

The two books under review are fairly easy to deal with on one level. T.H. Green’s *Prolegomena to Ethics* is a republication of the older edition of the work—originally published in 1883. I have not had the time to compare the texts in any detail; however, the present edition looks largely unchanged from the older A.C. Bradley edition. The novelty in the new edition is largely the introduction and updated bibliographic essay by David Brink. The new introduction, however, with some very slight changes, is also pretty much the same substance as Brink’s book, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*. This point would obviously be worth noting for any potential purchaser. It also makes the reviewing process more straightforward.

It would have been interesting to have had some editorial commentary and guidance in the Green text, on the various republications of the *Prolegomena* that came out during the twentieth century, from 1907 onwards; namely, who was involved in the republications and what were their reasons for pursuing it. One could speculate on these reasons, but it would have been fascinating to know a bit more. I have never checked such sources, but there may well be some archive material (letters or reports) in Oxford University Press on this issue.

Green did not have the chance to reflect even on the first edition of his work in 1883. His *Prolegomena* (as is fairly well known) was posthumous and *based upon* lectures that he gave as Whyte’s Professor of Moral Philosophy (from approximately 1877). Green, on taking up the Whyte’s Chair, had the avowed aim to develop a systematic moral philosophy in these lectures; however, as A.C. Bradley noted, many of the lectures, as they stood, would clearly have been ‘only the first [attempt]’ at such systematization (p. cxv). Green’s untimely death in March 1882 meant that they remained largely unstructured. Green left the manuscript material to A.C. Bradley to deal with. Some of the first quarter of the volume had been printed in *Mind* in 1882, but it is difficult to know precisely where Green would have placed this material in a final considered volume. The placing of these sections of the book in the front continues to give rise to philosophical debates, particularly over the role of the eternal consciousness. The title ‘Prolegomena to Ethics’ was Green’s, but the actual organization of the text and the table of contents were largely the work of A.C. Bradley, in consultation with Mrs Green, Edward Caird and R.L. Nettleship. Nettleship must have been particularly helpful, since he was, at the time, working on both Green’s biography and the three-volume collected works of Green (1885–1888).

As Brink notes, the *Prolegomena* is, for posterity, Green’s major philosophical treatise and, as he continues, ‘Sadly, the *Prolegomena* has become a neglected classic in the history of ethics; it has been out of print with any major press for over thirty years’ (p. xiii). Brink’s answer as to why it has been so long out of print is that, firstly, it is clearly a long and dense work which requires some sustained critical attention. Secondly, A.C. Bradley’s decision to front the volume with a more technical and demanding section on Idealist metaphysics and epistemology can be off-
putting for some modern readers. Another point to add here is that the philosophical traditions had changed markedly by the 1930s. Logical atomism, logical positivism, ordinary language philosophy, intuitionism, a latent utilitarianism, and even pragmatism, were both dominant and hostile to Green’s Idealist position and its metaphysical core. Thirdly, Brink suggests that Green’s work was partly eclipsed by Bradley’s more polemical book, *Ethical Studies* (1876). There is some truth to this, but it should not be overdone. It would though have been interesting to know whether Green actually read Bradley’s work. We certainly know that Bradley attended Green’s lectures earlier on, but the relation between the two works (and philosophers) remains tantalizing and open-ended. Finally, the *Prolegomena* has also tended (in the light of twentieth-century developments) to languish, to a degree, in the shadows of Green’s better-known posthumous work, *The Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, originally published in the collected works in 1888 and then separated out as a distinct text, with an introduction by Bernard Bosanquet. To an extent, Green’s reputation as a political philosopher has been probably more significant than his status as a moral philosopher. This position would certainly be the case post-1930, although not necessarily pre-1914. Brink also suggests that Green’s moral philosophy writing is more systematic than his political writing; however, this neglects the point that Green did not see the two realms as wholly distinct. It would be well nigh impossible to understand either his moral or political writings in a wholly separate manner. What is certainly true is that some of twentieth-century admirers of Green have not always grasped (for various reasons) the larger systematic metaphysical and moral dimension underpinning his political philosophy. The same would be true of Hegel.

What is distinctive about Brink’s approach overall is that he reads Green’s *Prolegomena* as a unique philosophical brand of moral perfectionism, which ‘weaves together a rich and varied tapestry of idea from different parts of the history of ethics’ (p. xiv). He thus identifies Green’s philosophical legacy in the writings of contemporary perfectionist moral philosophers such as Sher, Hurka and Parfit. Indeed, Green’s whole philosophical bequest is seen in both his contributions to the history of ethics and perfectionism. Brink views Green as combining a rigorous critical attack on forms of naturalism, empiricism and utilitarianism, with receptive but highly modified versions of Greek eudaimonism and neo-Kantianism. Indeed, he suggests that many aspects of Green’s ethics can be appreciated independently of Idealist metaphysics and epistemology—which is a rather odd claim for someone trying to reconstruct the systematic unity of Green’s thought. Brink, in sum, provides a useful breakdown of the various sections of the argument in the *Prolegomena*. He also canvases, in a fairly interesting way, some of philosophical conundrums raised by the work. In this sense, it is a useful and very timely attempt to revalidate Green’s work.

What I think is missing in the present work is a more comprehensive incorporation of Green’s philosophical oeuvres, namely, Green’s other quite diverse writings. Many of these ‘other writings’, contained in his collected works, do provide important insights into the *Prolegomena* and some of its key preoccupations. There is, though, little sign of them in the present works. This is connected to a second point, namely, there is little developed sense of Green’s deeper metaphysical system (linking his views on history, theology, morality, literature and so forth). Green’s philosophy is clearly different in its central preoccupations to many contemporary