



James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality

Timothy L. S. Sprigge

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At the dawn of the twentieth century, William James was acknowledged as the leading American philosopher, and Francis Herbert Bradley as the leading British philosopher. Today James and Bradley are recognized as among the world's most significant thinkers of the past 100 years. Despite their enduring importance, the theoretical systems of James and Bradley are often badly misunderstood. Professor Sprigge's ambitious new comparative study freshly expounds and clarifies their arguments, demonstrating that it is wrong to think of James's pragmatism and Bradley's monistic idealism as opposite extremes. Their positions in fact display an intriguing mixture of affinities and contrasts. They share many main premisses and some main conclusions, while the contrasts between their views are all the more fascinating because they share so much. They were also insightful critics of each other's work: James described Bradley as "the bogey and bugbear" of most of his beliefs. Professor Sprigge begins with a detailed critical account of the theory behind James's notorious claim that the true is nothing more than the expedient. Sprigge defends James against many misrepresentations and unsound criticisms, but concludes that pragmatism's account of truth is incomplete. James's evolving metaphysical enquiries, from *The Principles of Psychology* through his later radical empiricist phase, his opposition to absolute idealism, and his religious motivation are all carefully elucidated. After outlining Bradley's metaphysical system, Sprigge scrutinizes Bradley's use of 'The Absolute', critically evaluates Russell's criticisms of Bradley, compares Bradley's phenomenology with Husserl's and considers Bradley's view of the displacement of Christian morality by Darwinism.

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