

Preface

This monograph is a revised version of a book published in Italian (*La democrazia "puritana" di Thomas Hill Green. Con alcuni scritti inediti*, Florence, 2002), which was adapted from a doctoral thesis (Dipartimento di Studi Politici, University of Rome, La Sapienza, 1998). The central concern of my doctoral thesis was already the relationship between Puritanism and idealism in Green's thought, but the material was not very well organised so that I entirely overlooked that Green's main objective was the achievement of democracy in his own country. The Italian version of this book resulted from an effort to offer better evidence for some central points of my work, for instance how Green managed to make the teaching of Vane consistent with that of F.C. Baur. The opportunity for an English translation of the book was the chance of a lifetime. I have tried to sharpen the focus of my analysis further, revising the structure of the book as well as consulting the latest scholarship. My main concern is to show the significant role which the Puritan element played in the working out of Green's view of democracy. The book focuses on a reconstruction of Green's political thought which is meant to illuminate facets usually regarded as inconsistent with both the English and the German philosophical traditions. It provides an examination of Green's position based on the assumption that Puritanism gave him the clue for harmonising idealism and empiricism and for attuning their differences and incompatibilities.

The central concern of the present study is to demonstrate how Puritanism was a theme which ran through all Green's biography and political philosophy. It thereby reveals how Green's connections with Evangelicalism and his known affinities with religious dissent came from his way of conceiving

Puritanism. In Green's eyes, its anti-formalist viewpoint made Puritanism the most suitable tool for avoiding the drawbacks of democracy. The key objective of the book is to illustrate how the philosophy elaborated by Green aimed to encapsulate the best of Puritanism whilst eschewing the dangerous abstractions of both Puritan philosophy and German idealism. It follows that Green's conception of positive and negative freedom, and his vision of political obligation, stemmed from his effort to revive the Puritan heritage rather than from an ambiguous flirtation with idealism.

The book purports to show how the influence of Puritanism in Green's political thought is an element which can help to integrate the literature in the area, contributing to a better comprehension of a philosopher who, despite being unanimously considered as the founder of the so-called Oxford idealist school, had a very difficult and sometimes obscure connection with idealism. It has been widely argued that Green's relationship with idealism seemed to be infected by a religious germ which, because it was unrelated to German idealism, gave it a bad taste. This study aims to encourage further investigation of the nature and propagation of that germ in the British idealist School.