

Timothy Sprigge and the Importance of Subjectivity

By Scott Ryan

In this essay I shall offer a brief appreciative overview of the philosophical system of British philosopher Timothy L.S. Sprigge (14 January 1932—11 July 2007). In so doing I shall be emphasizing the importance in that system of *subjectivity*—of the existence of centers (he writes “centres,” but here I follow the US spelling convention) of consciousness, sentience, and experience, characterized essentially by the fact that there is 'something that it is like' to be them.

Sprigge had adopted this way of talking about subjectivity—as involving what it is “like” to be something—before it was made famous by Thomas Nagel in his 1974 paper “What is it Like to Be a Bat?” Subjectivity was a theme of Sprigge’s philosophical work from the very beginning, well before he had fully worked out his mature views. Indeed, “The Importance of Subjectivity” was the title of his inaugural lecture upon his appointment to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh in 1982, and was chosen (by his friend, colleague, former student, and literary executor Leemon McHenry, at the suggestion of Pierfrancesco Basile) as the title of a posthumously published collection of his papers.

My aim is to provide, for interested readers, a short and accessible (though of course very far from complete) account of the main lines of Sprigge’s system in a way that will provide a quick and ready grasp both of the overall unity of that system and of the fundamental and far-reaching importance of subjectivity within it. (Sprigge’s system is not presented *in toto* in any single source, but it is presented in helpful summary form in the chapter on “Pantheistic Idealism” in *The God of Metaphysics*. My order of exposition does not quite follow his, and his summary is a good deal longer and in most respects more detailed than this one.) I have had to be a bit selective, as subjectivity is a major theme in Sprigge’s work and plays *some* important role throughout all of it. I am therefore limiting my exposition to those lines of argument in which I think subjectivity plays an especially significant role or provides some special emphasis or twist.

My brief summaries should not, I hasten to reiterate, be regarded as complete accounts of Sprigge’s arguments. For those, the reader is of course referred to Sprigge’s own works, where he develops his views elaborately and at length. (At the end of this essay I offer some suggestions as to how those not already familiar with Sprigge but interested in learning more

might approach his published works. The fact that I am not a professional philosopher myself may make my recommendations more useful to other interested laypersons, without, I hope, diluting the value of the rest of my account for those readers who *are* professional philosophers or studying to become such.)

We shall discuss Sprigge's philosophical system under the successive headings of panpsychism, eternalism, absolute idealism, and ethics.

Panpsychism

Sprigge offers several metaphysical arguments for panpsychism (essentially the view that what we ordinarily call the "physical" is just the appearance of a reality consisting of sentient experience); here I shall summarize the one that seems to me to be the strongest. The argument is set forth in *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (pp. 110-140) and in his 1996 paper "Absolute Idealism" (mainly in section 5).

In the former work he offers four lines of argument that converge on the same conclusion. The first is that panpsychism provides an answer, indeed the only answer that does not in the end reduce to agnosticism, to our clearly meaningful question about the character of the noumenal reality behind physical phenomena; the second is that panpsychism offers the best hope of a true account of the mind/brain or mind/body relationship since it does not regard the *relata* as radically different in the first place; the third is that panpsychism takes the one noumenal reality we do know, namely our own consciousness, as its clue to the rest; and the fourth is the one I am summarizing here. It should be evident that these arguments are not entirely distinct, and in what follows I do not quite treat them as such.

His argument is that, if we try to arrive at any positive knowledge or understanding of what anything in the physical world literally is in itself, we shall find that we cannot do so unless we characterize it as in some way experiential or implying a subject. In particular, he argues, it is quite impossible for us to form any such positive conception that is altogether lacking in *perspectival* properties (characteristics that depend on relations to sensory organs, involving not only sight but e.g. taste as sensory modalities), *gestalt* properties (organizational properties involving grouping, foreground vs. background, and so forth), and *aesthetic* properties

(characteristics, like beauty/ugliness, which have to do with the sort of interest we take or do not take in an object).

For expository convenience I am here glossing over the difference between “conception” and “imagination,” but it should not be thought that Sprigge does so himself. On the contrary, he argues at some length that for a metaphysician, knowledge of the literal truth about something specifically requires imagination (whether direct or indirect) in a certain broad sense.

It is important at this point to guard against an elementary confusion. As Sprigge himself is at pains to make clear, he is *not* making the argument (which he suspects we are also incorrect to attribute to Berkeley) that anything we experience is, for that very reason, *experienced* and thus “in the mind.” This argument he holds to be unsound (though he stops short of calling it, as David Stove does, “the worst argument in the world”). To borrow one of Sprigge’s several illustrations, it is one thing to imagine a man without also imagining his clothes, and quite another to imagine a man who is actually and positively naked. His concern is not whether we can imagine concrete reality without also imagining this or that perspectival, gestalt, or aesthetic property, but whether we can *positively* imagine it in a way that *excludes* such properties—or, more generally, whether we can imagine anything, say a country scene, expressly *as unexperienced* and still attribute to it any positive character at all. His claim is that we cannot. Thus, he contends, having no positive alternative, we should take experience or sentience as the fundamental nature of reality and as the “in-itself-ness” of physical entities. (He usually calls this view “panpsychism,” but in later works he occasionally calls it “pan-experientialism.” The latter term seems more apt, if only because it is more precise.)

The thrust of this argument is that although the physical world itself is mere appearance, it is not mere illusion: there is something real behind that appearance, something which constitutes its actual inner being and which exists independently of this or that external perceiver. This is not a denial of the physical world but a positive account of what that world really is, as against what we ordinarily take it to be. Suppose, for example, that there is a clock ticking on my wall. For Sprigge, it is not sufficient that it be “like something” *for me* that the clock is ticking on my wall; that does not, he thinks, grant the clock sufficient reality independent of my mind, for surely I take the clock to continue ticking when there is no one in the room. (And to follow Berkeley in holding that it is God’s perception that keeps the clock in existence when no one else is looking

at it is not only to make the clock purely phenomenal but also to make God into some sort of cosmic illusionist: if He puts sensory impressions directly into our minds, how are our complex sensory organs anything more than mere show?) What Sprigge is arguing is that there must be a center of experience, or a whole host of such centers, that constitute the actual inner reality of what *appears to me* as a physical clock. Only with such an account, he holds, can we accord the clock the independent reality it appears to have and still regard reality, as he says we must, as consisting of experience/sentience.

Here we must make a careful distinction. Sprigge is *not* saying that in order for there to be a clock ticking on my wall, it must “like something” to be a clock ticking on my wall. Sprigge is not attributing to the clock itself a unified consciousness like ours, nor even saying that it must be “like something” (however little) to be any one of the *physical constituents* of the clock (an electron, say). In order to be completely clear here, we must make two points.

(1) Sprigge’s view differs, subtly but significantly, from the view that physical entities just *are* centers of experience. Strictly speaking, his claim is that it isn’t “like” *anything* to be a “physical entity,” which is itself a mere appearance: physical entities are phenomena only, and sentient experience is their “noumenal backing.” In this strict sense, saying that it is “like something” to be an electron would make no more sense than saying that it is “like something” to be the way I look to my wife. For of course it isn’t “like anything” to be an appearance; an appearance is just part of “*what it is like to be*” something else, namely the center of consciousness to which it appears.

(2) But we can still ask whether, in a less restrictive sense, it might be “like something” to be an electron—meaning, that is, whether the noumenal reality of which an electron is the appearance consists of a single unified consciousness. Sprigge acknowledges (in e.g. his 1996 paper “Absolute Idealism”) that, on his theory, the “bottom-level” centers of experience must correspond to the fundamental units of matter; whatever these turn out to be (a question on which Sprigge takes no position), he attributes a (very low-level) unified consciousness to each such unit. At one time it was thought that electrons were among these fundamental units, and had that turned out to be so, Sprigge would presumably have agreed that it was correct to attribute a unified consciousness to each of them. However, it is now believed that electrons are themselves composed of more elementary quasi-particles (called spinons, holons, and orbitrons); an

arrangement of quasi-particles need not itself have a unified consciousness, and as we shall briefly see later, Sprigge would not attribute such a consciousness to a “mere aggregate.” (Whether the arrangement of quasi-particles in an electron *could* possess the requisite sort of unity is, I think, technically an open question, but it seems very unlikely that it does.) According to current physics, then, the “noumenal backing” of an electron is not a single center of experience but an aggregate of such centers, and Sprigge would not say it is “like” anything to be the electron itself even in this less restrictive sense. (Likewise, of course, for the clock’s higher-level components—hands, gears, and so forth.)

At any rate the general principle is that physics, which is fine as far as it goes, gives us (as Bertrand Russell once wrote) only abstract structure; experience is what fills in that structure and makes it fully concrete. Experience is what reality is like “from the inside,” so to speak; physics is what the bits of it look like to each other “from the outside.” (This point is brought out especially clearly in Sprigge’s 2001 paper “The World of Description and the World of Acquaintance.”)

Thus his conclusion is that the universe consists at its “bottom-most” level of bits of (proto-)experience which constitute the way the structure of the physical world is concretely filled in, and that what we know abstractly or through appearance as the physical world really consists of innumerable finite centers of experience. This, he says, is the best and even the only way to do justice to both (a) the independent reality of the objects of our experience and (b) the fact (for so he takes it to be) that reality itself *consists of* experience.

Now, panpsychism is a distinct philosophical position from, and does not in and of itself commit its adherents to, absolute idealism. To see why Sprigge thinks *his* panpsychism leads to absolute idealism, we must look first at another of his arguments.

Eternalism

Though disagreeing with McTaggart’s argument for the unreality of time, Sprigge agrees with its conclusion and holds that our ordinary intuition that things come into and pass out of being is quite erroneous. Rather, he holds, there must be some perfectly meaningful sense in which everything that ever happens is just eternally “there.” His argument for this point (briefly summarized in *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*, where he credits it to Santayana, and set

forth at greater length in his 1992 essay “The Unreality of Time”) is disarmingly straightforward, but his panpsychism gives it an unusual twist that, I think, makes it even more persuasive.

His argument is essentially that, if what we say about the past is *true*, then there must be something *of which* it is true, something that *makes* it true (a “truthmaker,” although Sprigge himself does not use this current term and might not fully agree with some of its definitions). If, that is, the past simply fails to exist in *any* sense at the time of a later utterance about it, then it can be neither true nor even false, but must be simply unmeaning, for me to say *now* that I had, say, scrambled eggs for breakfast *yesterday*; “yesterday” is simply not *there* “now” to serve as an object of reference. Yet of course the past does *not* exist “now” in the sense of “at the present time.” There must therefore be some other, timeless sense in which the past exists, not “at the present time,” but absolutely.

The panpsychist twist comes in Sprigge’s account of what it means for it to be the case that, for example, I had a toothache yesterday. For him, the essential nature of experience strongly involves a certain quality of felt presentness; he vigorously scotches the suggestion that yesterday’s experiences, though existing in some sense, have somehow acquired some quality of “pastness.” Thus, if I can meaningfully say that I experienced a toothache at noon yesterday, it must be eternally the case that my experience of a toothache is just *there*, in all its concreteness, located in spacetime at noon yesterday in somewhat the same way that a bump in the road is located ten miles behind me—and not as a “former experience,” whatever that might mean, but as a *present* experience, in all its fullness and reality, possessing an eternal quality of “presentness.” (“Eternally present” might seem to be an oxymoron, but the sense of “present” here is not strictly temporal; it really means “presented,” i.e., “given.”)

He then argues that we must take a similar view of the future (essentially because there is nothing special about “now” in any relevant respect), and are thus committed to what he calls *determinationism*, that at any given time events that are past and future with respect to that time are fully determinate—and indeed are so in a sense that transcends our ordinary conception of “time” altogether. (He carefully distinguishes this view from *determinism*, the view that the future is determined by or can be predicted from the past.) All moments of finite experience are present tenselessly, in much the way that, for example, I am expressing in this essay by referring

to Sprigge in the grammatical present tense even though he died in 2007: his life just *is* part of the eternal fabric of reality.

Moreover, of course, because for Sprigge experience is ultimately all that exists, this account covers all of reality—everything that is, ever was, or ever will be. (Sprigge allows for the theoretical possibility that there might be more than one self-contained “universe,” each entirely unrelated to any of the others, regarding it as a mere “dodge” to say that being unrelated itself constitutes a relation. But even in that case his metaphysical account would surely apply to each of them.)

Although Sprigge characterizes this account (as did McTaggart) as the view that time is unreal, he allows that it is equivalent to an alternative account of time that describes what time really is. I prefer the latter characterization, in part because Sprigge unambiguously acknowledges (again as did McTaggart) that there are irreducibly temporal *relations* between (and even within) moments of experience, and in part because it is patently obvious that (as with “change”) there is *something* about reality that answers to our concept of “time,” even if not in the sense we unreflectively take ourselves to mean.

Putting the matter in this way allows us to do full justice to Sprigge’s views about how his innumerable finite centers of experience “fit together” into an overarching reality. One important part of the answer is that each moment of experience has a certain directionality or (my phrase) “vector quality” about it that leads or points to its successor (a quality Sprigge also identifies as the source of the illusion that time is something that “passes”) and thus orders certain moments of experience into streams—a view that makes sense only if we regard temporal relations as in some way real even if the ordinary view of time to which they give rise is itself flawed. We must therefore not take the “unreality of time” to mean for Sprigge a blanket denial of all temporality; all he is concerned to deny is that, with the “passing” of time, things actually come into and go out of existence and one moment is “replaced” by another.

(In fact—this is my own point, not Sprigge’s— the reality of temporal relations seems itself to entail Sprigge’s sort of eternalism: if two events are really related by one’s coming before another in temporal succession, then they must coexist in some timeless sense, else at least one of the *relata* would simply fail to exist at any given time and the supposed relation could never

truly obtain because it would never have two terms to relate. This point is surely presumed in the argument that two successive moments of experience are “related” at all.)

By itself, though, this account would get us only a group of series or streams of such moments at the “bottom level.” In order to complete his account Sprigge needs to face the “combination problem” and tell us something about how those centers of experience combine to form larger wholes.

This he does over the course of several chapters in *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*. We need not summarize his arguments here, a task which would take us rather far afield; for present purposes it suffices to say that he spends a good deal of time considering the relations of parts to wholes and what is involved in moments of experience coming together into the sort of felt unity exemplified in our own consciousness. We have already mentioned that Sprigge does not attribute such unity to a “mere aggregate”; what more is needed? The heart of his conclusion is that we can properly say two things are *related* only when they are parts of a larger whole that is in a certain sense more genuinely individual than either alone is. The interested reader should consult Sprigge for details, and for now need only be aware that he does deal with the issue at length.

Absolute Idealism

We are now in a position to see why Sprigge’s panpsychism leads him to his own version of absolute idealism, and in what that version consists.

Having laid most of the metaphysical groundwork already, we can afford to be brief here. Essentially his idealism consists of the view that the entire universe consists of one single, eternal, unified experience that tenselessly and eternally encompasses all the finite moments of experience at all times and places in an overarching whole. The alternative to such a whole, according to the arguments we have summarized so far, would be that there simply failed to be a *universe* at all, for if the various streams of experience were not related by being parts of a larger and more genuinely individual whole, then they would not be related, full stop.

(He holds, moreover, that while in one sense we are each of us “in” that single unified cosmic experience, there may well be another, complementary sense in which the subject of that

experience is “in” *us*. We cannot develop the point here, but we shall mention it again briefly below when we discuss ethics. For Sprigge’s own account, see his discussion of “all-in-one” vs. “one-in-all” monism in the final chapter of *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*, where he discusses the “ethically inspiring idea” that “what looks forth from another’s eyes, what perhaps throbs with felt if dim emotion within an electron, is really the very thing which, when speaking with my lips, calls itself ‘I’” [p. 274].)

Sprigge describes his absolute idealism as a form of pantheism, in which God or the Absolute is precisely the Eternal Consciousness we have just described. This result he regards as mainly (though not exclusively) a synthesis of Spinoza and F.H. Bradley, and his invocation of the latter makes clear that his absolute idealism stands in the line of succession of the (mainly British) Neo-Hegelians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The relation of his Absolute to the God of traditional western religion is of course a matter of great interest, but it falls outside our scope here; the interested reader is referred to his paper “Pantheism” and to the chapter “Pantheistic Idealism” in *The God of Metaphysics*.

Having now set out, in broad strokes, the metaphysical essentials of Sprigge’s system, we can give a brief summary of its ethical implications. Such implications it definitely has, and Sprigge himself not only argued for them but put them into practice, advocating publicly for animal rights and following a vegetarian diet from 1969 until his death in 2007.

Ethics

Sprigge’s ethical views (as set forth most completely in *The Rational Foundations of Ethics*) are utilitarian/consequentialist in taking the production of good as the measure of rightness, and in taking good and bad to be respectively the presence of, in the very broadest sense, experienced pleasure and pain. I would agree, though, with his own statement in his 1996 paper “Orientations” that over the years he manages to remain a utilitarian only by the skin of his teeth; indeed he makes very important qualifications to his utilitarianism (especially in his acknowledgement that utilitarian concerns must not be allowed to set aside the ethical importance of self-realization) that almost remove them from the utilitarian camp altogether. (To my mind these qualifications redound very much to his credit, in part because, despite my broad overall agreement with him, I do not think “right,” “responsibility,” and “obligation” can be fully

cashed out in terms of “goodness.”) At any rate he certainly does not take the sole goal of ethics to be the strict “maximization” of something or other, at least in terms of cost/benefit analysis (which he does not decisively reject but neither does he entirely trust), although he does argue for an attenuated and nuanced version of the “greatest happiness principle.”

Again, though, our interest here is primarily in the role of subjectivity in his philosophical system and we are focusing on places where it is especially important, so for expository purposes I will be emphasizing a few aspects of his thought at the expense of others. As usual, the reader is referred to Sprigge for a fuller account. For present purposes, we will focus on Sprigge’s view that panpsychism and absolute idealism reveal important distortions in moral thought influenced by physicalism and materialism, and that they offer correctives to such distortions.

One point to which I wish to call special attention is Sprigge’s singling out of a brief passage in Josiah Royce’s *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. In this passage, Royce contends that one cannot understand the will of another without to a degree incorporating that will into one’s own. Sprigge finds this a pregnant suggestion and is disappointed that Royce does not elect to develop it further in his later writings. Of course the fact that this view is expressed by Royce is not itself significant to Sprigge’s own philosophy, but I think we learn a good deal about what matters ethically to Sprigge from the fact that he finds its appearance in Royce’s work worthy of mention and its subsequent disappearance worthy of regret.

A crucial part of Sprigge’s ethics is his development of the idea, based in part on the previous point, that the “self” does not exist in splendid isolation but is, by its very nature, in relationship with other selves and indeed part of an overarching, inclusive unity. In part through making others’ wills part of our own in the manner suggested by Royce, we come to include the well-being of others within our own and indeed (through something like the Stoic process of *oikeiosis*, though Sprigge does not himself use this term) to see through the imaginary barriers that seem to separate us one from another in the first place—ideally even coming to recognize that the “I” who looks out through your eyes is in some entirely literal sense identical with the “I” who looks out through mine. Again we see the central role that subjectivity plays in Sprigge’s system.

Once those barriers are seen to be unreal, we also see that our true moral concerns extend beyond the human species. I have already mentioned that Sprigge is an advocate of animal rights; we need not discuss this aspect of his thought at length, but I shall make one or two summary points.

First, as to our understanding of rights themselves: Sprigge eyes with suspicion the claim that the rights of one reduce entirely to the obligations of others. To say this, he thinks, fails to do justice to our sense that a right tells us something directly about its bearer: it fails in some way to treat the right-bearer as a source or locus of value. He therefore prefers instead to regard the obligations of others as *following from* one's right. The importance of subjectivity appears again here, in Sprigge's insistence that the holder of a right be respected *as* a subject of experience, and therefore a locus of intrinsic value rather than a mere means to the moral success of others.

Second, as to whether (nonhuman) animals have rights: At bottom, his basis for attributing rights to animals is that each one is a center of consciousness, for whom things can be good and bad, and whose well-being is an intrinsic good to be encouraged and prized. Here again, what is important to Sprigge is that the animal is a *subject*, whether "rational" or not. (Thus far this leaves open the question of precisely *what* rights animals have, a matter we shall leave aside here. But at the very least it commits us to the view that animals have the same right not to be made to suffer that we humans have.) Such claims are bound to be controversial, and we cannot spend any time discussing the controversy here, far less adjudicating it.

But the truly revolutionary ethical import of Sprigge's panpsychist absolute idealism becomes evident in his suggestion that we can reasonably ascribe "rights" of a sort even to, say, a beautiful landscape. It is true, he says, that he locates value ultimately only in experience, and so it might seem that he is opposed to the view that a landscape could have any value apart from experience. But this is not so, for he simply denies that there *is* any reality "apart from" experience.

Moreover, in his view, we need not regard a beautiful landscape as itself a conscious entity in order to ascribe value to *it* rather than just to our experiences *of* it. For one thing, we can regard the value of the landscape as residing in the landscape itself at least *in potentia*, in the sense that the landscape has in itself the power to bring about experiences of beauty in certain sorts of conscious mind. But more importantly, we can relinquish the notion that the landscape exists

solely for *our* sake, and instead come to recognize that, in an important sense, *we* exist for *its* sake.

Sprigge's pregnant suggestion here is that since the values inherent in the beautiful landscape can be realized only in the experience of conscious beings like ourselves, we should regard ourselves as the occasions for such experiences of beauty, indeed as even having some sort of ethical responsibility for evoking them—and certainly as having some responsibility for preserving the landscapes from which such beauty *can* be evoked, on the grounds that, as a source of value, *the landscape is itself in some way a bearer of rights*. (Note that, again, on Sprigge's view the obligations *follow from* the right and the latter is not simply reducible to the former.) This view, if it is sound, must surely constitute something like a Copernican revolution in modern ethics.

For Sprigge, then, the ethical importance of subjectivity is at least this and perhaps more: Each of us, as a subject and a center of consciousness, is a bearer not only of rights, but of the responsibility—or, better, the opportunity—to *evoke* value from a world that is, as it were, “primed” to cooperate in that process, like a tuned guitar ready to be played. Such value is not an alien visitor to a barren world; this world comes to us already seeded with value, wanting only our cultivation in order for it to be realized. Our evocation of value, whether in our own experience or that of others (and in general these are not mutually exclusive but reinforcing), comes not at the cost of, but as part of, our own self-realization. And the moments in which such values are realized are not lost to time but are forever part of the experience of an Eternal Consciousness that, in this sense at least, notes the fall of every sparrow.

References and Recommended Reading

For the reader new to Sprigge, there is no better resource than *The Importance of Subjectivity* (2010), a posthumous collection of his most significant papers selected, organized, and edited by Leemon McHenry (who has done the job masterfully). For those of us who are not professional philosophers and do not have access to library copies of the journals in which Sprigge's papers were originally published, this collection is a godsend; I wish something like it had been available when I began reading Sprigge myself. All of the papers I have mentioned in this essay are included in this collection. (I have not yet had an opportunity to read *Consciousness, Reality and Value: Essays in Honour of T. L. S. Sprigge*, a Festschrift edited by Pierfrancesco Basile and

Leemon McHenry and published on the very day of Sprigge's death, but it surely deserves a mention here as well.)

Sprigge's masterpiece is surely *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (1984), but I think it will be much more accessible to a reader who has already tackled *The Importance of Subjectivity*, where its major arguments are given in at least summary form over the course of several papers. Moreover, although Sprigge is generally a very able and clear writer, in this book he has an occasional tendency to render this or that point needlessly obscure by couching it in a sentence that I, at least, find fiendishly difficult to parse on the first pass. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, the result (for me, at any rate) is a mental train wreck.

I am almost tempted to recommend reading *The God of Metaphysics* (2006) beforehand as well, since its chapter on Sprigge's own pantheistic idealism sets out so much of his outlook in summary form. But the primary purpose of the book is to inquire whether the "God of the philosophers" can provide a foundation for a living religious faith, and most of the chapters are therefore devoted to exposition of other philosophers; excellent though those other chapters are, it isn't necessary to read them first in order to understand Sprigge's own philosophy. They are of great interest in their own right, of course, and each chapter can be read independently; I highly recommend the book overall. (By the way, the full title of the book—and one can imagine the relish with which Sprigge must have composed it—is *The God of Metaphysics: Being a Study of the Metaphysics and Religious Doctrines of Spinoza, Hegel, Kierkegaard, T.H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, Josiah Royce, A.N. Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, and Concluding with a Defence of Pantheistic Idealism*. Anyone who thinks philosophers are without a sense of humor should take note.) Readers interested in Sprigge's accounts (and criticisms) of the views of the British Idealists might be disappointed to see from the full title that he does not include a chapter on Bradley, but they will be cheered again to learn the reason for the omission: Sprigge discusses Bradley at great length in his earlier work *James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality* (1993).

Sprigge's ethical views are developed primarily in *The Rational Foundations of Ethics* (1988), which should be consulted by the reader who wants to see what utilitarianism looks like in Sprigge's capable hands. The first part of the book is a historical survey of ethics; Sprigge's own views follow in part two.

The foregoing is not a complete list of Sprigge's published books, but by the time the interested reader gets around to such other works as *Facts, Words, and Beliefs* (1970) and *Theories of Existence* (1985), he or she will no longer need any guidance from me.

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