

*Walter Pater as Oxford Hegelian:
Plato and Platonism and T. H. Green's
Prolegomena to Ethics*

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PATER AND THE BRITISH RECEPTION
OF GERMAN IDEALISM

In Great Britain throughout the nineteenth century, the influence of German literature and philosophy, including works by Goethe, Schiller, Jean Paul Richter, Kant, and Hegel, increased steadily. What Rosemary Ashton has called “the German idea” grew from the quirky pioneering work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* (1817) and Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1834) through George Eliot’s 1854 translation of Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*, and on to her monuments of the 1870s, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.¹ In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the British reception of German philosophy grew beyond the well-informed literary world to include the more rigorous treatment of professional philosophers, at Oxford in particular, where an impressive number of translations and commentaries on central German works, as well as British Idealist works themselves, were produced by influential thinkers including T. H. Green, Edward Caird, and F. H. Bradley. By the 1880s, these so-called “Oxford Hegelians” came to dominate philosophical thought in Britain.²

¹ See Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

² On the growth of Hegelianism in Britain, see Kirk Willis, “The Introduction and Critical

Walter Pater holds a unique place in the nineteenth-century British reception of German thought. As a writer of fiction and literary essays influenced by Kant, Schiller, Fichte, and Hegel, Pater continued in many ways the belletristic appropriation of German Idealism from Coleridge and Carlyle through Eliot. Unlike his literary predecessors, though, Pater also held a fellowship at Oxford where he regularly lectured on philosophy from the early 1860s till near his death in 1894, precisely the decades when the Oxford Hegelians came to dominate the teaching of philosophy in Great Britain.³ Pater's reputation during and after his life has rested on his prose style, his aesthetic theories, his art criticism, and his influential articulations of homoeroticism. In his years at Oxford, though, he also earned a name as a philosopher. As early as February 1864, Samuel Roebuck Brooke commented after hearing Pater deliver an essay at a meeting of the Oxford essay society Old Mortality, that Pater was said to be the "best philosopher in Oxford."⁴ Probably owing to his knowledge of German philosophy, that same month he was elected to a fellowship at Brasenose College, where his formal lectures on philosophy sustained this evaluation among students.⁵ Pater scholarship has demonstrated the prominent force of German philosophy in his writings. In particular, the significance of Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy of history for Pater's aesthetic criticism and fiction has been documented and analyzed.⁶ Yet while Pater has often been considered a Hegelian, he has rarely been read as an Oxford Hegelian.⁷

Reception of Hegelian Thought in Britain 1830–1900," *Victorian Studies* 32 (1988): 85–110.

³ For the rise of Idealism in late Victorian Oxford see Bruce Robbins, *The British Hegelians, 1875–1925* (New York: Garfield Publishing, 1982); and Sandra M. Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 10–51.

⁴ Quoted in *Walter Pater: A Life Remembered*, ed. Robert M. Seiler (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1987), 12.

⁵ On Pater's owing his fellowship to his knowledge of German philosophy see Thomas Wright, *Life of Walter Pater* (London: Everet, 1907), 2: 211. Humphrey Ward described Pater's 1867 lectures on the history of philosophy as "an extraordinary stimulus" among "the most educative of all I ever listened to." Seiler, *A Life Remembered*, 18.

⁶ On Pater and German Idealism see Anthony Ward, *Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966), 43–77; F. C. McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit: Walter Pater and the Modernist Paradigm* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1986); William F. Shuter, "History as Palingenesis in Pater and Hegel," *PMLA* 86 (1971): 411–21, and Shuter, *Rereading Walter Pater* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Stefano Evangelista, "The German Roots of British Aestheticism: Pater's 'Winckelmann', Goethe's Winckelmann, Pater's Goethe," in *Anglo-German Affinities and Antipathies*, ed. Rüdiger Görner (Munich: Iudicium, 2004), 57–70; and Giles Whiteley, *Aestheticism and the Philosophy of Death: Walter Pater and Post-Hegelianism* (London: Legenda, 2010).

⁷ Previous studies of Pater have given some attention to the late-Victorian reception of Hegel, but as a way to further develop Pater's relation to Hegel. See Ward, *Walter Pater*,

Just where do the odd minglings of philosophy and literature of late Victorian Britain's most prominent man of letters fit in relation to the intellectual movement which came to dominate the study of philosophy in Oxford—and in Great Britain as a whole—from the 1880s until the First World War? As a way to begin to answer this question, this article will explore the possibility that Pater's most explicitly philosophical work, *Plato and Platonism* (1893), echoes, criticizes, and offers an alternative to the Idealist moral philosophy articulated by T. H. Green in his influential *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883).⁸ Through an analysis of Pater's and Green's closely related borrowings from Kant and Hegel, I will argue that *Plato and Platonism*, like Green's *Prolegomena*, appropriates a Kantian epistemological critique, develops a Kantian ethical subject, and then moves beyond Kant's autonomous subject towards a more Hegelian historical evolution of individual subject and state. While tracing the ways Pater implicitly echoes Green, this article will also explore Pater's idiosyncratic survey of Greek philosophy as an implicit alternative to Green's philosophy in two ways: first, the philosophical argument in *Plato and Platonism* moves further beyond the limitations of the Kantian subject and much closer to a Hegelian dialectic of subject and object; second, the literary form of Pater's presentation offers a formal alternative to the abstract argumentation that characterizes Green's *Prolegomena*. After brief presentations of Pater's and Green's shared intellectual context and of Green's *Prolegomena*, the argument will develop through a close reading of *Plato and Platonism*.

PATER AND GREEN

Pater began delivering the lectures collected as *Plato and Platonism* at Oxford at the opening of Hilary term in January 1891, eight years and one month after Green's death, in an Oxford where Green's influence continued to grow. Green not only spearheaded the first generation of British Idealism's attack on empiricism but after his death in 1882 he was regarded as the most influential philosopher of the next generation as well, in large part

45–52; Shuter, *Rereading Walter Pater*, 61–68; and Whiteley, *Aestheticism and the Philosophy of Death*, 30–31. In contrast, the attempt here is to use Pater's appropriations from German Idealism as a way of situating him within British Idealism.

⁸ Though not reading Pater as responding to Green or other Oxford Idealists, previous criticism has investigated Pater's place in the Oxford academic milieu. See Gerald Monsman, "Old Mortality at Oxford," *Studies in Philology* 67 (1970): 359–89; William Shuter, "Pater as Don," *Prose Studies* 11 (1988): 41–59, and William Shuter, *Rereading Walter Pater*, 78–91.

due to the moral philosophy most fully articulated in his posthumously published lectures collected as *Prolegomena to Ethics*. During and after his life, Green's influence emanated from Oxford throughout Great Britain. As R. G. Collingwood has explained, because of his ability to inspire his students to put "their vocation . . . into practice . . . the philosophy of Green's school might be found, from about 1880 to 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every part of national life."⁹

As T. H. Green became the most influential philosopher of the late Victorian era, Walter Pater became its most prominent man of letters. In 1873, just a year before the first volume of Green's edition of Hume was published, Pater's influential aesthetic manifesto *The Renaissance* appeared. Though he published only a handful of articles in the following decade, in the eight years before *Plato and Platonism*, he published *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), and *Appreciations* (1889), as well as a number of other articles and reviews in leading journals, and the third edition of *The Renaissance* (1888). After *Marius* Pater not only published more frequently, but in some ways actively sought the role of a public intellectual, adjusting the topics, genres, and tone of his writings in order to address a broader set of readers on contemporary religious, aesthetic, and philosophical issues.¹⁰ With the publication of *Plato and Platonism* in 1893, Edmund Gosse noted that Pater had quietly become not only "the very oracle of Oxford," but with the recent death of Matthew Arnold in 1888 "the first of our living critics."¹¹

Though Green and Pater achieved their renown in the increasingly distinct realms of professional philosophy and belles lettres, the two lecturers on philosophy had covered much the same ground in their Oxford intellectual formation. Green went up to Balliol in 1855; Pater, three years younger than Green, began his studies at Queen's College in 1858. As exceptional students, both caught the eye of Benjamin Jowett, Oxford's dominant intellectual figure at mid-century, and the major catalyst for the Victorian academic reception of German Idealism.¹² Under Jowett's influence, Green and

⁹ Quoted in Andrew Vincent, "Becoming Green," *Victorian Studies* 48 (2006): 490.

¹⁰ See Michael Levy, *The Case of Walter Pater* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 182–94.

¹¹ Edmund Gosse, review of *Plato and Platonism*, by Walter Pater. *New Review* (April 1893) in R. M. Seiler, *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1980), 250.

¹² Geoffrey Faber credits Jowett as "the first man in Oxford to master the new, exciting, bafflingly difficult system of Hegel; possibly even the first Englishman." Geoffrey Faber, *Jowett: A Portrait with Background* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), 24.

Pater learned German and devoted their long vacations to the intense reading of Kant, Fichte, Schiller, and Hegel.¹³ Both joined the elite Oxford essay society Old Mortality (Green five years before Pater), characterized by its progressive politics and German philosophical bent, where they heard each other deliver some of their earliest essays.¹⁴ If Pater was addressing Green's moral philosophy in *Plato and Platonism*, he was engaging with a thinker whose intellectual milieu was very much his own.

Though he never mentioned Green or his works in his writings, Pater did write a review of the most significant popularization of Green's ethics, Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere*.¹⁵ Commenting on this literary tribute to Green near the height of his own career, neither Pater nor his informed audience could fail to note that one of the era's major intellectuals was indirectly passing judgment on another. Published in March 1888, Pater's review anticipates the implicit critique of Green's *Prolegomena* developed three years later in Pater's lecture series on Plato. In Ward's novel, the title character, a contemporary Anglican clergyman, loses his faith, but regains his sense of vocation through his conversion to Green's moral philosophy. Ward not only dedicated the book to Green, she also explicitly based Elsmere's Oxford mentor Professor Grey on Green, and directly quoted from Green's essays in Grey's speeches, giving the full title and page numbers of the sources in a note at the opening of *Robert Elsmere*.¹⁶ Pater's review does not mention Green by name, nor does it comment at length on the ideas behind Elsmere's conversion. In a brief passage, though, Pater clearly criticizes the book's title character for following Grey's philosophy and suddenly abandoning his belief in the Church of England: "Had he [Elsmere] possessed a perfectly philosophic or scientific temper he would have hesitated."¹⁷ As U. C. Knoepfelmacher points out, Pater criticizes Elsmere's newfound unbelief for being "as dogmatic and unbending as orthodox faith."¹⁸ Pater goes on to criticize "the high-pitched Grey" for "the purely

¹³ On Green's early German reading see Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 91. On Pater's see Seiler, *A Life Remembered*, 6.

¹⁴ Monsman, "Old Mortality," 360.

¹⁵ In *Walter Pater's Readings* Inmann lists no allusions to Green's works in Pater's writings. Mary Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 4.

¹⁷ "Robert Elsmere" in *Essays from 'The Guardian'* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 67. Though Pater does not name Professor Gray as Professor Green, Pater typically ventures a deniable allusion, praising Ward for bringing out the "so well-known grey and green of college and garden." *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁸ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 186.

negative action of the scientific spirit.”¹⁹ Throughout *Plato and Platonism* Pater further develops this critique of a purely negative philosophy in his analysis of the Kantian ethics of Socrates. Like Ward’s *Elsmere*, Pater’s Socrates leaves behind an otherworldly belief, and attempts to bring his previous sense of the divine to the human. For Pater, though, rather than open up new possibilities for human life, the philosophies of Socrates, Grey, and Green fall back into the limitations they sought to overcome.

GREEN’S PROLEGOMENA TO ETHICS

In one of many significant recent studies of Green’s philosophy, Ben Wempe has pointed out that as a practical political man Green “applauded all social legislation regarding the conditions of work and sanitation, as well as the political reform of 1867.”²⁰ According to Wempe, though, Green found these advances “vulnerable so long as there was no convincing political theory to support them.”²¹ For Green the rising demand for social change needed a solid new philosophical foundation. The effort of Green’s *Prolegomena to Ethics*, I. M. Greengarten observes, is “to enunciate a new view of human nature that could serve as . . . a new cement for a society falling apart.”²² For Green and many other late Victorian Oxford philosophers, Hegel’s philosophy helped provide the recipe for the cement that might hold their society together.

Like Hegel, Green initiates his philosophical project with a Kantian critique. In a late Victorian intellectual milieu increasingly suspicious of the supernatural elements in orthodox Christianity, Green and the British Idealists were particularly interested in Kant’s arguments demonstrating the possibility of a moral conscience and freedom of the will without recourse to transcendent religious claims. In the first two of the *Prolegomena*’s four books, Green develops such an argument based on Kant’s analysis of experience in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.²³ The Kantian question, “How do

¹⁹ Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, 68.

²⁰ Ben Wempe, *T.H. Green’s Theory of Positive Freedom* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2004), 6. For a lucid review of recent books on Green see Vincent, “Becoming Green.”

²¹ Wempe, *Positive Freedom*, 6.

²² I.M. Greengarten, *Thomas Hill and the Development of Liberal-Democratic Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 10.

²³ Early in the first chapter, Green makes explicit his debt by quoting Kant’s dictum in the original “‘Macht zwar der Verstand die Natur, aber er schafft sie nicht.’ The understanding ‘makes’ nature, but out of a material which it does not make.” T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 15.

we know what we know?” leads Green to the affirmation of a particular sort of knowing self. The epistemological subject perceives through its senses, but at the same time the very possibility of its perceptive capabilities demands that it be conceived as beyond the limitations of the phenomenal world, beyond the forms of time and space. With Kant, Green claims this knowing self grounds our understanding of the material world, yet cannot be explained in terms of that world: “The relation of events to each other as in time implies their equal presence to a subject which is not in time. There could be no such thing as time if there were not a self-consciousness which is not in time.”²⁴ Unlike the ever-changing phenomena the senses perceive, this noumenal self retains permanence and consistency. Though not empirically verifiable, the reality of the noumenal subject remains philosophically demonstrable. What Hume would call a mere abstraction, or a phantom of the imagination, Green asserts is actually more real than the phenomena it perceives. In fact, in a bold declaration with just a slight admixture of philosophic hedging, Green at one point claims that “this all-uniting, self-seeking, self-realizing subject is . . . the only thing, or a form of the only thing, that is real (so to speak) in its own right; the only thing of which the reality is not relative and derived.”²⁵

This Kantian transcendental subject, what Green calls “the self-distinguishing self,” cannot be limited by the scientific laws governing the matter it perceives, and thus holds the potential to act through freedom in a way the matter it perceives cannot.²⁶ Such a knowing self holds the possibility of a willing self, a transcendental subject that can achieve freedom through ethical action. As Green explains: “Reason is the self-objectifying consciousness. It constitutes . . . the capability in man of seeking an absolute good and of conceiving this good as common to others with himself.”²⁷ This Kantian ethical gambit takes Green only so far, though. According to Kant, the transcendental subject is a border concept, one which preserves the possibility of, but denies any further glimpse into, the realm of noumena.²⁸ Through its analytical confidence, Kant’s critical philosophy affirms human ethical potential; through its speculative humility, it resists the lure of any further metaphysical knowledge.

For Green, though, as for Hegel, Kant’s closely guarded border

²⁴ Green, *Prolegomena*, 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

²⁸ See, for instance, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martins), 272, A255/B 311.

becomes a gateway to more encompassing notions of spirit. Green's philosophy thus develops beyond the concept of the individual noumenal self to include the broader notion of something akin to, though rarely named as, Hegel's World Spirit. Though Green does not mention Hegel or the World Spirit in the *Prolegomena*, in his closely related lecture "On the Different Senses of 'Freedom' as applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man," he explicitly works through the problem of the ethical subject in a discussion of Kant, Hegel, Spinoza, and St. Paul.²⁹ Green's Hegelian development of Kant's transcendental ego has two closely related aspects: first, the Kantian "I" becomes an intersubjective "we"—a collective political will rather than an individual ethical will; second, the collective subject works in differing ways depending on the historical context. By positing a collective historical spirit rather than an individual ahistoric subject, Hegel transforms Kant's noumenon from a negative limiting concept (about which nothing positive can be claimed) into a positive concrete concept (about whose particular manifestations much can be said). In this way, Green argues, a moral philosophy must necessarily lead to a political philosophy and a philosophy of history. Just as individual humans manifest reason through acting as well as knowing, what Green refers to as "the eternal mind" knows nature entire and acts through both individuals and the most wide-ranging structures of world history.³⁰

For Hegel, the moment an age comes to the recognition of ideas necessary for its advancement, reason assumes a new form and a new power. As an emblematic instance of such a recognition of reason in the development of western civilization, Green describes the effect of the great Greek philosophers on their age. In their ethical teaching, he insists:

They were really organs through which reason, as operative in men, became more clearly aware of the work it had been doing in the creation and maintenance of free social life, and in the activities of which that life is at once the source and the result. In thus becoming aware of its work the same reason through them gave a further reality to itself in human life.³¹

This evolving force of reason manifests itself in both the social institutions that make possible greater degrees of human freedom and the lives of indi-

²⁹ *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1927). See especially Green on Hegel and freedom through the institutions of the state, *ibid.*, 6.

³⁰ Green, *Prolegomena*, 181.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 269–70.

viduals who develop, maintain, and transform those institutions. Green's Hegelian reconception of liberal political philosophy thus finds its foundational principle in the ongoing process of mutual recognition and reinforcement by individuals and institutions. The (Kantian) ethical life becomes the (Oxford Hegelian) life of citizenship—fostered by, fostering, and constantly reforming the state's institutions:

Thus in the conscientious citizen of modern Christendom reason within and reason without, reason as objective and reason as subjective, reason as the better spirit of the social order in which he lives, and reason as his loyal recognition and interpretation of that spirit—these being but different aspects of one and the same reality, which is the operation of the divine mind in man. . . .³²

Up to this point Green appears to follow Hegel closely: both find the World Spirit growing through history, manifesting itself subjectively in the ethical subject and objectively through social institutions. But even though Green adopts Hegel's concept of an objective reason, he resists the full implications of Hegel's World Spirit. Hegel's *Phenomenology* is defined by a series of oppositions (subject-object, master-slave) that must be struggled through and overcome. Each turning point in Hegel's process comes through a dramatic reversal that Hegel at one point characterizes as "a life-and-death struggle."³³ Only through such confrontations can new entities emerge, which in turn produce more such struggles. In contrast, Green's *Prolegomena* defines change through the mutual cooperation of two forms of reason: the ethical subject and social institutions. Green's *Prolegomena* adumbrates historical growth not as a succession of sudden reversals but as a process of growing refinement, as the symbiotic growth of personal conscience and political structures, steadily moving towards greater freedom for the individual through more developed social institutions.

Almost as if to distance his own philosophy of history from Hegel's, Green develops his notion of morality through an analysis of the character Antigone that clearly differs from Hegel's well-known interpretation of the classical Greek heroine.³⁴ For Hegel the plot of Sophocles's tragedy represents a world-historical conflict between the moral duty to family (in Anti-

³² *Ibid.*, 231.

³³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 114.

³⁴ Green, *Prolegomena*, 351–61.

gone's commitment to care for the remains of her brother Polyneices) and the political duty to the state (in Creon's demand to carry out the punishment for burying her brother). In Hegel's reading of the play, the conflict between Antigone and Creon embodies a struggle between two forms of reason which must confront each other so both may be transformed. Comparing Antigone's conflict with Creon to the world-historical confrontation of Socrates and the Athenian public, Hegel finds that in both cases "[t]wo opposed rights come into collision . . . and yet both are mutually justified."³⁵ For Green, on the contrary, only one right can be justified: objective reason and the ethical subject serve rather than challenge each other. Green's treatment of Antigone emphasizes this lack of conflict. In his view, "[t]here is no such thing as a conflict of duties" in the case of Antigone.³⁶ Considering the contemporary analogous case of "a good Catholic who was also a loyal [British] subject," Green argues that true conscience for Antigone as for the Victorian Catholic must "recognize as duty the course which contributes most to the perfect life."³⁷ Philosophical analysis for Green thus serves to reveal conflict as apparent rather than to follow through what Hegel would see as concrete historical contradictions.

As Green's Kantian noumenal self retains its fundamental identity through history, so does it remain fundamentally distinct from phenomena. For Green the true person as such is the noumenal, the morally willing subject: "[t]he will is simply the man. Any act of will is the expression of the man as he at the time is."³⁸ The person in her "feeling, thought, and desire" may coincide with the willing of the noumenal subject, but any time these manifestations of the phenomenal self do not converge with the moral will they cease to be part of that actual self: "[t]he feeling, thought, and desire with which the act conflicts are influences that he is aware of, influences to which he is susceptible, but they are not he."³⁹ Rather than Hegel's ongoing interpenetration and transformation of spirit and matter through history, for Green the ever more developed social structures only serve to allow the Kantian transcendental subject a greater degree of moral perfec-

³⁵ G.W.F. Hegel, *The History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane and Francis Simson (London: Routledge, 1892), 1: 446. In his *Lectures on Fine Art* Hegel finds the dialectical conflict internal as well as external, describing Antigone's conflict with Creon as a tragedy because each shares the opposing value that she or he confronts in the other. See G.W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 2: 1216–17.

³⁶ *Prolegomena*, 355.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 351, 355.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

tion. For this reason, as Peter Nicholson points out, the material inequities of class society are thus not necessarily an obstacle for Green's moral philosophy:

the achievement of the common good is attainable in a society where the distribution of wealth is unequal, provided only that every member of the society is enabled to acquire sufficient material means to engage in the moral life, and to obtain the necessary conditions of it such as education.⁴⁰

Epistemologically, historically, and politically, Green thus holds back from more radical Hegelian metamorphoses. The individual moral subject progressively emerges through history, but is fundamentally unchanged by it; the noumenal willing self acts through phenomena, but remains fundamentally distinct from it. The foundational entities of Green's philosophy, the conscientious self and society's institutions interact, and symbiotically develop, but the two never fundamentally challenge, interpenetrate, and dialectically transform each other into new entities with new sets of relationships.

PLATO AND PLATONISM I: FROM SOCRATIC ETHICS TO PLATONIC METAPHYSICS

In the same breath, a participant at the Old Mortality essay readings in the early 1860s contrasted Pater's flamboyant style with Green's sober manner: "[Pater's] speculative imagination seemed to make the lights burn blue. T. H. Green preached Hegel, with the accent of a Puritan."⁴¹ In their mature work, as in their philosophical juvenilia, this contrast persists: where Green's earnest preaching in his *Prolegomena to Ethics* brings German Idealism directly to bear on the contemporary reevaluation of ethics and politics, Pater's imaginative reconstruction of the roots of Plato's philosophy in *Plato and Platonism* more often seems to aim at high literary effect. Early in his first lecture Pater offers a possible hint of how to approach his lectures, describing Plato's dialogues as a form of "philosophical literature."⁴² As Green's sober analysis recalls the abstract reasoning of his philosophical

⁴⁰ Peter P. Nicholson, "A Moral View of Politics: T.H. Green and the British Idealists," *Political Studies* 35 (1987): 116–22, 121.

⁴¹ Quoted in Richter, *The Politics of Conscience*, 82.

⁴² Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism: A Series of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 8.

forebears Kant and Hegel, Pater's speculative narrative of Plato's intellectual and psychological formation echoes the forms of his German literary influences, Goethe and Novalis, particularly their inward-turning *Bildungsromane*, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. The tight focus on the *Bildung* of a unique individual might seem too narrow to contain the large philosophical claims of Kant and Hegel. As Carolyn Williams points out, however, Pater's "Plato enfolds within him the entire history of philosophy."⁴³ Embedded within his imagined life of Plato, Pater moves through a progression of ideas parallel to Green's in both content and key moments of development. In ways, though, Pater also goes beyond Green: within the thick shell of Plato's person, he reconstructs a variation on the thoroughgoing Hegelian logic of extremes that the *Prolegomena to Ethics* consistently resists. Where Green's reformist Kantian turn retains only enough of the noumenal for his ethical and political purposes, Pater's Hegelian *Aufhebung* resurrects a thoroughgoing Idealist metaphysics. This reading of *Plato and Platonism* will follow through a series of Hegelian dialectical oppositions, first in the conflicting pre-Socratic philosophies of motion and rest, then in the conflict between Socrates's asceticism and Plato's passions. Through his experience of the death of Socrates, Pater's Plato achieves a Hegelian dialectic of spirit and matter, at once more metaphysical than Green's Kantian epistemology and more materialist than Green's Kantian ethics. Finally in Pater's rendering, Plato's materialist metaphysics leads to a politics where the objective reason of social structures and the subjective inner life of individuals intertwine more fundamentally than in Green's politics.

As central works for the late nineteenth-century Oxford curriculum, Plato's dialogues provide a natural textual site to gauge Pater's place within the ongoing reception of Kant and Hegel mediated by Green at Oxford. The same term Pater began delivering *Plato and Platonism*, Green's close friend Richard L. Nettleship also lectured on Plato at Oxford.⁴⁴ In 1895, just three years later, Bernard Bosanquet, Green's most prolific student and an admirer of Pater's writings, would publish an important commentary, *A Companion to Plato's Republic*, with frequent quotations from Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy.⁴⁵ For the Oxford of Jowett, Pater, and Green, Greek philosophy, especially Plato's dialogues, served as a way to

⁴³ Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 266.

⁴⁴ Shuter, "Pater as Don," 50.

⁴⁵ Bernard Bosanquet, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (New York: Macmillan, 1895).

channel German Idealism into British philosophy. Sandra Den Otter has noted that “[m]ost idealists were keen classicists”; more specifically Jowett’s introductions to his influential 1871 translation of Plato’s works “showed a distinctively Hegelian gloss.”⁴⁶ This Victorian effort to bring German Idealism to bear on contemporary ethical and political problems through Plato, however, sometimes blurred distinctions between Hegel’s World Spirit and Being for Plato. Whereas Plato’s strict hierarchy of being tends to rigidify the distance between the physical and the metaphysical, Fichte, Schiller, and Hegel attempted to develop notions of Will, *Spieltrieb*, and Spirit that could in various ways bridge the gap between the intellect and the senses. Written within this tradition, Pater’s *Plato and Platonism* may at times seem closer to Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* than it does to Plato’s dialogues. Rüdiger Safranski describes Schiller’s notion of the primacy of the aesthetic realm in a way that could also be applied to Pater’s: “Die ästhetische Welt ist nicht nur ein Übungsgelände für die Verfeinerung und Veredelung der Empfindungen, sondern sie ist der Ort, wo der Mensch explizit erfährt, was er implizit immer schon ist: der ‘homo ludens.’”⁴⁷ Furthermore, for Pater, as for Novalis and Hölderlin, philosophical literature becomes itself a way to formally ground the convergence of thought and sense, intertwining the abstractions of philosophy and the particulars of a specific life.

As in Green’s epistemological critique, Pater’s first step is to establish the Kantian need to secure a stable subject in the midst of phenomenal change. Pater’s account of Plato’s intellectual formation thus opens with “The Doctrine of Motion,” a critique of Heraclitus’s philosophy. For both the earnest preacher and the aesthetic speculator, contemporary society’s vertiginous change is mirrored in the epistemological problem of constantly shifting phenomena. In classical Greece, Pater finds the same disintegrating effect at work in the social realm that Heraclitus had identified in the natural realm:

In Plato’s day, the Heraclitean flux, so deep down in nature itself—the flood, the fire—seemed to have laid hold on man, on the social and moral world, dissolving or disintegrating opinion, first principles, faith, establishing amorphism, so to call it, there also.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Den Otter, *British Idealism*, 45, 25.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Schiller, *oder Die Erfindung des Deutschen Idealismus* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2004), 413.

⁴⁸ Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 21.

Pater finds a concrete instance of the intertwinement of nature's flux and Athenian anarchy in the influence of the Sophists. Protagoras, the chief Sophist, "applied to ethics the physics or metaphysics of Heraclitus," causing "the disintegrating Heraclitean fire" to take hold "on actual life, on men's very thoughts, on the emotions and the will."⁴⁹ The Sophists further fan the fire of political anarchy through their promise to render their students "as fluid, as shifty, as things themselves," to bring them "like some perfectly accomplished implement, to this *carrière ouverte*, this open quarry, for the furtherance of your personal interests in the world."⁵⁰

Pater here sides with Green against the moral anarchy of atomistic individualism, against the embrace of a career open for mining by the world's shiftiness. Much more than Green, though, Pater retains a wariness of the intrinsic alliance of even Kant's critical philosophy with deadening abstractions, which lead away from, rather than deeper into, felt experience. That wariness underlies Pater's second essay "The Doctrine of Rest," which considers the pre-Socratic alternatives to Heraclitus's philosophy developed by Zeno, Parmenides, and Xenophanes. Their monism with its unchanging abstract ideas initially appears to be an appealing remedy for Heraclitean disintegration. Pater, however, soon condemns these philosophers for "this harshest dualism," their complete divorce of spirit from matter.⁵¹ The philosophy of Parmenides, in particular, claims to attain the highest of truths, but this quest for "true Substance, the One, the Absolute," must be recognized by "the majority of acute people [to be] after all but zero, and a mere algebraic symbol for nothingness."⁵² In characteristic fashion, Pater here conceives of philosophy's anti-materialism materialistically as a threat to the health, an inclination with "something of the disease about it."⁵³ After pre-Socratic monism, the disease resurfaces twice in radically different guises: first in the medieval asceticism of the Christian mystics Eckhart and Tauler, then again "altogether beyond the Christian influence, in the hard and ambitious intellectualism of Spinoza."⁵⁴ Through this lineage, Pater implicates the atheist Spinoza "that great re-assertor of the Parmenidean tradition" (and his fictional acolyte, the title character of Pater's short story "Sebastian Van Stoeck") in the same "literal negation of self, by a kind of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 107.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 108.

⁵¹ Ibid., 34.

⁵² Ibid., 40.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 40–41.

moral suicide” as medieval Christian asceticism.⁵⁵ Pater’s strategy of diachronically elongating this anti-corporeal ideology opens up the space for an implicit critique of the Parmenidean strains in Kantian moral philosophy. If Spinoza’s rationalism can revive the deadening force of medieval Christian mysticism, then so can Kant’s critical philosophy (and its reception in British Idealism), however carefully distinguished from the supernatural tenets of Christian dogma.

In his third lecture “The Doctrine of Number,” Pater shows how Pythagoras’s philosophy of musical harmony anticipates Socrates’s contribution to Plato’s philosophy. More than Socratic ethics, though, the mystical cult of Pythagoras remains tainted with the otherworldliness (or nonworldliness) of the Parmenidian One. For Plato to transform the music of the Pythagorean celestial spheres into a thoroughgoing philosophy—at once ethics, metaphysics, and politics—he must receive it through the more earthbound Socratic wisdom. Pater thus develops the Socratic seeds of Plato’s philosophy in his fourth and fifth lectures “Plato and Socrates” and “Plato and the Sophists.” As Pater works through Socrates towards Plato, he implicitly echoes key turning points of Green’s argument for the stability and freedom of the ethical subject through corresponding moments in Socrates’s intellectual development. First, as Green follows the Kantian turn away from an all-encompassing metaphysics toward an analysis of the subject, Socrates abandons mere speculation on the metaphysical beyond our experience, refocusing on an interest in the human. Next, Socrates discovers within the individual a divine element akin to Green’s “self-distinguishing self.”

For Pater, the first Kantian step becomes one of Socrates’s defining moments: he “turns away from useless, perhaps impious, enquiries,” limiting his intellectual energies to “the direct knowledge of man.”⁵⁶ By rejecting the futility of metaphysical speculation, and focusing on the core of knowledge within each human, Socrates effectively brings “philosophy down from heaven to earth.”⁵⁷ As in Kant’s Copernican revolution, Socrates’s renunciation of speculation beyond the human paradoxically moves on to the second step—the recovery of the noumenal within the human subject. Quoting Montaigne on Socrates, Pater affirms this shift to earthly knowledge as a commitment to, rather than an abandonment of, genuine truth: “’Twas he [Socrates] who brought again from heaven, where she lost her

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 49, 41.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

time, human wisdom, to restore her to man with whom her most just and greatest business lies.’”⁵⁸ Pater’s language stresses the religious core of this Socratic humanism: Plato’s mentor turns his philosophical investigations toward “the divine reason really resident in each one of us”; his “ironical humility” was “a divine possession”; “the very thoroughness of the sort of self-knowledge he promoted had in it something of the sacramental.”⁵⁹ Like the transcendental subject for Kant, “divine reason” for Pater’s Socrates grounds an ethical potential in an epistemological subject distinct from the chaos of phenomena. Through his “careful path of enquiry,” Socrates discovers “facts most often of conscience, or moral action.”⁶⁰ Whereas the Sophists teach “fluid, shifty” truths in the service of “the furtherance of your personal interests in the world,” Socrates seeks to “make men interested in themselves” as a way to find what Pater calls “*la vraie vérité*,” a more fundamental truth.⁶¹ By reconceiving the subject as noumenal, Pater’s Socrates challenges the Sophist’s submission to the ever-shifting winds of phenomena.

To this point, *Plato and Platonism* transposes the epistemological foundation of Kant’s ethical philosophy into the narrative of Socrates’s intellectual formation. Though in a very different form, Pater’s implied philosophical argument has thus followed Kant’s critical philosophy as Green’s *Prolegomena* did. As Pater turns from Socratic wisdom to Plato’s own philosophy, however, he distances himself much more from the limitations of Kantian critique than Green did. Gently nudging Socrates aside in the sixth lecture “The Genius of Plato,” in brief but telling contrasts, the Oxford essayist makes way for the very different character and philosophy of Plato, and for his own idiosyncratic variation of British Idealism. Typically, Pater buries in an aside in an earlier lecture the most precise articulation of the distinctions between Plato and Socrates that he will later develop in “The Genius of Plato”:

Strange! out of the practical cautions of Socrates for the securing of clear and correct and sufficient conceptions about one’s actual experience, for the attainment of a sort of thoroughly educated

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79, 83, 90.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 108, 120. For the most accurate and perceptive analysis to date of Pater’s very refined arguments on subjectivity and objectivity see Carolyn Williams, “Walter Pater’s Impressionism and the Form of Historical Revival” in *Knowing the Past: Victorian Literature and Culture*, ed. Suzy Anger (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 77–99.

common-sense, came the mystic intellectualism of Plato—Platonism, with all its hazardous flights of the soul.⁶²

As he does throughout *Plato and Platonism*, Pater sketches philosophical differences here as differences of personality. Where the Kantian Socrates limits himself to a precise investigation of “one’s actual experience,” the post-Kantian Plato abandons himself to “mystic intellectualism.” Where the mentor cautiously constrains himself within a “thoroughly educated common sense,” his student dangerously indulges himself in “hazardous flights of the soul.”

As Pater further develops this distinction between “safe” Socratic critique and “dangerous” Platonic speculation in “The Genius of Plato,” he more clearly sides with Plato against Socrates, with Hegel against Kant, and implicitly against Green. Pater builds his rejection of Socratic ethics by implicating it in the imagery of nothingness and disease he previously associated with pre-Socratic monism. Though his critique relies more on literary imagery than on abstract logic, Pater makes his alliance with Hegel’s philosophy explicit through an allusion to Hegel’s characterization of abstract thought as a colorless grey. For Pater, the vacuity Hegel criticizes in a philosophy that lacks concretion finds its analogue in the emptiness of most philosophers’ lives. Recalling his earlier criticism of Parmenides’s One, Pater describes the lives of those “single-minded servants” of philosophy, who

have served science, science *in vacuo*, as if nothing beside, faith, imagination, love, the bodily sense, could detach them from it for an hour. . . . Little more than intellectual abstractions themselves, in them philosophy was wholly faithful to its colours, or its colourlessness; rendering not grey only, as Hegel said of it, but all colours alike, in grey.⁶³

Hegel refers to the abstractions of philosophy as grey in both the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* and in *The Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, but neither reference matches the critical tone Pater adopts here. In both potential intertexts, Hegel characterizes philosophy’s “grey on grey” as an inevitable historical shift from an era of action to one of contemplation. In *Philosophy of Right* Hegel explains that when life has grown old “[b]y

⁶² Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 85.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 125.

philosophy's grey on grey it cannot be rejuvenated only understood."⁶⁴ By contrast, Pater's use of the image here implies an active criticism of philosophy's Parmenidean reductions rather than a mere resignation to an age of grey thought.

Pater's differing emphasis suggests that he may have combined Hegel's image of grey on grey from one or both of these two passages with the closely related critique of philosophical abstraction in the "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel there famously criticizes the false knowledge offered by a merely formal philosophy, condemning its so-called higher truth as "the shapeless repetition of one and the same formula, only externally applied to diverse materials, thereby obtaining merely a boring show of diversity."⁶⁵ Though this passage from the "Preface" does not mention grey, Hegel does go on in the same paragraph to characterize this inadequate form of knowledge as a "monochromatic formalism."⁶⁶ Furthermore, in the next paragraph he continues the visual analogy, describing philosophy's crude attempt "to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black—this is cognition reduced to vacuity."⁶⁷ The color representing colorlessness shifts from grey to black in this passage, but Pater's disapproval of "those who are little more than intellectual abstractions themselves" better matches Hegel's disdain for a school of thought that would merely "palm off its Absolute." Pater's may also play off Hegel's description of "cognition naively reduced to vacuity" in his characterization of philosophers serving science "*in vacuo*."

However muddy the currents flowing from Hegel's texts to Pater's, within Pater's lectures he clearly links his critique of Socratic ethics to Hegel's critique of intellectual abstractions. As Hegel rejected intellectual abstractions because of their "colourlessness," Pater laments "the somewhat sad-coloured school of Socrates" and its "discipline towards apathy or contempt" for the passionate life.⁶⁸ Pater culminates this critique of Socratic ethics as a form of Parmenidean nihilism in his analysis of Socrates's death. Even though Socrates initially turned away from empty meta-

⁶⁴ *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 13. Hegel uses the same image in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: "When philosophy with its abstractions paints grey on grey, the freshness and life of youth has gone, the reconciliation is not a reconciliation in the actual, but in an ideal world." *History of Philosophy*, 1: 52.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 126.

physical speculation, through his self-willed death he implicitly embraces the monists' reduction of a variegated life to the deadening unity of pure abstractions. Pater had criticized Parmenides's "Doctrine of Rest" as a philosophy with "something of the disease about it" that threatens physical health, in extreme instances leading to "a literal negation of self, by a kind of moral suicide."⁶⁹ He similarly describes Socrates's decision to accept the death sentence because of his allegiance to the abstract idea of Justice as "sick and suicidal."⁷⁰ On that "last depressing day in the prison cell of Socrates," Pater tells us, "the cold breath of a harshly abstract, a too incorporeal philosophy, had blown, like an east wind."⁷¹ The Kantian self-legislated unity of Socrates with Justice, the abstract ideal of his "too incorporeal philosophy," merges in Pater's imagery with the "cold breath" of death itself. Socrates may bring the noumenal to earth through moral practice, but the ethical subject retains the infectious mania of philosophic abstraction. In Socrates's death, the limitation of philosophy and life to the abstract consistency of moral action reveals its hidden allegiance to monism; the freedom of Kant's (and implicitly Green's) transcendental subject becomes for Pater potentially another strain of philosophy's nihilistic plague.

Pater's main effort in "Plato's Genius" is to explain and explore how Plato's "hazardous flights of the soul" succeed in recovering the vitality and variety of the phenomenal world where Socrates's cautious attention to "actual experience" has failed. To the extent that we can read Pater's critique of Socrates as an implicit critique of Green's ethical philosophy, the author of *The Renaissance* would seem to offer his aesthetic alternative in Plato's person and philosophy. In the place of the grey life of Socrates (and implicitly that of Ward's Robert Elsmere and his mentor Professor Grey) dominated by the Parmenidean One, Pater offers a Plato who "had brought capacities of bodily sense with the making of an *Odyssey*," or perhaps "a poet of the order of Sappho or Catullus."⁷² Pater's narrative of Plato's *Bildung*, however, not only criticizes Socrates's "severities, moral and intellectual," it also effects the dialectical incorporation of Socratic ethics. Even as

⁶⁹ Ibid., 40–41.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 127. Lesley Higgins notes in her contrast of Pater's Plato with "the more sexually orthodox" presentation of Plato's writings by Benjamin Jowett, that through the associations with writers such as Sappho and Catullus Pater "enshrin[es] Plato's writings within a counter-canon of homoerotic texts and authors." Lesley Higgins, "Jowett and Pater: Trafficking in Platonic Wares," *Victorian Studies* 37 (1993): 43–71, 45.

Plato and Platonism charts the spread of monism from the pre-Socratics through Socrates to implicitly include some forms of modern Idealism (German and British), Pater discovers its cure within the even more metaphysical character of Plato's genius. For Pater as for Hegel, the necessary antidote for the disease that is philosophy becomes philosophy itself. The rescue of critical thought leads not away from speculative thinking but into that paradigm of Idealist thought—Plato's "World of Ideas." Pater does not dismiss Idealist philosophy as such nor does he merely transform Plato's philosophy into a metaphysical veil for his materialist project. Through his presentation of Plato, Pater instead fuses together something akin to Green's Kantian moral philosophy with a Heraclitean embrace of what Kant called the manifold of the senses.

For Pater as for Hegel, the key dialectical moment where these oppositions merge is the death of Socrates. The very moment when his mentor's moral philosophy most reveals its kinship with the negation of monism, Plato incorporates Socratic ethics into a dialectical understanding. When Plato sees his teacher voluntarily submit to "Justice itself," the young student becomes "the creature of an immense seriousness," as he "inherits . . . alike the sympathies and antipathies" of his teacher.⁷³ Earlier in *Plato and Platonism*, Pater quotes at length Hegel's description of Socrates's death from his lectures on the history of philosophy. As in the death of Antigone, Hegel finds in Socrates's death a dialectical moment of transition where "[t]wo opposed Rights come forth," on one side "the unconscious moral habit," on the other "the claim of the consciousness of reason, creating a world out of itself."⁷⁴ Pater does not comment directly on this quotation at this point, nor does he precisely evoke the two opposed rights Hegel describes in Socrates's death. He does, however, suggest a closely related dialectical development in his later description of Plato's maturation. For Pater, Socratic ethics contains in itself a form of moral truth, but that abstract truth or "Right" must be surpassed because of its inability to embody the concrete truth of the senses envisaged by the young Plato. At the same time, though, Plato's confrontation with justice in the person of Socrates forces on him an "immense seriousness" that recognizes the reality of the invisible. Neither merely continuing nor reversing the Socratic-Kantian subordination of the senses, the mature Plato dialectically rediscovers his passions for the visible world (Socrates's antipathies) through his incorporation of the purity of the unseen world (Socrates's sympathies). Plato's

⁷³ Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 138.

⁷⁴ Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, 1: 446; Pater, *Plato and Platonism*, 92.

writings achieve their literary effects through the power of his passions: “the visible world” Plato represents in his writings “‘really exists’ because he is by nature and before all things, from first to last, unalterably a lover,” and “had not been always a mere Platonic lover.”⁷⁵ Turning his attention to the invisible, he becomes “a lover of the invisible, but still a lover . . . carrying an elaborate cultivation of the bodily senses . . . into the world of intellectual abstractions.”⁷⁶ Neither matter nor spirit becomes a mere vessel for the other in Plato’s philosophy: “all gifts of sense and intelligence converge in one supreme faculty of theoretic vision . . . the imaginative reason.” For Pater, then, the defining trait of Platonism is neither the “Puritan element in his master’s doctrine” nor the “sensuous nature” of the young Plato, but “a temper for which, in strictness, the opposition of matter to spirit has no ultimate existence.”⁷⁷

PLATO AND PLATONISM II: PLATO’S POLITICS

The first half of *Plato and Platonism*, the first five lectures, builds to the magisterial synthesis presented in the sixth, “The Genius of Plato”; in the last half, the last four lectures follow through the implications of that synthesis. Of these final four, the eighth and the ninth, “Lacedaemon” and “Plato’s *Republic*,” most fully develop the political philosophy Pater prepared throughout the first half. The affinity of Athenian social ills and Heraclitus’s philosophy of motion suggested in the first lecture already points towards the political response of the second half. The Pythagorean overcoming of both the destructive Heraclitean flux and the deadening Parmenidean One, winding its way through Socratic ethics to Platonic metaphysics, finally reappears in the harmonized spirit of the state in Plato’s *Republic*. Like Green, Pater finds the resolution for a society breaking apart in the reestablished harmony of individual and society. For Green “the conscientious citizen of modern Christendom” recognizes both “reason within and reason without,” both his own ethical will and the community’s will working through social institutions. For Pater’s Plato, a different unity emerges: the needed social harmony is underwritten by a Pythagorean incorporation of the senses rather than a Kantian noumenal will beyond the senses. Where the symbiosis of objective and subjective spirit define Green’s moral and

⁷⁵ Ibid., 134, 136.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 139–40.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 145.

political philosophy, an objective body incorporating the individual subject comes to dominate Pater's image of Plato's polis. In the place of Green's Hegelian World-Spirit (*Welt-Geist*), Pater offers what one might call a Platonist World-Body (*Welt-Körper*).

In Lacedaemon, the historical model for Plato's "Perfect City," that Pythagorean harmony finds in the body of the Spartan athlete both a literal image of the dutiful citizen and a figurative image of the well-ordered society. The key social institution for developing these athletes is the gymnasium, where the Spartans found "proportion, Pythagorean symmetry or music" while forbidding "all that was likely to disfigure the body. . . ."⁷⁸ Similarly in Plato's Perfect City the foremost ideal is "organic unity with one's self, body and soul," and that microcosm of the individual "supplies the true definition of the well-being of the macrocosm, of the social organism, the state."⁷⁹ Pater expresses the unity of the macrocosm variously, at one point listing analogies: the "wholeness of an army in motion, of the stars in their courses, of well-concerted music."⁸⁰ He most often returns, however, to images of the Spartan gymnast to represent the Spartan community: the "well-knit athlete . . . one of those perfectly disciplined Spartan dancers," "the beautiful body of the state," "one colossal person . . . the consummate athlete."⁸¹ As Pater's Plato conceived the relation between matter and spirit more dialectically than Green did, so does he reimagine the relation between citizen and state more dialectically. Rather than just symbiotically developing alongside each other, citizen and state become welded together, transforming both more fully. In an important sense the image of the colossal man becomes more than figurative for Pater, particularly as he stresses the necessity of the physical force found in "the wholeness of an army in motion" for the survival of the Spartan state.⁸²

The remaining question, though, is whether Plato's politics brings to earth Parmenidean unity without reducing the variegated colors of his ideas to a mere grey of social unity. Does Pater's Spartan social harmony redeem physical pleasure through political unity as Plato's theory of ideas redeemed the variety of color through the expression of his non-corporeal ideals? "The Genius of Plato" may implicitly challenge the "monochromatic formalism" of Green's moral philosophy with Plato's vital sense of the visible world. At key moments, in his exposition of Plato's politics, however, the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 238, 251, 255.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 241.

objective political body begins to take on the very characteristics of the monists' Absolute that the inclusion of the senses claimed to overcome in Plato's metaphysics. In this political manifestation of Plato's "organic unity" of body and soul, both the variety of the Heraclitean many and the corresponding sensual pleasure become threatened. Rather than retaining a Renaissance freedom, Pater describes the citizens of Plato's "Perfect City" as living "[l]ike hired servants in their own house."⁸³ Pater even breaks his guise of merely describing Plato's philosophy to more overtly critique the loss of the private life of the family in such a community, as "a loss of differentiation in life . . . a movement backward, to a barbarous or merely animal grade of existence."⁸⁴ On the one hand, Pater's philosophical imagination becomes fascinated with the radical transformation of society promised by a political actualization of the Renaissance recovery of the body; on the other, he becomes increasingly wary of what Hegel would call the abstract negation of the individual demanded by such a transformation. Pater critiques the limitations of Kantian ethics, with its tight hold on the fixed form of the noumenal individual; yet as he envisages an idiosyncratic adaptation of Hegelian dialectic that goes beyond those forms, he draws back apprehensively. Though his imaginative exploration of Plato's metaphysics ventures farther beyond Kantian ethics than Green's moral philosophy does, Pater at times still retreats back to the security of the Kantian subject in his apprehension of the incomplete dialectic of Plato's politics.⁸⁵

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⁸³ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁸⁵ I would like to thank Irving Wohlfarth, Robert Hullot-Kentor, Richard L. Stein, Lesley Higgins, Ryan Hickerson, Henry Hughes, and the anonymous reviewers for their help in various stages of this project.

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