's Quest for a Middle Way*, Efraim Podoksik, *The Idealism of Young Oakeshott*, Jan Olof Bengtsson, *Idealism and the Pantheistic Revolution: The 'Big Picture' and Why it is Needed*, Stamatoula Panagakou, *The Kingdom of God on Earth: Religion and Ethics in the Philosophy of Bernard Bosanquet*, T. I. S. Sprigge, *The Problem of Evil for Absolute Idealism*, Karim Dharamsi, *Mind as Action: Reflections on Collingwood and the Cause-Reason Divide*, Timothy Lord, *R. G. Collingwood's Response to Oxbridge Meta-Ethics: Hierarchical Moral Pluralism*, Derrick Darby, *Taking Individuals Seriously: New Liberalism and Rights*, Chris Colgan, *The Ideal of Charity in the Realist Age*, Gary Browning, *Collingwood, Hegel and the Owl of Minerva*, Sverre Wide, *Absolute Presuppositions and the Limits of Reason: Some Aspects of the Philosophy of Collingwood*, T J. Rosser, *Collingwood, Heidegger and the Art of Being*, Marie-Luise Raters, *Art, Feeling and Truth: The Central Problem of the Aesthetics of Anglo-Saxon Idealism*, Philip MacEwen, *Edward Caird, Northrop Frye and Kant Scholarship*.

The heterogeneity of the themes of the essays in the volume show the multiplicity of preoccupations of the Anglo-American Idealists in logic, epistemology, metaphysics, religious studies, ethics, and politics.

I have decided to dedicate the remains of my review to two articles of the volume: Efraim Podoksik's article on Michael Oakeshott, *The Idealism of Young Oakeshott*, and Leslie Armour's article, *Rethinking the Absolute*.

Efraim Podoksik is a well-known critic in Oakeshott's philosophy whom I appreciate very much. In the present study the author discusses the early ideas of Oakeshott before his publishing of his first major work, *Experience and its Modes* (1933), considering a period of time of exactly five years from 1924 to 1929, when Oakeshott was in his twenties.

Oakeshott is usually considered as belonging to the Absolute Idealist tradition of thought, but Podoksik doubts this very much, having in mind Oakeshott's pluralism against the supposition of the spiritual unity of experience common to the Absolute Idealists.

However, in his youth Oakeshott spent four years at Cambridge, as a student of the Faculty of History and as beneficiary of a studentship. At that time he attended lectures given by J. M. E. McTaggart and devoted his studies to the classics (especially Greek philosophy) and the British Idealists. The Absolute Idealism (Bradley, Bosanquet) offered him a solid education, although later on he will turn away from its path. His mind's inclination to the Absolute Idealism resided in a religious appetite in young Oakeshott.

I have no doubt that Leslie Armour is a follower of the British Idealists among us, not only a critic, but also a true philosopher descending from the school of the British Idealists. I am honoured to write a few lines on him.

In the study of the volume here presented Leslie Armour intends to reactivate the concept of the absolute as what is not relative, or the accomplishment of the spirit. Leslie Armour's intention is to defend the *Absolute* of the Idealists, but this is not a simple matter. He evokes Ayer's critique of Bradley's Absolute in *Language, Truth and Logic*. Bradley's sentence from Appearance and Reality: 'It enters into, but is itself incapable of evolution and progress' is read by Ayer erroneously as if "it" stands for the "Absolute" when, in fact, it means "pure spirit" or the inner life of things. In Bradley's view, the pure spirit can only come fully into being in the Absolute. Leslie Armour suggests a religious interpretation of Bradley. The pure spirit stands for the Holy Spirit of the Christian tradition; the Absolute, or the highest order determinable, as Armour likes to call it, stands for or the origin of things or the first person of the Trinity; the perfected individual who instantiates the highest order values is the second person. The values that show themselves in reality reflect the third person. They are really one according to Christianity.

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