

Mrs Humphry Ward and Greenian Philosophy

Helen Loader

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Dedicated to my family

PREFACE

The name ‘Mrs Humphry Ward’ continues to provoke a range of reactions from general and academic audiences; it invokes a mixture of vague recognition and intrigue to that of distaste and condemnation as she has been championed as a reformer, vilified as an anti-feminist and frequently referred to as ‘Ma Hump’. Placing ‘Mrs Humphry Ward’ in the title of this book is consistent with all major studies that have been published in relation to her life, novels and reforms; it reflects the social conventions and the historical context in which she has been considered as a famous female Victorian public figure. In the text of the book, I use ‘Mary’ for three main reasons; first as a way of disrupting the cultural associations of using ‘Mrs Humphry Ward’, second, her first name, Mary, applies across most positions, roles and activities during her life without putting an emphasis in any one area and finally, using her surname only, would jar against how she perceived her identity as a woman, as ‘equal but different’. Due to the number of related men and women, similar names and married couples who feature in the book, all other historical figures will be referred to by the names they were best known as, in order to avoid confusion and to ensure parity in discussing men and women, as far as possible.

The precepts of Green’s philosophy impose particular methodological difficulties when conducting an analysis of historical sources for general readers as well as those more familiar with his work. This is first, because his concept of the ‘eternal consciousness’ cannot be known and is incomplete and therefore it is problematical to state with certainty how Mary

expressed it within her life and work. This is compounded by the difficulty of identifying what Green meant by ‘true motives’ in relation to moral action and therefore apportioning the extent to which her actions, as an exponent of his work, were consciously or unconsciously directed by self-interest or in the interests of educating and improving society as a whole. In this book, I use the concept of education as moral ‘improvement’ to reflect the Greenian idea of progress: for the individual as self-realisation and also for society as the common good. This required the faith and belief of individuals that they could become closer to God by working in pursuit of a better society, through moral actions united by a shared interest. The complexity of Green’s moral philosophy and political theories have been highlighted in all major studies of his life and work; and consequently, I cannot claim to present a definitive or completed version of how Mary viewed Green’s ideas and philosophy or how she conveyed them through her writing and reform activities. The aim of this book is to demonstrate the value of re-visiting the lives and work of controversial women like Mary, whose unique views, perspectives and contributions to history were drawn from and inspired by Green’s idealism and broaden the spectrum and understanding of how women engaged with the religious, social and political issues and debates affecting late-Victorian and Edwardian society.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEW	Association for the Education of Women
AT	Armitt Trust
BCAM	Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts
BFUA	British and Foreign Unitarian Association
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
MAW	Mary Augusta Ward
NUWW	National Union of Women Workers
OBL	Oxford, Bodleian Library
PES	Passmore Edwards Settlement
SCA	Somerville College Archives
THG	Thomas Hill Green
UCL	University College London