

LECTURES ON MODERN IDEALISM

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Lectures on Modern Idealism by Josiah Royce

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BY
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THE present volume is the third work published by the Yale University Press on the James Wesley Cooper Memorial Publication Fund. This Foundation was established March 30, 1918, by a gift to Yale University from Mrs. Ellen H. Cooper in memory of her husband, Rev. James Wesley Cooper, D.D., who was born in New Haven, Connecticut, October 6, 1842, and died in New York City, March 16, 1916. Dr. Cooper was a member of the Class of 1865, Yale College, and for twenty-five years pastor of the South Congregational Church of New Britain, Connecticut. For thirty years he was a corporate member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and from 1885 until the time of his death was a Fellow of Yale University, serving on the Corporation as one of the Successors of the Original Trustees.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE lectures here published were first delivered at the Johns Hopkins University in 1906 under the title "Aspects of Post-Kantian Idealism." They were, in their present form at least, not originally intended for publication, but a note, dated 1907, found among Professor Royce's manuscripts mentions these "Baltimore Lectures" as material "worth publishing." This entitles them to head the list of his posthumous works. Written as they were for oral delivery the lectures required much revision; the editor hopes he has not used his pen too freely.

The subject-matter of these lectures is one that, in a more biographical way, has already been treated in *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*. The present exposition of post-Kantian idealism, however, is by no means a repetition of the former one. In the earlier book, in which the charm and the depth of Royce's writing reach perhaps their happiest union, the interest is general rather than technical, the tone is popular rather than professional. It contains a rapid survey and not a detailed analysis of the period in question. Yet no other work of his exhibits perhaps in the same degree "the glory of words," the art of vivid phrasing, the gift of graphic and pleasing metaphor, the skill of forcing subtle and difficult ideas into luminous and concrete expression. It is indeed one of the finest feats of Royce's reflective

EDITOR'S PREFACE

imagination. As a work of deep speculation touched with warm feeling, of historical research cast in original mould, the book has a unique and permanent place in our philosophic literature.

To literary distinction such as the *Spirit of Modern Philosophy* possesses the present lectures can evidently lay no claim. In range and depth, however, they surpass the chronicle of the same period in the earlier volume. There we have but a brief recital of the main phases of post-Kantian doctrine, here an examination of its historical foundation, its logical roots, its human as well as its technical motives. The selection of topics is here more rigorous and the interest more preëminently theoretical. Moreover, what is here deliberately avoided is the familiar and conventional reproduction of post-Kantian thought. The usual method of the usual textbooks is here not repeated. In vain do we here look for the hackneyed themes of a hundred histories of philosophy. Royce does not seek the successors of Kant in the obvious tracts of ideas. He searches for them in the neglected aspects, the buried documents, the forgotten theses. These reveal to him the true meaning of their teachings; these disclose to him the spirit of the post-Kantian movement. In the early works of Schelling, for instance, Royce finds the pulse of the dialectical method, and in the *Phenomenology* rather than in the *Logic* he discovers the soul of Hegel. And, though the present study is wanting in completeness, there is no shirking of the most difficult problems but rather a choosing of them and a discussion of them with a power, adequacy and clearness which, as we look about, Royce alone seemed able to summon to such a task.

We have particular reason to value at this moment a

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dispassionate estimate of that phase of philosophy which, like German music, must suffer through the retrospective judgment of the war. During the present generation it seems difficult to approach without prejudice the products of German genius. The war may be said to have created a "German problem." Shall we condemn and approve uncritically? A double evaluation of Germany seems at first natural enough. Why not condemn her war and her war lords, and admire her philosophy? Unfortunately the boundary between her war and her philosophy is not easy to define. The treacherous onslaught upon the peace of the world in 1914 was no isolated phenomenon. It was the outcome of a definite theory of life.

The hypothesis of continuity in German culture—a culture largely fashioned by technical philosophy—was one which during the war had its protagonists alike among defenders and opponents of Germany. The apologist apologized for all things German; in the eyes of the accuser everything Teutonic appeared tainted. It was not enough to find Germany guilty of this iniquitous war, the guilt must be fixed upon her whole past civilization. Similarly, it was not sufficient to appreciate her past admirable achievements, her deeds in the war must also, since they were German, be the embodiments of the same admirable qualities. The major premise was the same in both cases. Beginning with the assumption of a continuous German civilization, one concluded that it was either continuously bad or continuously good. Germany's past was made responsible for her present crimes; or her present iniquities were cleansed in the stream of her glorious past. Thus it happened that the idealism of Kant, of Fichte, of Hegel became a matter of passionate denunciation or apology. And the books