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Beyond Narrativism

The historical past and why it can be known

Abstract: This paper examines narrativism's claim that the historical past cannot be known once and for all because it must be continuously re-described from the standpoint of the present. We argue that this claim is based on a *non sequitur*. We take narrativism's claim that the past must be re-described continuously from the perspective of the present to be the result of the following train of thought: (1) 'all knowledge is conceptually mediated'; (2) 'the conceptual framework through which knowledge of reality is mediated changes with every new generation of historians'; therefore (narrativism's claim) the historical past changes with every new generation of historians'. The idea of an unchanging past, for the narrativist, requires denying premise 1 ('all knowledge is conceptually mediated') and therefore rests on a problematic commitment to the chimerical notion of the past as it is in-itself, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. We argue that the narrativist's conclusion does not follow unless one adds a further premise, namely (3) 'it is not possible to view reality through the categorial framework of historical agents'. If one asserts the possibility of grasping reality through the categorial framework of others, be they contemporary or past agents (as much philosophy of history written in an idealist key does), then one no longer has to accept the

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narrativist's inference that since the past cannot be known in-itself or independently of conceptual mediation, then it cannot be known *as it always was* for the historical agents. Narrativism's inference that the past cannot be known *as it always was* does not follow from premises 1 and 2 unless one smuggles in another problematic premise, premise 3. In this paper we defend the claim that the past can be known *as it always was* (not as it is in-itself) by invoking a different conception of the role of conceptual mediation in historical knowledge, one which assumes the possibility of viewing reality through the categorial framework of others. This notion of the role of conceptual mediation in historical knowledge is prevalent in the idealist tradition but, in the interest of brevity, we will defend this notion of mediacy by specific reference to the idealist philosophy of R.G. Collingwood.

Introduction

The narrativist turn in the philosophy of historiography was characterized by the view that there is no such thing as immediate knowledge of the past. This denial was largely motivated by the consideration that the meaning and significance of historical events emerges in the process of forging narrative connections with later events, something that can be done only retrospectively, from a perspective in time that is unavailable to the chronicler contemporary with the events in question. Early narrativists, such as Arthur C. Danto, Louis Mink and Morton White,[3] tended to characterise the temporal distance between the events of the past and the historian's standpoint in time in positive terms and viewed temporal distance as an enabling condition of historical knowledge. The significance of historical events, so they argued, is better grasped retrospectively, namely in the light of their

3 Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Louis Mink, 'The Autonomy of Historical Understanding', *History and Theory* 5 (1966): pp. 24–47; Morton White, *Foundations of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

knock-on-effects.[4] Retrospectivity is not a cross that historians must bear but a condition of the possibility of historical knowledge because, writing from a later point in time relative to that of the events' occurrence, historians have a vantage point that the contemporary chronicler inevitably lacks. Further, as the 'now' from which historians cast their glance at the past is an ever-shifting standpoint in time, the retrospective nature of historical narratives entails not only that history has to be written from the standpoint of a future present, but also that it has to be re-written afresh by each generation of historians from their particular 'now'. Given that the meaning and significance of historical events is determined by the 'story' that is chosen for making connections with *later* events, historical knowledge is (logically) dependent on knowledge of the future and the past cannot be known in itself or 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' ['as it really was'].[5] Later narrativists, such as Hayden White, Frank Ankersmit and Keith Jenkins[6] on the other hand, have tended to emphasize the linguistic and cultural features of narratives, arguing for the view that knowledge of the past, as indeed all knowledge, requires conceptual mediation. For these later narrativists, history is written (and-re-written) from the standpoint of the present, not just because the historian, having had the chance to see the chain of effects that a particular event set in motion, has a vantage point in time that the original contemporary witness lacks, but also because the meaning one ascribes to events in the past depends on concepts belonging to the historian's own 'cultural

4 Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, 94–95, 183.

5 Leopold von Ranke, 'Preface: Histories of the Latin and Germanic Nations from 1494–1514', in F. Stern, *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books 1973), p. 57.

6 Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination of the 19th Century Europe* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973); Frank Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983); Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991).

endowment'.[7] If the past as it is known historically is the result of the application of different conceptual frameworks and concerns, then each generation of historians must necessarily re-write history from the perspective of their own *Zeitgeist* and there can never be any such thing as the past 'as it always was'.[8] While both early and later narrativists deny that the past can be known in itself, they reach this conclusion in different ways. For earlier narrativists history must be written (and re-written) from the standpoint of the present because the significance of past events is logically dependent on knowledge of later developments. By contrast, for later narrativists history must be written (and re-written) from the standpoint of the present because the categorial structures and concerns of historians change from time to time and, since it is not possible (so they allege) to jump outside one's own cultural skin, the past must be continuously re-described from the cultural perspective of the historian of the present. Both earlier and later narrativists, however, agree that there is no such thing as 'the past as it always was' either because the significance of past events is grasped retrospectively in the light of the chain of events which they set in motion, or because it is mediated by the cultural endowment of the narrator.

This paper sets out to defend the idea of the past 'as it always was' firstly by making explicit and secondly by challenging the hidden inference which leads narrativists to claim that history needs to be re-written from every new standpoint that arises in time. Narrativists infer the positive claim that 'there is no such thing as the past *as it always was*' from the negative assertion that 'there is no immediate knowledge of the past'. What enables them to make this inference is the consideration that historical knowl-

7 Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 86.

8 W.H. Dray, *History as Re-enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 317–8.

edge is the result of the act of synthesis that is accomplished through narration and that, since narratives change either according to the temporal standpoint or *Zeitgeist* of the historian, so too does the past which the narrative depicts. Our defence of the claim that there is indeed such a thing as the past as it always was does not rest on the assumption that there is such a thing as immediate knowledge of the past. The notion of the past 'as it always was' which we wish to defend is not synonymous with that of the past as it is in-itself, i.e., in terms of Ranke's 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'. Knowledge of the past as it is in-itself is deemed to be unachievable by narrativists because this kind of past would be accessible only by what Kant called an *intellectus archetypus* and presupposes what Nagel called, 'the view from nowhere'.[9] From this mythical standpoint the events of history would be perceived not as truly temporal but as somehow 'ever-present'. Knowledge of these events would in principle therefore not have to await the passage of time. Nor would knowledge of this past require any conceptual mediation. Our claim that the past can be known 'as it always was' is premised on the view that the past can be known in its own light, and *not* on the view that it can be known 'in-itself'. It is only when the past is understood in its own light that it is understood historically.

Because the notion of the past 'as it always was' that we intend to defend is not the same as 'the past in-itself', this paper challenges *not* the narrativists' negative assertion that a) there is no immediate knowledge of the past, but rather the inference narrativists make from this negative assertion to the positive claim that b) there is no such thing as the past 'as it always was'. We argue that there is a way of preserving the narrativist insight that there is no such thing as immediate/unmediated knowledge of the past

9 Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

that does not require accepting what narrativists tend to see as the necessary corollary of this claim, namely that the past needs to be continuously re-described from the perspective of the present. In order to preserve the narrativist insight that knowledge of the past is mediated without at the same time committing to the claim that the present changes the past, we introduce a different notion of mediacy, one which is drawn from idealist philosophy of history and, in particular, from the philosophy of history of R.G. Collingwood. The goal of this paper is therefore to rethink the notion of mediacy in historical knowledge so as to make room for the possibility that the past may be understood not in itself, but as it always was.

The paper is divided into two sections. The first outlines the notion of mediacy at work in the narrativist approach to historical knowing. The second contrasts the narrativist conception of mediacy with Collingwood's understanding of the nature of mediation in historical knowledge. Our argument is that Collingwood's account of mediacy retains the central insight of the narrativist turn without however yielding the sceptical implication that knowledge of the past is relative to the standpoint from which the historical narrative is written and thus that, to use a rather old and well-worn analogy, the shape of the cookie cut from the dough changes along with the shape of the cookie cutter itself.

I: The Narrativist's Conception of Historical Mediation

According to Frank Ankersmit, narrative philosophers of history investigate the question of 'how historians integrate a great number of historical facts into one synthetical whole'.[10] For early narrativists this was chiefly a question concerning the ways in which knowledge of the past is mediated by the temporal position of the historian. The

10 Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic,* p. 15.

focus on temporality was championed primarily by Arthur C. Danto who influentially claimed that the differentiating feature of historical knowledge is the use of 'narrative sentences'. Danto's by now classical example was the sentence 'The Thirty Years War began in 1618'. Narrative sentences synthesize individual facts in order to reveal truths about the significance of an earlier event in light of later events. Thus, historical knowledge contains elements that were not (logically) available to the agents themselves since truths about the significance of an event continue to accrue after the latter has happened. A 'historical event' is something that exists only under a certain description, and the availability of descriptions alter with our position in time. Accordingly, it is not even possible in principle to establish a direct correspondence between the past-as-actuality and the past as described in historiography, for the latter will always involve reference to a future-related significance that was not available at the time of the occurrence of the events. According to Danto, this means that there can be no complete description of historical events and that the historian's narrative organization 'logically involves us with an inexpungable subjective factor'.[11]

The primary motif for early narrativists, Danto especially, was not to develop skeptical arguments in order to undermine the very possibility of historical knowledge. Their explication of the concept of narrative was directly connected with the contemporary debate on the scientific status of historical explanation and their philosophical aim was that of delineating the *a priori* conditions of historical knowledge. The historian's lack of direct access to the past (which is the inevitable result of the temporal interval elapsing between the events and the historians' description of them) was not viewed as a deficiency, but as part and parcel of what it means to know a fact historically. As

11 Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, p. 142.

Danto clearly states: 'It is just because we do not have direct access to the past that we have history to begin with: history owes its *existence* to this fact: it makes history possible rather than impossible or unnecessary.'[12] The fact that historical events are not available to the historian's observation, as they were for contemporary witnesses, is not something that entails skeptical conclusions about the possibility of historical knowledge. On the contrary, it is a 'unique privilege'[13] of the historian to be able to view the actions of historical agents from a retrospective viewpoint. Danto further emphasizes that it is the whole point of history to know about the actions of past agents, not as contemporary witnesses might have seen them, but in connection to later events and temporal wholes. Accordingly, temporal distance is an enabling condition of historical knowledge and '[t]o wish away this singular advantage would be silly, and historically disastrous, as well as unfulfillable'.[14] Historical narratives provide mediate access to the events of the past by integrating those events into a synthetic whole. Since the integration of a fact into a synthetic whole is the condition of the possibility of historical knowledge, where there are no synthesizing narratives, there is no historical knowledge.

Both early and later forms of narrativism rely on a two-level hierarchy of historiography: on the one hand, there is a basic level of raw (individual) statements about events in the past and, on the other hand, there is a higher level at which raw data are integrated into a synthetic whole (narrative). The basic level is often exemplified by chronicles or individual statements of facts, and their epistemic status is typically not considered problematic or even a relevant object of philosophical analysis at all. As Ankersmit writes:

12 Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, p. 95.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 183.
14 *Ibid.*

> all that is essential and interesting in the writing of history […] is not to be found at the level of individual statements, but at that of the politics adopted by the historians when they select the statements that individuate their 'picture of the past' […] Saying *true* things about the past is easy [on the level of individual statements]—anybody can do that.[15]

The question of mediacy in narrativism is a question about what happens at the higher level of historiography, in the process of the synthetization of data. The major difference between early and later narrativism concerns the issue of what the process of synthetization involves and entails.

Later narrativists would certainly agree with early narrativists about the contention that historical knowledge is (necessarily) temporally mediated. However, for later narrativists, temporality does not designate simply different points in time, but also the ways in which our efforts to understand the meaning of historical events is determined by contemporary linguistic and cultural contexts. The main idea of later narrativism is that historical narratives are not structured by past events themselves, but rather by the story or narrative form of literary fiction and by the culturally specific concepts that historians use for representing past events. This change in focus is directly related to the fact that, for later narrativists, the object of analysis is not individual 'narrative sentences', but rather entire historical monographs. Consequently, the notion of narrative is used to designate the holistic accounts of past events given in story form by an entire historical monograph. A typical example would be the view of an entire epoch argued for in a comprehensive work such as Johan Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*—a title that already reveals the main narrative of the book.

15 Frank Ankersmit, '[Historiography and Postmodernism: Reconsiderations]: Reply to Professor Zagorin', *History and Theory*, 29:3 (1990), pp. 275–96, at p. 278.

If early narrativists explicated narrativity as an enabling condition, construed as an *advantage* for revealing truths about the past, then later narrativists tended to view historical narratives as free-floating contemporary constructions, without any referential relations to 'the real past' that they purport to reveal. According to later narrativist theory, the historian's narrative is not limited by the facts of the past and the narrative choices historians make are not based on epistemological but on aesthetic and political grounds. Such suppositions were underpinned by the fundamental idea of later narrativist philosophy of history, namely, that in order to understand historical knowledge one must analyse entire historical texts as autonomous literary units based on contemporary cultural discourses and genre conventions. It became a received opinion that while individual statements about historical facts are falsifiable, and philosophically unproblematic, historical texts as a whole are not like this and that their evaluation is, therefore, to be considered analogous with the 'truth-to-lifeness' of a novel or painting.[16] Now advanced as a 'new philosophy of history', the narrativist approach provocatively set out to reveal 'history as the literature of the realist illusion'.[17] The notion of historical mediacy that underpins this position is clearly expressed by Ankersmit:

> The past is by no means like a machine: it does not possess some hidden mechanism whose workings the historian has to trace. Nor is the past like a landscape that has to be projected onto the linguistic level with the help of projection or translation rules. The 'historical landscape' is not *given* to the historian; he has to *construct* it. The narration is not the projection of a historical landscape or of some historical machinery, the past is only *constituted* in the narratio. The structure of the narratio is a structure *lent* to or *pressed* on the past and not the reflection of a kindred structure objectively present in

16 Cf. Hans Kellner, 'Introduction: Describing Redescriptions', in *A New Philosophy of History*, eds. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (London: Reaktion Books, 1995), p. 8.

17 Kellner, 'Introduction', p. 1.

> the past itself. […] [I]t is wrong, although quite enticing, to believe that the 'es' in Ranke's dictum that the historian should represent the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen', should refer to something fixed and with incontestably having the same contours for all historians. On the contrary, historical discussions are not concerned with how to reproduce this 'es', but with what narrative content can best be given to this 'es'.[18]

Ankersmit's claims follow from two connected constructivist ideas about the relation to the past in historical research. Firstly, the historian's construction of the past from present evidence does not result in a discovery of the past as it always was, but rather in the *constitution* of the past on the basis of contemporary concepts and concerns. According to Ankersmit, historical reality is a meaningless myriad of facts and a chaos of data until the historian brings order into the latter by the use of narrative representation. In other words, the 'es' of Ranke's dictum has no content apart from the meaning-making processes of historical narration. Secondly, if there is no order or structure to be found in historical reality to begin with, then there is no sense in saying that the narrative order created by the historian either corresponds or fails to correspond to the past-as-actuality. The order created by historical narratives is therefore described by Ankersmit as something entirely pressed upon the past by historians. Historians do engage with material from the past in their constructions, but their rules for interpreting that material do not reveal 'the real past' but will only mirror the logical structure of narrative writing itself. Consequently, Ankersmit claims that there are no 'translation rules' that govern the relationship between the historian's narrative representation and the past-as-actuality.[19]

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18 Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*, 81. Ankersmit is approvingly referring to Johan Huizinga in the latter part of the quote.

19 Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*, 87, pp. 216 and 225.

Ankersmit's account of history is a good example of the two-fold radicalization of historical mediation found in later narrativism. On the one hand, historical narratives are thought to be absolutely confined within the precincts of narrative logic and contemporary cultural concepts, which means that the historian's representations can never access and describe the past 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'. On the other hand, the very idea of 'accessing the past' is pointless precisely because there is no 'untold story' in the past for historians to discover. For it is only through the historian's own construction and concepts that the 'chaos and disorder' of historical reality is replaced by 'unity and continuity'.[20] In other words, Danto's idea that temporal mediation through narrative sentences was an *advantage* for the historical mode of understanding, has in later narrativism been replaced by the idea that narrative mediation is a kind of *deficiency*—if we presuppose that the aim of historical research is to discover truths about the past. Given that later narrativism proclaimed that there is no access to the past as it always was, and that there is no structured historical reality to be discovered even if such access were possible, it is unsurprising that several authors drew far-reaching conclusions for the entire discipline of professional historical research. If the radically sceptical claims of later narrativists are true, then why bother with history at all?[21]

II: Beyond the Narrativist's Concept of Mediation

In the following we shall set out to show that one need not abandon the view that all knowledge, including historical knowledge, is mediated, in order to defend the knowability of the past 'as it always was'. This defence of

20 Frank Ankersmit, *Meaning, Truth and Reference in Historical Representation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 45.

21 Cf. Keith Jenkins, *Why History? Ethics and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3–4.

the knowability of the past as it always was can be found in the tradition of idealist philosophy of history and relies on a very different understanding of mediation, one which retains the narrativists' negative claim that the past cannot be known in itself or 'wie es eigentlich gewesen' but which does not take this denial to entail that that there is no such thing as the past as it always was. This alternative notion of mediacy was already present in Hegel who, in his introduction to the lectures on the philosophy of history, described the sort of retrospective histories that are typical of the narrativist turn as 'reflective' histories.[22] It is also found in the work of Oakeshott, who distinguished the historical past from the practical past.[23] We will however focus on the way in which this conception of mediacy is invoked in the philosophy of history of R.G. Collingwood.[24]

As an 'idealist' philosopher (although Collingwood used that term warily and at times even refused it) Collingwood saw history as a form or way of knowing with its own characteristic presuppositions. History is a distinctive form of knowing because it rests on presuppositions which differ from those of (natural) science. The fundamental presupposition that governs (natural) science is the presupposition of the uniformity of nature, a presupposition that is necessary for formulating the empirical generalizations that enable us to predict and retrodict the course of natural events. Such a presupposition, he claimed, is not operative in history because understanding agents from a distant past (as indeed

22 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction, Reason in History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet from the German edition of Johannes Hoffmeister (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

23 For an account of Oakeshott's philosophy of history see Liam O'Sullivan, *Oakeshott on History* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2003).

24 R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944; revised edition, with an introduction by Jan Van der Dussen, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993).

understanding any agent) requires viewing their actions as responsive to norms. Historical agents, like any other agents, are understood *not* when their behaviour is subsumed under general laws formulated on the basis of inductive inferences, but when their actions are explained as a response to norms which, unlike natural laws, cannot be assumed to hold at all times and places. This is not to say that there can be no generalizations in history, but rather that the generalizations which are of any use to historians are made possible by the consideration that agents abiding by similar norms will reach similar conclusions about how they *ought* to act. The past, for Collingwood, is historically mediated, but the mediation that is relevant to understanding the past qua historical past is the conceptual framework of the agent, *not* that of the historian. The temporal distance that separates the historian from the people and civilizations that are under investigation, therefore, does not make the task of the historian any different *in principle* from that of the cultural anthropologist endeavouring to make sense of the actions of a contemporary Amazonian tribe.[25] To know the past historically is to view it through the conceptual framework of the agents involved. Since to understand the past historically is to understand it through the conceptual framework of past agents, what historians seek to explain, their *explanandum*, does not change every time it is approached from a different standpoint in time or a different *Zeitgeist*. To grasp the significance of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon historically, for example, is to understand that such an act constituted an infringement of Republican law[26] and to understand it in this way is to invoke the conceptual framework that was operative in the 'period' of history under investigation, rather than that of the historian's

25 'In principle' because in the case of the past there may be more epistemic obstacles in the way, for example, the paucity of records.

26 See Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 213.

own time. A period of history, in this sense, is not simply a time interval between certain events; it is characterized by a set of assumptions that govern the agents' conduct.

Collingwood's understanding of the kind of mediacy required by historical understanding would have made him very critical of the narrativist turn. He would have viewed the claim that the past is a retrospective construction from the viewpoint of the present as belonging to a form of historiographical writing that he refers to as 'scissors-and-paste history'.[27] He condemns this historiographical approach for taking an inappropriately judgemental approach to the past. The scissors-and-paste historian who looks at the past from the perspective of the present, for example, is prone to dismissing pre-scientific beliefs as false, instead of seeking to understand their role as epistemic premises in action.[28] As a result, this kind of scissors-and-paste history dismisses any statement which appears to contradict the historian's own system of beliefs merely as false rather than focusing on how false beliefs might provide a clue to unlocking the differences between the thought-context of the agent and the historian's own way of mediating reality. Collingwood argued that history, as a distinctive form of knowing or what he calls 'scientific history', achieves autonomy as a form of knowledge when it turns away from a concern with the truth or falsity of historical statements to the question of what they mean.[29] A history concerned with unlocking what was meant by a statement or testimony, rather than ascertaining its truth by the epistemic standards of the historian, would be better off relying *not* on the retrospective accounts of the past found in scissors-and-paste history, but on what he calls 'common sense' history. Collingwood's distinction between common-sense, scis-

27 For Collingwood's account of 'scissors and paste' history see part V of *The Idea of History*, Epilegomena § 3 (iv).
28 Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 257.
29 *Ibid.*, p. 260.

sors-and-paste and scientific history bears marked similarities to Hegel's threefold distinction between 'original', 'reflective' and 'philosophical' history in the introduction to his lectures on the philosophy of world history.[30] For Collingwood, as indeed for Hegel, we understand the past historically only when we view it as mediated in terms of mind or human self-understanding, *which is not the same things as saying that it is mediated by the historian's own set of beliefs*. The rationalizations which the historian invokes to explain the actions of historical agents have to be understood in the cultural context of the agent if they are to be understood historically at all. For the rationalizations which historians invoke must be sensitive to the epistemic norms to which the agents themselves respond and thus must see reality as mediated by the agent's own set of norms. This is what it takes to understand the past historically. For example, we understand the dispute between Galileo and Bellarmine historically to the extent that we understand the clash between the Ptolemaic and the Copernican conceptions of the universe. To know the past through the eyes of historical agents, therefore, is *not* to know it as it is in itself. But there is no implication here that, since the past is known through the eyes of, say, Galileo and Bellarmine, rather than in itself, it is therefore an ever-changing construction projected from ever shifting future presents. While human self-understanding changes over time (the norms which determine the code of conduct between a medieval serf and its lord are not the same as those which govern the relation between landlord and tenant in present-day London), the norms which governed the Greek, the Egyptian or the Mesopotamian civilizations remain what they always were; the task of the historian is to retrieve them without compromising their

30 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1975). 'Introduction, Reason in History', *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet from the German edition of Johannes Hoffmeister (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press).

integrity so as to bestow intelligibility on actions whose significance would otherwise elude us.

This (idealist) conception of mediacy preserves the early narrativists' claim that historians have a vantage point that historical agents lack without however committing us to the claim that the past is understood only if it is understood in a different way every time or, as Gadamer puts it 'we understand in a *different wa, if we understand at all*'.[31]

There is no contradiction, for example, in saying both

a) that Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 BC would have been seen by his contemporaries as posing a challenge to Republican law, thereby understanding its significance in the light of Roman legal norms and
b) that had Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon not triggered the end of the Republic and the rise of the imperial era of Rome, it would not have had the same significance for later Roman historians

To describe Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon as representing a challenge to Republican Law, as in (a), is to understand what Roman law entails. This kind of understanding is not empirical because the connection between Roman Law and the description of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon as constituting a challenge to it (rather than, say, simply moving around with horses and men) involves understanding his action as being in breach of a military norm. This conceptual connection is *not* time-sensitive: what Roman law entails, what behaviour it forbids and what it allows, is not altered by the later course of events. By contrast, understanding Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon as in (b), i.e. as the event which triggered the demise of the Roman Republic, can only be done retrospectively from a later point in time, once the Republic has collapsed, for the crossing of the Rubicon would not have

31 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 296. Italics in the original.

been described as triggering the demise of the Republic had Rome not subsequently become an empire. Collingwood would not deny that the claim that Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon triggered the demise of the Roman republic can only be made post-facto, from a standpoint in time that is not available to the contemporary witness or chronicler. How could one possibly deny this? Collingwood's notion of mediacy does not deny that retrospectivity has an important role to play in historical knowledge. What it rules out, on the other hand, is that later historians could change the way in which the significance of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon is captured in a) i.e. as constituting a challenge to Republican law. For such a characterization of the event, as we have seen, is not time-sensitive and is therefore not affected by later developments: the retrospective character of historical narratives, for Collingwood, cannot change what is and what is not permitted by Roman Law. In fact the description of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon as in a) i.e. as constituting a challenge to Republican Law, is the condition of the possibility for Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon to be identified (by later historians) as the event which triggered the demise of the Republic. For how could the crossing of the Rubicon be considered as a possible contributing factor to the collapse of the Republic had Caesar's contemporaries not viewed it as challenging the senate? On this (idealist) view of historical mediacy, retrospective narratives such as the one tracing the cause which triggered the demise of the Republic back to Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon do not work with data which are completely raw, but with historically mediated facts, mediated, in this specific case, by the understanding of the Romans living under the Republic. Later historians can retrospectively identify the crossing of the Rubicon as the event which triggered the demise of the Roman Republic only to the extent that they present the significance of Caesar's crossing of the

Rubicon precisely as it would have been perceived by a contemporary Roman living under the Republic, i.e. as a gesture of defiance rather than that of simply moving over to the other river bank. This conception of historical mediation denies what the narrativist conception of mediacy presupposes, namely that there are raw historical data which, when duly synthesised, are turned into historical narratives. For Collingwood there are no such things as non-inferential historical facts because to understand the crossing of the Rubicon as the distant cause of the collapse of the Republic already requires understanding it in relation to a norm of conduct. His notion of mediacy does not allow for brute facts which are then later turned into historical narratives through the colligatory or synthesising activity of historians, just as the dough is turned into a gingerbread man by pressing out the relevant shapes with the cookie-cutter. It is this understanding of mediacy that he rejects and which he replaces with an account of the nature of historical understanding which does not rest on the sort of constructivist epistemology that Hegel disparagingly labelled as 'the tool conception of knowledge' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[32]

Here is another example which illustrates why the idealist notion of mediacy can incorporate the early narrativists' insight that later historians have a vantage point that historical agents lack. Consider Russia's seizing of three Ukrainian vessels in the Kerch Strait on November 25th 2018. The Ukrainian and the UN condemned Russia's attack as a violation of Ukranian waters. It is possible that this event will be seen, by future historians, as the cause of a third world conflict. Whether it will or not, can at best be surmised by contemporary commentators concerned with the possible ramifications of this event. But

32 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), see 'Introduction', §73.

that the seizing of the boats on Ukrainian territorial waters constitutes a violation of an agreement is not the kind of consideration that needs to await the verdict of time. For presenting it as an act of aggression requires understanding it as breaching the treaty agreed by Russia and the Ukraine on unimpeded access to the sea of Azov via the Kerch strait. That the seizing of the boats constitutes an act of aggression is entailed by the terms of the Russian-Ukrainian treaty. It is a conceptual claim that is true come what may and cannot be empirically falsified by the future course of events. For Collingwood, the historical facts on which retrospective narratives build are always already mediated. They are not facts like 'there were some men crossing a river and they were carrying guns' but rather 'an army, led by its general, transgressed a border in defiance of a law that banned them from doing so'. Not 'three vessels were seized forcefully' but rather 'the territorial waters of one country were violated by another in defiance of international law'. The facts with which narrative philosophy of history work are not empirical facts which are transformed into historical facts through the act of colligation. They already are facts as they would have been perceived by agents with an understanding of Roman Law and of the Russian-Ukrainian treaty. This is what it means to understand a fact historically. Like the cookie-cutter conception of knowledge, the narrativist view of mediation presupposes precisely what it wants to deny, namely that there is some raw dough that is shaped through the synthesizing activity of narration.

One well-known narrativist response can be found in Hayden White's critique of Collingwood's account of historical understanding.[33] Importantly, White's critique is premised on first ascribing to Collingwood views on his-

33 Hayden White. 1978. 'The Historical Text as Literary Artifact' (1974), *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978).

torical understanding that belong to White's own position. According to White, Collingwood believed that 'historical sensibility was manifested in the capacity to make a plausible story out of a congeries of "facts" which, in their unprocessed form, made no sense at all.'[34] Consequently, White ascribes to Collingwood both the idea that the historian starts from raw dough and that historical knowledge consists of processing that dough by narration. The difference between their respective views, according to White, is that Collingwood assumes that the historian's retrospective narration—'the story'—can be found ready-made but hidden in the past itself. White then claims that, for Collingwood, these hidden narratives could be excavated only if the historian had a 'nose for the "story" contained in the evidence.'[35] This allegedly Collingwoodian view is then criticized by White for relying on the unwarranted supposition that the past itself has properties that correspond with the historian's retrospective and imaginative stories. As White writes:

> What Collingwood failed to see was that no given set of casually recorded historical events can in itself constitute a story; the most it might offer to the historian are story *elements* […] For example, no historical event is *intrinsically tragic*; it can only be conceived as such from a particular point of view or from within the context of a structured set of events of which it is an element enjoying a privileged place. […] [H]istorical situations do not have built into them intrinsic meanings in the way that literary texts do. Historical situations are not *inherently* tragic, comic, or romantic '. […] *How* a given historical situation is to be configured depends on the historian's subtlety in matching up a specific plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say fiction-making, operation.[36]

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34 White, 'The Historical Text as Literary Artifact', p. 84.
35 *Ibid*.
36 *Ibid*., pp. 84–5.

White's reading assumes that Collingwood shared the narrativists' cookie cutter conception of historical knowledge. The difference is supposedly only that Collingwood affirms what the narrativists deny; namely, that the historian's story is found ready-made in the past itself. However, as we have shown, Collingwood entirely rejects the narrativist conception that historical knowledge depends on the synthetization of brute facts into narratives. For Collingwood, to understand the past historically is to understand it from the conceptual framework of the historical agents. In this sense, Collingwood would indeed, contrary to White, claim that historical situations have intrinsic meaning. For to understand historically is to trace the meaning of the conceptual connections that shaped the space of reasons of the historical agents themselves. However, this level of meaning is not to be confused with the kinds of meaning that derives from the retrospective and narrative work of the historian. It is one thing to 'endow' meaning to historical events by making retrospective connections with other events, and another thing to understand meaning from the perspective of the conceptual framework of historical agents. We have argued that these different levels of meaning are not independent from each other, but rather that the historian's endowment of meaning must presuppose that retrospectively connected events have already been historically understood. In the above quote, White is often read as denying any relation of dependence between historical facts and the meaning-making of the historian's narration. However, in the heated debates on narrativism and Holocaust historiography during the 1990s, White himself later recognized that his position was untenable. Faced with the question of whether the events of the Holocaust can legitimately be narrated as a comedy if the historian so wills, without restraints from historically understood facts, White made what seems like a complete turnaround and claimed

instead that the historian *is* justified in discriminating between competing narratives by appealing to historical facts.[37]

Collingwood's conception of the ways in which facts are historically mediated was obscured by his attempt to capture the nature of historical understanding through the idea of re-enactment. He claimed that when historians understand past agents, they do so by rethinking in their own minds the very same thoughts that the historical agents entertained. Re-enactment was unfortunately (and unfairly) taken as invoking the possibility of an act of psychic transposition that enabled historians to gain immediate access to the mind of the historical agent,[38] which is precisely what Collingwood actually denied. Collingwood's account of re-enactment (which we cannot explicate and defend here in full)[39] was rather intended to isolate the propositional content of thought from its spatio-temporal context so as to make it possible to account for how two persons could hold the very same thought, i.e. a thought with the same propositional content. For if the propositional content of thought were inextricably tied to its spatio-temporal manifestation (say, the agent's uttering of the sentence), then no one could ever be said to entertain the same thought as someone else. Re-enactment, in other words, was meant to distinguish

37 Hayden White, 'Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth,' in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'*, ed. S. Friedlander (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 40.

38 An outspoken critic was Patrick Gardiner, *Theories of History* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959).

39 Collingwood is often read as an empathy theorist, but his goal was not to provide a method for the recovery of the thoughts of other agents but a conceptual claim about the criteria for the identity of thought. On this see: G. D'Oro, 'Collingwood on Re-enactment and the Identity of Thought', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 38/1, (2000), pp. 87–101; J. van der Dussen, 'The Philosophical Context of Collingwood's Re-enactment Theory', *International Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 27/2 (1995), pp. 81–99 and H. Saari, 'R.G. Collingwood on the Identity of Thought', *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, , vol. 28 (1989), pp. 77–89.

between token acts of thinking which are necessarily tied to a spatio-temporal context and propositional contents which, on the other hand are not. It made the arguably uncontroversial point that while it makes no sense, for example, to locate the principle of specific gravity in a bath tub, it does make sense to locate Archimedes' body in the bathtub where he had the insight. We can rethink the thoughts of the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans much in the way in which we can rethink Archimedes' principles of specific gravity.[40] But we do not do this by entering their minds. We do so by recovering the conceptual connections that they made between, say, the crossing of the Rubicon and the challenging of Republican law. To do this the historian has to study historical sources, rather than attend some kind of a seance.

Be that as it may, there are arguably more troubling philosophical reasons why Collingwood's views concerning the nature of mediacy in historical knowledge have been overlooked and neglected. If Collingwood is right, and there is such a thing as the past as it always was, a past that can be recovered, not as it is in itself, but as it was for the historical agents under investigation, a past that does not change from one generation of historians to another, then there must be claims that are true come what may, or in virtue of their meaning. For if the claim that Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon constituted a challenge to Roman law does not change its meaning with the passage of time, then there must be a distinction between conceptual claims and empirical claims. The notion of mediacy which is at work in Collingwood's account of historical understanding presupposes that there are conceptual truths that can be known by understanding the norms of the culture under investigation. And the task of understanding these norms is, as Peter Winch pointed out, a reflective or conceptual task. Winch writes:

40 Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, 287.

> Historical explanation is not the application of generalizations and theories to particular instances: it is the tracing of internal relations. It is like applying one's knowledge of a language in order to understand a conversation rather than like applying one's knowledge of the laws of mechanics to understand the workings of a watch.[41]

Collingwood's understanding of mediacy and his account of re-enactment presuppose, contra Quine, that it is at least in principle possible to achieve determinacy in translation. Quine[42] notoriously denied that there can be such a thing as determinacy of translation, and his denial was a direct implication of the rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction.[43] For if the rules which govern the use of terms are not fixed, then, for example, the meaning of Roman Law and what it entails is not fixed either, and so the meaning of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon could not be fixed once and for all for subsequent generations of historians by referring to what it signified for those living under the Republic.

Clearly some terms do change their meanings over time. For example, 'marriage' no longer simply means 'an heterosexual union' in countries which have legalized same sex marriages. But observations such as these do not provide the historian with a licence to retrospectively change the way in which the word 'marriage' was used before the introduction of same sex marriages. To do that would be tantamount to re-writing Roman Law. It is the task of historians, Collingwood argues, to record these differences,

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41 Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), 133.

42 W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge Massachusetts, the MIT Press, 1960), ch. 2; W.V.O. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*, (Cambridge Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1990), part III.

43 Quine, W.V.O., 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', *Philosophical Review*, 1951, 60 pp. 20–43. Interestingly, the idea of an indeterminacy, or even impossibility, of translation was also central for Ankersmit's narrativist argument. Cf. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*, 87, pp. 216 and 225.

not to obliterate them.[44] Understanding the different ways in which certain words are used and the inferences that they allow one to make (for example: 'if they are married, then they are man and woman' in countries where same sex marriages are not sanctioned in law) is a precondition for historical understanding. If one abandons this basic rule of historical understanding, then one is not miles away from the postmodernist logic that any interpretation goes. It is a glaring example of philosophical double standards that whereas postmodern philosophers are vilified for claiming that the past must be rewritten anew by each generation of historians, Quine is applauded for his argument against the determinacy of translation.[45] For either one agrees with the postmodernist's logic and with Quine, or one disagrees with the postmodernist logic and thereby also disagrees with Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of translation.

The idealist conception of historical mediation that we have outlined here denies there is any such thing as knowledge of the past in itself, 'wie es eigentlich gewesen'. But it arrives at this conclusion in a distinctive way. From this idealist perspective, the past is understood historically not when it is understood from either the temporal or categorial perspective of historians, but when it is approached from the distinctive set of presuppositions which govern history. To understand the past historically (by adopting the presuppositions which govern historical enquiry) requires understanding it in the 'language' of the agents, making the same conceptual connections that, for example, would have led a Roman living at the times of

44 For a critical appraisal of Quine's views concerning the indeterminacy of translation see D'Oro. G. 'Understanding Others: Cultural Anthropology with Collingwood and Quine', *Journal of the Philosophy of History*, vol. 7/3 (2013), , 326–45.

45 For the suggestion that Quine is a sort of postmodern philosopher of history see Alan Weir, 'Indeterminacy of Translation' in E. Lepore and B. Smith (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233–49.

Caesar to view the crossing of the Rubicon as a challenge to Republican Law.

Collingwood's conception of the nature of historical knowledge was developed within a metaphilosophical framework which saw history and (natural) science as forms of *scientia*, i.e. as forms of knowledge with their own distinctive methods, that enable their practitioners to advance claims that are justified by the inferential standards characteristic of their distinctive ways of knowing.[46] Since both history and (natural) science are kinds of *scientia*, both forms of knowledge are in the same epistemic boat: no form of knowledge captures reality in-itself. Historical claims are the result of historical inferences; but scientific hypotheses too are the result of scientific inferences. It is the presuppositions from which the study of the past is approached that determines whether or not one's *explanandum* constitutes a genuine historical subject matter. But to say that the past is understood historically when it is understood through the presuppositions which govern historical enquiry, i.e. in the light of the norms (epistemic, legal, aesthetic etc) which mediated past agents' understanding of reality, is not the same as saying that it is a subjective construction of historians or even a time-limited inter-subjectively valid construction of a group of historians sharing the same cultural endowment. The view that historical knowledge is inherently subjective is a consequence of viewing history as a defective form of knowledge when compared with the kind of knowledge that (natural) science is deemed to yield. Since Collingwood regards both history and natural science as kinds of *scientia*, he would reject the suggestion that scientific claims capture facts of the matter that are logically independent of the (inductive) method through which

46 R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940; revised edition, with an introduction by Rex Martin, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.

they are known, whereas history brings facts under value-laden descriptions that are logically dependent on the inferences established by historians through the act of narration. The view that historical knowledge is inherently subjective while scientific knowledge is inherently objective relies on a piecemeal endorsement of anti-representationalism that accords (natural) science a pride of place that is denied to history. Collingwood rejected the view that there is any such thing as unmediated presuppositionless knowledge of reality, be this scientific or, indeed, historical knowledge. His philosophy of history does not ask one to take the mythical view from nowhere (from which reality, past or present, could be known in itself); it explains rather how it is possible to take in the view from elsewhere. Unlike the narrativist position, therefore, his denial that the past is knowable in itself does not entail that it is not possible to view the past as it always was, i.e. from the conceptual framework of the historical agent.

Narrativism's claim that the historical past cannot be known once and for all because it must be continuously re-described from the standpoint of the present rests on a *non sequitur*. The narrativist reasons as follows:

1) all knowledge is conceptually mediated;
2) the conceptual framework through which knowledge of reality is mediated changes with every new generation of historians;

Conclusion: the historical past changes with every new generation of historians.

For the narrativist the idea of an unchanging historical past rests on a problematic commitment to the chimerical notion of the past as it is in-itself, *wie es eigentlich gewesen* because it requires denying premise (1).

However, as this paper shows, the narrativist's conclusion is not entailed by premises (1) and (2) unless one adds a further premise, namely (3) 'it is not possible to view reality through the categorial framework of historical

agents'. Once this suppressed premise is challenged and removed one can no longer infer the claim that the past cannot be known as it always was from the assertion that it cannot be known as it is in-itself. There is no need to deny either or both premise (1) 'all knowledge is conceptually mediated' and (2) 'the conceptual framework of historians is ever shifting', in order to challenge the narrativist's conclusion that the past cannot be known as it was for the historical agents and must be re-written anew by each generation of historians. What one needs to do rather, and what we have done, is to identify and challenge the hidden premise without which the narrativist's conclusion could not be legitimately drawn.

Francesco Postorino[1]

The Anxiety of Another City in de Ruggiero's Interpretation of Green

Abstract: Guido de Ruggiero moves towards Green's work using an idealistic perspective. In his view, Green's idea of an absolute consciousness placed out of time is naturalized, and so re-inverts the philosophical error of empiricism. A real idealism, according to the young de Ruggiero, should expose the relationship between the universal and the particular in a 'variant identity'. But he, after his stay in England in the second half of 1920, enthusiastically embraces Green's 'new liberalism'. Green's famous distinction between 'positive» and 'negative' freedom would have serious repercussions for de Ruggiero's mature theory.

The 'Platonism' of Green

Green clearly manifests the need to build up a strict philosophy able to cope with changes in art, religion and politics occurred during the nineteenth century. He maintains that English thought was still imprisoned in the culture of

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the Enlightenment, i.e. bound to an abstract narration, and also not in tune with religious awakening and with the moralization of political commitment, which had been embraced by a large number of Victorian politicians.

Those were later defined by Benedetto Croce the four spheres of the spirit (aesthetics, philosophy, politics and morality),[2] for Green they didn't move in unison, given that philosophy remained behind. In short, to be able to go along with the qualitative growth of art, religion and political direction it was essential to free knowledge from empiric error.

Green provided two long introductions to the two parts of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, with the aim of refuting its epistemological and ethical assumptions.[3] In particular, he rejects the theory of feeling, that is the idea of knowledge on the basis of senses. From his point of view, Hume's empiricism is a false philosophy as it is independent of consciousness and cannot understand the complexity of reality.[4] It is a sophist manifestation that feeds on bad psychology and is reflected in the elusive dimension of life, where everything loses its value.[5]

Green believes that consciousness is something decisive. Consciousness is not a fact among other facts, it is not a grey phenomenon, but it is the incontrovertible beginning, the light that illuminates the dynamics of immanence. Sensations, impressions, perceptions exist because there is a consciousness that recognizes them. This con-

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2 For a simple understanding of Benedetto Croce's philosophical system, see B. Croce, *Breviario di Estetica* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1978).

3 D. Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. (with preliminary dissertations and notes) T.H. Green and T.H. Groose (London: Longmans, 1874).

4 T.H. Green, *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, Vol. I, ed. and intro. P. Nicholson (Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1997), p. 263.

5 For a recent and interesting review of the relationship between Green and Hume, see A. Dividus, *Politica e coscienza. Thomas Hill Green e il Liberalismo sociale* (Genova: GUP, 2020), pp. 47–77.

sciousness, adds Green, is outside both time and space because it is infinite, eternal and absolute. It is the language of God. More precisely for Green there are two types of consciousness: eternal and individual. The first corresponds to the meaning of the *a priori*; the second is the (empirical) moment which aims to reproduce the eternal content of the first consciousness in a natural and imperfect way. Individual consciousness, Green continues, lives in everyday life, and is an 'animal organism' which, together with objects, is limited by the finite rules of time and space. The second consciousness, in short, must externalize the imperatives of the former.

Green's ethical lesson should be read as the direct consequence of this metaphysical discourse. Here absolute consciousness becomes the duty, the *Sollen*, the spiritual conception of 'good'. According to the Oxford philosopher, the Greeks and especially the Christians gave the empirical and historical name to the divine sense of good: virtue, or the will to be good. Therefore, the task of every man is to realize his spiritual faculties. Furthermore, relentless competition is unjust in order to obtain universal good, because the latter is nothing but the compass, the spark that allows us to take a direct path towards the humanization of humanity, the outcome of which is already perfectly anticipated by the unmistakable voice of transcendence. Against every extreme hedonism, Green's philosophy is supported by a puritan impulse—partly inherited from the seventeenth century theologian Henry Vane—who tried to shake the conservative minds of his time advancing a secular and progressive perspective.

The 'Variant Identity' of Guido de Ruggiero

Guido de Ruggiero sympathizes with British idealism. He, in his *La filosofia contemporanea* of 1912, says that this school of thought, while rediscovering Kant and Hegel in a peculiar way, attempts to 'realize God in the fullness of

reality'.[6] More generally, British idealism is characterized by an unusual 'theological concern' that has its strengths and its faults. On the positive side there is the spiritual need to restore the priority value of consciousness and thought, in explicit contrast with empiricist culture; on the negative side there is the naive attempt to separate consciousness from history. Green, in his *Prolegomena to Ethics*, published in 1883 (after his death) by A.C. Bradley, writes that:

> there may be a change into a state of consciousness of change, and a change out of it, on the part of this man or that; but within the consciousness itself there can be no change, because no relation of before and after, of here and there, between its constituent members—between the presenta-

6 G. de Ruggiero, *La filosofia contemporanea*, Vol. II (Bari: Laterza, 1929), pp.49–50.

> tion, for instance, of point A and that of point B in the process which forms the object of the consciousness.[7]

In this way, according to de Ruggiero, he distances thought (rational) from concrete life (real), thus achieving the dissolution of Hegelianism. In his view, Green's idea of an absolute consciousness placed out of time is naturalized, and so re-inverted the philosophical error of empiricism. However, first things first.

It should be said above all that de Ruggiero distinguishes between right and left-Hegelianism, always in reference to the British context. The Hegelian right, of which Green is a part, would give a Platonic meaning to Hegel's philosophy, in that it interprets his dialectic as an imperfect process which is necessary to conquer truth, good, the absolute or the eternal; while the Hegelian left, represented by Baillie, would seem more in tune with Hegel as it understands that infinity *is not beyond* the dialectical process of the spirit, but is already contained in history.

In de Ruggiero's interpretation, Green is not an abstract thinker, out of the historical and social context in which he lives - after all, he knows very well how much Green's political commitment is alive - yet his metaphysics risks slipping superficially into the territory of Platonism, and thus betrays the great Kantian discovery of the 'a priori synthesis» amplified by Hegel himself.

Green, according to de Ruggiero, despite his original adherence to the principles of idealism, fails to understand the strength of this speculative current of modernity, that is, the indissoluble encounter between the universal and the particular. Green does well to denounce the errors of empiricism, but detaching the eternal (God) from immanence (the facts) falls into pre-Kantian naturalism. If the ideal transcends the temporal process of history, it means that it (the ideal) is something immobile, a

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7 T.H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, ed. and intro. David O. Brink (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), p. 23.

brute fact. For de Ruggiero, in short, it is impossible for the eternal to produce time, or for immobility to realize movement. Real idealism, according to the young de Ruggiero, should expose the relationship between the universal and the particular in a 'variant identity'.

De Ruggiero moves towards Green's work using an idealistic perspective. In fact, he considers himself part of that Italian movement initiated by the precursor Giambattista Vico with his '*verum et factum convertuntur*', from the Hegelians Bertrando Spaventa and Francesco De Sanctis, up to his contemporaries Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile. It is an idealist current that, over the centuries, has tried to combine the absolute with the particular, or essence with existence.[8]

De Ruggiero, in his works, presents a theory aimed at unifying the object (science) and the subject (philosophy) not in an extrinsic way, that is, starting from an earlier dualistic relationship, but through an act of knowledge which is able to convert the two terms (object and subject) into a single dialectic relationship, in such a way that philosophy *becomes intrinsically* a science and vice versa. Moreover, de Ruggiero appreciates the historical and cultural contribution of positivism; while rejecting the proposal and intentions of this movement, but welcomes the idea of a return to immanence, a sacred respect for facts, or the empirical moment of life. He, unlike Hegel, Gentile or Croce, aspires to confirm the high value of science. I repeat, from his point of view philosophy is science, and more generally thought must breathe concretely in the other dimensions of the human sphere (art, religion, culture, politics).

In other words, in order to tear philosophy away from metaphysics, it is necessary to put into operation the perspective of the 'variant identity', that is neither the 'pure

8 G. de Ruggiero, 'La filosofia moderna', *Storia della Filosofia. Da Vico a Kant*, Vol. III (Bari: Laterza, 1943), pp. 19–80.

identity that neutralizes variation' (Gentile), nor the appearing and disappearing of a shadow that cancels the stability or duration (Hume), but that variation that 'is in the identity of itself, and the identity that is differentiated in infinite variation'.[9] It is in this way that the great historian of European liberalism translates the Vichian and Kantian formulas: trying, on the one hand, to radicalize the philosophy of Gentile and, on the other hand, to prudently recover the Crocian immanentism. The dialectic of de Ruggiero, this first dialectic of the *here-and-now*, attempts to represent the triumph of immanence over the old transcendence, as well as the alighting point of a season inaugurated by Vico and Kant, and reached by both Gentile and Croce.

In this itinerary, there is no room for British idealism, and in particular for that of Green. In de Ruggiero, history instantly hosts the meeting between the universal and the particular; while in Green, history is the path that will lead to the imperfect realization of an eternal placed outside time. In the young de Ruggiero the problematic tension between the eternal and the particular is dissolved to the advantage of the 'variant identity'; in Green, the concrete life of individuals must constantly adapt to the point of reference, that is, to the concept of 'good'. These are two idealisms that are difficult to reconcile. In my view, the English philosopher would not have accept the Italian's 'variant identity', since Green's philosophy, rightly or wrongly, bends to God's reasons.

More precisely, the God of Green is in tune with the categorical imperative formulated by Kant; one more reason to emphasize the distance between Green and Hegel.[10] In Hegel, the reconciliation of human nature with divine

9 G. de Ruggiero, *La scienza come esperienza assoluta* (Palermo: Alberto Reber, 1912), p. 69.

10 T.H. Green, *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, Vol. III, edited and introduced by P. Nicholson (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1997), pp. 144–146. A progressive distance between Green and Hegel is underlined in D. Boucher, J.

nature is already given and there is no place for the Kantian stance of *Sollen,*[11] since the 'rational is real and the real is rational'.[12] In Green, the rational is not real because God (the rational) cannot be confused between phenomena and cannot endure the rhythm of time. Instead, de Ruggiero's 'variant identity' seems to get rid of the idea of God and so clearing it from the opposition between real and rational.

The 'Meeting' with Green's Neo-liberalism

Good, for Green, is the transcendental condition for every experience worth living.[13] Thus the 'indeterminate' or *a priori* must be explained within places of contingency; or rather, empirical productions must be purified due to divine impulse. The metaphysics of Green conditions, therefore, his political and ideological choices. As is well-known, he famously distinguishes between 'positive' and 'negative' freedom. The 'positive' dimension of freedom consists of the progressive realization of universal good to which everyone has the right to participate. Green is among the most authoritative exponents of the 'New Liberalism', a philosophical and political current that wants to be an intelligent intensification of the liberalism inaugurated by the Manchester school. In short, negative Freedom must be transformed into positive freedom. Green thinks that the state can and should help its citizens lead better lives by intervening in the fields of health, education, employment contracts, etc. The long-term goal,

Connelly. S. Panagakou, W. Sweet, C. Tyler, 'British Idealism and the Political Philosophy of T. H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, R.G. Collingwood and Michael Oakeshott,' *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* vol. VII (2005), pp. 97–125.

11 G.W.F. Hegel, *Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche*, edited and introduced by Benedetto Croce (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2009), pp. 10–11.

12 G.W.F. Hegel, *Lineamenti di Filosofia del diritto*, ed. Giuliano Marini (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999), p. 14.

13 T.H. Green, *Works of Thomas Hill Green*, Vol. II, ed. R.L. Nettleship (London: Longmans, 1888), pp. 216–219.

once again, is to achieve *self-realization* and *self-perfection* for anyone. The man-commodity (or man-instrument) must give way to a real subject of law. This is, in short, the ethical-political thought of Green: a progressive liberalism with a strong religious strain.

His interpreter, de Ruggiero, though initially suspicious - as we have seen - of Green's philosophy, shows himself in a more mature phase to be much more in tune with his ethical and political views. Indeed, after his stay in England in the second half of 1920, he embraces enthusiastically Green's 'new liberalism'; in particular, Green's distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' freedom will have serious repercussions for de Ruggiero's mature theory.

De Ruggiero perfected his political critique and his liberal sensibility only after having dealt with the philosophical-political writings of Green in greater depth. In fact, as he recalls in *Il ritorno alla ragione* in 1946, he did not change his point of view, passing from an individualistic liberalism to a social liberalism, because from the beginning he had a progressive inclination for social justice. He suggests this in his fundamental *Storia del liberalismo europeo* (*History of European Liberalism*) written in the early 1920s and published in 1925, when he aptly describes the evolution of English liberalism through the various works of Green, Hobhouse, and finally Beveridge.[14]

De Ruggiero, who boasts that he was the first to introduce the social liberalism of English philosophers into Italy, follows Green in an attempt to distinguish positive freedom from negative freedom. Negative freedom, for de Ruggiero, is wild or primitive freedom. Positive freedom, instead, is the freedom of the self, of inner serenity, of the spirit. It is evident that the distinction made by Green suggests a difficult and courageous rethinking of the dialecti-

14 G. de Ruggiero, *Storia del liberalismo europeo* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2003), pp. 148–66.

cal relationship between history and spirit to de Ruggiero, between facts and values, between the real and the rational.

The young de Ruggiero, as we have seen, had no doubts about it. Real for him was already rational: history coincided with the spirit.[15] On the contrary, the mature de Ruggiero rethinks the 'variant identity', his original dialectic, and anticipates what will later become his definitive theoretical thought. It is a philosophically somewhat uncertain phase that de Ruggiero lives through during these years.

In any case, his liberalism, inspired by Green, stutteringly begins to get close to a more transcendental version of it. The facts, from now on, belong to the 'first history', while the values ??to the 'second story', and it is these - the ideals - that renew the meaning of positive freedom. Thus a dialectical tension takes place between the real and the rational, or between heaven and earth. A true liberal, both for de Ruggiero and for Green, must with one eye observe the problems of immanence and with the other never lose sight of *Sollen's* vocabulary in order to improve the 'first story', the first event.

The Return to Green

I do not wish to be misunderstood. De Ruggiero will always remain an historicist and an enemy of all abstractionism. However, especially after 1933—I refer to his short essay *Revisioni Idealistiche*—he denounces his intellectual past and distances himself from both the philosophy of Gentile and the absolute historicism of Croce.[16] In this phase, de Ruggiero seems to want to question the rigid interpretation of the *a priori* synthesis of Kant. It is no

15 G. de Ruggiero, *Problemi della vita morale* (Catania: Battiato, 1914), pp. 13–14.

16 G. de Ruggiero, *Revisioni idealistiche* (L'educazione nazionale, 1933), pp. 138–45.

longer the perfect and indissoluble encounter between the eternal and time, but rather the indefatigable tension between the absolute and history. A tension that is only in part owed to the eighteenth-century culture of enlightenment, not forgetting that his points of reference are other, I am referring to methodological historicism.

His historicism, however, cannot undergo the deception of contingency and therefore be confused with the 'first story'. In other words, his historicism is not dogmatic. He prefers to place himself on the border between the two extremes and thus does not surrender to the muscular voice of time or even to the utopian purity of *Sollen*. In another essay of 1942, entitled *Azione e valore*, de Ruggiero is even more explicit in condemning the realists of every generation, who live only in the *here*, and the so-called 'half-idealists', who renounce values.[17] It seems evident that he, in these analyses, first condemns himself, that is, the young de Ruggiero, the one that broke with the tension between values and facts and emphasized instead the character of the 'variant act'.

Still in 1942 he joined the Action Party, a new political entity committed to the defence of freedom and justice. In this phase, moreover, de Ruggiero wrote some short essays for the weekly 'La Nuova Europa' by Luigi Salvatorelli, which would then be republished in *Il ritorno alla ragione* in 1946. It was a book that some scholars considered an important manifesto for the progressive culture of the immediate post-war period and which, in my opinion, presents signs of actuality to this day.[18]

17 G. de Ruggiero, *Azione e valore* (Archivio della Cultura italiana, 1942), p. 11.

18 G. de Ruggiero, *Il ritorno alla ragione*, ed. Francesco Mancuso and Francesco Postorino, new edn. with intro. Francesco Postorino and Francesco Mancuso (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2018). On the hermeneutic comparison between de Ruggiero and Green, see my Introduction (esp. pp. 5–11).

In this volume, de Ruggiero pays homage to Green's social liberalism, but not to his metaphysics. In reality, reading the nuances, one can notice an interesting approach to Green. I do not mean to say that there is now a clear correspondence between the two. In Green, after all, there remains a sort of theological and platonic residue that cannot be seen in de Ruggiero; however, both reaffirm the value of God: a tendenciously religious God for Green, and a secular God for de Ruggiero: a God who takes revenge on time and bad history. An *a priori* that sounds the hour of enchantment, of the sublime, of the truth to be applied. They are not Jacobins: Green, for example, is a convinced adversary of the Enlightenment period, and de Ruggiero—according to Gennaro Sasso—turns out to be a 'romantic neo-illuminist' in old age.[19] But they do not accept the philosophy of the 'first history'.

In 1947, de Ruggiero wrote his last book, dedicated to the reconstruction of the thought of Hegel, which, moreover, concludes his thirty-volume *Storia della filosofia*. I interpret this volume as the last stage of a journey that denies its own starting point. Here, he gave an anomalous interpretation of the famous Hegelian formula according to which 'the real is rational and the rational is real»; replacing the "be" of the formula with a "do". In other words, for de Ruggiero the rational *becomes* real, since the duty of being is 'the animating principle of reality' [20]: an interpretation that perhaps would not have been shared by Hegel, and certainly did not please his critic Croce, but I think Green would have appreciated it.

From the volume dedicated to the history of liberalism in 1925 to Hegel's book in 1947 (published a year before his death), de Ruggiero does not lose sight of his primary objective: the defense of the spiritual conception of the

19 G. Sasso, 'Sulla filosofia di Guido de Ruggiero', *Filosofia e idealismo. De Ruggiero, Calogero, Scaravelli*, Vol. III (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1997), pp. 13–125.

20 G. de Ruggiero, *Hegel* (Bari: Laterza, 1968), pp. 66–7.

human personality. And, in order to achieve this goal, he criticizes all those philosophical currents that betray the moral needs of humanity. Metaphysical historicism fails to respect the dignity of man, not least irrationalism, with old and new theories that do nothing but betray the infinite sense of man and name in various ways the 'death of God'. The only plausible answer for him is to rehabilitate the virtues of rationalism. That is de Ruggiero's critical reason, as it must continually bathe in the confused ocean of immanence. I would say, therefore, that the return to the reason for de Ruggiero coincides with a surprising return to Green, that is, a return to the language of the divine cleansed of any fundamentalist imprint.

In this essay I have tried to demonstrate the close connection between Green and de Ruggiero. After a partly penetrating and hasty critique of the philosophical core of Green, developed between 1911 and 1912, de Ruggiero, in the following decade, shows an appreciation of the ethical-political thought of the Oxford professor, allowing him, in the '30s and '40s, to refute his initial theoretical approach and reduce the cultural distance between himself and Green. Certain other important factors have occurred that have influenced the intellectual and political path of de Ruggiero, but I believe that his personal re-reading of Green, have been crucial for the reasons outlined above.

In the present age, marked by the 'death of God', by fundamentalism, by a ruthless historicism and by the defeat of *Sollen*, I believe it is good to revisit and examine the work of these two scholars, two democratic philosophers who, between their strengths and weaknesses, have lived with intensity the 'anxiety of another city'.[21]

21 The following expression 'anxiety of another city' stresses the tension put forward by some philosopher—including Green and de Ruggiero—between history and endless ideals. In facts, 'The other city' represents the ideal (transcendence) which should shed light on the event of history

Giacomo Rinaldi[1]

A Few Critical Remarks on Collingwood's Philosophy of Art

Abstract: This paper outlines, interprets and critically evaluates Collingwood's philosophy of art. It takes into account his two major works on aesthetics, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (1925) and *The Principles of Art* (1938), pointing out in them both the constant presence of a subjective-idealistic epistemological outlook and a divergent conception of the relationship between form and content in the art work. While in his former book he endorses Croce's identification of the Beautiful with its pure intuitive form, in the latter he more appropriately stresses, following Hegel, the crucial role played (at least as far as the works of the 'greatest poets' are concerned) by a substantial intellectual content. The main hermeneutic thesis upheld in this interpretation of Collingwood's aesthetics is that its statement *is* genuinely and consistently idealistic in character, but in its concrete articulation the influence of Hegel's Absolute Idealism and that of Croce's Absolute Historicism intermingle in an often inextricable and unenlightening way. This overlapping of two quite heterogeneous forms of idealistic thought in Collingwood's philosophical outlook gives rise to a sequence of inconsistencies in his treatment of particular aesthetic problems that partially mar the theoretical relevance of his

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philosophy of art. A more positive judgement is instead passed on some particular achievements, such as his dialectical conception of the relationship between the artistic forms of the sublime, the comic and 'real beauty', and his theory of natural beauty.

1) The philosophy of R.G. Collingwood constitutes an original and interesting developmental stage of 20th-century British thought for at least three main reasons. First of all, it radically breaks with the prevailing empirical-realistic orientation of British philosophical tradition insofar as it refuses to recognise the objective reality or validity of any presuppositions whatsoever external to the subjective experience of thinking—be they the 'sense-data' erroneously identified by Logical Empiricism with the original foundation of human knowledge or the dogmas sanctioned by religious authority. Secondly, Collingwood sets against Empirical Realism a form of Subjective Idealism, which resolves reality's whole essence, or at least our knowledge of it, into the activity of 'the spirit'. This latter is conceived by him—in the aftermath of Hegel[2]—as an 'eternal' dialectical process, whose original unity splits up into contradictory opposites, thus alienating itself from itself, namely positing within itself an other to itself, and then going on to reconcile such contradictions, returning to itself in a form strengthened and enriched by all the logical determinations emerged in its previous self-development. Finally, Collingwood's thought evidently shows the traces of the appropriation and critical revision of Hegel's philosophy carried out by the two most prominent exponents of 20th-century Italian Idealism—Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile. In fact, whereas Hegel does identify reality's absolute concreteness with the self-conscious activity of Absolute Spirit, which manifests itself in the ideal forms of art, religion and philosophy, but deems that it is impossible and unthinkable if one does not distin-

2 Cf. G. De Ruggiero, *Filosofi del Novecento* (Bari: Laterza 1958), pp. 93 and 96.

guish from it two (ideally) preceding metaphysical spheres, that of the absolute Idea, unfolded by the Science of Logic, and that of nature, explicated by the Philosophy of Nature, and, within spirit's process itself, the abstract and formal determinations of subjective and objective spirit; Croce and Gentile maintain instead that spirit's process exhausts the entire theoretical ambit of philosophical knowing, and that the initial form of such a process coincides with the essence of art. This fundamental assumption of Italian Idealism is unconditionally shared by Collingwood, who nevertheless in his book *Speculum Mentis* replaces Gentile's tripartition of the pure act of spirit into the 'absolute forms' of art, religion and philosophy, and Croce's division of it into four 'distinct', i.e., autonomous, form—art, philosophy, economics and ethics—with a more complex articulation, which distinguishes in it five fundamental theoretical activities (to which, according to the idealistic principle of the identity of theory and praxis explicitly adopted by him, correspond five forms of the will): art, religion, science, history, and philosophy. Furthermore, he endorses also Croce and Gentile's view that art is not only—as Hegel asserted—the most immediate and elementary form of Absolute Spirit, but even the original, 'primordial' beginning of spirit's whole process, and thus of reality itself. This accounts for the crucial role played in his thought by the philosophical understanding of art's essence. But the influence of Italian Idealism on Collingwood's thought is not confined to philosophical aesthetics; it permeates also his conception of the nature of logical thought. Not unlike Hegel, both Croce and Gentile do not conceive of logical thought as a passive representation of a transcendent ideal object already possessing in itself, before and independently of the act of human thought, absolute reality, or at least ideal objective validity; for the universal object of logical thought is held by them to be absolutely identical with the

subjective activity of the 'I think', which alone can bestow on it actual reality and self-consciousness. Yet while Hegel articulates the process of the logical Concept into the three ideal moments of universality, particularity and individuality, in each of which the totality of the Idea is present and immanent, which, owing to this triadic structure, can be formally expressed by the logical figure of *syllogism*;[3] Croce and Gentile instead identify thought's essence with the dichotomous form of (individual) *judgement*,[4] in which the self-conscious I attributes a universal predicate to a singular subject. Spirit's infinite and eternal actuality exhaustively turns into the absolute indeterminacy of judgement's predicate; all the determinations thought of by it fall instead into the singularity of its subject, so that the only real object of thought can be the mutable and contingent multiplicity of 'historical facts'. From this viewpoint, which I have elsewhere called 'schematic formalism' (*formalismo schematizzante*),[5] the philosophical understanding of art's essence must necessarily turn into the mere definition of its generic concept and the enumeration of its essential differences from the other forms of spirit. But this renders impossible in principle that very logical activity which Hegel had instead identified with the inmost nature and highest task of philosophical thought—namely, the *a priori* deduction, or rather the speculative construction, by virtue of the immanent

3 Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, in Id., *Werke in 20 Bänden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1969–71), Bd. II, p. 352: 'Alles Vernünftige ist ein Schluß'; Id., *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, in Id., *Werke in 20 Bänden*, Bd. I, § 181: 'Alles ist ein Schluß'.

4 Cf. B. Croce, *Logica come scienza del concetto puro* (1905) (Bari: Laterza, 1971), p. 96. Not unlike Hegel, Gentile recognises the logical primacy of syllogism over judgement; but, according to him, this holds good only for the inactual 'logic of the abstract'. Cf. G. Gentile, *Sistema di logica come teoria del conoscere* (1917–1921) (Florence: Sansoni, 1955), vol. 1, p. 250. The real act of thinking, which is the object of the 'logic of the concrete', is conceived by him, too, in a radically dichotomous way.

5 Cf. G. Rinaldi, *L'idealismo attuale tra filosofia speculative e concezione del mondo* (Urbino: QuattroVenti, 1998), pp. 100–1, 103–4, 110.

self-development of the pure Concept, of all the particular and individual differences into which any form of reality, including art itself, is articulated, so that they turn out to be what they are *not* because they are *a posteriori* 'given' in sense-perception, but because the Idea's logical necessity itself shapes *ab intra* their specific determinations, thus bestowing on them the character of 'absolute necessity'.

If, now, we come back to reflect on Colligwood's philosophy of art, we can easily notice that Hegel's speculative conception of thought and Croce and Gentile's schematic formalism almost inextricably overlap in it. If, on the one hand, we cannot but appreciate in this English thinker the sustained effort to appropriate the most significant theoretical results achieved not only by the more influential philosophy of German Idealism, but also by the less well-known one of Italian Idealism, on the other hand we cannot even refrain from realising that the co-presence of the two different theoretical perspectives in his reflections on the nature of art gives rise to a sequence of serious difficulties, which I shall now try to show. But it is equally undeniable that in those passages of Collingwood's aesthetic theory in which he more closely adhered to the dialectical structure of Hegel's thought he undoubtedly succeeded in enriching contemporary philosophical thought with some enlightening insights.

2) In this paper, then, I shall state and defend the following theses: (1) Collingwood's conception of art as the most 'immediate' and 'primordial' developmental form of the human spirit, which he directly derives from Croce (and indirectly from Giambattista Vico), is marred by some plain shortcomings which he himself, in the subsequent developments of his aesthetic theory, goes on to correct, without, however, showing himself to be able to state a fully consistent and comprehensive solution to its fundamental difficulties. (2) The influence of Croce and Gentile's schematic formalism is most evident in his critique of

the traditional theories of art's forms and kinds, which must therefore be rejected, just as is the case with the analogous one which was stated by his Italian masters. (3) Croce and Gentile's dichotomous conception of the act of thinking reappears also in Collingwood's denial of the possibility of a philosophical universal history of art, because the concrete art works, which should constitute its matter, would actually be mere 'monadic', i.e. atomistic, unities, being, furthermore, 'perishable' and thus excluding in principle that internal relatedness—namely, universal and necessary connection—of the manifold which is the peculiar performance of philosophical thought. In a similar way, the judgements of taste, through which the reader or the spectator affirms or denies the aesthetic value of singular art works, would actually be mere 'opinions', no less mutable and perishable than the art works themselves. I shall try to show that not only philosophical logic, but also the concrete history of art induces us to reject this radical historicist-relativistic outcome of Collingwood's aesthetics. (4) A not merely formalistic-schematic, but, in a sense, 'speculative' explication of the ideal content of aesthetic experience is instead offered us by Collingwood's dialectical conception of the relationship between the artistic forms of the sublime, the comic and 'real beauty', in which I do not hesitate to see the highest and most original achievement of his whole aesthetic theory. (5) No less valuable seems to me to be his resolution of natural beauty into the dialectical relationship between three different, subsequent and complementary aesthetic perspectives: (a) the admiration for the majesty and destructive power of 'wild nature'; (b) the Romantic nostalgia for archaic rural life in a nature not yet contaminated by modern industrial society; and (c) the beauty inherent in the products of human technique themselves through which industrial society destroys the original beauty of nature. None of these forms of natural

beauty, Collingwood rightfully points out, is fully satisfying, because none of them can manifest that conscious intentionality of artistic creation which is the peculiar character of true art, and which only in and through the self-conscious act of the human mind can actually be achieved.

3) The fundamental assumption of Croce's aesthetics[6] maintains that in spirit's creative activity it is possible to distinguish two ideal forms, theory and practice, being wholly independent of each other, and, within the former, a more immediate and '*aurorale*', i.e., original, 'degree', sensible fantasy, and a more complex one, logical judgement, being equally independent of each other. The essence of art is unqualifiedly identified by him with fantasy's creativity, which would be wholly independent of logical thought and, consequently, of philosophical reflection, would develop according to laws exclusively peculiar to it, and thus would be an 'autonomous' spiritual form. Despite its being more elementary than logical thought, it is nevertheless held by him to be no less actual than it.

This conception of art's essence plainly reappears in some passages of Collingwood's aesthetic theory, e.g., on p. 3 of his book *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (1925), where he peremptorily asserts that 'art is at bottom neither more nor less than imagination';[7] on p. 21 of the same work, where he declares that 'Beauty is the unity or coherence of the imaginary object'; on p. 67, where he vindicates art's absolute originality and immediacy: 'the aesthetic consciousness is the primary and fundamental form of all consciousness'; and on p. 77, where he still more clearly reiterates this thesis: 'the work of art is always an act of

6 Cf. B. Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (1902) (Bari: Laterza, 1965), pp. 3 ff.; Id., *Breviario di estetica* (1913) (Bari: Laterza, 1974), pp. 9–35; Id., *Aesthetica in nuce* (1946) (Bari, Laterza, 1969), pp. 5–56.

7 R.G. Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994), p. 3.

imagination, not of thought'. A consistent philosophical idealism cannot but reject this conception of the essence of art and imagination, if only because the pure act of thinking, as an actually infinite totality, is immanent in every other form of spirit and reality. Not even imagination can therefore be actual and self-conscious before, and independently of, it because in such a case the act of thought would face a limit which would render it contradictorily finite. Art's imaginative form, then, does not exhaust its essence, because in it also the logical act of self-conscious reflection—or rather, as Hegel would more precisely say, the absolute Idea, in the specific form it takes on in the aesthetic sphere, namely the 'Ideal'—is immanent as an *a priori* necessary constituent of it. What is most surprising in this regard, however, is that Collingwood himself, not only in his later book *The Principles of Art* (1938), but also in some passages of his former works, realises the insuperable inconsistency of this conception, which he plainly derives from Croce, and submits it to a lucid, wholly shareable critique: every act of imagination', he says in *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, 'is an imaginative reflection or resultant of the man's whole experience, and this experience includes his own thought about his imaginative activity'[8]. The presence of thought, whose peculiar object is the Idea of the True, in artistic imagination itself raises it to a form, although only inchoate or implicit, of *knowledge of truth*: 'On the surface, his work [of the artist] is a mere play of fancies; but behind this surface it is quick with a hidden truth, a meaning that goes far beyond what is explicitly said'[9]. The essential immanence of the act of thinking, owing to its absolute infinity, in the very sphere of artistic imagination is still more clearly reiterated, in unspoken polemic with Croce, on p. 95: 'But to speak of the pure act of imagination is a contradiction in terms, for

8 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

the qualification implies a distinction between imagination and thought, and an activity from which another activity is distinguished is by definition not a pure activity but one limited by, because correlative to, another. There is therefore no such thing as this life of pure imagination which is the life of art'. This contention is more extensively set out in *The Principles of Art*, where he devotes many pages to showing, through detailed psychological analyses, that imagination, far from being a primordial, wholly immediate form of experience, necessarily presupposes the more original activities of feeling, emotion and sensation, and thus is *mediated* by them, coming to the conclusion that 'imagination forms a kind of link between sensation and intellect, as Aristotle and Kant agreed in maintaining',[10] and not even hesitating to declare that his former conception of imagination as an absolutely immediate power of spirit, creating the world out of nothing, was one of his 'youthful follies'.[11]

These two contrasting positions of Collingwood's thought on the essence of art and imagination are merely juxtaposed in both his books, and the plausibility of the latter is unable to dispel the impression of a fundamental inconsistency in his aesthetic theory. But against it other serious objections can be raised, which I can here state only in a very summary way. First of all, if it is true that the mediation of thought in the form of received education, of critical reflection and of the intentions consciously followed by the artist in his creative activity *is* immanent in the art work produced by him as an essential constituent of it, it is also true that the subjectivity of his formal and finite thought not only does not exhaust the essence of the act of thinking, but does not even exhaust that of the art work itself. For it is necessary to distinguish from it, as its

10 R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 198. Cf. also p. 215: 'imagination is a distinct level of experience intermediate between sensation and intellect'.

11 *Ibid.,* p. 288, n. 1. Cf. also p. 291.

ultimate foundation, the infinite self-consciousness of pure thought, which is articulated into a system of internal relations, or logical categories, of which the artist's finite self-consciousness is only darkly aware (e.g., when he ascribes to a divine 'inspiration' the origin of his artistic production), but which is nevertheless immanent (in different forms and degrees) in the art work created by him, in which it assumes the specific form of its *ideal content*. Misled by Croce's aesthetics, Collingwood does not realise, at least in his former book on aesthetics, the necessary immanence, in art's imaginative form, of such a content, which, although actualising itself only in and through the artist's reflection, is nevertheless distinguished from it as the logical-metaphysical condition for its possibility.

Secondly, a fundamental ambiguity is easily discernible in Collingwood's thesis that artistic imagination is the primordial, because absolutely immediate, form of spirit's process. For this thesis appears to be plausible only if one takes into consideration the relationship between art and the subsequent, more complex and concrete, spiritual forms of religion and philosophy, with respect to which it does indeed make sense to say that art is the most immediate, primitive, or just primordial, form of Absolute Spirit. But this thesis becomes instead erroneous when it is understood—as is the case with Collingwood, and even more with Croce—in the sense that the act of imagination is an *absolutely* immediate form of spirit; and the reason for this is that, even apart from the anthropological and phenomenological mediation of subjective spirit's immanent self-development (within which also sensations and emotions fall), in this latter the conceptual determination of *representation* (*Vorstellung*), of which imagination is a particular form, necessarily presupposes that of *intuition* (*Anschauung*), from whose absolutely immediate self-positing it is therefore necessarily mediated. Hence art, insofar as it unfolds its ideal content in the element of

imagination, can be rightfully regarded as an only *relatively*, not *absolutely*, immediate form of spirit's autoctisis.

Thirdly, one could object to Collingwood that the very *concept* of art's 'absolute immediacy' is plainly self-contradictory because, as a concept, it is a product of the mind which conceives it, and thus of thought's essential *self-mediation*; because the immanence of the act of thinking in imagination, finally admitted by Collingwood himself, necessarily implies a relation, and, consequently, a *mediation*, between the two spiritual activities; and because the essence of the act of thinking is nothing but its own autoctisis, i.e., *self-mediation*, so that its immanence in imagination excludes in principle the possibility that this latter might be an absolutely immediate form of spirit.

Fourthly, Croce and Collingwood's contention that art works are 'monadic', i.e., atomistic, in character, and, consequently, radically independent of one another, thus rendering in principle impossible their internal relatedness in the unity of spirit's process and the construction of a universal history of art such as that outlined by Hegel in his Philosophy of Art, seems to be grounded only upon a further epistemological ambiguity. Art is the manifestation of the logical Idea in the sensible forms of intuition and imagination. Owing to the peculiar *externality* of sensible intuition, such form *does* split up into an immediate multiplicity of fragmentary, exclusive entities, and in this sense it *is* correct to maintain that art works constitute an atomistic manifold of unrelated unities. But this is not the whole story. The ideal content manifesting itself in art's sensible form is instead a system of internal relations whose constitutive elements, far from excluding one another, mutually integrate, thus forming the developmental stages of a unique, continuous, organic spiritual process whose final aim is the production of its absolute totality itself through the gradual sublation of the partial totalities into which its immanent self-development is

articulated. From this viewpoint, already Schelling had pointed out, in his *Philosophie der Kunst* (1803), that the universe itself could be rightfully regarded as a *unique*, infinite art work, and that the supreme aesthetic exigency looming at the end of art's historical development is the creation of a 'total art work', which should draw its matter, no longer from Greek or Christian mythology, as was the case with the art works of the past, but, rather, from the 'holistic' conception of the universe outlined by 'speculative physics', i.e., the Romantic philosophy of nature.[12] This aesthetic ideal of a total art work, which in Schelling's mind was a mere 'ought-to-be' (*Sollen*), still lacking objective historical reality, was actually realised, half a century later, in Richard Wagner's 'musical drama', in which all kinds of art, far from vindicating an 'egoistic' independence of one another, mutually integrate into a unique organic Whole, whose substantial continuity breaks from within the empirical barriers which the inadequate monadic conception of art works vainly strives to perpetuate between them.

A remarkable difference from Collingwood's conception of the relationship between imagination and thought expounded in his former book is to be noticed in *The Principles of Art*. Here he explicitly upholds the thesis that art, although being, in itself, a product of pure imagination, *can* also express an 'intellectual content' which is, as such, identical with that of philosophy. This would especially be the case with the greatest poets, such as Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, and Donne, to whose names he also adds that of T. S. Eliot, as the author of that which he holds to be the only true art work produced by contemporary litera-

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12 Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, in *Schelling's Werke*, ed. M. Schröter, Dritter Hauptband, (München: Beck & Oldenburg, 1927), pp. 468–71.

ture, *The Waste Land*.[13] From the thesis of the possible presence of an intellectual content in the art work, and from Croce's conception of the identity of art (imagination) and language, he draws two no less remarkable consequences. The first is that, since the content of art and philosophy is identical, and since also the language used by philosophical thought is a product of art, 'the distinction between philosophical writing … and poetical or artistic writing … is wholly illusory … Good philosophy and good poetry are not two different kinds of writings, but one'.[14] The second is that, since poetry has an intellectual content, which in the eminent case of Eliot's poem coincides with a radically pessimistic world-view, the highest aim poetry could achieve in the contemporary age would be to utter a sort of 'prophecy' about the irreversible 'decay of our civilization'.[15]

I cannot but emphatically disagree with this conception of the later Collingwood, in which I do not see a progression, but, rather, a deplorable involution of his philosophical thought. First of all, as I have already said, owing to thought's actual infinity, the immanence in art of an intellectual content is not simply possible, but absolutely necessary. Secondly, such a content is in and for itself determined as a dialectical succession of logical categories, which in the sphere of art take on a specific modification as the system of art's forms, of which Collingwood is wholly unaware, although it constitutes nothing less than the peculiar subject of a philosophy of art worthy of the name. Thirdly, the unqualified identification of language and art, maintained by both Croce and Collingwood, is untenable, since art is the manifestation of the Absolute in the form of sensible intuition, which language, as a form of finite spirit, is not, and since, moreover, language can also

13 Cf. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, Part III, Ch. XIII, § 2: 'Art and Intellect', pp. 292–299, and 'Conclusion', pp. 334–6.
14 I*bid*., p. 298.
15 *Ibid*., p. 334.

be 'prosaic', which art cannot be, on penance of failing its own peculiar aim. Fourthly, since language is not a product of art, it is absurd to unqualifiedly identify philosophical and poetic writing. The (relative) identity of their intellectual content, in fact, does not exclude an essential difference in the epistemological forms through which it manifests itself, which in the case of art are intuition and representation, in that of philosophy is the self-mediation of the pure Concept, and a consequent difference in the kinds of language in which they are expressed. Fifthly, his unqualified identification of art and philosophy strikingly contradicts one of the pivotal assumptions of his whole philosophy of spirit—namely, that while art is the most abstract, initial, and 'rudimental' form of spirit's self-development, philosophy, on the contrary, is the most concrete, complex, and final one. Finally, the negativity in the concept's dialectical process is as necessary as it is eventually sublated, so that Eliot's pessimistic vision of humanity's ineluctable spiritual death, far from being the most perfect contemporary expression of poetry's intellectual content, is, in truth, nothing more nor less than a *false* prophecy.

4) An unavoidable consequence of the formalistic-schematic conception of philosophical thought upheld by both Croce and Gentile is that they unanimously reject Hegel's deduction of the system of the forms (symbolic, classical, romantic)[16] and of the kinds (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry; and, within poetry, epos, lyric and drama)[17] of art, maintaining that their differences are merely empirical and contingent in character, and, consequently, that it is possible to conceive the existence of infinitely many other forms and kinds of art, equally empirical and contingent, besides those analysed by

16 Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in Id., *Werke in 20 Bänden*, Bd. I, pp. 389–546; Bd. II, pp. 13–242.

17 Cf. *ibid.*, Bd. II, pp. 243–462; Bd. III, pp. 11–574.

Hegel, because each singular art work could, in the last resort, be regarded as a new form and a new kind of art. Collingwood endorses, at least to some extent, this formalistic conception of art, but outlines an original statement and foundation of it, which deserves to be carefully examined and discussed. Despite his emphasis on the monadic character of art works, he admits the existence of a specific dialectical rhythm in their historical development, which he articulates, according to the logical structure of the Hegelian Concept, into the phases of 'formal', 'naturalistic' and 'imaginative' art, corresponding, respectively, to the thought-determinations of universality, particularity and individuality. Formal art—in which prevail the passive observance of the aesthetic precepts drawn from the tradition and the cold imitation of classic masters, and which for this reason is the most imperfect art form—necessarily involves, owing to the reciprocal determination of art's form and content or matter, the immediate givenness of a sensible matter whose external differences constitute, indeed, the objective ground of the different kinds of art. Yet the essence of matter consists, he maintains, in an unrelated multiplicity of contingent facts, lacking any ideal form and necessity. No less manifold and contingent, therefore, will be all the differences among the kinds of art that can be empirically noticed. This argument by Collingwood does not seem to me to be more convincing than the analogous ones to be found in Croce and Gentile's writings. First of all, the range of the categorial relation between form and matter is not restricted—as Collingwood seems to believe—to formal art alone, but holds good for any possible art work. Let us take as an example a masterpiece of music such as Mozart's *Magic Flute*. Collingwood would certainly regard it as a perfect instance of the highest art form distinguished by him, imaginative art, and not of the formal one. But if the difference between form and matter con-

cerned only formal art, we would be faced with two alternative consequences of his aesthetic theory, which are both plainly absurd: either the difference between form and matter inheres also in this art work, and then it must be contradictorily downgraded to the rank of merely formal art; or it is really true imaginative art, and then we must conclude that the material element into which its ideal meaning is embodied—namely, the universe of sounds—can be removed from it without prejudice for its intrinsic artistic value; which is equally absurd, because a 'mute' musical work is no *musical* work at all.

Secondly, the contention that the matter into which the form of an art work is embodied is, as such, merely formless, manifold and contingent clearly presupposes a materialistic and atomistic conception of nature's essence which Hegel had successfully refuted with respect to both its fundamental principles and the details of the physical theories grounded upon them. For in nature's externality itself, the inwardness of the Idea is immanent, although only 'in itself', i.e., virtually. Therefore matter itself appears in nature's process not only as formless, mechanical matter, but also as *formed* matter, and as such it differentiates itself into a complex of essentialities, in which it is possible to distinguish, besides those of space and time, which extend to the whole nature, the more specific ones of the gravity of inert matter, of the form of man's organic body, of the relation between light and colours, and of the tonal system of sounds, which constitute, respectively, the essential natural foundations of the specific matters into which the products of architecture, sculpture, painting, and music are embodied. Far, then, from being merely contingent artefacts of man's arbitrary will, these kinds of art are the necessary manifestations, in the sphere of human artistic creation, of the close system of nature's ideal essentialities, and their differences and relations can

therefore be deduced *a priori* (at least in principle) from nature's speculative concept.

The logical impossibility of reducing the system of the kinds of art to the contingent product of subjective reflection becomes even more evident if we take into consideration the difference between the aforementioned kinds of art, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other. For the former embody the ideal meaning expressed by them into a matter which is the specific object of *intuition*, whereas the peculiar element of the latter, the word, is a product of a different spiritual form, *representation*, within which falls also that act of imagination which Collingwood, as we have seen, unduly extends to the whole aesthetic experience. Now, Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit convincingly shows that the difference between intuition and representation is no less objectively valid than that between imagination and thought. The same *a priori* necessity, which Croce and Collingwood themselves recognise to characterise the difference between imagination and thought, must therefore be ascribed also to that between intuition and imagination, and, consequently, to that between the kinds of art which are grounded upon them—namely, the figurative arts and music, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other.

Finally, one could also point out that the need for a rational deduction of the system of the kinds of art is so rooted in the essence of human reason that it is explicitly outlined already in Schelling's philosophy of art sooner than in Hegel's, and, after both, in the philosophical writings of a great musician such as Richard Wagner. From the fundamental principle of Schelling's metaphysics—namely, that the Absolute is an original Identity manifesting itself as the 'indifference' of the 'ideal series' and of the 'real series' (i.e., of thought and matter), and that artistic genius provides us with the most perfect compre-

hension of the nature of the Absolute—he infers[18] that the essence of the real series manifests itself in music and in the two figurative arts distinguished by him, sculpture and painting, while poetry has the task of revealing the content of the ideal series. Within the artistic expression of the real series, Schelling then deduces the differences between music, painting and sculpture from their correspondence to the differences between the real series, the ideal series and their indifference. In the ambit of the ideal series, the traditional kinds of poetry—epos, lyric and drama—manifest, respectively, the essence of the ideal series, of the real series and of their indifference. According to Wagner,[19] art is the highest product of man's universal essence (*Gattungswesen*), whose fundamental forms are feeling and thought. Through feeling man becomes aware of his immediate being, coinciding with his 'sensibility' (*Sinnlichkeit*), which has not only an ideal side (the 'inner man'), but also a real one (the 'outer man'). The kind of art in which the outer man manifests himself is dance (whose most genuine, because most expressive, form is mime); the inner man instead expresses himself in music, while thought finds its appropriate externalisation in the poetic word. But man's universal essence involves also an internal relation with the whole nature, so that also inorganic nature can become, in the figurative arts, an appropriate means of its expression. Yet in such different kinds of artistic productivity man's universal essence remains originally undivided, and this raises a further fundamental aesthetic exigency, which no art work (with the partial exception of Greek tragedy) before that conceived by Wagner himself was able to satisfy—namely, the unification of all kinds of art not only into the theoretical form of a philosophical system such as the Hegelian one, but also

18 Cf. F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, pp. 390–1, 500–7.

19 Cf. R. Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, in Id., *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen* (Sechste Auflage, Dritter und Vierter Band, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, undated), § IV, pp. 148–60.

into a single, concrete 'total art work' (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), i.e., the 'musical drama' I have already mentioned.

I believe that the examples I have now put forward suffice, at least within the limits of this paper, to prove that the influence of Croce and Gentile's aesthetics on Collingwood's does not seem to have been very fruitful.

5) An even more crucial role, fraught with very relevant theoretical consequences with respect to two fundamental issues such as the principled possibility of the philosophical history of art and the objectivity of taste seems to be played in Collingwood's aesthetics by Croce's conception of the act of thinking as individual judgement. The aforementioned possibility is clearly undermined by their monadic conception of art works, for if the history of art exhaustively turns into a discrete succession of unrelated atomistic unities, any attempt to explain their genesis, transformation and dissolution by means of universal, necessary, organic principles, laws or rational criteria is doomed to failure from the outset. Regarding, then, the problem of the objectivity of taste, one can first of all point out that it is suitably defined by Collingwood as a spiritual faculty 'correlative' to that of 'genius': 'Genius is the active or creative faculty, taste the passive or receptive; yet they are not two separate faculties but two correlative phases of the single aesthetic activity'.[20] Through taste, then, the recipient experiences the intrinsic aesthetic value of the art work created by genius. But in what does such an aesthetic value properly consist? We have seen that, according to Collingwood, art is a purely immediate form of spirit. Does this perhaps mean that taste is a sort of intellectual intuition enabling us to grasp the objective essence of a determinate art work, and thus to reliably distinguish the 'beautiful' ones from those which we, by contrast, deem to be 'ugly'? This is by no means the case, because from Croce and Gentile's dichotomous conception of the act of

20 Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 82.

thinking as the unity of a universal indeterminate form and a multiplicity of contingent historical facts Collingwood draws the ineluctable consequence that, since the singular art works exhaustively turn into the manifold historical facts thought of by the self-conscious subject, and since such facts, as contingent, are all transient and 'mortal', they, too, are products of the human mind ineluctably doomed to perish; and the same contingency and caducity infect also the judgements of taste that state their specific aesthetic value. For they are no less mutable and contingent than their own objects: the art works extolled as masterpieces in a particular historical epoch are instead disparaged, or even condemned, in the subsequent one; and Collingwood seems to imply that there is no intrinsic, objective, rational criterion for deciding which of those opposite aesthetic evaluations is really valid. Lacking such a criterion, the only means for distinguishing the beautiful art work from the ugly one seems to be the merely extrinsic one of the fashion prevailing from time to time: 'The particular forms which art assumes at any given period of human history are necessarily mortal. None of them is or can be a joy for ever. Not only are the individual poems and paintings of individual artists doomed to a merely material corruption, but they must become objects first of hatred and then of indifference to the world that has accepted them'.[21] 'Contemporary art is the only art whose appeal is direct and spontaneous; and that is because it embodies imaginatively the experience of the contemporary world. We are all, though many of us are snobbish enough to wish to deny it, in far closer sympathy with the art of the music-hall and the picture-palace than with Chaucer and Cimabue, or even Shakespeare and Titian'.[22] The ineluctable caducity of all products of the human mind is no less emphatically reiterated by

21 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
22 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

Collingwood in his subsequent book on aesthetics, *The Principles of Art*: 'in order to point the contrast between feeling and thinking it is not necessary to assert the eternity of all objects of thought as such. What is necessary is only to insist that in thinking we are concerned with something that lasts, even if it does not last for ever'.[23]

I cannot but reject this crudely historicist-relativistic outcome of Collingwood's aesthetics;[24] and I cannot avoid seeing in it the most deleterious consequence of the influence exerted on his thought by that schematic formalism which constitutes the most negative heritage of Italian Idealism. In order to realise the untenability of his denial of the intrinsic, 'eternal' value of every genuine art work, it suffices to reflect on a fundamental achievement of Hegel's speculative logic—namely, the thesis that owing to the concrete universality of the pure Concept, in the very logical moments of particularity and singularity its original universality, and thus necessity and 'eternity', is necessarily contained—because we can consistently infer from it that in the very essence of each singular art work the universality and infinity of the 'art spirit' (*Kunstgeist*), which is the specific form assumed by Absolute Spirit in the aesthetic sphere, is present and immanent, raising it over the ineluctable caducity of temporal becoming. In a similar way, we can plausibly maintain that not all judgements of taste are the expression of merely subjective and mutable 'opinions', because a fundamental epistemological difference must be traced out between those judgements whose predicate is a mere subjective representation, which are indeed all historically dated,

23 Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, p. 159.

24 An insightful criticism of it is to be found in Errol E. Harris's pivotal Work, *Nature, Mind and Modern Science* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), Part I, Ch. 1, § 3, pp. 19–42. Harris suitably emphasises the insuperable contradiction between the historicist bent of Collingwood's thought, holding sway especially in his later works, and his far more tenable dialectical conception of philosophical method set out in his homonymous essay that appeared in 1933.

relative and perishable, and those whose predicate is instead an inner determination of the rational totality of the artistic Ideal—namely, of the absolute Idea in the spiritual form of artistic experience—which, to the contrary, shares with such an Idea the essential moment of its objectivity, i.e., its absolute universality and *a priori* necessity. Contrary to what Collingwood maintains, then, the temporal distance separating us from the masterpieces of a Sophocles, a Shakespeare or a Beethoven does not detract at all from their perennial validity and up-to-dateness; just as commercial success that has smiled on the worst products of contemporary cultural industry—e.g., the selling of millions of copies of disks by a 'rock' pseudo-musician, or of the books written by a spiritless crime writer—does not constitute reliable evidence at all of their real aesthetic value.

6) But luckily this historicist-relativistic outcome of Collingwood's aesthetics does not exhaust its theoretical content. There are, in fact, in his writings, other, more felicitous passages in which his critical spirit does succeed in escaping the unfortunate schematic formalism of Croce and Gentile's aesthetics, clearly realises its insuperable epistemological shortcomings, recognises the intrinsic rationality and necessity of the self-differentiation of art's universal concept into its specific forms, and outlines a dialectical deduction of the artistic forms of the sublime, the comic and 'perfect beauty', as well as a theory of natural beauty, which are undoubtedly fruitful and enlightening. To Croce Collingwood rightfully objects that if it is true, as he maintains, that all the differences among the forms and kinds of art are merely 'empirical', unessential, if not even 'verbal', then he should explain to us how and why the entire philosophical and literary tradition has instead regarded them as objective and essential. Yet in none of his writings does he offer us such an explanation; and he does not do so because, nourishing an 'excessive

confidence in the logic of classification', he reduces his philosophical theory 'to the repetition of an empty formula'.[25] The concrete, genuine philosophical comprehension of art's essence, to the contrary, distinguishes in the process of imagination (a) its initial stage, in which it sets a transcendent, infinite object against the finitude and nullity of the human individual; (b) the subsequent stage, in which the individual subject discovers that he himself is the creator of the transcendent object, and thus denies its alleged actual reality and immediacy; and finally (c) the third stage, in which he understands that, by negating the reality of the transcendent object, he, in the last resort, negates himself, because such an object is an essential part of him. His real self-affirmation, then, involves also that of his object—namely, the positing of the absolute unity, identity, harmony of subject and object. The first stage gives rise to the *feeling of the sublime*, which is not, unlike what Kant believed,[26] a form of aesthetic experience different from that of the beautiful, but, rather, an internal moment of its own self-development. It coincides with that 'reverence' which the individual feels for the 'Divinity' when this is inadequately conceived as a Lord of the world radically other to man, who in front of Him perceives only his own radical impotence and dependency. But owing to the immanence, in artistic imagination, of thought's absolute reality itself, the alleged absolute objectivity of the transcendent God is inevitably called into question by the critical reflection of the human spirit, who, becoming aware that he himself is the real creator of his God, negates the actual reality of his object. The artistic form in which such a negation is manifested is the *comic*; and the celebration of the individual's freedom involved in it is expressed by laughter. Yet the comic cannot avoid

25 Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 32.

26 Cf. I. Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (hrsg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1913), Band V, § 23.

being tinged with bitterness, melancholy, if not even pessimism, thus giving rise to that species of the comic which is *humour*, when the individual realises that by negating the objectivity of the God created by him, he also annihilates the intrinsic value of his own subjectivity. The real self-affirmation of the individual subject, the true expression of man's humanity, can therefore be achieved only by a different, and higher, art form, that of 'the beautiful in the full sense of the word',[27] in which man becomes aware of his unity or 'intimacy' with God, refers to his object as to himself, and to himself as to his infinite object: 'Hence arises', Collingwood profoundly says, 'that absence of constraint, that profound sense of contentment and well-being, that characterises the experience of real beauty. We feel that it is "good for us to be here"; we are at home, we belong to our world and our world belongs to us'.[28] Real beauty, then, is the unity of the sublime and the comic, which is expressed in a still inadequate way by a mere juxtaposition of them such as that which is to be found in the grotesque statues adorning English cathedrals or in the alternation of tragic and comic episodes in Shakespeare's dramas.

No less original and enlightening is Collingwood's theory of natural beauty. In accordance with the spirit of the strictest idealism, he sees in nature nothing more than the (necessary) self-alienation of the act of thinking, the 'other' immanent in it but also eternally negated by it. Hence, strictly speaking, there exists no natural object being in itself 'beautiful'. What actually exists, is only the creative act of human imagination, which, by setting itself against itself, experiences such other as the dark, mysterious 'source' of the artist's 'inspiration' or as the immediate, and therefore indeterminate, appearance of natural beauty. The only non-empirical distinction that can be

27 Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 41.
28 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

traced out in it is therefore that between the different attitudes of the human subject with respect to nature. Collingwood acutely grasps the dialectical structure of the historical succession of such attitudes, which he articulates into three main stages. (a) The first stage consists in the admiration for the original beauty of nature, not yet contaminated by man's intervention. It plainly coincides with that 'wild nature' which, owing to its majestic greatness and to its destructive power, Kant had identified with the peculiar object of the feeling of the sublime.[29] (b) But the human subject's self-negation involved in this kind of natural beauty can be only provisional, because such a self-negation is, as we have seen, in principle impossible. The experience of natural beauty must therefore assume a different shape, that of the contemplation of the harmonic co-existence of man and nature in archaic rural society, because in it the original configuration of the natural environment is not yet distorted by man's productive activity. The aesthetic experience corresponding to it is that of the Romantic feeling of nature, whose most eloquent 'mouthpiece' was the English poet William Wordsworth. Yet the intrinsic ontological negativity of nature, and thus of natural beauty itself, cannot but undermine also this kind of aesthetic experience. For the poet who nostalgically celebrates the beauty of archaic rural society is himself a member of modern industrial society: by admiring some especially striking rural resort such as, e.g., the Lake District or Cornwall, and by moving into it, he himself starts that process of contamination of its natural beauty which culminates in its destruction by that typical product of modern industrial society which is mass tourism. (c) But the very technical devices through which such a society destroys nature's original beauty—e.g., motor-car, steamship, railway, etc.—show a peculiar beauty of their own, which remains a form of the natural beautiful because

29 Cf. I. Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, §§ 26 and 28.

technique can dominate through its artefacts the powers of nature only by submitting itself to its physical laws. What their production incurably lacks, Collingwood rightfully concludes, is 'the conscious intention to be beautiful',[30] which is the 'moving soul' of genuine artistic creativity. Hence this latter can fully actualise itself only in a different, and higher, aesthetic form than that of the beauty of nature and of the artefacts of technique—namely, the beauty inherent in the pure activity of spirit, for only in it can artistic imagination enjoy that unbounded freedom which is its very essence.

In Collingwood's contraposition of the relative beauty of technical artefacts to the absolute beauty of free imaginative art it is easy to see a last echo of the distinction, drawn by Kant in his 'Analytics of the Beautiful', between '*pulchritudo adhaerens*' and '*pulchritudo vaga*';[31] which confirms, I believe, the fundamentally idealistic character of his aesthetic theory, despite constant relapses into the less consistent epistemological perspective of relativistic historicism, which became more and more frequent as the years went by,[32] seriously undermining the inner consistency and relevance of his later philosophical production.

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30 Collingwood, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 64.
31 Cf. I. Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, § 16.
32 Cf., e.g. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, pp. vi, 159, 355, etc.

David Lincicum[1]

Ferdinand Christian Baur, the Bible, and T.H. Green

Abstract: Ferdinand Christian Baur found remarkably few successors in his synthetic theological project, one that might be characterized as a historicizing idealism. New Testament scholarship, by and large, inherited Baur's historicizing tendencies without much patience for the grand metaphysical commitments that, for Baur, had functioned to give meaning to the historical details.

In Britain, opposition to Baur was perhaps even stronger than in German-speaking lands. But here we find a surprising exception to the prevalent critical stance toward Baur. From the 1840s onward, Benjamin Jowett had immersed himself in German biblical criticism, and his papers demonstrate a deep but not uncritical reading of Baur. When Thomas Hill Green came up to Balliol in the 1850s, Jowett passed along to him his admiration for Baur. Green was a profoundly religious thinker, and his debt to Baur has been largely unexplored. This article seeks to characterize Green's debt to Baur, and argues that in some ways Green represents a rare continuation of Baur's historicizing idealism. His historicism is seen in his de-privileging of the creeds and in his questioning of the miraculous and traditional views of

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the incarnation, but he also embraces the individual's need to realize God within oneself, drawing on Paul's concept of justification by faith in order to illustrate this. The article particularly considers Green's 'Essay on Christian Dogma', 'The Conversion of Paul', 'Faith', 'Incarnation' and 'Justification by Faith', as well as previously unpublished fragments on the Gospel of John, Romans, and Galatians made available by Colin Tyler in 2005.

Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), the great Tübingen historian of doctrine and critical scholar of the New Testament, is one of the most prolific and important theologians of the nineteenth century, though in comparison to his peers, one of the most neglected.[2] Born in Württemberg, he lived and taught there his entire life, first at the lower seminary in Blaubeuren, then, from 1826, at the University of Tübingen. Like his most famous student, David Friedrich Strauss, Baur subjected the New Testament documents and the theological tradition to critical scrutiny, though unlike Strauss, Baur managed to evade the ecclesiastical strictures that led to Strauss's difficult relationship with the theological academy.[3] Although Baur himself was the subject of numerous controversies, he remained in his position until his death, probably due in part to Baur's personal ongoing piety (he remained a University preacher throughout his career), the relative independence of the church in the Kingdom of Württemberg, and

2 See the bibliography of Baur's works in Peter C. Hodgson, *The Formation of Historical Theology: A Study of Ferdinand Christian Baur* (Makers of Modern Theology; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 285–91; Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F.C. Baur* (2nd edn.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990 [orig. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975]), pp. 263–74; also, note Klaus Schuffels, 'Der Nachlass Ferdinand Christian Baurs in der Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen und im Schiller-Nationalmuseum Marbach/Neckar', *ZKG* 79 (1968): pp. 375–84.

3 For a trenchant analysis of the relationship between Baur and Strauss, see Ulrich Köpf, 'Ferdinand Christian Baur and David Friedrich Strauss', in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity,* ed. C. Landmesser, M. Bauspiess and D. Lincicum, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 3–44.

Baur's cordial relations with the consistory.[4] Baur is most often characterized as a Hegelian theologian, but the label is an imprecise one.[5] His philosophical and theological commitments change over time, and he seems to move from an early enthusiasm for Schleiermacher and Schelling, to an intense engagement with Hegel from the mid-1830s, to finally a late return to Kant in the 1850s. Throughout his career, though, he maintained an emphasis on the oppositional dialectics of history that he first learned from Schelling[6] and later from Hegel. He came to disagree with Hegel's view of the incarnation, which Baur thought destroyed the particularity of the historical Jesus, and later considered that Hegel's panentheism threatened the integrity and alterity of the world.[7] But he found in the idealist tradition a way to overcome the stark disjunction

4 See the selection of controversial exchanges collected in K. Scholder, ed., *Für und wider die Tübinger Schule*, vol. 5 of F.C. Baur, *Ausgewählte Werke in Einzelausgaben* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1975).

5 Against the charge that Baur is simply an unthinking Hegelian, see Hodgson, *Formation* (note also K. Penzel, 'Will the Real Ferdinand Christian Baur Please Stand Up?' *Journal of Religion,* 48 (1968): 310–23); Robert Morgan, 'F. C. Baur's Lectures on New Testament Theology', *Expository Times,* 88 (1977): pp. 202–6; idem, 'Baur's *Paul*', *Expository Times.* 90 (1978): 4–10; idem, 'Non Angli sed Angeli: Some Anglican Reactions to German Gospel Criticism', in vol. 1 of *New Studies in Theology* (eds. S. Sykes and D. Holmes; London: Duckworth, 1980), 1–30, esp. 9–10, 28; idem, 'Ferdinand Christian Baur', in vol. 1 of *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the* West, ed. N. Smart, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 261–89.

6 For the importance of Schelling for Baur, see E. Zeller, 'Ferdinand Christian Baur', in *Vorträge und Abhandlungen geschichtlichen Inhalts* (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1865), pp. 354–434, here 364; Gotthold Müller, 'Ferdinand Christian Baur und David Friedrich Strauss in Blaubeuren (1821–1825)', in *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte. Festschrift für Ernst Benz zum 60. Geburtstage am 17. November 1967* (eds. G. Müller and W. Zeller; Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 217–30; Carl E. Hester, 'Gedanken zu Ferdinand Christian Baurs Entwicklung als Historiker anhand zweier unbekannter Briefe', *ZKG* 84 (1973), pp. 249–69; K. Scholder, 'Baur, Ferdinand Christian (1792–1860)', *TRE* 5 (1980), pp. 352–59, here p. 353; Carl E. Hester, 'Baurs Anfänge in Blaubeuren', in *Historisch-kritische Geschichtsbetrachtung. Ferdinand Christian Baur und seine Schüler* (ed. U. Köpf; Contubernium 40; Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1994), pp. 67–82.

7 See the analysis in Hodgson, *Formation*, pp. 54–70.

between rationalism and supernaturalism that confronted him in his formative theological training.[8]

Baur found remarkably few successors in his synthetic theological project, one that might be characterized as a historicizing idealism.[9] Apart from a few members of his own 'Tübingen school', who did not achieve much influence after Baur's death,[10] those who came afterward tended to prefer either his historicism or his idealism, and so his fragile synthesis was almost immediately bifurcated after his death. New Testament scholarship, by and large, inherited Baur's historicizing tendencies without much patience for the grand metaphysical commitments that, for Baur, had functioned to give meaning to the historical details. Many of those who opposed Baur's concrete historical results in his work on the New Testament and early Christianity largely shared his basic set of methods for the interpretation and historical reconstruction of the development of earliest Christianity, even as they took issue with his *Tendenzkritik* and the oppositional picture of the early church that the criticism produced.

In Britain, opposition to Baur was perhaps even stronger than in German-speaking lands.[11] But here we find a surprising exception to the prevalent critical stance toward Baur. From the 1840s onward, Benjamin Jowett had immersed himself in German biblical criticism, and his papers demonstrate a deep but not uncritical reading of Baur. When Thomas Hill Green came up to Balliol in the 1850s, Jowett passed along to him his admiration for

8 So, e.g., Heinz Liebing, 'Historical-Critical Theology: In Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of Ferdinand Christian Baur, December 2, 1960', *Journal for Theology and Church,* 3 (1967), pp. 55–69.

9 Martin Wendte, 'Ferdinand Christian Baur: A Historically Informed Idealist of a Distinctive Kind', in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, pp. 67–79.

10 See Harris, *The Tübingen School*.

11 James Carleton Paget, 'The Reception of Baur in Britain', in *Ferdinand Christian Baur and the History of Early Christianity*, pp. 307–54 (note discussion of Green on p. 319).

Baur. Green later became a leading light of the British Idealists, and a significant political philosopher and radical reformer in late Victorian Britain, in some ways an early architect of the modern welfare state. But Green was also a profoundly religious thinker, and his debt to Baur has been sometimes noted but left unexplored in detail[12] (and conversely, Green rarely if ever features in histories of biblical interpretation). This article seeks to characterize Green's debt to Baur, and argues that in some ways Green represents a rare continuation of Baur's historicizing idealism, even if he differs from the Tübingen theologian in notable ways.

1. Jowett, Green, and Baur

Thomas Hill Green was born in Yorkshire in 1836, into a vicarage where he was imbued with warm evangelical sensibilities and a moral seriousness that accompanied him throughout his life. He was educated at Rugby School and, from 1855, at Balliol College, Oxford, where his pensive inwardness earned him an occasional reputation for indolence, although his native intelligence came to be recognized as well. Benjamin Jowett took an interest in Green, as his tutor at Balliol, and subsequently Green was made a fellow in 1860.[13] He went on to assume lecturing duties in 1866[14], was elected Whyte Professor of Moral

12 Colin Tyler's exhaustive bibliography of works about Green includes no entry that explicitly thematizes either his debt to Baur or his engagement with the Bible. Those who approach Green do so most often, and understandably so, from the perspective of political theory or the history of philosophy; see Colin Tyler, ed., 'Bibliography of Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882)', *Centre for Idealism and the New Liberalism, Working Paper Series: Number 3* (2018).

13 On Balliol in this time, see John Prest, 'Balliol, For Example', in *The History of the University of Oxford, Vol. VII: Nineteenth-Century Oxford, Part 2,* ed. M.G. Brock and M.C. Curthoys (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 159–70.

14 R.L. Nettleship, 'Memoir', in *Works of Thomas Hill Green,* 3 vols. (London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1885–1888), pp. xi–clxi, here lx–lxi.

Philosophy in Oxford in 1878, and died in 1882, just weeks before his 46th birthday.[15]

Jowett was Green's tutor at Balliol (1855–1859) and they subsequently worked together when Green became a fellow, though relations between them eventually cooled, in part due to Jowett's doubts about the value of metaphysics as a subject of inquiry.[16] The first edition of Jowett's commentary on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans first appeared in 1855, Green's first year at Balliol, and the revised second edition appeared in the final year of Green's undergraduate studies. The commentaries offer a rare picture of a critic in mid-19th century Britain taking careful consideration of the views of the German higher criticism. Jowett's debt to Baur and other German scholars is acknowledged, but the reader is not overwhelmed by explicit engagement with such named figures throughout the commentary. Nevertheless, to those capable of recognizing it, Jowett's debt to Baur was profound, and Otto Pfleiderer could look back and say that it was in these commentaries that Jowett 'introduced to his countrymen

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15 For basic information on Green, Nettleship's substantial 'Memoir' is foundational; see also Colin Tyler, ed., 'Recollections Regarding Thomas Hill Green', *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies,* 14 (2008), pp. 5–78 and Andrew Vincent, 'Green, Thomas Hill (1836–1882)', *ODNB* (https://doi-org.proxy.library.nd.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/11404, last accessed 1 October 2018). Other useful treatments for the scope of this paper include H. D. Lewis, 'The British Idealists', in Ninian Smart et al, eds., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West,* 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2:271–314; D. M. MacKinnon, 'Some Aspects of the Treatment of Christianity by the British Idealists', *Religious Studies* 20 (1984), pp. 133–44; Bernard Reardon, 'T.H. Green as a Theologian', in A. Vincent, ed., *The Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), pp. 36–47; Peter Hinchliff, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology, 1875–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 126–29; W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 139–47; Ralph Norman, 'The Christologies of Kant and the British Idealists: Ethical and Ontological Theories of Kenosis', *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies,* 19:1 (2013), pp. 113–37.

16 So Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T.H. Green and His Age* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 148–57.

the results of Baur's critical labours'.[17] This impression is only strengthened if we attend to Jowett's notebooks and correspondence in the years leading up to the publication of the commentaries. From the late 1840s onward, we find a growing engagement with Baur. By September 1848, he had been reading Baur's recently published book on Paul and the Pauline letters.[18] He wrote to his co-commentator A. P. Stanley, 'Baur appears to me the ablest book I have ever read on St. Paul's Epistles: a remarkable combination of Philological and Metaphysical power'.[19]

Of course, Jowett was not uncritical of Baur and his school, whom he characterized as attempting to construct Niebuhrian accounts of the early church where the evidence was simply too slim to allow this. He also worried about other defects, as he saw them, of German theology more broadly. In what appear to be notes for a talk, entitled in a notebook of 1849–1850, 'German Theology July 26', among other cautions Jowett suggests that, 'All questions of historicism and metaphysics [are] abstract with them and severed from life'.[20]

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17 Otto Pfleiderer, *The Development of Theology in Germany since Kant: and its Progress in Great Britain since 1825* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890), p. 387.

18 *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Briefe und seine Lehre*, 1st ed. (Stuttgart: Becher und Müller, 1845); 2nd edn., ed. Eduard Zeller, 2 vols (Leipzig, Fues's Verlag, 1866–67). English translation: *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings*, trans. from the 2nd edn. by Allan Menzies, 2 vols (London and Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1873–75).

19 Evelyn Abbott and Lewis Campbell, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, M.A., Master of Balliol College, Oxford,* 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1897), 1.162; cf. 1.142.

20 MS Balliol IA6, fol. 63v–64. All subsequent references to Jowett's papers are to those held in the Balliol College Library Archive. The collection has been well catalogued by Robin Darwell-Smith, *The Jowett Papers: A Summary Catalogue of the Papers of Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) at Balliol College, Oxford* (Oxford, Balliol College Library, 1993), and an expanded version of the catalogue has been usefully digitized at http://archives.Balliol.ox.ac.uk/Modern%20Papers/Jowett/jowett-contents.asp [last accessed 18 April 2018]

This cautious but appreciative stance toward German theology more broadly, and German biblical criticism in particular, seems to have been characteristic of Jowett throughout this time (which led, it should be remembered, to the publication of his famous essay on 'The Interpretation of Scripture' in the 1860 *Essays and Reviews*). He seems to have mediated this appreciation to his students, and Green likely owes his early interest in Baur to Jowett's influence.

2. Green's Encounter with Baur

Green remained a deeply religious figure throughout his life, though his views could not be considered orthodox. In his academic work, he concerned himself with philosophical questions arising from the empiricist and idealist traditions. Although he is sometimes styled as a 'British Hegelian', he owes as much to Kant as to Hegel, and Collingwood, who studied in Oxford during Green's time, described Green's philosophy as simply 'a reply to Herbert Spencer by a profound student of Hume'.[21] In the course of his relatively short career, he wrote a critical introduction to Hume's philosophical works that ran to over 350 pages, published replies to Herbert Spencer and G. H. Lewes, left full but unpublished lectures on Kant, on Mill, and on the 'principles of political obligation', wrote a nearly complete 'Prolegomena to Ethics', and a series of shorter, occasional pieces on philosophical, theological, and political topics. His theological oeuvre is thus a relatively minor part of his overall corpus, but as we shall see, it was inflected by his philosophical and moral interests. A contemporary described him as 'a singular instance of a metaphysician with a bent towards politics and practical life', as well as 'a thinker far removed from orthodoxy who

21 R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 15–16.

exerted over orthodox Christians a potent and inspiring religious influence'.[22]

Green's two early Ellerton Theological Essays (neither of which was selected for the prize) indicate his historical capacities as well as his interest in the intersection of philosophical and theological currents. He wrote on the prompts set, first on 'Life and Immortality Brought to Light by the Gospel (1860)', and then, 'The State of Religious Belief Among the Jews at the Time of the Coming of Christ (1861)'.[23] The essays are competent for the standards of the day, and wide-ranging, even if not yet making full use of critical scholarship. It seems to be in the early 1860s, just after these pieces, that Green began to read German scholarship in earnest. He traveled in Germany and visited Tübingen in the Long Vacations of 1862 and 1863.[24] As Henry Nettleship, the brother of Green's biographer, R.L. Nettleship, recalls:

> About this time (1862–3) Green was beginning the critical study of New Testament theology. He saturated himself with the writings of the Tübingen school, and was not long in stimulating me to do the same. I remember his making strictures on Goldwin Smith's Essay on the alleged Biblical sanctions for American slavery, for its author's ignorance of recent theological criticism. He adopted then, and so far as I know never abandoned, the main theory of the Tübingen theologians, that the fourth Gospel is non-apostolic, and represents the latest phase of thought visible in the New Testa-

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22 James Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1903), p. 99.

23 In Peter Nicholson, ed., *T.H. Green: Additional Writings* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997), pp. 57–81 and pp. 83–104 respectively.

24 Nettleship, 'Memoir', pp. xxxvii–xxxix, xlii; Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, 87–90. Cf. also T.H. Green to Donald Crawford, 30 May 1863: 'I am thinking of making for *Tübingen* in the Long. It seems likely to be a nice place for excursions, and high up, which is necessary for my chum, Symonds' (in Nicholson, *T. H. Green: Additional Writings,* p. 419).

> ment canon. I think his views on the authorship of the Acts coincided in the main with those of Schwegler.[25]

In this connection, Green once referred to Baur as 'nearly the most instructive writer I ever met', remarkable praise for a figure who aroused such suspicion in contemporary British academic circles.[26] In the summer of 1863, Green began, while in Heidelberg, a translation of Baur's *Kirchengeschichte der drei ersten Jahrhunderte* from the newly published third (posthumous) edition of the work.[27] The translation was never completed, though Nettleship tells us that it had 'contributed considerably in an indirect way to his mental growth'.[28]

A few years later, in 1869, perhaps frustrated with his lack of progress on the project, it seems that Green was planning a collaborative translation of Baur. In a letter to Mrs. Clough, wife of the Victorian poet Arthur Clough, he writes,

> I have not yet been able to make any definite scheme for the translation of Baur's book. Several men, to whom I have spoken about it, talk as if they would be glad to take part in a translation, but how far they can be trusted to take the trouble when finally put to the proof is not so certain. I have no prospect of being able to attend to it myself for another 9 months. I will promise then, however, to assail the chapter on Gnosticism, & if once I were working at it myself, I should be more sure of getting others to do the same.

I am very sorry that your contribution to the undertaking should have to wait so long for company. My own version of the part which you have done, even if it could ever be made as readable as yours (which, without compli-

25 H.L. Nettleship, in Tyler, ed., 'Recollections Regarding Thomas Hill Green', here 40–1.

26 Nettleship, 'Memoir', p. xxxvii.

27 Cf. Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, p. 92.

28 'Memoir', p. xxxvii. Later in his life, he was also translator of part of Hermann Lotze's Metaphysic, and until the task passed to Bernard Bosanquet at his death, general editor of the English translation of Lotze's System of Philosophy (which comprised both the Logic and the Metaphysics).

ment, I don't at all expect) is—with the exception of the few pages that I sent you—in so rough a state that it would have to be done again. Nor did I ever get beyond the 60th page or thereabouts. I think that if once we had the work done, or nearly done, we could be sure of a publisher who would take the work. But I am not well-informed on this point.[29]

In fact, we find not one but two partial, overlapping translations of Baur in Green's papers, in different hands. One of them is Green's, the other may well be Mrs. Clough's.[30] The translation as a whole never materialized, and Baur's *Geschichte* would have to wait another decade before Allan Menzies brought it into English.

So, if Baur was for Green 'nearly the most instructive writer' he ever met, what did Green find in Baur to instruct him? Do we find evidence of Baur's imprint in Green's theological works?

3. Green's Theological Writing

Although Green's specifically theological writings are not numerous, he did author an 'Essay on Christian Dogma', two college sermons on 'The Witness of God' and 'Faith' respectively, substantial manuscript fragments of lectures on Galatians, Romans, and the Fourth Gospel, and one or two smaller fragments.[31]

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29 Letter of T.H. Green to Mrs. Clough, 12 Dec. 1869 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Eng. Lett. e. 76, 105–107) (n.b., not 195–97 as in Denys Leighton, *The Greenian Moment: T. H. Green, Religion and Political Argument in Victorian Britain,* British Idealist Studies Series 3: Green (Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2004), p. 52 n. 78; transcribed also in Green, *Additional Writings,* pp. 431–33).

30 Balliol MS IV/a/20 and IV/a/21. Comparing the hand of the translation to Mrs. Clough's letters in this instance is not definitive, but it does not rule out this identification.

31 These are all to be found in *Works* 3.161–276 and in Colin Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts in British Idealism: Political Philosophy, Theology and Social Thought,* 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2005), 1.88–188 (an excellent volume, though note that the transcription of the Greek is unreliable).

The 'Essay on Christian Dogma' probably belongs to the early 1860s. Nettleship remarks that 'The studies which suggested a translation of Baur's work were condensed into an essay on dogma, which expresses clearly, though in somewhat Germanised phraseology, the speculative basis of his conception of christianity [sic]'.[32] In this essay, Green is offering an account of the development of Christian dogma which reads as a narrative of decline. He is clear that he wants to resist the 'habit of identifying christianity with the collection of propositions which constitute the written New Testament'.[33] Indeed, the doctrine of inspiration is a mere 'accident' of an 'enfeebled Christianity'.[34] Christian truth should be immediately apparent to the mind, an expression of spiritual life, but there has been an ossification of the vitality seen in the New Testament as it became the object of theological reflection and ultimately dogmatic definition: 'Christianity, in its simplest primary form, is involved in the divine consciousness of Jesus and in that of St. Paul, the spirit and work of Jesus standing, no doubt, in a relation of essential priority to the spirit and work of Paul, but implying the latter as their necessary complement'.[35] Unlike Baur, who wants to attribute more positive significance to the process of doctrinal formation, as evidence of the Spirit's objectifying self-revelation in history, and who thinks of dogma as 'the doctrines or propositions in which the absolute content of

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32 'Memoir', p. xxxviii. Green consistently uses the lowercase 'christian' and 'christianity' in his writing, so these will not be standardized to current usage or noted each time they occur.

33 *Works* 3.161. Contrast Baur: 'In keeping with the basic principle of Protestantism, the dogmatics of the Protestant Church ought to be none other than the presentation of the teaching contained in Scripture' (Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 63).

34 *Works* 3.161.

35 *Works* 3.164.

Christian truth is expressed in a determinate form',[36] for Green the dogmatic development involves a betrayal of an original purity of consciousness.[37] Naturally the most far-reaching consequence of this view, and the one on which his essay focuses, is for Christology. Rather than being a true interpretation or development of the New Testament's witness, the Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries attest an alienation and objectification of the original. Initially Christianity 'is still as far from being dogmatic as are the Shakespearian dramas from being a system of poetics'.[38]

One can see other commonalities between Baur's general view of early Christian development and that offered by Green. Green's view that the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount present 'a sense of the infinite greatness of the human spirit in itself, apart from external accessories' is reminiscent of Baur's contention that in the Sermon on the Mount we see, as the original Christian idea, 'a religious consciousness which is penetrated by the deepest sense of the pressure of the finite and of all the contradictions of the present, and yet is infinitely exalted, and knows itself, in spite of this, to be far superior to everything finite and limited'.[39] Similarly, for Green as for Baur, Paul is the one who perceived the genius in Jesus's mes-

36 Ferdinand Christian Baur, *History of Christian Dogma,* ed. Peter C. Hodgson; trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 49.

37 Cf. also his address, 'The Witness of God', in *Works* 3.230–52 which similarly charts a decline.

38 *Works* 3.167. See also the letter from Green to Henry Scott Holland, 9 January 1869: 'If there seems now to be a reflective morality, which yet is not religious, this is not really unreligious, but its religion is for the time dumb; and this dumbness mainly results from the action of philosophy upon the dogma of the revelation of God in Christ. When it is found that this dogma (tho' in a wrong, because dogmatic, form) embodies the true idea of the relation of the moral life to God, the morality of speculative men will find its religious tongue again' (in Stephen Paget, ed., *Henry Scott Holland: Memoir and Letters* (London: John Murray, 1921), p. 31).

39 Greek, *Works* 3.164 and Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries,* 2 vols., trans. Allan Menzies (London, Williams and Norgate, 1878), 1.27.

sage, whereas first it had been 'stunted and dwarfed' in the conception of the original apostles, a judgment offered with an attendant criticism of Judaism.[40] And in the same way that Baur sees the Johannine writings as expressing a speculative theology on the other side of the conflict between Paulinism and Judaism, so also Green suggests that 'The perfect fusion of the ideal exaltation with the historical reality of Christ is effected in the gospel which we call St John's'.[41]

If we broaden our inquiry to include Green's other addresses, we are struck by further similarities. Notable is the rejection of the miraculous. Henry Nettleship recalls that by around 1862, Green had 'definitely abandoned his belief in the miraculous, and therefore in the commonly-accepted historical groundwork of Christianity'.[42] This 'abandonment' required new historical resources to fashion a coherent account of the Christian faith that did not require one to begin from, say, the virgin birth or the incarnation. Green must have been pleased to read in the first pages of Baur's *Kirchengeschichte* a critique of those who wished to root a historical account of the church's development in 'the most stupendous of miracles'.[43] Rather, belief in the miraculous required endorsing a division of reality into nature and supernature that both Baur and Green found objectionable. As Bernard Reardon aptly suggests, 'The basis of Green's theological position is, to put the case negatively, his decisive rejection of the 'two world' view of reality: his refusal to admit the traditional theistic distinction between the natural and the supernat-

40 *Works* 3.165–66.
41 *Ibid.*, 3.168.
42 Nettleship in Tyler, ed., 'Recollections', 33.
43 Baur, *Church History* 1.1.

ural, and therewith the whole conception of miraculous intervention'.[44]

This problematic comes to the fore most poignantly in his late address on 'Faith'. He again stresses that faith is not established through historical accounts or miraculous events. His critique of naturalism and empiricism underlines his idealist theory of knowledge, which in turn makes belief in the miraculous not something that is outlawed by recent advances in science, nor even, like Baur, something that would make the nonsensical claim that a miracle belonged to the chain of cause-and-effect involved in history. Rather, to claim that the miraculous had occurred would threaten the very concepts of nature and knowledge themselves:

> If we assert a suspension of its laws, a break in its continuity, to have taken place even in a single case; if we maintain so much as the possibility of an intrusion or 'projection' of extranatural agency within the natural; though we may be willing to stake our life upon the proposition or more truly upon some moral or spiritual interest which we strongly suppose it to involve, we are none the less saying what is intrinsically unmeaning; for we are affirming the existence of knowledge and nature, and at the same time denying the principle in virtue of which alone knowledge is possible and there is for our consciousness such a thing as nature.[45]

Rather than seeing the significance of the earliest events in the church in their external character or facticity, Green argued that they attest a new form of consciousness or faith. In his partially-preserved address on 'The Word is Nigh Thee' (Deut. 30:14) Green strikingly suggests, in

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44 Reardon, 'T.H. Green as a Theologian', 41. See also Vincent, 'Green, Thomas Hill (1836–1882)': 'The individual cannot rely on miracles or historical events: God becomes immanent in everyday duties. He thus wanted to change a religion based upon dogma into one that was coincidental with the moral life of the ordinary citizen'.

45 *Works* 3.267.

> wither, but as one of whom we may say that we are reason of his reason and spirit of his spirit.[47]

By this Green does not simply mean that Christianity offers the good news that God is kindly disposed toward humans, but rather that in a certain sense, 'God is identical with the self of every man in the sense of being the realisation of its determinate possibilities, the completion of that which, as merely in it, is incomplete and therefore unreal; that in being conscious of himself man is conscious of God, and thus knows that God is, but knows what he is only so far as he knows what he himself really is'.[48]

That the consequences of these theological views distanced Green from the orthodoxy of his day is clear, and he was wary of the church as an institution. 'I find it impossible', he once said, 'to get up much interest in ecclesiastical affairs. The dead may bury their dead. Saving souls is one thing; making a fuss about an institution and a creed quite another'.[49] But at the same time, he had no desire to trounce the creeds as such, nor did he think of himself as somehow non-Christian or as an opponent of Christianity. Rather, he wanted to express his demurral from creedal Christianity clearly while at the same time continuing his adherence, without concern for dogma or miracle, to the spiritual and moral center of the faith as he understood it. As he once put it, 'Inability to adopt the creeds of christendom in their natural sense—and in any other sense they are best left alone—need not disqualify us from using its prayers'.[50]

4. Green's New Testament Lectures

If we turn to the lectures Green offered on the New Testament, can we detect any influence of or interaction with

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47 *Works* 3.221.
48 *Ibid.*, 3.227.
49 'Memoir', p. xxxvi.
50 *Works* 3.274.

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4. Green's New Testament Lectures

If we turn to the lectures Green offered on the New Testament, can we detect any influence of or interaction with Baur's views? In general, Nettleship suggests of his lectures,

> He took the material for them chiefly from German works, especially those of F.C. Baur, and his main purpose was to enforce certain truths contained in the books of the New Testament, and at the same time to point out where they seemed to him to have been misunderstood or perverted by the writers themselves or by subsequent interpreters.[51]

We have surviving lecture manuscripts from Green's lectures on Galatians, Romans, and the Fourth Gospel. On the whole, these lectures do not read like simple repetitions of Baur's views, but rather as records of independent judgment inflected by philosophical concern.

Green is much less interested in historical reconstruction than Baur, although there are some notable points at which Green makes a historical case in conversation with Tübingen views. For example, in his 1871 'Notes of Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans', Green engages with a

49 'Memoir', p. xxxvi.
50 *Works* 3.274.
51 'Memoir', p. xci.

view (not ascribed, but surely Baur, who had argued that a conflict in Rome between Jews and Gentiles had precipitated the letter, is in mind) that sees the Epistle as 'occasioned by a practical difficulty—the relation of the Christians to the Jews'.[52] Jowett had earlier, in his commentary on Romans and in an unpublished preparatory essay on 'The Object of the Epistle to the Romans', negotiated with Baur's views.[53] In the end, Green agrees with Jowett and Baur that Romans is best seen as addressing a concrete situation in Rome arising among Christians in a mixed church composed of Jewish and Gentile believers. At the same time, Green adds his characteristic concern for the consciousness of modern Christians: 'Doubtless it has an interest for the 'Christian consciousness' now, not for the Jewish; why not? Because the present 'Christian consciousness' has to a great extent grown out of it'.[54]

Green is concerned to establish certain conventional topics of historical inquiry: the date of the Epistle, its structure and purpose, and so forth. But even as he engages some of the same questions that Baur raised to prominence, we find that Green's energies lie elsewhere. For example, Green largely concedes Baur's view of Romans 9–11 as more significantly concerned with the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles and the concomitant implications for Israel rather than an abstract reflection on divine election and predestination.[55] As Green writes, '[a]ccording to this view, then, the Epistle, like those to the Galatians and Corinthians, is occasioned by a practical difficulty—the relation of the Christians to the Jews'.[56] The view that Romans is an occasional epistle, rather than a timeless treatise or a systematic theological

52 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 90. The lectures on Romans are found on pp. 88–110.
53 Jowett's draft essay is MS Balliol IA8, fols. 57–94.
54 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 90.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
56 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

reflection, is emphatically Baur's, but it is also one that Jowett had taken over and mediated, in more palatable terms, to the Anglican world.[57] But Green's overriding interest in idealism, and in particular his interest in the consciousness of the knowing human subject, eclipses his indebtedness to Baur and puts his own distinctive emphasis on the interpretation of Romans. So in discussing the nature of justification, he writes 'the change in the relation between man and God, which St. Paul calls justification, is not a change in God, which is impossible, but a change in the consciousness of man'.[58] The emphasis on the consciousness of the knowing subject is in fact a consistent feature of Green's commentarial impulse. So also, in commenting on Romans 5:12 and 21, Green writes, 'As σάρξ, from being simply equivalent to 'body,' comes to mean that which in fact separates us from God, viz., the self-seeking principle, so death, necessarily attaching to σάρξ, comes to mean the consciousness of alienation from God; of his wrath'.[59] Or again, in his lectures on Galatians: 'the 'hearing of faith', 'beginning in the Spirit', 'delivery from the curse of the law', represent a change of consciousness wrought by the belief that God is manifest in the crucified Christ'.[60]

The emphasis on consciousness rather than external facts or change in the divine is consistent with Green's idealist thought. This becomes particularly clear in Green's treatment of the atonement. In some ways, the most divisive element of Jowett's commentary on Paul had been his treatment of the atonement in a dissertation, wherein he argued against externalizing the atonement as an act of expiation or propitiation: 'Not the sacrifice, nor the satisfaction, nor the ransom, but the greatest moral act ever

57 Note again Jowett's essay, 'The Object of the Epistle to the Romans', MS Balliol IA8, fol. 57–94.
58 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 92; cf. pp. 97, 117, etc.
59 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
60 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

done in this world … is the assurance to us that God in Christ is reconciled to the world'.[61] Jowett's emphasis on the moral quandary of the traditional views of the atonement is echoed by Green, but also refracted through his own emphasis on the consciousness of the individual. In his lectures on Galatians, he writes:

> The question arises: did Christ, in his death, really undergo God's wrath as represented by a quantum of suffering adequate to what is due for the sins of all men, or did he relieve the smitten conscience from the sense of God's wrath by bringing God near to it in reconciliation even under its sinful conditions? Once get hold of this and see that the 'wrath of God' is a transfer from our consciousness, and no doubt can remain...The doctrine that Christ bears a penalty for sin of which he is innocent cannot be held without lowering morality.[62]

For Green, it is impossible for God to change, and so Paul must be speaking of the reformation of the individual to alignment with God's view of the relationship: 'the change in the relation between man and God, which St. Paul calls justification, is not a change in God, which is impossible, but a change in the consciousness of man'.[63]

In some ways Baur's interpretation of Galatians formed a key to his picture of the emergence of early Christianity. Here he found Paul's opposition to James and to Peter, and the understanding of freedom which conditioned his interpretation of Paul's Gentile missionary activity over against his Jewish Christian opposition. If we compare

61 Jowett, *Commentary*, 2.481; cf. Andrew Atherstone, 'Benjamin Jowett's Pauline Commentary: An Atonement Controversy', *Journal of Theological Studies* 54.1 (2003), pp. 139–53.

62 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts,* pp. 127, 129.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 91–2. Green's concern about the immutability of God is also seen in his lectures on Galatians: 'the standing difficulty, how the eternal and perfect God can communicate himself under conditions of time and progressively: and the conception of such communication is further embarrassed by that form which has yet given it practical power over men, as condition by, and somehow having taken place in, a past historical event' (Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 129; cf. also his essay on 'Christian Dogma').

Green's interpretation, an emphasis on the universality of the gospel does come through in his analysis, even if he does not thematize it to the same degree.[64] More striking by comparison is the lack of any sense of the dialectical progression of history by way of opposed principles resulting in some new synthesis or equilibrium, the Schellingian or Hegelian suppositions of Baur's most famous reconstruction of early Christianity. Green is not shy of calling attention to tensions and conflict in early Christianity, and he follows Jowett in agreeing with Baur in privileging Paul's own witness over Acts's recollection of the resolution in the so-called 'apostolic decree' of Acts 15. But he does not systematically exploit these tensions in the service of some overall reconstruction of *Urchristentum*.

Occasionally we find Green dealing summarily with matters Baur treats at length. For example, Green raises the question about the reality of the appearance of the risen Jesus to Paul. He poses the question, 'What is objective reality? An actual picture on the retina and agitation in the tympanum of the ear? . . . the true objective reality lay in the truth of those ideas as to law and grace, which truth was proved by the success of Paul's apostleship to the gentiles'.[65] This sounds like Green is taking up the question that Baur investigates at length in his treatment of Paul's conversion. In Baur's words, 'The chief point lies unquestionably in the inquiry, whether the appearance of Jesus is to be considered as an external or internal fact?'[66] Here it seems that Green is thinking with the question that Baur poses at length, but ultimately arrives at his own solution.

64 Cf. Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 117: 'Paul's belief in Christ involves (negatively) the abandonment of all claim to distinctive righteously, and positively the duty of preaching a universal Gospel to the Gentile as well as the Jew'.

65 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Lectures*, p. 120 = *Works* 3.189.

66 Baur, *Paul*, 1.68; cf. 1.63–92.

Finally, as the citation of R.L. Nettleship above has already indicated, Green sides with Baur and the Tübingen school on the question of the non-apostolic origin of the Fourth Gospel, a highly contested position in Britain in this period. His lectures on John are unsurprisingly philosophical, and he finds himself sympathetic to the Fourth Gospel's realized eschatology and practical invocation of the truth: in John 'the antithesis between the speculative and moral which had been the weakness of philosophy is thus overcome'.[67]

All of this suggests that Baur often functioned as an implicit dialogue partner for Green in his lectures, as Nettleship suggests. Green can occasionally invoke the names of commentators, such as John Lightfoot, Ewald, Lachmann, Hilgenfeld, Meyer and others, but on the whole his lectures proceed by interpretation of the primary text rather than by ongoing citation of secondary authorities. Nevertheless, although Baur is relatively seldom mentioned explicitly by name in his lectures, throughout his exegesis Green frequently shadow boxes with the Tübingen theologian's views and those of his school, sometimes accepting them, sometimes modifying them, but animated by the questions Baur and his followers posed.

5. Conclusion

In Henry Nettleship's recollections of Green, on which his brother R. L. Nettleship drew in composing the 'Memoir' in Green's Works, he remembered Green's religious evolution as a relatively serene passage from orthodox belief to his new views:

> He had, I think, at this time [i.e., around 1862–63] definitely abandoned his belief in the miraculous, and therefore in the commonly-accepted historical groundwork of Christianity. Many men go through this stage, but the peculiarity, as it

67 Tyler, ed., *Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 153.

> seemed to me, of Green's mind was that the fact in no way affected the basis of evangelical piety which lay at the root of his whole life.[68]

But this picture of serenity may be questioned. In Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, the sprawling late Victorian best-selling novel detailing a crisis of faith of an Oxford clergyman, the author introduces an Oxford don who helps Elsmere beyond his doubts about the particular claims of Anglican confession, and to a new kind of constructive liberalism focused on concrete acts of charity and grounded morality. In Gladstone's famous critical review of the novel, he remarked on 'the noble-minded rationalising teacher, whose name, Mr. Grey, is a thin disguise of another name, and whose lofty character, together with his gifts, and with the tendencies of the time, had made him a power in Oxford'.[69] Mrs. Humphry Ward herself wrote to Gladstone about Green as the inspiration for Mr. Grey:

> The parting with the Christian mythology is the rending asunder of bones and marrow' – words which I have put into Grey's mouth–were words of Mr. Green's to me. It was the only thing of the sort I ever heard him say - he was a man who never spoke of his feelings - but it was said with a penetrating force and sincerity which I still remember keenly. A long intellectual travail had convinced him that the miraculous Christian story was untenable; but speculatively he gave it up with grief and difficulty, and practically, to his last hour, he clung to all the forms and associations of the old belief with a wonderful affection.[70]

Here we find a rare insight into the depth of struggle that precipitated some of the difficult irruptions in Green's

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68 See Tyler, 'Recollections', p. 33.

69 W.E. Gladstone, '"Robert Elsemere" and the Battle of Belief', *Nineteenth Century* 23 (1888), pp. 766–88, here p. 768.

70 Mrs. Humphry Ward to William Gladstone, 17 April 1888, in Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward* (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1923), p. 63; cf. pp. 50–1; cf. also Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, p. 88.

faith. In the end, might it have been Baur's speculative theology and his views of the non-miraculous account of Christian origins, which still did not devolve into what Baur characterized as the 'negative criticism' of his own student D.F. Strauss, that helped Green to find some Christian faith on the other side of an orthodoxy enamored of the supernatural?

However we answer that question—and it is not clear that we have enough information to come to a definitive conclusion on the matter—Green's interest in Baur and indebtedness to him remain clear. As an idealist critic of empiricism and naturalism, he found in Baur, as in Kant and Hegel, an ally. Baur was clearly not the only or even a singularly significant source for many of Green's idealist views. Green was an original thinker who cannot simply be reduced to an adherent of any one philosophical or theological school. But the evidence is sufficient to conclude of Baur what Peter Nicholson has argued about Hegel: Green 'has absored some of Hegel's chief ideas, though . . . due to the nature of the evidence, and Green's working habits, this is difficult to trace or measure'.[71] Nicholson goes on to suggest that 'Green is reflecting on Hegel in order to reach his own conclusions',[72] and that functions as an admirable description of Green's relationship to Baur.

In the end, Green finds in Baur's historicizing idealism an attractive way to transcend the historical problems of Christian origins in the search of the truth of what Baur calls the Geist but what Green might refer to as self-consciousness, or consciousness of the divine, which ulti-

71 Peter P. Nicholson, 'T.H. Green's Doubts about Hegel's Political Philosophy', *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 31 (1995), pp. 61–72, here p. 63. Indeed, several of the points that Nicholson ascribes to Hegel's influence could come as readily through the mediation of Baur—who, like Green, had a return to Kant on the other side of an initial Hegelian infatuation.

72 Nicholson, 'T.H. Green's Doubts about Hegel's Political Philosophy', p. 69.

S. K. Wertz

Collingwood and Racial Considerations

Abstract: R.G. Collingwood (1889–1943) had several arguments that analyzed race in history and anthropology. These appear mainly in *Roman Britain* (both in theory and practice of history), *The Idea of History*, and *The Principles of History*. This latter work, which is fairly new to Collingwood scholarship (1999), contains the most important arguments. Collingwood argued that race is grounded in the historical process and this includes a people's environment, more so than genetics or evolution. He used the nature of art as an example in his main argument. This spills over in his view of anthropology—in particular physical anthropology that was influenced by John Beddoe. His view is contrasted with Claude Levi-Strauss who held that physical anthropology is at the forefront of social or cultural anthropology which follows its lead. Whereas Collingwood held that in studying blood types, skulls, and bones, 'one does not get inside the object or recreate its object inside itself.' Consequently, cultural anthropology will always provide the key to racial considerations. What is revealed is that emotions and rationality are the same across cultures; also, that superiority/inferiority claims about race are mythical and lead us into darkness and superstition.

Keywords: Collingwood, racial considerations, history, Roman Britain, Beddoe, Levi-Strauss, physical anthropology, social or cultural anthropology

> There is no human being of any race who,
> if he finds a guide, cannot attain to virtue.[1]

R.G. Collingwood had several arguments that analyzed race in history and anthropology. In what follows, I present various interpretations of race and survey his thought in light of these. The period in which he lived is important in making these interpretations, so we shall also examine that. This essay is divided into three sections. The first deals with Collingwood's earliest account of race which is from his *Roman Britain* (both books). The second covers his accounts of race in his works on the nature of history—*The Idea of History* and *The Principles of History*. Third is a conclusion which draws out some implications of the arguments from the previous two sections.

I. Roman Britain

One place where Collingwood examined race was in *Roman Britain*[2] where we find several substantive remarks. As was common nomenclature at the time (1920s & 30s), race was considered a factor in history and anthropology, but not a dominant one for Collingwood. His best consideration comes from the chapter on art (XV). Collingwood was attempting to answer the following question: 'Why … did they [the Celts] not continue to show their talent by producing good works in the Roman style which they had adopted?' His answer:

> In order that this question may become answerable, we must first of all understand that there is no such thing as an abstract and general artistic talent, biologically transmissible

1 Cicero, ***Laws***, *I.x.30* (see note 7).

2 R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (2nd edn.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937); hereafter RBES, followed by page number(s) after citations. A much earlier version, which is considerably shorter (by two-thirds) and less detailed, was published just as *Roman Britain* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923); hereafter RB, followed by page number(s). RB offers more insight into Collingwood's racial considerations. His discussion of race can be found in the following pages of RB: 11, 12–13, 14–15, 16, 18–19, 22, 77, 81, 101.

> like the shape of a skull. Art is a phenomenon not of biology but of history; and the historical possessions of a people, their traditions and culture, are inherited in a way quite different from that in which biological characteristics are inherited. Biological conceptions like that of race throw no light, but only darkness, upon historical problems, breeding error and superstition where what we want is fact. If we wish to answer our question, we must beware of all talk about racial talent. The artistic power of a people is not an innate power to produce good art: it is a tradition, handed down from generation to generation, telling the members of that people what kinds of artistic problem they must set themselves and how problems of that kind can be solved.[3] (RBES, 252)

So what was Collingwood's understanding of biology and what role it plays in an account of a people? When we turn from the stages of history (ch. I)—the physical geography and climate—to the time of the invasion of Julius Caesar (ch. II), we find a preoccupation with the question of race. Why? It is because Collingwood's contemporaries were preoccupied with the race question.[4] He raised the question in this way: 'to what race did the Britons of that age

3 In *R.G. Collingwood:* ***An Autobiography*** *and Other Writings*, with Essays on Collingwood's Life and Work, edited with an Introduction by David Boucher and Teresa Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); hereafter A, followed by page number(s). Collingwood expressed this point another way: 'there were those who argued that Celtic art was a product of the "Celtic temperament", and that the Celtic temperament blossomed into artistic expression only under conditions of a certain kind. These conditions had existed at the beginning of the Roman period and again at its end; but not in between. It only remained to say what the conditions were. This argument I valued for its intriguing suggestion that the survival of a certain style in art does not necessarily depend on the survival of certain patterns in workshop practice; but its dependence on an occult entity like the "Celtic temperament" forbade me to take it seriously. With entities of that kind we have left behind us the daylight, and even the twilight, of history, and have entered a darkness peopled by all the monsters of *Rassentheorie* and Jungian psychology. In that darkness we find is not history but the negation of history; not the solution of historical problems, but only a heady drink which gives us the illusion of having solved them.' (A, 139–40)

4 For some of the historians and archaeologists he mentioned, see 'Books [and Proceedings] for Further Study,' (RB, 102); and 'Bibliography for Books I–V,' (RBES, 462–78): for example, 'With regard to physical

belong? or, in less ambiguous terms, since the word race is apt to carry misleading associations, what kind of men were they in bodily form and habit?' (RBES, 16). He added that this question cannot be answered briefly and decisively because of the present state of knowledge, but 'something can be done towards clearing away misconceptions and indicating the direction in which an answer should be sought.' (We have seen this in the previous passage on the nature of art.) Consequently, Collingwood's historical methodology could be labelled a 'racial' methodology,[5] but a rather mild one at that, especially compared to Herder and his followers, as we shall see below.

Next is a discussion of physical anthropology: an examination of bones, skulls, and blood types, and how this contributes to an understanding of the ancient Britons. 'It is not until the later Roman period [third and fourth centuries], when cremation ceased to be practised and inhumation became general throughout the country, that we can assemble a sufficient mass of evidence to give us a trustworthy general idea of the physique prevalent in ancient Britain.' Collingwood continued: 'When this happens, we find that the physical type [the Romano-British type anthropologists called it] is fairly constant. The head is moderately long, with a flattish top, giving an upright, square, and somewhat low forehead, generally marked by a transverse groove above the eyebrows: the back of the head projects strongly; the cranial capacity is about the same as that of an average modern Englishman, the stature somewhat less; the figure is as a rule sturdy and muscular' (RBES, 17). This is a summary and what follows are some details (RBES, 18, 27, 183–5).

anthropology, J. Beddoe, *Races of Britain* (1885) is still valuable, but writers (see footnotes) have placed this study on a new footing' (RBES, 475).

5 By racial methodology, I mean that racial matters are focused on in the treatment of a subject matter like Roman Britain; this can be clearly seen in RBES, 18, 182, & 426, where Collingwood took note of L.H.D. Buxton's contributions.

A good example of the early development of physical anthropology is John Beddoe (1826–1911). In *The Races of Britain*,[6] he maintained that hair and eye (iris) color were determinates, in addition to skull and bone dimensions, of race. For instance, whether one was blond or reddish hair and blue or grey eyes, or dark or brown (blackish) hair and brown eyes, would differentiate a specific British race (or other races for that matter).

Collingwood offered more on race in *Roman Britain*. He concluded this early work with this comment: 'The civilization vanished [the Romanized Britons'], but the race remained, and its character, I venture to think, has reasserted itself—mental and physical character alike' (RB, 101). And he spoke of 'the present English race' as a mixed population which dates prior to the Anglo-Saxon period. By 'race' he meant the customs, values, and beliefs of the ancient Britons without the fringe of moral and intellectual superiority over other races. But to show the importance of race, he began *Roman Britain* with a discussion of race (RB, 12–13). He dismissed the idea of the determination of racial types by exact measurement; he declared 'there was no regular physical differentiation whatsoever' between Britons and Romans. Moreover, Collingwood added:

> It is this [homogeneity both in race and civilization] that makes the Roman Empire a quite different thing from all modern empires. The empires of modern times are rent by a racial cleavage between a governing race and a governed, which are too far apart to unite into a single whole. We have barriers of colour and race and language which were absolutely unknown in the Roman world. (RB, 15)

Again, he claimed: 'The Roman Empire was a society of peoples in which intercourse was nowhere checked by

6 John Beddoe, *The Races of Britain: A Contribution to the Anthropology of Western Europe* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1885); hereafter TRB, followed by page number(s). This work is favorably cited in Collingwood's Bibliography (RBES, 475); see note 4.

barriers such as separate races or even nations in the world of to-day' (RB, 15–16). The idea of equality among the races was there but not in practice.[7] Contemporary historians of Roman Britain question these assertions. By the mid-nineteenth century, racial groups were thought of as self-contained and immutable. 'The "Romans" were not a pure race but a very mixed one,' Collingwood declared, 'and one of the chief elements in the mixture was just that Celtic strain which predominated in Britain' (RB, 13). There are still people today who refuse to believe that early London was a multicultural society.[8] It was substantiated that the walls were built by slaves or captives and that the walls were there to keep out 'the barbarians.'[9] Collingwood made the Romans out to be more civilized than the modern Europeans were: 'the Roman Empire was

7 See the prefatory note from Cicero; he added to this conclusion the following remarks: 'there is no difference in kind between man and man; if there were, one definition could not be applicable to all men; and indeed reason, which alone raises us above the level of the beasts and enables us to draw inferences, to prove and disprove, to discuss and solve problems, and to come to conclusions, is certainly common to us all, and, though varying in what it learns, at least in the capacity to learn it is invariable. For the same things are invariably perceived by the senses, and those things which stimulate the senses, stimulate them in the same way in all men; and those rudimentary beginnings of intelligence to which I have referred, which are imprinted on our minds, are interpreted on all minds alike; and speech the mind's interpreter, though differing in the choice of words, agrees in the sentiments expressed.' Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Laws*, I. x. 29–30, trans. C. W. Keyes (The Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 329–30.

8 Rebecca Redfern, 'The Myth of Racial Purity in Roman Britain,' *Sapiens: Anthropology/Everything Human* (12 July 2018), accessed on–line (3 Oct. 2019) with https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/roman-britain-diversity-bioarchaeology/.

9 See, for example, Richard Hingley, *Hadrian's Wall: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. 167, 222–3, 227. North Africans were attested on Hadrian's Wall. Collingwood implies that Roman Empire ideology did not entail the claim of racial opposition, but recent historical research (like Hingley's) demonstrates that it did. But skin color was not as important as education, language (how well someone could speak and write Latin), wealth, kinship and place of origin. Also there was usually no stigma or bias against mixed race relationships in Antiquity (see RB, 16). Consult the *Ancient History Encyclopedia* on-line for recent articles on slavery in the Roman world and on the Roman Empire in West Africa for openers.

far more cosmopolitan than modern Europe' (RB, 16). However, he did make some concessions; for example, 'This savage race [the Celtic-speaking barbarians] was conquered by Rome and kept in subjection by a vast Roman army for three centuries' (RB, 11). That subjection was usually brutal and at times inhumane.

Collingwood supplemented these remarks with an interesting comment on racial differences which is worth quoting in detail:

> But when we say that the Britons, like the other provincials, became Romans, and when we lay stress on the absence of a British racial self-consciousness setting itself up against the self-consciousness of other races, we must not fall into the error, into which historians of the Empire too often fall, of imagining that there were no racial differences. They were not erected into shibboleths and battle-cries, but they existed. A Celt was a Celt and a Syrian was a Syrian even though they conspired to treat each other as brothers and to call themselves simply Romans. Here again the same thing is true in a country like England. A Cumberland man and a Cornwall man are separated by definite racial differences, though they both call themselves Englishmen as unquestioningly as the Celt and the Syrian both called themselves Romans. And these differences crop out when you begin to examine the artistic products of the various provinces. This is another subject to which we shall return; at present we merely note the fact that those racial differences which have attained self-consciousness in our modern nationalism existed, though unaware of themselves, in the Roman Empire. (RB, 18)

This unawareness is at a subconscious level but manifests itself in actions and behavior. He used the same idea, unawareness, to explain how the Celtic art tradition remained within the Celts suppressed until the Roman departure and then it reappeared in their art (see RBES, ch. XV).

Also, of interest, in this passage (RB, 18), is Collingwood's remark that 'A Cumberland man and a Cornwall man are *separated by definite racial differences*,

though they both call themselves Englishmen . . . (emphasis added). Here are Beddoe's descriptions of the Cumberland man and the Cornwall man.

> *Cumberland man*: 'In the prevailing type the profile is straight; the nose of good length, straight or slightly aquiline, rather narrow, not sharply pointed, nostrils roundish; brows not prominent; mouth and chin medium; eyes *a fleur-de-tete*, often of a muddy gray; ears oval, well-formed; hair generally straight and blond, but not bright coloured. The face is either oblong or scrut; form; the head apparently oblong or elliptic.' (TRB, 252)

> *Cornwall man*: 'Generally dark in hair and often in eye: they are decidedly the darkest people in England proper; . . . a receding forehead, a head much arched longitudinally, and broad about the parietal eminences . . . with the heaviness of the mouth and lower part of the nose; this is a common feature among the earlier races of Britain, but is certainly not universal in Cornwall . . . . The colours come out very much like those of the surrounding districts; so do the head forms. The differences between the sexes are the usual ones, but are very small; the males have, if anything, the darker hair, the females the darker eyes. The middle are slightly, the upper decidedly, fairer than the lower classes.' (TRB, 258–9)

Collingwood did say 'we have *barriers* of colour' (RB, 15; emphasis added), but he gave no elaboration or examples of what he meant.

Furthermore, Collingwood's position on racial differences between modern nationalism and the Roman Empire is most puzzling. Even as early as Edward Gibbon in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*[10] (vol. I in 1776), there was discussion of Roman slavery and it was not a pretty picture that was painted. Gibbon began the monumental work with an account of slavery (30-32, 34). And he continued this discussion (480, 976, 1198, 1452). Collingwood wrote several critiques of him in *The*

10 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury (3 vols.; New York, NY: The Heritage Press, 1946); page numbers are to this edition.

Idea of History and *The Principles of History*,[11] so it seems logical that he would have supplied another of Gibbon's position on slavery in the Roman Empire, since it contradicts his position in *Roman Britain*. (Race sometimes figures into slavery, primarily as a justification, as it does here.) But he remained silent on Gibbon here.

Also, it is a general posture like this that led him to diminish the importance of physical anthropology. When Collingwood left historical considerations and entered philosophical ones, his view of physical anthropology changed dramatically. Race became a problematic issue and was downplayed in his arguments.

II. The *History* Treatises

Collingwood picked up his discussion of race again in *The Idea of History*[12] with a summary and a critique of Johann Herder (1744-1803). First is his summary of Herder:

> As a natural being, man is divided into the various races of mankind, each closely related to its geographical environment and having its original physical and mental characteristics moulded by that environment; but in each race, once formed, is a specific type of humanity which has permanent characteristics of its own depending not on its immediate relation to its environment but on its own inbred peculiarities (as a plant formed in one environment remains the same when transplanted into another). The sensuous and imaginative faculties of different races are thus genuinely differentiated; each race has its own conception of happiness and its own ideal of life. (IH, 90)

Part of Collingwood's critique followed: 'The psychological characteristics of each race were regarded as fixed and

11 C.V. Wedgwood, *Edward Gibbon* (Writers and Their Work, No. 66; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1955), 17–22, 28, took issue with Collingwood's account of him, although she did not mention Collingwood by name.

12 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, edited with an Introduction by Jan van der Dussen (revd edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); hereafter IH, followed by page number(s).

uniform, so that instead of the Enlightenment's conception of a single fixed human nature we now have the conception of several fixed human natures' (IH, 91). This is continued with a criticism which echoes Collingwood's own view: 'Each of these [human natures] is regarded not as an historical product but as a presupposition of history. There is still no conception of a people's character as having been made what it is by that people's historical experience; on the contrary, its historical experience is regarded as a mere result of its fixed character' (IH, 91).

And what followed this critique is a political statement similar to what we find in *The New Leviathan*[13] concerning the barbarism of the Germans (among others) and it is worth quoting in full detail:

> At the present time [1936], we have seen enough of the evil consequences of this theory to be on our guard against it. The racial theory of civilisation has ceased to be scientifically respectable. To-day we only know it is a sophistical excuse for national pride and national hatred. The idea that there is a European race whose peculiar virtues render it fit to dominate the rest of the world, or an English race whose innate qualities make imperialism a duty; or a Nordic race whose predominance in America is the necessary condition of American greatness, and whose purity in Germany is indispensable to the purity of German culture, we know to be scientifically baseless and politically disastrous. We know that physical anthropology and cultural anthropology are different studies, and we find it difficult to see how anyone can have confused them. Consequently we are not inclined to be

13 R.G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan: or Man, Society and Barbarism*, ed. and intro. David Boucher (rev edn.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); hereafter NL, followed by page number(s). I have in mind specifically Part IV Barbarism, section xlv The Fourth Barbarism: The Germans. Collingwood does have a discussion of Gibbon's *History* in The First Barbarism: The Saracens; NL, 354–8; in The Second Barbarism: The 'Albigensian Heresy'; NL, 360–5; and in The Third Barbarism: The Turks; NL, 367–8.

> grateful to Herder for having started so pernicious a doctrine.[14] (IH, 91-2)

In *The Principles of History*,[15] Collingwood traced Herder's idea of multiple, distinct human natures back to the ancient Hebrews with their notion of being pronounced by God as the 'chosen people'[16] (PH, 236). Along with this conception of 'choseness' comes persecution (PH, 237); that is, it often provoked antagonism from non-Jews. This was especially true in the 1930s with the Nazis. During times like this, the choseness doctrine was a source of great strength for the Jewish people. Collingwood wrote that only if the Nazis had realized how Jewish their notion of Aryan superiority was (that is, choseness), they would have immediately dropped it.[17] In

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14 And this doctrine unfortunately continues today. Since 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump and the white-supremacists have systematically tried to undermine core democratic values (liberty, equality, and justice) in America and elsewhere.

15 R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History and Other Writings in Philosophy of History*, ed. with intro. W. H. Dray and W.J. van der Dussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); hereafter PH, followed by page number(s).

16 Biblical evidence of this comes from the *Torah*: Deuteronomy (ch. 14) where it announces: 'For you are a holy people to Hashem your God, and God has chosen you to be his treasured people from all the nations that are on the face of the earth.' (Also, see Genesis, ch. 17.)

17 In detail, Collingwood argued: 'The recent outbreak of persecution against the Jews in Germany is conditioned not by the persecutors' desire to stamp out historical biologism, but by their acceptance of that error. The official doctrine of the persecutors is a so-called *Rassentheorie* according to which the facts of history are subordinated, as effects to their causes, to certain biological facts, namely the differentiation of the human species into those varieties which are called the "races" of man. This *Rassentheorie* is an eighteen-century thing—the eighteen century was characteristically the age when the still immature historical consciousness of the modern European world was experimenting with every form of historical naturalism—being in fact Herder's special version of the general type of pseudo-history then prevalent. (Query: is there any *direct* evidence that Herder was influenced by Jewish thought? he was, of course, as an eighteenth-century German, a Bible-reader and presumably given to taking his Bible very seriously: you would *expect* him, in a matter such as this, to regurgitate fragments of Biblical doctrine; but I should like proof.) Modern Germany thus stands officially committed to the same error

light of these attacks, though, some Jews wanted to do away with the belief in Jewish choseness.[18]

But returning to Collingwood's view, we find a significant shift in his thinking. This comes from his discussion of physical and cultural anthropology. All this changed when he began to explore them from a broader perspective with other considerations. The most telling statement is this: 'What are now days called racial types in the psychological sense are in fact cultural traditions built up, not unlike the character of an individual, through a history of many centuries; what are called in the stricter sense psychological types are the product of that historical process which biologists call the evolution of man' (PH, 193). This is a remarkable claim. It is well known that Collingwood's gripe with evolution was not with Darwin per se, but evolutionary philosophers like Herbert Spencer, so this remark about the 'evolution of man' is aimed primarily at them. What this amounts to is basically a denial of physical anthropology as a genuine study. The basic premise in this argument is seen in the following passage: 'On a foundation of animal life his rationality builds a structure of free activities, free in the sense that although they are based on his animal nature they do not proceed from it but are invented by his reason on its own initiative, and serve not the purposes of animal life, but the purposes of reason itself' (PH, 46). Elsewhere Collingwood let it be known that 'Anthropology—I refer to *cultural, not physical anthro-*

which infected ancient Jewish thought, and which Paul exploded—the error of regarding a given community's historical function as bound up with its biological character, i.e. with the common pedigree of its members—and thus persecutes the Jews *because it agrees with them.* Intellectually, the Jew is the victor in the present-day conflict (if you can call it that) in Germany. He has succeeded in imposing his idea of a chosen people (in the biological sense of the word people) on modern Germany: and this may explain why the victims of this persecution take it so calmly.' (PH, 237; his italics) His contemporary, George Bernard Shaw, made a similar statement.

18 I have profited from consulting the Jewish Virtual Library website, and especially their link, chosen people.

pology—is a historical science, where by calling it historical as opposed to naturalistic I mean that its true method is thus to get inside its object or recreate its object inside itself.'[19] In studying blood types, skulls, and bones, one does not get inside the object or recreate its object inside itself. Accordingly, physical anthropology takes a back seat to cultural anthropology. Collingwood moved further and further away from physical anthropology and settled for the questions which cultural anthropology could answer. This moves him away from mainstream anthropology; for example, Claude Levi-Strauss held that 'It [the chronological and spatial continuity between the natural order and cultural order] explains why anthropology, even social anthropology, affirms its solidarity with physical anthropology, whose discoveries it awaits somewhat avidly.'[20] Collingwood's posturing on this methodological issue stems from his idealistic (maybe *antirealistic* is a better term) stance which we witnessed earlier about reason's structure and its independence of animal life (PH, 46). We no longer have a racial methodology at work. A person's actions and behavior are predominantly independent of racial considerations, so these considerations need not be reflected in a historical methodology (as Collingwood did in *Roman Britain*).

19 R.G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, ed. David Boucher, Wendy James, and Phillip Smallwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), cited in Boucher's 'In Defence of Collingwood: Perspectives from Philosophy and the History of Ideas,' Editors' Introduction, PE, cxiii; my emphasis.

20 Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Scope of Anthropology,' in his *Structural Anthropology*, translated from the French by Monique Layton (2 vols.; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), II, 14. Elsewhere, in 'The Work of the Bureau of American Ethnology,' Levi-Strauss claimed that 'Anthropology . . . has the same subject matter as history, but for lack of time perspective it cannot use the same methods. Its own methods . . . aim at discovering invariant properties beneath the apparent particularity and diversity of the observed phenomena' (II, 57). An example of the method is what he called 'transformation rules which make possible to include in the same group myths previously held to be markedly different' (II, 58).

His best discussion of race appeared in the unpublished manuscript 'Reality as History' (1935), section 4. Human Nature and Human History (PH, 189-97). Collingwood queried 'If there is such a thing as human nature, how is it related to the nature of the various races—European, African, Asiatic, and Australian—which form the varieties of the human species?' (PH, 196-7).[21] To which he responded: in studying blood types, skulls, and bones, 'one does not get inside the object or recreate its object inside itself.' So physical anthropology is not as important as cultural anthropology. This is the exact opposite of what Levi-Strauss held for anthropology. So we find a methodological controversy here. In addition, Collingwood cited genetics as a premise in his argument against the conception of human nature as static and that it supported his view of humanity as a product of the historical process. But to this, we can add that the concept of race is not grounded in genetics; (see note 19). If it is not genetics, then what is it? Collingwood's answer is that race is a product of the historical process and that includes a people's environment. The closer peoples are together in their

21 I am not sure where Collingwood got his list of races. He left one out: Capoid (Bushman/Hottentots) race which the American anthropologist Carleton S. Coon (1904–81) in the mid-twentieth century listed in his racial classification into five groups: besides Capoid, Caucasiod, Negroid, Mongoloid, and Australoid. This comes from his *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1939). In 1933 he was invited to write a new edition of William Z. Ripley's *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1899). The Capoid race is a historical category proposed by Coon and named after the Cape of Good Hope. The Capoids are now considered to be a sub-group of Negroid people. Coon avoided discussions of blood groups and racial intelligence in his study. In the seventeenth century, Europeans used the term race to refer to physical traits (which Collingwood did in *Roman Britain*) rather than refer to speakers of a common language or to national or religious affiliations. This information comes from Human Race—Wikipedia, website: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Race. Like Coon, Collingwood wanted to avoid speaking of intelligence in terms of race. 'Futile,' he declared, 'is the attempt to find causes for different kinds of rational activity in the biological difference between varieties of the human race' (PH, 85, see also 197).

environment, the closer their physical characteristics match. The further away from one another, their physical characteristics are different and can be significantly measured. This is seen or appreciated in the five variations of the races of humanity listed above: not four as Collingwood thought (see note 21).

III. Implications

If we look at race studies before Collingwood, and what he contributed to the conversation, he made a major contribution to bringing race out of darkness and into the twilight of understanding where it fits into anthropological investigations in a significant way.[22] Furthermore, geography provides another avenue for biologists and anthropologists to explore race which demonstrates the importance of environment. He also provided a serious critique of claims of racial superiority and inferiority, and this is perhaps his best contribution to the subject. This racial stance at that time was most unusual for a person of privilege, because most English people, including Collingwood, believed in the Empire and that Great Britain was assisting places like South Africa, Australia, and India by their presence and influence.[23] However, rudiments of Empire thinking can be found in Collingwood's history: at the conclusion of 'Art and Language' (ch. 4), he asked

> How we are to square these facts ['The Romans were no more ignorant of education [i.e., Latin] than of hot and cold water-pipes.'] with our belief in progress and in our own

22 For further discussion of Collingwood's anthropology, see S.K. Wertz, 'Eating and Dining: Collingwood's Anthropology,' *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies* 22 no. 2 (2017): 247–58.

23 Sir Winston Churchill makes for a good study of Empire thinking; see Andrew Roberts, *Churchill: Walking with Destiny* (New York, NY: Viking, 2018), inter alia. In writing a historical narrative, Churchill avoided the term *empire* as in the phrase 'The British Empire,' *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, 4 vols. (1956–8).

> superiority to all our predecessors is another question; but there the facts are (RB, 88).

Put simply, he was not immune to Empire thinking. Empire thinking may not be racism, but it can foster it. But these beliefs were suspended as WWII was becoming imminent. In 'Man Goes Mad',[24] he forewarned: 'modern civilization is destroying itself, or what modern man (in words of my title) is going or has gone mad' (PE, 306). Part of this madness is racism.[25]

As Collingwood noted, race is an ambiguous term which is emotionally charged. It denotes ethnicity and race in biological (Coon's categories), national, religious, and linguistic (common language) senses. However, what is missing in his analysis is *race as skin-color* which has dominated American history.[26] Collingwood was more than likely acquainted with the American Civil War and its causal antecedents, but that was something out of his historical interests. We don't find traces of race as skin-color in his writings but we do find it elsewhere (see note 6). This sense of race is clearly most of the madness

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24 R.G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, ed. David Boucher, Wendy James, and Philip Smallwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 305–35; hereafter PE, followed by page number(s).

25 I have exhibited above two arguments from Collingwood on art and racial considerations. Recently, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* has had an entire issue on race: vol. 77, no. 4 (Fall 2019). But none of these articles has addressed the arguments that Collingwood had advanced; however, he was one of the first to begin a methodological investigation of race in history. Some of the arguments have been addressed by Vanita Seth, 'The Origins of Racism: A Critique of the History of Ideas,' *History and Theory* 59, no. 3 (Sept. 2020): 343–68. For historical (starting with Francois Bernier, 'A New Division of the Earth,' 1684) and contemporary sources, consult *The Idea of Race*, ed. with intro. Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott (Indianapolis, IN/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000).

26 See Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018). Her central thesis is that U. S. history is a history of slavery and what it—slavery—engendered. Also, Carrie Gibson, *El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten Story of Hispanic North America* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2019), 5–9, 87, 214, 234, 244, 283, 286, 310–11, for a discussion of ethnicity and various meanings of race.

that Collingwood spoke of. Of all the senses of the word race, this is the most irrational. How could color of skin determine or even contribute to the physical and/or mental capacities of a race? Yet it was, and still is, believed by many to be the case.

The emphasis on color in physical anthropology in the late nineteenth century, and especially the idea of a 'official colour-census of Germany' (TRB, 40n), went a long way to 'legitimize' color for distinguishing race, and moved us closer to associating it with skin as was done in America. For instance, in California how dark a Hispanic was would determine whether one could vote or not. Elsewhere in America, especially the South, if one was black then he or she was completely disenfranchised (see note 26).

As can be seen above, there is a tension in Collingwood's view of physical anthropology: at times he seemed to deny a positive role in understanding race, and at other times he saw a legitimate use and place in that understanding. This tension was left unresolved in his philosophy.[27]

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27 I thank Nell Graham Sale for her comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

Roger Crisp[1]

F.H. Bradley as Theological Utilitarian

It is not uncommon for the most famous essay in F.H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, 'My Station and its Duties' (MSD) (1927: 160–213), to be thought of as the definitive statement of Bradley's ethical position.[2] According to Bradley himself, indeed, 'There is nothing better than my station and its duties, nor anything higher nor more beautiful' (201). But Bradley ends the essay by pointing out several major deficiencies in MSD (202–6): (1) the moral person may not find themselves fully realized in the world; (2) the moral sphere of MSD is too narrow: moral development is diachronic, and the moral agent has to stand above the practices of their community to assess them, taking a point of view above the particularities of time and space; (3) self-improvement does not always involve others, since there are duties such as those to produce truth and beauty, and these are independent of any station.

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2 All unattributed references are to this work.

MSD is only the fifth out of eight chapters in the book, and in the following essay, 'Ideal Morality' (214–50), Bradley seeks in Hegelian fashion to remedy the problems of MSD. He explains how the ideal self will involve the fulfilment of not only the duties of MSD, but also the duty to reflect and if necessary go beyond those duties, and non-social duties, such as to fulfil one's aesthetic talents (219–24). This chapter might be thought to have a stronger claim to encapsulate Bradley's moral view, since the next essay, 'Selfishness and Self-sacrifice' (251–312), is essentially the tying up of some loose ends, concerning psychological egoism and various other matters. This would be a disappointing conclusion, however, since ideal morality itself involves contradictions: it tells you to be virtuous, but this is something you cannot achieve because of the constant presence of the bad self; and it aims to bring about its own destruction as morality, as without the bad self there would be no morality (234–5; see 244–5).

In the light of these contradictions, and Bradley's Hegelian method, it is important to remember that Bradley finishes *Ethical Studies* with some substantial 'Concluding Remarks' (313–44). These begin by reiterating the various tensions and contradictions in morality, and state quite clearly: 'Reflection on morality leads us beyond it' (314). What we find beyond morality is religion, which actualizes an ideal self that, in morality, remains only potential (319). Religion removes the tensions in the self resulting from the presence of the sinful 'private self':

> To that self you must die, and by faith be made one with the ideal. You must resolve to give up your will, as the mere will of this or that man, and must put your whole self, your entire will, into the will of the divine. That must be your own self, as it is your true self; that you must hold to both with thought and will, and all other you must renounce; you must both refuse to recognize it as yours, and practically with your whole self deny it. You must believe that you too really are one with the divine, and must act as if you believed it. (325)

What is meant by my being one with the divine? Bradley nowhere mentions the doctrine of the Trinity, or anything similar, but he does later suggest that the relationship is not one of straightforward one-to-one identity, and involves also a metaphysical relationship with other selves. Speaking of the object with which the self is made one by faith, Bradley says:

> it is known, not until it is apprehended as an organic human-divine totality; as one body with diverse members, as one self which, in many selves, realizes, wills, and loves itself, as they do themselves in it. (331)[3]

My post-renunciation self, then, is a constituent of the ideal, divine, self, as are other selves, presumably also post-renunciation. And there is no conflict between these

> The member feels and knows itself, not as this member distinct from that member, but (since for faith the bad self is not) immediately one with the wall of the entire organism. (332n)

This passage is from a note in the original edition of 1876. Bradley adds a later note in the second edition which makes it clear that, though each self can distinguish itself from others, the 'consciousness of oneness' removes 'the possibility of opposition and of separation in spirit'. The 'member' selves, then, can be seen as constituting the divine whole, as an absolute ideal, in a way analogous to that in which the parts of an individual's life constitute that life as a whole. In these passages, Bradley appears to be recommending not the denial of what J.N. Findlay called the 'separateness of persons', but of its ultimate practical significance (1961: 235–6). It is this denial of significance that John Rawls claims is especially characteristic of utilitarianism (1999: 24), so it might seem that at the conclusion of *Ethical Studies* Bradley is at least gesturing in the direction of a theological utilitarianism.

3 Such organicism is present also in MSD: see pp. 186–7.

But, surely, it might be said, we must understand Bradley's religious claim here as in line with MSD and the other two elements of ideal morality? Moving beyond that morality, that is to say, is not to leave it entirely behind. The suggestion here seems both charitable and plausible, given that Bradley nowhere suggests giving up on non-utilitarian elements of morality. We have to remember, however, that, once the distinction between persons is discounted through identification of oneself with the divine, any 'other-regarding' aspects of that pre-renunciation morality, in particular those governing the distribution of goods between different individuals, will in effect be in abeyance. Consider again the analogy with different temporal parts of an individual life. I may take on certain burdens at an earlier part of my life in order for a later part to go better. But there is no reason to think of the later part as having a 'right' that the earlier part take on these burdens. This is justified by the benefit to me as a whole, of which each self is a mere part. So, because there can be no conflict between the wills or the interests of the constituent selves, any beneficence must be impartial (and so, from the point of view of the divine itself, amount to a form of maximizing prudence). What about distribution based on desert? This notion also will surely be in abeyance, since the divine presumably cannot do wrong, and any wrong-doing will anyway be attributable to bad, non-ideal selves.

It is true, however, that certain non-other-regarding elements, independent of the distribution of goods, may not be practically transcended after renunciation. Consider, for example, veracity. This raises the question of the relation between benevolence and such virtues.[4] On one view, divine morality is pluralist, and there is a potential for conflict between benevolence and veracity. On another,

4 On the eighteenth-century debate concerning the relation between God's benevolence and other virtues, see Irwin (2013: 197).

which is essentially the utilitarian position, the veracity principle, and all other such principles, are secondary to benevolence, always giving way in any conflict.

There is some evidence in Bradley's text that he would have preferred the second option, and can therefore be interpreted as a theological utilitarian. He ends the work with the suggestion that post-renunciation morality will be dominated at all times by 'immortal Love'. Further, Bradley's hostility to utilitarianism seems primarily to be directed at hedonism (see especially chapter 3) rather than the utilitarian account of distribution:

> If 'happiness' means well-being or perfection of life, then I am content to say that, with Plato and Aristotle, I hold happiness to be the end; and, although virtue is not a *mere* means, yet it can be regarded as a means and so is 'useful'. In this sense, we, who reject Hedonism, can call ourselves Utilitarians, and the man who thinks he is pushing some counter view by emphasizing 'happiness' and 'usefulness' does not touch us with his phrases, but perhaps rather confirms us. (140–1)[5]

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Rebecca Toueg

R.G. Collingwood and Imperfect Rationality

Abstract: In his article 'On Explaining Disaster', J.W. Watkins says that human actions resulting in disastrous consequences are due to mistaken judgments made by the agent. Although his actions are based on rational assessments of his situation, he fails to achieve the desired result. Watkins correctly assumes that even almost inexplicable disasters such as the collision in Mediterranean waters of two British battleships in 1893, the HMS Victoria and HMS Camperdown, can be explained rationally by reconstructing the subjective reasoning behind the actions of each of the two captains, Tryon and Markham. In a later article entitled 'Imperfect Rationality' he uses this same argument to attack the view of R.G. Collingwood that only successful actions can be explained. He cites a passage in Collingwood's *Autobiography* that in the Battle of Trafalgar, only Nelson's plan of action can be historically explained because it was successful, while Villeneuve's plan can never be known because he failed to achieve it. Watkins apparently misunderstood what Collingwood meant by an unsuccessful action. An unsuccessful action is not one that ended in failure or in disaster, but one that was planned but has not been successfully carried out.

Imperfect rationality is the term used by J.W. Watkins to explain failed or disastrous actions that seem to have been performed irrationally. In the world of today we are constantly faced with the problem of explaining disasters.

Aside from natural disasters over which we have little control, such as earthquakes, typhoons or floods, the disasters caused by human agents are usually the result of human error and negligence.

To explain a disaster, we usually try to think back to the possible *cause* for it, to find out what mechanical or technical failure may have generated it. If there was no such failure, then there must have been some human action, whether deliberate or mistaken, that was the *reason* for the disaster. A cause is something that might have been averted if we had been aware of its possible effects (e.g. 'for want a horse-shoe nail'). But when we try to find out the reason for an action, we have to discover the motivations, intentions or aims of the person or persons performing the action. Here historical explanation and the problem of rationality enter the picture.

In trying to explain disaster resulting from human error, John Watkins (LSE Professor in the Social Sciences) published an article in *The Listener*[1] in which he says that a human action cannot be explained unless it is shown to be rational—not necessarily objectively rational but at least subjectively rational based on the agent's own appreciation of his situation. He illustrates this with the story of a disastrous naval maneuver, the collision of the two battleships, HMS Camperdown and HMS Victoria in 1893, which at first seemed inexplicable but was given an intelligible reconstruction of the situation and circumstances. And he uses the explanation of this tragic event to counter the statement made by R.G. Collingwood in his *Autobiography* (1939) that a historian could only know why a certain action was performed by knowing the problem that the historical agent was trying to solve. Watkins claims that by negating the possibility of understanding an

1 J.W.N. Watkins, 'On Explaining Disaster', *Listener*, January 10, 1963, pp. 69–70.

unsuccessful action, a failed or disastrous action, much of historical behavior would remain unintelligible.

Later, in a more extended discussion of his thesis,[2] Watkins put forward the idea of 'imperfect rationality' in order to 'rationalize' the apparent irrationality of the human agent. His imperfect rationality principle was meant, as he says, to bridge the gap between the intentional decision made by the historical agent and the unforeseen consequence of his action:

> In seeking an explanation we are often seeking a rationalization of a seemingly irrational answer. Philosophically speaking, the easiest kind of historical explanation of an action that ended in failure is this. The main components of the agent's decision-scheme have been ascertained to the historian's satisfaction; these point pretty unambiguously to a certain practical conclusion; *but* there is a significant discrepancy between the situational appraisal contained in the agent's decision-scheme (as reconstructed by the historian) and the agent's objective problem-situation (as reconstructed by the historian); and the failure of the action can be explained in terms of this discrepancy (pp. 209–10).

In his attack of what he considers to be Collingwood's view of unsuccessful actions, Watkins also points out what Alan Donagan had already noted,[3] that Collingwood's statement contradicts his own practice in giving a convincing explanation of Caesar's unsuccessful attempts to conquer Britain. What we have here, however, is a complete misinterpretation of what Collingwood meant by a successful action, which he uses in the sense of an action that *successfully carries out the agent's intention*. The passage in question which Watkins quotes from Collingwood's *Autobiography* is the following:

2 J.W.N. Watkins, 'Imperfect Rationality', in: R. Borger and F. Cioffi, eds., *Explanation in the Behavioral Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 167–217; 'Comment', Alan Donagan, pp. 218–27; 'Reply', J.W.N. Watkins, pp. 228–30

3 Alan Donagan, *The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 268.

> Naval historians think it worth while to argue about Nelson's tactical plan at Trafalgar because he won the battle. It is not worth while arguing about Villeneuve's plan. He did not succeed in carrying it out, and therefore no one will ever know what it was.[4]

Watkins mistakenly thought that for Collingwood, *only* those actions that can be explained in terms of problem and solution can be rationally understood. What Collingwood meant was that a historian can only deal with historical acts, those which have actually been carried out through historical agents. For Collingwood, a plan that was not carried out is not a historical act. Perhaps, if a written account or verbal testimony of Villeneuve's plan were available to the historian, it could have been recorded as evidence of what 'might have occurred', but it was not a historical action. The thought in the mind of an agent which did not result in an action is an aborted act, one that was unsuccessful and failed to occur. Thought and action are two sides of the same coin. Every historical act is the result of an intention in the mind of the agent within certain a situational complex.

History for Collingwood is the story of human actions within a specific context – it is not only subject, as Karl Popper would say, to 'situational analysis' but also to the intentions of the historical agent. An action is therefore to be judged successful if it was successfully carried out, if the intention of the agent was carried through in practice. The success of an action should not be judged subjectively according to its result, whether disastrous or beneficial. One might call the terror action of September 11 a disaster from our viewpoint, but from Bin Laden's viewpoint it was highly successful. Watkins apparently confuses between an action that culminates in disaster and one that

4 R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 70.

was unsuccessful, in the sense of not having succeed in being carried out.

As Herman Simissen,[5] in his criticism of Watkins, has already pointed out, Collingwood did not mean to say that an unsuccessful action could not be explained, only that it could not be regarded as a historical action. A historian may make certain educated assumptions of a failed or unsuccessful attempt to act by consulting written evidence of prior intent, or by analogy with other actions performed by the same agent or other agents in similar circumstances. But only actions that have been carried out, that have succeeded in taking place, are historical actions, not those that may have been planned but were never realized.

The example that Watkins brought forward to illustrate his principle of imperfect rationality is a naval disaster which had been called at that time 'an explanation defying enigma'. This is the story of a disastrous naval maneuver that occurred on June 22, 1893. The British Mediterranean Fleet was on its way from Beirut to Tripoli (Lebanon). As it neared its destination, the 13 ships were ordered to form two parallel divisions, with the flagships of each division, the Victoria commanded by Vice-Admiral Tryon and the Camperdown commanded by Rear-Admiral Markham at the head. The ships were six cables apart from each other. Tryon hoisted a signal for the two divisions to turn inwards towards each other and reverse their direction at 180 degrees in succession. This order alarmed Markham because the turning circles for each ship was four cables and the distance between them was only six cables. He hesitated at first, but when he received a signal of rebuke from Tryon he gave the order to turn. The ships swung towards each other and collided violently. The Camperdown rammed into the Victoria and the ship soon sank.

5 Herman Simissen, 'On Understanding Disaster', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 23 (1993): pp. 352–67.

Many of those in the water were massacred by the turning screws and 356 officers and men died, including Admiral Tryon.

It seemed to the people of that time that Tryon must have taken leave of his senses to give such an order. He was a brilliant commander, but his guiding brain must have failed him at that moment. Yet Watkins found an explanation for his action in the rational reconstruction of the event in Richard Hough's book, *Admirals in Collision*.[6] It seems that Tryon had intended for the two ships to turn within each other's turning circle. Markham, soon after his initial hesitation, realized this was Tryon's intention, but thought that according to the general 'rule of the road' the Victoria would circle outside the Camperdown, while Tryon had assumed that the Camperdown would circle outside the Victoria in accordance with the current naval regulations to 'preserve the order of the fleet'. This meant that the Camperdown should have ended up on the port side of the Victoria, and therefore should have wheeled around it and not inside it.

As Hough explains it, the disaster was not the result of irrationality by the agents but of mistaken intentions, of misjudgment of what the other person meant. Each of the main protagonists assessed the situation differently and the conflicting assessments led to a collision. The *maneuver* itself was an 'unsuccessful' action in view of the fact that the plan in Tryon's mind was not carried out successfully. Yet the resulting *disaster* could be explained rationally by reconstructing the conflicting assumptions of the agents and the reasons for their actions.

In fact, Collingwood wanted to go one step further than the mere reconstruction of historical agents and their actions. Even after a rational reconstruction of historical event on the basis of all the available evidence, the historian could only present a *conjectured* picture of the past. In

6 Richard Hough, *Admirals in Collision* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1959).

order for the event to become history in the real sense of the word, the historian would have to re-enact the thought behind the action, to rethink what must have been in the agent's mind at the time, to see the problem he was trying to solve, to find the question he was trying to answer. Collingwood's theory of re-enactment of the past, his concept of the incapsulation of the past within the present, which also links up with his logic of question and answer and his theory of relative and absolute presuppositions, shows how all his ideas are closely interconnected in a unified system of thought.

Watkins makes no mention of this theory of re-enactment—one of Collingwood's principles of history. He did not realize that Collingwood had no interest in rationalizing history, only in understanding it, in knowing how it came about. Re-enactment was a way of imaginatively placing oneself in the place of the historical agent, of reasoning backward to a plan of action that is presupposed by the action itself, so that the action becomes intelligible, comprehensible. This means he would probably have complied with Watkin's concept of 'imperfect rationality' and even with the idea of a 'bounded rationality', a concept introduced by the economist and cognitive scientist Herbert Simon.[7] Bounded rationality, according to his definition, is not irrationality or an inferior form of rationality, but an alternative form of rationalization outside the current norms of rational behavior. It takes into consideration the actual behavior of human agents - a rethinking of their behavioral norms in accordance with their expectations, aspirations, level of satisfaction, etc. which allows for considerable scope for incompatible assumptions of reality.

Collingwood's view of history is that human actions are based on the preconceptions and presuppositions of people at a given time and place. One can only 'rationalize'

7 Herbert Simon, *Models of Man* (New York: John Wiley, 1957), p. 198.

human actions by relating them to the particular context in which they are performed—the context being not merely one of an objectively physical, social or environmental situation but also of the thoughts and presuppositions that presumably and most probably lie behind their actions. History for Collingwood had an outer and an inner side, and the two were inseparable and inextricable.

> The historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and inside of an event … The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other. He is investigating not mere events … but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and inside of an event … His work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent.[8]

Watkins says that he was actually using Collingwood as a 'stalking horse' for his own ideas about rational action. I realize now that I have been using Watkins as a stalking horse for Collingwood's ideas about history. If thought and action are inextricably linked, the human agent is never intentionally 'wrong' to act as he does. Markham was not wrong to act as he did—he was unfortunately mistaken in understanding the intentions of Tryon, in misinterpreting his signals. He may be blamed for his imperfect realization of what Tryon had intended just as Tryon is reported to have blamed himself for the disaster just before he died.

As Oded Balaban says in his article on error as an explanatory category:

> The notion of error only makes sense in light of the analysts' own expectations and preconceptions. Rendering a decision wrong makes sense only comparatively because we compare

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8 R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 213.

> the actual decision to some ideal decision on which we *consider* the decision-maker *should* have taken.

It is this gap between the actual and the ideal decision that Watkins is talking about in his imperfect rationality principle.[9] As imperfectly rational human agents, acting in an imperfectly rational world, all we can do is study the history of human actions and do the best we can to close the gap between the real and the ideal, between imperfection and perfection.

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9 Oded Balaban, "The Use of Error as an Explanatory Category in Politics", in: G. Hon and S.S. Rakover, eds., *Explanation: Theoretical Approaches and Applications* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 277–306.

Peter Nicholson

Book Review

W.J. Mander and Stamatoula Panagakou, eds, *British Idealism and the Concept of the Self* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), ISBN 9781137466709 (boards) and 9781137466716 (ebook), xii + 335 pp.

This is a very good collection indeed. Taken individually, all the contributions are high quality, well-informed, up-to-date and original, and some are outstanding. Taken together, they make up an unusually integrated whole.

The editors' 'Introduction' gives an excellent general survey of the topic—as well as a helpful summary of the papers—and demonstrates its importance. In 'The Early British Idealists and the Metaphysics of the Self' Jenny Keefe gives a balanced and historically sensitive account of three 'predecessors' of British Idealism who prepared the way: Ferrier, John Grote and J.H. Stirling, concentrating on Ferrier's system as the most developed and most novel. Her discriminating eye brings out clearly the differences as well as the underlying similarities between the three philosophers. James Allard's excellent 'Metaphysics, Religion, and Self-Realization in F.H. Bradley' first identifies an apparent contradiction in Bradley's treat-

ment of God in different parts of his philosophy, then pursues an argument centred on his metaphysics to explain how it can be resolved. The great value of Allard's analysis is that it distinguishes, in a way that Bradley himself does not, the many levels of argument in Bradley's philosophy; thereby Allard offers a way of rendering intelligible and acceptable Bradley's making the self central in *Ethical Studies* yet pushing it aside in *Appearance and Reality*. *Ethical Studies* is the subject of Dina Babuskina's 'F.H. Bradley's Conception of the Moral Self: A New Reading'. She successfully explores Bradley's moral self, separating the diverse strands of his argument and bringing out its complexity but also its unity. Particularly revealing is her use of a 'project', 'a lifelong conscious endeavour', which illuminates the development of the self. This is a subtle new reading, paying very close attention to the text, and to variations in Bradley's language, with excellent results. Phillip Ferreira's 'Self, Not-Self, and the End of Knowledge: Edward Caird on Self-Consciousness' carefully assesses Caird's Hegelianism and shows how he reworks Hegel significantly when he treats self-consciousness. This paper is especially welcome. Although Caird is, as the editors note, 'a central figure' in British Idealism (p. 12; and he appears as such in Mander's own paper), he has been relatively neglected until recently. Janusz Grygieńć, in 'Dialectics of Self-Realization and the Common Good in the Philosophy of T.H. Green', provides an acute and succinct survey of Green's treatment of the relation between the individual and their community. Grygieńć helpfully distinguishes the different lines of argument and shows that they differ in adequacy. He concludes that, although flawed, Green's treatment remains 'inspiring' (p. 123). Rex Martin, in 'Three Dimensions of T.H. Green's Idea of the Self', examines Green's notion of the self in his metaphysics, his ethics and, at most length, his political philosophy. In the last, Martin concentrates on Green's theory of

rights, highlighting its key elements and investigating how they work together. Martin provides many insights into Green's theory, however I think his view that Green's account of rights is too narrowly confined to liberties of action (pp. 141–2) needs qualification because Green's wider contention that the state should act to enable citizens to develop as moral agents opens the way to rights of recipience (e.g. LPPO sects 209–10). Stamatoula Panagakou's 'Bernard Bosanquet on the Ethical System of the State' examines how *The Philosophical Theory of the State* links metaphysical and social analyses of the self. She brings out extremely well the interconnections between his ideas, and how they form a systematic philosophy. Especially commendable is her provision of illuminating examples which clarify and elucidate Bosanquet's technical and often difficult language. In 'The Metaphysical Self and the Moral Self in Bernard Bosanquet' William Sweet discusses a basic problem with Bosanquet, asking whether he adequately recognises the distinctness and value of the human individual. The common answer is 'no': Sweet's is 'yes', when one attends to 'how Bosanquet understands individuality, the self, and the nature of the human subject.' Sweet's main focus is the tension some see between a metaphysics which devalues the self and a moral philosophy which prioritises it, a tension he dissipates mainly by means of revisiting and reinterpreting Bosanquet's metaphysical self. This is a highly persuasive analysis of the consistency and unity of Bosanquet's two principal perspectives on the self, presented with exemplary clarity and detailed textual evidence. Interestingly, the same accusation—that Bosanquet depreciates the self—is also confronted by Avital Simhony in '"To Set Free the Idea of the Self": Bosanquet's Relational Individual', though she approaches the issue more from the other side, emphasising the social aspects of the self in the finite world. She does not deny that Bosanquet's view of the self

remains vulnerable to some criticism but demonstrates that many of the usual objections are misplaced because they fail to understand the strengths of his position. Simhony is a reliable guide through some very demanding terrain. Between them Panagakou, Sweet and Simhony effect a major rehabilitation of Bosanquet. Ian Winchester's 'Collingwood's Conception of Personhood and Its Relation to Language Use' is a clear and careful investigation of its topic, which it also assesses critically. James Connelly, in 'Collingwoodian Reflections on the Biographical Self', discusses questions about the nature of the self involved in writing biography or autobiography, especially in the case of the biography of a philosopher. His elegant and interesting essay reveals much about both Collingwoodian biography and intellectual biography per se. Gary L. Cesarz, in 'Renovating McTaggart's Substantial Self', rethinks 'McTaggart's stand on immaterial *substantive* selves in light of its relation to Humean bundles and recent scientific trends' (p. 264). This is a significant piece of closely argued philosophy, referring to contemporary literature and finding much of importance in McTaggart's position. W.J. Mander, in 'Idealism and the True Self', successfully demonstrates how very important the idea of the true self was in the philosophy of the British Idealists. The essay is a masterly and sympathetic presentation of the different senses, or different aspects, of the true self. Notable is the weighting he gives to the religious dimension, which some wish to marginalise. Mander's account shows how *all* the dimensions of the self are interwoven and interdependent: he gives a good sense of the integrity of British Idealist thought. He also sets out cogently its value for philosophy today. The final paper, 'Persons, Categories and the Problems of Meaning and Value', by the late Leslie Armour (to whose memory the collection is dedicated) is in a category of its own. It does not start from what one or more of the British Idealists said

but is an independent and original consideration of what it is to be a person or self, conducted on broadly Idealist lines. It is a sketch of the issues about personality as they arise today, with the guiding idea that one is a person if one says one is, in the sense that one makes a claim. This seems correct—and fundamental.

As I remarked at the outset, this is an unusually unified collection, with plentiful connections between the papers whereby they throw light upon one another. Reading them stimulates further thought and comparisons. For example, the interpretation of Bosanquet given by Sweet and Simhony reduces the gap between him and Green. Bosanquet himself said his political philosophy followed Green's, merely updating it (*Philosophical Theory of the State*, pp. viii-x). Bosanquet's moral self, as explicated by Sweet, has obvious and deep similarities with the self of the *Prolegomena to Ethics*. And now that Sweet has revealed that Bosanquet's moral self is compatible with his metaphysical self, one is prompted to wonder whether Green's metaphysics is all that far from Bosanquet's? The passage standardly cited to display Green's individualist credentials is: 'Our ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of *personal* worth. All other values are relative to value for, of, or in a person' (*Prolegomena*, sect. 184). But the context is a comparison with the value of nations or societies: Green is not making a metaphysical assertion of the ultimate reality of the individual. For his view of the reality of the individual self we have to look to his discussion of the Eternal Consciousness, and then we are very much in the same territory as Bosanquet's metaphysics; and their conclusions may be nearer to each other's than one had appreciated. Of course, where I am assuming that moving Bosanquet and Green closer together wins points for Bosanquet, others might feel it loses points for Green.

The editors have fully justified their claim that the concept of the self provides a way into the perspective,

assumptions and language of British Idealism more generally (pp. 3-4). The collection does serve as a fine introduction to British Idealist philosophy. Anyone reading it for that purpose should begin with the Introduction and Mander's 'Idealism and the True Self', then read the rest of the papers in order. Such a reader would learn from experienced experts and be saved from many misconceptions.

Editorial Policy

The aim of the journal is to publish high quality research papers, commentaries and reviews which relate to the study of R.G. Collingwood and the British Idealists and the broader connections, and contexts in which their philosophies have a place and relevance. This includes influences upon, and significance to other philosophical schools, as well as contributions to disciplines and subject-matters to which idealist thought is relevant, such as, for example, social justice, human rights, state intervention, philosophy of history, aesthetics etc.

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