BRITISH IDEALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF THE SELF

Edited by
W.J.MANDER and STAMATOULA PANAGAKOU

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In memory of
Leslie Armour (1931–2014)

Contents

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Introduction

W.J. Mander and Stamatoula Panagakou

I

The concept of the self stands as one of the chief puzzles of contemporary philosophy. Our selfhood presents itself to us as something at once utterly familiar and wholly mysterious. What (we might think) could be better known to us than our own self, ever there, whatever we think or sense or feel? And yet, as we try to fix ourselves in our own gaze, such confidence evaporates and we realise that we can scarcely put our finger on who or what we really are. However, it is not simply as an isolated mystery that contemporary philosophy accords the most vital importance to the notion of the self, for it may be considered a conceptual lynchpin of

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the entire discipline in the sense that there is scarcely a region of philosophical speculation where it does not play an absolutely central role in our understanding. For example, the egocentric perspective, which holds that all knowledge originates in those perceptions, thoughts and feelings which we personally experience, is a scarcely avoidable starting point for epistemology, although it is one whose significance lies not merely in those matters to which it lays claim, but equally in those that it places in question, such as the existence of the external world or of other minds. Contemporary science has only added to these puzzles, as developments in the fields of neurophysiology, evolutionary biology and social psychology have thrown up new and challenging perspectives for understanding selfhood. But the philosophical significance of the concept of selfhood is not confined to theoretical philosophy, of course; it also spreads deeply into the axiological realm. Not only must the ethicist face foundational issues, such as the possibility of free will and the criteria of personal identity, but, as Kant well saw, any practical philosophy which takes as its starting point the rationally acting self thereby sets for itself a cardinal locus of value—that of the free rational agent whose existence alone has, or confers, intrinsic worth. And this point in its turn must raise for us the principal problem of all moral and political philosophy; namely, whether, why and how such selves should concern themselves with the well-being of other such selves.

For all of these reasons selfhood is a vital topic in contemporary philosophy. But, of course, the interest is not a novel one, and a deep concern with the notion of selfhood might well be thought the hallmark of all philosophy in the modern period, as will be familiar to readers from the study of such figures as Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant. However, the history of philosophy as taught today is a highly selective activity. In its determination to tell a particular story, it passes over in silence large swathes of otherwise interesting philosophical work. This is true of nineteenth-century British philosophy as a whole, and especially so of the philosophical movement that developed in the last quarter of that century and which is known today as British Idealism. Marked by its high moral and religious tone, grounded in a bold spirit of metaphysical construction, and deeply influenced by the philosophies of Hegel and Kant, from the 1870s onwards there sprung up in Britain and rose rapidly to

dominance a new spirit in philosophy quite unlike either the empiricist or common-sense systems which had hitherto dominated. While it was never characterised by anything like a single dogmatic creed, its various champions—who included such figures as T.H. Green (1836–1882), Edward Caird (1835–1908), F.H. Bradley (1846–1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923), Henry Jones (1852–1922), D.G. Ritchie (1853–1903), R.B. Haldane (1856–1928), J.M.E. McTaggart (1866–1925) and R.G. Collingwood (1889–1943)—held views which were clearly cut from the same cloth. Their ideas supported and expanded each other's, and even where they differed (as inevitably they sometimes did) this was from *within* a common understanding of the history, nature and purpose of philosophy. Although it continued as a discernible strand of philosophy well into the twentieth century, the ascendancy of British Idealism lasted only until about 1900, at which point more realist and empiricist forms of philosophy forcefully reasserted themselves, in no small part by painting Idealism in rather cruder and darker colours than it ever deserved, leaving it under a cloud from which it has never fully recovered. Recent years have seen a renewed interest in this forgotten and disparaged tradition, however, and the essays of this volume continue that ongoing work of recovery and re-evaluation.[1]

One of the most striking differences between modern analytic philosophy and British Idealism is that while philosophers of the former persuasion tend to adopt a narrow focus, working in close detail on specific isolated problems, those of the latter tradition preferred a broader perspective, maintaining not simply that philosophical results in one field had implications in other domains, but even more fundamentally that the Idealist principles they uncovered were at work everywhere, creating a grand narrative or synthesis. Idealism to them was a single highly integrated world-view, a unitary vision of the nexus binding together mind, world and God, whose implications spread out across the whole of philosophy, from logic and metaphysics through to ethics and aesthetics. One difficulty with understanding such a highly integrated system of thought is that of finding a 'way in'. The language of Idealism can all too easily seem like a closed circle, where everything connects to everything else but nothing connects to anything familiar. It is the contention of this volume that the idea of 'selfhood' provides just such a key for unlocking

the thought of the British Idealists. Standing at the centre of their world-view, the concept of the self is an axial and common point that radiates throughout all of the rest of their thinking, both illuminating their distinct researches and knitting them all together.

There is no escaping the centrality of metaphysics in British Idealist philosophy. Today, to describe some question as 'metaphysical' is a way of indicating its obscure and marginal status with respect to inquiry, but for the Idealists, questions about the fundamental nature of reality push themselves forward into all debates. Since they understand being 'fundamental' precisely in contrast to the everyday, British Idealist metaphysics is typically a dialectic of appearance and reality. Reflection upon the notion of selfhood can take us right to the heart of that dialectic. At root, in so far as the philosophy is idealistic, selfhood constitutes the model for reality itself. The precise relationship between experience and the subject of experience is no doubt a complex and subtle one, to be sure, but at its most fundamental, the idealistic claim that all reality lies within experience is just the thesis that so-called 'external reality' is, in truth, no more distinct from its cognition than are our thoughts from our thinking of them. Notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, knowledge of the world is really a kind of self-knowledge, and there can be no explanation of what it means to grasp the former except though an account of our knowledge of the latter.

To take just three examples, we can see this in Ferrier, for whom no object is ever given except along with a subject; we can see it in T.H. Green, for whom the relational structure of the known world designates it the 'work of the mind'; and we can see it in F.H. Bradley, for whom it is simply impossible to abstract out the element of our experiencing them from the things which we experience. But matters are not quite as simple as the foregoing might suggest, for if selfhood constitutes the model for fundamental reality itself, it must be conceded that the self in its deeper being is not to be mistaken for the self as it presents itself in its everyday or common-sense dress. Experience *is* foundational, but appearances can be misleading. The self of the British Idealists is certainly not to be construed naturalistically—and this much we might expect from their idealistic stance—but more puzzling assertions may also be found. For example, many Idealists argue that the individual self is not properly *distinct* from

other selves (although there are differences of opinion as to whether this is because it is merely a moment or aspect of mind more generally, or because it is something that only comes into being through interaction with other selves.) And perhaps equally strange, many Idealists argue that the self is not properly *temporal*. (And here again we find differences. For some this is because it is something essentially timeless which merely appears or manifests itself in time, while for others this is because its proper form of being is as a moral ideal that *ought* to exist rather than as any sort of temporal actuality.)

One of the most characteristic features of British Idealism is its focus on philosophy of religion. In no small part in response to the difficulties which originated from contemporary science and biblical scholarship (the so-called 'Victorian crisis of faith'), it very largely abandons the traditional conception of God as ontologically distinct from the world, replacing it with a God that is immanent in nature, and most especially immanent in the finite self; a position whose reverse expression, of course, is to say that the finite self is implicitly infinite or divine. Our true self—the self which lies behind the individual we ordinarily take ourselves to be—is continuous with the divine principle. A good example here is T.H. Green, for whom the progressive growth of human knowledge is precisely the progressive unfolding of the infinite and eternal understanding, while moral and social progress is understood as nothing less than the realisation of God on earth. We see the same ideas, this time in a more personal guise, in A.C. Bradley (F.H. Bradley's younger brother), who declares that 'the stirring of religion is the feeling that my only true self in the end is God, to be a pulse-beat of his infinite life, to feel and know that I am that and nothing but that, and that this horrible core of selfishness in my heart, that parts me from him, is not there in his eyes at all, but melts like ice before the sun when I give myself utterly up to him'.[2] The root inspiration behind this theological conception is to be found, of course, in Hegel's doctrine of the true infinite, that interpenetration of finite in the infinite and the infinite in the finite, which, like the Idealists who followed him, he construes as the breaking down of the separation between God and Man.[3]

The doctrine of the true infinite is absolutely central to Hegel's *logic*, but it might seem that, with logic, we enter into a region where the notion of selfhood can be of but little guidance to us. Yet even here it

may be argued that the concept offers a vital key to understanding the Idealists' contributions.[4] The earliest examples of British Idealistic logic are concerned with rejecting the extreme psychologism of empiricists such as Mill and Spencer, arguing robustly that logic deals with more than just the empirically established laws of psychological association. But it would be quite mistaken to thereby suppose that the Idealists see logic as a wholly abstract or 'pure' science, one that deals only with meanings and propositions without any reference at all to the way in which they occur in psychical life. Idealist logic is concerned rather with what is necessary and universal in so far as it is expressed in what is concrete and particular, the real as it is expressed in ideal form, that is through the mental life of the actual subject. 'Truth', argues Bosanquet, 'is reality as it makes itself known through particular minds in the form of ideas', 'not merely an antecedent framework, but a spirit and a function'.[5] The unity-in-diversity of conscious self-awareness is precisely the clue that must be followed in order to grasp the underlying logic of reality itself.

Some of the most striking and well-known ways in which the British Idealists appeal to the notion of selfhood come into view as we shift the focus of our attention from theoretical philosophy to axiology, or value theory. In ethics, for example, the central concepts of normativity and responsibility are both understood though analysis of what is involved in being a moral agent or self. For Green and Bosanquet, the good is that which would provide us with full, complete and enduring satisfaction; for Caird, Jones and Bradley, it is that which realises our true or real self, the self we continually strive to become; for Mackenzie and Collingwood, it is to be understood as that which an ideally rational choice would select. What all these answers have in common is the thought that the normative, or *what ought to be*, although certainly more than just an externalisation of our current strivings and desires, at the same time may not be taken as anything simply existing in itself, as some *sui generis* form of being wholly external to us. Rather, the good must be understood as the outworking of some idealised notion of selfhood, its normative hold on us residing in the fact that it is the culminating extension of principles which are implicitly at work within us already. The root of this idea is Kantian. Celebrating it as 'surely one of [his] most valuable contributions

to modern thought', Kant's doctrine of the autonomy of the will is characterised by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison as the view that,

> 'a man can be bound only by the enactment of his own self-legislative will. So long as the law comes to me from without, I can demand its warrant and evade its claims; but I cannot escape from my own law, from the law which is the expression of my necessary will.'[6]

A similar focus on selfhood characterises British Idealist treatments of moral responsibility and free will. Where many modern discussions of moral responsibility focus largely on *actions*, the Idealists tend instead to look to the notion of the *agent*. For example, following Hegel's expressivist theory of moral agency, in which individuals are deemed accountable for those actions which make them who they are, those which they 'own' or can think of as truly theirs, Green maintains that 'moral action is the expression of a man's character'. More specifically, 'the Ego identifies itself with some desire…. This constitutes an act of will; which is thus always free…. in the sense that the motive lies in the man himself, that he makes it and is aware of doing so, and …. imputes to himself the act.'[7] Pursuing a similar line, Bradley opens his celebrated work *Ethical Studies* by arguing that physical determinism, since it resolves everything into sequences of causally connected states, commits itself to a psychology of the mind as nothing but a collection of sensations held together by laws of association for which enduring objects must be judged but fictions of the mind, and hence for which 'the mind itself is a fiction of the mind'.[8] In other words, from this perspective we lose sight of the underlying continuous agent without whom responsibility is nonsense. The entire argument of *Ethical Studies* following this starting point may be interpreted as an attempt to articulate and defend a sense of 'the moral self' capable of filling this gap.

Of the many philosophical domains in which the British Idealists worked, their political philosophy is the one most thoroughly and discernibly shaped by their conception of selfhood.[9] In mid-nineteenth-century Britain the prevailing mode of thinking about society was individualist. For example, both John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer regard social phenomena as reducible to the behaviour of distinct 'atomic' individuals. Against this paradigm, and taking their cue from the writings of Hegel,

the Idealists urge a strongly *social* conception of what it is to be a person, arguing that it is only in so far as we find ourselves within a community that we can come to have, or exercise, any meaningful selfhood at all. We like to think that we make our place in life, but in truth matters are reversed, and it is our place in life that makes us. 'Society is the condition of the development of a personality', says Green.[10] Each of us, he argues, from the first, finds ourselves 'existing in manifold relations to nature and other persons', and 'these relations form the reality of the self'.[11] On my own I am nothing, but through my mutual relations with others around me I become a genuine person. The issue, argues Bradley, is one of conceptual priority. Instead of atoms combined into a subsequent conglomerate, what comes first is the social whole, and it is only by an act of intellectual and falsifying abstraction that we can consider individuals apart from that context. An agent must not be abstracted out of this context and considered apart from its social relations, for it is they that work to constitute its very identity. 'To know what a man is . . . you must not take him in isolation. He is one of a people, he was born into a family, he lives in a certain society, in a certain state.'[12] The Idealists commonly think of society as an organic unity. 'The parts of it are necessary to each other, as the parts of an animal organism are,' urges John Stuart Mackenzie.[13] The great significance of this conception of selfhood for political thought lies in its power to suggest a solution to the problem highlighted by Henry Sidgwick and commonly referred to as 'the dualism of practical reason'[14]; the equally rational pull of egoism and universal concern, whose potential to conflict with one another leaves practical reason destitute. Considered in abstract isolation from the community which nurtures it, our apparent or finite self may appear to have interests potentially at odds or in conflict with those of our fellows, but taken in its wider social context, the interests of our true or real self must coincide with those of society at large. As social creatures we have social aspirations (whether we quite recognise it or not), and we find ourselves, as Bradley famously puts it, through 'our station and its duties'. As we fail perfectly to grasp ourselves, so we may fail perfectly to grasp our true interests, argues Green. But recognising that we are parts of something larger, we see too that our own good is really part of something wider than us: it is 'the idea of an absolute and a common good; a good common to the

person conceiving it with others, and good for him and them, whether at any moment it answers their likings or no'.[15] The result is an *ethical* conception of politics which regards the state as an instrument for the moralization or perfection of human nature—the creation of an 'ethical citizenship'[16]—and which measures all powers, rights and institutions against that yardstick. Moreover, as politics cannot be separated from ethics, nor may either topic be separated from religion, for the same result may also be understood as the manifestation of the infinite and divine in the concrete world of the finite. As Bosanquet puts it, 'All that we mean by the kingdom of God on earth is the society of human beings who have a common life and are working for a common social good.'[17]

The last area of philosophy to consider is aesthetics. Not all of the British Idealists were interested in this subject, nor is it one specifically dealt with in this volume, but it was an extremely important focus of interest for some among them, most notably Bernard Bosanquet and R.G. Collingwood.[18] Moreover, the reflections of these two thinkers on matters of artistic expression and aesthetic appreciation continued the emphasis that we have outlined above on the nature and development of the self.

Bernard Bosanquet is a central figure in British Idealist aesthetics and the author of the first history of aesthetic in English, *A History of Æsthetic* (1892). He also wrote *Three Lectures on Aesthetic* (1915), as well as many articles and addresses on the nature of art and its relation to the development of the individual. For Bosanquet, the work of art is a synthesis of content and expression.[19] Art involves the creation and consumption of beauty. The pleasurable experience we get by making, contemplating and understanding a work of art involves the expression of emotions and the revelation of new dimensions of the spiritual world within and around us. Art relates to 'the human desire for expression', and each art has its own medium, laws and expressive capacity to communicate such feelings.[20] The 'essence of beauty is expression, and expression depends on intelligent connection'. A work of art 'operates by selection', and we must, 'as the artist does, proceed by selection'.[21] Thus for Bosanquet, the self is central to theorising, creating, understanding and enjoying art. An active frame of mind is receptive to the aesthetic emotion which is expressed in a work of art. Aesthetic emotion allows the spectator to enter

into the mind of the artist, and thus it widens and deepens the contents of the self.[22] Aesthetic experience refers to a feeling that is stable, relevant, common[23] and affects the whole person. The aesthetic attitude encompasses 'the double process of creation and contemplation'.[24] In criticising Benedetto Croce's 'false idealism', Bosanquet emphasises the synthesis of physical (material) and mental processes involved in the execution of a work of art. The brush in the hands of the painter is crucial to expressing the ideal world of the artist's imagination,[25] and its materiality and movement contribute to the realisation of the aesthetic ideal.

R.G. Collingwood's theory of art develops an expression theory which comes closer to that of Croce. Collingwood distinguishes between 'art' and 'craft': crafts have a purpose other than the expression of the artist's feelings and mind, which is the end of art. Yet despite his insistence on the internal character of art—for the work of art is an activity of the artist (an activity of his consciousness)—Collingwood recognises the importance of the audience in the understanding and sharing of the creative activity.[26] The artist stands in a collaborative relation to the community, which attempts imaginatively to re-enact or reconstruct the artist's emotions. Expressing emotion is central to art proper. Art relates to truth: 'Art is knowledge; knowledge of the individual'[27] and knowledge of one's world. Art relates to the self: it reveals truth, first and foremost, to the artist. The revelation of truth in art occurs not in an assertive way but in an immediate intuitive shape, in the form of beauty.[28] Art is integral to the artist's self-realisation, for it signifies the struggle (through the channel of imagination) to realise one's being in a particular way.[29] The artists inhabit a private world of feeling, and through their creative capacities he expresses emotions in the work of art.[30]

II

The bulk of recent work on British Idealism has been on the central figures of Bradley, Caird, Green, Bosanquet and, looking even further forward, Collingwood. The opening paper of this volume, however, looks back in time to the earliest origins of the movement and considers the ways in which three mid-nineteenth-century pioneers of Idealist thought,

James Frederick Ferrier, John Grote and James Hutchison Stirling, laid the grounds for the conception of selfhood which later came to prominence.

Central to the story is Ferrier, who in grand metaphysical style attempts to derive an entire system of what he terms 'Absolute Idealism' from the root principle that in whatever is given to knowledge there must always be found some measure of cognisance of the knowing self. If nothing which is known can be isolated from the knowing of it, rendering talk of things-in-themselves senseless, no more can that knowing activity itself be isolated from the objects which fall within its purview, rendering equally senseless all talk of selves-in-isolation. And in this sense, Jenny Keefe argues, Ferrier's advance may be seen as a rejection of the previous Enlightenment theory of a science of man, that scheme in which the workings of the mind might be isolated, described and analysed in the very same way as the objects of nature. Grote similarly emphasises the impossibility of ever making the thinking self a direct object of thought while at the same time insisting that it is always thought or apprehended along with whatever is thus known. Where Ferrier's approach is largely individualist, Grote and Stirling do more to emphasise the communal nature of knowledge, thereby laying the foundations for the distinctively 'social' conception of the self that later comes to prominence.

Perhaps the most famous of the British Idealists, F.H. Bradley, notoriously declares that the finite self is something contradictory and lacking in fundamental metaphysical reality.[31] Along with all other relational phenomena, it belongs to the realm of appearance. It is perhaps this claim which has lead commentators to ignore his doctrine of the moral self, but that neglect is misguided, for in point of fact Bradley's ethical thought presents us with a detailed account of the nature, development and significance of the moral self. Taking Bradley's moral philosophy as a system in its own right not to be placed in the shadow of his later metaphysics, Dina Babushkina presents a close examination of his position, offering a variety of novel readings. She draws a contrast between the moral self as an abstract universal standard, indiscriminately binding on any agents whatsoever that find themselves in the relevant position, and the more concretely specified ideal or true self, which may be something different for each individual. Precisely what it means to aim to realise one's moral self in this latter sense she elucidates in terms of the twin notions

of 'projects' and 'plans'. The unity of such selfhood, she maintains, lies in the mutual consistency of its projects rather than in their subsumption under any one larger endeavour.

Where Babushkina focuses on the secular nature of the moral self, James Allard explores a second, rather different aspect of that concept, its religious dimension. He locates an apparent contradiction between two separate ways of thinking about God in Bradley's philosophy. In his metaphysical treatise, *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley suggests that the notion of God is one that has meaning for a metaphysical consciousness, arguing that 'the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of… experiencing the Deity'.[32] Elsewhere, however, he claims that the notion is fundamentally an ethical one, arguing that 'God for me has no meaning outside of the religious consciousness and that is essentially practical'.[33] Assuming that no metaphysical consciousness is at the same time a practical consciousness, these two claims seem to be contradictory. Allard argues that the more fundamental of the two is the second. At the conclusion of his earliest work, *Ethical Studies*, Bradley finds a contradiction in the very idea of morality, an incoherence in the basic notion of normativity. We aim to make actual what ought to be, but the very sense of *what ought to be* depends on its continued separation from actuality, or *what is*. Religious faith solves this dilemma, but drawing its content from theoretical ethics the concrete upshot of this resolution is less obscure than that might sound; it is Bradley's contention that we realise God when we do our moral duty. If the ethical sense is thus the more fundamental sense of divinity, then the alternative intellectual reading must be brought into line with it. The products of thought are always defective for Bradley, and nothing we could arrive at by thinking could claim the title 'God'. But Allard suggests that even if the product of metaphysics is not God, the *practice of doing philosophy* itself may be as much a way of realising God as fulfilling one's station in society or bringing to fruition one's ideal self.

With a foot in both its Scottish and its Oxford bases, Edward Caird is a central figure whose influence does much to unite the British Idealist movement as a whole. He is also a figure whose careful drawing out of the lessons from both Kant and Hegel about the nature of self-consciousness lay behind the thinking of many who come after him.

However, those writings are not easy to follow. In his careful and illuminating account of Caird's position, Phillip Ferreira explains that it may be understood as a form of dialectical exchange between three key ideas: self, not-self and God. The lesson of Kant's transcendental deduction is that the self and the not-self imply each other. Take away the work of the mind and its 'other' sinks into an empty *caput mortuum*, but except in its role of limiting and structuring a known world it is equally the case that selfhood amounts to nothing. Self and not-self are certainly different, but to Caird difference is only possible within a common framework which defines and delimits it. And so he argues that the essential relationship just described between subject and object reveals to us that the contrast between them in fact rests upon the deeper basis of an all-embracing, self-conscious unity. In Caird's further insistence that this greater unity must be understood as something infinite or divine, we see the strong influence upon him of Hegel, something which is further displayed in his argument that the unity cannot properly be understood 'all at once' but only gradually through a process of evolution. For Caird the progressive evolution of the details by which this three-fold dialectic expresses itself may be called upon to explain absolutely everything, although the explanatory scheme is one he develops most fully for religion and social philosophy.

The reconciliation between the individual and the community is a perennial problem in political philosophy. Liberal, communitarian, republican and leftist thinkers all address in their discourses this key issue of moral, social and political theorisation. Janusz Grygień notes that the two major methodological approaches which are used in the analysis of the relation between individual and the community—individualism (atomism) and collectivism (holism)—both fail to develop a viable notion of common good. Yet such a notion is necessary to accommodate both individual self-realisation and commitment to one's community. Grygień focuses on T.H. Green's conciliatory stance regarding individualistic and holistic perspectives and explores his 'paradoxical' combination of self-realisation with common good. He argues that a survey of Green's writings themselves and a review of the relevant literature reveal six different interpretations of just how Green sees the resolution of this 'paradox' as functioning: the salvation argument, the communitarian argument, the

reconciliation argument, the non-competitiveness argument, the natural sentiments argument and the institutional argument. The six arguments are classified into two groups (institutional determinants of the common good and the origin of the common good) and assessed in terms of mutual compatibility and overall tenability. According to Grygień, the institutional, non-competitiveness and communitarian arguments taken together constitute Green's conception of the relations binding the individual and the common good. Green's account of the common good contains features both of liberal individualism and holism, and it combines ethical universalism with political contextualism. Green's reconciliatory and multifaceted theory of the common good goes far beyond contemporary reductionist approaches to this issue.

Metaphysics, ethics, and social and political theorising are all intrinsically connected in T.H. Green's philosophy. Every aspect of human activity is understood not in isolation but in the context of an overarching view of reality that relates it to a broader framework of meaning. The analysis of the self is an area of inquiry which shows the importance of this hermeneutic approach. Rex Martin argues that Green develops an extended notion of the self which is relational and social and has three dimensions: the metaphysical, the ethical and the civic. This extended notion of the self is integral to the ethical process of self-realisation and to the common good discourse, as well as to the issue of citizenship. Citizenship involves an ethic of reciprocity and mutual benefit reflected on a system of civil rights. Martin shows that Green's system of civil rights is attractive and balanced, for it holds a middle ground between the extremes of atomistic individualism, on the one hand, and the celebration of community as an ultimate value in and of itself, on the other. This system of rights generates a democratic polity which is based on a social sense of a shared common good and on a reciprocal recognition of individual self-realisation. The life of the political community becomes an affair of its citizens who, as extended selves, negotiate and harmonise their multiple interests while promoting a beneficial good of each and of all. Martin's account of Green's idea of the self takes us on a fascinating journey from the metaphysical heights of the eternal consciousness to the ethico-social landscape of self-realisation, rights, citizenship and the common good.

The political philosophy of Bernard Bosanquet is an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Bosanquet is a key exponent of the moral view of politics, which combines elements of ethics and metaphysics in the discussion of the nature of the state, the role of institutions, the common good, the best life, and the ideal of self-realisation. The development of the self in the context of the *polis* is at the heart of Bosanquet's political philosophy. This is a feature of Greek political thought whose legacy Bosanquet continues and enriches with further Idealist insights. Stamatoula Panagakou explores the relation between ethics, politics and the self in Bosanquet's (1899) political philosophy, focusing mainly, although not exclusively, on his *The Philosophical Theory of the State*. She argues that for Bosanquet, the state is an ethical system aiming at the realisation of the best life or common good, and she shows that the ethical system of the state provides the necessary institutions and meanings which can unite individuals in an ethical human fellowship. The components of the ethical system of the state are ethical life, the metaphysics of the self, institutions as ethical ideas, and ethical citizenship. Ethical life refers to the moral nature of human fellowship and to the self-realisation processes in the context of institutions as ethical ideas. The metaphysics of the self depicts the overall development of individuality, an aspect of which is the political life of man. Institutions as ethical ideas embody moral purposes and influence the minds of individuals who comprise the political community. Ethical citizenship refers to the individual's duty to contribute to the moral growth of society.

Bosanquet's theorising of the self and the individual is complex and multifaceted and has become the subject of numerous discussions and interpretations. The centrality of the notion of the self to his moral, social and political philosophy necessitates a thorough exploration of this concept across the wide spectrum of his philosophical production. William Sweet focuses on Bosanquet's theory of individuality and argues that he consistently defends the value and significance of the human individual both in his metaphysical and in his ethico-social theorising. In his Gifford Lectures, Bosanquet theorises the self and its value in relation to the Absolute. The development of consciousness is a realisation of the Absolute, and the presence of the Absolute in consciousness enables the continuous realisation of consciousness. On the other hand, in his moral,

social and political philosophy, Bosanquet is constantly preoccupied with the development of character and the realisation of the moral self. Yet, the spiritual growth and self-transcendence which sustain the articulation of the moral self signify its metaphysical foundation and point beyond its spatiotemporal existence. Bosanquet holds a concept of the self that overcomes the apparent tensions between the accounts of the 'moral self' and the 'metaphysical self' and identifies three ways of reconciliation. First, the process leading to the Absolute is parallel to the process of moral development. Second, finite consciousnesses retain their distinctiveness in the Absolute and are not entirely absorbed by it. Finally, a true understanding of the self involves recognition of its unity with others as well as of its self-transcendence for the sake of self-realisation.

The Bosanquet/Pringle-Pattison debate is a central episode in the controversy between Personal and Absolute Idealists. In a 1918 symposium entitled 'Do Finite Individuals Possess a Substantive or Adjectival Mode of Being?' Pringle-Pattison criticises Bosanquet for denigrating the individual and for depriving the empirical self of its reality.[34] Avital Simhony argues that an uncritical acceptance of Pringle-Pattison's charges precludes us from appreciating the complexity and significance of Bosanquet's theory of the self. Bosanquet theorises the self in terms of growth and expansion, not of exclusion and limitation. His 'adjectival self' is in fact a lateral-relational self which contains a positive and constructive conception of individuality. Bosanquet theorises the self in terms of growth and expansion, not in terms of exclusion and limitation. The distinctiveness of individuality is crystallised out of the self's lateral-relational identity. The notion of relational individuality explains the nature of the confluence of selves in the social whole. Institutions provide ethico-social structures which sustain individual development. The mutual completion of selves through social co-operation and the idea of the general or communal will demonstrate the vital interconnection of selves and the significance of the lateral-relational concept of the self for understanding the substance and operation of society. Bosanquet's relational holism is an approach which shows the value of the individual in two main respects. First, it pays attention to the particular concrete universal, and second, it views the self as an active and energetic entity whose capacities for self-maintenance and self-government develop through social co-operation.

Drawing upon *The New Leviathan*,[35] R.G. Collingwood's late treatise on man, ethics and civilisation written late in his career, Ian Winchester reflects on his conception of personhood and its relation to language use. For Collingwood, a person is an agent who possesses reason and free will, both of which are mediated by human speech and the use of language. Winchester examines the validity of Collingwood's position by discussing some examples from everyday life which show that possessing an elementary level of reasoning can be independent of the normal use of language and speech. His account contains references to such thinkers as Stanislas Dehaene, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, the Dalai Lama, Eugene Linden, Bertrand Russell, Peter Strawson, Alan Turing and others. Winchester reaches a two-fold conclusion concerning the soundness of Collingwood's notion of the generally required conditions for personhood. First, there are cases in which humans and other animals possess a sort of elementary reasoning capacity without necessarily possessing normal speech and language adequate for communication. Possession of a rudimentary level of language would probably add nothing to one's animal powers. Or a person who has language ability for communication purposes might lack the necessary imaginative power in the use of that language. Therefore, he/she might be unable to reflect on the various possibilities in order to make an adequate and really free choice. Second, for sophisticated acts of reasoning (e.g. poetry, philosophy, mathematics, scientific discourse), one needs to have developed human speech and sophisticated linguistic abilities. It is in this case, then, that Collingwood's thesis is verified.

In the field of biography and autobiography, the self is at the centre of inquiry. James Connelly focuses on philosophical biography and explores issues relating both to the self as the subject of biography and to the complex task of the biographer. His analysis is based on a constructive reading of R.G. Collingwood's reflections on biography and autobiography, as well as his theorising of self-knowledge, the activity of thought, the logic of question and answer, and the idea of process. Process is a feature of narrative and a characteristic of the biographical self. The biographer should be able to see the life of his subject as a process in a dialectical relation to its surroundings and not as a fixed, unchanging self. Connelly develops his account by referring to, and at the same time by

critically assessing, Collingwood's insights. He examines Collingwood's theorisation and shows that his views often contain hermeneutic paths which are not immediately obvious. In his works, Collingwood reveals important information about the way in which he conceives of himself as an actor in the unfolding of life. Both his 'psychoanalytic' activity and his projection of his own experience on the depiction of the lives of others are part of his autobiography and should be understood and considered by the author of Collingwood's philosophical biography. Connelly argues that the biographer must have a sense of the subject's self-understanding and projects, trace the biographical self's dialectic with society and thus capture its development and its constitutive relationships, and create a coherent narrative which naturally fits the biographical subject. Writing a philosophical biography involves judgment, imagination, sensitivity and attention to the biographical self's interests. It also presupposes recognition of the fact that the thought of the philosophical biographical self is (mostly) their life.

It might be feared that studying the conception of the self as it figures in British Idealist philosophy can offer no more than historical interest, but the ungroundedness of that concern and the value of such thoughts for contemporary philosophy are well illustrated by Gary Cesarz's discussion of McTaggart's conception of the self. Taking as his starting point modern materialist conceptions in which the self is construed as but a story we tell ourselves, he shows that the self-defeating irony of such schemes was long ago diagnosed by McTaggart, who argues that self cannot be a product of body when body itself is a function of mind. The problem stems from our overextension of an otherwise useful methodology into a region where it has no place. We investigate something by a method that itself precludes all evidence of what we wish to study, complain we cannot find what we are looking for, and in a fit of explanatory pique conclude there's no such thing. But it is not simply error that we may learn about from McTaggart's writing, argues Cesarz, for his own positive theory of the self *as substance* is one with great promise. Substance is a unity to be identified neither with the set of its properties nor with the core individual which has them, sides of its being which while they may be distinguished can neither be thought of as having separate reality. Applying this abstract scheme to the immaterial realm, Cesarz suggests that by applying this

abstract scheme to the immaterial realm we can find what we need to understand selfhood; for that is something which in similar fashion is neither a bundle of perceptions nor a bare ego, but rather the indissoluble unity of these distinguishable but inseparable aspects.

The papers looked at thus far have each dealt with a single author. The last two papers take a broader approach and look at British Idealism as a whole. While it is a concept that modern philosophy treats with suspicion and distain, the concept of the *true* or *real self* is one that is absolutely central to the Idealist conception. In his paper, W.J. Mander draws out four distinct roles which the concept can be seen to play in Idealist thinking, thereby demonstrating the unity of their philosophical vision. In the first place, the notion of the true self gives us a tool to understand what it means to speak of value or goodness, for genuine and final value may be understood as that which would satisfy our true or ideal self, where the true or ideal self is that self able to find final and complete contentment. Secondly, the true self can function as an explanation of the obligating or imperatival character of moral demands. The true self is something that we must or ought to listen to—our better self binding our worse nature. Thirdly, the concept is linked to freedom, for true freedom must be *self-expression* as well as *self-determination*. A free action is one that we can own, one that we author, one that truly expresses who we are. And thus freedom identifies for us our true selves. Fourthly and finally, attention is drawn to the teleological aspect of the doctrine. To find my true self I must direct my attention not at who I am *now*, however that may be conceived, but at the person I shall become, at my *future or end*.

The concluding paper of the volume differs from those which precede it insofar as it addresses the issue of personhood head-on rather than indirectly through the medium of historical scholarship. But it is at home in the collection for it picks up and continues that same spirit of idealistic inquiry whose origins the previous essays explore. Not simply the same thing as being rational, being an animal, being a body, being a character, being an intelligence, or even being conscious, the notion of a person seems to outrun all possible categories, to refuse confinement to any single function. It is this very fact, Leslie Armour argues, that inclines us in idealistic fashion to locate the defining mark of persons in their *creativity:* generally, in their power to frame or structure an intelligible

world, and more specifically, in their capacity to originate both value and meaning. Each one is unique and irreplaceable, and those which bestow value and meaning on the world can have value and meaning themselves only as it is given them by others of the same kind, that is to say, within a community of persons. But communal life is reciprocal, of course, and in so far as those who enter into it thereby assert their human existence, it is correct to maintain that anyone is a person just in case they say that they are—where this is understood as a *claim*, not a *description*. Persons are necessarily social, but social relations themselves are necessarily between individual persons, which tension explains the long-running disputes between absolutists and personalists which historically have tended to polarize Idealist discussion of these issues.

We may be concerned with political questions of individual liberty and social responsibility. We may be concerned with metaphysical matters concerning the relationship between our mind and our body. We may be concerned with epistemological concerns as to how we may ever know anything beyond the compass of our own selfhood. Or we may be concerned with the questions of cosmic significance, of what it means to be a conscious, rational individual in the universe at large. But sooner or later we must come to some kind of understanding of our own selves, of who and what we are. One obstacle to ever achieving such reflexive understanding would be to suppose that this is a straightforward question to which one might give a quick and simple answer, but in truth selfhood is a highly complex concept with multiple aspects, levels and depths, and one whose development has occurred gradually over centuries at the hands of many different thinkers. We cut ourselves off from fully appreciating such a complex and historical notion—and hence from fully understanding ourselves—if we stick only to familiar discussions and ignore the less well-known moments in its articulation. It is with the hope of avoiding such narrowness of vision that we may hope to draw insight from reading about the concept of the self as it figures in the philosophy of the British Idealists.

Notes

1. For further general discussion of British Idealist philosophy see Boucher and Vincent, 2012; Mander, 2011.
2. Bradley, 1940, p. 242.
3. Bosanquet, 1920b, p. 62. For further discussion see Panagakou, 1999.
4. That the British Idealists indeed made substantial contributions to philosophical logic has been sadly overlooked due to the dominance of the new logic which came after it.
5. Bosanquet, 1920a, p. 150, p. 163.
6. Pringle-Pattison, 1907, p. 96
7. Green, 1907, §107, §102.
8. Bradley, 1927, p. 38.
9. The most fully developed example of British Idealist work on political philosophy is Bosanquet's *The Philosophical Theory of the State.* For a recent collection of essays on this topic see Sweet, 2009.
10. Green, 1907, §191.
11. Green, 1885–8, p. 146.
12. Bradley, 1927, p. 173.
13. Mackenzie, 1892, p. 154.
14. Sidgwick, 1901, pp. x, 404n, 504–7.
15. Green, 1907, §202.
16. For a recent collection of essays on this theme see Brooks, 2014.
17. Bosanquet, 1891, p. 121. For further discussion see Panagakou, 2010.
18. For further discussion see MacEwen, 2007; Mander, 2011, pp. 328–355; Raters, 2010; Sweet 2001; and Trott, 2007.
19. Bosanquet, 1904, p. 465.
20. Bosanquet, 1889–1890, p. 102.
21. Bosanquet, 1893, p. 251, 257.
22. Bosanquet, 1894, pp. 153–166.
23. Bosanquet, 1915, pp. 4–6.
24. Bosanquet, 1915, p. 74.
25. Bosanquet, 1915, p. 73.
26. Collingwood, 1938, pp. 300–324.
27. Collingwood, 1938, p. 289.
28. Collingwood, 1924, p. 117.
29. Collingwood, 1924, pp. 61–63.
30. Collingwood, 1924, p. 68.

31. Bradley, 1897, chs. IX–X
32. Bradley, 1897, p. 5.
33. Bradley, 1914, p. 428.
34. B. Bosanquet and A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 1918.
35. Collingwood, 1942.

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2

The Early British Idealists and the Metaphysics of the Self

Jenny Keefe

Introduction

British Idealism emerged as a significant school of British philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century. W.J. Mander says that:

> we will not go far wrong if we think of the movement as beginning in 1865, the year in which James Hutchison Stirling published his *The Secret of Hegel*, or in 1866, the year of T.H. Green's appointment as college tutor at Balliol and Edward Caird's election as Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow. (Mander, 2011, p. 9)

Of additional interest to the historian of philosophy are the preceding years—specifically, the conditions which allowed for Green and Caird's philosophy to be not only novel but also influential on subsequent British philosophy. A number of figures should be considered in

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the telling of this story, most notably the German Idealists. Additionally, teachers such as Benjamin Jowett (1817–1893) and Alexander Campbell Fraser (1819–1914) played an important role by teaching many of the first generation of British Idealists.[1] Moreover, three nineteenth-century philosophers developed idealist ideas before idealism was a British school of thought. As such, James Frederick Ferrier (1808–1864), John Grote (1813–1866) and James Hutchison Stirling (1820–1909) may be considered predecessors of British Idealism, paving the way for the more influential figures that followed them.

As noted by James Seth in his *English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy*, there were three principal trends in mid-nineteenth-century British philosophy: idealism, empiricism, and a continuation of Thomas Reid and William Hamilton's Common Sense philosophy (Seth, 1912, p. 238). Collectively, Ferrier, Grote and Stirling entail the first of these groups, and they may be considered early British Idealists who anticipated the better-known philosophers who followed them. They differed from one another in certain respects, yet they all had an understanding of the self that departed from the Enlightenment picture of a science of man, which at the time was the dominant approach to understanding the self in British philosophy.[2] Of the three, Ferrier's system is not only the most developed but also the most novel. Hence, this chapter will present and discuss Ferrier's account of the self, outlining what Ferrier believes the self *is* and how it fits into his metaphysical system, and comparing and contrasting his account with those of Grote and Stirling. But first, some general and biographical details will place these philosophers in historical context.

Ferrier, Grote and Stirling's Proto-Idealism

Ferrier lived from 1808 to 1864, dying shortly before idealism became a key school of British thought. He was originally from Edinburgh and spent most of his career as the Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. He was in part influenced by German Idealism; in his youth he travelled to Germany, where he attended some of Schelling's lectures and purchased a medallion of the recently deceased

Hegel. Additionally, he wrote biographical entries on both Schelling and Hegel for *The Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography* (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 545–568).[3] When he does mention the German Idealists in his philosophical works, it is with a degree of sympathy and interest. However, he does not discuss them at length, and on the few occasions that he refers to Hegel he professes to barely understand his ideas.[4] Illustrative of this is an anecdote provided by Stirling, who discovered Ferrier "diligently engaged on a volume of Hegel which turned out to be upside down. Ferrier's explanation was that, being utterly baffled in the attempt to understand his author the right side up, he had tried the other way round in desperation" (University of St Andrews, *Votiva Tabella*, 1911, p. 155). It was Ferrier's reaction to the Scottish philosophy that came before him that led him to develop his own idealist metaphysics. He was very familiar with the Common Sense school that preceded him and which dominated Scottish universities during his lifetime. And to a large extent his idealism is developed from his rejection of Reid's philosophy of Common Sense and the more general Enlightenment project to develop a science of man.[5] By imitating the science of the world, the science of man separates the subject from the object and thus fails to observe the most distinctive feature of human beings, self-consciousness, thereby rendering itself a flawed project of observation.[6] In Ferrier's view, the *essential* fact of humanity is self-consciousness; therefore, this must be the starting point for philosophy.[7] So, throughout his philosophical works he emphasizes its importance and argues that self-consciousness is the condition of knowledge, reality, freedom and religion.

His major work, the *Institutes of Metaphysic*, was published in 1854. Here he develops an idealist metaphysics, which he describes as a system of Absolute Idealism. Unusually, he employs a deductive style and attempts to develop an account of absolute existence from a foundational axiom. The *Institutes* is arranged into three parts: the Epistemology, the Agnoiology and the Ontology. He begins his epistemology with his primary proposition: "Along with whatever any intelligence knows, it must, as the ground or condition of its knowledge, have some cognizance of *itself*" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 79). According to Ferrier, self-consciousness is the constant concomitant of all experience; in knowing anything, whether in perception or in the consideration of an abstract

idea, a person simultaneously has *some* knowledge of herself.[8] From this starting point, he deduces 41 propositions, and chief among these are his arguments that a synthesis of subject-*with*-object constitutes the minimum units of knowledge, ignorance and existence (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 97, 432 and 511). The *Institutes* received mixed reviews. On the one hand, John Stuart Mill described it as "the romance of logic" (Mill, 1972, pp. 246, 247), but W.R. Sorley said Ferrier's style "grows a little wearisome", and he suggested, "Perhaps the formalism of his method counteracted the lucidity of his thought" (Sorley, 1920, pp. 285, 286).

In making an idealist principal the starting point for his philosophy, Ferrier at once connects his ideas with both Berkeley's spiritual idealism and German Idealism. Ferrier, along with Alexander Campbell Fraser, contributes to a re-examination of Berkeley in the nineteenth century.[9] He recognizes him not only as the intermediate figure between Locke and Hume but also as a philosopher who identifies the spiritual principle in all reality.[10] He says: "[Berkeley] was the first to swell the current of that mighty stream of tendency towards which all modern meditation flows, the great gulf-stream of Absolute Idealism" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 293). Moreover, he appreciates that Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel identify the importance of self-consciousness, but he believes that in Kant's case this is obscured under "a mass of subordinate considerations". He finds the delivery, if not the content, of the German Idealists hard to break through, describing them thus: "Admirable in the substance and spirit and direction of their speculation, [but] they are painfully deficient in the accomplishment of intelligible speech" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 95 and p. 96).

Ferrier, unlike Reid or the British Idealists, did not start or contribute to a school of thought; the idealists who came after him cannot be described as followers of his philosophy.[11] Nevertheless, they were familiar with his ideas to varying degrees. Certainly, he influenced William Wallace, who attended St Andrews. And the idealists who were students at Edinburgh University, including R.B. Haldane, read him. Additionally, the influential British Idealist Edward Caird was familiar enough with Ferrier that he encouraged his students at Glasgow to read him.[12] Figures who knew his philosophy well made important contributions to the introduction of idealism for British readers. For instance, Ferrier's biogra-

pher, E.S. Haldane, translated Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1892–1896). But more importantly, Ferrier's philosophy was the first original, post-Hegelian system of idealism that can be found in British thought. It is one that he developed largely from British sources, via his rejection of Reid and his return to Berkeley. Therefore, he may be considered as a forerunner of British Idealism, anticipating both an interest in and an approach to metaphysics that gained greater popularity in the decades following his death.[13]

Grote was a contemporary of Ferrier. Born in Beckenham, Kent, in 1813, he was the younger brother of the more famous Utilitarian and historian of Ancient Greece, George Grote. He studied at Cambridge, later becoming the Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy there. He is the author of *Exploratio Philosophica*. The first volume was published 1865, the year before his death and the same year of publication as Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel*. This was the only book published during his lifetime. After his death, three further texts were published, including his critique of Utilitarian philosophy and the second volume of his *Exploratio*. Thus, like Ferrier, he died shortly before British Idealism became a major school of British thought. His *direct* influence on subsequent idealists is unclear. Nevertheless, he anticipated their ideas in his efforts to provide a commentary and critique of contemporary philosophy.

Like Ferrier, Grote places knowledge at the centre of his account. Moreover, he also views self-consciousness as the attendant of freedom. In his rejection of Epicureanism and Utilitarianism he says: "The Idealist or non-positivist scheme is that which starts from what (philosophically) is the full or complete fact or phenomenon, viz. consciousness or knowledge, accompanied with *power* or *freedom*" (Grote, 1900, p. 296). Yet, his account differs from Ferrier's and places him closer to both the German and British Idealists in so far as he notes the importance of the communality of consciousness. He says that "the fact that *we know*, is prior to, and logically more comprehensive than the fact that what we know *is*". He adds: "Knowledge is the sympathy of intelligence with intelligence, through the medium of qualified or particular existence" (Grote, 1900, p. 291, 296). By acknowledging the "sympathy of intelligence with intelligence", he emphasizes the universality of experience.

Sorley observes that Grote's strength lies in his elucidation of other philosophers rather than in the development of his own philosophical position. This is borne out in the first volume of *Exploratio,* where he identifies and examines three trends in philosophy: (1) the Philosophy of the Human Mind, or Psychology, (2) Positivism, which he also refers to as "wrong-phenomenalism", and (3) Idealism. He notes his allegiance by describing the last of these as "the true and real philosophy" (Grote, 1865, p. xii). The first two he considers problematic branches of the science of the human mind, which he views, just as Ferrier did before him, to be an essentially flawed enterprise. He contrasts idealism with positivism on the basis that the latter looks to the facts generated by physical research, whereas the former considers metaphysical questions, or "the basis upon which all rests—being not that things exist, but that we know them, *i.e.*, think of them as existing" (Grote, 1865, p. 59). Yet Grote's approach is more consensus-building than the accounts provided by either Ferrier or Stirling. And, whilst he favours idealism, he argues for a synthesis between the various types of philosophy.[14] For example, he notes the contribution of the positivists to an account of knowledge, whilst at the same time recognizing that this is an incomplete view which idealism can correct and add to. The former account of knowledge focuses on what is known, but it does so in abstraction and without reference to the method of thought. In this way, the "correction" provided by idealism is constructive. He says: "[It is] not simply a substitution of something better … but a correction of it in one particular direction, leaving what thus purports to be corrected still important and of force in other directions" (Grote, 1865, p. 2). The result, as Sorley says, is that "none of the criticism is merely destructive: it aims always at elucidating the core of truth in other men's opinions, with a view to a comprehensive synthesis" (Sorley, 1920, p. 264).

Stirling was born in Glasgow about a decade after Ferrier, in 1820. He was a contemporary of Alexander Campbell Fraser and Lord Kelvin at the University of Glasgow. He trained as a doctor, and he even practiced as one in South Wales for several years. Upon the death of his brother he received an inheritance that allowed him to give up medicine and travel to France and Germany. He became inspired to study Hegel while dining with two German students. He describes the moment of inspiration by

saying that "it was understood that [Hegel] had not only completed philosophy, but, above all, reconciled to philosophy Christianity itself. *That struck*!" (Stirling, 1898, p. xviii). This led to several years spent engaged in a systematic study of German philosophy, largely focusing on Kant's *Critique* and Hegel's *Logic* and *Encyclopaedia*, in an attempt to understand Hegel. After some years in France and Germany, he returned to Britain and finally settled in Edinburgh. In 1865, the year following Ferrier's death, he published *The Secret of Hegel*, which was the first sustained attempt to analyse Hegel's philosophy in English. Stirling unsuccessfully applied for two important Moral Philosophy chairs, losing out at the University of Glasgow in 1866 to a much younger Edward Caird and then at Edinburgh University to the Rev. Henry Underwood in 1868. Despite this, he spent the remainder of his life devoted to philosophy, writing several other philosophical works and delivering the first set of Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University. He died in 1909.

The Secret of Hegel originally appeared in two volumes. The first contains an account of Stirling's struggle to understand Hegel, as well as part of Hegel's *Logic* in translation. The second volume contains his interpretation of the translation. In the preface to the *Secret* he advises the reader to approach this in sequence: one should begin with the translation first, then "the struggle to Hegel", which should be read alongside the translation. Finally, the reader should turn to Stirling's own commentary. The so-called "secret" of Hegel is the influence of Kant in Hegel's work. Stirling argues that in order to fully understand Hegel's ideas, one must consider them in relation to his notable predecessor. He says:

> As Aristotle—with considerable assistance from Plato—made *explicit* the *abstract* Universal that was *implicit* in Socrates, so Hegel—with less considerable assistance from Fichte and Schelling—made *explicit* the *concrete* Universal that was *implicit* in Kant. (Stirling, 1898, p. xxii)

His book was received well, earning positive reviews from figures such as Carlyle and Emerson. T.H. Green said:

> [The *Secret*] not only contrasts with everything else that has been published in England about it [the Hegelian philosophy] as sense with nonsense, but

that it is such a true and thorough exposition of the development of German philosophy as could have been put forth by no one not possessed of the highest speculative ability, and of that "transcendental faculty of taking pains" which is said to constitute genius. (Stirling, 1912, pp. 169, 170)

Yet, the manner of Stirling's delivery is notoriously convoluted, and for this he received some criticism. For instance, James Seth said:

[Stirling] was a man of remarkable speculative insight; but his style, though often striking, is so marked by the influence of Carlyle, and he so resolutely declines to conform to ordinary standards of systematic exposition, that this work is as difficult as the original which it is intended to illuminate. (Seth, 1912, p. 342)

The oft-repeated joke is that if Stirling *knew* the secret of Hegel, he kept it to himself. Nevertheless, as the first book of its kind, Stirling's *Secret* played an important role in drawing the attention of the English-speaking world to German Idealism.

Ferrier develops an original system of idealist metaphysics, Grote provides an insightful critique of contemporary philosophy from an idealist perspective, and Stirling offers the first detailed analysis of Hegel's philosophy in English. One notion that is common to all three of these philosophers is an idealist conception of the self. Hence, the next section will examine Ferrier's account of the self, showing the ways in which his view compares and contrasts with those of Grote and Stirling.

Ferrier's Conscious Self

The notion of self is of paramount importance to Ferrier's philosophy. He rather vividly says: "Everything which I, or any intelligence, can apprehend, is steeped primordially in *me*" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 20). So, it is worth asking exactly what this self is that Ferrier develops his system of metaphysics around. As it stands, this question cannot be fully answered because for Ferrier, neither oneself nor that which is external to oneself (such as matter) may be known in isolation; each can only be known in

conjunction with the other. In this way, it is impossible to define exactly what the self *is* because it can never be isolated in thought.

Epistemology is the primary focus of Ferrier's work, and his epistemology revolves around his idealist claim that every unit of cognition consists of an inseparable synthesis of subject-*with*-object. So, for instance, in the perception of a table or the awareness that 2 + 2 = 4, the knower forms the subjective and necessary aspect of the synthesis and the object (the table or 2 + 2 = 4) forms the objective and contingent aspect of the synthesis. It is possible to focus on either the subjective aspect or the objective aspect, but for Ferrier any separate focus is really illusory; even when that occurs the other aspect of the synthesis is not fully eliminated. So, when an individual considers the table that she perceives, she also perceives herself at the same time, even if the greatest part of her attention is focused on the table, and *vice versa*.

Moreover, Ferrier demonstrates his idealism by arguing that the self is also part of any reality that is apprehended by arguing that a subject-w*ith*-object synthesis forms the absolute.[15] This is akin to Stirling's assertion that "the secret of the universe is thought" (Stirling, 1898, p. 678). It follows that Ferrier's self is not an individual substance; instead, it forms the universal aspect of all cognition, or as Torgny Segerstedt describes it, "the uniting and arranging principle" (Segerstedt, 1935, p. 128).[16] The objective aspect of the subject-*with*-object synthesis changes from one experience to the next, yet the subjective aspect is necessary and thereby unites all phenomena as *my* phenomena. Therefore, the self, as the subjective and necessary part of all of our experiences, is crucial. The clearest account of what Ferrier considers the self to be, or perhaps more importantly, what he thinks it is not, can be found in his series of articles "An Introduction to the Philosophy of Consciousness—Parts I to VII", which appeared in *Blackwoods Magazine* between 1838 and 1839.

In these articles, Ferrier's primary aim is to show that the self cannot be identified with the mind or any of its states. Ferrier's principal target is the notion of the self that was developed by the "science of man"[17], which he describes as follows:

> By benumbing a vitality she cannot grasp, and by denying or passing by, blindly or in perplexity, a freedom she can neither realize nor explain, she

will do her best to bring him under the dominion of the well-known laws which the rest of the universe obeys. But all her efforts ever have been, and ever shall be unavailing. She may indeed play with words, and pass before us a plausible rotation of "faculties." She may introduce the causal *nexus* into thought and call the result "association." But the Man himself is not to be found in this calculating machine. (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 18)

Ferrier looks to common language to show that the self cannot be identified with the mind. He notes that the ordinary person does not identify herself with either her mind or her states of mind; rather, the ordinary person typically speaks of *her* mind and *her* sensations or passions. It follows that she does not identify these with the self but instead considers them to be *objects* of awareness. Conversely, the ego, or the "I", never has the possessive pronoun "my" attached to it in ordinary conversation; to do so would be redundant because the ego *is* the self.

According to Ferrier, the self is not the mind (a concept which he considers to be a philosophical fiction), nor can it be identified with one's "states of mind", which he allows for only as a convenient expression to describe one's collective experiences. Instead, the only thing that can be attributed to and identified with the self is one's conscious awareness of these varying experiences. One's self is the being to whom consciousness belongs. He says:

The *fact* of consciousness belongs to the man himself, to that being which calls itself "I;" and this, truly speaking, is all that belongs to him. The *objects* of consciousness, namely man's passions, sensations, &c., are not, properly speaking, his at all. The fact and notion of self do not necessarily or always accompany them. They may be referred to "mind," or to what you please. They are indeed within the man's control, and it is his duty to control them. But this is not because they *are* himself, but only because they are *not* himself; because they are *obscurations* of himself. (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 55–56)

Ferrier's view is opposed to the idea of a mind as the recipient of various external forces. He argues that "the *ego* is never passive. Its being is pure act. To hold it passive is to hold it annihilated" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 134). In order to allow for the possibility of freedom and morality,

one's consciousness cannot be at the mercy of external forces, and this is why he rejects a passive account of the self. He says: "If there be bondage in his common consciousness, it must necessarily pass into his moral conscience. Unless our first and simplest consciousness be an act of freedom, our moral being is a bondsman all its life" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 99). Here he refers not only to what might traditionally be considered as external forces, such as other people or environmental influences, but also to one's sensations and passions. For Ferrier, these are not parts of the self; instead they are "obscurations" of the self, and as such they are at odds with the self. In his view, to be beholden to one's experiences is to be devoid of freedom. In this way, the self has an antagonistic relationship with what he collectively calls "the forces of nature". He says:

> It is true that man's consciousness would not develop itself unless certain varieties of sensation, reason, &c., became manifest within him; but it does not by any means follow from this that consciousness is the natural sequent or harmonious accompaniment of these. The fact is, that consciousness does not come into operation *in consequence* of these states, but *in spite* of them: it does not come into play to increase and foster these states, but only actively to suspend, control, or put a stop to them. (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 79)

As Ferrier underlines, there is no self-in-itself; there is only the conscious self that is present in experience or, in other words, some subject-w*ith*-object synthesis. Yet, contained within this synthesis, as part of each experience, is something which is alien to oneself and which Ferrier believes should be suspended and controlled to allow for the possibility of freedom and morality. Therefore, at the centre of experience is an antagonistic relationship. Bernard Mayo suggests that Ferrier's focus here is less about antagonism and more about controlling one's sensations and passions. He says: "Conscience is not necessarily antagonistic to passion, only to *uncontrolled* passion. But control can be exercised by the accelerator as well as by the brake" (Mayo, 1969, pp. 7, 8). However, Ferrier's own words suggest that no "forces of nature" should be endorsed: he specifically states that "[consciousness] does not come into play to increase and foster these states, but only actively to suspend, control, or put a stop

to them". So in his view, controlling the forces of nature is a prerequisite for a fully conscious life. Thus, the self of experience is born out of antagonism.

By consciousness, Ferrier means self-consciousness; it is "that notion of self, and that self-reference, which in man generally, though by no means invariably, accompanies his sensations, passions, emotions, play of reason, or states of mind whatsoever" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 40). This, in his view, is the peculiar and defining feature of humanity. Moreover, consciousness is not merely an attribute of the self; instead it constitutes the self. He describes the creative act through which one's self is generated as follows:

> For let it be particularly noted that the notion of self is a great deal more than a mere notion,—that is to say, it possesses far more than a mere logical value and contents—it is absolutely genetic or creative. *Thinking* oneself "I" *makes* oneself "I;" and it is only *by thinking* himself "I" that a man *can* make himself "I;" or, in other words, change an unconscious thing into that which is now a conscious self. Nothing else will or can do it. So long as a Being does *not* think itself "I," it does not and cannot become "I." No other being, no being except itself, can make it "I." (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 109)[18]

For Ferrier, it follows that the very attempt to develop a "science of man" is a flawed undertaking. Humanity, unlike other things in the universe, cannot be a true object of research because it is the one case in which the subject and the object of research are one and the same. This is problematic in so far as consciousness is the defining feature of humanity. One cannot truly be an object of oneself because then the object is not one's whole self; some of the self remains with the subject that considers the object. The part of oneself that is reflective—namely, self-consciousness—is required to undertake a study of anything. Thus, in making oneself the object of one's study, one is required to divest the object of part of itself—indeed the defining part of itself—in order to undertake the study at all! In Ferrier's view we always know ourselves, but only as *subjects* of awareness and never as *objects* of awareness. It is for this reason that Ferrier determines that a science of mind must be impossible.

What he says about the impossibility of making the self an object of thought is echoed by Grote. In *Exploratio Philosophica* Grote says:

> By the "self-self" I mean that which cannot really be thought of, *i.e.* which cannot be made an object of thought, but which is *with-thought* (mitge-dacht), thought along with, or included in, our *immediate* thought and feeling, or which, in other words, is one of the essential elements of such thought or feeling. (Grote, 1900, p. 145)

Grote presents the self in two ways; there is the self-self, which is an essential component in all experience, and there is the thought-self, by which he means the conscious self. The latter is not identical with the self-self (or the self-in-itself), which can never be an object of thought. The thought-self is the conception of ourselves that occurs whenever we have an experience. These are, of course, not two different entities but rather the same thing differently engaged. His position bears some resemblance to Ferrier's account of knowledge in his *Institutes of Metaphysic* as an indivisible synthesis of subject-*with*-object, yet he describes this slightly differently. For Grote, when knowledge occurs, the self is divided into two parts; there is self-consciousness (or the thought-self, which is the self as aware of itself), and there is a unit of cognition such as perception, and here the self-self is directed outwards.

Both Ferrier and Grote deny that the self-in-itself can be an object of cognition; whilst the self is something that pervades experience, any attempt to define it must be approximate because it can never be isolated. Grote defines it well when he says:

> The sentiment is so close, so intimate, that one can hardly put it into words: it is, that *feeling* (that which we express by self-consciousness, that which suggests to us personality or our own existence) is something, in virtue of the very feeling of it, heterogenous to anything which we conceive as existing *for* the feeling, meeting it from what we call "without," and which we know, and call reality or things, owing to this meeting. However, words are of but little use on this subject, and I will not dwell upon it. (Grote, 1900, p. 170)

For both philosophers the self is a necessary and inseparable part of all experience, but it cannot be severed from a unit of cognition. So, it is impossible to know oneself as one would know anything external.

For Ferrier, the most problematic development from the Enlightenment is the science of man. He views it as a flawed project resulting in a barren account of humanity that fails to take into account the importance of self-consciousness, presenting a person as nothing more than what he describes as "a wretched association machine" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 195). For Stirling, the problem is the resultant individualism that he perceives to exist in contemporary British life. He rejects the materialism of the present day and what he describes as the elevation of self-will above the universal will. He says:

> We all live now divorced from substance … Self-will, individual commodity, this has been made *the principle*, and accordingly we turned to it that we might *enjoy ourselves alone*, that we might *live to ourselves alone*, that the I might be wholly the I, unmixed and unobstructed; and for the result, the I of each of us is *dying of inanition* … Hence the universal *rush* at present, as of maddened animals, to material possession. (Stirling, 1912, p. 127)

Whereas for Ferrier an insufficient account of the self leads to a false philosophical system, for Stirling elevating the individual above all else has negative social implications. Like Ferrier, Stirling believes that idealism is the solution to the problem of contemporary philosophy, although he does not develop his own idealist metaphysics. Instead, he favours a close study of the German Idealists; through an examination of Kant and Hegel one can discover the importance of the universal. He says: "Kant and Hegel would restore Faith … The path to the New World is necessarily through them" (Stirling, 1898, p. 2).

Ferrier believes that consciousness involves an act of negation between the ego and the not-self. In perception the negation is between the self and the sensation, or as Ferrier says, "the realisation of self in conjunction with the sensation experienced" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 121). In this way, knowledge of the external world is gained simultaneously with knowledge of oneself; one can only know the self through its union with the not-self. Ferrier reveals the importance that he ascribes to this process

when he refers to it as "the fundamental act of humanity" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, p. 177). Indeed, in this the positions of Stirling and Grote are markedly similar to Ferrier's. In *The Secret of Hegel* Stirling also says:

> The Ego is first unal simplicity,—that is unal or simple negativity … it becomes a duplication, a duad, the units of which confront each other, in the forms of Ego-subject and Ego-object; and then, again, this very self-separation, this very self-duplication, becomes its own negation—the negation of the duality, inasmuch as its confronting units are seen to be identical, and the antithesis is reduced, the antagonism vanishes. (Stirling, 1898, p. 51)

Similarly, Grote says: "Consciousness is then self-consciousness: we distinguish ourselves markedly from what we know as not ourselves: we know ourselves as knowing and we know the object of knowledge as known by us" (Grote, 1900, pp. 160–161). Thus, for all three of these philosophers, the development of self-consciousness simultaneously involves both difference and identity.

In his biographies of Schelling and Hegel, Ferrier acknowledges that both of these philosophers emphasize the universality of experience, or in other words, the absolute considered from a general rather than a particular perspective.[19] Yet, this is not something that he develops in his own philosophy. He does not refer to a unified or shared consciousness; indeed, consciousness is mainly referred to as the subjective aspect of a person's experience.[20] In this way he differs from Stirling, who focuses on that which unites all egos. In *The Secret of Hegel* Stirling says:

> Reason is ascribed to every man as that which constitutes his Ego; we can thus conceive Reason as *per se*, as independent of this particular subject and that particular subject, and as common to all. We can speak of Reason, then, as now not subjective but objective. (Stirling, 1898, pp. 88–89)

By contrast, Ferrier believes that it is self-consciousness, rather than reason, which has primary importance because it is the one thing that we do not share with other animals. In his view, it is the addition of consciousness that makes our experiences *human* and which makes our reason *human* reason. Nevertheless, by neglecting the universality of experience

Ferrier does not overcome the problem of other minds. Despite some reference in his *Institutes of Metaphysic* to an argument from analogy in which he says that the example of one's own existence provides the template for the existence of other persons, the question of the existence of other selves is a topic that he does not devote much attention to (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 519–520). By contrast, Grote, like Stirling, focuses on the communality of consciousness and the fact that consciousness is importantly a shared experience. He says:

> We come not only to know something widely expanding beyond ourselves. In fact we have here *another* of our primary experiences, which places us not only in a universe of things to be known, but in a universe of *fellow-knowers*. The universe of what is to be known surrounds not only *us*, but a number of intelligences like us: and our *knowing* has the second character of being not only a mirroring of the universe or of fact, but of being a sympathy with other intelligences. (Grote, 1900, p. 213)

By acknowledging the universality of experience in a way more directly reminiscent of the German Idealists, Stirling and Grote avoid some of the problems that Ferrier has with demonstrating the existence of other minds.[21]

Conclusion

Ferrier's metaphysics essentially depends upon the self; through his epistemology the self forms the foundation of knowledge and reality, and as the initial act of will it also forms the basis of freedom and morality. It is an active self, which cannot be known in itself but which is at once self-conscious and differentiating. In several respects, Ferrier's position is akin to both Grote's and Stirling's. All of these philosophers view the self as emerging from a negation of self and not-self and as forming an essential aspect of reality. Both Ferrier and Grote deny that the self (or the self-self) can be an object of thought. And Ferrier and Stirling both view contemporary philosophy as problematic; for Ferrier the model of the "science of man" leads to a bereft account of humanity, and for Stirling it is only through idealism that the destructive individualism of contem-

porary philosophy can be overcome. Moreover, while Ferrier develops his own idealist metaphysics, he does not fully account for the existence of other minds. By contrast, Grote and Stirling place more emphasis on the "universe of fellow-knowers". Overall, in their accounts of the self, Ferrier, Grote and Stirling separate themselves from the Enlightenment picture of humanity provided by the science of man and mark the beginning of an idealist conception of the self in British philosophy.[22]

Notes

1. For example, Fraser's students included Andrew Seth (Pringle-Pattison) and R.B. Haldane, and Jowett taught both Edward Caird and T.H. Green. Additionally, some idealists, such as D.G. Ritchie and William Mitchell, were students of both Fraser and Jowett. For further information see Mander, 2011 and Boucher, 2004.

2. Enlightenment philosophers such as Thomas Reid (1710–1796) and David Hume (1711–1776) remained very influential in the mid-nineteenth century. In Scotland, Reid's philosophy was very popular due to its promotion and development by Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) and Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856). And in Britain more generally, Hume's ideas were crucial in the development of new empirical trends, such as the associationism of Alexander Bain (1818–1903) and the Utilitarianism of J.S. Mill (1806–1873).

3. The Hegel entry originally appeared in Waller, 1863, vol. II, pp. 850–852, and the Schelling entry originally appeared in Waller, 1963, vol. III, pp. 914–915.

4. See Ferrier, 2001: vol. 1, p. 95, and Ferrier, 1856, pp. 13, 14.

5. Ferrier understands the science of man in broad terms, referring to a variety of philosophers from Thomas Brown to Thomas Reid whom he variously labels as "metaphysicians" (see Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 1–257) and as "psychologists" (see Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 407–459). He rejects the Baconian project to develop an account of humanity akin to the science of the world. In his view, the crucial difference between persons and anything else that could be an object of science (rocks, the solar system and such) is that this is the one case in which the observer and the observed are one and the same. He believes that any type of philosophy that emerges from this model leads to representationism and falsely severs subjects from objects or per-

sons from the world. For further discussion of this point see Keefe, 2015, pp. 67–94.

6. "We have a most radical distinction laid down between physics and philosophy. In ourselves, as well as in nature, a certain given series of phenomena is presented to our observation, but in studying the objects of nature, we add no new phenomenon to the phenomena already there; whereas, on the contrary, in studying ourselves we *do add* a new phenomenon to the other phenomena of our being; we add, to wit, the fact that we are thus studying ourselves." (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 193–194).

7. In Ferrier's view, self-consciousness is the distinctive feature of human beings. He says: "We have found in mind a fact which is *peculiar* to it; and this is, not that it changes, but that it *takes cognisance* of its changes" (Ferrier 2001, vol. 3, p. 27). The importance of self-consciousness is a recurring theme throughout his published works.

8. Ferrier often uses the word consciousness to refer to self-consciousness, or, in other words, that awareness of the self that accompanies all thinking. Moreover, the self-consciousness that he refers to does not involve an explicit or clear understanding of the self. Instead, by consciousness he means the reflexive awareness that accompanies thinking. He says: "There is a calm unobtrusive current of self-consciousness flowing on in company with all our knowledge, and during every moment of our waking existence; and this self-consciousness is the ground or condition of all our other consciousness. Nine hundred and ninety-nine parts of our attention may be always devoted to the thing or business we have in hand: it is sufficient for our argument if it be admitted that the thousandth part, or even a smaller fraction, of it is perpetually directed upon ourselves" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 82).

9. See Keefe, 2007, pp. 101–113.

10. Ferrier argues that by saying existence is *percipi*, Berkeley observes that egos —or, as Berkeley prefers to describe them, spirits—cannot be separated from any reality that is apprehended. See Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 291–347.

11. Yet the Scottish contribution to British Idealism was considerable. For further information see Boucher, 2004, pp. 1–22, and Panagakou, 2012, pp. 177–210.

12. See Haldane, 1899, p. 7, and Mander, 2011, p. 28.

13. Ferrier's interest in metaphysics and his idealist epistemology and ontology sets him apart from his predecessors in the Common Sense school, who were inspired by Bacon and Newton in their method and who were invariably realists.

14. See Gibbins, 2007, p. 162.
15. In the *Institutes* Ferrier argues that a subject-*with*-object synthesis is the only possible object of knowledge. Egos-in-themselves and things-in-themselves are contradictory it is impossible to think of a self in isolation from the experience it is engaged in (perceiving, remembering), and it is impossible to think of some object, such as a table or an abstract idea, completely divorced from the act of perception or conception. The whole unit, subject-*with*-object, always remains. He then defines ignorance as not knowing what could be known by some intelligence (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 412). Therefore, the objects of knowledge and ignorance are one and the same: subject-*with*-object. Finally, in his ontology he asserts that what absolutely exists must be either that which is a possible object of knowledge or ignorance, or that which cannot be an object of knowledge or ignorance (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 453). It cannot be the latter because that is the contradictory (matter *per se* or ego *per se*). It follows that the absolute must be "the synthesis of the subject and object" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 511). John Veitch says that Ferrier's account of the absolute shows the influence of both Hamilton and Fichte (Veitch, 1877, p. 229).
16. Ferrier's view bears some resemblance to Kant's account of phenomena.
17. As previously noted, Ferrier's target is broad, including many different philosophers inspired by Bacon and/or Newton. Here he specifically refers to association, intimating that he partly has in mind the psychological school of associationism. Yet, in the *Institutes* he points out: "In case it should be thought that psychology is rather unsparingly dealt with throughout this work, it may be here observed that it is only in so far as psychology ventures to treat of the fundamental question in regard to knowledge, and to intrude into the region of the *prima philosophia* that her procedure is reprehended and her insufficiency exposed. Within her proper sphere—the investigation, namely, of such mental operations as memory, association of ideas, &c.—the performances of psychology are by no means to be slighted" (See Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 116). This view—the distinction between philosophy and psychology—is shared by Bain, who considers psychology and metaphysics to be distinct, although complementary, endeavours (see Bain, 1990, pp. 37, 38).
18. In this respect, Ferrier's view here is not at odds with that of his contemporary, the Hamiltonian Henry Longueville Mansel, who says: "My own consciousness is not merely the test of my real existence, but it actually constitutes it" (Mansel, 1860, p. 355).
19. See Ferrier, 2001, vol. 3, pp. 554, 564–565.

20. In his account of the absolute he is primarily concerned with the structure of the absolute, which is common to all intelligences. He says: "The absolutely Existent which each of us is individually cognisant of, is—himself-apprehending-things-*by-the-senses* … Other intelligences may be cognizant of themselves-apprehending-things-*in-other-ways-than-we-do*. In which case *their* Absolute, both in cognition and existence, would be different from ours, in its *accidentals*, but not in its *essentials*" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, pp. 517–518). In Ferrier's system, there is one absolute existence that is necessary, that of "a supreme, and infinite, and eternal Mind in synthesis with all things" (Ferrier, 2001, vol. 1, p. 523). All intelligences share the same *type* of experience, but the connection between intelligences is unclear.

21. In the *Institutes* Ferrier deduces that the absolute must consist of some subject in synthesis with some object. And with respect to his subjective experience of the absolute, his argument is convincing. Yet, Ferrier has more difficultly showing that other minds beyond his own exist without abandoning his deductive method. For further discussion of this point see Keefe, 2014, pp. 167–170.

22. I would like to thank W.J. Mander and S. Panagakou for their comments and suggestions.

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3

Metaphysics, Religion, and Self-Realization in F.H. Bradley

James W. Allard

Bradley famously says, "Metaphysics is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct" (AR x).[1] His appeal to instinct conforms to his assumption, made explicit in the appendix to the second edition of *Appearance and Reality*, that metaphysics is deeply rooted in human nature. It is an attempt to find a particular kind of satisfaction, namely, intellectual satisfaction (AR 491). He thinks that we are naturally led to wonder about and reflect on ultimate reality, on what "is beyond the visible world" (AR 5). For some of us who do this, Bradley writes, "the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principled way of thus experiencing the Deity" (AR 5). Condense this as (1) God has meaning for a metaphysical consciousness. This assertion is in keeping with A.E. Taylor's report that Bradley was "an intensely religious man,"[2] and it perhaps reflects what he believed on instinct.

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Despite the heartfelt tone of the opening pages of *Appearance and Reality*, (1) seems inconsistent with Bradley's settled views about metaphysics and religion. In his essay "On God and the Absolute," Bradley writes, "God for me has no meaning outside of the religious consciousness and that is essentially practical" (ETR 428). Paraphrase this as (2) God has meaning only for a practical consciousness. Bradley also claims that metaphysics is a theoretical rather than a practical activity. Paraphrase this as (3) A metaphysical consciousness is not a practical consciousness. (2) and (3) entail (4) God has no meaning for a metaphysical consciousness. (4) is the negation of (1), and Bradley seems caught in a contradiction. In what follows I will explain why Bradley is committed to these numbered claims. Most of my discussion will focus on (2) because it is the most elaborate claim and involves almost all of Bradley's moral theory. After discussing these claims, I will consider some suggestions for how Bradley might avoid the contradiction.

I

Taking these numbered assertions in order, (1) is a way of condensing Bradley's statements, quoted above, that pursuing metaphysics is an attempt to find intellectual satisfaction and that it provides a principled way of experiencing the Deity. Bradley asserts this in the course of defending the pursuit of metaphysics in his introduction to *Appearance and Reality*. Pursuing metaphysics, he admits, may not be good for everyone. But there are people, he writes, who believe that it offers the only way of finding "consummation" for their "chief desire" in life (AR 4–5). Bradley defines the good as that which satisfies desire (AR 356), so for those people, Bradley concludes, pursuing metaphysics is part of their good. There is a gap in the argument here. Just because people *believe* that pursuing metaphysics will satisfy their chief desire, it does not therefore follow that it will do so. But if we assume that Bradley is one of those people and that pursuing metaphysics has consummated his chief desire, then the gap is bridged. Moreover, part of the significance or meaning of pursuing metaphysics, Bradley thinks, is that it provides a way of experiencing the Deity. Bradley does not use the term "metaphysical consciousness"

in this context nor, as far as I know, anywhere else in his work. But he uses the term "religious consciousness" for a form of consciousness he regards as practical (ETR 428), and he distinguishes theoretical and practical aspects of experience (AR 405–10), so it would be natural for him to describe the form of consciousness that is not practical as theoretical.[3] Because pursuing metaphysics requires theoretical activity, it seems in the spirit of Bradley's philosophy to describe the form of consciousness it involves as metaphysical. Accordingly, Bradley seems committed to (1) God has meaning for a metaphysical consciousness.

While Bradley's commitment to (1) rests on a few remarks in his introduction to *Appearance and Reality*, his commitment to (2) has a much deeper basis in his thinking, and it will perhaps be useful to begin by summarizing it. It rests on his account of the moral point of view and its limitations. Bradley thinks that to take the moral point of view is to endeavor to realize the moral ideal in one's life. Realizing this or any other ideal is, of course, a practical matter. According to Bradley's account, however, the moral point of view contains a contradiction that makes it impossible to realize this ideal. But it is possible to avoid the contradiction by transforming the moral point of view into a religious one, namely the point of view found in "the modern Christian mind." This point of view he refers to as "the religious consciousness" (ES 314). This form of consciousness attempts to eliminate the contradiction found in the moral point of view by embedding the requirements of morality within a believing consciousness. It then attempts to realize the moral ideal as that ideal now found in the religious consciousness. (2) is not a general claim about the religious experience but only a claim about the experience of God in "the modern Christian mind," in the religious consciousness. Bradley thinks that for the modern Christian, God has meaning only in this form of consciousness. God has a role in the practical attempt to realize the moral ideal. As a result, Bradley is committed to (2) God has meaning only for a practical consciousness.

As this brief summary indicates, Bradley's commitment to (2) rests on a complex set of claims. Understanding it requires appreciating, first, how Bradley conceives of the moral point of view; second, why the moral point of view, as he understands it, contains a contradiction; and third, why the religious point of view resolves this contradiction while remaining a practical consciousness. I will consider these three elements in (2) separately.

Bradley thinks the moral point of view has a goal: the perfection of human nature, or to use his vocabulary, "the realization of the self as good will" (ES 228). Described in this way the moral point of view requires one to develop oneself in a certain way. It is thus a form of what Bradley calls "self-realization," and understanding Bradley's conception of the moral point of view requires understanding what self-realization is. This can be approached by way of his conception of the self. He addresses this topic not in *Ethical Studies*, but in *Appearance and Reality*, where he discusses various meanings of the term "self" understood as the self of a particular individual (AR 66). In any of these meanings, the self for Bradley is a "form of unity of psychical existence" (AR 77). He distinguishes seven different forms of this unity, but it is the sixth form that he seems to regard as the most important, and it is this form that is involved in self-realization.[4] For Bradley a unity in experience always involves what he refers to as a "felt background" (e.g., AR 78), and it may involve no more than this. This background consists of immediate experience, a form of experience in which objects have not yet been distinguished. An example will perhaps illustrate the contrast Bradley has in mind between such a background and an object. Suppose I feel a vague disquiet and gradually come to identify it with the sound of my neighbor's chain saw. Then suppose that having identified the sound, I cease to notice it. The sound fades from my focal awareness into the background of that awareness (cf. AR 78). The background in which the sound is no longer distinguished is immediate experience. In this example Bradley takes immediate experience to be the subject of experience and the sound, as a focus of awareness, to be an object of experience. The sound could not, of course, be the only object of experience, because it is identified as a sound *made by a chain saw*, one that *belongs to my neighbor*. In order for the identified sound to be an object of experience, there must therefore be other objects of experience as well. Bradley speaks of these objects as a "concrete group" within the unity of my experience, a group that is felt to be other than the subject group. The subject group contains the "felt mass" of immediate experience.[5] Bradley refers to the group containing the felt mass as the self and the group containing the sound as a focus of awareness as the not-self (AR 75–9).

Bradley describes the division between the self and its object as having two forms, one theoretical and the other practical. The theoretical division is found in thought and perception, the practical in desire and will. In the theoretical case, which is described above, I distinguish an object from the immediate experience and focus my attention on it. By identifying it and attending to it, I have separated it from the rest of my experience and made it into an object of experience. It is distinguished from and other than the subject of experience. Bradley is not sure whether there is anything in our experience that cannot be made an object or that must be made an object. The division between self and not-self within experience is thus not a division that determines the contents of either side. It determines neither what is objectified nor what remains in the felt mass of the subject. For example, despite the fact that pain is a common example of something subjective, as a focus of awareness pain is an object for the person having it. Although pain can be an object for a theoretical consciousness, it is more often an object for a practical consciousness to alleviate.

The practical case of the division between a self and its objects, Bradley writes, involves a new element: the object is not merely other than its subject but opposed to it (CE 517). To see what he has in mind, consider a case of a small but nagging pain that I am aware of as limiting me. Bradley describes, but says he is not explaining, the opposition between subject and object in such cases. He identifies a subject group, the felt mass of experience; an object group, in this case the pain and the objects providing a context for it; and a third group, one not present in theoretical cases. This third group is composed of an idea of the removal of the pain and perhaps other related ideas (AR 82). Here I am aware of a conflict between the object and the idea of a change in the object. If this is a case of practical opposition, then I feel myself to be one with the idea of the removal of pain. Because this idea is opposed by the object, the self is now opposed to the object as well (CE 518–19). Because of my focus on this idea, it becomes the main feature of my self. To be in such a situation is to desire to remove the pain (ES 68). In such a case the tension between the idea of the self and that of the not-self may lead to an activity that removes the pain. If it does, I will also have removed the tension between

my idea and my present reality, and as a result I will feel a sense of peace and harmony, that is, satisfaction. This will be a result not merely of the removal of a pain but of the elimination of the tension between the idea of my self and the not-self.

To use Bradley's vocabulary, this will be a case in which an idea has been "realized." The idea of my self without the pain will have led to an activity which changed the object, that is, removed the pain, so that the object conforms to my idea of what I wanted it to be. In such cases I identify with the idea and it determines my practical end, so if I realize it, I realize myself. In other words, this is an example of self-realization.[6] Bradley thinks that what agents desire is always a state of themselves, or, perhaps better, that they be in a certain state (ES 68). As a result, whenever I satisfy one of my desires I am realizing a state of myself. Bradley says almost nothing to defend this view of the objects of desire, presumably because he takes it to be accepted by "our main psychological party" (ES 66). What he is undoubtedly referring to is the utilitarian belief that the only things we desire are our own pleasures, and these are states of ourselves. Bradley agrees that the objects of desire are states of ourselves, but he thinks we desire satisfaction, not pleasure (ES 68).

As this account indicates, the distinguishing feature of the self-realizing or practical self is active desire or, to use Bradley's term for it, will.[7] Bradley defines an act of will, a volition, as "the self-realization of an idea with which the self is identified" (CE 476). It is an act that carries "the inner mind out into the world of fact" (ES 149). For Bradley an act of will is not a primitive, irreducible element of mind. "It is," he writes, "everywhere a result of that which by itself is not volition" (CE 584). The elements in his analysis of an act of will are those present in his description of self-realization: first, present existence or the existing state of affairs (i.e., the not-self); second, the idea of a change in the presently existing state of affairs (i.e., a component of the self); third, the transformation of the state of affairs so that it becomes real; and fourth, a state identical with the content of the idea (i.e., the self-realization). A fifth condition requires the agent "to feel" that his or her idea has changed reality, and this requires the self to identify with its idea to the exclusion of other ideas. Finally, an act of will requires activity, or what Bradley refers to in his analysis of will as an ideo-motor action (CE 477). This activity "carries the idea over into reality" (CE 577).

Identifying the self with will explains an otherwise puzzling feature of Bradley's discussion in *Appearance and Reality* of the various meanings of the term "self." That discussion contains no reference to character or to anything like character, even though in *Ethical Studies* Bradley treats character as a significant part of the self (ES 55). The explanation is that the ideo-motor action contained in an act of will requires dispositions, both natural and acquired. These form the bridge that carries ideas into reality (CE 572–84). But dispositions are components of character (ES 52–3). They are the habits that determine our reactions to our circumstances.[8] So an act of will presupposes the dispositions that form character, and character, in turn, is a major part of the "abiding personality" present throughout a person's various acts of will (ES 33). The practical self thus implicitly includes the "abiding personality," the whole self present in acts of will in *Ethical Studies*.

In *Ethical Studies* Bradley distinguishes "the self as will in general," which must include the abiding personality, from "this or that object of desire," claiming that the two are inseparable in acts of will (ES 71). He locates these two components of acts of will by means of an example of a deliberate choice. In choosing between conflicting desires, which he refers to as A and B, we may reflect on both (i.e., consider them theoretically) without choosing either. More than this, "we are aware besides of ourselves … as something practically above them, as a concentration which is not one or the other, but is the possibility of either" (ES 71–2). This "concentration" is the self as will in general, or what Bradley calls "the universal factor" (ES 72). The language here is Hegelian,[9] and Bradley's notebooks for *Ethical Studies* are helpful in understanding how the self as will is universal. It is universal in the sense of being abstract. When I confront a choice between A and B, I sometimes think of myself, to use Bradley's metaphor, as being in suspension over them and looking down on them. When I think of myself in this way, I have separated or abstracted the universal factor in myself, the factor that I think of as initiating activity, from the various desires that fix the direction of my activity (CW 1, 220). The desire on which I act becomes the particular factor. When I unify these two factors, I act, and to do so is to externalize and realize myself. Bradley follows Hegel in speaking of this unification, and hence externalization and realization, as a concrete universal (ES 72).

This is not, however, a simple realization because the self is both that which realizes and what is to be realized.[10] The unity of the self to be realized is important for Bradley because he thinks that not only will whatever we desire be a state of ourselves, but also that it will not be an isolated state. In other words, whatever we desire will be a component of what we want ourselves to be as a whole, what we want in life (ES 70). We desire particular ends that form some kind of systematic whole, a "concrete ideal of life," as he sometimes calls it (ES 96), and we desire them as means to or constituents of an ideal form of life. For example, I desire to have a passport to be able to travel to conferences in order to carry on the sort of life I want to live. That life is, as Bradley says, fairly systematic, a sphere including spheres, with the lowers ones, like obtaining a passport, subordinate to higher ones.

Bradley identifies the goal of self-realization with perfect happiness (ES 70). It is, he writes, what satisfies desire (e.g., ES 68), and for him this is the good (AR 356).[11] But Bradley also describes the good in a different way, as the full and harmonious development of human nature, of the distinctively human functions (ETR 86). Bradley generally uses the term "self-realization" in this overall sense to refer to full human development, to the achievement of the good. Other terms he uses for "self-realization" in this sense include "perfection," "self-development," "realization of a concrete ideal of life," and "self-evolution" (CE 173; ES 138, 96, 125). This is the end Bradley has in mind when he writes that "what determines, makes, and is good or bad, is in the end function" (ES 136). Bradley never clarifies the relation between these two ways of describing the end of action. But the fact that he thinks that happiness is a condition of function (ES 139) and that function carries pleasure, a component of satisfaction, with it (ES 137) suggests that Bradley regards satisfaction to be at least roughly extensionally equivalent to self-realization as the perfection of human nature.[12]

On the basis of this account of the self and its realization, it is possible to explain the first element in (2), Bradley's conception of the moral point of view. A consequence of his view that self-realization in some form or other is the aim or end of actions (ES 82) is to understand the moral point of view as aiming at some kind of self-realization. Bradley takes this aim to be one form of the perfection of human nature, namely,

"the realization of the self as good will" (ES 228). Nothing, Bradley says, "is morally good save a good will" (ES 228). Bradley, of course, takes this from Kant, and he accepts another feature of Kant's dualism. He thinks good will requires us to "suppress the worse self [i.e., the self that wills what is contrary to the will of the good self (ES 280)], and realize the good self" (ES 215). Following Hegel, however, Bradley thinks that Kant's ethics are formal and lack content.[13] Bradley proposes to remedy this defect by finding content in three places. It is, first, fundamentally and even notoriously found in my role in society, in my station and its duties.[14] But because of inevitable defects in existing societies, it is also found in social ideals not realized in the world. Finally, it is found in non-social ideals, by which Bradley means the development of individual artistic, scientific, philosophical and other talents (ES 220–4). Bradley admits that one can be a good scientist without being a good person, but he denies that science, or any other individual endeavor, is separated from the sphere of morality. Any such endeavor is controlled by the moral demand that we realize the good "in all things and everywhere, to try always to do the best, and to do one's best in it, whether in lonely work or social relaxation …" (ES 215). To realize the self as good will is to will the good as defined in these spheres of life, and in so doing to develop a character that wills the good will.

The second element in (2) is Bradley's claim that there is a contradiction in the moral point of view. It is a theoretical rather than a practical contradiction.[15] He is not claiming that self-realization, as enjoined by morality, requires incompatible actions, but rather that to conceive of self-realization in moral terms is contradictory. Here is Bradley's statement of the contradiction:

> Morality … does tell you to realize that which can never be realized, and which, if realized would efface itself as such. No one ever was or could be perfectly moral; and, if he were, he would be moral no longer. Where there is no imperfection there is no ought, where there is no ought there is no morality, where there is no self-contradiction there is no ought. The ought is a self-contradiction. (ES 234)

Bradley does not explain this contradiction in much detail, but his starting point seems to be Kantian. Kant thinks that morality takes the

form of a set of duties, requirements, commands, or imperatives, each member of which is expressed "by an ought."[16] The reason it takes this form is because we are imperfect. We do not always do as we should, and that is why we need to be told what to do. Our imperfection results from the fact that we are divided selves. We have, in Bradley's vocabulary, a higher and a lower self, a good self and a bad self. Morality tells us we ought to realize our good selves and suppress our bad selves. If, however, we had only good selves, then as Kant says, "the ought is here out of place."[17] This is why Kant thinks imperatives do not hold for the divine will. The divine will is perfect.

If this is correct, the moral point of view conceives of self-realization in a contradictory way. According to the moral point of view we ought to realize the good self completely. Of course, if we ought to do something then we can do it, and so we can realize the good self completely. But to do this is to eliminate the bad self completely. The contradiction then is that to realize the good self completely is, *according to the moral point of view*, to always act *as we ought*, to always act to realize the good self and to suppress the bad self. But if there is no bad self, this cannot be done. There is no bad self to suppress. So we cannot do what morality requires us to do; we cannot realize our good selves completely. Conceiving of self-realization in moral terms is contradictory.[18]

It is now possible to explain the final element in Bradley's commitment to (2). Bradley thinks that the contradiction in the moral point of view reveals the necessity of a higher point of view, one that transcends the moral point of view. Following Hegel, he claims that this is a religious point of view.[19] His interest, however, is in what he calls "the religious consciousness" or "the modern Christian mind, whether that mind recognizes it or whether it does not" (ES 314). This form of consciousness avoids the contradiction in the moral point of view by denying the demand of the moral consciousness that we realize the good self completely. According to the religious consciousness, the ideal self, which it identifies as God, is both ideal and real. God is "the highest expression of the realized good" (AR 396) and the whole of reality including us (ES 320). The religious consciousness replaces the moral demand that we realize the good self with the task of reconciling our finite wills with the all-inclusive and infinite good will. This requires faith, which for Bradley

is the belief in the reality of the ideal will and a simultaneous willing of the ideal will to be real.[20] The religious consciousness is a practical consciousness because it involves willing (ES 319–26). When Bradley writes that God has no meaning for himself outside of the religious consciousness, he is claiming that the significance of the term "God" is embedded for him in the modern Christian consciousness. This is not only a practical consciousness, but it is also the consciousness of a moral person. No one, Bradley writes, who knows what religion is would call an immoral person religious (ES 318). One result he draws from his long examination of the moral point of view and its limits is (2) God has meaning only for a practical consciousness.

Although Bradley's reasons for accepting (2) are complex, (2) is relatively close to what he explicitly asserts. (3) is not something he explicitly asserts, nor, as mentioned above, is the phrase "metaphysical consciousness" his. My attribution of it to him is based on his claim that philosophy is a theoretical activity while religion is a practical one. Bradley distinguishes theory from practice in the course of giving a rough typology of the modes of experience. In this typology there are modes, such as immediate experience or feeling, that do not involve a distinction between subject and object and modes that do. In the latter modes, the main division is between those that are theoretical and those that are practical. This is not an exhaustive division. Aesthetic experience does not fit into either. Nevertheless, Bradley regards the division between theory and practice as the main one in modes of experience in which there are subjects and objects (AR 405–12).

Bradley is at pains to point out that there is no absolute distinction between theory and practice. The aim of theoretical experiences is knowing, and in this way theoretical experiences are practical. In parallel fashion there is an aim in practical experiences, and it is initially present in the form of an idea. In this way practical experiences are theoretical. There is no absolute distinction between theory and practice. But there is a relative distinction, and Bradley thinks it "useful and necessary" (PL 723). According to his way of drawing the distinction, practical experiences are those in which the main purpose is doing, in contrast to theoretical ones where the main purpose is knowing (PL 713). To use Bradley's words, an experience is practical "where the aim, end, and result of the process is

taken to qualify the existence which is altered and so predicated of that fact" (PL 723). This is a complex way of saying that in practical experiences the aim is to change things to conform to our ideas of how they should be. The goal of theoretical experience, by contrast, is not to change facts, but "to belong to and to qualify a world above and beyond the mere course of events" (PL 723). The world to which Bradley here refers is the ideal world, that is, the world of ideas. The point of a theoretical activity, in other words, is to form true judgments so that our judgments conform to how things are.[21]

This way of distinguishing between theoretical and practical activities provides Bradley with a way to distinguish philosophy from religion. Philosophy, or metaphysics (he often uses these words interchangeably), is a theoretical activity. Its aim is intellectual satisfaction, which Bradley takes to be truth (ETR 11–12, AR 491). "It seeks to gain possession of Reality, but only in an ideal form" (ETR 13). For Bradley it is an "autonomous activity."[22] As Bradley puts it, "philosophy like other things has a business of its own, and like other things it is bound, and it must be allowed, to go about its own business in its own way" (ETR 15). In particular, it may be practiced in a spirit which is "immoral or irreligious" (ETR 14). The aim of philosophy is truth, and in pursuing this aim it is independent from religion. "Metaphysics," Bradley writes, "has no special connection with genuine religion… " (AR 402). In (3) A metaphysical consciousness is not a practical consciousness, I have used the phrase "the metaphysical consciousness" to describe the kind of experience found in philosophical thinking.

Putting these claims together, (2) God has meaning only for a practical consciousness, and (3) A metaphysical consciousness is not a practical consciousness, entails (4) God has no meaning for a metaphysical consciousness. But (4) contradicts (1) God has meaning for a metaphysical consciousness. Bradley thus seems caught in a contradiction.

II

There are at least three suggestions for how to avoid this contradiction, although only the third of these seems to me to be satisfactory. The first suggestion is that Bradley's views developed and that he never held (1),

(2), and (3) at the same time. In support of this proposition, it could be said that Bradley asserted (1) in *Appearance and Reality* (second edition, 1897), (2) in his essay "On God and the Absolute," which appeared in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914), and (3) in the second edition of his *Principles of Logic* (1922).[23] The difficulty with the suggestion is that Bradley's views do not seem to have developed on these matters in ways that avoid the contradiction. Bradley begins his essay "On God and the Absolute" by saying that "the following pages will contain little beyond that which I have already published," and he cites portions of *Appearance and Reality*, the work in which he asserted (1). Bradley asserts (3) in Terminal Essay XII, "On Theoretical and Practical Activity," which he added in the second edition of his *Principles of Logic*. This essay is an elaboration of his view of the relation between theory and practice in *Appearance and Reality* (405–12). It does not, however, represent a change in his view of the relation between a theoretical and a practical consciousness. Consequently, Bradley (1), (2), and (3) all seem present in *Appearance and Reality* and so are not matters on which his views developed in ways that would affect the contradiction.

The second suggestion is that when Bradley refers to the Deity in the introduction to *Appearance and Reality* he is referring to the Absolute. This in effect means that his use of the term "God" is ambiguous. In (1) it refers to the Absolute, while in (2), and therefore in (3) and (4), it refers to the God of a practical, religious consciousness. There is no contradiction in saying that the God of a practical, religious consciousness is not the Absolute, the "Deity" of the theoretical consciousness.[24] While this avoids the contradiction in a straightforward way, it requires Bradley to have used the term "Deity" for the Absolute, at least in his introduction to *Appearance and Reality*. There are two reasons for thinking that he did not do this. The first is that he is quite explicit that the Absolute is not God. For example, in his essay "On God and the Absolute" he writes, "I have not, I know, to repeat to those who are acquainted with my book [i.e., *Appearance and Reality*] that for me the Absolute is not God" (ETR 428). Bradley seldom uses the word "Deity," but his use of the term "God" suggests that he is not using the term "Deity" to refer to the Absolute. The second reason is that Bradley, in the course of giving a reason for pursuing metaphysics, makes his claim about metaphysics being for some persons an experience of God even if its pursuit ends

in "total scepticism" or the conviction that we cannot know ultimate reality (AR 5, 1–2). Bradley's reason for pursuing metaphysics even in such a case is that it offers a valuable experience, an experience of the Deity. Bradley describes this experience in religious terms as an experience of "something higher, which both supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us" (AR 5). It would certainly be disingenuous of him to defend the pursuit of metaphysics in his introduction by saying that even if it leads to scepticism, it is valuable because it provides an experience of an entity, the Absolute, whose existence can only be established by that pursuit. For these reasons I reject the second suggestion.

It is only the third suggestion that appears to me to be satisfactory. This suggestion is that Bradley might avoid the contradiction by relying on an ambiguity in the term "metaphysical consciousness." It is my term, not Bradley's, but there is a parallel ambiguity in Bradley's terms "metaphysics" and a term he often treats as its synonym, "philosophy." This would allow him to distinguish between the meanings of the phrase "a metaphysical consciousness" in (1) and (3) and thereby eliminate the contradiction.

Consider two passages in *Essays on Truth and Reality*. The first is "a true philosophy certainly does not contradict the postulates required for conduct" (ETR 12), while the second, two pages later, is that "even genuine philosophy may be practiced in a spirit which is immoral or irreligious" (ETR 14). These passages suggest that Bradley draws a distinction between a philosophy and the spirit in which it is practiced. This is related to but not quite the same as the process/product distinction. His distinction is between the product considered in isolation from the process, and the product conceived as the end result of its process (cf. ES 321). Both are aspects of the metaphysical consciousness, but they can be considered separately.

When Bradley speaks of "philosophy" in phrases like "a true philosophy," he is speaking of the product at which the philosophical consciousness aims, and he is considering this product in abstraction from the process that produces it. The product in this case is truth. Truth for Bradley is intellectual satisfaction, and as a form of satisfaction it is part of the good. It is in this sense that Bradley claims that "a true philosophy certainly does not contradict the postulates required for conduct" (ETR 12). The good for him is a systematic and harmonious whole, from

which it follows that its components are not in conflict or contradiction. Philosophy or metaphysics in this sense is not a set of psychical events but a set of true or false judgments, as are the "*postulates* required for conduct" (my italics).[25] This, I suggest, is the sense of "metaphysics" in (3) A metaphysical consciousness is not a practical consciousness. In this sense, a metaphysical consciousness is distinguished from a practical consciousness by its aim, which is to produce true judgments, not to change things. Its product is different from the product of practical activity, and this is why it is not a practical consciousness.

In considering a metaphysical consciousness in the above way, Bradley is not considering the fact that the aim of a metaphysical consciousness is found in the wills of individuals pursuing philosophy. He is describing a metaphysical consciousness solely in terms of its product, not in terms of the process of achieving that product. If the will of the individuals pursuing the product is taken into account, the situation changes. A metaphysical consciousness is still theoretical because its primary aim is to know reality, not to change it, as would be the case were it practical. But it is no longer, as Bradley says at one point, merely theoretical (ES 321). It is now a component of a human life and has a spirit in which it is *practiced*. I suggest it is metaphysics taken in this way that Bradley is describing in the opening pages of *Appearance and Reality* when he writes "the intellectual *effort* to understand the universe is a principled way of thus experiencing the Deity" (AR 5, my italics). This emphasis on effort appears in some of Bradley's other remarks on philosophy. For example, at the end of his essay "On Truth and Practice" (ETR IV), he remarks that "everything which is good is but the bringing to light of God's perfection and glory." The good, he thinks, is most present in the practical will for good (ETR 106). He then says, "The constant sense of [God's perfection and glory] together with the *endeavor* to realize it in thought, may be said to make the life of philosophy" (ETR 106, my italics). Here he would seem to be speaking of a practical aspect of a metaphysical consciousness, its will for good. This endeavor is part of the moral demand that we are to realize the good "in all things and everywhere, to try always to do the best, and to do one's best in it, whether in lonely work or social relaxation… " (ES 215). Endeavoring to realize the good in thought is willing to find truth.

Bradley is quite clear that as an endeavor philosophy rests on faith. Faith for him is "the nonlogical overcoming from within of doubt as to an idea, or a similar prevention of such doubt" (ETR 20). The faith on which philosophy rests is faith in its criterion of truth. It assumes that a general view that satisfies the intellect is true (AR 491), even though such a view cannot be verified in detail (ETR 27). In so doing, a metaphysical consciousness assumes that something ideal, truth in all its detail, is real. It thus requires faith in the reality of an ideal. This ideal for Bradley is not merely theoretical because realizing it, insofar as that is possible for philosophers, is part of the good. For Bradley God is a real ideal that one is nevertheless striving to realize in one's life. In pursuing truth one is striving to realize part of this ideal. In so far as one is doing so, one is experiencing the Deity. Bradley writes, "so soon as the philosopher or artist is conscious of his will in relation to the real ideal, as a will which has demands on him, he ceases to be a mere philosopher or artist as such … and becomes also religious or irreligious" (ES 321). This is the sense in which a metaphysical consciousness can experience God.[26]

To summarize, the contradiction can be avoided by distinguishing two senses of the term "metaphysical consciousness." It may be taken to refer to metaphysical consciousness considered not only as a product but also as a process leading to that product, as willing the reality of the ideal self in the world. It is here taken as willing its own perfection. In this sense it may offer a meaningful experience of the Deity. This is its sense in (1). But in (3) and hence (4) a metaphysical consciousness is understood solely in terms of its product and not as willing anything. In this sense it is a merely theoretical consciousness and so is unable to experience the Deity. Distinguishing these two forms of the metaphysical consciousness allows Bradley to affirm consistently both (1) and (4).[27]

Notes

1. I follow the convention of referring to Bradley's works by their abbreviated titles: "ES" for *Ethical Studies*, "PL" for *The Principles of Logic*, "AR" for *Appearance and Reality*, "ETR" for *Essays on Truth and Reality*, "CE" for

Collected Essays, and "CW 1" for *Collected Works of F.H. Bradley*, vol. 1. The full citations appear in the bibliography.

2. Taylor, 9.
3. Cf. ES 224, where Bradley refers to "the content of the theoretical self."
4. Bradley describes this meaning as "a most important way of understanding the self" (AR 75); following T.L.S. Sprigge, I take it to be the most important one (Sprigge, 519), and I will use the term "the self" in this sense. Bradley is emphatic that this notion of self does not coincide with that of self as the individual, that is, as the content of experience at a moment (AR 76).
5. For Bradley the self is "inseparable from immediate experience as a whole" (ETR 421).
6. The first use I have found of this term is in Wallace's translation of Hegel (1874, #233, 231). It provides an English term for "*sich zu realisieren*," which occurs in Hegel's description of will.
7. Cf. ES 33 where Bradley refers to "the rational self in the form of will."
8. Bradley describes moral habits as constituting our standing will (ES 243).
9. Cf. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, #4–7.
10. Nicholson, 17.
11. Bradley later qualifies this, but not in a way that affects his reasons for accepting (2) (ETR 2n).
12. Cf. Hurka, 26–7; Hurka rejects the equivalence.
13. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, #424–31.
14. For the role this plays in moral development, see MacNiven, 157–72.
15. In this respect it is like Kant's Antinomy of Practical Reason.
16. Kant, Ak. 413.
17. Kant, Ak. 414.
18. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, #599–603.
19. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, #671.
20. Although it is not relevant to the topic of this paper, it should be noted that Bradley also finds the religious consciousness to be inconsistent. For his reasons, see Mander, 174–6. For a fuller description of the religious consciousness, see Vincent, 112–22.
21. Bradley lists perception and thought as the main theoretical activities, but his emphasis is clearly on thought (AR 408–9).
22. I have borrowed this description of Bradley's position from Rorty, 32–3.
23. I owe this suggestion to Owen Fellows.
24. I owe this suggestion to W.J. Mander.

25. This, of course, needs to be qualified because even true judgments have only a degree of truth. Cf. ETR 140.
26. Carr, 379–82.
27. I would like to thank Gordon Brittan for very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper. I would also like to thank Owen Fellows, W.J. Mander, and the delegates of the 2013 conference on British Idealism and the Concept of the Self for very helpful comments on a later version of this paper.

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4

F.H. Bradley's Conception of the Moral Self: A New Reading

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Introduction

F.H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies* centres on the concept of the moral self, which, despite its central role, is difficult to interpret. It is tempting but mistaken, for instance, to understand the moral self as a set of appropriate desires and beliefs or as a combination of character traits and habits. I believe, by contrast and despite appearances to the contrary, that the moral self of *Ethical Studies* cannot be explained in merely empirical terms. I intend to show that Bradley's approach is more complex. First, I will distinguish between the moral self as an abstract principle of universalisability and the moral life of the self. Then, I will interpret the moral life of the self as a project and suggest that it consists in acting in accordance with the coherent set of an agent's reasonable commitments.

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The rich vocabulary deployed in *Ethical Studies* for discussing the moral self reveals the importance and complexity attributed to this concept by Bradley. Here is an (incomplete) list of expressions used:

the thinking and rational self	the systematised self
the true self	the underground self
the habitual/habituated self	the conscious and unconscious self
the self-conscious self	the real self
the private self	the moral and non-moral selves
my personal self	the moralised self
my exclusive self	the good and bad selves
the self which feels pleasure and pain	the best self
the sensuous self or 'empirical' self	the universal self
the self to be satisfied	the theoretical self
the self to be realised	the 'artificial' self
the self to be pleased	my natural self
the superior or higher self	the anarchical self
the lower self	the seeming self
the formal self	the true and real self
the social and non-social selves	the false self
the ideal and actual selves	the inner and external selves

Bradley's vocabulary may give the incorrect impression that there are many different moral selves. Perhaps this paper, with its detailed study of the terms essential for understanding the moral self, will even appear to contribute to this erroneous impression. I would like to make it clear, however, that in fact the many selves suggested by Bradley's terminology merely reflect analytical distinctions within the unitary process of the moral development of an agent's self. Some terms express the psychological side of this process, such as self-conceptualisation and evaluation; some are a part of the normative theory. There is one moral self, and it is a concrete-universal whole, a unity of the universal will and a particular moral agent. The aim of this essay, to explain the moral self by reference to the concept of a project, is an attempt to analyse this unity in detail and to draw attention to Bradley's novel moral ideas. The distinctions that I will draw between the moral self, my moral self, the true self, and the ideal self are all distinctions within this unity, and they are used to explain how this unity functions and constitutes the moral life of an agent.

A Naturalistic Interpretation

It may appear that Bradley's is a naturalistic account of the moral self. He seemingly explains the moral self in terms of psychological facts about the moral agent, such as a set of proper beliefs and desires. In Essay VII (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 281–299), he turns to moral upbringing and discusses the psychological formation of the moral self in the child. On the one hand, the child is trained to desire good and to desire it in a proper way. It learns to like to desire what is good when it sees that such desires and their corresponding actions are encouraged by parents or teachers. Likewise, the child learns that its desires are bad ones when it is punished for what it has done. Moral training targets the development of a standing desire for what is good. On the other hand, the child has to learn the meaning of good and bad. It is not enough to desire good; one has to desire it knowingly. In this way it can seem that a combination of true belief about good and bad together with a standing desire for good is enough to explain the moral self.

To further support this naturalistic interpretation of the moral self in *Ethical Studies*, one may suggest that having a standing desire for X is the same as having a set of dispositions that bring about X. Bradley indeed links the moral self with dispositions, saying that the good and bad selves result from good and bad habits (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 295–296). Habits are patterns of action or desire. You can form a habit of brushing your teeth in the morning by repeating the act of brushing after every breakfast. In a similar way, a habitual desire is formed by the dull repetition of this desire over and over again. Habits are dispositions or tendencies to perform a certain action or have a certain desire under certain conditions. This seems to suggest that the moral self is, in the end, a matter of correct dispositions.

There are several reasons, however, why this explanation of the moral self cannot be in line with Bradley's views. Firstly, as I have shown elsewhere (Babushkina, 2014), Bradley does not think that desire is a disposition to act. Secondly, the reduction of the moral self to the natural self implies a deduction of *ought* from *is*. The concept of the moral self is essentially normative; it suggests what should be. The concept of the

natural self, on the other hand, is a descriptive one. It is empirical and refers to psychological facts about the agent. The reduction of the moral self to the natural self, thus, implies that an idea about what one should be could be derived from observations about actual psychological reality, namely, the beliefs and desires that result from a proper kind of upbringing or education. So, is Bradley guilty of breaking Hume's Law? No, he is not. What is at fault here is the naturalistic interpretation of his meaning. Bradley acknowledges, in his 'Concluding Remarks', that there can be no derivation of *ought* from *is* (compare to Nicholson, 1990, p. 36). Belief in the gap between *is* and *ought* is essential to the moral consciousness and precisely what distinguishes it from the religious mind. Finally, the naturalistic reading of the moral self in *Ethical Studies* has difficulty explaining Bradley's concept of the ideal self. According to the essay 'Ideal Morality', striving for perfection or for the ideal self is our ultimate moral goal, giving it a vital place in Bradley's overall scheme. But those interpreters who tend to understand the moral self in naturalistic terms (for instance, by reducing it to my station and its duties) neglect this fact.

The Principle of Universalisability

One of the reasons the naturalistic reading of the moral self in *Ethical Studies* faces these problems is because it ignores the distinction between *the* moral self and *my* moral self. When I reflect upon my psychological attitudes and my actions from a moral point of view, I am reflecting upon *my* moral self. My moral self is me as a moral agent. It is described in empirical terms. It is the subject of my moral emotions and actions. It is the bearer of responsibility for the actions I have committed. It is the object of blame or praise, the subject and object of moral evaluations. My moral self stands for all the properties that make me a separate moral individual. I can sensibly ask whether my self is the same morally as it was ten years ago, because in this context I ask, in fact, whether I have changed from the moral point of view during the last ten years. This is a question about changes in what I think, desire and do—in other words, about changes in my empirical self, which is the ground for all such moral characterisation. I can be a morally better person today than

I was ten years ago. As long as I am the same empirical self, the moral qualifications 'better now' and 'worse ten years ago' describe the same me. It makes sense to say that my moral self develops and changes because I can change and develop as a moral agent.

However, it does not make sense to ask whether I am still the same moral self if this is a question about whether *the* moral self at one point in time is one and the same as *the* moral self at another point in time. The question of diachronic identity cannot be applied to it because it does not change. My morally-better-self now and morally-worse-self ten years ago differ in how well I succeed in being good now and then, but not in what makes these self-stages moral. On the interpersonal level, the moral self also does not change. Take two examples: on the one hand a young bachelor student, who is the only child to his sick mother, and on the other hand an established company executive, married and the father to several children. They live different lives and aspire to and care about different things. The desires, beliefs and actions on which basis certain moral qualifications can justifiably be ascribed to them are objectively different. The student has a dependent mother to take care of and his own life and career to establish. If he disregards these things, that may be a reason to blame him. However, we would not blame him for failing to care about his wife and children since he has none. On the other hand, not caring about his wife and children can certainly be a relevant reason for moral evaluation towards the company executive. But empirical differences like these do not affect what the moral self as such consists in. It is one and the same in every individual. We call both selves moral for the same reason.

Even though Bradley does not explicitly conceptualise the distinction between the moral self and my moral self, this distinction lies in the foundation of his ethical views. *Ethical Studies* describes the rich life of the self in the sphere of morality and its struggle for moral perfection. This is a story of the empirical self, working hard to reach its truth and realise its ideal. But in my view, the moral self as such is nothing more than a principle. This principle says that in all situations which are identical in morally relevant features, every moral agent has the same moral obligations. I will call this the principle of universalisability. As Bradley explains, 'That does not mean that everybody does or has to do what I do, but it means that, if they were I, they must do as I have to do, or else be

immoral' (Bradley, 1962a, p. 230). A similar explanation can be found in Bradley's notes from the period when *Ethical Studies* was written: 'Hence I call my act the realization of the universal will because another man in my case … must have acted as I did and would have been commanded to do so' (Bradley, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 244). In other words, if I happen to witness a drowning woman, and the moral requirement to help those in need legitimately applies to me, then it applies to everyone who happens to witness the drowning and whose situation is identical to mine. The self that a moral requirement is addressed to is universalisable and thus is, in a sense, impersonal:

> The moral consciousness thus assumes its identity in all men. … The superior will … commands individual acts which are ends without distinction of person if 'person' means the private self. (Bradley, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 245)

The moral self as such is no one's empirical self; it is an abstract principle that is projected onto every individual moral life.

Moral Life and Projects

Not much can be said about the moral self as such. Interesting moral discussion about it revolves rather around the question of how this principle gets specified and results in a particular moral life. Bradley attempts to analyse the meaning of being moral and the mechanism of the development of the self. For Bradley, the moral life is acting (Bradley, 1962a, p. 65). We are judged, blamed and praised on the basis of our actions (compare to Warnock, 1963, p. 4). Responsibility can justifiably be attributed to us only for what we have done (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 3, 9). Our actions establish us as objectivised selves or persons, that is, they make us known to others. But the moral life is not solely about acting. Our actions must have a substantial connection to what we are. As long as we are moral agents, we cannot separate ourselves from what we do. MacNiven says that 'in acting … we create ourselves' (MacNiven, 1987, p. 50). If I systematically lie and cheat, I cannot justifiably claim that I am

not a liar or a cheat. If I believe I am not, then I am deceiving myself. My actions make me what I am. There is also a further connection between our actions and our self. We have a sense of what actions are appropriate for a moral person in a given situation; which actions the moral person would undertake (which are permissible), and those she would consider unthinkable (which are prohibited). Here we see an idealised view of a moral agent with normative implications for actions. I choose a course of actions, thinking of what actions are appropriate for me as a moral agent. My actions are guided by my normative ideals or by idealised views of my own self.

These two aspects of the relationship between our moral actions and our selves come together in the idea of a *project*. I suggest that the moral life of the self in *Ethical Studies* is best described as a project, the purpose of which is the concretisation and realisation of the moral ideal. I understand projects generally as major pursuits that organise one's conduct over a period of time. By structuring diachronically our goals and actions, projects help us realise complex goals that lie beyond our present-moment needs and desires. We can say that an agent is involved in a project when the seemingly unrelated actions she has been performing over a period of time can be rendered meaningful as a whole in the light of a cause. Projects, thus, 'give shape and content to our lives'; they 'guide our lives' (Betzler, 2013, p. 101) and contribute to its meaningfulness. For an undertaking to count as a project, its cause has to be significant (objectively or subjectively) and require for its pursuit a body of actions. Projects are endeavours. Careers, hobbies and personal relationships are all examples of projects.

So, my point is that, for Bradley, the moral life of the self is a project in the sense described above. In other words, my moral self is essentially a lifelong conscious endeavour. This pursuit has two components. On the one hand, it includes something that I will call a *horizontal project*. The horizontal project is the pursuit of one's *true self*. The true self is this project's cause; it is, in other words, the object of the agent's devotion. This project is an undertaking expressed in particular actions; it is an active engagement with one's true self. This cause guides the agent's actions and gives them meaning. The fact that the project of becoming one's true self has a cause does not mean that it has an external goal.

Such projects as hobbies may have an external goal. I may collect rare stamps as a small investment. Other projects, like personal relationships (Betzler, 2013, p. 110), do not have an external goal; they are projects embarked upon solely for the project's sake. When I send my friend a small gift for her birthday, I do so not in order to be friends (unless I am trying to start a fresh relationship), but because we are friends. Small gifts are one way to express friendship. The project of becoming one's true self is similar to friendship in this sense. When I act morally, I do so not in order to be moral, but because I am moral. Bradley confirms this point, claiming that self-realisation is an internal or non-instrumental moral goal (Bradley, 1962a, p. 64; 1999, Vol. 3, p. 256). Moral acts are expressions of my true self. When what I do is morally good, I am my true self. Such actions as calling your friend, making gifts or taking care of her cats when she is on vacation maintain and develop friendship. It is by acting this way that I become a better friend. Similarly, good deeds maintain and develop my own self morally; by acting morally I come closer to my true self.

Moral practice is complemented by moral comprehension. Along with her horizontal project, the moral agent is engaged in the *vertical project* of conceptualising her ultimate moral end in terms of the *ideal self.* The purpose of the vertical project is to understand what one's moral cause is and what is required for its realisation. Moral agents are not machines that carry out pre-programmed actions to reach their goals; they have to be creative both in defining their moral cause and in finding ways to implement it. The ideal self is a sort of moral inspiration that is drawn on by agents to develop understanding of the particular causes they are engaged with. They act with a view to what they believe their true self to be in the light of such an ideal. The vertical project gives feedback on the horizontal project; it allows the agent to reflect upon her actions, to evaluate the progress of the realisation of her cause, to make corrections and to become better. If we look at the horizontal project as a ground or core pursuit, then the vertical project can be called a moral meta-project. The ground and meta-projects comprise what I will call one master project of the self's moral life.

There is circularity in this master project. As a result of my moral activity I become what I am. The true self is the cause of my moral

project, but I must already be my true self in order to act as it calls me to do. I loop round on myself in each moral action I undertake. However, this circularity is not vicious if we look at it from a Hegelian point of view. Every subsequent loop entails the expansion of my empirical self. I produce more actions in the world, my activities vary, but it is the same self that produces these actions. In this way I change while remaining the same self—or in other words, I develop. The project of realising her true self presupposes not only the development of an agent's empirical self but also its perfection (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 228, 246). The ideal of the true self is revised to better fit the ideal self. By means of the agent's moral master project, her self becomes ever more like the ideal self in a process of expansion, evaluation and correction.

While proposing to analyse the life of the moral self in terms of projects, I do not suggest that having a moral self is a matter of having a rational life plan (compare to Royce, 1908, pp. 168–169). A sequence of actions makes a plan if actions comprising this sequence are instrumentally connected to their cause. If this sequence maximises utility (brings about the intended result at least as efficiently as other alternatives), it is rational. Moral development as the implementation of a rational life plan entails that the agent has a well-defined goal (for instance, a clear conception of what character traits she needs to develop in order to become her true self), knows the means to put herself in possession of these properties, and can prove that these means are the most effective for the job (compare to Rawls, 1999, §§63–64). The idea of such a rational life plan is too restrictive, however; it limits the possible ways in which a moral cause can be implemented and it demands that the agent be instrumentally rational. There are no such demands or restrictions in *Ethical Studies*. On the contrary, Bradley is flexible about the criteria of moral self-realisation. He says only that it has to be guided by the moral ideal. He argues, moreover, that rational calculation of an agent's future life is against moral consciousness (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 15–18). Bradley describes the activity that realises the moral end in terms of tendencies and approximations (Bradley, 1962a, p. 70). Implementation of the moral cause is an art (Bradley, 1962a, p. 225) rather than an excellence of instrumental rationality.

Note the difference between the principles that connect various actions into plans and into projects. A set of actions qualifies as a plan when there is a means-end relationship between each action and its goal (for each action, it is possible to explain how it facilitates the end goal) and the actions are hierarchically connected (each leading to the other). For example, I plan to meet my husband at 15:25 at the city's central square. Meeting my husband is my goal. So I have a plan for how to achieve my goal. I may decide to leave my office at 15:00 and take tram number six. In order to take the tram, I need a ticket. Buying the ticket is part of my plan. But I forgot my wallet, so borrowing a couple of euros from my friend is part of my plan as a means to get a tram ticket. This sequence of actions is my plan to achieve the goal of meeting my husband at 15:25 at the central square.

On the other hand, for a set of actions to qualify as a project it is sufficient for them to contribute to the cause in a relevant way. For example, suppose Mary is involved in a project of helping children in need. She does a variety of things, such as distributing food and clothing on the streets, organising free HIV checks, fundraising, raising awareness about social problems and family planning, and taking part in PR training for NGOs. Some of her actions are instrumentally connected to her cause (distribution of food). Some are not (raising awareness or taking part in PR training). But the point is that her actions do not have to be instrumentally connected to the project's cause. It is enough if they can be seen as contributing to the cause of helping children in need, or as expressing such a project. 'And it is the contributory value of those different action types that jointly manifest and constitute … [the] cause' (Betzler, 2013, p. 107). Mary carries out her project with every action that contributes to its cause (she *is* helping children when distributing food), while I only move closer to my goal when performing an action as a part of the plan (I have not yet met my husband when I get onto the tram). Bradley describes the relationship between a moral cause and the action that carries it out in very similar terms. He says that our major end can be seen as uniting at least some of our minor ends in the sense that the former *qualify* the latter. Our minor ends, in turn, qualify our particular actions. Together, minor goals and our actions carry the mark of the major end and they jointly realise it (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 69–70).

While in a plan the goal is of utmost importance and the actions have merely instrumental value, in a project the actions have as much value as the cause. In this respect, Bradley's description of a self's moral life is obviously closer to the idea of a project rather than a plan: 'Morality implies both something to be done, and doing of it by me … [and] … there is no end beyond the act' (Bradley, 1962a, p. 65). Nicholson writes that 'the self has two dimensions, and a dual function, in Bradley's moral philosophy: it is both what realises and what is to be realised … Self-realisation is the self, through its actions, shedding its finitude and changing into its true, infinite self' (Nicholson, 1990, p. 17).

Reasonable Commitments and Coherence

If talk about the true self brings to mind the image of a person like Jesus Christ or the Buddha (compare to Mackenzie, 1901, pp. 97–98), we are missing Bradley's point. The true self should not be understood as a set of personal properties or as the image of a perfect human being. On such a view, it is possible to spell out the characteristics that every agent ought to achieve. One could argue that everyone's true self is a rational person who values the common good above her own and is devoted to God (see Mander in this volume p. 289). In this case, the true self would consist in universally valued personal characteristics. Everyone should be 'rational, social and divine' or be immoral. The moral life, then, would consist of activities that contribute to the development of such characteristics in my self.

It is unlikely that in *Ethical Studies* our moral end is the development of certain universally valuable personal characteristics. For one reason, Bradley gives no list of such characteristics. The clue to understanding the true self lies in the fact that its content is specified by reference to the moral ideal. This implies that the true self is essentially connected to the agent's commitments. A moral life is the life of a particular moral agent in her concrete circumstances. These circumstances include, among other things, career, hobbies, religion, intellectual work, artistic occupation and family status. The moral profile of an agent consists of her specific commitments to causes and people that make her world, on the one side, and contribute to her own development, on the other. What we are each

committed to as individuals differs, but we are moral as long as we recognise those claims upon us and respect them in our choices and actions.

For Bradley, an essential feature of the true self is that it is a whole. In other words, commitments bring unity to my life. It is sometimes argued that for Bradley loyalty or devotion to a cause is the necessary condition for the moral agent to achieve unity in her life. For instance, Mander, in his analysis of *Ethical Studies*, notes:

> The good life is not that which jumps from whatever is the best at one moment to whatever is best at another … No, the good life is a life as a whole, one springing from a unity of vision, a life which manifests a single aim and overall coherence—whatever the vicissitudes of the world around us. It is a life of integrity. (Mander, 2011, p. 185)

Although this might be a convincing interpretation, I do not think it does Bradley justice. It appears that Mander's understanding of integrity in this context is close to the Roycean idea of loyalty: the agent's life shows integrity as long as the agent is loyal to her cause. For Josiah Royce, loyalty is a lifelong dedication to a cause. Josiah Royce requires, and Mander appears to agree, that the moral agent must be committed to a cause, must not have more than one cause, and that her commitment is not subject to rational revision. Bradley agrees with the first point, namely, that personal morality is about commitment, but the second and third requirements do not find sufficient support in *Ethical Studies*. Nowhere does Bradley require that the moral agent be devoted to only one cause or have only one commitment. There is no limit to the number of commitments one may take upon oneself or find oneself bound by. On the contrary, Bradley acknowledges that the moral agent can and does have a variety of different commitments. When they conflict, the agent is faced with theoretically irresolvable moral dilemmas.

The one-cause requirement can arguably be seen as an unnecessarily narrow moral viewpoint, that is, as a failure to recognise that other causes than the one the agent is engaged with may have value. To impose the one-cause requirement on Bradley's ethics is to make it unnecessarily restrictive. One could argue that Bradley has no other

choice because the one-cause requirement is necessary for the true self to be a whole and the agent's moral life to be a unity. If you have one definite goal, you are doing one thing in your life and you are a solid person. I doubt that the one-cause requirement is the only way for Bradley to account for the unity of the true self. I suggest, alternatively, that integrity consists of the compliance of actions with the coherent set of one's commitments (compare to Eschenbach, 2012). It is odd to say that integrity is achieved simply by virtue of the agent's *having* a commitment. Imagine that I have promised my advisor to finish my dissertation in a year and this is the only commitment I have. If it is true that commitment entails integrity, then the dissertation's completion in a year is the cause that brings integrity in my life. Now imagine that one year passes and I have not fulfilled my promise. Is my life still to be considered a whole? If not—and I think it is not—then integrity is not a matter of simply having a commitment. Integrity is rather a matter of acting upon one's commitments. Commitments may conflict and require contradictory courses of action. If I act on one I may be unable to act on another if they are mutually exclusive. But in that case since my actions do not comply with my commitments, I would not be a whole. Therefore, it is better to argue that integrity is achieved through actions that comply with one's non-contradictory commitments. There must be a consistency in my commitments. My true self is a set of consistent commitments, or in other words, a system. This view, I believe, is much more attractive for Bradley. It allows him to avoid unnecessarily restricted moral viewpoints. As long as they are non-contradictory, an agent is able to achieve unity by acting on her commitments, no matter how many she has.

Finally, the loyal agent should stand up for her cause despite any challenges that may occur. As Royce puts it, loyalty is 'a sort of ethical marriage to … [a] cause' (Royce, 1908, p. 191), with no right of divorce. What is meant here is not simply that your chosen cause is a source of overriding reasons in the sense that you should always give preference to your cause over any irrelevant desires. Rather, what is meant is that your cause is not subject to rational revision; there is no other consideration that can override what the cause demands of you. Most people would probably agree that there is at least one such

consideration: the avoidance of extreme suffering and death. It is rational to abstain from extreme suffering or to preserve one's own life. If a goal requires sacrificing my life or suffering enormous pain, this is a reasonable consideration against pursuing it. However, Roycean loyalty does not recognise any reason that can override the demands of its cause. If you are forced to choose between your faith and torture, you should choose torture. Devotion to one's religion demands that you protect it with your life; it will make you a martyr and it is good to be one. This is a clear case of moral fanaticism. A moral fanatic is one who insists on following her moral principles even if this causes her unnecessary suffering (compare to Hare, 1963). There is no evidence that Bradley advocates moral fanaticism in his *Ethical Studies*. Furthermore, there is at least one rational consideration, which Bradley must allow for in the reconsideration of one's moral commitments, if his ethics is to be judged possible at all. Morality is unthinkable outside the process of self-development, or self-realisation. For there to be any moral development, there must be a self that changes, a moral agent that acts. If an ethical theory centres on personal perfection but demands that the agent suffers a loss that inhibits her perfection, this ethical theory is contradictory. Thus, Bradley's ethical theory should allow the conditions that jeopardise one's moral development (such as the absence of extreme suffering and preservation of one's life) to count as reasons in favour of the reconsideration of one's moral commitments. Otherwise the theory is doomed. There is textual evidence that Bradley acknowledges this:

> The good may be identified with self-sacrifice, and self-assertion may, therefore, be totally excluded. But the good, as self-sacrifice, is clearly in collision with itself. For an act of self-denial is, no less, in some sense a self-realization, and it inevitably includes an aspect of self-assentation. And hence the good, as the mere attainment of self-sacrifice, is really unmeaning. For it is in finite selves, after all, that the good *must* be realized. (Bradley, 1962b, 375)

Bradley's concept of the true self, thus, stands for a coherent unity of one's commitments that are subject to rational revision.

The Ideal Self

Under the name of the ideal self, Bradley collects together the types of commitments worth having. There are three categories. The first, commitments grounded in our relationships, are obligations we have due to our various social roles. These relationships can be chosen or imposed on us, or perhaps we find ourselves involved with other people as a result of some of our choices. People with whom we interact may be close and dear to us, or we may not care about them too much or even at all, but the nature of our relationships, personal or formal, presupposes a commitment to certain ways of treating them and, thus, to certain actions. Bradley refers to this group of commitments as my station and its duties. The second category is commitments to ways of treating others by virtue of their being human. Here Bradley reconsiders the concept of relationships with others in terms that go beyond our social roles. There is a special type of relationship that humans have to each other. This relationship presupposes a commitment to treating all humans—no matter how remote they are from us—in a certain way (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 204–205, 220–222). The third category is commitments to truth and beauty. These commitments, because they are not grounded in our relationships with others, constitute a non-social aspect of the ideal self (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 222–224).

The ideal self is a perfect true self. Note, however, that Bradley does not give a list of particular virtues. He is very general in his description of the ideal self. It is a wide concept that can be stretched to embrace all those things that we usually expect people to care about. Personal relationships, career aspirations, care for the welfare of one's state and such-like can all be accommodated under the category of my station and its duties, which embraces any concerns a person may have about her relationship with others. My concerns about the impression I make on my husband's relatives or about my reputation at work and in my neighbourhood can be placed under the second category. Piano playing, scientific progress, inquiry into the nature of the moral self, and even knitting can be embraced under the third category. It is difficult to see what concern cannot be justified as a part of the moral ideal as long as these concerns are universalisable. But the generality of the ideal self creates problems.

It is unclear how many concerns are enough for my moral pursuit. Bradley says nothing about how the three components are to be related together. Should my project include something from all three categories? One aspiration from each? Or several from each? It may appear that Bradley simply did not develop his concept of the ideal self in sufficient detail. After all, the ideal self is our ultimate end, but it is so wide and abstract that it is impossible to aim at it. I believe, however, that Bradley never meant the ideal self to be my moral aim. The ideal self just gives me criteria by which to judge what my true self consists in.

The ideal self is the standard or criterion of perfection. It is important to note, however, that it refers to ideas about what one should *be*, and not what one should *do*. Such ideas are neither direct orders for action nor recommendations to action. However, these ideas about what one should be, when applied to the reality of an agent's life, help her understand what her particular commitments are and what obligations follow from them. Knowing the categories of worthy commitments (the ideal self), the agent needs to apply this knowledge to her particular case, that is, to the conditions in which she exists as a moral agent (her true self). Bradley suggests how the second category of commitments may be turned into a particular moral goal in the following statement: 'The perfect types of zeal and purity, honour and love, which, figured and presented in our own situation and circumstances, and thereby unconsciously specialized, become the guides of our conduct and law of our being, are social ideals' (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 220–221). The ideal of commitment to a human way of treating others is presented to me as particular virtues or as 'the ideal of social perfection' (Keene, 1970, p. 447). My understanding of what my true self is may include an idea of particular virtues. In a similar way, the category of the social commitments may become particularised in the reality of the agent's life. What commitments she has will depend on the concrete relationships she has with other people, such as her parents, children, co-workers, friends and fellow citizens. And here lies a source of our moral obligations as well as a constraint on our conduct. Similarly, the commitment to truth and beauty in the reality of a philosopher's life may become a commitment to rational argument or to contemplation of the essence of things. My particular obligations as a philosopher are further particularised in the view of my research project.

From the various categories of worthy commitments the agent deduces a personalised ideal of a self, which forms her moral cause. This is why Bradley says that moral perfection does not result from seeking the ideal of a human being, but rather from the agent's devotion to her own ideal or her own true self: 'We do not ask who is the most perfect man. We do not say, Whose will is most identified with *the* ideal human type? but, Whose will is most identified with *his* ideal?' (Bradley, 1962a, p. 237).

Carrying Out the Moral Project

'A mere formal harmony is not a moral end: the end is … the systematic realization of the self whose will is in harmony with the ideal' (Bradley, 1962a, pp. 235–236). The agent's moral self is a master project that consists in acting upon her reasonable commitments (horizontal project) and in understanding what commitments it is reasonable to have from the point of view of the ideal self (vertical project). The agent's moral self is, in other words, a process, not a final state. It is a process of self-determination (developing a self-conception based on the ideal self), on the one hand, and self-perfection (acting upon this self-conception), on the other. Self-determination must be of primary importance because the agent has to know her aim in order to aim at it. In other words, the ideal of moral perfection should precede moral practice. This is why Bradley's account of the agent's moral self is essentially idealistic. Moral development starts with an idea of what one should be, and it is in the light of this normative idea that one acts and shapes one's empirical self. Thinking back to the naturalistic account of the agent's moral self discussed at the beginning of this paper, it can be seen that it got wrong the very goal of moral upbringing. Its goal is not to develop an appropriate set of desires and beliefs or even dispositions to action. The goal is to teach a child to identify herself with the ideal self. Moral upbringing rests on the educator's conception of the ideal self, which she communicates to the child by encouraging some of her desires and actions and discouraging others. Such moral education is a training in self-identification, during

which time the child learns the reasons for accepting the worth of certain categories of commitments. Internalising the ideal self as a criterion of moral perfection, the child reaches an understanding of what its true self is. After moral education is completed, the proper moral work on the empirical self begins.

The fact that the agent's moral self is a process but not a final state has an important implication: the moral project can never be fulfilled, and its result is an approximation on both the ground level and the meta-level. First, as it is impossible for me to have a full and clear picture of my true self, I can never *entirely* become it. Carrying out the moral project is like shooting blind. We never have a clear understanding of what the true self is. It is not because we do not try hard enough to grasp it, but because the concept of the true self does not have sharp boundaries; it is fuzzy and its content is not fixed once and for all. The agent gets to know what her true self is and what it is not and thus develops an understanding of her own moral goal, while at the same time she is trying to reach the goal and become her true self. It is thus a journey of trial and error. Changes in my life's circumstances entail changes in my commitments. I have constantly to revise my condition. New relationships and intellectual and artistic projects all bring new commitments. Broken relationships and abandoned causes terminate the commitments related to them. As a moral agent, I must always reflect upon my moral cause and adjust, refine and perfect the idea of my true self. My true self endlessly expands and modifies. This means that my moral cause is fuzzy, and as a moral agent I am bound to act with an unclear and ever-changing cause in view. I do, however, *partially* become my true self as a result of engagement in the moral project. Whatever I do as a part of my moral master project, I achieve my true self *to some extent*. But I cannot become my perfect true self and nothing else.

Second, the ideal self is impossible to achieve: 'Bradley explains that for the ideal self to be in the world as the expressed will of this or that spiritualized animal is quite out of the question' (Bradley, 1962a, p. 231). To say that X is *impossible* is to say that X could not be realised under any circumstances and to no degree. There is no such possible world where X is realised. There is no such possible world where an agent is the ideal self

(unless she is a god or god-like creature, she cannot be the embodiment of all possible worthy commitments). The ideal self is what I would have become if my moral master project had been completed, and it never is. Therefore, the ideal self also gets realised only partially: each moral self is an instance of the ideal self (as an ideal representation of oneself), but none *is* the ideal self; none equals the ideal self.

As described above, Bradley's view of the agent's moral self as a project has a number of problems. First, if the moral cause is uncertain, how can progress towards perfection be ensured? I suggest that self-evaluation must play an important role here. On the one hand, the agent evaluates how well her true self expresses the ideal self or, in other words, how good her conception of herself is. On the other hand, the agent reflects upon her realisation of her true self or, in other words, how good her behaviour is. This two-step evaluation (of the concept by an abstract criterion and of actions in the light of the concept) allows her to ensure that the ideal self is properly particularised in her actions. Having parents, I have a moral goal of being a good daughter. This goal guides my actions, desires, emotional responses and other minor goals. For example, I may call my parents twice a week, take care of their health checks or help them financially. In the end, I ask myself: Am I a good daughter? Is what I do enough to make me a good daughter? What I want to know is whether my actions meet my commitment to my parents; whether I am what I aspire to be. But I may also ask myself: What actions are descriptive of being a good daughter? What does it mean to be a good daughter? In this case I am wondering whether my concept of daughterhood is the correct one. However, the latter conceptual inquiry is subject to the former practical one. I need to know whether my idea of daughterhood is close to the ideal notion because I don't want to take a wrong course of action. I want to act as an ideally good daughter would act. The second problem is motivational: if partial realisation is all that a moral agent can ever hope for, it is difficult to see why she would choose to strive for the ideal at all. A moral project that is counterfactually realistic—at least in the agent's own eyes—makes more sense for the agent, and therefore this project is more likely to give her reasons to carry it out. After all,

Bradley himself warns against unattainable moral goals and morality in which 'we aim at a mark we do not hit, and endeavour to get nearer to an impossibility' (Bradley, 1962a, p. 245). Finally, if the true self is the agent's cause and the ideal self is the evaluative criteria, what does the agent aim at when striving to realise her moral project? What is she hoping to achieve? Without going into details here, let me only suggest that the agent must aim at particular ideals or idealised objects, which, compared to the ideal self, are more concrete and are at least counter-factually realisable.

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5

Self, Not-Self, and the End of Knowledge: Edward Caird on Self-Consciousness

Phillip Ferreira

It is the belief of many that, amongst those writers we refer to as 'the British idealists', Edward Caird stands the closest to Hegel. Having once described himself as an 'unregenerate Hegelian', Caird left no doubt as to which philosopher had the greatest effect on his intellectual development and whom amongst modern thinkers he held in the highest regard.[1] And while Caird produced little in the way of direct commentary on Hegel (one short book), his three volumes on Kant and his two sets of Gifford Lectures reflect his unswerving commitment to the general outlook of 'Hegelianism'.[2] This is not to say that Caird was a slavish follower; anyone who studies Caird cannot but come away with the impression that, having painstakingly assimilated the Hegelian system, he reworked it in terms specific to English-speaking philosophy. And though his Hegelianism may have been 'unregenerate', I think it safe to say that Caird always remained his own man.[3]

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One example of this reworking of Hegelian ideas is found in Caird's treatment of self-consciousness. While this is an overarching theme in Hegel's writing, Caird's discussion of the topic shows great originality. And unlike Hegel's account, it takes place in language that is, by and large, comprehensible to the non-specialist. The accessibility of Caird's writing on self-consciousness is the result, I think, not of his watering down the idea, but rather of his extensive analysis of Kant. Indeed, much of what Caird has to say on this topic is found in his commentaries on Kant's 'Critical Philosophy'; while this material isn't exactly an easy read, it does develop out of what for English-speaking readers is more familiar territory.[4] Hence, in what follows I shall appeal often to Caird's discussion of Kant.

But let us begin by considering Caird's larger view of consciousness. In his *Evolution of Religion* we read:

> When we consider the general nature of our conscious life—our life as rational beings endowed with the powers of thinking and willing—we find that it is defined and, so to speak, circumscribed by three ideas, which are closely, and even indissolubly, connected with each other. These are the idea of the object or not-self, the idea of the subject or self, and the idea of the unity which is presupposed in the difference of the self and the not-self, and within which they act and react on each other: in other words, the idea of God. (Caird, 1893, p. 64)

These three ideas, then, are the principal components of Caird's account of conscious experience,[5] and they may be provisionally defined as follows. The idea of the not-self (or object world) is simply my awareness that specific entities exist. Hovering in the background is the awareness that, in some sense, these entities are 'other' than me. However, *mere* consciousness has not yet brought this awareness into explicit focus. The idea of the self (or subject) refers to my awareness that 'I am' and that 'I am a being who is conscious of things that are separate from myself'. Finally, there is the idea of God. We should understand this idea as an awareness that includes but transcends both the ideas of self and not-self. It is, as we shall see, the awareness that views my finite consciousness and its relation to the world from what may be called a 'neutral' or 'disinterested' perspective. We are told, too, that these divisions within

consciousness should not be seen as rigid and absolute. (To see them in this fashion is, according to Caird, to engage in an abstraction.[6]) In the final analysis, they must be understood as comprising a single, though internally diverse, experience.

But there are two further aspects of this theory we should note before proceeding. First, Caird acknowledges that both the idea of self and the idea of God are not—in the earliest stages of experience, anyway—present to our reflective (explicit) awareness.[7] Yet, he claims, they are always there, hovering in the background. We are told that the idea of the object world (not-self) presupposes—that is, implicitly contains—the idea of the self; and just as the idea of the object world presupposes the idea of the self, so too does the idea of the self (standing in opposition to the not-self) presuppose the idea of God.[8] Second, we should understand that Caird typically chooses to use the term 'self-consciousness' to refer to this fuller experience wherein we find the ideas of not-self, self, and God. To some this has seemed puzzling, given that the idea of self seems to be best fitted to this term.[9] However, as the discussion proceeds, we should come to appreciate why Caird characterizes our fullest experience in this fashion. But let us begin by considering in greater detail how Caird views the idea of the most basic element within our experience—the idea of the not-self.

The Idea of the Not-Self (or Object World)

On Caird's view, the not-self (or object world) is that of which we are first aware; it is also that which remains throughout our conscious experience. It is, in fact, the foundation of all that we ever do experience. Caird is also the first to acknowledge—indeed, insist—that the not-self/object world is law-governed and ordered throughout. And he would agree with the staunchest of realists that the finite individual does not, in any significant sense, 'make' this world. But despite this, Caird claims that our *idea* of the not-self—that is, the not-self as *we* experience it—is flawed.[10] When he tells us this, he means to say much more than just that our experience of the object world is incomplete. (That is quite a common view.) What Caird wants to say is that our idea of the object world (not-self) is defec-

tive because there are conditions that are essential to its being but which remain merely implicit and hidden from view.

There are, according to Caird, many such conditions. What most concerns us here, though, are the ideas of self and God. As suggested above, it is their *absence* from our explicit awareness that, amongst other things, constitutes the varying degrees of defect in our understanding. This defect is somewhat mitigated when we come to understand that the ideas of self and God are somehow co-extensive with our apprehension of the not-self. However, on Caird's theory, the overcoming of this intrinsic flaw is an ongoing process. The highest levels of understanding require that we grasp both self and God as not just co-extensive with our awareness of the object world, but as constitutive of and necessary to its existence. Of course, in declaring self and God to be necessarily contained in any truthful apprehension of the not-self, Caird is going against the views of common sense and a number of philosophical theories. To better appreciate his position, let us consider briefly how some of these theories view the idea of the object world/not-self.

Let us begin by considering classical empiricism's view of the not-self. While writers who fall under this head differ widely, they also hold a number of beliefs in common.[11] The most significant of these is that the fundamental constituents of experience are the given data of sense. We are typically told by proponents of this view that, though we come to believe in the reality of an external world of objects and events, that world is more accurately located within the psychological space of the conscious subject. And what we come to call the 'object world' is, in fact, an inferential construct built up from given sensations standing in relations of spatial (simultaneous) and temporal (sequential) contiguity. From these sensuous data mental habits develop, and these mental habits eventually provide us with our inferentially constructed world. But if we define the not-self as that which is wholly *given* (meaning here, not contributed by the subject and not referring beyond itself), then the not-self would just be those sensations standing in relations of spatial and temporal contiguity. As for the ideas of self and God, there is disagreement amongst the empiricists.[12] Certainly none would claim that the idea of God is given or otherwise contained within the sensuous data. And the strictest of empiricists assert that neither do we find any sensuous data that corre-

sponds to the idea of the self.[13] When we do develop ideas such as self and God, it is most often seen as the result of mental associations between ideas that are, though based on prior sensational states, not directly found within those states. Hence the given—that which constitutes the strict empiricist's most fundamental conception of the not-self—implies neither self nor God, as it is simply a manifold of discrete sensations.[14]

Also opposed to Caird's doctrine is what has been called 'direct realism'.[15] While this term has been applied to a broad array of theories, there are still common elements between them. Most important amongst these is the idea that the related objects and events that provide us with a world have their reality not in the mind of the subject, but in a reality that is mind-independent. It is these mind-independent objects and events, then, that constitute for the direct realist the not-self. While it is claimed that our understanding of the given not-self may be woefully incomplete, this object world/not-self does not, in any significant sense, originate with or depend upon the subject: it is simply given.[16] It is typically claimed, too, that the characteristics of this world do, in fact, belong to the entities that populate it (most of them, anyway). However, more to the point for our study is this: I may have, according to this doctrine, an awareness of objects and events that, so long as it stays focused on them, is devoid of reference to the self or any higher entity (God). And if I confine my attention just to those given realities, I shall not be forced to think beyond them to their 'hidden' or 'implicit' ground. While many self-described direct realists have embraced the ideas of self and God, the source of these ideas is typically found to lie outside the given object world/not-self.

Although these descriptions are undeveloped (and subject to qualification), I present them in order to illustrate a fundamental aspect of Caird's doctrine. Let us understand that for the classical empiricist and direct realist, though our experience of the not-self (understood as either given sensa or full-blown objects) might be incomplete, that experience does not significantly *distort* the given not-self. Put differently, while sense experience might not give us the *whole* picture, the portion it provides is essentially accurate. This cannot, however, be said of Caird's doctrine; throughout Caird's theory of consciousness is the idea of 'implicit' or 'hidden' conditions.[17] We have already encountered this idea in our sum-

mary of Caird's belief that, while we may not *see* the ideas of self and God in our initial encounter with the not-self, they are nevertheless there. But there is more to this idea of hidden conditions than has been considered thus far.

I refer to Caird's claim that when the object world is consciously reflected upon, we shall at some stage be forced to re-conceive that world—not as a congeries of entities that are independent of one another (or related only by a limited set of laws), but as unified throughout. Indeed, Caird tells us that as we attempt to make clear to ourselves the nature of the object world/not-self, internal tensions eventually become manifest, and at some point open contradiction breaks out.[18] In an effort to resolve this contradiction, we must bring into the light of consciousness conditions that were previously implicit (hidden). These conditions are numerous, and they include the system of categories, lesser concepts that fall under these categories, and the sensuous contents that lie at the base of everything. But, Caird argues, when the object world/not-self is seen in its fullest truth, it will be apprehended not just as a systematic whole whose parts stand in reciprocal and interpenetrating relations, but as a whole that contains a plurality of finite subjects and is completely self-transparent (self-conscious).[19] Any belief that the object world consists of something less than this is, Caird tells us, simply the expression of an 'undeveloped' or 'pre-scientific' consciousness.[20] In order to better understand this claim, let us move on to Caird's idea of the self.

The Idea of Self (or Finite Subject)

According to Caird, the systematic unity of the object world/not-self is something we come to grasp through ongoing reflection. We are told, too, that the same process of reflection that brings to light the true structure of the object world also reveals, at some stage, the ideas of self and God. However, Caird's position might be best approached by considering his relation to Kant's 'Critical Philosophy'. Following Kant, Caird claims that much of the structure of the object world is, in one sense, 'contributed' by the subject.[21] And though Caird accepts Kant's analysis only with significant qualification, let us recall here the 'revolution' in

philosophy that Kant's theory of knowledge is said (at least by his followers) to have brought about.[22]

On Kant's analysis, the given contents of sense must, if they are to be part of our conscious experience, appear in space and time. However, the spatio-temporal manifold in which they appear is itself the *result* of their being 'synthetically combined' by a subject—a 'transcendental subject'—that is not part of that manifold.[23] The synthetic combination of these sensuous contents is always made according to conceptual 'rules' (or categories) that establish precise relations between them. Hence, all *consciously* apprehended sensuous contents (experienced as either individual sensa or fully formed objects) are, on this account, already permeated by the conceptual threads of the categories.[24] Should this categorial synthesis be absent—should there exist no rule-governed ordering of sensuous contents by the transcendental subject—the conscious differentiation of these contents (and the determination of objects in space and time) would, we are told, never arise. And that there must be such a synthesis according to rules for even the most primitive awareness to exist is what led Kant to describe them as 'conditions of any possible experience' and 'a priori'.[25]

Now, while this is a simplified statement of what is quite a complex theory, it provides the context for understanding Caird's idea of the unity of the object world and the higher forms of consciousness this world presupposes (self and God). However, to follow Caird, we must consider in greater detail how this Kantian 'deduction' entails not just the categories (the conceptual threads that 'run through' all sensuous contents), but also the subject for whom any manifold of determinate objects exists.[26]

According to Caird (and Kant), time can only be consciously experienced when the sensuous 'now' is placed in the context of a past and a future.[27] That is, I must be able to remember the past and anticipate the future if I am to be aware of the present moment *as* present. If my awareness were to collapse into a single instant, my conscious experience of the spatio-temporal manifold would simply disappear. But in order to experience the present moment (the 'now') as present, the self for whom these moments (past, present, and future) exist must experience itself as the *same* self throughout. Indeed, were my awareness of myself in one moment not continuous with my awareness of myself at another, there

would be as many 'me's' as there are disappearing 'nows'.[28] But how, on Caird's view, does my sense of my own continuity arise? We are told that the awareness of self-continuity arises only through an act that, first, synthesizes (i.e. organizes according to rules) the contents of sense, and, second, differentiates the self from those contents. It is only through this act of differentiation from sensuous contents that the unity of the self may develop at all. Caird expresses this idea when he writes:

> In determining himself as a self, the individual at the same time excludes from himself every other thing and being, and determines them as external objects. He emancipates himself from the world at the same time that he repels the world from himself. Yet this movement of thought, by which his individuality is constituted, is also that by which he is lifted above mere individuality, for, in becoming conscious of self and not-self in their opposition and relation, he ceases to be simply identified with the one to the exclusion of the other. His finite individuality is regarded by him from a universal point of view, in which it has no less and no more importance than any other individuality, or in which its greater or less importance is determined only by its place in the whole. (Caird, 1892 pp. 472–3)

In this passage we have a compressed account of both the self's differentiation from the sensuous manifold and the forms this differentiation may take. While there is much that could occupy us here, I shall focus for the present on only the following points: (i) that my sense of continuous selfhood develops at the same time as my thinking determination of external objects; and (ii) that through this determination of external objects, I am lifted above 'mere individuality' and my boundaries as a 'finite individual' are expanded. The third point, (iii) that this process finds me assuming a more 'universal point of view' through which my finite individuality is continually transcended, will occupy us in the final section of the paper.

As for the first point, this is a restatement of what has already been said about the self's relation to time. Only through the process of relating (synthesizing) sensuous contents and subsuming them under overarching principles can any awareness that 'I am' arise at all.[29] Put differently, it is through the thinking apprehension of the contents of sense as constituting *one world* that I differentiate myself from that world and arrive at an

awareness of myself as *one self* across and through all sensuous difference. This act of differentiation binds together the empirical contents, unifying them into a single world (the idea of not-self).[30] But this same action—this 'differentiation'—also generates the unity of the subject (or idea of self). 'Self and world,' we are told, 'are strictly co-relative'.[31]

However, the conscious self that achieves its unity through this act of differentiation is still partially mired in empirical content. For example, it is associated with a body and its various sensations; it also has behavioural dispositions and emotional states, only some of which ever work their way into the self's conscious awareness. But more than this, the self that has differentiated itself from the immediate empirical content is in possession of an intellectual world-view that, although it allows the self to transcend much of this empirical content, only reaches so far. Hence we are forced to acknowledge that the self that stands in opposition to the not-self/object world is *impure*. Its impurity consists in the fact that its ability to determine the not-self—its capacity to raise empirical content into conscious awareness—is limited. It is just this limitation that generates what we might call the 'boundaries' (and hence finitude) of the self.[32]

We shall return to this idea momentarily. But I would mention here a point that will be of central importance in the next section. This is what Caird calls the self's 'return upon itself'. Briefly put, although the subject's awareness of itself only arises through its differentiating itself from the mass of empirical content, this act of differentiation also involves a kind of identification with the object world that has been made conscious. The extent that the object world (not-self) is consciously determined by the self is the extent to which any sense of *alienation* from that world is overcome. As we shall consider below, this is because the content that has been raised into consciousness *already belongs* to that self and constitutes a kind of 'coming home'.[33] We may approach this idea by considering more closely the transition from what Caird calls 'mere individuality' to 'finite individuality'.

While the distinction is not developed in the above passage, Caird makes it clear elsewhere that what he calls the mere individual is simply the individual who understands himself (and the not-self) according to a conceptual framework that is inadequate; it is inadequate because of its narrow focus and lack of systematicity. The mere individual sees himself

as fundamentally isolated, both from other individuals and the world at large. Characteristic of his consciousness is a general sense of externality (and frequently indifference) to that which surrounds him. The mere individual often believes that his interests are opposed (sometimes radically) to both the natural world and other selves. It is in this attitude, we are told, that he betrays the rudimentary nature of his self-concept. But how does Caird see the transition from this form of individuality to one that is more adequate?

We may answer this question (and progress to our third point) by considering the term 'finite individual'. In the passage quoted above the finite individual (who has progressed beyond mere individuality) has, to a greater or lesser extent, transformed the opposition between self and not-self. And though this opposition remains, it is experienced in a new light. As the self rises above mere individuality, self and not-self start to appear as manifestations of a deeper *unity,* a unity that has been there all along.[34] Thus, through ongoing reflection, what may have been a rigid and inflexible opposition between self and not-self begins to soften; the self now sees its existence as more closely bound up with its material environment and its social relations. The finite self now sees its situation no longer as one of 'me against the world', but increasingly as 'me as part of the world' and as a 'member' of a moral community.[35] This is achieved, however, by assuming the perspective of the universal consciousness, the perspective from which the relative worth of all things may be understood.

The Idea of God (or Universal Consciousness)

It was remarked in the previous section that, as we develop a more comprehensive grasp of the object world, that world becomes differently understood, and the rigid opposition between it and the self starts to give way. Caird tells us that as the underlying unity of self and not-self works its way into consciousness, the finite self's narrow and unsystematized idea of itself dies; it dies so that it might live through a higher, more adequate form. But the self's 'dying to live'—its changing conception of its

own finite individuality—can only come about through the presence of what Caird calls the 'universal consciousness' (another name for the idea of God).[36] It is just this universal consciousness that allows the finite self to expand its boundaries and to grasp more fully the truth of the object world/not-self and its own being. We read:

> It is the strange paradox of the spiritual life, that to be a self is at once to be one finite individual among other finite individuals and things, and to reach beyond the individuality not only of all other things and beings but even of ourselves; for we can neither know nor act without thus transcending ourselves. But thus to go beyond our own individuality and all mere individuality is already to apprehend in some way that which is universal and divine. (Caird, 1893, p. 87)

With this passage we come to what is, for Caird, the heart of the matter. In order to be aware of either the world or ourselves, we must, as finite subjects, continually reach 'beyond' ourselves. That is, we must, in thought, outstrip the boundaries of our own finitude. That we can do this, Caird tells us, is because—no matter what our stage of development—we already *are* beyond those boundaries; we are beyond them through the presupposed idea of God (or universal consciousness). We should understand, too, that Caird sees the idea of God not as something that is added to our primitive awareness of objects and events 'after the fact'; rather, it is there from the beginning. Though for much of our lives we may be unaware of its presence, were this idea not at work within us we would be unable to rise above the contents of sense so as to develop an awareness of either self or not-self. As we have seen, any awareness of self that we possess is dependent upon the ability to transcend the sensuous 'now'. After this awareness of self has arisen, we must expand our reach beyond its boundaries even further if we are to develop either the idea of a law-governed universe or a system of morality. Being beyond the self, then, is not only the fundamental condition of being conscious of the self; it is required in order to realize all that we value in both our theoretical and practical lives.[37]

Let us summarize the argument as developed thus far. First, we were asked by Caird to acknowledge that the most fundamental condition

of experience is the object world/not-self. His point was simply that, if there is to be 'experience', there must be *something* experienced. Next, we considered Caird's claim that if something is experienced, that something must exist in space and time. However, we quickly learned that the experience of space and time requires a self-same subject that maintains a continuous self-awareness across and through the disappearing presentations of sense. As we considered in the previous section, it is the binding together of the contents of sense into one world that gives rise to the experience of self as one self standing in opposition to that world. But we noticed, too, that the self that arises out of this simultaneous act of differentiation and synthesis possesses certain characteristics. This self is aware that it 'is' and that it is, in some sense, 'other' than the objects and events of which it is conscious. In addition to this, the self is aware that its own awareness is circumscribed and limited.

However, in the passage above, Caird takes us a step further. We now learn that the awareness of our own boundaries as conscious beings presupposes that, in some sense, we are already beyond those boundaries; the 'beyond' that we occupy when we reflect on the limits of our awareness cannot be described as residing wholly within 'me' or 'you' or anyone else. Though it is always accompanied by (and is continuous with) the self's finite and circumscribed awareness, this 'beyond' must be described as the non-perspectival *ground* of all that is limited and finite. For this reason, it may be said to be truly universal in nature.

Indeed, we are told repeatedly by Caird that all knowledge—be it 'of the world' or 'of the self'—requires that we progressively move beyond seeing things *in ordine ad individuum*—the circumscribed view of finite selfhood—and contemplate them *in ordine ad universum*.[38] For example, when the scientist questions the natural world, it is always from this universal perspective. While the sensuous impressions from which he or she starts constitute an ineliminable *part* of knowledge, they are, on this theory, just that—a part. And science *qua* science results just to the extent that consciousness rises above the fleeting sensa and recognizes them as limited manifestations of a law-governed and ordered universe. Through the assumption of this universal perspective, the natural sciences thus overcome the contradictions and limitations that characterize our mere individuality and 'common sense' understanding. While Caird believes

that these sciences are an all-important and necessary component in the development of knowledge, they too must eventually give way to the even greater universality that the categories of philosophy provide.[39]

It is in a similar fashion that we achieve our practical self-realization. That self-realization, according to Caird, results when the individual rises above individual appetite and animal instinct and begins to see him- or herself as part of a 'moral organism'—a community of finite individuals whose common good takes precedence over the interests of the isolated member.[40] Such a view of the self can exist, however, only through the impartial perspective of the universal consciousness. Hence we find that in the practical sphere we are driven forward by the same idea as in the theoretical. Whereas our theoretical judgments proceed upon the idea of a perfectly integrated, wholly systematic universe, so too do our practical judgments presuppose an intrinsic harmony of purpose as the true ground of human action. While we might act for some time on the belief that our lives are isolated and independent, this belief will at some point come into conflict with our fuller nature as self-conscious agents. The tension between these aspects of our being will eventually lead us to re-shape our desires so that they realize not just our merely individual (and thus misconceived) 'good' but the good of all.[41]

Caird is, of course, the first to admit that this universal consciousness—this idea of God—can be concretely realized by finite individuals only in a limited fashion. That is, any judgment we make will always be something less than perfectly true, and any action we undertake will be less than perfectly good. Though it is admitted that theoretical and practical knowledge will always fall short of its ultimate end, real progress is, Caird claims, possible. But it is possible only on the basis of the criterion that the idea of God (or universal consciousness) provides. There is, however, one further aspect of this universal consciousness we must consider if we are to come to an adequate overview of Caird's doctrine. I refer here to a point raised in the previous section—the idea of the self's 'return upon itself'. It is here that we find one of the more demanding aspects of Caird's theory. It is here, too, that we are likely to encounter the greatest resistance to his 'Hegelianism'.

Now, we have already learned that when the self differentiates itself from the not-self (object world), this differentiation is, in fact, the rec-

ognition that, in its truth, the self is more than its immediate empirical embodiment, more than its own thoughts or personality, and more than *everything* that is contained within the boundaries of its explicit awareness. But its progressive recognition that it is more than all of this constitutes, according to Caird, an expression of its 'infinite content' and 'spirit of totality'. Briefly put, Caird takes the view that the self that stands in opposition to the object world is no contentless and empty subject. Rather, it contains implicitly (and in a largely unconscious manner) the form and content of both itself and the not-self/object world. Indeed, Caird tells us:

> The world may be shown to be not merely the object but also the manifestation of the intelligence. When therefore the mind seems to have freed itself of all content of its own, it is just then that it begins to find itself—i.e. to find the categories and forms of thought which constitute it—in the object. (Caird, 1877, pp. 156–7)

But what exactly is Caird's point in this passage? Let us recall from our earlier discussion that my experience of my unity as a self-same subject is co-extensive with my experience of the unity of the object world/not-self. If there is no apprehension of unity in the object world/not-self, there is no apprehension of unity in myself. Or, to state the matter from the other side: if I fail to apprehend my identity as a self-same subject through time, I will also fail to apprehend unity within the world of objects and events. However, we are now being told something more than this. Caird is now telling us that the principles of unity *in* the object world are the very same principles that allow me to apprehend unity *in* myself.[42] Or, more simply, Caird is committed to the idea that there exists within both the intelligence and the object world a deep structure that is *shared*. But what this implies is that *self*-discovery is co-extensive with the truthful apprehension of the object world/not-self, and insight into the object world contains, at the same time, an insight into the deeper nature of the self.[43] We read:

> The perfect revelation of what the object is, is also the return of intelligence into itself, or rather the discovery that, in all its travels, it has never really

gone beyond itself. The highest fruit of knowledge is the deepening of self-consciousness. (Caird, 1883, p. 187)[44]

We might say, then, that for Caird the finite self is 'joined at the hip' with the whole that is its ground and condition.[45] That is, the infinite content that is attributed to the individual intelligence is its implicit (presupposed) identification with the absolute. Just so far as this (largely unconscious) identification with the absolute is made conscious, the finite self may be said to be participating in the universal consciousness and to have made explicit the idea of God.[46] But let us consider, too, how this unity of self and not-self relates to both the theoretical and practical 'end of knowledge'. Simply put, the end of knowledge—the condition that knowledge seeks—is an experience that duplicates the absolute's experience of itself; this, Caird tells us, is the experience of a perfectly *unified* and *self-transparent* universe.[47] Any 'progress' or 'spiritual growth' that a finite subject might realize is, therefore, proportionate to its incorporating within its own awareness just these conditions. While this is something that can only be imperfectly achieved, if we did not presuppose such an ideal and at some level believe that this ideal is *real,* there would exist no motive force within our theoretical and practical lives.[48]

But why would anyone accept such a claim? Caird believes that it is only by working through the inherent contradictions of various forms of life that we may develop a fully concrete understanding of this intellectual and moral ideal. Still, we are told, the universal consciousness (or idea of God) receives its most adequate *philosophical* proof in Hegel's *Logic.* While Caird does not attempt to take his readers through the detailed argument of that work, he does provide an overview of the process by which the necessary existence of this idea can be established. Indeed, we are told that it is only by thinking through (or otherwise experiencing) the sequence of categories as described by Hegel that we might come to such an understanding. Caird writes:

These different categories [as found in Hegel's *Logic*] are not a collection of isolated ideas, which we find in our minds and of which we apply now one, now another, as we might try one after another of a bunch of keys upon a number of isolated locks; he [Hegel] is seeking to prove that the categories

are not instruments which the mind uses, but elements in a whole, or the stages in a complex process, which in its unity the mind is…. From the first judgment of perception in which it is asserted that a particular object is, to the last scientific and philosophic comprehension of that object in its relations to other things and to the mind that knows it, there is a necessary sequence that cannot be inverted or changed. And our thorough comprehension of the world must depend on the order and completeness with which this process of thought is followed out in reference to it. Now this movement it is for logic, as the science of method, to trace in abstracto from category to category up to the idea of self-consciousness, which is the category of categories, the organic unity of all the other categories…. Thus logic will reach at once a definition of intelligence as the principle of unity in the world, and a complete idea of method, as the process by which that principle of unity is to be traced out and discovered in all the manifold diversities of things. (Caird, 1883, p. 158)

It should be noted here that Caird characterizes the highest category of Hegel's *Logic* (what Hegel calls the 'absolute idea') as 'self-consciousness'. In doing this he is pressing the point that what provides the basis of our theoretical and practical lives is the idea of an intelligence in which subject and object perfectly coincide. We should also understand that while logic concerns itself with the intellectual (or ideal) manifestation of the categories, these categories are not seen by Caird (or Hegel) as 'mere ideas'. They are 'forms of thought', to be sure; however, they are much more than this. Although the account of the categories the *Logic* provides is necessarily abstract, this does not preclude the demonstration of their necessity.[49] When we consider, too, that we have no ground outside of these categories from which we might identify them as merely subjective (and as mere ideas), we are forced to accept them as not just ways in which we must 'think' reality, but as characteristics of reality itself.

Conclusion

Certainly to some readers this doctrine will seem extreme. However, neither Caird nor his fellow idealists saw it as such. If we are to develop an account of knowledge that is neither sceptical nor dogmatic, then

something along these lines, they argued, must obtain. We should understand, too, that Caird sees this doctrine not as a balm for the religious consciousness that has been unsettled by the advance of the natural sciences, but rather as Science itself.[50] By calling it 'Science' Caird is claiming that it is capable of logical demonstration. Whether we begin with the minimal conceivable experience (as did Hegel) or with something fuller and more developed, it matters not. We are told that if we carefully reflect on the conditions of that experience, we shall discover that all roads do, indeed, 'lead to Rome'. That is, the presupposition and condition of any part can only be the whole—the whole that possesses characteristics of what we are ultimately forced to call a 'divine intelligence'. To those who would deny this, Caird presents this challenge: provide a self-consistent explanation of how any of the contents of experience could be known if such a whole—such an absolute—did not exist. Caird believes that this challenge cannot be met. He believes, too, that if we think the matter through with the seriousness it deserves, we shall see that, in the end, it is a view such as this or nothing.

Notes

1. *Collected Works*, 1, p. xv, note 12. The reference comes from a letter to F.H. Bradley. As for Caird's view of F.H. Bradley (circa 1893), see Jones and Muirhead, 1921, pp. 189–97.

2. Caird delivered his first set of Gifford Lectures in the University of St. Andrews in 1890–1 and 1891–2. These lectures were published (in two volumes) in 1893 as *The Evolution of Religion*. (See Caird, 1893, or *Collected Works*, 7 and 8.) The second set was delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1900–1 and 1901–2. These were published in 1904 (in two volumes) as *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers* in 1904. (See Caird, 1904, or *Collected Works,* 9 and 10.) Readers should note that Caird's individual books will be cited in these notes according to the volume of the *Collected Works* in which they appear. By consulting the Bibliography, the cited volume can, in most cases, be matched to the year it was published. (For example, *Collected Works*, 7 would be the same as Caird, 1893, volume I.)

3. Consider Caird's essay 'Metaphysic', where he writes: 'No doubt there is much in Hegel's *Logic* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, and still more in his *Philosophy of Nature*, which there is reason to regard with distrust.' *Collected Works*, 6, p. 532.
4. See *Collected Works*, 12, 'The Influence of Kant', pp. 420–36.
5. Consider *Collected Works*, 7, pp. 64–8; see also *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 154–6.
6. See *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 64-8; also Collected Works, 1, pp. 387–8.
7. See, for example, *Collected Works*, 7, pp. 127–8.
8. Consider *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 183-5; see, too, pp. 157–9.
9. Consult Jones and Muirhead, 1921, pp. 280–1, on what is to their thinking Caird's idiosyncratic use of the term 'self-consciousness'.
10. See, for example, *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 398–401.
11. Caird accuses both Locke and Berkeley of holding inconsistent positions. Regarding Locke, see *Collected* Works, 1, p. 59. As for Berkeley, consult p. 63 of the same volume.
12. 'Subjective idealists', Caird calls them. See *Collected Works*, 12 , 'Idealism and the Theory of Knowledge', pp. 98–9.
13. I refer here principally to the empiricism of David Hume. See Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part 4, Section VI, pp. 251–63 (Selby-Bigge edition). However, it would seem that J.S. Mill was unwilling to embrace fully the Humean doctrine. See J.S. Mill's *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (sixth edition), 1889, p. 248, and his discussion of the 'final inexplicability of the self'.
14. The position discussed in the text has little in common with some later forms of empiricism; for example, the 'radical empiricism' of William James.
15. Also known as 'naive' or 'common sense' realism.
16. 'Given' means, again, 'not originating with the subject' and 'not referring beyond itself'.
17. Caird also uses the term 'latent' in referring to these conditions. For example, see *Collected* Works, 2, p. 166.
18. While systematic, there is still an element of contingency that characterizes the not-self/object world. The object world (like the self) is, for Caird, always *in posse*—it is developing towards some end. While ultimate reality (which would just *be* that end) may be seen as perfectly systematic, the not-self, in being only a partial expression of that reality, does not fully exhibit this characteristic. Put briefly, the material universe—a universe which for Caird is dynamic and always undergoing change—exhibits systematicity only up to a point. Consider *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 449–51.

19. Helpful here is *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 508–14. See, too, *Collected Works*, 7, pp. 67–8, where Caird uses the image of a 'crystal sphere' to describe this whole.

20. See, for example, Caird, 1883 pp. 166–8; also pp. 153–60.

21. The 'contribution' does not, however, come from the finite, empirical self.

22. Most problematic for Caird was Kant's 'lingering dualism'. Caird claims that Kant never fully gave up the idea that the contents of sense were given from without and that their content would remain the same even if categorial synthesis never took place. Caird argues that this makes of the categories mere 'forms of the mind' that do not belong to the objects of experience that we apprehend as result of that synthesis. See, for example, *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 402–4; *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 122–124, pp. 299–302, and pp. 371–77. However, see *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 404–442 for a more generous view.

23. *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 257–8; pp. 268–9; pp. 334–5, pp. 338–49; see also pp. 394–401.

24. Caird's reading of Kant, unlike some, sees space and time (the a priori intuitions) as wholly dependent upon synthesis according to the categories. See *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 257–8; also pp. 268–75; see, too, *Collected Works*, 4, 309–14.

25. If the categories are viewed only as 'forms of the mind' (i.e. as belonging only to the subjective understanding), they lose their logical force. This is because there could exist, on this psychologized view of the categories, creatures who possess different mental forms (categories) and who would thus interpret given sensuous contents along completely different lines. This would mean, though, that the categorial forms identified by Kant are not 'conditions of any possible experience'. *Collected Works*, 4, pp. 278–80.

26. Consider, for example, *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 407–9; see also *Collected Works*, 4, 410–5; and *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 366–9 and pp. 376–81.

27. *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 338–51; see also *Collected Works*, 4, p. 440 *ff*.

28. 'The very conception of a "varied many-coloured self," … i.e. of a self which is not an absolute unity through all the diversity of its experience, would involve a scepticism fatal to all thought or knowledge.' *Collected Works*, 7, pp. 155 *ff*.

29. This act of 'synthesizing' is, according to Caird, just the application of categorial concepts.

30. These empirical contents are not 'given' in the sense previously discussed. Rather they are 'immediate', which is to say that, though they are 'directly present to sense', they may (through an identity of content) still refer beyond themselves to other entities that are not immediately given.

31. Consider *Collected Works*, 4, p. 423. See, too, *Collected Works*, 1, pp. 427–8.

32. See *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 117–9. Consider, too, p. 155, where Caird writes: 'The activity of the intelligence is not pure till it has got rid of the accidental or particular element that clings to the immediate self, for then only can it rise to a new universal life, in which its movement is one with that of the object it contemplates.'

33. *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 181–2; also p. 187.

34. See *Collected Works*, 4, pp. 423–6.

35. *Collected Works*, 7, p. 163; also *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 211–5.

36. See, for example, *Collected Works*, 8, pp. 150–3; also *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 203–4; and *Collected Works*, 4, p. 211. Caird writes: 'The true interpretation of the maxim ['die to live'] is, that the individual must die to an isolated life—i.e., a life for and in himself, a life in which the immediate satisfaction of desire as his desire is an end in itself,—in order that he may live the spiritual life, the universal life which really belongs to him as a spiritual or self-conscious being.' *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 213–4.

37. Readers who are familiar with the literature of British idealism might notice a strong affinity here between the views of Caird and those of T.H. Green. See, for example, Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1883), Book 1, Chapter I, Sections 16–26; and Book I, Chapter II, Sections 56–64. See also Caird's 'Preface' to the fifth edition (1907) of this work.

38. Caird, *Collected Works*, 6, p. 473; also, *Collected Works*, 4, pp. 151–2; and *Collected Works*, 2, 103.

39. Caird writes: 'The scientific mode of knowledge, though necessary as a stage of knowledge, has an imperfection clinging to it, which can be corrected only by going beyond it to a philosophical mode of thought....' *Collected Works*, 2, p. 171; see also p. 159 *ff*; and *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 440–1.

40. The transition from *in ordine ad individuum* to *in ordine ad universum* is, however, a matter of degree. Even if one's conception of morality places the interest of the finite self above others, some degree of universality must obtain. The pursuit of 'self-interest' (construed in individualistic terms) still requires an evaluation of the relative merit of the agent's conflicting desires. The position described in the text has, of course, achieved a very high degree of universality.

41. See *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 211–5, where we read: 'The way to self-realization is through self-renunciation—i.e., through renunciation of that natural and immediate life of the self in which it is opposed to the not-self.'

42. Consider, for example, *Collected Works*, 4, pp. 405–6.
43. 'All ignorance of the object is ignorance of the self; all development of consciousness is also a development of self-consciousness.' *Collected Works*, 4, p. 423; see also *Collected Works*, 2, p. 142.
44. See, for example, *Collected Works*, 4, p. 413, where Caird writes: 'Self-consciousness, in its transparent unity-in-difference, contains all the keys by which we are to unlock the secrets of the world: it is the brief abstract of the whole process of knowledge and so of all knowable reality.'
45. Caird further tells us: 'The mind has no key but itself to apply to nature; in spelling out the meaning of things, it can only move through the circle of its own self-consciousness in relation to them. Its process is, therefore, a continuous process, with a beginning and end determined by the nature of self-consciousness itself.' *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 157–8.
46. It should be emphasized, too, that through this expansion of self-consciousness, neither the individual self nor the not-self becomes 'lost' or 'submerged'. On the contrary;one of the most distinctive aspects of Caird's idealism is his insistence that it is through the progressive grasp of the idea of God by the finite self that the individuality of both self and not-self can be experienced. This, Caird tells us, is because it is only as things are seen as systematically related that their uniqueness and specificity can be grasped. This idea may be expressed differently by saying that the universal consciousness (or idea of God) requires 'difference' if it is to manifest its unity.
47. Caird writes: 'To act with God as our end may seem to be a rare and exceptional thing, but in so far as He is the end which is beyond all other ends, and in so far as the satisfaction of the self that is within us, can only be found in the attainment of this absolute end, we may fairly say that all action is ultimately a seeking for God.' *Collected Works*, 7, p. 168. See also *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 436–7.
48. *Collected Works*, 4, p. 149; pp. 405–6. See, also, *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 430–3; also p. 533. Calling this ideal 'real'is not, of course, meant to say that it 'exists' in the ordinary sense. The term 'real' is used here to mean something like 'is ultimately real'.
49. The demonstration of their necessity proceeds by transcendental argument throughout. Hegel begins by asking that we acknowledge that something 'is' or 'exists'. Grant this, and he believes he can show us that there is in ineluctable sequence of ideas that follows, and that these culminate with the 'absolute idea'.
50. *Collected Works*, 2, pp. 141–3; also pp. 183–5. See, too, *Collected Works*, 6, pp. 439–42.

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6

Dialectics of Self-Realization and the Common Good in the Philosophy of T.H. Green

Janusz Grygień

Introduction

Rousseau famously formulated, in the *Considerations on the Government of Poland,* the most important problem of political philosophy as that of making individuals agree or even identify their freedom with submission to some political authority, comparing it with "squaring of the circle in geometry."[1] Rousseau's original statement included two theses: (1) that the most important problem of political philosophy consists in reconciling the individual with the community, and (2) that this problem seems impossible to solve both in political theory and practice.

The history of modern and contemporary political philosophy. which has been the key point of difference between various political doctrines since Rousseau's time. Its most evident contemporary expressions are the debates between liberals and communitarians, corporatists, and republicans, as well as ongoing quarrels between

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liberals and leftists on the scope of state interventionism in the economy.[2] Most recently this problem has revealed itself in the discussion between Democrats and Republicans on the health care system in the United States.

Individualism Versus Holism

Typically, the choice between different ideas regarding the reconciliation of the individual with the community is predetermined by the choice of a methodological approach.[3] Two major options in this respect are individualism (atomism) and collectivism (holism). The first one ascribes ontological existence only to particular people and their interests. Society as a substantial and autonomous being is non-existent, a myth, merely a way to depict a group of individuals. The second approach gives both ontological and normative primacy to the community, which is an ontologically independent being (of which individuals are either mere phenomena, or constitutive elements) and the sole judge of right and wrong in ethical matters. One may list among the exponents of the first approach Max Weber, Karl Popper, Robert Nozick, and Isaiah Berlin, while among advocates of collectivism we may count such ideologically distant thinkers as Wilhelm von Humboldt and Karl Marx.

Although seemingly contradictory, these two approaches—the individualist and the collectivist—are sometimes claimed to be reconcilable. This is the case with, among others, liberal communitarians such as Will Kymlicka,[4] liberal republicans such as Philip Pettit (defining himself as a holistic individualist[5]), and several other thinkers and theoreticians (for example, J. Elster,[6] J. Crittenden,[7] L. Udehn,[8] T.R. Machan,[9] and J. Kloppenberg[10]). They all are convinced that the individual is dependent upon the community as much as the community is dependent upon its members. Hence they value spontaneity and diversity of life-plans as much as communal identity and coherency.

The Problem of the Common Good

Such a variety of approaches with respect to the problem of the relation of the individual to the community translates into a multiplicity of attitudes to the problem of the common good. Individualist perception of the issue comes down to the negation of the very existence of the common good. Since there are only individuals (and not abstract "communities"),[11] there are only individual goods, individual interests, individual wills, and individual preferences, which occasionally may coincide but which have no necessary points of convergence.[12]

Conversely, a holistic approach tends to view the common good as the only real expression of social and individual interests. This thesis has been justified in many ways, of which the most popular is the Aristotelian *zoon politikon* argument.[13] Since individuals are essentially social animals, their visions of the good cannot differ completely from socially acceptable perceptions of desirable goods, and they definitely cannot be anti-social. Thus, whatever serves the community must also serve individuals, even if they are reluctant to admit it. If individuals strive for goods potentially undermining of the common good, then they are obviously misunderstanding their own genuine interests.

Both these approaches—the individualist and the holistic—neglect the very possibility of a genuine collision between individual and communal interest. For both theories, the appearance of such a collision indicates only some misunderstanding of the individual-community relation either on the individual's side or on the government's/society's side. Thus neither of these approaches manages to explain the possibility of reconciling one's duties to one's self (as a private person) and to one's community (as its member).

"Green's Paradox"

The attempt to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory approaches has been undertaken by many different authors representing various politico-philosophical traditions. One of the most unique, and at the

same time undeservedly forgotten, approaches to the problem was that developed by British idealists, with Thomas Hill Green as their main representative in political philosophy. Green was undoubtedly one of the leading socialist liberal writers of the second half of the nineteenth century, considering both the range and the longevity of his influence exercised both on political practitioners and theoreticians. His ability to combine individualist with communal perspectives and political radicalism with state interventionism made his thought inspiring to a variety of thinkers, such as Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse, John Atkinson Hobson, and John Dewey. The same approach is typical of his account of the relations between common and individual good. Green holds a conciliatory stand in relation to individualist and holist perspectives.[14] He explicitly states that moral good is of a dual character—comprising both individual self-realization and common good—calling "the distinction commonly supposed to exist between considerate Benevolence and reasonable Self-Love, as co-ordinate principles on which moral approbation is founded, a fiction of philosophers."[15]

Green's account of both categories in question—self-realization and the common good—may be judged unsatisfactory due to his lack of precision in defining them. This is especially true of the concept of self-realization. Although explicitly equated with development of character (PE §184, 195), "the realization of the moral capability" (PE §172; cf. ibid. §173, 239), and "the perfecting of man" (PE §283, 286, 288), its definition is still most imprecise (cf. PE §172, 193, 353). The end of such development, the ideal self, is said to be impossible to describe since it coincides with the character of an unknowable "eternal consciousness."[16]

Green's paradoxical combination of self-realization with the common good, which may be called "Green's paradox," has been addressed by many authors before now. Some, like Henry Sidgwick, find any such attempt to reconcile altruism and egoism impossible since it is easy to point to obvious examples of inevitable collisions of duties to oneself and to society (e.g., compulsory enlistment into the armed forces or paying taxes).[17] In such cases one can utilize one's time and resources either to self-realize or to support one's country, but not both at the same time. Similarly, Alan Milne points out that despite being assessed as morally

bad, some types of behavior may nonetheless be of benefit to individuals.[18] The same argument is upheld by Harold Prichard.[19]

Others argue that this paradox may be insoluble due to the vagueness of Green's moral conceptions. Edgar Frederick Carritt and Hywel Lewis note that Green's writings are signified by *circulus vitiosus in definiendo* (something admitted by Green himself),[20] since being morally good is defined by him as aiming at moral goodness, while goodness itself is given no material content.[21] Maria Dimova-Cookson in the same context writes about the problem of a "phenomenological circle" in Green's conception of moral good, meaning that the moral good is defined by reference to a good will, while a good will is equated with a disposition to act in a disinterested (i.e., morally good) way.[22] Writing in individualist terms, Prichard considers Green's conception of moral good as common good to be an example of *contradictio in adiecto*, since the individual good is dependent on the feeling of pleasure, which cannot be shared with others.[23]

Possible Solutions to "Green's Paradox"

Both the complexities of the matter itself and the often vague character of Green's statements regarding the issue make it possible to distinguish at least six potential solutions to "Green's paradox."[24] Together with their underlying arguments they may be named the salvation argument, the communitarian argument, the reconciliation argument, the non-competitiveness argument, the natural sentiments argument, and the institutional argument.

(1) **The salvation argument** states that individuals try to immortalize themselves through a commitment to the wellbeing of their community. The argument is based on two assumptions: (a) that individuals are aware of their finitude, and (b) that they inevitably search for possible ways of transgressing this finitude. They display a primeval urge to immortalization, which finds its expression in various life-plans, from begetting descendants (genetic immortalization), through raising a family and influencing others (immortalization through

promotion of a specific set of seemingly universal values), to artistic activity (creation of ageless, unforgettable works of art) and scientific activity (developing ideas or "puzzle-solving"). With respect to each of these different activities, community is essential to the individuals' "salvation" since (a) recognition of the eternal worth of their deeds is possible only within a society, and (b) society enables the survival of their descendants. Thus self-realization is inseparable from the community's existence, and an individual's good is an essential part of the common good of society.

Green himself clearly supports this argument, inter alia, by stating: "Every one thus immortalizes himself, who looks forward to the realization of ideal objects, with which on the one hand he identifies himself, and which on the other hand he cannot think of as bounded by his earthly life,—objects in which he thinks of himself as still living when dead" (PE §229). Green also addresses the natural need to protect one's family, saying:

That determination of an animal organism by a self-conscious principle, which makes a man and is presupposed by the interest in permanent good, carries with it a certain appropriation by the man to himself of the beings with whom he is connected by natural ties, so that they become to him as himself and in providing for himself he provides for them. Projecting himself into the future as a permanent subject of possible wellbeing or ill-being—and he must so project himself in seeking for a permanent good—he associates his kindred with himself. It is this association that neutralizes the effect which the anticipation of death must otherwise have on the demand for permanent good (PE §231).

This salvation argument has been discussed most recently by Maria Dimova-Cookson (who also named the argument)[25] and Colin Tyler (who criticizes its possible nationalist implications).[26]

(2) **The communitarian argument** rests on a belief that individuals to some extent spontaneously identify themselves with a community because that community necessarily embodies the values they themselves hold. The argument is based on an assumption of the social origin of human personality (the so-called Aristotelian *zoon poli-*

tikon thesis). It implies that most of the content of human consciousness, and definitely all of our moral and political ideas and ideals—that is, goals, the attainment of which is identified with self-realization—are the products of society and are aimed at the sustainment and perfection of society (PE §190, 202, 321). Our ideals originate from social interrelations and refer to such interrelations (Green, Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, sect. 247 (further referred to as LPPO)). Being morally good always means being good to others. Justice and freedom also depict particular visions of relations between individuals.

Furthermore, since all societies need their communal ethos to include pro-social ideals and values, even in the most libertarian and individualist communities (in terms of economic and social policy), some form of patriotic ideal will always be cherished (PE §205). In this way, at least some part of an individual's projects of self-realization will always include an element of aiming at the general wellbeing.[27]

(3) **The reconciliation argument** is of a strictly utilitarian character and is an individualist and materialist variation on the communitarian argument. It rests on an assumption that individual life and wellbeing depend on the existence of society. Communities are essential to the realization of most human wants, from the merely physical to the moral. This means, firstly, that individuals need to cooperate with others in order to gain the means of sustaining their lives, and, secondly, that they need recognition by others in order to self-realize. Helping others is a way of sustaining social existence, which in turn means sustaining our own existence. Thus the foundation of society rests not with altruistic attitudes but rather with enlightened egoism. It is of benefit to ourselves to care for others and for the common good.

Green seems to invoke this argument, inter alia, when he speaks of "overruling," for good, the "actions of men whom in themselves we reckon bad" (LPPO, sect. 129, 131; PE §295). The validity of this argument has been advocated by Milne[28] and David O. Brink.[29]

(4) **The non-competitiveness argument** rests on a quasi-evolutionary belief in peoples' moral evolution. It starts with a statement that individuals' desire to acquire material goods inevitably leads to a situ-

ation of scarcity. For this reason, any identification of personal fulfill-
ment with the possession of such goods must result in

(a) struggle for limited resources,
(b) questioning the very possibility of the "common good," and
(c) instability in our sense of personal fulfillment (gained
    through the possession of some desired goods but continu-
    ally eroded by the creation of others).

In consequence (the argument maintains), character-evolution
must lead to the replacement of such a "materialistic" attitude with
an "ethical" one. It must lead to the perceiving of oneself as a part of
a social whole and the seeking of self-realization in ethical conduct. It
is only in the realization of a moral ideal that an individual can find
his or her permanent fulfillment. Since material goods give only tem-
porary pleasure, they cannot be continually perceived as sources of
permanent self-realization (PE §223, 234). Thus individuals who pri-
marily strive at obtaining material objects gradually develop a belief
in the essential worthlessness of the objects. Moral maturity takes
them from a perspective of "having" to one of "being." As the process
of character-development progresses, individuals start to identify
their own personal fulfillment with creating a broader ethical envi-
ronment. They begin to aim at a common good—a state of citizens'
mutual recognition and material self-sufficiency—an essential com-
ponent of moral development (PE §229; LPPO sect. 18, 221, 224).[30]
    Ethical self-realization enables the reconciliation of individual
and common good since ethical goods are of a non-competitive char-
acter (PE §245).[31] It is possible for everyone to act morally at the
same time (while it is impossible both in practice and even in prin-
ciple for everyone to have exceptionally valuable material goods).
Ethical development is the only possible way of attaining overall
social self-realization.
    Green seems to favor this argument when he states that "the only
good in the pursuit of which there can be no competition of interests,
the only good which is really common to all who may pursue it, is

that which consists in the universal will to be good" (PE §244; cf. ibid. §281, 283). He further says: "Until the object generally sought as good comes to be a state of mind or character of which the attainment, or approach to attainment, by each is itself a contribution to its attainment by everyone else, social life must continue to be one of war (PE §245)."

In the case of this argument, the relation of the common good to self-realization is one-sidedly conditional—there is no common good without individuals' moral development. Individual struggles for self-betterment are mutually supportive.[32] To put it in Green's own words, "we cannot believe that the capacities of men … can be merely fulfilled in a state of things in which any rational man should be treated merely as a means, and not as in himself an end" (PE §189). For this reason David O. Brink calls self-realization a categorical imperative, forcing itself upon individual selves due to their rationality (cf. PE §196–8).[33]

(5) **The natural sentiments argument** is a simplified variation of the communitarian argument. It states that individuals have a natural drive to preserve not only their own interests but also the interests of those people closest to them, including family and relevant others (PE §229–32). They cannot imagine their own wellbeing without a simultaneous betterment in the situation of those they care for.[34] According to Green: "The man cannot contemplate himself as in a better state, or on the way to the best, without contemplating others, not merely as a means to that better state, but as sharing it with him" (PE §199; cf. ibid. §201).

In a different version of this argument, Green includes not only family and friends but also other community members or even the whole of humanity (PE §286; LPPO, sect. 121, 238). Green's underlying assumption here is that the evolution of moral ideas proceeds by the extending of their originally subjective scope (PE §206). The essential part of this process is a sympathetic recognition of the claims of others as convergent with our own (PE §270). Thus natural sentiments at first referring only to a limited range of people gradually come to embrace other people previously unrecognized as "*isoi kai homoioi* [equals]" (LPPO, sect. 139). In this formulation the argument has been found partly convincing by Tyler.[35]

(6) **The institutional argument** is of a strictly procedural character. It focuses exclusively on the structural determinants of gaining self-realization. It implies belief that self-realization is possible only when appropriate institutional arrangements are made (LPPO, sect. 7, 106).[36] On this understanding the common good is identified with a particular system of political and economic institutions that enable self-realization, that is, democratic government with a limited policy of state intervention.

Maria Dimova-Cookson names this ideal "the society of equals," and Avital Simhony refers in this context to the "two principles of justice"—guiding rules in the ideal society, where everyone would have to recognize the equality of others and refrain from exploiting them (cf. PE §205).[37] This interpretation of Green's concept of the common good clearly evokes John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, where the author defines the common good as "certain general conditions that are in an appropriate sense equally to everyone's advantage."[38]

One or Six Ethical Goods?

The question arises whether these six possible ways of reconciling individual and common good to be found in Green's writings can be reconciled with one another. With respect to this question, they may be divided into two groups:

(1) **Institutional determinants of the common good**—implying that realization of moral good requires the support of particular types of political institutions (the institutional argument) or of any kind of institutions providing a socio-political system stable enough for individuals to self-realize (the reconciliation argument); or

(2) **The origin of the common good**—referring to reasons for the identification of the individual with the common good (the natural sentiments argument, the communitarian argument, the non-competitiveness argument, and the salvation argument).

Arguments of the first type may be reconciled with arguments of the second type, but within each type the different arguments contradict each

other. Some of the arguments seem also to be untenable with respect to a number of Green's other philosophical concepts and claims.

For example, within the group of arguments referring to institutional determinants of the common good, the reconciliation argument, founded on a belief in the stabilizing role of enlightened egoism, may be judged contrary to Green's critiques of utilitarianism and materialism (PE §246; LPPO, sect. 23). Green explicitly states that moral action is not an effect (or even a side-effect) of the calculation of personal gains and losses,[39] but rather the outcome of striving for moral goodness for its own sake.[40] Utilitarian obsession with calculations of pleasure and pain resulting from every action, typical in Hume and other adherents of "popular philosophy" (Locke, Rousseau, Butler, Priestley),[41] contradicts what Green identifies as the fundaments of moral behavior, namely moral obligation and self-restraint (cf. PE §232). "The prime impediment, alike to maintenance of the narrower and to the formation of wider fellowships, is selfishness: … a preference of private pleasure to common good" (PE §216).

This argument may also be criticized because of the undefined character of personal good. Common good understood as a stable social and political system does not necessarily favor the development of human capabilities. Instead, it may be found that some forms of economic and social governance (e.g., those identified with conservative liberalism), although preserving the existence of society, in fact deprive masses of the chance for self-realization (PE §202).

This criticism does not apply to the institutional argument. The danger of political and social systems undermining ethical development is eliminated here by the predetermination that only socialist liberal forms of democratic governance may systematically contribute to citizens' development (LPPO sect. 25–6). This argument's underlying belief in the superior value of ethical self-realization coincides with Green's teleological account of personal development (always aiming at moral perfection).

Within the group of arguments referring to the origin of the common good, the natural sentiments argument is the most questionable. Although it provides an answer to the question of why people identify their personal good with the good of those people closest to them, it does

not provide sufficient explanation of why this care for close-ones should then extend to other community members (or even more puzzlingly, to all other human beings) (PE §286). Why must moral ideas evolve in this way, by gradual extension of their originally subjective scope? Thus the common good that this argument may be said to legitimately support is of a very limited range (PE §216–7) and hence of limited use in the task of reconciling the individual with the community. It is difficult to apprehend on its grounds why, once placed outside the circle of his own special interest, the individual would not transform into an egoist striving to realize his own particular interest and displaying (to use Rousseau's remark) a will that is particular in relation to the state's *volonté générale* but general in relation to the members of such group (LPPO sect. 121).[42]

The salvation argument may be said to include the natural sentiments argument (care for those to whom one is closest is correlative to the drive for self-immortalization), and by extending its subject it escapes the deficiencies of the latter. It coherently explains why people identify their good with the good of community members rather than just the good of their relatives and friends. The argument, however, is not self-contained. If we accept that to strive for immortalization one has to firstly realize that material goods cannot provide permanent fulfillment but only temporary satisfaction, then the salvation argument may be said to constitute a part of the non-competitiveness argument. Like the latter it refers only to people who develop their moral sentiments enough to understand that permanent fulfillment may be found only in striving for a common good. This affinity makes both arguments susceptible to similar criticism; their elitist character in determining their limited subject and (or) their underlying belief in the inevitability of moral progress prove to be their weakest points. For either we accept as fact that there is and has been universal moral progress among people—and this thesis seems much too optimistic—or we assume that only a minority is capable of such moral development, in which case the argument's usefulness to political theory and practice is significantly restricted.

With regard to the non-competitiveness argument, the communitarian argument is both complementary (because it does not contradict it) and a rival (because it provides an alternative explanation of the origin of the sense of commonality). It explains both why we find so much in

common with other community members and why we are inclined to aim at common wellbeing.

Thus there are six possible explanations of the interconnectedness of individual and common good in Green's thought, but only three of them seem legitimate, self-contained, and complementary: the institutional argument, the non-competitiveness argument, and the communitarian argument. Together they constitute the Greenian conception of the relations binding the individual and the common good. According to this conception, *under the socialist liberal democratic regime, depending on the character of the community and of the particular individuals, the sense of commonality and the identification of personal with the common good may be an effect of conformity to a communal ethos, or individuals' moral development.*

Conclusion

Avital Simhony rightly claims that Green brings the concepts of the community and the common good to the very heart of liberalism.[43] But is his contribution only of historical importance? Does his account of the common good have any use today? It seems that in the context of the ongoing debate between adherents of individualist and holist approaches in political philosophy, Green's thought offers an original and inspiring trial to reconcile individual interest with common good.

Undoubtedly, Green's account of the common good bears distinguishing features both of liberal individualism and holism. The individualism of his conception consists in (1) an appreciation of the differences among individuals, who may have various motivations for caring for others; (2) an acknowledgment of a non-totalitarian character of community as a precondition to self-realization; and (3) a recognition of personal development as inseparable from the interest of the community.[44] The holistic component of Green's account of the common good is displayed most of all in (1) his acknowledgment of the social origin of all ideas and ideals, but also (2) in his recognition of the radical interdependence between self-realization and the wellbeing of the community. Moreover, Green's conception of the relations binding individual and

common good manages to combine ethical universalism with political contextualism. Its underlying assumption of ethical development as a universal goal of self-realization perfectly harmonizes with recognition of in the multitude of ways of developing a moral attitude. It takes recognition of both individual dispositions and external circumstances (PE §105–9, 113, 191).

The conception of the links binding common good and personal good which is characteristic of Green's philosophy is exceptional not only because of its reconciliatory potential, but also for its multifaceted character. It comprises institutional (the institutional argument), cultural (the communitarian argument), personal and interpersonal (the non-competitiveness argument) aspects. Hence it goes far beyond contemporary reductionist approaches to the issue.

Notes

1. Rousseau, *Considerations*, p. 426.
2. See for example Frank, *The Darwin Economy*; Wilkinson, Pickett, *The Spirit Level*.
3. Lukes, *Individualism*, pp. 72–73, 101; James, *The Content of Social Explanation*, pp. 54–56; Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism*, p. 16; Machan, *Liberalism and Atomistic Individualism*, pp. 231–232; Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, p. 6; Dunn, *Western Political Theory*, pp. 32–33; Johnson, *The Idea of a Liberal Theory*, p. 191.
4. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, p. 76.
5. Pettit, *The Common Mind*.
6. Elster, *Political Psychology*, p. 7.
7. Crittenden, *Beyond Individualism*, p. 5.
8. Udehn, *Methodological Individualism*, pp. 338–339.
9. Machan, *Classical Individualism*, pp. XI–XV, 3–14.
10. Kloppenberg, *The Virtues of Liberalism*, p. 125.
11. Downing, Thigpen, *Virtue and the Common Good*, pp. 1050–1051.
12. See Prichard, *Moral Obligation*, p. 70. The same reasoning is often applied to the criticism of Rousseau's concept of "general will." Some scholars point to the fact that only individuals possess their will, and thus the so-called

"general will" is impossible since it is self-contradictory (see Riley, *General Will Before Rousseau*, p. 87; cf. Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, pp. 165, 193).

13. See Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, pp. 50–51.
14. Harris, Morrow, *Introduction*, p. 6; Simhony, *Rights that Bind*, p. 237; Simhony, *T.H. Green's Complex Common Good*, p. 70.
15. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, §232 (further referred to as PE).
16. Problems with Green's imprecise definition of "eternal consciousness" have been approached by William Mander (Mander, *In Defence of the Eternal Consciousness*, pp. 187–206).
17. Simhony, *Green and Sidgwick*, pp. 36–37; cf. Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory*, pp. 123–132; Hudson, *A Century of Moral Philosophy*, pp. 47–50.
18. Milne, "The Common Good and Rights in T.H.Green's Ethical and Political Theory", pp. 68–69.
19. Prichard, *Moral Obligation*, pp. 72–73.
20. PE §194.
21. Carritt, *Morals and Politics*, p. 132.
22. Dimova-Cookson, *T.H. Green's Moral and Political Philosophy*, p. 68.
23. Prichard, *Moral Obligation*, pp. 70–71. A comprehensive list of past charges leveled against Green's moral concepts as well as a convincing defense of Green's stand is provided by Peter Nicholson (Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, study II).
24. Other classifications and assessments of such solutions have been developed among others' by I.M. Greengarten (Greengarten, *Thomas Hill Green and the Development of Liberal-Democratic Thought*), who has been criticized in this respect by Colin Tyler (Tyler, *Civil Society, Capitalism and the State*, pp. 47–49).
25. Dimova-Cookson, *T.H. Green's Moral and Political Philosophy*, pp. 87–92.
26. Tyler, *Civil Society*, pp. 47–48.
27. LPPO sect.98.
28. Milne, *The Common Good and Rights*, pp. 68–69.
29. Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, pp. 27–28.
30. Cf. Green, *Lecture on 'Liberal Legislation'*, pp. 375–376.
31. Green, *On Different Senses of 'Freedom'*, §24.
32. See Thomas, *The Moral Philosophy of T.H. Green*, p. 254.
33. Brink, *Self-Realization and the Common Good*, pp. 22–23, 25.
34. See Simhony, *A Liberal Commitment to the Common Good*, p. 42.
35. Tyler, *Civil Society*, pp. 47–48.

36. Since "the institutions by which man is moralized … express a conception of a common good … through them that conception takes form and reality" (LPPO, sect. 116).
37. Dimova-Cookson, *T.H. Green's Moral and Political Philosophy*, pp. 100–102.
38. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 217.
39. Cf. Lamont, *Introduction to Green's Moral Philosophy*, pp. 162–175; Greengarten, *Thomas Hill Green*, pp. 110–123.
40. PE §124, 169, 171, 195, 202, 242–3; LPPO, sect. 2, 104.
41. Green, *Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life*, p. 97. Cf. Irwin, *Green's Criticism of the British Moralists*, pp. 106–135; Walsh, *Green's Criticism of Hume*, pp. 22–26.
42. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, p. 54.
43. Simhony, *Rights that Bind*, p. 237.
44. This claim contradicts the opinion of William Dawson Lamont, who finds Green's version of the common good highly oppressive because of its implication that others have to be "interested in the same thing as I am" (Lamont, *Introduction to Green's Moral Philosophy*, p. 218) and its definition of good as "some unitary object for which all the members of society are co-operating" (ibid., p. 216).

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7

Three Dimensions of T.H. Green's Idea of the Self

Rex Martin

Introduction

Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882) was White's (sometimes Whyte's) Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Oxford, holding that chair from 1878 until his sudden death, at the age of 45. The publication of his major book-length treatises was posthumous.[1] Nonetheless, Green's reputation and his influence were considerable at the time of his death and continued so for years afterwards. But they had dissipated markedly by the end of the First World War.

A revival of interest in Green occurred in the 1970s and 80s. In that period, the dominant concern was with Green's political philosophy (especially his account of rights), but more recently interest has shifted to include his ethical theory and general philosophy.

In the present chapter I am interested in Green's notion of the self. It is a rather extended notion; by this I mean that persons and citizens, in

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his view, have affiliations with others that take any given person beyond their own individual self or family and the interests of that self or family. There are three dimensions to this notion of an extended self—the metaphysical, the ethical, and the civic—that I want to take account of in this chapter.

Metaphysics: The Eternal Consciousness

In Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* he devotes a bit more than 100 pages to what is sometimes called the 'Spiritual Principle in Nature' and sometimes the 'eternal consciousness.'[2] The role of this consciousness in knowledge of nature (including natural science) is certainly one of Green's main topics, but its exact role in ethics is a more disputed one. I will begin by examining some recent work on this topic as background to a more specific normative or evaluative account of the person and citizen.

The leading ideas in Green's doctrine of eternal consciousness, as found in his book *Prolegomena to Ethics*, are Kantian. In the simplest terms, Green's claim is that every perception involves a judgment or discrimination, a picking out of some sort, wherein something that is perceived is brought into relation with something else. Green does not deny that there is an 'objective or external order' to nature.[3] Rather, Green's point is that in experience as just described, mind (or thought) is a contributory source of these relations. The discriminations, the relations conceived, could not exist without it. Experience itself is more ordered, more connected and unified (through the identification of regularities and the formulation of general laws of nature), than it would otherwise be without reflective, discursive (and, I would add, self-conscious) thought. We must, Green says, 'recognise as the condition of this reality the action of some unifying principle analogous to that of our understanding' (see *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, sections 28–29 and, for the matter quoted, p. 34).

Thus, our understanding of nature, and of nature as a possible object of apprehension and comprehension, presupposes a consciousness that is itself something other than nature. Our experience (if we include memory) is not limited to moments of perception, to the sheer here and now. Indeed, if we credit the experience of others (as revealed in history),

nature as experienced is very complex, very nuanced, and has an indefinitely large extension in both time and space. The consciousness that is presupposed by nature—by nature as so experienced and so conceived—tracks this vastness and depth; hence Green's description of it as eternal or timeless.[4]

Green is unwilling, however, to accept Kant's idea of nature as presupposing unexperienceable 'things in themselves.' Here he joins with Hegel's critique of Kant. But Green is uncomfortable with Hegel's system and skeptical about Hegel's bold claim that rational thought by individual persons is able to penetrate to and comprehend the way things finally are. Green is content to rely instead on science to give us what objective knowledge of the natural world we can have, subject to the proviso that such knowledge will always be somewhat infirm, incomplete, and not fully conclusive (Nicholson, 2006, pp. 146, 150).

Two questions, among many others, are usually asked about Green's doctrine of eternal consciousness. What is it doing in a book identified as a 'prolegomena to *ethics,*' and how do individual human minds like yours and mine relate to this consciousness? Several treatments stand out in my view as subtle and provocative analyses of the motif of eternal consciousness on these very issues.[5]

Andrew Vincent sees Green in his writings as laying out two quite distinct views of ethics; one offers injunctions (rules or norms) for conduct and the other sees such injunctions as largely superfluous. This is because moral ideas are 'deeply at work in human practice long before they are understood philosophically' or even before they are reduced to explicit norms; it is this moral discipline, existing in practice and prior to explicit norms, that really does the work in ethical life (Vincent, 2006, p. 80 for the quote; also pp. 81–82). Vincent thinks these two views are in a certain tension with each another, a tension felt by Green, and Vincent offers us an admittedly speculative solution as to how Green could have resolved the matter.

One possible solution would be to try to link up the view of moral practice as something deep and inarticulate with what Green says about eternal consciousness—concluding that just as 'mind makes nature,' so that same mind makes human moral consciousness, over time. But this presupposes a relationship of eternal consciousness with the minds and conduct of individual human persons, a relationship that is problematic and perhaps

indecipherable. An alternative solution, and one Vincent seems drawn to, is that there is no moral counterpart in Green's theory to Green's epistemological version of eternal consciousness. There's just conventional human moral practice, amplified and clarified (but not superseded) by philosophical reflection and articulation (Vincent, 2006, pp. 76–77, sections 9–10).

There is a middle ground available. Green's invocation of the eternal consciousness could be taken to suggest that a unifying moral ideal is manifested or reflected (to a degree) in human moral and social practice as it develops over time (*Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, sections 173, 187).

Peter Nicholson argues that Green is concerned with one aspect of human moral practice in particular; Green wants to bolster, or at least assure room for, an ethics of conviction. The function of the eternal consciousness in Green's philosophy, Nicholson says, is to put a limit both on materialist views of nature and on naturalist views of ethics (like utilitarianism). Thus, the eternal consciousness makes room for conventional human moral practice and for convictions that are appropriate to that practice (Nicholson, 2006, pp. 153–154). Here Nicholson's and Vincent's views come together.[6]

Ethics: Self-Realization

Green is well known for his ethical doctrine of self-realization: this is the process by which one tries to gain a clear sense of one's overall good, as constituted by the development of desirable and choice-worthy objects, capacities, and traits of character. The ideal goal is to achieve an ensemble that will yield, over the whole course of one's life, an 'abiding satisfaction of an abiding self' (*Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, section 234). This is the sought-for good. Such a good involves more than simply achieving a desirable state; it also involves achieving an authentic and worthwhile character and set of projects suitable to the given individual in question. Self-realization brings into play capacities that, without effort and application, would remain latent and undeveloped. (See *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, section 235, at p. 236; also section 202.)

Since association with other people is a main feature of almost every human life, Green argues that the overall good of any person will

include not only the good of that person's future self but also the good of others.[7] Indeed, Green thinks that individual human lives are essentially social, so satisfaction of the well-being of others is included within one's own sense of satisfaction. More precisely, that satisfaction will include positive duties to attend to the well-being of others. This view is quite like Aristotle's eudaimonistic account of human well-being; Green's view differs in that the common good he contemplates is universal, including, in prospect, the good of all persons (Brink, 2006, p. 34).

Is such a universal good even possible? Green argues for the most part that it is, if we require only a substantial harmony between one person's good and that of others. Thus, he is not committed to the extreme view that there will be no conflict or competition between these goods at all, or to the view that all people have the *exact* same good in common (Brink, 2006, sections 9 and 10, and see pp. 44–46). More importantly, Green claims that his theory does not require a sharp ethical dichotomy between self-realization and other-regarding concerns (as exhibited, for example, in benevolence), and it does not require, once basic needs are met, an absolutely strict impartiality between persons, with no preference shown at all for those persons who are near and dear.[8]

Green contrasts his ethical aim, as captured in his view of self-realization, with the ethical aim proposed by utilitarianism. The evaluative aim of utilitarian theory is that we should seek the largest sum of pleasure *overall*. This aim is incompatible, Green argues, with the emphasis Bentham and Mill placed, as their initial point of assessment, on the pleasurable experience of *individual* persons. In any event, Green adds, the *sum* of pleasures overall is not itself a pleasure (for there is nobody to enjoy *that*), and hence that sum is not eligible to serve as the ground of an avowedly hedonistic theory (see Brink, 2006, pp. 21–22).[9]

Rights and the Common Good

Green's theory of rights is set out in his posthumously published *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*.[10] In these lectures Green is particularly concerned with general or universal rights, which are subdivided by him into two main sorts: natural rights and civil rights. Each is in

some sense a universal right. Clearly, natural rights, as normally understood, are rights of all persons. Active civil rights, as Green uses the term, are political rights universal within a given society (see *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 22–25). They are ways of acting, or ways of being treated, that are specifically affirmed in law or practice for each and all the citizens there (or, in the limiting case, for all individual persons there) and are actively promoted.

Green was one of the important nineteenth-century philosophers (Jeremy Bentham was another) who argued that social recognition is a necessary feature of any proper right (be it a natural right, a political right, or a customary one).[11] But this emphasis on social recognition did not meet with much favor in the century that came after Green (or in the present one). The independence thesis (the thesis that the possession and justification of moral rights is entirely independent of social recognition) has tended to be the dominant view. But that thesis has come under significant criticism beginning in the 1980s.[12]

Besides social recognition, Green's own theory of rights emphasizes the idea of a common good. I want to concentrate initially on Green's idea of social recognition.[13] I want to suggest (as the argument progresses) that Green's account of common good can perhaps be best understood as an outgrowth of sorts of his idea of social recognition.

Social Recognition

Green does not argue directly for social recognition, and its essential status, and then use that argument against the classical natural rights theorists, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, and Rousseau. Rather, Green's notion of social recognition is developed dialectically out of his paying careful attention to the particular theory of natural rights these thinkers had developed. They understood such rights as rights of individuals, and they regarded such rights as holding good in a state of nature—a state which, almost by definition, lacked devices for registering social agreement or recognition—and thus as holding good even in the absence of such recognition. For them, this was part of the force of calling such rights *natural* rights. But matters are not quite so simple as this, Green suggests.

As Green notes, both Hobbes and Spinoza emphasized, once it became apparent to them that the state of nature involved perpetual and often

lethal conflict, that the solution to this conflict required all persons to act in concert to end the state-of-nature situation. For Spinoza the solution involved their combining; for Hobbes it required each one's 'standing aside' from or 'laying down' the exercise of their natural rights, thereby waiving the exercise of that right, permanently but conditionally, and prospectively deferring to the will of a sovereign over them all.[14] For each theorist, this acting in concert occurred in the state of nature, but the direct result of so acting was the achievement of the civil condition, the condition of living in civil society under a government.

The gravamen of Green's objection to both Hobbes and Spinoza becomes, then, to show that this coming together, this concerted act (as a crucial point of consensus or common action within the so-called state of nature), creates a condition which is integral to the existence of rights and without which rights would be impossible. Consider, for example, what for these two theorists was explicitly a *presocial* state of nature, when persons were detached or separated from one another except for occasions of conflict.[15]

In viewing the state of nature as primarily a situation of endless and chaotic strife, Hobbes and Spinoza straightforwardly identified natural rights with natural powers. On this point and against these two theorists, Green argues that rights (even on *their* own view, when we take account of the solution by Hobbes and Spinoza to the very problem they posed) are not mere *natural* powers but are instead things that have normative force (in particular, as involving obligations and other kinds of normative direction of second parties).[16]

Locke in effect took up where Hobbes and Spinoza left off. For Locke was one of the first philosophers (along with Grotius and Pufendorf) to make the point that all rights necessarily involve the normative direction of the conduct of second parties (that is, of persons other than a given rightholder), in the state of nature as well as in civil society. Typically rights do this by imposing duties (or obligations) on second parties.[17]

Once this point about rights is granted, the important question (in Green's view) is to ask what is involved, in being obligated or in being normatively directed, on the side of second parties. According to Green, a person's being normatively directed—being under obligation—necessarily involves that person's being conscious of such direction.[18] And the

appropriate consciousness is, of course, one of affirmation, or commitment to that direction. If the appropriate consciousness does not exist in the case of given individuals, then there at least has to be a real possibility for persons, including those on whom the obligations fall, to acknowledge such obligations by the lights they have (by reference to standards of morality actively ingredient among them). A person's action cannot be determined by duty (or obligation) if it is not possible for that person even to be aware of the obligation—or not possible for them to see and take on board that the obligation is normatively binding for them and others. These things are no less true in the state of nature than in any other society.[19]

Rights are normative, or as Green calls them, 'ideal,' entities.[20] A right is properly conceived, on the one side, as a claim that a certain way of acting should be engaged in—or that a certain way of being treated should hold good—and, on the other, as the securing of this claimed way of acting or of being treated (for the rightholder) by the obligations and appropriate attendant actions of others.[21] Without an appropriate awareness of obligation on the part of second parties, there could be no normative direction of their conduct. And without awareness that the way of acting or the way of being treated should be maintained for the rightholder and that the conduct of others was limited so as to allow it, rightholders could not be said to understand or knowingly exercise their rights, nor could others undertake to endorse or actively support claims on the holders' behalf.

One might say, then, that affirmative awareness or acknowledgment must come from both sides, from both parties, in the case of a right. Without such mutual recognition, rights would be mere powers or ways of acting/ways of being treated; they would lack normative force and, thus, necessarily fail to constitute rights.

Where a right is itself general, as a right of many people, or where it constrains generally, then the recognition involved must be a genuine *social* recognition. Such recognition—an appropriate awareness on all sides—is an ingredient of any general right properly so called, be it a human right or a constitutional right or a civil right (a right of all citizens in a body politic). On this basis Green is able to repudiate the foundational conception of natural rights—the view that isolated individuals in

a state of nature have inherent rights—which formed the starting point for theoretical reflection in the natural rights tradition.

Green's argument up to this point has gone something like this: (1) There are and can be no rights independent of or antecedent to society. (2) Hence, no rights can attach to individuals per se, that is, to individuals in total isolation from society or to individuals conceived merely as individual specimens of our biological species and taken in isolation (at least conceptually) from all other such individuals. (3) Therefore, there can be no natural rights (that is, rights in a state of nature) if we conceive that state as involving no society, or as originally (or conceptually) involving just such isolated individuals as these.[22] Thus Green is able, by what amounts to an internal critique of the natural rights tradition, to reach his own distinctive idea that all rights, in particular, all general rights (including even natural rights), involve social recognition.

Common Good

For Green, natural rights and civil rights are alike in one important respect. Such rights are rights of all persons, all subjects, in a given society. A natural right (what is today called a human right), like a morally or normatively justifiable civil right, is justified in particular by the standard of mutual and general benefit (the benefit of each and all). This standard is worth being singled out and given special attention.

It would be hard to say convincingly that something could be claimed for each and all as a right and that directives on conduct should be put in place to support that claim unless the thing claimed was widely beneficial. Thus, where the right in question is a universal right (either natural or civil), then the specific way of acting or way of being treated that it identifies should be a matter of benefit to each and all. Or at least it could be seen by almost all people as being (at a minimum) of benefit to themselves and to a *vast number* of human beings alive now (and for the foreseeable future), in the case of a natural or human right, or of benefit to themselves and to fellow citizens or co-inhabitants, in the case of a civil right.

The point is, sound or creditable justification is a necessary condition of any right's counting as a natural or a human right. The argument just made suggests that the mutually *perceived* benefit of a very

large number of human beings needs to be satisfied (or can reasonably be expected to be satisfied) in given cases. Unless it is, we don't have an adequate normative justification for the *universality* of the right(s) in question. The standard of mutual and general benefit has a continuing and essential importance in the justification of natural or human rights, whatever other normative standards might be deployed, in showing that the requirement of universality has been satisfied in a plausible and sound justificatory fashion. Mutual and general benefit is a first-order standard that needs to be met.[23]

It is a standard that needs to be met by natural or human rights on a significantly universal basis and by civil rights within given polities. When this standard is met, there is a presumptive case for saying that individuals are obliged to limit their conduct so as to allow or provide this good, or means to this good, for one another. A particular line of conduct, or of forbearance, is agreed upon because it is in the interest of each and all persons or each and all members. Individuals claim it for themselves and acknowledge it for all others on that basis, and each thereby takes on obligation. The element of mutual acknowledgment of a common good—the good of each and all—constitutes the significant feature of proper universal rights (be they natural or civil) in Green's account.[24]

These claimed ways of acting or of being treated are arguably part of the 'good' of each person or instrumental to it. Social recognition and mutual and general benefit (the good of each and all) are closely linked ideas in Green's account. General rights (be they civil rights or natural/human rights) represent and are justified by the fact (where it is a fact) of mutual perceived benefit; such benefit refers to interests each citizen has in the establishment within the society (or within the relevant human population) of certain ways of acting or of being treated that are the same for all.

The idea just described is not the same as the idea of a collective benefit, where person *a*'s having a right R benefits both person *a* and all other persons. Rather, it's from the fact that *everyone* has the same right(s) that this mutual and general benefit arises. Such established ways of acting or of being treated, the same ways for everyone, are beneficial (in 'distributive' fashion, so to speak) for *each and all*.[25] There are, of course, other senses of common good besides mutual and general benefit which Green

sometimes uses.[26] But the essential sense of what Green capaciously calls 'common good' is captured, for purposes of characterizing general rights, by what I have been describing as mutual perceived benefit.

Green's ideal of self-realization (See section above 'Ethics:self-realization' pp.134–5.) does suggest yet another dimension to his notion of common good. Here a common good can be said to exist where individuals, taken one by one, conceive themselves and others as having (some) identical traits of character, at the point of full self-realization, or as requiring (some) identical means to those traits.[27]

Here, though, we must take care. Green typically talks of rights as establishing *conditions* for such self-realization; his emphasis, when discussing rights and their value in this context, is on such *means* and their sameness, but without implying the sameness of the ends themselves (as given in the notion of the traits of a fully realized self).[28] Indeed, the ideal of self-realization will be an individualized one; some traits of character will be identical across such ideals, but not all will be. The goal of an abiding satisfaction, in its detail, is not identically the same for literally everyone. Rather, the important point is the compatibility for various persons of the sought-for satisfaction with the abiding satisfaction of others.

Green's emphasis throughout is on mutually acknowledged ways of acting/ways of being treated (and on establishing the conditions for such ways to be exercised by all). Social recognition and common good are the leading ideas in Green's account of rights. Probably the easiest way to keep the larger picture in view here is to say that, for Green, rights (and the obligations associated with rights) provide conditions, powers, or capacities by which individual persons can realize a common good in two respects. They can realize it as a political or social common good, a good for each and all, and as an abiding satisfaction (over the whole course of their respective lives) compatible with the abiding satisfaction of others.

Green's account of rights, though it continues to be attractive, is somewhat narrow in two respects: (1) by starting out primarily as a critique of traditional state-of-nature natural rights theory, it has a rather narrow range and confines its discussion largely to those rights that were emphasized in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and (2) in his talk of rights, Green sometimes exclusively emphasizes a concern with liberties of action.[29] Such a view of rights, though widespread, is much too nar-

row. At a minimum, we would need to add as one of the main aims or functions of rights the avoidance of serious injuries at the hands of others. Even so, this is probably still too narrow to satisfy the contemporary understanding of rights (as expressed, for example, in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] of 1948). For talk of merely *refraining* from injuring people says very little about UDHR concerns with the *public* provision of services and benefits for them.[30]

Reciprocity and Citizenship

Green argues that rights may and do arise in the social relations that persons have with one another (and through membership in communities and in civil associations, such as families, churches, or economic markets) and are sustained there through practices of reciprocity. Nonetheless, a certain overarching political arrangement is typically required as well. This arrangement is the state, as Green calls it.

> The state is [for the citizen] the complex of those social relations out of which rights arise, so far as those rights have come to be regulated and harmonised according to a general law, which is recognised by a certain multitude of persons, and [behind] which there is sufficient power to secure [such rights] against violation from without and from within.'[31] The state (with a democratic form of government as Green's favored case) exists to formulate, maintain, and harmonize such legal or social rights—and in particular general or civil rights—that are universal within a given society.[32]

In Green's account, civil rights are justified in a characteristic way, that is, by reference to the standard of general and mutual benefit. It follows that the members (the citizens), insofar as they have civil or general rights, must have upon reflection a sense of common good (given that some of the important goods of any particular person are also goods of all or most other persons). This sense is, in fact, identical (to that degree) for each and all. And it has been shown, in a fashion acceptable to each person, that persons in such a society must or should give priority to civil

rights and thereby restrain self-seeking and the deployment of rights for mere partial or factional advantage.

Moreover, it could be shown, in view of this pattern of justification, that the members will have a characteristic allegiance or sense of belonging to such a society (and an obligation to obey many of its laws). This allegiance and its attendant duty are not modeled on voluntary obligations and, in an interesting and recognizable way, are specific to that one particular society (or community) of people with which the members' lot in life has been cast.[33]

People have this allegiance—a sense of affiliation with one particular society and a sense of being especially open to the claims made on them by fellow citizens—because the scheme of political benefits they and others participate in is a shared and reciprocal one. Reciprocity grounds the allegiance, the sense of identification with fellow members I've just described, that typical citizens have toward a particular body politic.

Let me discuss further this claim about reciprocity. We start with the obvious point that sometimes a particular way of acting or of being treated can be beneficial for a wide number of people. It would be likely, then (where this was so), that when someone perceived that it was a good for them, they would also perceive that it was a good for others as well. Now, such ways have to be sustained in practice; they don't just happen. They have to be accomplished and maintained through some sort of effort and choice. Typically, they are sustained through joint effort.

Citizens or lifelong members of a given system of civil rights have pooled their efforts, through the democratic institutions there, to achieve a common set of values or norms for conduct in their society, as given (especially) in the general or civil rights laws that constitute or are among the main rules in this particular system of rights. The texture of any such body politic is spelled out not only in the specific list of rights that all enjoy but also in the normative directives imposed on the conduct of every person—but variously—by those rights. Thus, persons who are citizens or lifelong members of that particular society are rightholders there and have made their contribution to that society and to its system of rights when they've acted in character as typical citizens, through their conduct, in supporting civil rights and in conforming to law.

It is *their* system, for they have contributed to it in this way. A system of rights so understood is always the work of its citizens or lifelong members; they are its primary beneficiaries, but they are also its primary progenitors. A kind of reciprocity and a *social* sense of common good—an active concern for the good of each as connected with the good of all—comes to characterize the conduct, and ultimately the attitudes, of typical citizens in a particular system of civil rights.[34]

In sum, Green's theory appeals directly to the idea that some ways of acting/being treated are mutually beneficial when engaged in by everyone. In this theory, others are not regarded as mere *means* to one's own good, but rather they are fellow citizens who share identical goods (ways of acting/being treated) with one another.

Green then deepens the account of mutual benefit, in the ways I have indicated, by showing that reciprocity is required to make that idea work. Recognition of this fact in turn generates an abiding and reflective commitment, presumably a widespread one existing on many sides, to a sense of one's own good as a *social* good fully realizable only in a certain kind of society.[35]

Thus, a political system in which civil rights have priority in the public domain over other normative considerations—over nonrights—is not essentially atomistic. Nor is it antithetical to many of the traditional values associated with theories of common good or with republican civic virtue.

Green's theory of a system of civil rights (rights of individuals), grounded in democratic institutions and cultural norms and embedded in the practices and attitudes of reciprocity, stakes out a middle ground. It is a middle ground between extreme individualism, on the one hand, and the celebration, on the other, of community as an overarching value in and of itself (without concern for the question of what goods the community invests in, or for what people). Green's vision of the good society, because its theory of rights is not individualistic in the unattractive way deplored by communitarianism, and because it is democratic and depends on reciprocity and engenders allegiance to a particular kind of body politic (and, within that kind, to particular ongoing societies), can avail itself of the resources of a robust sense of community.[36]

It is in the notion of an institutionally justified right of each and all—a *democratically* justified right, in a system of rights that require reciprocity—that we find a basis for bringing together the two main elements in Green's own account of rights, the elements of social recognition and common good.[37]

Notes

1. The *Works of T.H. Green* was edited by R.L. Nettleship, in three volumes (London: Longmans, Green, 1885–88; subsequently reprinted). These volumes contain almost everything of note except Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, virtually completed before his death in 1882 and published separately under the editorship of A.C. Bradley, the brother of F.H. Bradley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883; subsequently reprinted).

2. The first phrase is part of the title of both chs. 1 and 2 of Book 1 of Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by David O. Brink (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) (hereafter: *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003). See also section 75 of this book. The second phrase is found in several of the earlier sections of the book (for instance, sections 72–74).

   The division of Green's lecture text into books, chapters, and sections (the sections numbered consecutively throughout the entire published book) was the doing of his first editor, A.C. Bradley. (See the 'Editor's Preface to the First Edition' in *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, pp. cxv–cxvii, at p. cxv).

3. Andrew Vincent, 'Metaphysics and Ethics in the Philosophy of T.H. Green', pp. 76–105, at p. 87 in *T.H. Green: Ethics, Metaphysics, and Political Philosophy*, edited by Maria Dimova-Cookson and W.J. Mander (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). (The book will be cited hereafter as Dimova-Cookson and Mander [eds.] 2006, and the chapter by Vincent as Vincent 2006.)

4. See Peter Nicholson, 'Green's Eternal Consciousness', pp. 139–159 in Dimova-Cookson and Mander (eds.) 2006, at pp. 142–145 (hereafter: Nicholson 2006).

5. Besides the two essays I've already cited, see Colin Tyler, *The Metaphysics of Self-Realisation and Freedom* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2010), ch. 4, and Tyler, *Civil Society, Capitalism and the State* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2012), pp. 11–14. One other insightful account, not so recent as the ones

just mentioned, should also be noted: Geoffrey Thomas, *The Moral Philosophy of T.H. Green* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), ch. 3 (esp. sections 3.10 and 3.12); also pp. 14–15.

6. It should be noted that what amounts to sections 3–100 of the *Prolegomena* (including almost all the sections devoted mainly to 'eternal consciousness') were submitted separately by Green himself for publication as a three-part article entitled 'Can There be a Natural Science of Man?' This article appeared in *Mind* 7 (1882), at pp. 1–29, 161–185, 321–348 (in issues 25, 26, and 27, respectively). Thus, the term I've chosen to emphasize has the imprimatur of Green himself (as does also, I would suggest, the term 'spiritual principle').

   At the conclusion of the 1882 *Mind* article (in issue no. 27, at p. 348), there is a very interesting endnote by A.C. Bradley, the editor of the original publication of the *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Bradley explains briefly why Green put an elaborate and lengthy account of the eternal consciousness, et al., at the very beginning of the *Prolegomena*. I have tried to convey the gist of Bradley's brief account in my discussion in the text.

7. See David O. Brink, 'Self-Realization and the Common Good: Themes in T.H. Green', pp. 17–46 in Dimova-Cookson and Mander (eds.) 2006, at pp. 25, 29, 31 (hereafter: Brink 2006). *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003 includes an excellent introduction by Brink, its editor, at pp. xiii–cx.

8. For discussion of the morality of two contrasting themes or ideal types, limited partiality and impartiality, see Brian Feltham and John Cottingham (eds.), *Partiality and Impartiality*: *Morality*, *Special Relationships*, *and the Wider World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For discussion of the point just made about T.H. Green on partiality, see Brink 2006, pp. 36–37, 39–40.

9. For recent discussion of the complex relationship that holds between Green, for example, and utilitarian ethical thought in general (but especially that of J.S. Mill), see David Weinstein's book, *Utilitarianism and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and the special journal issue concerned with that book, edited by Colin Tyler, in *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 15.2 (2009).

10. Green's 'Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation' first appeared in print in *Works* vol. 2 (1886); they were reprinted as a separate book (1895), with a preface and a brief appendix by Bernard Bosanquet. T.H. Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, edited by

Paul Harris and John Morrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), is currently the definitive version.

    I will typically cite from the definitive version of Green's *Lectures* (hereafter: *Political Obligation* 1986) by section numbers; these numbers were introduced by R.L. Nettleship, the editor of Green's *Works* (1886), and are still conventionally used. All my page references in the present chapter (where such are found) are from the Harris and Morrow edition.

11. For excerpts of Bentham's writings on rights, along with comment and criticism, see *Nonsense Upon Stilts*: *Bentham*, *Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man*, edited by Jeremy Waldron (New York, NY, and London: Methuen, 1987).

12. We might cite Wayne Sumner, Derrick Darby, Gerald Gaus, and Rex Martin as examples of present-day theorists who criticize the independence thesis and who advocate the idea that social recognition is a feature of all rights. For representative writings here, see Sumner, *The Moral Foundation of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), ch.5; Darby, *Rights*, *Race*, *and Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chs. 2 and 3 (esp. pp. 79–81, 85–108); Gaus, 'The Rights Recognition Thesis: Defending and Extending Green', pp. 209–235, in Dimova-Cookson and Mander (eds.) 2006; Martin, 'Human Rights and the Social Recognition Thesis', *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 44.1 (Spring 2013), pp. 1–21. Sumner acknowledges the influence of Bentham on his views, Darby and Martin acknowledge that of Green, while Gaus acknowledges that of both Bosanquet and Green.

13. 'The right to the possession of them, if properly so called, would not be a mere power, but a power recognised by a society as one which *should* exist. The recognition of a power, in some way or another, as that which should be, is always necessary to render it a right' (*Political Obligation* 1986, section 23, p. 25). This emphasis on the role of social recognition lies behind Green's notorious remark that 'rights are made by recognition. There is no right but thinking makes it so—none that is not derived from some idea that men have about each other' (*Political Obligation* 1986, section 136, p. 106; see also section 41, p. 38).

14. Hobbes' terms, 'standing aside' and 'laying down', and his discussion of them, can be found in *Leviathan*, chs. 14 and 28.

15. Green's argument here in effect distinguishes certain explicit views in the natural rights tradition (e.g., that the state of nature is presocial) from the

implications of important arguments by natural rights theorists that point in another direction.

16. For the details of Green's criticism of Hobbes and Spinoza, see my paper 'Green on Natural Rights in Hobbes, Spinoza and Locke', pp. 104–126 in Andrew Vincent (ed.), *The Philosophy of T.H. Green*, Avebury Series in Philosophy (Aldershot: Gower, 1986), esp. pp. 105–111 (hereafter: Vincent [ed.] 1986).

   For further background (on Hobbes in particular), see Martin, *A System of Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), esp. pp. 32–36, and my paper 'Hobbes and the Doctrine of Natural Rights: The Place of Consent in his Political Philosophy', *Western Political Quarterly* 33 (1980), pp. 380–392.

17. This feature, the correlation of rights with duties even in the state of nature, is one that Green especially commends in Locke's theory. And it is the point on which Locke, at least as a state-of-nature theorist of rights, chiefly differed from Hobbes and Spinoza (*Political Obligation* 1986, section 57). The point that rights and duties are logical correlatives, in that rights always entail or at least involve the existence of duties (or as he sometimes puts it, 'obligations') on the part of second parties, is often made by Green as expressing his own view. See, for example, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 8, 10, 21; also section 30.

18. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 54–55 and 57; also sections 143–144. The conclusion (as given here) and much of the argument that follows in this paragraph are Green's.

19. We have already seen that Hobbes and Spinoza were logically committed to the view that there was a loose society of sorts in the state of nature. In Green's opinion both Locke and Rousseau were also committed to viewing the state of nature as itself a society of sorts. (See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 54–55; also section 52.)

20. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 38, 136.

21. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 23–25.

22. For representative statements by Green on each of these points, see *Political Obligation* 1986 (for point 1: sections 25, 30–31, 99, 113, 138–139, 143, 180, 216; for point 2: sections 37–38, 49, 50, 138; for point 3: sections 31, 138).

23. For suggestions about how this standard could be met, see James W. Nickel, *Making Sense of Human Rights*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), at pp. 178–182. And see my paper 'Are Human Rights Universal?' in Cindy

Holder and David Reidy (eds.), *Human Rights*: *The Hard Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), at pp. 72–74.

24. We should view Green's critique of natural rights theory and his own analysis of rights as designed to repudiate not the whole idea of natural rights, but rather to repudiate just that version of it which was grounded in the notion of a state of nature. Green does recognize what he calls a 'legitimate sense' or sound theory of natural rights in contrast to that which was provided by the state-of-nature theorists; see *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 7, 9–11, 20, 24, 29–30, 39.

25. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 29 and 217; also sections 25–27, 30, 38–39, 41, 99, 114, 121, 143–144, 151, 206, 208, and 216. The distributive, as distinct from collectivized, reading that I've given Green's notion of common good is well supported by the text of *Political Obligation*.

     What I call here mutual perceived benefit (or, sometimes, mutual and general benefit) has much likeness, I suspect, with the idea of 'humanistic social ethics,' as presented in A.J.M. Milne, 'The Common Good and Rights in T.H. Green's Ethical and Political Theory', in Vincent (ed.) 1986, pp. 62–75. See also Avital Simhony, 'T.H. Green: The Common Good Society', *History of Political Thought* 14 (1993), pp. 225–247, in particular, pp. 237–47.

26. For citations to these other views of common good, see my article 'T.H. Green on Individual Rights and the Common Good', pp. 49–68 in *The New Liberalism*: *Reconciling Liberty and Community*, edited by Avital Simhony and David Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), at p. 60 (hereafter: Simhony and Weinstein [eds.] 2001).

27. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, section 25. For further discussion of his ideal of self-realization, see Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, Book 3, chs. 3 and 4.

28. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 20–21, 23, 25, 29. For additional defense of this general line of argument, see my article 'T.H. Green on Individual Rights and the Common Good', in Simhony and Weinstein (eds.) 2001, at pp. 60–64.

29. As a way of summing things up, Green often associates rights simply with *liberties* to do or have, or as he puts it, with 'freedom of action and acquisition' (*Political Obligation* 1986, sections 105, p. 84; 114, p. 90; also section 186, p. 144).

30. Welfare or service rights (like rights to the provision by *public* or *social* agencies of free, good-quality education at public expense, pensions and other forms of social security, unemployment benefits, health-care insurance, or state-funded medical care) are not merely UDHR rights but also constitutional or legal rights in many countries today. And contemporary theories of rights must take such rights on board.

    I think Green's theory (and those of the nineteenth-century British idealists more generally) would have trouble accommodating this concern with welfare rights. In particular, they had no serviceable theory of political justice to provide content and direction for the development of a coherent theory of welfare rights, in particular, for provisions of welfare *by the body politic*, rights that go beyond rights to liberties and to non-injuries.

    For a sketch of a theory of justice based on Green, which might mark a jumping-off point to confront the basic criticism I have just made, see Avital Simhony's papers, 'On Forcing Individuals to be Free: T.H. Green's Liberal Theory of Positive Freedom', *Political Studies* 39 (1991), 303–320, at pp. 315–320; and 'T.H. Green's Theory of the Morally Justified Society', *History of Political Thought* 10 (1989), 481–498, at pp. 481–488. See also her more recent chapter 'Rights that Bind: T.H. Green on Rights and Community' (pp. 236–261 in Dimova-Cookson and Mander [eds.] 2006).

31. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, section 141 (p. 110), for the passage quoted; see also sections 134, 138, 142, 143. For Green's idea that the obligations attached to rights (including rights based on social relations, insofar as these rights have come to be regulated by general laws and protected by 'sufficient power') can be coercively enforced, see *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 7–11.

32. Green was an enthusiastic supporter of the tendency toward democracy that could be descried in the governmental institutions of the USA, in particular, and also of Britain. He supported the extension of the franchise in the direction of one person/one vote. But this support was not limited to universal franchise considerations alone; it also included, in its concern for 'popular government and settled -methods of enacting and repealing laws,' a broad institutional focus. (See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, section 100, p. 80. See also Sandra M. Den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation*: *A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 164–165.)

33. See Green, *Political Obligation* 1986, sections 100, 142–147. See also Paul Harris, 'Green's Theory of Political Obligation and Disobedience' in

Vincent (ed.) 1986, pp. 127–142. I have discussed the notion of allegiance at greater length in *System of Rights*, ch. 8.

34. For a very helpful discussion of the view of citizenship in high Victorian times in contrast to the view in the late twentieth century, see Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy*, *Politics and Citizenship*: *The Life and Thought of the British Idealists*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984, ch. 9. For discussion in particular of Green's views on citizenship, see Andrew Vincent, 'T.H. Green and the Religion of Citizenship' in Vincent (ed.) 1986, pp. 48–61; and David Boucher and Andrew Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), ch. 1.

35. See Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* 2003, sections 199–200. I am indebted to David Weinstein for calling my attention to these sections of the *Prolegomena*.

36. For Green's own emphasis on the appropriateness of the notions of reciprocity and community in any sound theory of rights, see *Political Obligation* 1986, section 39. This section occurs as part of Green's discussion of Spinoza's theory of rights, but I think it reflects, with suitable modification, Green's overall view.

37. I have already mentioned two of my earlier papers on Green (one published in Vincent [ed.] 1986 and the other in Simhony and Weinstein [eds.] 2001). In the writing of the present paper, I have drawn as well on my review of Dimova-Cookson and Mander (eds.) 2006, in *Mind* 116 (November 2007), 1104–1110. The present chapter, now revised and shortened and with a new title, appeared earlier as a chapter, at pp. 13–34, in Thom Brooks (ed.), *Ethical Citizenship*: *British Idealism and the Politics of Recognition*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. I am also indebted to William Mander for written comments on an earlier draft of the current chapter. I want to thank him as well for suggesting some of the citations I have used and for a few of the turns of phrase.

8

Bernard Bosanquet on the Ethical System of the State

Stamatoula Panagakou

Introduction

Ethics is central to any discussion of politics and society in the philosophy of Bernard Bosanquet. The moral view of politics is, in fact, a defining characteristic of the political philosophy of the British Idealists.[1] The importance of the relation between ethics and politics is a feature of Greek political thought, the legacy of which is celebrated in the writings of the British Idealists. According to Bosanquet, the Greeks developed a philosophical conception of society that considered the promotion of the common good as the primary duty of the body politic and focused on the type of life that is conducive to the perfection of the human soul (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 1–8, p. 17). Bosanquet situates his political philosophy in the broader context of an Idealist heritage which includes Plato, Aristotle, Hegel and T.H. Green (Bosanquet, 1930, p. viii).

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In this chapter, I focus mainly on *The Philosophical Theory of the State,* which is the most comprehensive statement of Bosanquet's political philosophy and a landmark in British Idealist political thought.[2] Although this treatise is my principal source, I also refer to some other of Bosanquet's writings which contain important information for my analysis. Due to lack of space I have not been able to address all issues.[3]

The ethical system of the state is the subject of Bosanquet's philosophical theory of the state. The phrase 'ethical system' comes from Bosanquet's discussion of Hegel's political philosophy (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 238–274). In the ethical system, which is 'a world', 'the individual or particular will' is connected 'with the universal spirit of the community' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 248). The ethical system of the state encompasses a cluster of institutions, such as family, neighbourhood, civil society and the state as government, and unites all these social units in the fellowship of a shared common good. The state is 'the operative criticism' or 'the working adjustment and supreme criticism' of all institutions, and it appeals 'by reasoning and persuasion to the logical will as such'.[4] The state, as a logico-metaphysical idea, is an ethical system whose end is the best life or the common good (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 169, p. 178).[5]

Bosanquet's views on the ethical system of the state have not been adequately explored, though there are many important studies which deal with various other aspects of his (political) philosophy.[6] In this chapter, I show how the edifice of the ethical system of the state is built and provide a systematic account of Bosanquet's political philosophy based on an identification and discussion of key components of his discourse. Bosanquet views the state as a coherent whole which consists of interrelated spheres of ethico-social experience and which aims at the realisation of the best life or common good. The analysis of the ethical system of the state involves discussion of such notions as ethical life, institutions as ethical ideas, the metaphysics of the self, and ethical citizenship.[7] These ideas are the foundations of the ethical system of the state. Its end is the best life or common good, which is also the the end or goal of the social whole and of the individuals who comprise it.

Ethical Life and the Metaphysics of the Self

The philosophical theory of the state focuses on the ontology of the state and on the life of individuals considered as members of the political community. The two aspects are interrelated and included in the discourse of ethical life. Ethical life refers to the essence of human existence within the logical whole of the political community. It also comprises the framework within which institutions as ethical ideas operate and ethical citizenship unfolds. The substantiation of ethical life relates to the metaphysics of the self, which incorporates the spiritual processes of self-transcendence and self-realisation which characterise the development of individuality. Ethical life lies at the heart of the ethical system of the state.

The philosophy of the state theorises life in the social whole from an ethico-logico-metaphysical standpoint. It examines the relation of the activity of the members of the political community to the coherence and completeness which ethical life and institutions as ethical ideas substantiate and express. It endeavours to grasp the purpose for which the particular whole exists and to reflect on the type of experience elicited by this synergy between social beings and ethical structures: 'Its leading idea is the estimate of degrees of completeness, degrees of self-expression, degrees of harmonious life. Historical and economic explanations, laws and causes of progress and decadence, are not as such its primary problems' (Bosanquet, 1999 [1902], p. 206). The philosophical theory of the state explores 'the political life of man' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 2).[8] The political life of man is not an isolated phenomenon independent of 'the general world of life and knowledge' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 2). In addition, it cannot be adequately described as a process of self-realisation based on a superficial dichotomy between 'self' and 'others'. This distinction of 'self' and 'others', which corresponds to the 'individual' and 'society', respectively, is to be found in what Bosanquet calls '*prima facie* theories' or 'theories of the first look' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 75). The 'theories of the first look' do not deal with the spiritual wholeness of reality, for they 'are mainly guided by' the first impression 'of the natural separateness of the human unit' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 75).

Atomistic individualism is based on the visual distinction between 'self' and 'others', and it cannot account for the spiritual reality of shared values, relations, meanings and interdependencies which constitute the ethico-social being of the finite-infinite self (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 270).[9] Atomistic individualism cannot describe adequately the political life of man. According to Bosanquet, we are distinct individuals, yet our self is part of a spiritual history that transcends our own particularity and connects our individuality with more universal determinations. Our real or ultimate self is not circumscribed by the boundaries of our actual self at a given moment. In teleological terms, we are more than that we appear to be: the finite spirit 'is more than it knows' (Bosanquet, 1913, p. 158). Bosanquet develops a philosophical theory of individuality which underlies his moral, social and political philosophy. The human being is an entity who is more inclusive and self-transcending than its 'first look' appearance as an exclusive self.[10] Every time we make a step towards the realisation of values, we 'reach out' and 'return to' ourselves less finite, completer, more real (Bosanquet, 1913, p. 25, p. 162). The individual 'is a world that realises, in a limited matter, the logic and spirit of the whole' (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 287). Guided by this spirit, and in a constant state of self-transcendence, we enter the wider horizons of self-realisation and come closer to attaining the higher potentials of our individuality. The mind constantly assimilates, readjusts, negates and affirms contents in a ceaseless dialectic of transformation and expansion. This dialectic of creation and reconstitution supports the mind's self-maintenance and growth (Bosanquet, 1968, p. 20). Its dynamic interaction with the world transforms the self in a vital ontological process harboured in the universe which ultimately is 'a place of soul-making' (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 26). The metaphysics of the self 'captures' the individual's movement towards self-realisation and wholeness. It includes various aspects of the self-realisation process—among them, the political life of man.

The political life of man refers to the individual's endeavour for self-realisation at the ethico-social level of human experience. This is the sphere of ethical life. Ethical citizenship emanates from the formative ground of ethical life and signifies the contribution of individuals to the good of their social whole.[11] Ethical citizenship refers to a crucial aspect of self-realisation which encompasses the ethical development of individuals

in relation to their contribution to the moral growth of the social whole. Their contribution might not always be conscious or immediately noticeable, yet it is real. It affects both the present and the future. For instance, good governance can be seen as a public good whose attainment and continuation depend not only on institutional and legal arrangements, but also on the conscience, ethos, will and effort of government and the people. The existence of good governance makes proud the political officials and the citizens of a country and represents a good that must be safeguarded, promoted and bequeathed to the next generation.

The elevation of the moral tone of our community requires a specific attitude of mind, namely, consciousness of a greater shared good which unites us in an ethical fellowship. It also needs a synergy of individual and collective effort for its realisation. Moral agency is first and foremost an individual attribute: the individual is the primary agent of value realisation. Yet, humans exist in societies and develop nexuses of relations, interdependencies and influences. The metaphysics of the self contains a 'genealogy' of self-building that captures complex movements of immanence and transcendence, of particularity and universality. Individuals are particular entities, yet they expand spiritually for they become part of more complex structures which constitute the social environment. This membership of the social whole both substantiates and invigorates the relational self. For instance, the identity of a person is a constellation of characteristics, properties, attachments and relations. Let us take the example of a female teacher. She is a woman; she has a set of beliefs, attitudes and preferences; she has a family and is involved in various social relations; she is a national and a citizen; and she can be a member of different organisations and groups. In order to accomplish her duties and obligations and to realise herself, she works with others in pursuit of common goals as well as independently focusing on her life plans. This complex activity of self-fulfilment and social self-realisation involves self-transcendence. The teacher of our example might fight against sexism and racism both individually and collectively. The promotion of rights, equality and justice unites teachers, parents and pupils in an effort to realise social ideals and to elevate the moral tone of their society. Their co-operation means sharing a common social ethic. The people who fight for a better society realise a vision of moral excellence and inspire others

to continue their legacy. The attainment of the best life is a moral ideal which encompasses the well-being of the individual and of the social whole in an ethical unity (Bosanquet, 1924a, p. 52).

Human beings are connected with the spiritual world of values which expands before and beyond their immediate existence. Our membership of the axiological cosmos affects the formation of our individuality and relates to our contribution to the community around us. Contribution to a good that contains our own good and, at the same time, transcends it makes the individual a participant in a world of values which is transgenerational, infinite and perennial, and as such it brings a kind of 'immortality' into our personal history. We contribute to the common good by carrying out our duties, as well as by our overall personal and professional ethos and conduct. We play a part in helping realise a good which is substantiated through the activity of many individuals and is a manifestation of the eternal and infinite world of values (Bosanquet, 1917, p. 12, p. 15). Each person's effort complements that of others, they are all united in the ethical fellowship of the good, and the value of their achievement outlives them (Bosanquet, 1917, p. 108). Our part in the realisation of an ideal might be small, unremarkable or indirect, yet it has its own significance in the order of things (Bosanquet, 1919, p. 160). One's contribution to the common good is an expression of 'a true patriotism' (Bosanquet, 1917, p. 5).

We are all involved in activities which can heighten the tone of our society by increasing the level of values attained. Enjoying or creating a work of art, visiting a museum, walking in the countryside, singing in a choir, doing voluntary work—the ways of realising the values of truth, beauty and goodness are endless. The life of the social whole is affected and energised by the activity of its members. As new paths to self-realisation and development are charted, goodness passes into the lifeblood of the social whole. The persons 'live' for ever in the ethical legacy of their lives—that is, in the amount of truth, beauty and goodness they help realise with their thought, will, action and being. Individuals are both trustees and creators of the world of values. This element of their ethico-social existence is reflected in the idea of ethical citizenship. Self-realisation entails an ethic of sustaining, enriching and contributing to the world of values.

Self-realisation requires a ceaseless process of self-transcendence, which makes the human individual the topos of the dialectic of the finite-infinite. The self is limited and imperfect in many ways, yet its victory over the hindrances to the higher life gives it fullness and satisfaction. The daily endeavour to achieve a life worth living, the quest for truth, and the spiritualisation of the self through the religious, the ethical and the aesthetic consciousness constitute 'sites' of ethical enactment as well as ways in which the dialectic of the finite-infinite is both substantiated and maintained. These activities, experiences and processes depict our unity with the axiological cosmos (Panagakou, 1999a, 1999b, 2009, 2010). The individual is the centre of value affirmation and substantiation, yet the world of values is an ethical universe which simultaneously colours individual lives and expands far beyond them. The capacity of humans to become loci of value realisation derives from their self-transcending dynamic (and thus their rationality and spirituality). During the soul-moulding activity, the finite-infinite self fights against its limitations and strives to attain its higher potentials. As members of the ethical system of the state, individuals inhabit various domains (family, neighbourhood, civil society and the state).[12] They develop as social beings and moral agents in the protective harbour of ethical life. Ethical life offers a site of self-realisation in which the universal passes into the particular and the particular affirms the universal within its being. The state, the logico-metaphysical matrix of ethical life, accommodates a substantial part of the human being's self-realisation endeavour and unites individuals in the fellowship of a shared common good. The ethical system of the state is 'the natural habitat' of the ethical fellowship of the common good.

The State, Ethical Life and Institutions as Ethical Ideas

In *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet explores the nature of the state and its role in the moral architecture of society, and he provides a historical-philosophical overview of political theories culminating in Hegel's political philosophy. Bosanquet makes it clear from the outset that a philosophical theory aims at studying the full significance of the

object under investigation (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 1). Bosanquet's philosophical analysis is an inquiry into the idea of the state *qua* state. The state is both a fundamental constituent and the culmination of the ethical life. Bosanquet's conception of the state is not restricted to the government and its administrative organisation, but is instead wider and more inclusive (Nicholson, 1990, p. 213; Panagakou, 2005b, 2012a). Bosanquet writes:

> I use the term 'State' in the full sense of what it means as a living whole, not the mere legal and political fabric, but the complex of lives and activities, considered as the body of which that is the framework. 'Society' I take to mean the same body as the State, but *minus* the attribute of exercising what is in the last resort absolute physical compulsion (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 311n1).[13]

The Idealist conception of the state encompasses both society and government and describes a unity that is based on logical adjustment of differentiations. The philosophical theory of the state inquires into the nature of the state as a whole and focuses on 'the political life of man', which 'has a nature of its own, which is worthy of investigation on its own merits and for its own sake' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 2). The political life of man expresses the vital union between mind and community—between the human being and the social whole. This vital truth about the relation between the state and the individual was first expressed in the political philosophy of the Greeks and was further developed by Hegel (Bosanquet, 1999 [1902], p. 207, 1930, p. 6, p. 237).

The experience, spirit and nature of the Greek polis relate to the genesis of political philosophy. Political philosophy 'began in connection with' the ancient Greek city-state 'and revived in connection with' the nation-state of the modern world (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 3). The Greek philosophers, 'undisturbed by previous speculation, saw the great facts of social experience with a freshness and wholeness of vision with which they can never be seen again' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 75). Plato and Aristotle

> regarded the good for man as, in its nature, capable of realization only in a community of souls or selves, and did not think of separating the study of the good of the individual from the study of the good of the community (Bosanquet, 1999 [1902], p. 203).

The Greeks established a philosophical perspective on politics and society that focused on moral self-realisation, the ethical dialectic between the social and the individual mind, human excellence and the common good. Modern Idealism builds on the Greek legacy while adjusting it to contemporary conditions. A new element in the modern Idealist discourse is the centrality of freedom. Kant, Fichte and Hegel founded their political philosophy on Rousseau's 'idea of freedom as the essence of man' (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 221). Hegel elaborated a conception of the state 'as the realisation of freedom' (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 229–230). Bosanquet, and the other British Idealists, theorised freedom in the context of ethical life and elaborated a philosophical view of the state which stressed the logical relation between rational freedom, self-realisation and the common good.

As members of the social whole, individuals work for the common good—a good that is valued by all those who constitute the ethical fellowship of the state (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 102). The political life of individuals is their social self-realisation in the context of ethical life. *The Philosophical Theory of the State* contains an extensive analysis of what is understood as 'ethical life'; it is the life we can achieve within the political community as social beings and moral agents. Ethical life is the life of men and women in the context of institutions as ethical ideas. Institutions as ethical ideas signify the relation between mind and the social whole (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 275–311). The term 'ethical idea' refers to institutions as 'constituent elements of the mind'. Family (and property), the district or neighbourhood, one's 'class' (indicating occupation/employment and thus position of service in the community), and the state are institutions. Institutions have a material aspect which depicts the spatiotemporal aspect of their existence; yet they are, first and foremost, logico-metaphysical matrixes that both contain and nurture ideas and moral purposes. According to Bosanquet:

> It is unnecessary to insist on the external aspect of institutions as facts in the material world; but it will be worth while to gather up the leading conceptions of our analysis by tracing the nature of some prominent "institutions," as ideas, constituent elements of the mind, which are also purposes; that is, as ethical ideas (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 276).

Institutions have a formative influence on individuals. They organise the contents of social experience and create a meaningful and constructive environment for humans to develop as ethico-social beings (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 277). Institutions considered as ethical ideas assist individual self-realisation by restricting the impediments to human development and real freedom. The philosophical theory of the state is an analysis of the ethical system of the state—the locus of ethical life. Bosanquet shares the Hegelian view of the inclusive whole of the state as the logical matrix (and culmination) of ethical life, and he enriches it by recognising four, instead of three, interconnected spheres of ethical life: family, one's district or neighbourhood, one's 'class', and the state.

The Philosophical Theory of the State describes the ethical system of the state and explores the complex dialectic between structure and agency in the political life of man. Bosanquet's narrative unfolds in 11 chapters which refer to key issues of political philosophy, such as political obligation, liberty, the real will and the end of the state. Each nucleus of analysis reflects the organising principle of ethical life—the spirit of the whole. This principle also characterises Bosanquet's philosophical theorising of the individual: the metaphysics of the self. *The Philosophical Theory of the State* addresses crucial aspects of the individual's moral formation in the context of the state and shows the unity of Bosanquet's moral, social and political philosophy. Let us mention in brief some of these aspects. First, *The Philosophical Theory of the State* refers to the life of individuals, which is constantly restructured and reconstituted in the context of institutions as ethical ideas. Second, it focuses on the ideal of the best life that unites humans in the ethical fellowship of the common good—the core substance of political life. And finally, the Idealist perspective on state theory that *The Philosophical Theory of the State* articulates views society not as an aggregate of individuals but as a unity of individuals who, despite their differences, are capable of developing an understanding of common values and shared meanings that bind them together in pursuit of a common good.

The state *qua* state embodies an ethical idea. It signifies a spiritual and structural whole wherein the rational principle of organisation meets the will and consciousness of the individual. The state as a 'logical space' of ethical formation contains the movements of consciousnesses towards the

realisation of the best life. There is an essential relation between the state (as an ethical idea) and the development of the moral self. The logico-ethical role of the state is to provide a structured and principled whole which would enable individuals to fulfil their ethical potential. The ethical system of the state reflects not only the will and intelligence of the minds that constitute it, but also the spiritual unity of individual consciousnesses in the ethical fellowship of the common good.

In the context of the ethical system of the state, individuals engage in relations which affect the dynamic of their self-realisation. Different trajectories of self-realisation co-exist in the framework of ethical life, which synchronises the good of the self (as real will) with the shared good of a community of selves. This ethical symphony reflects the vision of an inclusive society that integrates different conceptions of self-realisation and guides its members towards the realisation of the best life that is the end of the individual, society and the state. Self-transcendence sustains the movement of consciousness towards deeper levels of self-realisation as the mind is ceaselessly shaped and transformed in the context of institutions as ethical ideas. However, the completion of self-realisation is not exhausted in the attainment of social ends. Both self-realisation and the best life refer to a domain that includes the fulfilment of social existence and the flight of being into spiritual heights essentially related to a proper development of the self. In fact, the realisation of social ends (e.g., good governance, social justice, respect for human rights) presupposes an axiological system that dwells 'beyond' the social temporality, although it is both manifested and cemented at the ethico-social level. Bosanquet briefly addresses this issue in *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, in *The Principle of Individuality and Value* and in *Psychology of the Moral Self* (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 309–311, 1912, p. 316, 1904, pp. 95–96). The values of beauty, truth and goodness are communicated to us through art, philosophy and religion. These values signify 'the greatest possibilities of human nature' (Bosanquet, 1904, p. 96) and represent the ultimate goal of self-transcendence (Bosanquet, 1912, pp. 5–8).

The spiritual world of values permeates our will and thought and is revealed in our action. Both the process of individual development and the idea of ethical citizenship affirm the reality of the spiritual world. There is a logical continuity between the spiritual world of values and

the world of institutions as ethical ideas. Institutions provide an accommodating environment for the manifestation of the spiritual world. Yet the expression of values through the framework of ethical life does not exhaust the whole reality of the spiritual world. Bosanquet follows Hegel in placing the ethical system of the state (Objective Mind) between the full growth of subjectivity and the development of self-consciousness (Subjective Mind) and the ultimate reality of the spiritual world (Absolute Mind) (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 237). In the penultimate paragraph of *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet refers to the continuity between the state and the spiritual world (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 310). This continuity provides institutions with real meaning and substantiates the ethical life. Individuals grow within the formative matrix of ethical life, and their movement towards higher spheres of ethico-social and supra-social reality is a manifestation of their self-transcending dynamic. The individual's evolution as a moral, social and spiritual being presupposes a process of self-transcendence. In other words, self-transcendence is essential for the attainment of the real self. The real self is a growth of the moral self.

The state *qua* state provides an environment conducive to operation of the perfective dynamic that underlies self-transcendence and self-realisation. Both processes are at the heart of the metaphysics of the self: they 'take' the human being 'beyond' its finiteness towards its infinite reality in the spheres of art, philosophy and religion, wherein the soul-moulding continues and the individual is further enriched. The level of the objective spirit and the level of the absolute spirit are related, yet they are not overlapping. As we enter the sphere of the absolute spirit, the 'universality' of the state is transcended; this does not mean, however, that the state ceases to have value. Its role in the overall system of ethical life is central. It provides the logico-metaphysical framework that sustains individuals' self-transcendence and self-realisation, and it enables them to affirm the reality of the world of values in concrete thought and praxis.

This perspective focuses on the ethical idea of the state as a matrix for the development of mind: it neither describes what a particular state does nor suggests that the activity of states has always been beneficial to the promotion of civilisation. World history contains many examples of states which inhibit, or have inhibited, the free development of thought, art

and religion. Bosanquet views the state philosophically as a space where the supra-social and the social meet and take concrete form, enabling thus 'the greatest possibilities of human nature' to flourish. The degree to which this order of things is actually realised within particular states (past and present) is another story. Yet, we cannot allow the defective form to dominate the discourse and forget about the ideal standard that expresses the nature of a thing. For instance, the nature of a ship is to accomplish the end for which it is made, that is, to provide a safe journey. If the ship sinks due to a mechanical fault we consider it as a defect in its building, not as something that relates to the nature of the ship *qua* ship. In life, as in the analysis of states, we do have incidents which show that a thing, a person or an institution does not always fulfil its end. Yet, the defective condition, the error, or simply the operation of a contingent factor cannot replace the end (*telos*) of a thing, a person or an institution and become the standard of any judgment, assessment or evaluation.

Bosanquet views the state as the enabling framework of the ethical life in the context of which individuals can develop ethically and thus affirm a greater degree of reality. The source of this transformation is the rationality and spirituality of human beings. As moral and social entities, individuals 'reach' beyond their immediate selves in the ethical fellowship of the state. Their membership of the social whole reveals the complex dialectic of 'structure' and 'agency'. The ethical life nourishes the ethical consciousness; the ethical consciousness sustains the ethical life. Institutions as ethical ideas reflect the development of civilisation. At the same time, they constitute a source for further enrichment of civilised life. The state *qua* state encapsulates the spirit of coherence and unity that sustains the logico-metaphysical unit of the social whole. In Bosanquet's philosophical theory, the state is the logical culmination of a complex organisation that encompasses the activity of institutions as ethical ideas and their soul-moulding function. The state represents a whole, but it is not the ultimate embodiment of the whole. The state 'is a phase of individuality which belongs to the process towards unity at a point far short of its completion' (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 312). As we move from the level of the objective mind towards the absolute spirit, the state is both included and transcended in a dimension of reality that marks the supra-social topos of being. This is the territory of art, philosophy and religion.

Art, philosophy and religion ennoble individuality and the socio-political whole—in fact, it is in the concrete life of a community that their soul-transforming function is seen and enjoyed (or impeded and frustrated, depending on the nature of specific states). Yet as modes of the spirit, they are both within and without the spatiotemporal closure of particular experiences and particular types of social organisation. However, and this is important for our analysis here, the state *qua* state provides an enabling framework for the realisation of spirit in the life of both society and individuals.

The End of the State

In Bosanquet's political philosophy, the state, society and the individual are constituent components of the ethical life, which is substantiated through the function of institutions as ethical ideas. Ethical life encompasses the life of individuals as moral and social beings and presupposes the existence of a social whole which supports the development of both individuality and citizenship. The state, the primary logico-metaphysical space of ethical life, plays a central part in the self-transcending trajectory of the human individual. In its complex structure of institutions, associations and clusters of socio-political life, multiple self-realisation processes take place. Self-realisation is the object of self-transcendence and relates to the perfectible dynamic of the finite-infinite being.

In the context of the social whole signified by the state *qua* state, individuals develop their capacities and form their distinct personalities while adjusting to the world around them, being influenced by it and transforming it in a dialectical movement of self-transcendence and self-maintenance. This activity occurs in the state, which is the framework of structured life in the civilised community. In its hypostatisation as an inclusive whole that sustains the self-realisation process of individuals and the operation of institutions, the state exhibits an element of 'universality'. Here, in the territory of the ethico-social, the treatment of the state 'is naturally analogous to the treatment of the universe' (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 311). Bosanquet's conception of the inclusive nature of the state can be better understood if we illustrate it with an example. Let us con-

sider the institution of the family in the context of the state. As an ethical system, the state includes and protects the family. Without this protection, the family cannot adequately fulfil its role as an ethical institution (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 279).

The formation of the individual begins in the nurturing environment of the family, which is one of the institutions that constitute the ethical idea of the state. In the family, children enjoy parental love and care while learning habits and virtues which will prepare them for adult life and citizenship. For instance, in a family that fulfils its role, children become accustomed to the values of truthfulness, respect, responsibility and politeness. These are fundamental qualities for the moulding of character and for civilised human conduct. Our cognitive and emotional development, as well as the cultivation of social skills, begin in the family and continue in more complex spheres of social experience.

The role of the state is to offer the legal, structural and institutional provisions that can enable the family to develop on sound foundations and fulfil its purpose. When serious problems arise in the domestic sphere and help is needed to resolve conflicts and protect the innocent and/or vulnerable, the state is a commonly recognised authority that should protect rights and enforce implementation of court decisions. The protection of the ethical unit of the family (and of individuals) refers also to such issues as health, education and social security. The state should uphold the rule of law in order to enable individuals to live the good life in the context of the wider social whole. Both the individual's self-realisation and the ethical function of the family are affected by policy- and decision-making, which ultimately belong to the province of the state. By hindering hindrances to the best life, the state *qua* state enables families and their members to develop. This can be done in a variety of ways: a family law that is updated according to the standards set by international conventions and treaties, as well as by modern jurisprudence; an impartial and effective judicial system; efficient bureaucracy; the existence of independent authorities (e.g., the institution of ombudsman) that check the work and operation of public institutions; accountability, transparency and the rule of law; a police that deals decisively with delinquency and maintains law and order; a democratic political culture that both encourages citizens to engage in public dialogue and raises the level of civic

consciousness. All these are but some examples which show that the state accommodates an array of institutions, processes and practices whose task is to protect the rights and well-being of families and individuals in the wider context of the political community. The state then is a more comprehensive ethico-social unit than the family, the local community or the civil society. Of course, the state does not operate in a void. We live in an increasingly globalised world, and complex interactions between states and the international community occur. However, the existence of new dynamics of power formations does not mean that the world of states has been abolished. Although we recognise the reality of global interdependencies, we still talk in terms of national sovereignty, national security and national interest. Furthermore, the implementation of laws, the realisation of good governance, and thus the attainment of the good life, depend, finally, on the character, function and authority of the state.

The ethical system of the state encompasses a cluster of institutions which, although they fulfil different purposes, are interconnected and form a complex logical structure whose guiding principle should be the promotion of the ideal of the best life. Attaining this ideal is the essence of ethical life, which in turn is harboured, structured and articulated in the logical framework of the state. Families, neighbourhoods, the civil society and political institutions intertwine in the social dialectic of the political whole. The state contains the institutions of ethical life and sustains their efforts to accomplish their ends and contribute to the common good (Bosanquet, 1895b, p. 9). These institutions are ethico-social cells in a state of constant interaction with their environment as well as with each other. The principal role of families is to empower their members through multiple processes of love and care and to sustain their overall development in a secure and nurturing environment. Families exist in larger wholes: they grow in neighbourhoods and are included in states (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 285). The quality of life in the locality affects the family and *vice versa*: the character of families and the ethos of their members influence the moral constitution of the community. To protect the people, local government and the state should deal effectively with crime, antisocial behaviour and other sources of deprivation and misery. In the fight against terrorism, human trafficking, drugs, paedophilia, money laundering and other cases which transcend state borders, trans-

national and global co-operation is required. Safety and protection are necessary for the development and well-being of both communities and individuals. However, the role of the state is not exhausted in its coercive power. The ethical system of the state is a complex of minds and institutions, of principles and purposes, of relations and meanings. The state should both sustain the moral growth of individuals and cultivate their capacity for contributing to society (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 142).

In Bosanquet's philosophical theory of politics, the state, society and the individual aim at an end which is not the end of a particular unit excluding, or prevailing over, the good of others. The ultimate end of the state, society and the individual is the attainment of the best life, a life fit for humans, which is realised in the context of institutions as ethical ideas (Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 169–173, pp. 275–299). For Bosanquet, therefore, the state is not 'an end in itself', as Hobhouse erroneously holds (Hobhouse, 1918, p. 19).[14] An attentive reading of *The Philosophical Theory of the State* shows that Bosanquet theorises the state in perspective. The state stands between the realm of subjectivities and the realm of the absolute spirit which contains 'the greatest possibilities of human nature' (Bosanquet, 1904, p. 96). Any given society or organisation 'is not ultimate, and we criticise it in respect of its power to find a complete harmony for the co-operating selves' (Bosanquet, 1904, pp. 95–96).[15] Yet, because of its function as a logical crossroad for the realisation of individuality and the development of ethical human fellowship, it deserves our full attention. It is primarily in the context of the state that the ethical life is sought, and, at the same time, it is the logical framework of institutions considered as ethical ideas that substantiates the ethical life. Philosophically conceived, the state represents an ethical whole that communicates to its members the consciousness of a reality which transcends their actuality and provides them with 'knowledge, resources, and energy' that both influence and empower social being (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 142).

The ethical life presupposes the social whole and becomes possible because of human spirituality and rationality. The spiritual nature of the individual enables the self to seek ontological enrichment and perfection by fighting against the restrictive conditions of finitude. We have here a process of self-transcendence and self-realisation that should be sustained by the state. This is the function of the state *qua* state, that is, the func-

tion of the state which is true to its idea. In other words, when the state acts as it should do (when the state justifies its ethical existence as a state), then and only then can we say that it operates in a way which enables individuals to realise the best life. Bosanquet theorises the state from an ethico-metaphysical perspective and focuses on the logical-normative nature of the state. He writes:

> For us, then, the ultimate end of Society and the State as of the individual is the realisation of the best life. The difficulty of defining the best life does not trouble us, because we rely throughout on the fundamental logic of human nature *qua* rational. We think ourselves no more called upon to specify in advance what will be the details of the life which satisfies an intelligent being as such, than we are called upon to specify in advance what will be the details of the knowledge which satisfies an intelligent being as such. Wherever a human being touches practice, as wherever he touches theory, we find him driven on by his intolerance of contradictions towards shaping his life as a whole. What we mean by 'good' and 'truth' is practical and theoretical experience in so far as the logic which underlies man's whole nature permits him to repose in it. And the best life is the life which has most of this general character—the character which, so far as realised, satisfies the fundamental logic of man's capacities (Bosanquet, 1930, p. 169).

Bosanquet clearly states that the end of the individual, society and the state is the realisation of the best life.[16] Yet, being a genuine liberal thinker, he does not prescribe what the content of the best life should be. Instead, he emphasises the role played by human reason in accomplishing this task (Bosanquet, 1895a, p. 311). Our rational capacity is the key factor in our willing and seeking the ideal of the best life. Realising the best life is the *telos* of both the moral self and the social whole. The ideal of the best life derives from the will of the political community—it is the product of reflection and reason. The attainment of the best life requires the individual's will, rationality, action and self-transcendence: it is a social good that fulfils and satisfies the moral being in its self-realisation endeavour. The best life relates to a vision of rational freedom that sustains the coherence of the social whole, as well as the individuals' ethical fellowship in the context of the political community. In the realm of the Objective Mind, there is a fundamental link between securing the development of

individuality and maintaining the unity of the social organism. The ideal of the best life is what can unite individuals in peaceful co-operation in the social whole. It also contains the necessary conditions for the affirmation of the self. Individuals seek self-realisation as distinct members of a logical whole. Human beings have the potential for attaining a higher degree of reality within because of their self-transcending dynamic and their finite-infinite ontological constitution. The state and its institutions provide the framework for the articulation of rational freedom and the development of the moral self. The ethical service of the state is to safeguard the common good and enable its members to realise the best life.

Conclusion

In *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, Bosanquet charts the landscape of philosophical politics and addresses an array of issues related to a proper understanding of the state and of the individual as a member of the political community. He explores the nature of the state and provides a historical-philosophical overview of political theories culminating in Hegel's political philosophy. *The Philosophical Theory of the State* contains both an analysis of what the state is and a philosophical history of the idea of the state. Central to Bosanquet's discourse are ideas which constitute the essence of the Idealist political philosophy: the logical relation between the good of the individual and the common good, the ethicosocial nature of the human being, and the ethical nature of the state.

In this chapter, I provided a detailed account of Bosanquet's political philosophy, focusing on the overarching idea of his philosophical politics: the ethical system of the state. I drew mainly, although not exclusively, upon *The Philosophical Theory of the State* and elaborated on core components of the ethical system of the state: ethical life, the metaphysics of the self, institutions as ethical ideas, and ethical citizenship. The analysis culminated in a discussion of the end of the state, which is the best life or the common good.

Through the operation of institutions as ethical ideas, individuals pursue their ethico-social self-realisation in the context of ethical life. Ethical life provides a sphere of coherence and completion which harbours and

sustains the 'meeting' of the particular with the universal. Institutions as ethical ideas are elements of the mind and embody values and moral purposes. They influence consciousness and unite individuals in the ethical fellowship of the common good. The axiological cosmos is revealed in the social whole and becomes present and concrete as moral actors realise a greater part of the world of values during self-transcendence and self-affirmation. Ethical citizenship grows on the formative ground of ethical life and refers to our responsibility to elevate the moral tone of our society and to realise the full potential of ourselves being regarded as receptors of, and actors in, the world of values. Ethical citizenship is indispensable to the realisation of the best life. Ethical life, ethical citizenship and the function of institutions as ethical ideas relate to the metaphysics of the self, which describes the genesis and development of the self in the social universe. The metaphysics of the self focuses on the spiritual processes of self-transcendence and self-realisation and captures the dynamics of the formation of individuality. Self-transcendence, self-realisation and, ultimately, the realisation of values are possible because of the finite-infinite nature of the human being. The dialectic of the finite-infinite is at the heart of soul-moulding and marks the whole trajectory of the human being from its emergence in the subjective realm to its membership of the world of absolute spirit, which is both partly manifested in and also beyond the framework of the state. The best life or the common good which is the end of the state refers to a kind of perfection characterising the ethico-social dimension of being. The ethical system of the state provides the structures, institutions and meanings which can unite individuals in the ethical fellowship of the common good.[17]

Notes

1. Boucher and Vincent, 2000, 2012; Connelly and Panagakou, 2010; Mander, 2011; Nicholson, 1990; Panagakou, 2005a, 2012a, 2012b; Sweet, 2009; Vincent and Plant, 1984.
2. *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, first published in 1899, is one of the most important works of the philosopher Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923). See Gaus and Sweet, 2001; Nicholson, 1990; Panagakou, 2005b, 2012a; Sweet, 1997.

3. For instance, the issues of the state in its external relations and of the general will are not discussed in this essay.

4. Bosanquet, 1930, p. 140, p. 174; 1999 [1902], pp. 209–210.

5. Bosanquet uses the terms 'the best life' and 'the common good' interchangeably. He mentions both terms in the same sentence in Bosanquet (1930, p. 178). For references to 'the best life', see Bosanquet, 1916–1917, p. 29, p. 42, pp. 47–48; 1917, p. 309, p. 311; 1930, p. 153, p. 169, pp. 171–174, pp. 183–185, p. 188, p. 191, p. 204. For references to the 'common good', see Bosanquet, 1895a, pp. 308–309, pp. 311–312, p. 318; 1895b, pp. 6–11; 1916–1917, p. 48; 1930, p. 180, p. 269, p. 274, p. 290.

6. Dimova-Cookson, 2014; Gaus, 2001; Mander, 2011; Morrow, 2000; Nicholson, 1990; Panagakou, 2005b, 2012a; Pfannenstill, 1936; Simhony, 2013; Sweet, 1995, 1997, 2007; Tyler, 2006; Vincent and Plant, 1984. This list is indicative, not exhaustive.

7. This chapter contains only a brief discussion of the idea of ethical citizenship. See Panagakou, 2012a.

8. The term 'man' refers to the individual in general, male or female. The use of the term has to do with the linguistic conventions of Bosanquet's time. It must be noted that Bosanquet praised women's contribution to overall progress of society and civilisation. See H. Bosanquet (1924b, p. 26, pp. 38–41). I use the phrases 'the political life of man' and 'the political life of the individual' interchangeably.

9. Bosanquet theorises the self as a finite-infinite being. Self-transcendence and the individual's moral agency are possible because of the finite-infinite nature of the human being (Panagakou, 2005b, p.45n25). I have coined the term 'the dialectic of the finite-infinite' in order to describe the nature and the function of the finite and the infinite dimension of the self in the ethico-metaphysical landscape of human ontology: 'The dialectic of the finite-infinite depicts the relation between the finite aspect of the self, and shows the character of the individual's ontological formation. The finite condition refers to the imperfect and incomplete nature of the human being; infinity refers to the inherent potential for completion, perfection, and coherence that drives the individual towards higher forms of self-realisation' (Panagakou, 2010, pp. 135–136n6). See also Bosanquet, 1905.

10. 'When we come to the great achievements of knowledge, of social and super-social morality, of the sense of beauty, and of religion, the argument that the limits of our normal self cannot be applied as limitations to our ultimate self becomes irresistible' (Bosanquet, 1912, p. 378).

11. Ethical citizenship can, and must, expand beyond state borders. For instance, environmental consciousness, a commitment to peace, and respect for human rights refer to goods which are both national and ecumenical. The focus on the state in the present chapter is for analytical reasons which are related to the nature of Bosanquet's theorisation and to the type of the hermeneutic framework that I have adopted.

12. Individuals are also members of the international community, and thus they expand in various other relational contexts which influence their ethico-social formation.

13. See also Bosanquet, 1895b, p. 8.

14. See Bosanquet, 1916–1917, p. 29.

15. See also Bosanquet, 1930, pp. 309–311.

16. *The Philosophical Theory of the State* contains many references to the best, or good, life (Bosanquet, 1930, p. xxxii, p. xxxix, p. 169, p. 171, pp. 173–174, p. 178, pp. 183–185, p. 197, p. 199, p. 204, p. 299, p. 302, p. 307). Grammatically, there is a difference between the superlative adjective 'best' and the simple form 'good'. My view is that Bosanquet uses the terms indiscriminately to refer to the same thing. In his discourse, the idea of the good life refers to the excellence of souls, to the realisation of man's capacities for ethical freedom, and to the overall development of the social whole. These characteristics define the best life as a social common good.

17. I would like to thank James Connelly, W.J. Mander and Peter P. Nicholson for their comments.

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9

The Metaphysical Self and the Moral Self in Bernard Bosanquet

William Sweet

Introduction

One of the common criticisms of British idealism—especially of its metaphysics—is that it does not fully recognise the distinctness and value of the human individual. This is a criticism that has been raised particularly against one of the leading 'absolute idealists', Bernard Bosanquet.[1] Yet Bosanquet's moral and political philosophy has also been criticised for being too individualistic,[2] for example, by underestimating or ignoring the constructive role of institutions that lie beyond the individual, such as the state.

If both of these 'received' views are correct, there seems to be a tension, if not an inconsistency, in Bosanquet's philosophy between the human being as understood metaphysically (the metaphysical self) and as understood in the moral and political sphere (the moral self).

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What I wish to do in this paper is, first, outline some of Bosanquet's arguments about the metaphysical self and the moral self, showing how, when brought together, they indeed do seem to exhibit not only a tension but an inconsistency with one another. I then offer three reasons for holding that many of the differences between the metaphysical and the moral self are in fact only apparent, and that Bosanquet consistently defends the importance and value of the human individual. Finally, I note that the tension between these accounts can be overcome if one is attentive to how Bosanquet understands individuality, the self, and the nature of the human subject.[3]

The Absolute and the Metaphysical Self

Bosanquet is convinced that an adequate account of reality is one that has at its centre what he calls 'the Absolute'.

Reality is what is all-inclusive, comprehensive, coherent and stable—a unity or whole that is above all categories. This whole does not have the diversity and inconsistencies characteristic of finite things—or what F.H. Bradley calls 'appearances' (see Bradley 1930, p. 1)—and in general it may be described as that which is complete, which is systematically unified, and which contains no contradiction or imperfection within it. This Bosanquet refers to as 'the Absolute'—a self-sufficient individual—indeed, the only individual, properly speaking—and the *only* thing that is entirely 'real' or (to be more precise) entirely 'actual'.

Broadly speaking, Bosanquet holds that reality, so understood, is 'inseparable from mind' and that only mind (or 'Mind') and its contents are real. In this respect, Bosanquet is an 'absolute idealist' after the fashion of F.H. Bradley and, before him, figures such as Edward Caird, if not J.F. Ferrier and J.H. Stirling, though there are clearly differences among them (see Sweet, 2014). Specifically, and like other absolute idealists, Bosanquet holds that mind in some way makes nature, though he rejects the views that reality is *simply* a product of human minds or perceptions, that reality is structured by (or is simply the sum of the perceptions of) human consciousness, and that we cannot speak of things as existing independently of consciousness. (His view is sometimes also

described as 'objective idealism'.) Moreover, Bosanquet holds that the complete description of any one thing requires seeing it in all its relations to every other thing.

For Bosanquet, this view is the result of an analysis of finite self-consciousness. Bosanquet argues that there is a 'nisus to coherence' (PIV 54)[4] in individual consciousness that leads from self-consciousness to self-transcendence and, ultimately, to the Absolute; the Absolute, then, serves as a kind of *telos*. (This way of 'moving' to the Absolute is not particularly novel, and it is characteristic of many earlier idealist authors [see Sweet, 2014].)

We find this view of a 'nisus to coherence' in individual consciousness in Bosanquet's political philosophy. Bosanquet describes the individual will, or 'mind in action', as 'a mental system' whose parts—'ideas or groups of ideas'—are 'connected in various degrees'. In a first instance, these ideas are 'more or less subordinated to some dominant ideas [in consciousness] which, as a rule, dictate the place and importance of the others' (RGW 311/s 259). But, '[i]n order to obtain a full statement of what we will, what we want at any moment must at least be corrected and amended by what we want at all other moments'. The process does not stop there. Bosanquet continues: '[T] his cannot be done without also correcting and amending it so as to harmonise it with what others want, which involves an application of the same process to them' (PTS 111). In other words, if one wishes to arrive at an accurate statement of what one's will is, Bosanquet believes that one must be concerned not only with what he or she wishes at some particular moment, but also with all of the other wants that he or she does or might have, given all of the knowledge available. Bosanquet describes this 'will' or 'mind', then, as 'rational' (PTS 139), and the will or mind produced is an individual's 'real will' (see PTS ch. 5; 101, 118, 141). Bosanquet writes that, in the end, this will 'transcends the individual whose will it is' (PTS 100).[5]

In *The Principle of Individuality and Value* and *Psychology of the Moral Self* (particularly in a lecture on 'the organisation of intelligence'), we find a similar account of the 'nisus to coherence' in mind or consciousness. Bosanquet accepts that 'mind is the way in which the unity of an organic body displays itself' (PMS 7), and that 'bodily identity is only regarded as a *sign* of personal identity, not as constituting it' (PMS 55). So to under-

stand the human person, one begins from the data of consciousness. Thus, from perceptions to elements of the mind gathered in 'appercipient masses'[6] to action, which is 'reasonable' and purposive (PMS 127), we see an 'effort to self-completion' (PIV xviii), which Bosanquet describes as a process of organisation and development at work. He describes the mind, then, as 'a *growth* of material, more like a process of crystallization, the *material moulding itself* according to its own affinities and cohesions' (PMS 9, emphasis mine). This process 'has two forms—practical organisation [which is virtually mechanical] and reflective discussion' (RGW 318/SP 265). Development of consciousness eventually leads to the Absolute, but this process of development is also dependent on the Absolute. Thus, the realisation or development of consciousness is a realisation of the Absolute, but it is the presence of the Absolute in consciousness that enables the development to occur.

The Absolute is not, then, anything over and above finite things or 'appearances', but rather it is, Bosanquet argues, the totality or full realisation of them. He writes: 'The Absolute or infinite should present itself to us as more of the finite… not its extinction' (PIV 255). It is a complete system in which all things are understood in their multiple relations to one another. In other words, despite this teleological account, Bosanquet does not think of the Absolute as something that will come to exist at some future time, but rather as something that is present and implied in all finite things and whose existence is a matter of everyday observation (PIV 373).

Bosanquet describes this Absolute as a concrete universal—a 'universal' or a world or a system 'which throws light on something beyond itself' (PIV xix), existing only in and through its particulars. It is universal *qua* complete, comprehensive and wholly determinate (PIV 69). It is concrete *qua* present in particulars and present to experience. (Thus, 'human', 'justice', 'number', 'triangle' are not concrete universals but abstractions, and they exist independently of particulars. A work of art that has unity and is complete and that leads the mind to a deeper appreciation of life and more intense experience is a concrete universal.) This Absolute is also, however, said to be 'individual'—*qua* self-sufficient. Though many things—for example, human persons—are loosely described as individual

and concrete, only the Absolute is concrete and an individual in the sense of being fully independent and self-sufficient.

For Bosanquet, this Absolute is not only what is completely actual or real, but because it is real it is the basis and principle of value and truth. This has important implications for the nature of 'evil,' 'error' and 'ugliness'. According to Bosanquet, none of these are ultimately real; they reflect only an incomplete account of reality and are somehow contained (though transmuted) in the Absolute.

This leads one to ask: from the level or perspective of the Absolute, what is the human person, or to use a term Bosanquet frequently employs, 'the finite individual'?

In a July 1918 discussion at the Aristotelian Society, later republished in a volume titled *Life and Finite Individuality*, Bosanquet speaks of 'the provisional individual' or 'provisional subjects' (LFI 84) as distinct from 'an ultimate subject' (LFI 79) or 'soul-substance' (LFI 77). No finite being, he says, can be an ultimate subject. This is because, to begin with, to see the human self as a being distinct from every other being, which emphasises him in his 'aspect of isolation' and 'independently of his relation to the end' and to others, is a 'false particularisation' (PTS 189). Bosanquet also denies that finite selves could be 'necessarily eternal or everlasting units' (LFI 87) or 'differentiations of the absolute' (LFI 86; see PTS 166).

Bosanquet goes further. He says that 'the self as we know him in Space and Time… is a figure deformed and diminished' (PIV 383) and 'essentially… imperfect and inconsistent with itself' (PIV 249). Moreover, the distinctions among selves seem purely contingent. Bosanquet writes that the 'differences between different persons [are not]… ultimate and irreducible' (VDI xx, referring to lecture 2). He holds that persons 'overlap in their contents. Often a little change of quality in feeling, it seems, would all but bring them into one… At their strongest they become confluent' (VDI xxi). Thus, individuality and separateness are only 'provisional'. So Bosanquet explicitly describes finite individuals as 'adjectival' and not 'substantive' (LFI 182).

The preceding account of the finite human individual bears on the question of its value. First, when Bosanquet speaks of 'individuality', he identifies it not with what is peculiar or specific to a human being,

but with what that being is about—with the '*content* of the self' (VDI 287, emphasis mine), with those 'interests and affections which carry us beyond our formal and exclusive self' (VDI 288) and which are present in 'the great achievements of knowledge, of social and super-social morality, of the sense of beauty, and of religion' (PIV 378; see PIV 270). In relation to this, the concerns for particular human beings seem to count for little. Bosanquet writes: 'For what appears as a passage in time, the Absolute has need to express itself through us as very subordinate units…; when its life demands our existence no longer, we yet blend with it as the pervading features or characters, which we were needed for a passing moment to emphasise…' (LFI 102). He concludes that 'we care for what transcends us, more than for our self' (VDI 288), and it is *this* that is fundamentally valuable and important.

Second, when Bosanquet discusses the 'self,' his focus tends to be on self-transcendence (VDI 25). He notes that 'we experience our self most completely just when we are least aware of its finite selfness' (PIV 250). Bosanquet even speaks of the individual self as fundamentally passive, and he says that '[t]he world imposes its plan upon the incipient centre of life and mind' (VDI 95). Altogether, these comments seem to point to the human individual as having only an instrumental—an 'adjectival'—value. In other words, the metaphysical self does not seem to count for much.

Many have signalled that such an account of the individual human subject is problematic. To begin with, it seems to deny the reality—the individual existence and subsistence—of the human subject and, indeed, any 'centre of personality' whatsoever (including the divine). It was because of this that absolute idealism was challenged by personal idealists, such as A. Seth Pringle-Pattison (see Seth Pringle-Pattison, 1917, 1918, 1919; Mander, 2005). Moreover, it seems to deny any ultimate or even significant value to the self—and therefore would allow, if not endorse, totalitarian or statist views. It was Bosanquet's *metaphysics* that putatively confirmed L.T. Hobhouse in his view that Bosanquet's political theory was 'the Hegelian theory of the god-state' (Hobhouse 6). Hobhouse sees in Bosanquet's writings the claim that the state is the 'expression' or 'working model' of the Absolute (Hobhouse 18–19), and that the state, and not the human individual, is an 'an end in itself'

(Hobhouse 73). Finally, some would argue that this view is also inconsistent with other remarks that Bosanquet makes concerning the human person as a moral agent, what he calls 'the moral self' (see Bosanquet, 1897).

To see whether this is so and whether anything can be said to address this and the other concerns indicated, I turn to Bosanquet's account of the moral self.

The Moral Self

What is the 'moral self'? From the late 1880s, in collections such as *Essays and Addresses* (1889), Bosanquet wrote periodically on society and culture, but also on social policy and social reform, subjects he continued to discuss until the end of his life. In these essays and books, one finds a *concern* for the development of character and, more broadly, for moral consciousness (PMS 87) and the human moral agent. From 1886 until 1897, Bosanquet was particularly devoted to the educational work of the London Ethical Society and its predecessor, the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, whose aim was the improvement of intellectual and moral character. In 1893–94, for example, he gave a series of lectures for the London Ethical Society on psychology, lectures that served as the basis of his 1897 *Psychology of the Moral Self* (Bosanquet, 1897), which presents the psychological presuppositions and underpinnings of moral action.

This moral self, Bosanquet says, is an end. It is 'the realization of a certain nature which is the outcome of these selves working together in society' (PMS 94). Elsewhere, he describes this end as the result of 'the perfecting of the soul' (see Bosanquet, 1910–11, and PIV 396–403) or 'the excellence of human souls' (PTS 25). How is such an end to be achieved? In several other texts of the period, Bosanquet addresses just this question.

At times, Bosanquet talks of a morality of 'my station and its duties'. (This notion is first explicitly used by him in 'The Kingdom of God on Earth' (1889) and, indirectly, in *The Civilization of Christendom* (1893), and it is frequently referred or alluded to throughout his writings.) Here,

Bosanquet's main interest is to provide a realistic and practical morality that would be available to moral agents. He suggests that the major challenge to the building of moral character is not that one does one's duty and nothing more, but that people often do not do even their duty. Duty, moreover, must be 'something absolute' (PIV 397). If the discernment of one's duty is left entirely to the person, Bosanquet is concerned that there would be nothing to prevent that person's private inclination from masquerading as duty. Thus, in *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, Bosanquet writes that 'my station'—that is, one's various functions in social life—is the main root of individual morals (SS 31).[7] The development of the moral self requires carrying out the duties of one's position or station in society.

Bosanquet recognises, however, that 'the perfecting of the soul' is not (just) a matter of following abstract moral rules. One must 'respond adequately to the situation',[8] and this may require doing much more than following rules. While Bosanquet does not say so explicitly, it seems that this amounts to doing, when possible, what the Aristotelian 'practically wise person' would do (see PIV 396–403). (Some find remarks in Bosanquet's writings on social and political philosophy that suggest 'moral perfectionism' or a nascent virtue theory [Hurka, 1993].) Doing this may also involve 'self-transcendence'—going beyond one's private interests and inclinations. Yet this activity is still to focus on the human person.

What is noteworthy about this account of the moral self and moral activity is that morality depends on something in individual agency; this end, the 'perfection of the soul', is possible only through persons being able to act, and to act morally. Specifically, the realisation of the moral self involves not just fulfilling one's duties or 'responding adequately', but acting from the right motive.

Bosanquet holds, then, that it is the motive that gives moral value to an action. Once an action is constrained[9] or done under compulsion (and not simply because one sees it as lawful or right), it is no longer one's (free) action, and so it is removed from the moral sphere (PTS 178–179).[10] In other words, when an action is constrained, the opportunity for it to contribute to the moral development of the agent is removed. Thus, Bosanquet insists that in the state, authorities normally should do only

what is required to enable human persons to act—such as by hindering hindrances to moral action (see PTS 177–178)—and should generally avoid bringing about good ends through coercion.

When the state does act, however, and particularly when it coerces, it must be certain that three conditions are satisfied[11]: first, that there is an important potentiality in some person(s) that is being frustrated; second, that the 'liberation' of the resources of character and intelligence that will follow is greater than the restrictions imposed on the person; and, finally, that it is better that the action be done even from the motive of fear of legal consequences than that it not take place at all (PTS 179–180). Still, the moral end is achieved only through the unconstrained moral action of finite individuals.

Bosanquet's account of morality also entails that there must be freedom—political freedom—because it is necessary for the exercise of moral freedom or the freedom of the will that is essential to moral action. Political freedom is not, then, mere physical freedom or licence; it is 'reasoned freedom'. So the limits on moral freedom are ultimately those imposed by reason, not political authority.

All this suggests that the human subject has significance and value. The 'perfecting of the soul'[12] is, for Bosanquet, a *self*-realisation. That this end has an almost individualist character is indicated when we see it described as 'the finite spirit' becoming 'what it had in it to be'[13] or as attaining 'the most and best that it has in it to become' (PTS 84), and when we read comments such as 'self-affirmation is the root of morality' (PTS 137).

Again, Bosanquet holds that '[t]he aim of politics is to find and realize the individual' (PTS lvi), by which he clearly means the human subject. He rejects a view of politics that sees human beings as mere means to the community, or vice versa. This view of the moral self, then, has strong social and political implications.

Finally, Bosanquet appears to want to extend this basic value to all moral agents—to all human subjects. He reminds us of the value of the contribution of even the 'anonymous' individual to the social good,[14] and in *Some Suggestions in Ethics* he writes: '[T]he habits, the solid virtues which are the main quality of humanity… all come to us from the nameless ones… from unities, families, communities of all sorts and sizes…. In all this medium of unity… we have an undeniable human value of a

direct and universal type, in which there cannot be a human creature who is not a partaker in some mode or degree' (SS 77).

In short, on Bosanquet's account, the moral self is very important indeed.

What are the *metaphysical* implications of this account of the moral self? Recall that since morality hinges on the motives and actions of human beings, they ought to have 'freedom' to act, not just because of the consequences but because of there being something valuable about human beings acting freely. As we have seen, the human individual not only makes a difference to reality, but it has a central status. Moreover, the moral end—the perfecting of the soul—is the realisation of the self or *self*-realisation, and so the human subject is, again, clearly of key importance. Admittedly, morality also involves a self-transcendence (PIV 260), and so the human subject to which Bosanquet refers is not simply the human person, independent of others. Still, since Bosanquet does not adopt a resolutely teleological or consequentialist view of morality, it matters how the moral end is achieved and not just that it is achieved. The metaphysical implication of this account of the moral self indicates clearly, then, that human individuals count for a good deal—that they are not mere 'adjectives' and without value.[15]

Given the account of the 'moral self' and its metaphysical implications, and given the description of Bosanquet's view of the 'metaphysical self' in the preceding section, one can see why people might find at least a tension, if not an outright inconsistency, on this issue in his writings. I believe, however, that such a view should be challenged.

Reconciling the Metaphysical and the Moral Self

Does the preceding account of the moral self in fact conflict with the account of the metaphysical self? Are there any elements in Bosanquet's philosophy that might reconcile this 'metaphysical self' with the 'moral self'? Arguably, there are.

One way of reconciling these views arises directly from Bosanquet's metaphysics—that it is the development of the human person, a being that is distinct from, and more than, the 'self', that is central to his philosophy.

In *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, Bosanquet focuses on the 'transmuting or expanding power of common finite mind' (PIV 376). For Bosanquet, the nature of a thing is inseparable from what it can become, and so, as we have seen, he begins his metaphysics with the finite self—which has a 'nisus towards absolute unity and self-completion' (VDI 4)—and moves on to its interconnectedness with other selves and with the environment. But this procedure does not lead, as Bradley suggests, to a confusion of the self with the non-self. It is, Bosanquet argues, a means by which one can understand the nature of the finite human individual more adequately.[16] What it is to be a mind is to be in a relation to other minds, and this goes beyond what one is at any one moment.

Where this leads is to the Absolute. The Absolute, then, is not a negation of the finite individual, but its development. As Bosanquet writes: '[T]he Absolute is the high water mark of an effort in which our minds actually consist and have their being, fluctuating in the successfulness within everyday experience' (PIV xxxvii), and 'If I possessed myself entirely, I should be the Absolute' (LFI 88). It is only because it is incomplete, Bosanquet suggests, that the human self cannot be an ultimate principle (PIV 310). Thus, Bosanquet's objection to the view that finite consciousness has some 'ultimate status' is not so much that it is contradictory (as Bradley argues), but that it is not completely realised. Nevertheless, even though it is not 'an ultimate subject … in its own right' (LFI 93), there is an 'intentional substantival' character of the self (LFI 84).[17]

Bosanquet's focus on building up, and up to, the Absolute as a 'principle of individuality' is consistent with his epistemology and with his general view that 'the true office of thought is to build up' (PIV 58). For example, he notes that the discursive model of thought and 'relational' understanding are continuous with the development of concrete judgement (see PIV 58ff) and are 'the first step on the road to perfect knowledge of the Absolute' (Hobbs, 1955, 49). Bosanquet adds that this is nothing new; he notes that Aristotle had long before recognised 'the synthetic character by which thought builds up its world' (PIV 263). Again, according to Bosanquet, thought leads us to a comprehension of the Absolute. He says that 'we are bound to follow thought as it obviously develops itself towards a higher vitality and a fuller perfection, in the certainty that… it will point us to what lies beyond' (PIV 39)[18]—

and what lies beyond is the Absolute. This process, however, is one of 'transmutation and rearrangement of particular experiences, and also of the contents of finite minds', and it occurs within 'a completer whole of experience'. Nevertheless, this development, Bosanquet concludes, is 'a matter of everyday verification' (PIV 373).

Thus, Bosanquet's apparent challenge to the isolated, finite self is not to its existence or its value. As Bosanquet notes in *Life and Finite Individuality*, it is the insistence on finite selves as ultimate that he rejects because it ignores their relation to other persons and, indeed, to other subjects (such as 'civilisation, society, nature' [LFI 79]). Bosanquet insists that we not lose sight of the self as 'a positive content to be realised' (PMS 94).

The process leading to the Absolute, then, is parallel to the account of moral development outlined earlier. It requires individual activity, a recognition of ideas or values greater than oneself, a willingness to strive to work towards and coordinate oneself with (if not to subordinate oneself to) them, and thus it involves a development that seeks to attain (as was said above) 'the most and best that it has in it to become'.

A second way of reconciling Bosanquet's accounts of the metaphysical self and the moral self can be seen in how human beings relate to the Absolute. Bosanquet argues that finite individuals are more than 'self or soul' in a narrow sense (LFI 83, note), and he states that individuals characterise the world 'as permanent qualifications' (LFI 101). As we have just seen, human beings are 'indispensable' for the move to, and the expression of, the Absolute. One might say that all finite beings—or, as Bradley would have it, all degrees of reality—are so, but Bosanquet goes much further. He describes the 'conscious and intelligent self' as 'the climax and sum and substance of evolution' (PIV 158; cf. 338) and as having a unique function (see PIV 326; 337–338). Bosanquet argues not only that finite consciousnesses are necessary for the realisation of the whole (PIV 287), but that they have a central role. Their role as conscious beings is not only to express the Absolute, but also to connect nature with the Absolute—to 'bridge' externality and the Absolute[19] (PIV 321, see also 193–194, 325–326, 337, 382). For example, Bosanquet writes that '[e]xternality is joined to the absolute through conscious centres' (PIV 218) and that it is through the self that nature acquires its significance

and value; self-consciousness has as its purpose 'to give everything its character, to be the centre in which everything in its degree tells on the import of the whole' (PIV 337).

Moreover, the privileged manifestation of the Absolute is in the work of the human spirit—namely, social life, art and religion (cf. VDI 90–91; 378; PIV 270). Thus, not only is it that 'the burden of the finite is inherently… an instrument of the self-completion of the infinite' (Bosanquet, 1906, p. 10), but '[n]ature, or externality, lives in the life of conscious beings' (PIV 371)—though, of course, this does not mean that it is reducible to the latter.

The human being is thus conceived of as a 'copula' (PIV 371, 382; see PIV 288,[20] 321–2, 326, 218; VDI 280ff [21])—as a way of connecting nature and the Absolute. As G.T. Hobbs notes: 'Finite minds have the dual nature of being at once a solution of the complexity which gave them rise, and also a means of further contributing to the ultimate unity, the Absolute Spirit, through the broader scope of unification which consciousness affords.'[22]

Finite consciousnesses, then, continue to be present *in* the Absolute; they are not entirely absorbed by it. Bosanquet writes: 'A world… is a system of members, such that every member being *ex hypothesi* distinct, nevertheless contributes to the unity of the whole *in virtue of the peculiarities which constitute its distinctness*' (PIV 37; emphasis mine). We see this mirrored in Bosanquet's logic: a single judgement or proposition has its meaning only within a set of propositions—in fact, its fullest meaning is found only in relation to the set of all true propositions. But to hold this is not to mean that the single judgement no longer exists, or is irrelevant, or is 'merely a means' to the system of propositions as a whole (see Sweet, 2002, p. 151).

It is this feature of being 'a world' that allows us to see that finite consciousnesses remain distinguished from other things. It is because each self is 'a world' that it retains its distinctiveness in the Absolute. In fact, the Absolute is described by Bosanquet as 'a world of worlds' (PIV 158).[23]

Again, Bosanquet asserts: 'We, both our form—I mean, our peculiarly qualified individual self-consciousness—and our content—I mean, our interests and experiences—are thus real and eternal in the ultimate being'

(VDI 282; cf. VDI 287).[24] So the individual human subject is not 'merely adjectival', even if it is not entirely 'substantive'.

A third way of reconciling the apparent difference between the metaphysical and the moral self is to note that this difference rests on an exaggerated account of the independence of the finite self that misrepresents what finite selves do and seek. As noted earlier, human beings live and act in the world and thus can have an influence beyond their 'separate' existences. Moreover, as has been noted, there is no contradiction between the fundamental aims and interests of human persons and (what Bosanquet calls in his metaphysics) the Absolute. Recall Bosanquet's comment that 'if I possessed myself completely, I should be the Absolute'. Indeed, Bosanquet argues that what is of most importance to human beings is not their own separateness or even 'self-completeness', but something far greater than, though not inconsistent with, themselves. This, Bosanquet thinks, is the insight of religion, which recognises that through self-sacrifice comes self-realisation. Bosanquet frequently alludes to Goethe's phrase 'stirb und werde'—'die to live' (SS 161; Bosanquet, 1912a 495–6). In religion and morality, there is an 'abandonment of self [by which Bosanquet means one's isolated, particular interests] in a greater whole' (LFI 190) since 'each "mind" finds its completion in the other' (LFI 185). The 'positive sense of the self' is something 'which continually passes out of and regains itself' (PIV xxiv).

Still, one might ask, what is the 'self' to be realised? Is it the human subject? This is a key question. Bosanquet writes that 'it is our nature to be a single self' (LFI 92). So, if by human subject we mean a (finite) centre of consciousness normally characteristic of a 'self-coherent body' (LFI 87), the answer can be yes—it is a 'self'.

We need, however, to be attentive to what more Bosanquet says about the human subject. This metaphysical self is *not* the metaphysical self of theorists such as Pringle-Pattison. It is certainly not the same as that of Mill or Spencer—or of earlier figures such as Locke. To see what it is, however, one needs to recognise Bosanquet's distinction between 'the self' and finite individuality.[25]

For Bosanquet, neither finite individuality nor selfhood should be identified simply with the human physical organism and its processes. Human subjects or selves are self-conscious beings—beings who have a

past and a future but who also are related to others and, hence, are social; who are capable of language, self-reflection and correction; who have and can discover ends or conceptions of the good; and who can choose to orient themselves to these ends. A human subject is something that has a unity about it, this unity being provided by (self-)consciousness. Moreover, what characterises a human subject is that it shares with other of its kind more than what distinguishes it from them. It also involves a recognition that what the human subject is includes what it has in it to become.

The accounts of the self found in Pringle-Pattison, Mill, Spencer and others focus on the linear, continuous aspects of identity, which Bosanquet considers to be empty and abstract. Instead, Bosanquet focuses on a person's lateral or coordinate identity—its relations to others. Separate from or only in potential to its 'lateral' relations, the self is 'provisional', and its distinctiveness from others is no more than a mass of differences that provides no sense of what is important about them.

Thus, for Bosanquet, there is more to the finite human being than being a self in the narrow sense; the human being achieves selfhood in a more robust sense, by identifying and incorporating content—for example, dominant ideas (such as truth and beauty)—into consciousness. This identifying and incorporating content requires individual action, effort, intelligence and responsibility. It is ongoing. Human subjects are always incomplete; there is always more to learn and to be put into relation with what they have already learned. This is the process of 'perfecting the soul'. Overcoming one's limitations not only develops one's moral character but also results in realising oneself. Further, this self-realisation[26] promotes a 'form of life' (PTS 183)—the best life of the whole (PTS 182)—and not just an individual life. It is for this reason that this moral end is called 'the perfection of *human* personality' and 'the excellence of souls', and not simply the excellence of one's own soul.[27] The Absolute, then, can be seen as an indefinite extension of these attributes and character.

We see this point reflected in Bosanquet's political philosophy. For example, he refers at times to the 'higher self' and the 'lower self' (see PTS 227). The lower self is the limited self; the higher is that which is more complete and coherent. Moreover, it is because the finite individual recognises that one's higher self has an imperative claim on one's lower self—and note that the human subject is neither just the lower nor the

higher self, but both—that we can make sense of Bosanquet's defence of the value and importance of self-*sacrifice* that is a moral as well as a political principle (see *SS* 161; Bosanquet, 1912a, 495–6).[28] Since the community and the state are also expressions of a process of the development of consciousness, they have an epistemic and moral—and not just a political—authority over finite consciousnesses, though one need not take that authority as *necessarily* right or just. To repeat, we should not forget that both the higher and the lower selves are part of the human subject.

What has been described above is a process in moral development, but it is also a process that has a metaphysical character that deals with the nature and development of the self. Throughout, Bosanquet nowhere states that human beings are unimportant, or that they do not exist, or that all that exists is an 'idea' or mere appearance. In order to understand human subjects, however—to know them as related to other beings and as capable of growth and development and to appreciate their value— requires focussing on them at the level of consciousness. This focus leads to absolute idealism, but it also reflects the continuing importance of the development of the human person. At this point, however, one needs to distinguish between the self *qua* isolated unit with only a linear identity, and the 'finite individual' which has both a linear and lateral identity. It is this distinction that explains how Bosanquet in his metaphysics can sometimes be critical of the nature and value of the human self, so far as the focus is on its linear identity, while in his moral and political philosophy he argues for the value of the finite human being, given its lateral identity.

Conclusion

Some have challenged Bosanquet's philosophical views by arguing that they ignore the distinctness and value of the human individual, but some have also argued that Bosanquet seems to offer two incompatible ways of looking at the finite human being—what I have called the metaphysical self and the moral self.

I have argued, however, that despite the apparent differences, these two perspectives are consistent—moral development occurs in much the same way (and involves the same active engagement of the human subject) as the development of self-consciousnesses. I have suggested that

Bosanquet's careful and life-long attention to the development of character and the realisation of the moral self makes any ultimate tension between the metaphysical self and the moral self implausible. Moreover, I have argued not only that the value and reality of the human subject can be preserved in Bosanquet's absolute idealism, but that the finite individual has a key role in the articulation of the Absolute—so that, again, Bosanquet's account of the metaphysical and the moral self is consistent. The tension between the metaphysical and the moral self remains only if one focuses on the 'apparent self identity of the movable and self-coherent body' (LFI 87)—what Bosanquet would call the linear identity—and ignores that human beings as finite consciousnesses essentially have relations to others—lateral identity. But, I have concluded, Bosanquet has given us reason not to do this.

Notes

1. For example, L.T. Hobhouse writes: 'For the thoroughgoing idealist, all the conscious beings that live under the shadow of the Absolute seem to have just as much or as little title to independent consideration as the cells of the human body' Hobhouse, 1918, pp. 19–20.

2. For example, the eminent British/American psychologist William McDougall writes: 'Bosanquet's theory amounts to a justification of the old individualist laissez faire doctrine—the doctrine that the good of the whole is best achieved by giving freest possible scope to the play and conflict of individual purposes and strivings.' (McDougall, 1920, p. 213). See also Collini, 1976, p. 87.

3. The purpose of this study is to address a putative inconsistency in Bosanquet's view. There is, however, a much broader and different question, raised by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison and others, about whether absolute idealists, such as Bosanquet, can maintain that the finite human subject is real in a concrete sense and has value. I cannot address this issue here. However, if the present argument is correct and my distinction between the narrow finite self in its linear identity and the human self as a moral being with lateral identity is persuasive, one can maintain the reality and value of human persons in a way that is compatible with an account of the Absolute.

4. This paper employs the following abbreviations for works by Bosanquet: *The Principle of Individuality and Value* (PIV), *The Value and Destiny of the Individual* (VDI), *Some Suggestions in Ethics* (SS), *'The Reality of the General Will'* (RGW), *Science and Philosophy* (SP), *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (PTS), *The Psychology of the Moral Self* (PMS) and *Life and Finite Individuality* (LFI).

5. Although the term 'the Absolute' does not explicitly play a role in Bosanquet's moral or political philosophy, it seems to be implied.

6. Bosanquet argues that '[t]he psychical elements of the mind are so grouped and interconnected as to constitute what are technically known as Appercipient masses or systems' (PMS 42). The mind or self, then, is a multiplicity of such systems.

7. The view that ethical life involves the existence of stations or positions and duties, characteristic of Bosanquet's early moral and political philosophy, echoes Bradley (see *Ethical Studies* (1876/1927, "Essay V") and T.H. Green (1917, sec. 39; 1906, sec. 183; 313 and 338)).

8. Recall here Bosanquet's description of morality as 'being equal to the situation' (see Bosanquet, 1924, 69, as well as SS 150 and PTS 39).

9. See Bosanquet (PTS 134): 'If we ask, "What is constraint?" the answer is founded on the current distinction between myself and others as different minds attached to different bodies. It is constraint when my mind is interfered with in its control of my body either by actual or by threatening physical violence under the direction of another mind.'

10. Collini (1976, p. 99) sees here a tendency towards Kantianism.

11. Recall that Mill (1978) finds three similar principles that provide limits on state action in *On Liberty*, 107–109.

12. Other terms that Bosanquet uses here are 'the excellence of souls' (cf. PTS, p. xxxvii, xxxix), 'the complete realisation of the individual' (cf. PTS, pp. xv–xvi), and 'the existence and the perfection of human personality' (PTS 189). It is this 'realisation of our self which we instinctively demand and desire' that Bosanquet calls, in his Gifford Lectures, 'the eternal reality of the Absolute' (VDI 288).

13. Bosanquet, 1924, 68; cf. PTS 6, 50, 52, 83.

14. Bosanquet writes: '[W]e are to think of the individual as a world of experience, whose centre is given in the body and in the range of externality that comes by means of it, but whose limits depend on his power. He is a world that realizes, in a limited manner, the logic and spirit of the whole…' (PIV 287).

15. Bosanquet writes: 'It might even be possible that the same being might be substantival in one relation and adjectival in another' (LFI 184).

16. This procedure is also present in Bosanquet's description of the general will as a 'maximization' of the individual will, where the former is the latter 'writ large'—that is, in the light of its full relations with others. (Bosanquet also notes that 'interdependence' is one of the characteristics 'of thought at its best'[PIV 59].)

17. One may say, therefore, that the conscious and intelligent human self, because it is not simply the isolated finite self, contains ('intentionally') the fuller completion of the self and thus has a substantive character. Bosanquet writes: 'It *is* a substance, and an ultimate subject, but not in its own right' (93).

18. See Bosanquet's remark: 'If you set down a description of man as he seems to be, you find that his self—what gives character to the appearance, and is needed to understand it—lies outside what you have portrayed' (PIV 258).

19. Human beings are natural material beings, and so this process of development also involves moving from the material—say, at the level of desire and aversion—and elevating the material to the level of moral consciousness. Arguably, it is in this sense that finite selves 'bridge' externality and the Absolute.

20. This seems to be suggested, as well, in Bosanquet's remark that '[e]very degree and every distinct centre or origin of individuality… necessarily constitutes a different vision and interpretation of things, and through all these incompletenesses a totality of differences must emerge which, so far as we can grasp, could not be allowed in any other way' (PIV 288).

21. Here Bosanquet is discussing Green's view, outlined in the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, that as individuals we are not extinguished in the Absolute.

22. Hobbs, 1955, p. 209. See also Hobbs, p. 127, n 46: Nature has 'a form of being independent of mind', but 'its highest significance is revealed through mind'.

23. See also Bosanquet's comment that '…the Absolute allows minor worlds, formally distinct… to constitute its union with externality, which union is itself' (PIV 321).

24. For a discussion of Bosanquet's views on this point of the distinctiveness and value of the 'self' in the world in contrast to those of Bradley, see Sweet, 1997. I do not have space to discuss this matter here.

25. In LFI, Bosanquet distinguishes between the self or soul and 'the finite individual' (LFI 100; see 83).

26. Curiously, Bosanquet does not often use the term 'self-realisation' to describe the object of moral action, preferring in its place the term 'self-transcendence'. See VDI 16–18. Self-transcendence is not restricted to morality and metaphysics; in logic, inference is also a kind of 'self-transcendence' (see Acton, 1967, p. 349). See also Stedman, 1931.

27. The problem with socialism, in Bosanquet's view, is not that it emphasises a role for the state but rather its underlying individualism. He remarks: 'One might say that the socialist Individualist forgets that every social good must be spiritual, and the *laissez-faire* Individualist forgets that every spiritual good must be social.' See Bosanquet, 1907/1999, pp. 217–8.

28. The distinction between a narrow finite self and a higher self is not, of course, one of strict opposition or negation.

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10

'To Set Free the Idea of the Self': Bosanquet's Relational Individual

Avital Simhony

Introduction

A common charge against Bosanquet holds that he depreciates the value of the self. This is, so the charge goes, because he denigrates the reality of the empirical self. For example, Berlin claims that 'the empirical spatio-temporal existence of the finite individual' is denigrated in that 'the individual is an element or aspect' of the social whole, in which his 'sense of personal identity' is dissolved (Berlin, 1969, p. xliii). However, perhaps the most prominent proponent of this criticism is Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison. In a 1918 symposium entitled 'Do Finite Individuals Possess a Substantive or Adjectival Mode of Being?' he criticized Bosanquet for depriving the self of any reality in its own right and, regarding it as a mere aspect of the social whole which, ultimately, is transmuted and absorbed altogether in the Absolute (Mander, 2005, p. 111–130). That

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is, Bosanquet defends an adjectival self which, ultimately, is a disappearing self. So goes the criticism.

Bosanquet makes the finite individual disappear in the Absolute. This, however, is not my concern. My concern is rather with how that disappearance impacts the status of the finite individual in the social world. Is the disappeared individual of the Absolute the proper model for understanding the finite individual in the social world? Does Bosanquet belittle the value of the social individual because of its ultimate absorption in the Absolute? Pringle-Pattison certainly thinks so. If we follow in Pringle-Pattison's footsteps, if we look at the finite individual from the perspective of the Absolute, it is difficult to resist his conclusion.

To deny wholesale Pringle-Pattison's objections would be a mission impossible. Nor is it my aim to inoculate Bosanquet entirely from this sort of criticism, which has some truth to it. My aim is much more modest. I argue that subscribing to Pringle-Pattison's criticism uncritically both obscures, and deflects from the proper appreciation of, a conception of self that merits our attention. I shall refer to it as the relational individual or self. Bosanquet on occasions refers in the plural to 'co-operative selves' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 95).

The conception of relational or co-operative individuality is, to be sure, not unique to Bosanquet. It lies at the center of nearly all Idealist social and political thought. Indeed, it would not be a misrepresentation to say that even Pringle-Pattison himself embraces that conception (e.g. Seth, 1883, pp. 33–4). Given the genuine difficulties that surround Bosanquet's conception of the self, the question arises: why focus specifically on *him* to explain an idea so common among Idealists? The reason is that no other Idealist focuses so much attention on the relational individual as Bosanquet does. Making his account conspicuous, therefore, may enrich our understanding of the conception of selfhood that informs British Idealist political thinking in general. Bosanquet's particular focus on the concept may, perhaps, be attributable to his interest in sociological theories and social psychology. He clearly gives center stage in his thinking to 'all that is "social"', namely 'all that springs from the co-operation and the sympathies of human beings' (Bosanquet, PTS, p. xxxiii).

I propose, then, that turning the spotlight on Bosanquet's conception of the relational self is sufficiently valuable to be of interest. While I do not wish to address the deeper metaphysical question of whether

Bosanquet models the social world on the Absolute, my approach is premised on the claim that it is sufficiently reasonable and valid to focus on the relational self from the perspective of the social whole. For it is primarily constituted by intricately connected webs of relations.

I proceed in three steps. First, I look at Pringle-Pattison's argument that Bosanquet conceptualizes the self as merely adjectival. The adjectival self is, as I shall call it, the disappeared self. Second, examining Bosanquet's response to this charge, I argue that his adjectival self emerges as a relational self. Strangely enough, the same idea of the 'confluence of selves' that so troubles Pringle-Pattison and that justifies his charge of the disappeared self also forms the basis for Bosanquet's concept of the relational self. Third, I argue that though the relational self is vulnerable to the criticism of being devalued, it does not have to be thought of as lacking in value. There are marked ways in which Bosanquet's relational self is far from diminished. In particular, I wish to highlight the active, energetic and self-governing capacities of the relational individual.

The Adjectival Self Is the Disappeared Self

Pringle-Pattison worries about 'Professor Bosanquet's on the whole grudging and depreciatory treatment of the finite self' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 108). How so? How is Bosanquet's treatment of the finite self depreciatory? The title of the symposium in which the charge is made—'Do Finite Individuals Possess a Substantive or Adjectival Mode of Being?'—provides a clue. Pringle-Pattison argues that Bosanquet diminishes the value of the empirical individual by depriving it of reality. Bosanquet, so the argument goes, assigns only an adjectival status to the empirical individual, thereby denying the individual a distinct status as a real subject. In protest, Pringle-Pattison insists on 'the permanence of individual personality', which he opposes 'to the transient function assigned to it in Professor Bosanquet's theory' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 113).

Ultimately, Pringle-Pattison complains, Bosanquet makes the empirical self disappear: 'It was this conception of the confluence of selves and a similar expression about the "overlapping" of intelligences which led me to assert that …"one might almost say that Professor Bosanquet's theory

does not contain the idea of self at all'" (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 109). The qualification 'one might almost say' suggests that Pringle-Pattison himself treats his claim with some hesitation. No hesitation, however, accompanies his insistence that '[T]he existence of the self for the self is an experienced certainty; it is, in a sense, the ground on which we stand' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 114). This certainty informs his charge against Bosanquet: 'In his theory there is no real self at all' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 113). The adjectival self is, then, the disappeared self.

It is important, however, to avoid a misunderstanding. The issue between Pringle-Pattison and Bosanquet is not about the opposition between the social-holistic self and the abstract-atomistic self. Pringle-Pattison does not defend an individualist, atomistic self against the adjectival self. Much like Bosanquet, he rejects that self, insisting on the social nature of the self. Thus, quoting Pringle-Pattison, Bosanquet stresses: 'We both believe that the mere individual nowhere exists; "he is the creature of a theory"' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 85). The disagreement between the two philosophers instead concerns the nature of the social self.

The nub of the disagreement lies with Pringle-Pattison's insistence that the numerical individual possesses value 'in itself' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 108). On the face of it, this is problematic since the 'in itself' claim—especially if joined by his emphasis on 'self-centred individuals' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 114)—seems to be inconsistent with his equal insistence on the social nature of the individual (Seth, 1883, pp. 33–4). The problem, however, is resolved if we consider the 'in itself' in the light of Pringle-Pattison's concern about Bosanquet's idea of 'the confluence of selves'. This concern is not unlike Rawls' charge that 'utilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons' because utilitarianism presupposes 'conflation of persons' (Rawls, TJ, p. 27, 29, 185–9). Rawls holds that the classical utilitarians' way of justifying their principle was by appeal to some sort of Humean altruist impartial spectator who carries out 'the required organization of the desires of all persons into one coherent system of desires; it is by this construction that *many persons are fused into one*' (Rawls, TJ, p. 27; emphasis added). This results in a conception of society in which '*separate individu-*

als are thought of as so many different lines along which rights and duties are to be assigned and scarce means of satisfaction allocated … so as to give the greatest fulfilment of wants' (Rawls, TJ, p. 27; emphasis added).

Pringle-Pattison argues, in a similar vein, that 'Professor Bosanquet's attitude to the self seemed to me … to be the outcome … of a general refusal to recognise the significance of *numerical identity* as the basal characteristic of concrete existence' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 108). For 'refusal to recognize the significance of numerical identity', read 'does not take seriously the distinction between persons'. Both Rawls and Pringle-Pattison are motivated by concern for the value of individual personality. Green similarly claims against the Benthamite utilitarian: 'It is not every person, according to him, but every pleasure, that is of value in itself' (Green, 1883, sect. 214). That the numerical individual on Bosanquet's account '*is of no value in itself*' is the charge that gives force to Pringle-Pattison's concern about Bosanquet's 'depreciatory treatment of the finite self' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 108). For by conflating distinct selves, Pringle-Pattison complains, 'the significance of any individual' is made to lie not in terms of distinct personality, but rather in terms of common value content realized in human life generally. 'But Professor Bosanquet's exclusive preoccupation with content', Pringle-Pattison stresses, 'leads him to forget that content is equally an abstraction, if severed from the centres of experience—the beings—in which it is realised' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 108).

Pringle-Pattison accepts that a large degree of identical content among selves is possible and that, therefore, it makes sense to speak of the overlapping of selves. What makes no sense and can have no meaning, however, is 'to speak as if their common content affected in any way their existential distinctness', for 'the very meaning' of the existence of the self 'is that it is a unique focalisation of the universe' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 109). Put differently, Pringle-Pattison's anxiety about the conflation of finite selves is really a worry about their disintegration as distinct human persons. The result recalls Rawls' complaint about the utilitarian conception of society in which '*separate individuals are thought of as so many different lines …*' (Rawls, TJ, p. 27). Similarly, Pringle-Pattison maintains that in 'speaking of finite selves he [Bosanquet] seems never to look at them from the inside … but always

from the point of view of a spectator' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 113). The result is 'that the mind or self is simply a punctual centre in which a system of moral and social relations reflects itself into unity as rays of light are concentrated in a focus' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 114). Because the point of view of the spectator focuses on 'common content' of selves without their 'existential distinctness', 'there is no ground discernible for the distinction and multiplication of personalities. These are at best only different points of view—peepholes, so to speak—from which an identical content is contemplated' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 109 & 116, respectively).

Bosanquet's Relational Self

Bosanquet's relational concept of the self is one that is all too easily lost sight of in this debate, but if we can look past the measure of justice in some of Pringle-Pattison's concerns, and set aside Bosanquet's own rather unhappy terminology, then it is possible to draw out from his account an understanding of the self as individual-in-relation which merits our closer attention. To construct this conception is the task at hand. The relational self emerges from Bosanquet's answer to his own question: 'Is the confluence of selves conceivable, and is there any analogy or example in its favour?' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 96). Curiously, then, the same idea of the confluence of selves that so troubles Pringle-Pattison and that justifies his charge of the disappeared self also forms the basis for Bosanquet's concept of the relational self.

The first step in constructing the individual-in-relation lies with Bosanquet's claim that an adjectival self need not be a disappearing self. Contrary to what Pringle-Pattison claims, Bosanquet does not deprive the adjectival self of reality: 'I am substantive and subject … but only so far as I recognise myself to be adjective and predicate' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 93). What does this mean?

> It is urged that individuals are none the less apprehended as they really are, if apprehended as distinct individuals in spite of belonging to a superior whole. … The question is whether, in considering the subordinate indi-

vidual, the abstraction involved in attending to it par excellence is forgotten or is remembered. (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 84)

To the extent that Pringle-Pattison insists on the reality of individuals as distinct in spite of belonging to a social whole, and on the reality of the finite individual 'in its own right', he could be thought to share in the fault of abstraction.

Bosanquet's own position requires that 'the abstraction involved in apprehending the subordinate individual is unforgotten'. So apprehended, the individual is 'real. So apprehended … and not otherwise, it may fairly be called substantival. But this is not in its own right …' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 84). The finite self gains reality only in and through unity with the social whole. 'In relation to him, his society is an infinite whole within which he is a finite being, partaking through it of infinity or self-completeness' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 185). 'Self-completeness' is the key. The more complete the individual is, the less abstract he is; the more complete, the more real he is. To appreciate Bosanquet's conception of the finite self is, therefore, to locate it on a continuum between 'the fuller and narrower self' (Bosanquet, PTS, p. 170); between the complete and the partial self. The completing self partakes in society through participating in its diverse institutions and networks of relations.

The self-completing individual is the relational individual. This concept is most clearly grasped in Bosanquet's idea of lateral identity. Lateral identity is relational identity. It is in the context of the lateral self that Bosanquet raises the possibility of a confluence of selves. Pringle-Pattison views it as proof positive that Bosanquet makes the self disappear. His anxiety might explain, I believe, why he misses the importance of the relational-completing self. Recall Bosanquet's question: '[I]s the confluence of selves conceivable, and is there any analogy or example in its favour?' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 96). His answer is to insist on what he has 'called lateral identity—identity of co-existent being as contrasted with that of a thread continuous in succession' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 96).

Lateral identity is best appreciated by noting how Bosanquet contrasts it with linear identity. 'It seems to me all-important for a free and full understanding of the self', urges Bosanquet, 'to make at least as much

of co-existent, as of continuous identity'. He contrasts here two kinds of identities of the self. One is 'lateral identity—identity of co-existent being'; the other, 'linear identity'—'that of a thread continuous in succession', 'the so-called existential or numerical identity of individual things' (Bosanquet, Symposium, pp. 94, 96, 89, respectively). Linear identity treats individuals as independent entities caused more by their internal characters than by their relation to others. Thus, whereas linear identity focuses on *intra*-relation, lateral identity is forged by *inter*-relation. Bosanquet by no means rejects the linear identity of the self (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 94; Bosanquet, PIV, pp. 283–4, 285; Bosanquet, VDI, p. 15). His conceptualization of the self, much like his conceptualization of society, stresses complexity. Linear identity is one of the features of a multifaceted self. Bosanquet claims only that it falls short of constituting the complete nature of selfhood or of standing out as its primary feature. If we neglect the co-existent identity of the self, 'we unnaturally narrow down the basis of our self' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 94). Put differently, exclusive focus on linear identity is 'blinding us to the moral and spiritual structure which lies behind the visible scene' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 89). This structure is a common life in which finite individuals participate; it is the 'wholeness' which resides in the complex institutions in which individual selves are embedded:

> Bosanquet says that a being which would be impoverished by the absence of another is plainly finite as against that other, and is part of a more comprehensive unity, which, immanent in it, is the ground of an implication connecting it with other members of the unity. (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 186)

What, then, are the main features of the lateral-relational self? The nature of the finite self is not based merely upon an accumulation of past experiences (linear identity), but it is inseparable from the environment of inter-personal relations in which the self is embedded. Bosanquet here insists on the synchronous dimension of the self in addition to its diachronic dimension. He maintains that viewing the finite self exclusively in terms of linear (diachronic) identity is reduc-

tionist in that it reveals a tendency to understand the self-in-separation. On this linear conceptualization of the self in terms of 'successional continuity', 'identity is only within one thing. Between two things there can only be similarity' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 89). The self, however, is always simultaneously-in-inter-personal-relations. Such are, for example, co-operative relations, associative action, or acting together with others—all of which are expressed in institutions such as neighborhoods, trade unions and worker co-operatives (Simhony, 2013, pp. 258–262). Linear conceptualization of the self, he believes, tends to isolate it from its orbit of simultaneous relations with others. Hence, Bosanquet's claim that '[Pringle-Pattison] keeps the individual selves more ultimately separate' (Bosanquet, 1917, p. 479). Lateral identity necessarily weakens the boundaries between selves, for it shifts the focus from self and others, from self-contained selves to 'co-operative selves' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 95), to selves-in-others, to selves-through-selves. Pringle-Pattison's charge of the disappearing self misses that co-operative identity—hence my focus on the lateral identity of the self. Such identity is not a simple matter of merging selves or disintegrating the idea of personality. To do so would militate against relationality, namely simultaneous-inter-personal-relations.

The relational individual is central to Bosanquet's conceptualization of the social world. If selves are merged, the language of reciprocal recognition would become redundant. Speaking of Hegel's objective view of freedom, to which he subscribes, Bosanquet states: 'The "free mind" does not explain itself and cannot stand alone. … its purposes cannot be made determinate, except in an actual system of selves' (Bosanquet, PTS, p. 235). Similarly, Bosanquet insists that:

> intelligent Mind is essentially reciprocal … and lives in the medium of recognition; … in the social being a new variation of Mind arises from the very fact of reciprocity. As the one relies upon the other, so the other relies upon the one; and both together … become elements in a universal consciousness or social Mind within which individual centres recognise themselves and each other. (Bosanquet, VDI, pp. 85–6)

Lateral identity, then, accounts for the mutual completion of finite selves.

If I have lingered over the relationality of the self or overburdened the reader with quotations, then by way of excuse I appeal to the dominance and staying power of the sort of charge articulated by Pringle-Pattison. Against this backdrop, I wish to turn the spotlight on something somewhat buried in Bosanquet's argument, something which has for too long lain under the shadow of excessively holistic interpretations of his social and political philosophy: namely, his conception of the relational self. Holistic his argument is, but it is a relational holism, not an abstract one.

To get an even better handle on the relational self, it will be helpful to center attention on the ideas of the mutual completion of selves and of the general or communal will.

Mutual Completion of Selves

Pringle-Pattison complains that Bosanquet denigrates the self by regarding it as transient and fragmentary. For Personal Idealists, these become fighting words and a self-evident proof of the devaluing of the finite individual, but taken in their proper context they need not be. Consider the following claim of Rawls that no human being 'could become a *complete* exemplar of humanity':

> *It is a feature of human sociability that we are by ourselves but parts of what we might be*. We must look to others to attain the excellences that we must leave aside, or lack altogether. The collective activity of society, the many associations and the public life of the largest community that regulates them, sustains our effort and elicits contribution. Yet the good attained from the common culture far exceeds our work in the sense that *we cease to be mere fragments* …. (Rawls, TJ, p. 529; emphases added)

Essential to Rawls' idea of human sociability is the complementarity of human goods. Since 'we are by ourselves but part of what we might be' (since 'we are by ourselves' essentially incomplete), participating in social activities with others is constitutive of our completion. Rawls' language of

'mere fragments' is entirely consistent with his insistence on the distinctive individuality of persons. An immediate retort might be that, unlike Bosanquet, Rawls rejects outright the confluence of persons. Which he does. However, the human sociability claim—'the members of a community participate in one another's nature … the self is realized in the activities of many selves' (Rawls, TJ, p. 565)—is not inconsistent with the idea of flexible boundaries to selfhood.

In a similar vein, the point of lateral unity is not the simple merging of selves but rather their relationality—their simultaneous-inter-personal-relations: 'Each "mind" finds its *completion* in the other, its purposes supported and corrected, its contradictions removed, its tendencies and inclinations represented, reinforced, systematised' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 185; emphasis added). Mutual completion is effected through participation in networks of social relations. For Bosanquet, society itself is a social whole of social wholes, for 'society … is a vast tissue of systems … There are wheels within wheels, systems within systems, groups within groups' (Bosanquet, PTS, p. 155). The point is that participating in multiple social systems and groups draws out a variety of human capacities, the exercise of which constitutes the development of individual personality. This is why, as I shall suggest below, Bosanquet accords much importance to participatory communities.

General/Communal Will

The general will is an example of 'one self in many bodies' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 99). So is the 'communal will', the 'communal mind' and the 'organic will'—all of which terms Bosanquet employs interchangeably (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 95, 185 & Bosanquet, RGW, p. 330). Each illustrates his idea of the confluence of selves. But what does Bosanquet mean by this? He aims to offer 'a different way of looking at the matter' and to shift the point of view involved in understanding individuals away from the individualist approach that takes 'the separate body as the separate self' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 94, 92). The new point of view which he advocates instead places relations at the center: 'The claim of society upon us does not seem to be founded on the fact that it is a plurality of

bodily selves or … of intelligences but rather in the particular nature that their co-operation reveals' (Bosanquet, PMS, pp. 93–4). The idea of co-operative selves captures 'the general or organic will as contrasted with the will of all as a number of units' (Bosanquet, RGW, p. 330).

The idea of the general will does not wipe out selves; it discloses their inter-connection in terms of co-operation and mutual completion: 'The communal mind is not a ghost hovering over a nation; it is the minds of individuals in which the common stuff gives varied expression to the qualities and functions of the whole' (Bosanquet, Symposium, p. 185). The 'common stuff' that inter-connects different selves is a 'community of life and of experience' (Bosanquet, RGW, p. 323) which they inhabit. Bosanquet's point is not simply that many wills share the same 'stuff'. This would be an abstract identity, which he rejects. For 'identity, being a co-operative universal, is best subserved by difference' (Bosanquet, VDI, p. 329,n. 2). Identity in difference, or the idea of the concrete universal is the cornerstone of Bosanquet's social metaphysics (Mander, 2000, pp. 293–308). To claim that 'common life' expresses some universal or identity is to maintain that it connects individual selves in a particular way; not as the same set of ideas repeats itself in many selves taken as separate units, but rather as a system of ideas which informs particular individual selves in their unique place in the web of relationships which they inhabit. 'What is the root of the whole matter?' asks Bosanquet. 'It is', he answers, 'nothing less than the correspondence with each other of the shapes taken by separate minds, each under the stress of its particular experience' (Bosanquet, RGW, p. 327).

The essential point here concerns participation. It is that individual minds or selves are not mere passive recipients of some common life which pours itself out through them. They are, rather, active participants in a community of experience which is sustained and advanced by them. Moreover, because individuals are members of multiple communities— recall that society is a community of communities—individual wills constitute themselves as complex systems of ideas. 'The communities to which we belong are now like a nest of boxes inside one another; but we cannot effectively share the general will of any community with which we have no common life and experience' (Bosanquet, RGW, p. 330).

Individuality Is Positive and Constructive

'What seems to me important is to set free the idea of the self', claims Bosanquet (Bosanquet, 1918, p. 96). To do so, he maintains, two related requirements must be met. First, full recognition must be given to lateral or co-existent identity—to what I have called the relational self. Second, and relatedly, it must be appreciated that content is the basis of the self. Putting these two points together forges his positive conception of the self, the insistence upon which informs all his treatments of it: '[W]e want to think of the individual primarily as mind. And we must learn to interpret "mind" positively, in its own right, by what it is and does' (Bosanquet, PIV, pp. 282; 285). Note that Bosanquet employs the phrase 'in its own right' approvingly when attached to the self as content, in contrast to his rejection of the same qualification when used to depict the self as distinct from the social whole—which use he associates with Pringle-Pattison. Bosanquet does not reject the idea of distinctness of personality or individuality. Rather, he refuses to equate it with the linear individual. He denies that the uniqueness of the human person lies exclusively with its linear identity. The distinctive nature of human personality lies with its ability to expand and develop, and this is inseparable from the lateral identity of the self.

Bosanquet conceptualizes the self in terms of growth and expansion, not of exclusion and self-centeredness:

> [T]he self, as that which is our unity, the good of life, and that for which we care, could turn out to lie not in a consciousness of the not-self but in a content or quality of being, which … is most completely realised when the antagonistic consciousness of the not-self is at its minimum. (Bosanquet, PIV, pp. 272–3)

Consider Bosanquet's criticism of what he calls 'first look' theories (Sweet, 1997, pp. 9–32). He claims:

> Force or automatic custom or authoritative tradition … are not hostile to one individuality because they come from 'others,' but because their nature is contradictory to the nature of the highest self-assertion of mind …. It is

not, therefore, the intrusion upon isolation, as such, that interferes with individuality; it is the intrusion, upon a growing unity of consciousness, of a medium hostile to its growth. (Bosanquet, PTS, p. 169. See also p. 174, 60–5)

Essential here is Bosanquet's conceptualization of the self by means of the positive ideas of growth and development, rather than by the negative notions of exclusion, externality to 'others', and the mutual limitation of individuals by one another.

'Otherness' of individuals, argues Bosanquet, cannot be that which makes the individual unique, that which distinguishes the fulfillment of the capacities of human nature:

[W]hen we deal with other people … our relation to them of benevolence, justice, etc. is founded upon some more positive point of view than that of mere otherness; it is based, for instance, upon their humanity or citizenship, their capacity for education or for religion … We regulate our treatment of them in accordance with the nature or capabilities we find in them. (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 94)

Bosanquet seeks to articulate an alternative to the approach that focuses on the otherness of individuals, on their self-contained separateness as that which invests the individual with value (more below). Rejection of 'mere otherness' does not, however, entail the obliteration of selves. This would be inconsistent with 'relation'—with the important concepts of mutual recognition and co-existent identity—that is, it would be to eliminate the relational self altogether. Instead, by rejecting 'mere otherness', Bosanquet seeks to shift the focus to 'co-operative selves', the work of whom 'together in society' results in a realization of human nature which enriches all (Bosanquet, PMS, pp.94–5). He refers to this realization as 'the moral self' and asserts: 'Our connection with others is, so to speak, in the Self, and not in the Not-self' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 67). We should take special note of Bosanquet's vocabulary here; his 'so to speak' is significant. Set against the 'Not -self', Bosanquet employs 'Self' not to signify the absorption of selves in a single collective self. Rather, by the 'Self' he means to draw attention to the positive nature of individuality

in terms of selves-through-selves, which he contrasts with the negativity of selves-versus-selves.

A more appropriate way of grasping Bosanquet's effort to reject 'mere otherness' is to see how he shifts focus from a weak conception of relationality to a strong one (Slife, 2004, pp. 158–9). From the weak relational perspective, persons begin and end as self-contained individualities. Relationships and practices take the form of reciprocal exchanges best described as interactions because individuals 'act on' each other from the outside. Weak relationality is, then, a form of individualism. 'Strong relationality, by contrast, is an ontological relationality' (Slife, 2004, p. 159). It occurs not between individuals who are first self-contained and independent entities, but rather it involves individuals each of whom 'is first and always a nexus of relations' (Slife, 2004, p. 159). From the strong relational perspective, then, the qualities and identities of individuals depend on how they are related to each other in patterns of connectedness and practices. Strong relationality infuses Bosanquet's understanding of lateral identity which, revealing the nature of the confluence of selves, informs his conception of the relational self.

Bosanquet's concept of the relational self is one that will feel familiar to contemporary scholarship, for a shift from the individualized, self-contained concept of the self to the relational one is widespread in contemporary scholarship, both in the social sciences and in the humanities (Gergen, 2006, pp. 119–124). Consider, for example, the following claim by Kenneth Gergen, a prominent advocate of the relational approach:

> The concept of relational being moves beyond the problems of the self-contained individual. That concept reduces the debilitating gap between self and other, the sense of oneself as alone and the other as alien and untrustworthy. … We are made up of each other. … and we are mutually constituting. (Gerger, 1999, pp. 137–8)

Further, in his *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*, Gergen puts forward an 'an alternative way of explaining human action' that is 'one that places co-active *confluence* in the center of concern' (Gergen, 2009, p. 49; original emphasis). His account of confluence both echoes Bosanquet's idea and helps to explain it. Gergen explains social phenomena, such as a

baseball game, in terms of 'a confluence, a form of life in that case that is constituted by an array of mutually defining "entities"', which he further describes as 'identity in relationship' (Gergen, 2009, p. 54).

Bosanquet's account of lateral-relational identity, including his idea of the confluence of selves, could usefully be viewed as a similar effort to provide an alternative way of going beyond self and society. Indeed, Bosanquet rejects the view of society in terms of 'selves and others', for it reflects 'a purely psychological individualism' that takes 'the separate body as the separate self' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 92). Not unlike Gergen, Bosanquet's relational theorizing moves from a concern with isolated individuals to one about selves-in-relationships.

> The real question must be, what sort of thing is it that these others are? … Taking this as the governing consideration we may now leave the conception that society consists of self and others, and try to get at the thing from a different way of looking at the matter. The claim of society upon us does not seem to be founded on the fact that it is a plurality of bodily selves or … of intelligences but rather in the particular nature that their co-operation reveals. (Bosanquet, PMS, pp. 93–4)

'Co-operation' is a distinguishing mark of Bosanquet's relational self. Far from being 'simply a punctual centre in which a system of moral and social relations reflects itself into unity as rays of light are concentrated in a focus' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 114), as Pringle-Pattison would have it, the relational self is his own unique particularity through the specific position he occupies in complex webs of relations, and through his associative action. The active nature of the relational self also reveals to us that it is not simply something denigrated by Bosanquet. I now turn to establish this claim.

Not Without Value

Pringle-Pattison charges that Bosanquet's treatment of the finite self as adjectival, transient and fragmentary entails a devaluation of the individual. To the extent that the adjectival self emerges as the relational self, this

criticism loses much of its force. But it is not entirely dissipated, for the concept of the relational individual itself invites similar criticism. A not uncommon criticism of such approaches is that they lay undue stress on relational structures and systems. Attention to such structures engenders a worry that the individual is no longer properly valued for his own sake but rather is subordinated to some collective good produced by the relational structure, which, in turn, is said to stand above and independently of individuals. Indeed, Bosanquet has traditionally been a frequent target of such complaints, which have not faded (Boucher et al., 2005, pp. 103, 107; Gewirth, 1982, pp. 155–9).

I do not deny that some of this criticism is just. To inoculate Bosanquet from all such criticism would be neither possible nor desirable. My aim in this paper has been modest: simply to show that an uncritical acceptance of the sort of criticism leveled by Pringle-Pattison prevents us from appreciating that which is valuable about Bosanquet's conception of the self. Labeling it the relational self or, following Bosanquet, the 'co-operative self', I have sought to place it under the spotlight. In the same vein, I now focus attention on Pringle-Pattison's charge that Bosanquet devalues the individual. My (modest) claim is that there are marked ways in which Bosanquet's relational self is far from devalued.

It is possible to identify three respects in which the relational approach does not diminish the value of the individual but rather, through its notion of relational embeddedness, sustains its significance: attention to the particular concrete individual, active self-government through co-operative action, and the relational conception of rights.

1. The particular concrete individual

  Contrary to Pringle-Pattison, Bosanquet's relational approach is capable of attending to the particularity of the individual and his concrete experience. Pringle-Pattison protests that Bosanquet fails to consider the particular individual since for him the individual is a mere conduit for the Absolute. Moreover, he says, 'Professor Bosanquet's general theory is of the type … in which the logical analysis of knowledge is substituted for an account of living experience' (Pringle-Pattison, Symposium, p. 115). Grounded in the concept of the concrete universal, the conceptualization of the individual as relational

aims at avoiding not only abstract individualism but also abstract holism. 'Living experience' is just what Bosanquet's approach requires and celebrates while insisting on the enabling role that the relational social environment plays in its construction. Discussing the problem of making a valuable life for oneself, Bosanquet holds that it is only in and through lived experience that moral values are realized.

> You are not a mathematical point, fitted to enter equally into any conceivable construction. You have *ab initio* the material of a self, and if you could cut yourself loose from it you would be nothing. Your task, then, is original, unique, creative. (Bosanquet, 1919, p. 149)

This creative task is one of self-molding one's life, something which could never be inferred from ethical first principles. For no rules exists which predetermine one's course of action.

The individual has to create his life by shaping and reconstructing the environment in which he is embedded. Thus, 'the social spirit in all its forms due to all its groupings is the main substance which is given you. But operating within and upon all this is the reason of the self' (Bosanquet, 1919, p. 151). In this way, the self is forging his own life as a lived experience without cutting himself loose from his social environment and web of tradition, and thereby also revealing the particularist aspect of the general will (Dimova-Cookson, 2014, pp. 202–6). Moreover, in Oakeshottean fashion, Bosanquet holds that social practices and traditions are not a constraint on, but really a condition of, the meaningful development and exercise of individuality (Oakeshott, 1975, pp. 78–80).

2. Active self-government through co-operative action

The idea of the mind as actively self-molding is central to Bosanquet's conception of the individual as self-maintaining, self-managing and self-governing. Bosanquet claims, however, that the active capacities for self-maintenance and self-government can be developed only through social co-operation. This is overshadowed by Pringle-Pattison's depiction of the adjectival self as passive, something which holds (he thinks) because Bosanquet's self is nothing but 'a punctual centre'

through which the Absolute flows. However, this picture of the self conflicts with Bosanquet's own account of the self as active, spontaneous, energetic and self-governing.

To be sure, Bosanquet fully recognizes the importance of routine, habit and automatic action as essential aspects of the self. Indeed, he emphasizes the connection and continuity between the routine-automatic-habitual aspects of the mind and its energetic-active-conscious aspects. Because the bulk of human actions are habitual, 'we can carry on while giving the bulk of our attention to something more worthy of mature consciousness. Growth and progress of the mind depend on this relation' (Bosanquet, 1927, p. 245; Simhony, 2014, pp. 10–11). It is for this reason that, following this claim—'that an adult human mind contains an immense structure of automatic machinery, by which connection is effected with its habitual ends in normal surroundings'—he states firmly: 'I insist on this view, which I believe to be true, and to have more significance than is usually seen' (Bosanquet, PIV, p. 181). It is significant because automatic-routine action clears the path for the individual to pursue conscious-energetic action. The habitual-routine identity of the self underpins its active-energetic identity.

The roots of this conception of the active self are to be found in Bosanquet's metaphysics. Consider for example Lecture IV of *The Value and Destiny of the Individual,* entitled 'The Miracle of the Will', in which Bosanquet discloses the 'secret' of the power of the will, 'or the power of character, to transfigure and so to conquer circumstance' (Bosanquet, VDI, p. 96). But also the creative power of the will reveals itself in 'institutions'. Created by the will, social institutions constitute 'the creative path by which the content of will—the second or spiritual world and nature—comes into finite form …' (Bosanquet, VDI, p. 112; Panagakou, 2005, p. 33–43). The complexity of the institutions that make up society constitutes a unique arena for the active and self-governing capacities of the relational individual.

Referring to both the individualist and collectivist side of the political argument over state action, Bosanquet rejects both.

> The error lies, on both sides, in an insufficient appreciation of what is involved in man's social being. Between visible activities backed by the force of the State, and the narrowest self-assertion, equally visible, of the separate, or would-be separate, human person, the whole social development—the development, that is, of man's universal nature …—fails to obtain due recognition. (Bosanquet, PTS, p. xxxii–xxxiii)

To give 'due recognition' to 'all that is "social"' is to attend to the activity 'that springs from the co-operation … of human beings'. He labels it 'true social activity' to distinguish it from both state action and self-centered action of the 'separate individual'. Bosanquet insists that 'truly social' activities constitute 'the laboratory of social invention', 'the inventive, experimental, creative element' (Bosanquet, PTS, pp. xxxii, xxxiv, xxxiii, respectively).

The individual exercises his creative energy and self-government through relations with others. Bosanquet, then, forges a conceptual-normative nexus between direct co-operative institutions and individual self-government and self-maintenance. Accordingly, he defends a great variety of spheres of 'direct relations' (Bosanquet, PTS, p. 285), among which are organizing society on the basis of neighborhoods, workers' co-operatives, trade unions and local activism (Simhony, 2013, pp. 258–262).

Membership in multiple diverse and intricately connected systems of social relations fashions the identity of a relational individual as multifaceted. Each unique position provides a distinctive point of view from which a particular identity (or facet of the individual's complete selfhood) becomes prominent.

3. Relational conception of rights

A case in point is the legal identity of the finite individual as a subject of rights and obligations (Bosanquet, PIV, p. 284). Bosanquet's recognition of the legal identity of the finite individual is important. It reveals that individual rights need not be threatened by the relational approach. That the relational approach, especially in its Idealist shape, poses such a threat is a familiar claim (Gewirth, 1982, pp. 155–9). Henry Jones, for example, holds that in thoroughly departing from individualist metaphysics, Bosanquet's argument pitches dangerously

close to monistic or abstract holism (Jones, 1922, pp. 135–149). Bosanquet holds that in 'the spiritual world as a world of true membership', unlike in the individualist world of claims and counterclaims, the claims of individuals as separate units receive no recognition (Bosanquet, PIV, p. 150). Such a world is not based on justice to the individual. Jones is incensed by the concept of 'justice on the whole and to the whole, which is not justice to any constituent of that whole' (Jones, 1922, 151).

At stake here is Bosanquet's claim that the Absolute transcends and absorbs finite individuals (though not their achievements and capacities). To the extent that the social world is an exact replica of the Absolute, Jones has a point. Jones, however, misses Bosanquet's claim that we cannot apply the standard of the Absolute to the social world, to 'a finite society in space and time' (Bosanquet, VDI, p. 150). In 'a finite society', instead, 'the principle of the unit as such must receive some sort of recognition and protection', for each finite individual 'must be guaranteed security' (Bosanquet, VDI, pp. 150 & 151, respectively). Significantly, then, much as Bosanquet recognizes the linear identity of the finite self, he fully acknowledges its legal identity. Without legal personality, 'our system of responsibility would be seriously shaken if bodily identity were no longer a sufficient guide' (Bosanquet, PMS, p. 56).

Yet, while legal personality is recognized in the sphere of moral activity and social obligation, it is not self-sustaining: 'You could not secure recognition for a system of obligations unless the minds which accept them were united in a purpose of which the obligations were corollaries' (Bosanquet, PIV, p. 284). To make this claim, in other words, is to maintain that rights can only have meaning when there are relational structures that give effect to them. Thus, not only does the relational approach not threaten rights, but it is essential for their realization. Rights themselves are, for Bosanquet, reflective of patterns of relationships, of mutual recognition, which institutionalize 'the community of life and experience'. In this way, far from setting limitations on individual growth and expansion, they become its essential conditions.

To immunize Bosanquet against the persisting charge that he denigrates the finite self was not my aim in this essay. Rather, I have claimed that there is value and intrinsic interest in turning the spotlight of attention on to his conception of the relational self. That his overall position is open to such criticisms should not deflect us from appreciating his conception of the relational self that is clearly embedded within it.

Abbreviations

PIV   Bosanquet, B. (1912) *The Principle of Individuality and Value*.
PMS   Bosanquet, B. (1897) *Psychology of the Moral Self*.
PTS   Bosanquet, B. (1920) *The Philosophical Theory of the State*.
RGW   Bosanquet, B. (1895) The Reality of the General Will. In Bosanquet B. (ed.) *Aspects of the Social Problem.*
Symposium   (1918) Do Finite Individuals Possess a Substantive or Adjectival Mode of Being? *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society.*
TJ   Rawls, J. (1971) *A Theory of Justice*.
VDI   Bosanquet, B. (1913) *The Value and Destiny of the Individual*.

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11

Collingwood's Conception of Personhood and Its Relation to Language Use

Ian Winchester

In this paper I attempt to expound Collingwood's picture of human personhood in the context of his inquiry into human civilization. In order to do this I present the early part of the plan of that work and show that for him a person is an agent possessing reason and free will, both of which are mediated by human speech or language generally. I then inquire as to what the relations for him are between reason, free will and language, pointing out that his account presents both reason and free will as dependent on language and not language on the prior possession of reason. I offer a couple of simple examples to show that in some elementary ways both humans and other animals might well possess reason to some degree prior to their possessing or needing to possess speech, contrary to both Collingwood's view and that of Hobbes. On the other hand, for sophisticated acts of reason, or acts of choice, I accept that language is necessary, as Collingwood argues.

His only explicit treatment of the topic, so far as I have been able to discover, is in *The New Leviathan* (1942). In his writings on the

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philosophy of history, in particular in *The Idea of History* (1946), Collingwood argues, following Bradley, that history is really the story of the actions of human beings. And throughout his account, while he never explicitly mentions 'persons' or 'personhood' as such, nonetheless one can infer that his actors are always beings endowed with reason and will. Since these are the same characteristics that he ascribes to persons in *The New Leviathan*, I shall concentrate exclusively in this paper on his explicit picture of personhood as presented in *The New Leviathan*.[1]

Collingwood on Man and Community

Let me begin by quoting Collingwood's opening to *The New Leviathan,* in which he tells us first what a 'man' is before moving on to his account of what a 'person' amounts to. Collingwood's account of what a man, or human being, is was written in the period 1939–1942, when things looked pretty bleak for the civilized world, and it has an edge to it. It begins as follows:

1.1. What is Man?
    1.11. Before beginning to answer the question, we must know why it is asked.
    1.12. It is asked because we are beginning an inquiry into civilization, and the revolt against it which is the most conspicuous thing going on at the present time.
    1.13. Civilization is a condition of communities; so to understand what civilization is we must first understand what a community is.
    1.14. A community is a condition of men, in which are included women and children; so to understand what a community is we must first understand what men are.

He then tells us that he will break his inquiry for this book into four separate sub-inquiries: Part I, an inquiry into man; Part II, an inquiry into communities; Part III, an inquiry into civilizations; and Part IV, an inquiry into revolts against civilizations.

A little later in this introduction he concludes:

1.83. Man as body is *whatever the sciences of body say that he is.* Without their help nothing can be known on that subject: their authority, therefore, is absolute.
1.84. Man as mind is whatever he is conscious of being.
1.85. The sciences of mind, unless they preach error or confuse the issue by dishonest or involuntary obscurity, can tell us nothing but what each can verify for himself by reflecting on his own mind.

Collingwood on Man's Mind and Body

In his chapter on 'The Relation between Body and Mind' Collingwood tells us:

2.41 'The problem of the relation between body and mind' is a bogus problem which cannot be stated without making a false assumption.
2.42 What is assumed is that a man is partly body and partly mind. On this assumption questions arise about the relations between the two parts; and these prove unanswerable.
2.43 For man's body and man's mind are not two different things. They are one and the same thing, man himself, as known in two different ways.
2.44. Not a part of man, but the whole of man, is body in so far as he approaches the problem of self-knowledge by the methods of natural science.
2.45. Not a part of man, but the whole of man, is mind in so far as he approaches the problem of self-knowledge by expanding and clarifying the data of reflection.

This way of putting the importance of both mind and body for the human being is potentially confused with Cartesian dualism. (A prominent idealist of my acquaintance tells me that when she points out Collingwood's view to her students and fellow philosophers, they often accuse her of just presenting Cartesian dualism in another form). By contrast, I think that it should be regarded as a way of accounting for both

our bodies and our minds together as a personal unity, which is unique to Collingwood—though writers as distinct as Bertrand Russell and Peter Strawson (like Collingwood, a Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy) have attempted to do something similar. Russell (1922) emphasizes in one of his later works (*The Analysis of Mind*) a notion of neutral monism according to which the stuff of a human being is of one neutral kind only but can be classed as either physical or mental depending on the organizational structure involved. Strawson (1959) suggests in his book *Individuals*: *An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* that the unity of a person is captured in our referring to beings like ourselves through P-predicates, or person predicates, that span both mind and body. And for him, as for Collingwood, there is no room for driving a wedge between mind and body in the case of a human being.

One way of putting Collingwood's approach is to suggest that there are two different kinds of sciences that we may use to look at or study the whole man or human being. One of these kinds is the familiar 'third person' kind of science which is common in the natural sciences generally. A third person kind of science is one in which, in principle, we can all participate equally since the object of our study is a common object in the common world. If someone can drop a ball from a tower, like Galileo is reputed to have done, we can all do it. Furthermore, we can all equally well observe Galileo's doing it and can all observe and perhaps time the fall, since these things are given to us all, together. 'He, she or it' is part of our common, or third person, world. The other kind of science to which Collingwood alludes is what has been called by the Dalai Lama (2000) a 'first person' science, or, in his terminology, a science of human consciousness. (See, for example, his book *The Transformed Mind*.) Looking to more philosophical models, this approach will be familiar to students of phenomenology, understood as the science of individual consciousness, or, to quote the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 'the study of the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first person point of view'. But it is also the sort of thing that is highly developed by practices like those of Buddhist adepts, in which only the individual her- or himself, the 'I', can directly observe the conscious experiences that are involved in what Collingwood, in 2.45 above, refers to as 'the problem of self-knowledge' attained by 'expanding and clarifying the data of reflection'.

Historically we have often given Descartes the credit for distinguishing these two approaches, but Descartes' way of putting it (for example, in his *Discourse on Method*) is not the same as Collingwood's. For Descartes (1985) there are in effect two distinct substances that must in some way interact, perhaps through the action of God or perhaps via the pineal gland. For Collingwood there is no problem of interaction since there are simply two distinct ways of studying the entire human being or man (which includes for him women and children): first, the way of natural science which studies the human being via a generalized empirical methodology, and second, the way of individual personal experience and reflection in our own case. Although exclusively individual, with this latter type of study we can each confirm for ourselves the conclusions of others by verifying their results in our own individual case.

One does not wish, of course, to suggest that Collingwood's way of putting this is not without its own paradoxes and problems. Emphasizing both the unity of the human being and the two apparently distinct ways of approaching its study, Collingwood fails to tell us if these are two completely incommensurable ways of approaching human nature or whether they can overlap and corroborate one another in interesting and important ways. Recently the relationship between the scientific or third person approach and the phenomenological or first person approach has been the subject of much study by philosophical neuroscientists, such as Stanislas Dehaene and a number of others.

Stanislas Dehaene and his school have things to say that in some ways directly contradict the kind of view which Collingwood advocates. In particular, Dehaene, in his recent book *Consciousness and the Brain*: *Deciphering How the Brain Codes Our Thoughts*, offers an extended critique of the Collingwoodian notion that 'the sciences of mind … can tell us nothing but what each can verify by reflecting on his own mind'. Dehaene (2014) attempts to do this by pointing out that our reflections on our conscious experiences are not autonomous and self-contained. For example, it is commonly understood when driving our automobiles that we look into the rear view mirror on the side to judge what is coming up behind us. But there is a blind spot in our perception due to the fact that the optic nerve comes out into the retina of our eye at a particular angle, and our brain creates an illusion of consciousness giving the

impression that there is no automobile beside us, when actually there is one in precisely the place where the optic nerve appears. Dehaene offers dozens of similar examples in Chapter 1 of his book (pp. 17–46), from which it is clear that there are limits to what 'the sciences of mind' can discern, taken only by themselves as reflection on the data of consciousness in the manner of Collingwood's claim at 1.85 of *The New Leviathan.* What Collingwood has to say there is important, but it is likely subject to a number of qualifications in which the other third person sciences may also be relevant in conjunction with the first person sciences. I suppose that Collingwood would answer to Dehaene that of course he is right about such examples, but that our agreeing with the claims of others about the defects or complications of our mental grasp is still a matter of our verifying for ourselves (as in section 1.85 above) such things as our having a blind spot. For example, by driving slightly forward in our cars, we can notice that there is now a vehicle where there did not appear to be one a moment ago. But I shall say nothing further on this point and simply commend Dehaene's book to the reader as a source of detailed references on the topic, should one care to pursue them. My sense is that such results clarify the possibility that the first and third person sciences, or, if you prefer, approaches to the understanding of the human being, *can* work together, which appears to be an immediate objection to Collingwood's view.

Collingwood on Personhood, Free Will, Reason and Human Language

Collingwood tells us that he comes at his notion of personhood via a modernized version of the notion of a person in Roman law. In *The New Leviathan* his primary characterization of personhood depends on two main features: free will and reason. Those who possess free will and are able to reason are, by that very fact, persons. But he does not leave it there. He also says explicitly in *The New Leviathan* that these two features which are crucial to personhood are dependent somehow on our ability to speak, to possess language. A typical Collingwood comment on this is the following: 'For the Roman doctrine that a society or partnership is

possible only between *personae* (19.51) I substitute the modern doctrine that it is possible only as between *persons*, where a person means an agent possessed of, and exercising, free will.' (20.61)

But how does Collingwood bring human language into this picture? In section 6.4 he remarks: 'It has long been known that language is an indispensable factor in social life, the only way in which knowledge can be communicated from one man to another. But it was long believed that within the precincts of the individual mind the processes of thought could go on without language coming into operation.' In 6.41 he immediately goes on to tell us: 'It is a commonplace with us that language is not a device whereby knowledge already existing in one man's mind is communicated to another's, but an activity prior to knowledge itself, without which knowledge could never come into existence.' He then truly remarks that '[t]o discover this truth was one of the greatest achievements of Hobbes'. He doesn't give the reference in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, but of course there are many passages in that great work in which human speech is commended for augmenting our animal powers, including our reason, well beyond those of the other beasts. A typical one from Chapter III of the *Leviathan* might be: 'For besides Sense, and Thoughts, and the Trayne of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion; though by the help of Speech, and Method, the same Facultyes may be improved to such a height, as to distinguish men from all other living Creatures' (Hobbes, 1996, p. 23).

As to reason, the other feature that Collingwood emphasizes as necessary for being a person, here is what he has to say about its essential nature:

> 14.1 'Reason' as the name of a mental function or form of consciousness, rational thinking, is thinking one thing, x, because you think another thing, y; where y is your 'reason' or, as it is sometimes called, your 'ground' for thinking x.

He goes on to distinguish between *theoretical reason* and *practical reason*, that is, the reason for making up your mind *that* (what logicians call a proposition) and the reason for making up your mind *to* (what moralists call an intention). And while he considers the more fundamental of these to be practical reason, he considers both of them to be dependent

on human speech and language use. This is most explicit when he tells us at 14.35 that '*theoretical reason* comes into existence when a man first, by propositional thinking, makes up his mind that something is so; and then, seeking to confirm this piece of propositional thinking, looks for a reason why he should think so'.

William Mander, in a personal communication, notes that this does not on the face of it make sense, for what can we make of the notion that one 'makes up one's mind' *in advance* of the business of looking for some reasons which might guide one in that making up of one's mind? Perhaps Collingwood's answer would be that in the case of possessing a theoretical reason, one has engaged in a deductive chain of propositional thinking that, if one believes the premises to be true, has led to an unavoidable conclusion which must be true, even if counter-intuitive. Then one might naturally look for some confirmatory reasons of a non-deductive kind. For example, in Maxwellian electromagnetic theory one is led to the deductive conclusion that the constant 'c' for the speed of electro-magnetic impulses in a vacuum ought to be true for things like ordinary light in the visual spectrum. Then one measures the speed of light and finds it to be a constant independent of the motion of the observer.

Collingwood then connects such thinking with free will in the following way: 'A man who asks for such a reason is presupposing that he is free to think the thing or not, according as he finds a reason for thinking it or not.' (14.36) He expands this in the next section: 'Theoretical reason, therefore, is based on the presupposition that a certain kind of propositional thinking, viz. that about which questions beginning "why" can be legitimately asked, is a matter of free will; it is not the mere acceptance of something "given", but is a voluntary decision to think *this* and not *that*.' (14.37)

I think is clear from the above assembled quotations that Collingwood thinks that a person is a human agent who possesses propositional thought (that is, reason) and free will, and that both of these are dependent on the human possession of language. This notion he inherits in part from the Roman picture of *personae*, but it also contains the modern European notion that a person is not just an adult male citizen but includes women and children, the latter at least up to a degree and only beginning at a certain age.

The Relations Between Possessing the Power of Speech and Possession of Free Will and Reason

We must now investigate what, following Collingwood's suggestions above, are the connections between being a language user in the human sense and possessing free will and reason. But before we do that, we need to ask a prior question, namely, is there any connection at all between free will and reason? Of course Collingwood is not the only thinker to have seen these two things as coupled. Kant, both in his writings on pure reason and in those on practical reason, comes to mind, but oddly he is never specifically mentioned by Collingwood.

One normally thinks of a person who can reason as someone who can, for example, not only follow the reasoning of others but also construct reasoning sequences for themselves, especially sequences that lead to definite and appropriate action relative to something desired. Now, reasoning is often seen in small children in very simple ways. For example, a small child under two years of age who can already walk and climb might see a toy or other object on a table and want to reach it but be unable to do so directly. After a few moments the child might pull a nearby chair to the table, climb up on it and grab the object of its desire. This appears to be a paradigm example of reasoning of a very simple kind (I am assuming that an agent who possesses 'reason' is an agent able to engage in reasoning in order to solve problems that come up in the course of one's daily life. There are, of course, gradations here between the reasoning of a small child about everyday desires and the reasoning of a Newton or Einstein in the esoteric realm of, say, the physics of motion).

But of course a chimpanzee or a dog might engage in something similar. Our family beagle, Bogart, managed more than once, when we had left the room for a moment, to get at a freshly cooked chicken or a turkey in the middle of our dining room table by climbing up on a chair and thence onto the table for his desired feast. This does seem to be a case of an agent engaging in a simple process of reasoning that results in a definite action leading to a desired result. Yet it does not seem to be a case of reasoning that requires human language ability in any obvious sense.

Does this simple act of reason also necessarily involve 'free will'? Free will seems to be minimally involved whenever one has a choice of actions and chooses either to engage in one of them or to not engage. For example, suppose that the child in question was able to look to the possibility of getting the object of its desire on the table by climbing up but decided not to do so because it was not something that Mummy encouraged, even though Mummy was not present. In the case of a human child of perhaps about two years old, it seems to me that we might just think that the child actually reasoned that Mummy would not approve and so decided not to do it, though I expect that this would be a rare two-year-old. But in the case of the dog I expect that it would always just climb up and get at the chicken or turkey whenever it could. Perhaps it might stop if it was spotted in its plan and someone called out 'Bogart, no!' But that would not be a case of internal control leading to a choice on the part of the dog. It is of course a little unclear precisely what is going on in the mind of the child who decides against climbing up on a chair when it perfectly well could do so. Is it just a case of hearing in its mind's ear, 'Freyja, No!' as if it were Mummy's voice? Or is it a primitive case of the exercise of free will? And if the latter, would some rudimentary language ability be necessary in order to carry out the imaginative exercise of entertaining the possibility of desisting from the desired action? On these matters Collingwood says nothing.[2]

This simple example seems to suggest that there is no necessary connection between the ability to reason in order to solve a simple problem and either free will or language-using ability. And in a sense that is just what we might have expected. Many animals are able to solve their problems, often in quite creative ways. Yet none of them seem to possess the independence from their surroundings or their past history that humans sometimes appear to possess. And certainly none of them, even the chimpanzees that have been taught rather large human vocabularies by devoted researchers, ever develop anything like human language-using abilities. However, there are many examples of sophisticated animal actions that suggest that animals can engage in quite subtle reasoning without language in our sense.

There have been a number of attempts to study both reasoning ability in animals and, indeed, the possibility of such abilities in suitably pro-

grammed computing devices. Eugene Linden (1993), in a well-known article in *Time* magazine entitled 'Can Animals Think?', offers a number of examples of the sort I suggested above for my dog, Bogart, although Linden's examples are more sophisticated. And Alan Turing, in his famous 1950 article in *Mind*, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', puzzling about the question of whether a computer could ever be said to think or reason, offers the famous 'imitation game' as a possible criterion to judge. In the imitation game, a neutral observer who does not know whether the being with whom it is in communication is a human being or a computer (or we could equally add, an animal or a creature from outer space) has to try to guess which of these is authoring the answers to questions which the observer is posing. We are all familiar now with the notion that the cleverest human chess masters can lose a match to a computer suitably programmed by IBM, like Deep Thought. The same is true of answer and question games like *Jeopardy,* a show that many of us have followed over the years on television, in which the two greatest winners ever in the game were handily beaten by IBM's program Watson. There has been much discussion on both these approaches, but full discussion of the issue here would take us too far from Collingwood's views in *The New Leviathan*.

On the other hand, the ability to reason about the rather complicated sorts of problems that humans often work on and puzzle about does require, does presuppose, the possession of very sophisticated linguistic abilities. The solutions offered to their problems concerning the motions of bodies by Newton and Einstein are both cases in point. Their problems about the motion of bodies on or near the earth could never have been put, far less grasped and solved, without very sophisticated linguistic abilities and a high development of our social skills involving language. One might object that in the case of these two scientific luminaries the crucial matter is rather *mathematical* ability. But the appropriate response would be that that is but an ability in a suburb of language not possessed by many. Anyone who attempts to read either Newton's (1999) *Principia Mathematica* or Einstein's (1905) 'On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies' will find their reasoning powers and their general linguistic and mathematical abilities tested. But specifically what they will find is their reasoning abilities tested in a way that would be impossible without sophisticated linguistic skills.

Collingwood on Free Will, Language and Notions of Contractual Obligations

Collingwood has quite a bit to say about free will and language with respect to the Roman notions of contractual obligations between *personae* in the sense meant in Roman law. He remarks that the Romans assumed that adult Roman citizens possessed free will and that they could freely choose to enter into, or not enter into, contracts of the sort that Roman law recognized. For example in 25.7 *et seq,* he remarks that there are always at least two classes of citizens in the modern sense (that is, of recognized persons); namely, independent or free persons and dependent persons, the dependent ones including at least those necessarily in a nursery situation. Clearly entering into or not entering into a contract is also an activity that requires a mastery of human speech or writing or perhaps both.

On the other hand, he notes that while, for the Romans, children were not members of the body politic, for modern Europeans, children are. This is something that he simply accepts as part of the modern European mind. But while children may be members of the body politic for modern Europeans, nonetheless they are dependent members; part of the *nursery* class to whom full personhood cannot be and is not granted. Part of the reason for this is that children cannot 'even authorize the rule of others, for they neither enter these nurseries nor remain in them of their own free will' (25.71). In other words, while they may have citizenship they do not have full personhood due to the restrictions imposed on their own free will.

There is considerable evidence in defence of Collingwood's view that the 'modern European mind' (and indeed the modern North American mind too) grants personhood, but not full personhood, to children. So far as I know, there is no jurisdiction in, for example, the European Union that will not intervene in the upbringing of a child if its parents appear not to be granting it full healthcare or education. However, on the other side, in some cases relating to the aboriginal people of Canada, the Canadian judicial system will let a child suffering from a potentially terminal illness, like leukaemia, refuse the state imposition of treatment that the child finds unbearable, such as chemical treatments that are poten-

tially lifesaving, and engage instead in traditional 'healing practices'. Such cases appear to involve the granting of full personhood to the child, but only on the grounds that the child is an aboriginal person with her or his own particular beliefs that are to be respected. In all such cases in Canada where the judiciary have intervened the children have died under the regimen of traditional healing practices. (It may be added that, as in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses with respect to the use of blood transfusions, one is tempted to credit *parents* with particular beliefs as actually being the source of the views of the child, in which case it would be questionable whether these were really cases of granting full personhood, in Collingwood's sense, to a child).

Is this usual restriction of a child's free will and thus their personhood, in the kinds of cases cited by Collingwood, a function of their limited 'reason', which in turn is a function of their limited linguistic capacities? It seems plausible to argue that that is indeed the case. Descartes, in his *Discourse on Method,* was one of those who argued that what distinguishes human beings from other animals is our ability to use language, a species-specific capacity, something that Noam Chomsky (1966) in *Cartesian Linguistics* has echoed in our own time. But neither Descartes nor Chomsky would argue that the reasoning capacity of all human beings was equal just because they all (or nearly all) possess the ability to use language, most often in the form of speech.

Perhaps the closest Collingwood comes to expanding on this matter is in 20.62 in *The New Leviathan.* There he tells us:

> Free will is a matter of degree (21.54); so we must qualify this by saying that a given society, being formed for the prosecution of a given joint enterprise, is possible only as between agents having the strength of will which that enterprise demands. Modern Europeans expect a woman of a certain age, not being mentally deficient, to have the degree and kind of free will which are needed for her to consent to her marriage; but do not expect a boy of seven or eight to have the degree and kind of free will which would be needed for his consent to joining a school. They do not, therefore, think this consent necessary for his becoming a member of the school. The marriage is not thought valid unless the woman consents to it; there is no such condition when a boy goes to school.

On the question of whether or not this is because a woman's reason is sufficient for us to conclude that she can marry of her own free will, or whether a child of age seven or eight does not possess sufficient reason to be able to enjoy an adequate exercise of free will in order to join or not join a school, Collingwood is silent. If, as we have argued earlier, the possession of an imaginative choice is a necessary condition for free will, something that the possession of linguistic ability makes potentially possible, then one might suggest that a person of limited imagination would also by that very fact possess less free will. If that is so, then Collingwood's notion that free will is a matter of degree would make sense. But I suppose one might also argue that it is a kind of quantum phenomenon; that either one has a choice or one does not. If one does, then free will is possible with no gradations. Otherwise it is not possible.

Is a human being paralyzed from the neck down and unable to speak or move still a person in Collingwood's sense? That is a little unclear. Usually such human beings are treated by their loved ones as being fully persons, but ones who have lost the physical connection to their reasoning and their free will. Some relatives may stay with such an individual every day for years, and occasionally miraculous returns to normal do occur. If free will necessarily requires the ability to act, then a person very close to me that I treat as a full person in every respect, but who is largely paralyzed from the neck down and who cannot attend to the normal everyday activities of human beings, would not be in possession of full personhood in spite of her being able to speak and reason normally. These kinds of cases can be multiplied and do suggest that Collingwood might be right about gradations of personhood. But it seems to me that a lot more work needs to be done in this regard for us to understand how we are actually granting or withdrawing personhood in our own time.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to expound Collingwood's picture of human personhood in the context of his larger inquiry into human civilization in *The New Leviathan*. It should now be clear that for him a person is an agent possessing reason and free will, both of which are in his view necessarily mediated by human speech and human language generally. My

examples of both domesticated animals and children who may possess elementary reason without necessarily possessing human speech suggest that while language may be a useful condition for the possession of both reason and free will, it is not likely a necessary one and perhaps not even a sufficient one. Indeed, one might possess language at such a rudimentary level that the possession of such language would add nothing to one's animal powers. Or one might lack sufficient imaginative power in the use of that language, such that even though one were in possession of a normal language ability adequate for purposes of communication, one was still unable to conceive the various possibilities that need to be entertained in order to make possible a free choice from among them.

On the other hand, for any sophisticated acts of reason and free will linguistic ability is likely to be necessary, as Collingwood suggests, for it is only when one possesses sophisticated linguistic abilities that there is room for the kinds of imagination which permit the higher order activities that human beings so value and that appear to involve both reason and free will. Ready to mind are such human activities as the writing of poetry, the construction of mathematical truths and their proofs, the development of philosophical arguments, and the invention of scientific theories that enable further discovery or engineering developments. Thus, if for full human personhood a human agent must possess both reason and free will, as Collingwood supposes, and if these are both mediated by their possession of human language at any reasonable degree of sophistication, then Collingwood's notion of the generally required conditions for personhood appears to be sound, if requiring further elaboration.

Notes

1. It might be suggested that topics of language, thought and the constitution of the self are also dealt with, at least implicitly, in his *The Principles of Art* (1938).
2. There are certain passages in the *Idea of History* (e.g. p. 227) where Collingwood suggests that animals can reason and form part of a community with humans. He often seems to address these things as a matter of degree rather than in absolute terms.

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12

Collingwoodian Reflections on the Biographical Self

James Connelly

Introduction

The origins of this chapter lie in reflections on writing philosophical biography (in particular the biography of a philosopher such as Collingwood). It is thus about Collingwood in two senses: first, as the possible subject of a biography, and, second, as a philosopher whose views, because they bear directly on all forms of historical writing, must be considered by a biographer. I do not discuss Collingwood's general account of the nature and possibility of historical knowledge; instead I focus on issues specific to the arts of biography and autobiography, including what it would mean to write a biography of Collingwood himself. In thinking through what it would mean to write the biography of such an author, the key issues are raised very sharply. The chapter is not intended as an account of Collingwood's theory of the self as expounded in, principally, *The Principles of Art* and *The New Leviathan*. Rather, it is intended to

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raise a set of questions about the nature of the self which arise in writing biography or autobiography.

In writing biography we need a sense of the subject's self-understanding and projects; that is, the biographer has to posit a self with projects, hopes and a certain self-understanding in order to make sense of the subject's life. There is a danger that we might assume a determinate individual self, whereas, I shall argue, the self is fluid and in dialectical relation with society. For biography this raises the issue of the legitimacy of presupposing a subject's character to be used in explaining actions and intentions.

Collingwood on Biography

Does one need to accept Collingwood's views on historical knowledge or biography to write a biography of him? To ask this raises further questions. Is biography history? Is it any the worse if it is not? What, if anything, has to be presupposed about the self in researching and writing biography or autobiography? Would a biography be rendered valueless if the biographer did not have a coherent conception of the self *per se* or of *this* self? Are sceptics about the self (Humian or otherwise) logically precluded from writing biography? Having raised this cloud of dust, let us try to navigate through it by starting with Collingwood's own expressed views on biography.

Collingwood has no objection to autobiography, although he warns of the tendency to validate the present standpoint of the autobiographer, and he therefore insists that it has to be treated in a properly historical fashion, relying on evidence and not memory alone (although he would admit that memory contains first-person clues to a life not available to the biographer) (Collingwood, 1993, pp. 295–6). When, after arguing that all history is the history of thought, he turns to biography, it is to denounce it:

> Of everything other than thought, there can be no history. Thus a biography … however much history it contains, is constructed on principles that are not only non-historical but anti-historical. Its limits are biological events, the birth and death of a human organism: its framework is thus a

framework not of thought but of natural process. Through this frame-work—the bodily life of the man, with his childhood, maturity and senes-cence, his diseases and all the accidents of animal existence—the tides of thought, his own and others', flow crosswise, regardless of its structure, like sea-water through a stranded wreck. Many human emotions are bound up with the spectacle of such bodily life in its vicissitudes, and biography, as a form of literature, feeds these emotions and may give them wholesome food; but this is not history. Again, the record of immediate experience with its flow of sensations and feelings, faithfully preserved in a diary or recalled in a memoir, is not history. At its best, it is poetry; at its worst, an obtrusive egotism; but history it can never be. (Collingwood, 1993, p. 304)

Elsewhere he writes:

Biography is not history, because its methods and interests are different. Its methods are scissors-and-paste[1]; its interest is a 'gossip-interest', based not on the desire to get at the thought embodied in an action, which is the desire underlying historical work, but on a combination of sympathy and malice which are the emotions aroused in one animal by the spectacle of what another animal does and undergoes. Hence the aim of a biogra-pher is to depict his hero not as *animal rationale* but as animal, by insist-ing on the animal vicissitudes of his life (birth, death, etc.). (Collingwood, 1999, p. 77)

How much should we accept of this? And is Collingwood really com-mitted by the logic of his own arguments, both here and elsewhere, to this view of biography? There is something paradoxical about the claim, given his claim that all history is the history of thought, for in those terms intellectual biography at least would seem to be the *purest* example of historical knowledge.

Many of Collingwood's comments on biography are not properly argued philosophical claims but rather broad empirical generalisations. As gener-alisations they are sometimes true and insightful; as statements claiming universal validity they are often false. Biographies are often (but not neces-sarily) compiled using scissors-and-paste: some are, some are not; they do not have to be. Again, biographies are often (but not necessarily) focused solely on 'gossip interest', written out of sympathy or malice. However,

it should be admitted that the image of the wreck makes the important point that the significance of an individual life generally does not correspond precisely to the significance (and boundaries of that significance) of a particular historical event, period or question. History, by contrast with biography, is a flow of selves and is not reducible to the actions of a single self. A single self might happen to dominate a given domain for a time, but there can be no presumption that it will *necessarily* dominate, even for Hegel's 'world historical individual', where one might be tempted to say that biography and history coincide. So the point concerning the restrictions imposed by biography as the account of a single life should be granted, but with the reservation that one could argue that no spatial, temporal or other frame is inherently better than another, as all are to some extent contingent, with created rather than discovered boundaries of significance.

In any work of history there is an issue of significance related to the questions the historian is raising and their necessity to the progress of historical inquiry. Can biographical questions (and hence biography itself) pass this test? The response is that it is easy to think of examples where a clear answer to a biographical question might be of value in answering a broader historical question. However, this is to cede Collingwood's point in that the answer to a biographical question does not require a complete biography. But let us not move too quickly. There are many examples of historical work where there is no clear historical question being asked, or where the questioning has carried on far beyond any conceivable point of historical pertinence. Many 'historical' inquiries, into the identity of Jack the Ripper or the fate of the *Titanic*, for example, suffer from the same defects of historical significance as biography. And perhaps some biographies, despite their limitations, pass the test. What sort of biographies would these be? At one end of the spectrum, in the case of significant thinkers or statesmen, biography can throw light on a person's motives, intentions and character and so enable us to explain better what led them to the point where their personal activities contributed to tackling significant theoretical or practical problems. And their failures might also be illuminated by understanding what led them in the direction they travelled. Either way, biography has a role, is more than gossip, and employs appropriate historical methods. At the other end of the spectrum, leaving

aside scissors-and-paste compilations of gossip, biographies of ordinary people might possess considerable value in illuminating the everyday lives of people living at particular times and places. Surely Collingwood would have been thrilled by the possibility of reconstructing the lives of Roman soldiers by deciphering the Vindolanda tablets discovered by descendants of his companion in Hadrian's Wall studies, Eric Birley. These tablets illuminate ordinary lives and, at the same time, illuminate the structure of the Roman occupation of Britain.

Let us return to the issue of biography and the emotions. In the passages quoted above, Collingwood denies that biography is history partly on the grounds that it only records and feeds emotions, which belong to immediate experience. It is presupposed that history does not deal with emotions, immediate experience or natural events, but only with thought. Hence Vasso Kindi argues:

> Biography is also renounced by Collingwood as a type of history because it deals with emotions; it makes use of them in order to also provoke them in the readers. The problem with emotions as regards history, according to Collingwood, is that they belong to immediate experience; they form part of the flow of consciousness and, as such, cannot be studied historically. If we simply have them, or recreate them, we cannot say that we know them or understand them. To understand them, that is to know them historically, we need to reflect upon them and see them as the outcome of a historical process which itself involves thought. For instance, if we want to understand why x feels upset, we need to see this feeling as the result of, say, this person having been insulted, or fired. We don't need to feel upset ourselves and then have psychology study our emotion. (Kindi, 2012, p. 49)

However, this is a point on which Collingwood's thought developed between writing the quoted passage from *The Idea of History*, written in 1936, with its sharp separation of thought and feeling, and his view in *The Principles of History*, written in 1939. *The Principles of Art*, written in 1937, developed a fuller and more subtle account of the emotions in relation to the intellect, and, accordingly, by 1939 Collingwood could write: 'All history is the history of thought. This includes the history of emotions so far as these are essentially related to the thoughts in question: not of

any emotions that may happen to accompany them, nor for that matter, of other thoughts that may happen to accompany them' (Collingwood, 1999, p. 77). However, despite allowing this possibility, he still denies the historical validity of biography, his prime objection now being the types of events chosen as suitable for inclusion. He writes:

> Biography, though it often uses motives of an historical kind by way of embroidery, is in essence a web woven of these two groups of threads, sympathy and malice. Its function is to arouse these feelings in the reader; essentially therefore it is a device for stimulating emotion, and accordingly it falls into the two main divisions of amusement-biography, which is what the circulating libraries so extensively deal in, and magical biography, or the biography of exhortation and moral pointing, holding up good examples to be followed or bad ones to be eschewed. (Collingwood, 1999, p. 70)

For Collingwood, then, the purpose of biography is not to command assent (Ibid., p. 73), but to stimulate emotions of the 'proper kind', those that will not offend public opinion (Kindi, 2012, p. 53). Despite the reservations expressed earlier about Collingwood's elevation of contingent claims about some biographies into necessary claims about biography per se, it is worth recognising the considerable temptation to produce biographies of the sort that Collingwood deplores. There is a ready market, and there always has been, for the hack biography pushed out in a hurry and focusing on the more insalubrious and titillating aspects of a person's life. We can readily concede, then, that Collingwood might be right about these and many other biographies; but we do not have to accept the universality of his criticisms of biography per se; they are not damning for the genre as a whole. That is, biography can be written in answer to genuine historical questions and on genuine historiographical principles, and there is no obvious a priori limit to what counts as a genuine historical question. Hence biography is not, in principle, unhistorical, and it is therefore reasonable to consider the principles on which it proceeds, in particular the presuppositions concerning the nature of the self which the biographer is committed to in the course of his or her inquiry.

The Self and Its Projects

In writing biography we need a sense of the subject's self-understanding and projects. Capturing this in biography and autobiography is likely to result in an interesting divergence. Whereas the biographer might be more tempted to interpret the later self in the light of their characterisation of the earlier self, the autobiographer is perhaps more likely to be tempted to interpret their earlier in the light of their later self. Further, an especial danger for the autobiographer is to fall into the temptation of overstating their causal powers and to minimise their social context. The biographer requires the slightly different navigational skills of steering between imputing a (relatively) fixed character to the subject whilst at the same time being committed to telling a forward-moving causal story of how the subject gradually grew to *become* that character. At what point in the subject's life is it reasonable to impute a character which is both the outcome of a period of formation and of explanatory value in understanding the subject's subsequent career? The biographer will be tempted to impute it earlier rather than later so as to help explain later actions, and this, if allied to the postulation of a fixed 'sovereign' character, will undermine their ability to tell the story of a character's becoming. This is a temptation rather than a necessary pitfall. The autobiographical subject has created their self in the course of their development, and interpretation is from the standpoint of this created self. By contrast, the self of the biographical subject has to be *posited* rather than lived. A self with projects, hopes and a certain self-understanding has to be projected onto the subject's life to make to make sense of it. Thus, the biographer typically wants to show how the self developed over time in *response* to circumstances; but they might also need to rely on a relatively determinate understanding of the self to *explain* events and responses to them. This creates a tension we need to explore further.

For Collingwood, we are self-accounting beings: 'Of everything that a mind in the full sense does, it gives itself an account as it does it; and this account is inseparably bound up with the doing of the thing' (Collingwood, 1924, p. 84). And it is important to get this account right

because 'a person may think he is a poached egg; that will not make him one: but it will affect his conduct, and for the worse' (Collingwood, 1924, p. 206). I have heard this denied, and a denial of such explicit self-accountancy would certainly fit some people at least some of the time. However, it seems plausible in general, and certainly so for Collingwood himself or, indeed, for any biographical subject whose life was similarly devoted to the life of the mind in all its variety of expression in manuscripts, whether in gloriously descriptive or self-analytical letters, singing, reciting, performing, composing music and poetry, writing lectures, essays and books.

Clearly, in writing biography, we need a sense of the projects which the subject set themselves. But we have to be careful in identifying and delineating them; there are dangers here. One danger for the biographer, as already noted, is of interpreting the later in the light of the earlier. However, the *subject* of a biography produces their own character and self in the course of its development. The biographer, on the other hand, has to posit or postulate a self with projects, hopes and a certain self-understanding. In biography there is therefore a danger that we may postulate a determinate and fixed self which we then use to explain all else. As Christopher Clark remarks, 'One of the temptations of biography is to anchor events in the hidden mechanisms of the sovereign self' (Clark, 2012). There is a dual error possible here. The first is to assume an unchanging self, and the second is to assume a merely individual self devoid of interaction, either in initial or continuing formation, with its society, surroundings and circumstances. It would be more accurate to assume that the self is in fact both social and in process. There is a need to avoid the danger of reductionism that arises either by assimilating the subject to society or by assuming an independent non-social self. The fully sovereign self would be a reified or hypostatised self which, Svengali-like (but in its own case), directs the conduct both of itself and all about it. To assume that the self is always in the making is, by contrast, a safer assumption—although, as we shall see, it leads to a question of how far we can rely on presumed knowledge of a self and its character in explaining what otherwise we lack independent evidence for.

For Collingwood, the self is a dialectical product, non-reducible either to external influences or to presumed ontological independence. This comes out clearly in this passage:

> As a finite being, man becomes aware of himself as a person only so far as he finds himself standing in relation to others of whom he simultaneously becomes aware as persons. And there is no point in his life at which a man has finished becoming aware of himself as a person. That awareness is constantly being reinforced, developed, applied in new ways. On every such occasion the old appeal must be made: he must find others whom he can recognize as persons in this new fashion, or he cannot as a finite being assure himself that this new phase of personality is genuinely in his possession. If he has a new thought, he must explain it to others, in order that, finding them able to understand it, he may be sure it is a good one. If he has a new emotion, he must express it to others, in order that, finding them able to share it, he may be sure his consciousness of it is not corrupt. (Collingwood, 1938, p. 317)

So a self comes into being through relation with the not self. Neither can it be reduced to its 'influences'. There is a good reason for that, which it is especially important to remember when writing intellectual biography in which the desire to identify influences is both strong and reasonable. Collingwood writes perceptively of 'that frivolous and superficial type of history which speaks of "influences" and "borrowings" and so forth, and when it says that A is influenced by B or that A borrows from B never asks itself what there was in A that laid it open to B's influence, or what there was in A which made it capable of borrowing from B' (Collingwood, 1945, p. 129). In other words, one is both created by one's influences and also creates those influences (or at least determines what those influences might be). This is the same point made, in the context of discussing biographical writing, by Virginia Woolf, which Ray Monk summarises by saying that 'when a character imposes itself upon another person, the kind of impression it makes depends, not only on the character but also on the person upon whom the impression is made' (Monk, 2007, p. 14).[2] This point is central to Collingwood's own account of historical knowledge as self-knowledge of mind, where mind

is taken to be not a substance but the activity of thought itself. Mind is what it does, and the self, for a biographer, is mind in action in both its theoretical and practical modes.

This can be summarised as saying that, first, the self is in dynamic relation with the other, that the self is activity, and the self is an agent, by which I mean, as do both Collingwood and John Macmurray, that practical reasoning has priority, logically and temporally, over theoretical reasoning.[3] To understand the self is to understand its agency: the self, indeed, is its agency. In agreement with Collingwood, Macmurray holds that 'the Self exists only in dynamic relation with the Other' (Macmurray, 1961, p. 17). The other, as we have seen, is not simply a given other but, at least in part, an other chosen by the self in dynamic relation with it. Macmurray goes on to state that 'the thesis we have to expound and to sustain is that the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other; that it has its being in its relationship; and that this relationship is necessarily personal' (Ibid., p. 17). Lest we be tempted to suppose that there can be action without thought, which would raise an impossible difficulty for the biographer in seeking to understand action, we should recall, in Collingwood's own words, that 'there is … only one kind of activity; namely, that which is at the same time thought and will, knowledge and action' (Collingwood, 1916, p. 34). To understand agency is to understand thoughts, beliefs and feelings as expressed in action.

However, we should distinguish between the primary constitution of the self, that is, the ontological communitarian claim about personhood and the more general claim that to understand a person (in our case, biographically) is to understand his or her relations with others, which entails knowing who and what those others were. To understand the self posited by the biographer, we need to understand the other selves with whom that self is in relation and which, in their mutual interactions, are partially constitutive of that self. The 'other' in this case can be both persons with whom the biographical subject comes into personal contact—friends, family, colleagues, others known only at a distance through correspondence or intellectually through their writings—and others whom one chooses as foils for one's own activities. The other can be both antithetical to the self and also complementary to the self. The dialectic of the self and the other is

constituted both by taking a stand *against* certain others and also by taking a stand *with* certain others. The key is to identify which relationships are constitutive of a person's identity, of their self.

Character, Self and Biography

A central issue in biography is the problem of character. We know that in the case of an agent's own self-conception this can be open to self-deception; the same is true of using character as part of a biographical explanation of someone's actions. In discussing T.H. Green's rejection of naturalistic accounts of mind and moral responsibility, Sprigge invokes Sartre's concept of bad faith, and his comments apply here. First, for Sartre, the *for itself* is 'continuously trying to absolve itself from the responsibility of its own freedom by pretending to itself that it belongs to the realm of the *in itself*'. However, he goes on to suggest, there might be a problem with invoking the conception of character too. For Sartre, explaining one's own behaviour by reference to one's character is an act of bad faith, just as a mechanistic or naturalistic explanation would be; the reason is that 'character is not a cause of action, but a description of its freely chosen nature' (Sprigge, 2006, p. 233). The general answer here has to be that character does not determine actions; actions constitute character. We can judge the likelihood of someone acting in a certain way by knowing their character, but because character does not determine their actions we cannot be sure that they did or did not act in a certain way and can be proved wrong.

But, as already intimated, this discussion of character introduces a curious instance of the hermeneutic circle. In other words, how do we know what someone's character is without knowledge of their actions? And how do we have knowledge of their actions without knowledge of their character? In the term 'action' I also include intention, or what the subject was trying to bring about. An action includes, as Collingwood would say, its inside, its meaning as understood by the agent. Hence external observation of an action (the attempt to reduce it simply to observable physical movements) may be insufficient to identify what an action was or what it was intended to be. As Collingwood notes in his

Autobiography (p. 70), this is especially difficult in the case of incomplete or failed actions. Discerning intentions in such cases is bound to be difficult. What would help identify what an agent was attempting to do would be prior knowledge of what they had done or intended to do or succeeded in doing in the past—in other words, their character understood as the reliable dispositions they had formed through their actions. In such a case we might attribute good or sensible intentions on the grounds of character, but equally someone might just have an off day. So, faced with an action but no evidence of reasons, what shall we do? We can fall on general explanations. We could consider our knowledge of the subject's character. Is it correct to assume knowledge of character—does it presuppose a fixed character rather than one which is developing and self-creating?

How reliable is such knowledge of character and dispositions? How much do we need to know of someone's virtues and vices and dispositions in order to be able to write intelligibly and revealingly about them? Clearly, if we are to avoid inappropriate naturalising of character or falling afoul of Sartre's strictures, we have to conceive of character not as fixed but as something developing. This raises the question of whether character is something progressively revealed over time or something which emerges through actions over time, that is, something created in time by the agent under scrutiny. This is what we track in a biography: but is it a hypothesis or postulate or fiction we impose on events and actions as a guiding organizing principle? Is it discovered or imputed? Or both? It can be imputed on the basis of evidence and then discovered on the basis of further evidence. We talk of character and we talk of a person's projects. Is a person the same as their character or projects? And is it not the case that a person can have a project to develop their character? That is, part of one's character can be to have a project about one's character, although this would not be true of all characters.

Perhaps this is why there is a necessarily fictional element in a biography, fictional in the sense that the biographer has to impute a character, as a form of narrative self, to the subject of the biography. Virginia Woolf argues that there cannot ever be a true biography. Monk paraphrases this by saying that 'in order to represent life as it *really* is, in order to present people as they *really* are, we must conjure up phan-

toms; in order to capture the *truth* about reality, we must write fiction'
(Monk, 2007, p. 12). Is this what we have to do? Can fiction provide
truth unavailable to the historian? The key point is the role of the imag-
ination. Collingwood himself, of course, argues for the importance in
historical thought of what he terms 'the historical imagination'. In our
context, imagination goes to work, aided by the resources of what we
know of the subject's character, to answer the question, what would we
expect this person to do in a situation of this type? But to use the his-
torical imagination in explanation in this sense is necessarily to impute
on the basis of known or presumed character. The danger of circularity
is ever-present, and hence, if we are to remain true to our presupposi-
tion that character is the expression of the self as an agent, we have
to be very careful to avoid all forms of dogmatism concerning what
someone did or did not do on the basis of their presumed character.
Our biographical subject should, at some point, surprise us by his or
her actions; if we lose the *possibility* that they might surprise us then we
have clearly gone too far in our presumed knowledge of their charac-
ter. Collingwood argues that there is a great similarity between fiction
and history, the key difference being that 'as works of imagination, the
historian's work and the novelist's do not differ. Where they do differ
is that the historian's picture is meant to be true' (Collingwood, 1993,
p. 246). And historical truth is sometimes surprising. The counter-
argument would be that there is a crucial difference between a char-
acter as known at the time of their acting and the character as known
(or imputed) in a biography after 'all is said and done'. In a biography
we know what happened next, and hence, it might be said, there is no
possibility of surprise. This is a good, but not a decisive, point, and to
understand it we need to distinguish biography as a finished product
from biographical writing as the pursuit of a person's life. In the former
we have made our judgements and all is explained; even well-recorded
and surprising deeds which might, *prima facie*, resist explanation will
have been brought within the fold of our overall conception of the
character of the self of the biographical subject. There are two excep-
tions: where we simply cannot believe that an apparently aberrant act
could have occurred, and where we accept that it occurred but find that
we have no way, given the evidence at our disposal, of explaining it. So,

even in a finished biography there might be elements which escape our explanations; but if that is so, consider biography as a process. Here we can easily be surprised by what we find, and when we are it will drive our search for appropriate evidence, evidence which we might seek out precisely *because* we have been surprised.

A novelist plots a novel. It could be argued that a biographer finds the plot of the subject's life ready-made. But this might be a mistake: if the self and character are in flux because they are active in their own self-creation, then the idea of a plot to a life is suspect. Some (Hayden White springs to mind) insist that the historian has to consider emplotment, which provides a narrative shape which a sequence of historical facts, no matter how well attested, cannot give us. Can a life persuasively be given a narrative shape, such as romance, comedy, tragedy or satire? Does the biographer need to choose? It might seem absurd to ask; one might say, 'tell it as it is'. But this brings us again to character and its relationship with narrative. Identification of a character is not the identification of a narrative; character and narrative are both objectively present and imputed by the biographer. The imputed character is a judgement by the biographer, underdetermined but based on evidence and called on to explain when evidence is lacking. The narrative, on the other hand, can be construed in various ways as it is only loosely situated in relation to character. On narrative we might say:

> '[t]o emplot' a sequence of events and thereby transform what would otherwise be only a chronicle of events into a story is to effect a mediation between events and certain universally human 'experiences of temporality.' And this goes for fictional stories no less than for historical stories. The meaning of stories is given in their 'emplotment.' By emplotment, a sequence of events is 'configured' ('grasped together') in such a way as to represent 'symbolically' what would otherwise be unutterable in language, namely, the ineluctably 'aporetic' nature of the human experience of time. (White, 1987, pp. 172–3)

The answer I shall give is that the 'plot' of a life is the narrative, and a narrative has a certain direction or thrust, is underdetermined by the evidence, and has to be conjured into being by the biographer as the

most 'fitting' and persuasive understanding consonant with the evidence. Thus, there can be reasonable disagreement about the most appropriate narrative or plot, but not all possible narratives will be equally plausible. All lives contain elements of the comic, the tragic and so on; the job of the biographer is to weld these elements into a narrative which, although the product of his or her biographical artifice, appears to most naturally fit the biographical subject.

Self-Knowledge for Biographer and Biographical Subject

History, for Collingwood, is self-knowledge of the mind. In history, that is, one learns and comes to appreciate one's own sympathies and capacities. Reading history—and here I include biography as history—helps us understand our own lives by understanding the lives of others. Collingwood fails to see this clearly in the case of biography; the irony is that it is in biography that this is most clear. Writing an autobiography is both an act of self-creation or self-development by the agent and also an act of self-knowledge in gaining enhanced understanding of the actions of the agent as author, both of their actions and of their account of those actions. Writing a biography is also self-knowledge in so far as it is history, but it is not the same self-knowledge as that that gained by the autobiographer because, if the self is a reflexive self constituted by identity over time, that identity is one which is the autobiographer's alone. The biographer cannot be the subject of the biography.

In some senses, given appropriate intellectual competence, it is easy to re-enact the intellectual history of a thinker, but is this all we need for a satisfactory biography? One might argue that if the life is the thought, then accounting for the thought is accounting for the life. What else could one want? Perhaps a sense of someone's personality or of the conditions in which the subject's thinking took place? But surely we do not understand Newton better by sitting under the apple tree with him? Collingwood would be right to say that this would be to miss the point. The answer lies, in part, in the recognition that a thinker's thought does

not emerge in one piece at a single moment as a complete and coherent system. It emerges over time in response to questions and problems recognised, raised and answered by the subject. So one has to learn to think with the biographical subject, to follow the trajectory of their thought, to feel what animates them (including the feelings which animate them). A biography which dealt only with the finished thought considered in abstraction from the thinking of it would be no biography at all. The self-knowledge of the biographer here is enhanced by their ability to identify with and understand the problem situation facing their subject, which will require vast reserves of intellectual energy because it will not be ready to hand for the reasons Collingwood gives in chapter five of *An Autobiography.*

To avoid a different pitfall, it is important to note that the biographer does not have to *share* the beliefs, arguments or conclusions of their subject: he or she has to interpret their actions in the light of the beliefs that they *actually* held, not those which they *should* have held, or which the biographer holds. To take Collingwood's example, if someone believes there are devils in the mountain, that explains why they are reluctant to climb the mountain pass. Whether there are really devils in the mountain is beside the point (Collingwood, 1993, p. 317). Sympathetic understanding is necessary, but it is not obvious that it would help if the biographer also believed there were devils in the mountains. However, the biographer should have sufficient sympathy to follow wherever their biographical subject goes. A deficiency of sympathy can lead to distortion of the facts. Let us adapt a comment of Clifford Geertz's, that a 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun' (Geertz, 1993, p. 5), and apply this to the biographical subject. It is incumbent upon the biographer to take seriously what the subject takes seriously. Not because of agreement—that is beside the point—but because the web of significance is the subject's and not the biographer's. Hence the biographer should take seriously what their subject took seriously. To do otherwise is to distort the account. This is not to deny that one can judge that someone took some things too seriously and others not seriously enough, but this judgement presupposes full and proper consideration.

The Unconscious Self and Self-Control

Collingwood took Freud seriously, wrote on Freud and underwent psychoanalysis. Writing to a friend after suffering a series of strokes, he observed of himself:

> I lead an interesting, sufficiently active, and on the whole happy life. The work I watch myself doing day by day to restore the adjustment of mind and body is I cannot tell you how interesting, though mostly unconscious: I congratulate myself that I have trained myself, all my life, to 'to keep on good terms with my own unconscious' as a psychologist once put it to me. (von Leyden, 1972[1941], p. 21)

Illnesses of various types raise the issue of the intentionality of action, of self-control, self-mastery. Here one might wonder which self one is invoking or adducing in explanation. There are all sorts of difficulties here for the biographer. Can we be sure that the subject of a biography is acting intentionally, and if they are not, are our methods, conceived in the Collingwoodian sense as the recovery of the thoughts of historical agents, unable to capture what they need to? Is this an especial problem for intellectual biography? Whatever might be true of other biographies, this must be an issue where a biography is of a thinker. My tentative view is that once one is no longer able to ascribe intentions and motives on the basis of rational reconstruction, modified as Collingwood say it can be by emotional knowledge, then one has departed from biography conceived as history.

However, this is not to deny that the subject of a biography will often inadvertently reveal something of themselves. This is quite common, especially when the subject is, like Collingwood, a historian. I have two illustrations.

First, in a talk on Jane Austen, Collingwood wrote:

> Genius never arises except in social surroundings so exquisitely fitted to produce it that its voice seems almost the impersonal voice of these surroundings themselves. At Steventon a family of seven little Austens grew up in surroundings healthy for body and mind, with plenty to read, plenty to

do, and a sufficiency of people to talk to. Here among the peaceful curves of the chalk downs Jane Austen, says a critic, had a 'fitting nursing-ground for that delicate genius which in the noise and bustle of town life might easily have been dazed into helpless silence'. I doubt if the critic has lived in a country house with seven healthy children, and I do not see Jane dazed into helpless silence by anything short of a boiler-factory; but Steventon certainly did form her mind, not so much by its rural quiet, whatever that means, as by the very definite atmosphere of self-contained and industrious activity which country life alone can produce. A family of intelligent children in a remote country place must invent its own amusements, and thus acquires a corporate personality which gives each of its members the sense of expressing something wider than himself…. (Collingwood, 2005, p. 37)

Whatever the merits of this as a description of Austen's home life, it is clearly an excellent description of Collingwood's early family life in the Lake District. It also illuminates the conception of self as both given and created, in which being influenced is itself an action. Further, the self that emerges in these conditions is one subject to intense self-scrutiny. Collingwood was a great observer and narrator: the two were one, and each the complement of the other. This was true of his family as a whole, all of whom possessed a close ability to observe in a variety of media, whether through words, music, stone or paint. Through their correspondence they developed a continuous family narrative of self-understanding.

 Second, in *An Autobiography* Collingwood wrote that 'I will not pretend that my first visit to a modern excavation (it was my father's dig at the north tower of the Roman fort called Hardknot Castle; I was three weeks old, and they took me in a carpenter's bag) opened my eyes to the possibility of something different' (Collingwood, 1939, p. 80). In 1929, at the age of forty, and at the height of his career as an archaeologist of Roman Britain, Collingwood wrote that the digs at Hardknot

were carried out at a time when *scientific archaeology was in its infancy*; this was one of the first Roman forts to be dug in this country; and the people who dug it were not able to interpret the history of the site by reference to the objects found in it, because the principles on which that interpretation depends had not yet been discovered. (Collingwood, 1929, p. 20, my italics)

This clearly conveys the suggestion, whether conscious or unconscious, that Collingwood identified scientific archaeology with himself and that therefore its infancy coincided with his own infancy, and his maturity with its maturity.[4] Collingwood really did think that his logic of question and answer was a major contribution to scientific archaeology. To be fair, he gave others credit too, but he included himself among those to whom credit was due. In *An Autobiography* he proudly writes of the moment in 1930 when

> the Congress of Archaeological Societies, through its Research Committee, drew up a report covering every department of archaeological field-work in Britain and offering archaeologists all over the country advice as to what the problems were, in each period, upon which the experts assembled in the committee thought it desirable to concentrate. The principle of question and answer had been officially adopted by British archaeology. (Collingwood, 1939, p. 126)

The picture is complete when one realises that at the meeting in 1930 it was Collingwood himself who moved the adoption of the recommendations of the Research Committee (Congress of Archaeological Societies, 1931, pp. 7–8).

Conclusion: On Philosophical Biography

Finally, what is distinctive about philosophical biography? Why is the life of a philosopher of interest and what is the distinction between their life and their thought? If their life is their thought, why not just write of their thought and not of their life? And if their life is to any degree separable from their thought, why suppose it to be of value independently of that thought? To answer these questions again returns us to the nature of the self posited by the biographer and to the features of its thought. For example, a moral philosopher who flagrantly transgresses his or her own ethical precepts is worthy of study because thereby the authenticity of the philosophy, as an ideal to be lived up to, is called into question (although not necessarily falsified). Frege's anti-Semitism, for example, plays no part in his writings

on logic, whereas Heidegger's anti-Semitism and Nazism raise difficulties about the interpretation and effects of his philosophy, given that it has a bearing on practice in a way in which Frege's could not. For a philosopher such as Collingwood, this is an especial difficulty: he wanted to assert a close relationship between theory and practice, and this led to his tangling himself in knots over Giovanni Gentile, with whom he had great philosophical affinities, because he wanted to disown his fascism while at the same time asserting that it showed that as a philosopher he was hopelessly confused.

Earlier we invoked the hermeneutic circle in relation to character, but it can be applied here too. In writing a biography we interpret the whole in relation to the parts and the parts in the light of the whole. We select the parts which reflect our view of the whole and of our narrative understanding of the life. This in turn reflects our basic sympathies and concerns. This prompts the question of one's duty in writing a biography, for it is unlikely that we will find all aspects of someone's life or thought equally interesting. My answer is that one should submit to the interests of one's subject: if they found something important the biographer should take the trouble to understand why this was so. To do less is to neglect the subject's projects, to fail to understand their character, and to misunderstand the self. To write a philosophical biography is to take on the burden of positing a self and a character to an agent whose thought is (mostly) their life. In the light of all that has been said above, to fail to do justice to one part of that life is to distort the whole through a failure to properly appreciate the projects the biographical subject took as central to their own self-development. If a self is constituted by its projects, then such a biographer has, to that extent, failed.[5]

Notes

1. Collingwood's term for an historical method in which the historian merely relies on collating authorities uncritically.
2. This is not to suggest that biography should dispense with analysis of borrowings and influences, but rather to insist that it should be more sophisticated, subtle and dialectical about them than it is sometimes wont to be.
3. See Macmurray, 1957, and Collingwood, 1992, 1.66, 1924, p. 15.

4. To complete the Freudian picture one might suggest that Collingwood asso-
   ciated the origins of modern scientific archaeology with his father, who he
   has to symbolically dethrone.
5. Some of the difficulties of doing this in a philosophical biography were felt
   by Ray Monk (1996, 2000), especially in his biography of Bertrand Russell
   where, as he admits, he found himself increasingly out of sympathy with him
   the older Russell got. This also illustrates the wisdom of choosing a subject
   who doesn't outlive the value of their intellectual projects.

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13

Renovating McTaggart's Substantial Self

Gary L. Cesarz

How ironic that neuroscience and philosophy of mind today seems hell-bent on explaining away that which it engages in explaining. It is widely assumed that we do not understand something unless it conforms to scientific canons, often resulting in the thing being reduced to something more basic or explained away. It begins with the habit of explaining the unfamiliar by the familiar, but often what is most familiar is forgotten. Now, reduction is a legitimate tactic of scientific explanation. It works in many fields, but it gets carried too far when we apply it reflexively to ourselves. Consequently, if we mean something when we speak of one's self, it is either an insubstantial bundle of qualities or, if substantial, something material. Bundle theory gets tangled in this methodological irony since, following scientific orthodoxy, it explains away the self.[1] So does materialism, for to reduce mind to neuro-activity is also to explain it away. Substance dualism avoids these problems but raises others considered insurmountable. Since the self is uniquely recalcitrant to this tactic, I propose to rethink

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J.M.E. McTaggart's stand on immaterial *substantial* selves in light of its relation to Humean bundles and recent scientific trends.

Many consider the advances in neurophysiology conclusive proof of the triumph of materialism. Its most strident defenders insist that consciousness and the self have been explained—in principle. But here what passes for "explanation" promotes the irony described above, that successful explanations of the self must be purely materialistic or explain the self away.[2] I find it alarmingly escapist that so much thought is devoted to explaining itself away—as though we were trying to rid ourselves of ourselves. For example, to *eliminate* the self as a quaint holdover of "folk psychology," as the Churchlands do, or as a "pack of neurons," as Crick does, is to explain it away.[3] And when Dennett denies that he *eliminates* the self, one finds he only means that our use of the word refers to *nothing but* "a story we tell ourselves" with a "center of narrative gravity" around which we organize our experience.[4] Anything more is illusion. Clever enough; but it still amounts to explaining away. After all, what (if not who) is the storyteller? The story *is* the storyteller; a self-caused story about itself, an epiphenomenal demigod, a situation which ignores the *asymmetry* between storyteller and story.[5] If the story includes anything more, it will include chapters on body and its neurophysiology. And if one insists that body generates the storyteller, then all we have is an expansion of the tale wherein the body is a character in the story that produces a storyteller that tells the story; a handy circular tale. If so, Dennett's story about stories, like Hume's bundles, is the fiction, not the self.

McTaggart makes a similar point in his critique of materialism where he denies that the self is just "an activity of the body."[6] He holds that matter is an abstraction from the "sensations experienced by selves" and is at best a mind-dependent construct. He argues:

> If my self is one of the activities of my body, then, since my body is only events in the life of some conscious being, then my self must also be events in the life of some conscious being. It is clearly absurd to suppose that I am an activity of my body, as my body is known to myself, for then I should be events in my own life.[7]

Although McTaggart's use of "life" and "events in my own life" tends to obscure his point, it is essentially the same as that made above. If my

material body is a mind-dependent construct abstracted from my sensations, and if my self is an activity of that construct, then my self is just part of the construct that I have constructed. One has only to substitute "story we tell ourselves" for "mind-dependent construct" to expose the similarity to and difficulty in Dennett's gambit. For we can again ask, what is constructing these constructs, or having these sensations and fashioning itself from them? If I am just a consequence of my body, and it is a consequence of my mind-dependent sensations, then I am, oddly enough, *causa sui*, which raises the absurdity that I exist before I exist.[8] If one is uncomfortable with this conclusion, the simpler lesson to draw is that this tangle comes from trying to explain the self in materialistic ways befitting anything but the self. But McTaggart continues:

> It is equally impossible that my self should be one of the activities of its own body as perceived by some other self. In that case the self A would be events in the life of another self B. But how about B? By the same rule it also will have to be events in the life of another self. If that self is A, the absurdity will recur in aggravated form. For then A would be the events which happened in a self which was itself events in A.[9]

It seems clear where this is going; if we try to avoid the circular explanation above by invoking a self C to account for B and so on, we only enlarge the circle or produce an infinite regress whereby "no self is explicable at all."[10] Again, one has only to substitute "story" for "events in the life of a self" to see the parallel to Dennett's position. Thus, in order to avoid circular reasoning and infinite regress, McTaggart concludes that the self cannot be an activity of the body. This is one of his reasons for rejecting materialistic explanations of the self and affirming that it is a spiritual substance.

It might be thought that the materialist can escape these problems by insisting that the body is something independent of the storyteller's tale and by maintaining that matter thinks. Our complex neurophysiology is just thinking matter—deal with it! Accordingly, we'll someday adopt a language without any residue of folk psychology. But the problem runs deeper and requires a solution different from marginalizing the self as a vestige of folk psychology and sterilizing our language.[11]

McTaggart, like Berkeley, critiques the primary/secondary quality distinction. However, McTaggart foregoes Berkeley's criticism of abstract general ideas and rejects the assumption that "the object and the sensation are the same thing."[12] McTaggart also endorses a version of epistemological realism alongside his ontological idealism[13] and affirms the priority of *esse est percipere* to *esse est percipi*.[14] Yet McTaggart and Berkeley are similar in that while neither denies that primary and secondary qualities are different (e.g., the shape and solidity of an orange are *distinct* from its color and odor, just as its color and odor are distinct from each other[15]), both maintain that such qualities do not (and perhaps cannot) exist *separately* from each other.[16] What they deny is any *justification* for (1) attributing primary qualities alone to matter, (2) assuming that primary qualities are mind-independent and objective while secondary qualities are mind-dependent and subjective, and (3) conferring existence upon something that consists exclusively of primary qualities.

To be fair, McTaggart acknowledges that the distinction has well served scientific inquiry. He notes that it seems to provide several advantages for science: a "greater degree of unity" in scientific explanations than a theory such as Cartesian dualism; the way much of what we experience behaves "almost entirely independently of one's will"; the persistence or uniformity of what we experience; and the principle that energy manifests itself as mechanical, thermal or electrical.[17] This gives materialists a ready-made assumption to exploit: if the different forms of matter reduce to energy, and if the self is an activity of the body, then the self should be likewise reducible or even eliminated. All of this, however, rests on the dubious assumption of the existence of primary qualities *separate* from secondary qualities.

McTaggart's opening move against that assumption is to observe that what one pre-reflectively experiences when one sees an orange, for example, is a particular orange, not a sequence of sensations from which one then infers the existence of an orange. No doubt we have sensations; but only if engaged in a theoretical analysis does one abstract and attend to the discrete sensations as such, and then try to explain "seeing an orange" as a construct from them.[18] If anything is a construct, it is not the orange but the concept of matter-as-such, an abstraction, a "naked extension."[19] The view that the existence of matter is inferred from one's sensations is an *invalid* inference from the unjustified assumption that primary qualities exist apart from secondary qualities.

McTaggart then affirms the widely accepted claim that secondary qualities are mind-dependent, but he acknowledges that sensations are transient and thus must have "part-causes" beside the self's state of awareness, which part-cause need not resemble its effect.[20] Indeed, secondary qualities cannot resemble matter since, according to materialism, matter consists of primary qualities alone. Now, some might think that this admission enables the materialist to press the standard assumption that primary qualities cause the secondary qualities presented in our sensations; after all, resemblance is unnecessary. McTaggart's point, however, is that it is inconsistent to insist that the part-causes of sensations are primary qualities, since we never do and cannot experience primary apart from secondary qualities. For since sensations provide the evidence for both types of qualities, and secondary qualities only exist in our awareness, then since primary qualities occur simultaneously with and in our awareness of secondary qualities, it is invalid to infer that primary qualities alone resemble and exist mind-independently in matter. If that is correct, then it is also invalid to infer that primary qualities are the part-causes of sensations of secondary qualities. McTaggart says that:

> the ordinary theory of matter makes…[it] the cause of the sensations of color and…pain, *as much as of…form*. Yet it denies that matter is red and painful. Here…is an external cause of mental events that does not resemble them. It is therefore impossible to [rely on] the principle, that the external causes of mental events always resemble them. [But] what other principle have we to justify…ascribing the primary qualities to those causes?[21]

This seems incomplete, but it establishes several points. It shows that since the evidence is the same for both primary and secondary qualities, we cannot jump directly to the existence of matter from the experience of primary qualities alone; for the part-cause could be something spiritual.[22] It also exposes an inconsistency in holding that one and the same cause produces sensations of both primary and secondary qualities as its effect, but that only the former resemble the cause. Since it is impossible to verify independently that the primary qualities resemble material bodies, the materialist view seems a happy convenience.[23] McTaggart considers a

proposal to abandon the distinction altogether by attributing both types of quality to matter, but he immediately notes that although this might avoid the inconsistency, it would lose the support of science.[24] He is correct about this but doesn't elaborate. So let me supplement his argument.

Connected with the problems about resemblance is Descartes' reason for distinguishing *res extensa* and *res cogitans* and the quantitative and qualitative properties inherent in each respectively, that is, to ground the mathematical measurement essential to physics.[25] For Descartes, extension, the essence of matter, establishes the mathematically measurable character of matter and confers upon it a veneer of objectivity. Sensory qualities, emotion, personal perspective, and other features of experience subject to human will are subjective, or mind-dependent. At first glance, this distinction is just what is needed to establish the rigor and prestige of physics and, by adoption, the other sciences.

But it has drawbacks—not the distinction itself but its transmutation into a *separation*—most notoriously illustrated by the mind-body problem. In particular, the distinction creates a problem for materialistic reduction that derives from the transmutation noted above. If the quantitatively measureable has exclusive ontological priority, and if entities such as a self and its intentional content[26] are either eliminated, reduced to neuro-activity or otherwise explained away, then the distinction between primary (objective) and secondary (subjective) qualities is undone. This undermines rather than supports comprehensive materialism; for by pushing the comprehension of primary qualities to the extreme of either eliminating or reducing secondary to primary qualities, materialism undoes the very distinction on which natural science rests. Eliminativism is plainly false, for since secondary qualities are going nowhere, neither is mind nor the self. And reductionism collapses secondary into primary qualities,[27] which reintroduces subjectivity into the objectivity of science—a price physics is unwilling to pay.

For his part, McTaggart never asks science to pay such a price. Besides, he is concerned with our experience of primary qualities, not with the basis of mathematical physics. Recall also that he denies not the distinction, but the separation of primary from secondary qualities and the reduction of the latter to the former. In reply to the claim that primary qualities are fixed, non-perspectival and more stable than secondary qualities, and

that from this we may infer that primary qualities objectively resemble matter, McTaggart observes, on the one hand, that "two men who look at a cube from different perspectives simultaneously will have two quite different sensations of its shape, which a material object cannot have... at once," and, on the other, that secondary qualities are often uniform.[28] Our experience of primary qualities might be enough to meet the interests of mathematical sciences, but it is invalid to infer the existence of matter as something that consists of primary qualities alone. The contemporary significance of this is found in the following two points that come from disputes among naturalists.

First, parallel to the issue over primary and secondary qualities is John Searle's point in a debate with the Churchlands over Strong AI and "computer intelligence."[29] A principal point of Searle's Chinese Room Argument is that *syntax* alone cannot generate *semantics*, a logical fact about the pure formality of mathematical logic which establishes its rigor, objectivity and universality. The Churchlands' rebuttal ignores this fact, insists that a purely syntactic engine can generate semantics, and overlooks the fact that it is the actual Chinese speakers *outside* the room who reintroduce semantics when they experience (read) the symbols produced by the syntactically ruled non-Chinese speaker inside the room. The Churchlands' eliminative materialism conflates syntax and semantics, a price mathematics and formal logic are unwilling to pay. Similarly, one can no more reduce secondary to primary qualities than semantics to syntax without undermining the possibility of scientific knowledge as currently understood.

Second, many who otherwise support the naturalist program have grown skeptical about our understanding of the physical and whether it can account for consciousness. Here, I can only mention the most pressing sources of such doubts. Tim Crane and Hugh Mellor argue that among the standard proposals about what it is to be physical, there is no true non-trivial definition of "physical" sufficient to distinguish physical from mental phenomena nor to justify the assumption that physics has ontological priority over psychology. Thus, they argue that physicalist reductionism is misguided and unlikely to succeed.[30] Barbara Montero argues that the increasingly odd varieties of theoretical entity counted as physical provide no coherent notion of body and concludes that "the

question of whether everything is physical is true" is far from settled.[31] And Thomas Nagel, in his most recent and controversial book, calls into question the whole naturalistic program.[32] Such doubts are not new. Russell, in *The Analysis of Matter*, anticipates many when he says that in the new physics, particle interaction—once assumed to be causally continuous—is "more like the parcel posts…[only] now…there is no postman," and judges that the new physics has "more affinity with idealism than with materialism."[33] Elsewhere he says that "matter has become as ghostly as anything in a spiritualist séance,"[34] a remark in the same vein as McTaggart's "matter is in the same position as Gorgons and Harpies."[35] If materialism is not near its explanatory limits, it remains a one-sided story. Neurophysiological research has much to say about the neural activity associated with mental events but little about the self, let alone a substantial one. How has it come to this?

One reason is the methodological error of mistaking distinctions for separations, a source of the irony that inspired this study. We examined its rationalist origins above. Consider now the empiricists' analysis of the substance/attribute distinction: isolating substance from its attributes, restricting intelligible existents to distinct perceptions, and, in Hume, abandoning substance altogether. Hume's rejection of substance—material or spiritual—is well known: absent an impression—sensory or reflective—of substance, we can have no idea of it. He further attacks substance using the trivialized definition "something which may exist by itself." He then argues, according to this definition, that since all perceptions are distinct, and everything "distinguishable is separable in imagination," then they "may be considered as separately existent, and thus may exist separately, and have no need of anything else to support them…[and] are, therefore, substances."[36] Clearly, this is meant as a *reductio ad absurdum*. Nevertheless, it exhibits the methodological principle that misleads him to conclude that if "self" refers to anything, it refers only to a bundle of distinct perceptions, not a substance.[37]

Whether this entails a denial of the self is a thornier question. Consider the famous passage: "[W]hen I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception …I never can catch *myself* without a perception …and never can observe anything but the perception"—nothing but a "heap…of perceptions."[38] Those who

think Hume denies self altogether note—with a smile—that at least he catches his self stumbling and so affirms what he denies. But their smile is premature, for coupled with his claim that "self… is not one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to" refer,[39] it is clear that Hume affirms self *qua* bundle of perceptions but denies self *qua* simple substance. He even compares the "soul," as a *system* of perceptions, to "a republic" of several persons "united by reciprocal ties…who propagate the same republic in the incessant change of its parts" without loss of identity.[40] The analogy helps, for a heap is neither systematic nor identity-preserving, and it gives a storied way to think about self other than as a substance.

Although this is Hume's best proposal, it is problematic, for he never explains how anything can be incessantly changing *without loss of identity*; he leaves that to imagination. And surely he goes too far when he claims that in the absence of any perceptions during sleep, he "may truly be said not to exist."[41] Unless Hume rejects the *ex nihilo* principle, whence his existence upon waking? Finally, the sense of the self as an imaginatively combined bundle of discrete perceptions analogous to a republic is too close for comfort to Dennett's position; like a masquerade, it appears to explain but only explains away the self.

In the Appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume gives pause to his thought. There he says: "I find myself involved in such a labyrinth, that…I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor… render them consistent."[42] After reviewing the evidence and reaching similar conclusions, Hume admits that having "loosened all our particular perceptions," he now realizes "there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor…renounce…*that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*."[43] One of these must go, and given my stand against mistaking distinctions for separations, it must be the first. And if that goes, so goes the bundle theory, leaving us again with no self.

These are errors unique to neither Hume nor empiricism: the bundle theory *reduces* the perceiver to the same level as perceptions by requiring the former to pass its test for the latter, akin to the point of Wittgenstein's meter.[44] Its failure to pass shows only the failure of the test, not the self's insubstantiality. The critical point is that the self cannot be put to the

same evidential tests we use on the evidence. It's not just more evidence among the rest, but that which decides the evidence. As McTaggart says: Hume "tried to find a consciousness of the self which had the same positive evidence for being an awareness as is found in an awareness of… some particular sense datum."[45] Let me illustrate. My oldest son once won a regional science fair and advanced to state-level competition. During a delay in the judging, I took Jason and his younger brother, Aubrey, to a nearby bird refuge, where we found telescopes that magnified the images of migrating birds. Jason began to explain how telescopes work but had hardly finished before Aubrey swung the scope around saying, "Hey, Jason, let's try to see dad better!" But since I was too close, the scope went dark. Completely surprised, Aubrey shouted, "Jason, dad's gone! Where'd he go?" Although Jason finished his explanation, Aubrey—convinced that he should be better able to see me—couldn't stop looking for me through the scope. This reflects how things go when we abandon the self. To seek something "in the wrong way" invites failure.[46]

In our case, the wrong way is to overextend a method—to investigate something by a method that excludes any evidence of it, complain about not finding it, and in a fit of explanatory desperation conclude there's no such thing. This fallacy undoes many human endeavors. For example, in medical practice a rigid commitment to "evidence-based medicine" can lead a physician to misdiagnose the disease that kills the patient. Yet, in light of this, we might sympathize with Hume's disappointment, for we cannot do without evidence, but neither can we restrict ourselves to it. Without method, we risk missing needed evidence; with method, we risk cutting out something else equally important. Our quandary is not simply a lack of knowledge; as finite beings that shall always be the case. More facts might fix a particular problem but not allow us to escape the dilemma. It's a fundamental dilemma of many forms; we solve puzzles at the cost of creating others. We pursue knowledge methodically, but doing so confines us to only that with which the method can cope and excludes everything else. This is an old insight, I know, but it's one we regularly forget. The two versions of this error we've considered eliminate selves or reduce them to neuro-activity coupled to the paradoxical claim that selves are only "stories we tell ourselves." However, the problem here

is not simply the wrong method; it also involves the wrong assumption about the self.

McTaggart agrees that Hume and his philosophical descendants bank too much on the selected scientific assumptions and methodologies of their times and imprudently dismiss the wisdom of metaphysics. Hume, after all, introduces the *Treatise* as a "science of man" and scarcely hides his atomizing of our nature.[47] And the Churchlands and Crick certainly write as if science can replace metaphysics. McTaggart, we noted, gives science its due but denies that it can replace metaphysics, and he thus would endorse the point of the criticisms and story above. Misled by methodological fallacies, Hume ends up with nothing but a plurality of separately existing perceptions—independent of a perceiver and a bare substance manqué, to be discarded as mere nothingness—nothing but existential anxiety. Doing so, he gets rid of the perceiver and, with it, the self. And his descendants end up with nothing but neuro-networks and stories we tell ourselves. Shouldn't we then discard the fallacy rather than substance and resist the inclination to transform distinctions into separations? Still, we need to restore something more. And since the distinctions in play cannot be only between perceptions as such, that something more must be a perceiver, for there are no perceptions apart from a perceiver and therefore a self. Contrary to what has been detailed above, let's consider the case for a substantial self.

Substance seems as elusive as the self is shy.[48] To begin with substance, the definition Hume attacks won't do. Little wonder; being incomplete, it isn't meant to. McTaggart deliberately avoids it and defines substance as "that which has qualities and relations without being itself either a quality or a relation, or having qualities or relations [facts] among its parts."[49] He further argues that substances separated from qualities are empty abstractions; they can be distinguished but cannot exist apart from each other, just as perceptions cannot exist without a perceiver or a perceiver without perceptions.[50] In the end, McTaggart argues, since selves meet this concept of substance, and do so without the explanatory desperation typical of materialism and Hume, selves are substances. Still, the case calls for further comment.

Broad says that for McTaggart, "substance" means "particular."[51] It is true that McTaggart sometimes uses "particular," but not in Broad's

sense.[52] Since Broad is following Russell, who posits particulars during his logical atomist period, one might assume McTaggart is too. For Russell explains particulars using "the old notion of substance."[53] Yet Russell is ambiguous about "particulars," at once saying they are only nameable, then only known by inference, or else structureless and so isolated from attributes and relations as to be no more than bare particulars.[54] All of this McTaggart rejects. Furthermore, Broad's use of "particular" seems equivocal, for it is wide enough to include bare particulars, particular facts, continuants and events. It thus refers to species of particulars, that is, Aristotle's "secondary substance," while McTaggart primarily uses the term to refer to concrete individuals. The fact that McTaggart sometimes is careless in his examples doesn't conceal this. As for the species of particular Broad insists on including, McTaggart rejects some outright and others he handles in ways unacceptable to Broad; but he doesn't ignore them. For example, Broad criticizes McTaggart for not analyzing events and continuants. However, since McTaggart thinks time is unreal, such temporalities have no initial place in his system[55] and are left for analysis in terms of the C-series (an infinite series he substitutes for time).

Contrary to Broad, Geach says that McTaggart's concept of substance is within the Aristotelian tradition, which holds that primary substance, the concrete individual, is the fundamental actuality on which all other predicables are contingent.[56] Geach, with qualification, is right about this. It corrects Hume's misleading definition of substance, avoids such fictions as discrete Humean bundles—bare particulars existing separate from any qualities—and captures the asymmetry between substance and characteristics. Indeed, Aristotle says that substances are individuals with qualities and relations but cannot themselves be qualities or relations, for substance *qua* individual cannot be predicates of other substances.[57] I am my mother's son, not one of her qualities, as was the auburn of her hair. This is what "something that exists by itself" means—a concrete individual, not a bare particular nor a Humean bundle.

Aristotle distinguishes other senses of substance,[58] but he never retracts substance as *qua* actual individual. The same is true of McTaggart, though he omits other Aristotelian notions such as prime matter, that is, matter as the principle of individuation. However, McTaggart retains

modified senses of essence and of actuality and potentiality. Instead of Aristotle's sense of essence, which is a specifying selection of a substance's qualities, McTaggart uses the notion of the "nature of a thing," which involves all of a substance's qualities, in which respect it recalls Leibniz's "complete concept of a substance."[59] And whereas McTaggart uses actuality and potentiality in his first book, in his last, amidst new theories of actual infinities, he incorporates versions of infinite series in place of Aristotle's robust sense of potentiality.[60] Finally, in McTaggart's timeless world of substances, all is actual. So, although his initial concept of substance is Aristotelian, he ends with something rather different.

Still, even with the corrected definition, substance might seem paradoxical to some, for we cannot say what substance is without invoking that which it is not—its qualities and relations. We are often constrained to work through thickets of evidence without any promise of finding something more fundamental. For example, the realist/anti-realist dispute over the existence of theoretical entities remains unsettled after years of wrangling about whether the observable evidence indicates the presence of a separate unobservable reality, or whether the observable evidence (measureable qualities) is all there is. Both sides to this dispute treat the observable evidence and the unobservable reality as each being a separate entity in itself. If we approach substance and the self in this way, the familiar problems arise: quality bundles or perceptions without perceivers on one side, and bare particulars or pure egos on the other—all fictions, or at best, theoretical entities. This is intolerable but no reason to deny substance or the self, for neither are fictions. As I see it, the suspicion of paradox arises from the fallacy of mistaking the distinction for a separation between the evidence of a substance and the substance itself or from treating the evidence as all there is. If so, there need be no paradox. How then are we to conceive of substance and the self if not in any of the ways criticized above? There is a third way. In ethics, for example, we distinguish the means to an end from the end itself, and we encounter problems only upon separating the means from the end. Similarly, just as evidence, as a means to an end, is evidence of something more than itself, so qualities evince the substance they characterize; paradox threatens only upon separating the two. And just as qualities cannot be isolated from a substance without paradox, so perceptions cannot exist independent of a

perceiver. We confirm this, McTaggart holds, in that we are acquainted with ourselves as substances.

In *The Nature of Existence* (*NE*), McTaggart admits two empirical premises: something exists, and many things exist.[61] We see things and appear to interact with them, as is evident in his arguments in *Dogmas* and too obvious to quibble over. In *NE*, to introduce characteristics, he argues in Hegelian fashion that to assert that something exists says nothing more than that some existent exists, "a perfect and absolute blank… equivalent to saying that nothing exists."[62] He adds: "If nothing is true of the existent except…that it exists, then it will not…be true that it is square. But then…it will be true of it that it is not square. And so… something will be true of it besides its existence. Now that which is true of something is a Quality of that something."[63] I think we ought to grant this. Still, some might object that this is a trivial obversion between two existential particular propositions, and since obversion is valid only on the assumption of existential import, then McTaggart's argument rests on an unwarranted assumption. However, we granted that something exists on empirical grounds. Therefore, the assumption of existential import is warranted—and trivial or not, obversion is valid and affirms a quality of the existent. So, let's grant this too. But there's another lesson here. If we restrict ourselves, as Hume did, to qualities or perceptions alone as the only items that exist, then are we not affirming the quality of the quality itself, "~square is ~square," thus muttering vacuities that McTaggart (and Hegel) warn against? Again, if we restrict ourselves to that which is empirically evident and conforms to materialistic methodology, we fare no better. Now, we can and do continue to find things out by scientific research, and I encourage this. But if we insist on absolute conformity to materialist methodology and affirm existence of matter alone, won't we end as befuddled as Hume? For if what counts as a material existent is a collection of primary qualities, simple or complex, and if primary and secondary qualities are inseparable, as we have seen, then even from a materialist standpoint will we not ultimately end up affirming primary qualities of primary qualities without end? This is the quandary addressed above. Again, some might object that matter is not all there is; there are, for example, forces and fields. Even so, since these also come down to primary qualities, the same argument holds. One way out of the quan-

dary is the old, sound tradition framed in terms of substances and their characteristics.

Now, there are only two types of substance for which we ever thought we had any evidence, material and spiritual substance, and we have found reason to deny the former. Thus, substance must be immaterial. There is also another more direct reason to affirm spiritual substance: we each are most familiar with it—one's self. We have ample evidence for other qualities of the self, most importantly that selves are perceivers, something we concluded after examining Hume's position. And we can add that we have states of perception that include thoughts; conceiving explanations; engaging in criticism and self-criticism, self-assessment and self-correction; and states of emotion, most prominently love. There are many others that most are familiar with through self-examination.

For McTaggart, selves are neither pure egos nor bundles of perceptions. They are complex substances that are uniquely individuated by their qualities and relations exhibited in and multiplied through their perceptual states of themselves and of other selves. The argument for this is based on his contrapositional formulation of the Identity of Indiscernibles, which entails exclusive/sufficient descriptions of each substance. I have defended these principles elsewhere and will forego any exposition here.[64] McTaggart also holds that each perceptual state is itself a substance (in a secondary sense), for perceptions are parts of that self, and as such they fit his definition of substance. This entails within each self endless perceptual states, some being perceptions of oneself, some perceptions of other selves, and still others being perceptions of other selves' perceptions of one's self. This introduces the first of McTaggart's many infinite series of several dimensions. Since this series appears to endlessly postpone the individuation of selves, a vicious infinite threatens unless reconciled with the principles above on the basis of determining correspondence (DC) relations. From this reconciliation follows a plurality of well-ordered infinite series of perceptions of perceptions of oneself and of others in the manner indicated above. Again, the details are too complicated to include here. However, I have argued elsewhere that McTaggart's reconciliation is consistent and succeeds in its task of nullifying the threatened viciousness of this first infinite series, for DC relations establish a tidy one-one correspondence between the different

perceptions of the plurality of selves that comprise the system.[65] But this carries us into McTaggart's theory of perception and exceeds the purpose of this essay, which is to revive the case that the self exists as an immaterial substance.

I should note, however, one objection to the uses of actual infinities that McTaggart envisions. Even if we can give a coherent definition of infinite sets (Cantor's transfinite numbers) and thereby show that actual infinities are mathematically possible, I am unconvinced that a mathematical possibility translates into the ontological reality that McTaggart needs. A potential infinite would serve the purpose of this essay without the doubts raised by the actual infinite. Besides, a potential infinite is more compatible with the obvious fact that I am a finite being who, although a substance, is not an unconditional existent. This, however, does not serve McTaggart's ultimate goal of proving that the self is inherently immortal. So here McTaggart and I part company, not because I categorically deny immortality, in some sense. I'm in no such position; it simply strikes me as undecidable.

I began by noting the self's recalcitrance to being explained away. If we invert the order of explanation, as is common today, the same missteps that lead to explaining away the self will arise. But we cannot be rid of the self; for as long as we go about explaining, we affirm the self. Even if we press a clever self-deception, we will not have lost the self—we will only have hidden it again from ourselves.

Notes

1. "Scientific" in the sense of being given in terms of evidence, or measured, manipulable observables.
2. Explanatory desperation, a form of existential crisis, obtains when one (1) resorts to dogma rather than demonstration, or insists the theory is complete or "potentially complete," even though (2) the theory is in fact incomplete, and (3) its assumptions are strained, but (4) one insists that the only way to support the pretense of completeness is to explain away the offending item that otherwise would falsify the theory. Item 1 above is from Nagel (2012) 13.

3. Paul Churchland (1996) 322; Francis Crick (1995) 3. These authors treat the self either as an illusion or an anomaly that doesn't yet fit the theory rather than as a falsifying fact that upsets the theory; nothing must be allowed to challenge the theory. But the self is not an illusion. And they better hope it's not an anomaly; for if it is, their theorizing is a product of something anomalous, which though unreal has captured a truth that challenges their assumption. Since they will have none of that, it must be explained away.

4. The first part of this synopsis of Dennett's view is from dinner conversations with him when he delivered several lectures at Auburn University the week of April 13, 1998. The last half is from Dennett (1991) 418, 426–29.

5. Cf. McTaggart (1968a) relies on this in his first two criticisms of Hume's bundle theory in *The Nature of Existence*, II, s.388 (hereafter, *NE*). Like Dennett, Hume ignores the asymmetry involved in understanding the self. McTaggart raises several objections to Hume's analysis: *NE*, II, 70–75; and "Personality," *Philosophical Studies* (1968b), 81–83 (hereafter, *PS*).

6. J.M.E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (1969), 100–101 (hereafter, *SDR*); cf. *NE*, II, ss. 390–91; the arguments differ, but the conclusion is the same.

7. *SDR*, 100. McTaggart gives a crisper version of this argument in "Some Considerations Relating to Human Immortality," *International Journal of Ethics*, January 1903, 161–62.

8. McTaggart infers a similar conclusion in "Some Considerations Relating to Human Immortality," 163.

9. *SDR*, 100.

10. *SDR*, 100.

11. Churchland (1996) 322–3.

12. George Berkeley (1988), Pt. I, s. 5, p. 55n17. Mary Calkins includes the quoted passage in the text of her edition (1929), 127.

13. "An Ontological Idealism," *PS*, 273. Cf. also *SDR*, 88–89, 90n1, 98–99 and 101; and *NE* I, chs. 2 & 3, & II, chs. 32, 34, & 36. *NE* is primarily metaphysics. His epistemological realism deflects Moore's generic criticism of idealism, "The Refutation of Idealism" (1959) ch. 1. McTaggart once framed a stage of his dialectic of the self in a manner open to Moore's attack but rejected it: *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (1901) 21 (hereafter, *SHC*).

14. *SDR*, 251, and *NE*, II, s. 412.

15. An old, rotten, squashed orange might be brown or black and smell of rot rather than the sweet promise of refreshment. But then, neither will it be

spherical nor of the same solidity. Still, it will have some shape, solidity, color and odor altered by the bus that flattened it. McTaggart simply means that an experienced object will be experienced as having both primary and secondary qualities.

16. To show that it is impossible that they exist apart from each other would require a new argument. Here, I only insist that separating the two types of quality only produces abstractions, which do not entail existence. Thus, the inference from the assumption that they can be conceived apart from each other to the conclusion that they can exist apart is invalid. We can conceive a shape without color, but such a shape is only a geometric abstraction. Conceivability is a quick and dirty test for possibility; but conceivability—a psychological test—cannot substitute for the logical or ontological test required here; the primary/secondary quality distinction is ontological, not psychological. Substituting one test for the other is a genetic fallacy.

17. *SDR*, 80–83.

18. *SDR*, 87.

19. *SDR*, 91.

20. McTaggart uses "mind-dependent" and "dependent on the self" interchangeably but doesn't equate them with subjectivity. This is a condensation of *SDR*, 88ff; cf. *NE*, II, ss.366ff, 376ff.

21. *SDR*, 89–90 (my italics and inserts). Developments in quantum physics do not change McTaggart's point, for quantum events (particles) are described purely mathematically, that is, as primary qualities. If one thinks that such entities refute McTaggart, recall that "particle" and any qualities attributed to it (mass/charge, position/momentum) have meaning or definite value only in the context of the macroscopic apparatus by which it is studied.

22. McTaggart says "another spirit"; *SDR*, 89.

23. McTaggart, *SDR*, 90; *NE*, II, s. 366.

24. *SDR*, 91.

25. As anticipated by Galileo, metaphysically justified by Descartes, empirically described by Locke, and ever since assumed by scientists and philosophers of a materialist bent. See Galileo (1957), 274–78; Rene Descartes (1993), I, ch. I, & II, Meds. II, V, & VI; John Locke (1974), I, 102, 104–105.

26. I mean our awareness and articulation of meanings, recognition of truth-valuability, intentionality, and ability to remember the past, anticipate the future, and connect them in the present.

27. I say collapses, for even if reductionism holds only that secondary qualities are *caused* by primary qualities, since the operative notion of causality here

is basically Humean regularity plus the usual counterfactual conditions, the connection here amounts to saying that certain quantitative qualities are followed by certain qualitative sensations. What is needed is a notion of cause that demonstrates how and why a given structure *must produce* a given secondary quality. We have no such notion.

28. *SDR*, 93.
29. Searle opposes the strong AI view of "computer intelligence." The Churchlands and others hold that even if the man in the room understands no Chinese and merely follows syntactic rules to juggle symbols, the system as a whole (room + rules + man) understands Chinese; that is, syntax alone produces semantic content, form alone is sufficient to produce content. John Searle (1990), 26–31; Paul and Patricia Churchland (1990), 32–37.
30. Tim Crane and Hugh Mellor (1990), 85–206. This doesn't imply they adopt idealism.
31. Montero (2009), 115. Her original article is "The Body Problem," *Nous*, 33, 1999, 185–200, first presented at the 50th annual meeting of the New Mexico/West Texas Philosophical Society in Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 1999.
32. Nagel (2012).
33. Russell (1954) 128 (my insert), 387–388.
34. Russell (1960), 104, and (1927), 98.
35. *SDR*, 95.
36. Hume, *Treatise* (1973), 233.
37. *Treatise*, 232–34, 254, and 261.
38. *Treatise*, 252 and 207, respectively (Hume's italics, my insert).
39. *Treatise*, 251.
40. *Treatise*, 261. McTaggart uses a similar analogy in "Personality," *PS*, 82.
41. *Treatise*, 252. Cf. the pattern of explanation in Churchland (1996), 307–308.
42. *Treatise*, 633.
43. *Treatise*, 636, (Hume's italics). The "connections" in question are resemblance, constant conjunction and contiguity (260).
44. *Philosophical Investigations*, para. 50.
45. McTaggart, "Personality," *PS*, 80; *NE*, II, 76.
46. McTaggart, "Personality," *PS*, 80; *NE*, II, 76.
47. *Treatise*, xv. McTaggart recognizes this as the atomistic fallacy: *SHC*, ss. 37, 66, 85; *SDR*, 108.
48. Note 45 above. In *NE*, "illusive" is misprinted instead of "elusive."

49. "An Ontological Idealism," *PS*, 275; see Keeling's note at 275 n. 1 (my insert).

50. *SDR*, 88–89, 103 and 109. In *SHC*, s. 26, McTaggart is quite explicit about this. Cf. Kant's (1965) "synthetic unity of apperception" or "transcendental ego," *Critique of Pure Reason*, A107–A109, & B132–B140; John Searle (2008), ch. 7. Kant and Searle cautiously posit the "I think" as a principle (not a substance); but in some sense, "self" is inescapable.

51. C.D. Broad (1976), I, 132 (hereafter, *EMP*).

52. *PS*, 70–71.

53. Russell, (1971), 201–202, and 337. My point is not that Russell merely substitutes particulars for substances. Rather, though particulars seem similar to substances, particulars are reduced to their minimal logically required functions symbolized in statements that fit the method of *Principia Mathematica*, (Ex)Φx, stripped of all classical metaphysical trappings.

54. Russell (1971), 188, 200–201, 270, 337–8. Russell even says he's discussing not "particular particulars but…general particulars" (201). In which sense, then, are they like substance for Russell or Broad?

55. Broad charges that under McTaggart's definition, facts count as substances (*EMP*, I, 132), but McTaggart dealt with this before Broad's commentary appeared; see n. 49 above.

56. Peter Geach (1979), 43–44.

57. *Categories*, 1a20–1b6, 2a11–2b19.

58. Genus and species, substances in a secondary sense, and essence; cf. *Categories* 2b15–2b19, and *Metaphysics*, 1017b23.

59. *NE*, I, 65; Leibniz (1962) and the re-worked notion of monad in *Monadology*.

60. *SHC*, ss. 42–43 and 81–82; *NE*, II, chs. XLVI–XLIX. McTaggart's knowledge of Kant's "Antinomies" and Hegel's critique of the "false infinite" figure in here. But contemporary defenses of Cantor's work by Russell (1952, chs. V–VII) and Royce (1959 I, 473ff) had to have inspired McTaggart; he studied both and reviewed Royce's volumes in *Mind*. The new analyses of infinity appear to remove the need for Aristotle's "potential infinite" and Leibniz's "pre-established harmony" among infinite monads and their perceptions.

61. *NE*, I, ss. 45, 56, 73.

62. *NE*, s. 59; McTaggart's abbreviated rendition of the dialectic of Being, Nothing, Becoming in Hegel (1976) I, ch. I.

63. *NE*, s. 60.

64. Cesarz (2005). "McTaggart and Broad on Leibniz's Law," presented at the 102nd Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, New York, December 28, 2005.
65. Cesarz (1988) *Substance and Relations in McTaggart's Metaphysics*, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of New Mexico.

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14

Idealism and the True Self

W.J. Mander

Introduction

The topic of this essay is the doctrine of the 'true self' as developed by the British Idealist School of the late nineteenth century. Although the notion of the true self is one that occurs widely in popular culture—a quick internet trawl will reveal that it is especially popular with flaky do-it-yourself religions and self-help programmes—it figures but rarely in contemporary philosophical discussion. However, that has not always been the case, and the following discussion will demonstrate how extremely important an idea it was in the overall philosophical scheme advanced by the British Idealists.

Snobbish disdain for the popular aside, the reason why contemporary philosophers tend to avoid the concept is that it is a very unclear

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and contested one. Is the true self that which is natural, free or spontaneous, as opposed to that which is forced, bound or artificial? Or is it rather that which is deliberately chosen and held onto in the face of disturbing counter-forces or spur-of-the-moment impulses? Does its significance lie in its actuality? That is to say, must I *discover* or learn to *accept* who, as a matter of fact, I truly am? Or is my true self better understood as an aspirational goal—a marker of the self I aim to be, the self which I ought to become, the ideal mode of being in which I could rest satisfied and free from further pressure for self-improvement? Again, is my true self private—something I may keep hidden behind the public mask which others see? Or am I most myself when I stop looking inwards and think instead about the world; is it only in interaction with others that I find my true self? And anyway, do I really have an essence or true self? Perhaps the freedom to self-create is unlimited. Perhaps I have no fixed essence or nature and can become whoever I like. Perhaps no form of life is more true or authentic for me than any other. These are all good questions, and none have easy answers, but the lesson which we can learn from the British Idealists is that when these issues are faced seriously, it becomes possible to draw out a notion of the true self robust enough to be capable of doing useful philosophical work.

What *was* the Idealist doctrine of the true self? The term 'doctrine' here should not be misunderstood. Rather than a precise set of claims unanimously understood and defended by all of the British Idealists (in the manner of some axiomatizable scientific theory), what is being indicated here is the presence of a general concept which does unifying and explanatory work of one kind or another right across their common world-view. Although perhaps even to speak of a unitary 'concept' suggests greater precision than is warranted, and it would be better to think in terms of a multifaceted conceptual 'assembly' which was the collective work of many different hands.

It will be the aim of this essay to explore in detail the various sides of that structure. But if what is wanted is a concise summation for the sake of initial orientation, we will perhaps not do better than Edward Caird's slogan 'die to live', the oft-repeated formula in which he expresses the dictum of Christ that 'whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but

whoever loses his life for me will save it'.[1] Caird's point is that if only we can renounce or let go of the identity we seem to enjoy, we will encounter, not our own destruction, but an altogether richer and higher level of selfhood. If only we can stop clinging to who or what we think we are, we may find out our true identity. One thing that we discover is that our true self is a *social self*. Against the view of society as nothing more than the combination of so many distinct atomic individuals, the Idealists argue that, considered in isolation from the society which fashions us, the self is but an empty and unreal abstraction. But if our selfhood is something partial or incomplete apart from the wider social context which gives it content and significance, then the wider whole to which we belong can really be thought of as our true self. This is a metaphysical doctrine, but crucially also an ethical one.[2] However, sociality is only one part of what is intended, for in addition, as Mackenzie puts it, 'The true self is what is perhaps best described as the *rational self*. It is the universe that we occupy in our moments of deepest wisdom and insight.'[3] The more we raise ourselves above particular sensations or desires or circumstances, the more we become—whether we realise it or not—organs of universal reason and the more truly we express ourselves. The Idealists are more Hegelian than Kantian about just what it means to live the life of reason, but at bottom they agree with both Plato and Aristotle that 'the rational self in man is his most real self'.[4] However, the true self is more than just social and rational; thirdly, it is also *divine*. The process of self-realisation is one in which we rise not just from egoistic atomism to altruistic social life, and not just from nature to reason, but from the finite to the infinite. And thus the theory of the true self is also a religious assertion: the thought that the true principle behind our own lives is at once the true principle behind the universe itself. For the Idealists, the heart of the religious insight is a recognition that we realise ourselves most truly only in union with God, or to put the same point another way, that we find God most truly only within ourselves.[5] In order to further develop this opening sketch, the following sections pick out four different senses in which the British Idealists urge us to pursue and realise our 'true' self. Each links in to a key aspect of Idealist thought, demonstrating the utter centrality of the concept of true selfhood within the overall Idealist system.

Our True and Lasting Satisfaction

Analytic philosophy's engagement with ethics originates with G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, much of which was written in opposition to the 'metaphysical ethics' of his Idealist predecessors. Among other things, Moore takes great exception to the doctrine of the true self, complaining that the word 'true' smuggled in a link from its *existence* to its *value*.[6] However, Moore is as careless reading his sources as he is prejudiced against them, for a more considered examination of the doctrine of the true self would show him immediately that there is no 'smuggling' going on here, since from the very beginning the true self is understood in terms which are essentially *ethical*. It is the notion of our ideal self, the self we ought to be, the self which—were we to realise it—would bring about our only true and lasting satisfaction.

This aspect of the theory can be seen most clearly in the thought of T.H. Green. In his undated address on the Biblical text 'The Word is Nigh Thee', he says: 'There is a conception to which every one who thinks about himself as a moral agent almost instinctively finds himself resorting, the conception variously expressed as that of the "better", the "higher", the "true" self. This conception, I believe, points the way to that true interpretation of our moral nature, which is also the only source of a true theology.'[7]

We may begin to explain his meaning here by noting that, for Green, the good is understood generically as that which satisfies desire,[8] by which he means not simply the formal condition in which a desire for *x* is said to be satisfied if *x* in fact occurs, but the psychological relief from the frustration of wanting which comes with its known fulfilment.[9]

Given that life is finite and desires often not mutually satisfiable, choices must be made. But in order to judge which desires to satisfy, we need to bring in the further notion of a *self*; something distinguished from its own wants but itself capable of more or less satisfaction 'on the whole' through the range of desires with which it chooses to identify itself.[10] As pertaining to the *whole* self, the criterion of such satisfaction is its *permanence.* We seek 'an abiding satisfaction of an abiding self'.[11]

The subject matter of ethics thus resolves into the question of what sort of person or character I should be; the true or adequate good being

understood as that in which an ethical agent may find the lasting satisfaction of himself which he seeks, that 'end in which the effort of a moral agent can really find rest'.[12] The true good is that which satisfies our true or ideal self, where the true or ideal self is that self able to find final and complete contentment.

This ideal self Green describes as a state of human perfection, that is, the perfection of our character,[13] but since this is something we have within us to become, the state can also be described as the full realisation of our potential.[14] Of course, we all have already many possibilities or capabilities which we desire to see fulfilled or realised (For example, among other things, I would like to see the Great Wall of China and to become a better philosopher). But it is important to appreciate that Green has in mind something much more radical than just this, for the perfection of our character must also be the perfection of our desire, and thus the standard to be considered is not necessarily what we *do* want so much as what we *would* want were we fully evolved and developed.[15] The desires which define the true good are those which my most fully realised self would endorse. My true self is the self of my ultimate, not my current, aspirations.

Since we cannot *yet* know what that would be, the precise *content* of Green's true good and true self remains rather vague. It is something we must continually work to identify. But if somewhat unspecified, the goal is not (as some have urged) merely empty. We can say for certain that every moral act aims at some form of what Green calls a 'personal good', the possession of individuals not of abstract entities.[16] We can say too that it is a common or social good, one in which none may find full satisfaction unless all do so.[17] Moreover, Green thinks we may look to the actual historical progress of our species to guide us, something which, if inadequate for prediction or full specification, may at least provide the 'direction of travel'.[18]

Our true or ideal self Green further equates with the eternal consciousness, or God. As knowledge and its potential growth are accounted for by Green as the gradual reproduction in us of a complete vision already realised in the understanding of an eternal consciousness, so likewise he considers moral progress to be explicable only as the gradual self-reproduction in us of a divine life 'who is in eternal perfection all that

we have it in us to become'.[19] The perfection of character which we must always strive towards through time is ours already in eternity. This divine self gradually realises itself in us, and hence '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'.[20]

The notion of the true self, then, gives us a tool to understand what it means to speak of value or goodness. As such it is closely connected with more contemporary accounts of the good as what would be favoured by an ideal observer, or what we would seek were we fully informed and perfectly rational.[21] However, these modern theories are more restricted than Green's. They consider only *cognitive* enhancement, while Green has in mind a development of our *whole nature*, that is to say, of our feelings and desires as well.

The Ground of Obligation

From Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Polonius's advice to Laertes—'This above all: to thine own self be true'[22]—has entered deeply into popular culture. The true self is something that we must or ought to listen to. No good can come to the person who fights his own true self. And here it is that we find another vital aspect of the British Idealist conception of the true self—its function as an explanation of the obligating or imperatival character of moral demands.

This is seen, for example, in the work of Mackenzie, who argues, 'The ought of duty is not a command imposed upon us from without. It is simply the voice of the true self within us.' It is the law imposed by the ideal self on the actual self, by the rational on the non-rational self. And so, he continues, 'Conscience is the sense that we are *not ourselves*'; it is the voice of our true or deeper self telling us that our present life is out of character and not representative of who we really are.[23] Green puts a slightly different slant on the matter. If our real or higher self dictates to our apparent or lower self its duties, were our character perfected and the true self fully realised, there would no longer be any 'duty'. Inclination would coincide with obligation, and the 'should' would be lost in the 'is'.[24] Of course, Green is simply echoing here Kant's conception of the

Holy Will, for whom there exists no imperatives because its actual will is always in harmony with the moral law.[25]

But perhaps the fullest account of this way of thinking is that of Bernard Bosanquet in his *Philosophical Theory of the State.* Bosanquet takes up explicitly what he calls the paradox of obligation, the puzzle of how (morally) an individual or (politically) a society may exercise authority or coercion over itself.[26] While we may agree with Kant that only an autonomous agent can have moral worth, the notion of self-legislation might seem a contradiction in terms: unless morality stems from something larger than us, it is hard to understand what authority it has over us and how it can stand in opposition to our desires. Bosanquet's response to this puzzle is to draw a distinction between what he terms an individual's Actual Will and their Real Will. Our will as we apply it 'in the trivial routine of daily life',[27] what we consciously desire from moment to moment, constantly changes and can never amount to 'a full statement of what we want'.[28] To obtain such a goal for our life as a whole, our current desires must be 'corrected and amended' by what we desire at other moments, something which cannot be done without also harmonising and adjusting in the light of what other people desire. The process Bosanquet envisions here is one of rationalisation—the determination of what would be desired from a viewpoint of full information and rationality—and the 'true' or 'real' will at which it arrives Bosanquet speaks of as the 'rational' will.[29] Such a process returns our will to us in a form which we barely recognise as our own. Where our Actual Will is narrow, arbitrary, self-contradictory, aimed at apparent interests and momentary wants, particular, and essentially private, our Real Will is complete, rational, coherent, aimed at real interests and permanent wants, universal, and fundamentally common or social.[30] Nonetheless, if we follow through the process we must recognise it as what we really want. It is precisely this distinction, thinks Bosanquet, that allows us to solve the paradox of obligation by representing duty as a matter of obedience to the 'better angels of our nature'. Duty—be it moral or political—is really one aspect of ourselves (the better/higher) coercing the other (the worse/lower), a matter of 'making ourselves' do something 'for our own good'. An authority which compels you to do something you desire strongly not to do may still claim to be acting in your name if it genuinely represents your real will, what you would want

if you rationally thought things through. The ground of obligation is therefore to be found in the fact that we are more than we take ourselves to be, and that we may therefore be coerced by something understood as both separate from and identical to ourselves. In the experience of conflict between our apparent or lower self, the self of passing or parochial desires, and our true or higher self, the self of our enduring and universal ambitions, our duties present themselves as at the same time external yet self-imposed. We are not yet our ideal selves. But the true self is the self we ought to listen to, our true wishes those we ought to obey, because at bottom or in reality it is what we really (already) are.

Freedom

It is widely recognised that the concepts of freedom and selfhood are analytically connected; there can be no adequate understanding of freedom which does not also carry along with it an adequate understanding of the self which is free. It is not properly actions, wills, faculties or choices which are free but rather *persons*. As Thomas Nagel has argued, the determinist threat to freedom is one that works primarily by leaving no room for selves or agents, by painting a picture in which everything 'happens' but nothing is 'done'.[31] Reflecting upon what is involved in the concept, to know what it would mean to be genuinely free, is necessarily to have a sense of our own self-identity, for what we want is *the freedom to be ourselves*. In a limited sense we are free whenever we make a choice, but too often mere choice is an unwelcome exercise in picking the lesser of two evils. Only in so far as we can select a course of action with which we freely *identify*, one which we think of as *properly ours*, will we regard ourselves as genuinely free; for true freedom must be *self-expression* as well as *self-determination*. A free action is one that we can own, one that we author, one that truly expresses who we are.[32] And so it is freedom that identifies for us our true selves.

This relationship between freedom and selfhood was well understood by the British Idealists. For example, both Caird and Jones present a narrative (first developed by Hegel) about the evolution of the idea of freedom which intimately connects it to the idea of the self.[33] According to this story,

it is with the origin of subjectivity, with the beginning of thought's sense, that it inhabits an inner private world of its own, that the idea of freedom first makes its appearance. It initially presents itself as the demand to be *left alone* by the rest of society and by the world at large. It is the demand for independence, best illustrated by the stand which Martin Luther made in setting his individual conscience against the authority of the whole Church. However, the freedom which is merely *release from* outside forces reduces in the end to nothing but erratic impulse, the very opposite of free responsibility and something whose self-destructive potential was most visibly illustrated in the French Revolution.[34] Overturning at one go all of the repressive mechanisms of state and social order in the name of 'liberty', that episode in European history unleashed a chaos of destruction more opposed to rational self-expression than anything from which it sought to free itself. What that abortive bid for freedom teaches us, argues Caird, is that the structures and moral obligations of communal life are not 'irksome bonds' to be thrown off at the first chance, but rather 'opportunities' for self-fulfilment. Having to live in a rationally organised society is not *an obstacle in the way of* our freedom but rather our best and only *means to achieve* it.[35] It was perhaps *St Paul*, when he compared members of the Church to the organs of a body, who first understood the reason *why* these two ideals are not opposed to one another; namely, our true selfhood lies in a wider social identity, according to which there can be no realisation for one that is not a realisation for all. However, it was *Hegel's* expression of this insight in his notion of *sittlichkeit*, or Ethical Life, that was the chief inspiration for Caird and his followers. What Hegel shows us, they argue, is that social life best frees us to realise ourselves because it is in social life that we find our true or real self. To conceive of our own identity as that of an atomic individual, distinct and isolated from all other individuals, is to think of ourselves as imprisoned both metaphysically and morally. But if we can abandon this empty abstraction and (as Caird puts it) pass 'beyond the negation of our immediate selves to the conception of a higher common self in which we are really united',[36] not only shall we recognise the fuller concrete reality of communal life which in fact makes us who we are, but realisation of that truth shall also set us free.

Thus Caird holds that a proper understanding of freedom as willing submission to the yoke of social participation and moral law is something

which reveals to us our true identity as moments in a wider collective whole. To explain a bit further this curious thesis, we may note that there are at least two senses in which social structures are not limits to our self-realisation but rather tools and resources to *achieve* it. First of all, in my social being I am *enlarged*. Where a life insulated from other selves would be narrow and circumscribed, the socially connected self has its horizons widened and is set free to realise its greater potential. As Caird preached in one of the regular Lay Sermons he used to deliver as Master of Balliol: 'True independence for a being like man, who is essentially part of a greater whole, is not to be reached by shutting others out of his life—for he who shuts others out, shuts himself in—but by that widening of sympathy which makes the life and interests of others part of his own.'[37] To extend this point a bit further, least it seem just *obvious* that the social order is an opportunity rather than an obstacle, it ought to be remembered that the society which Caird and Jones have in mind here is not just the society which *nurtures me* and which provides me with education and life-chances. More importantly, it is also the society which *I serve* and which determines for me my rights and duties. It is the disciplinary matrix of society every bit as much as its openings which give my life depth and meaning.

The second sense in which coming to embrace our social identity offers us our freedom is that it brings liberation from the more destructive aspects of limited selfhood; it releases us from our lowest and our worst tendencies. The real failure of the French Revolutionaries, argues Caird, was their inability to appreciate 'that the release from external restraint will never do anything to make man really free, [for] the true freedom is not freedom from law, but from ourselves'.[38] It is too easy to think that liberty consists in being able to do what we want, such that anything which stands between us and our desires is a limit on our freedom. But where desire itself is the problem, the truth may rather be that 'that which appears to limit us is most truly setting us free', and that 'what enslaves our self-will and opposes our desires, is really emancipating our higher self from the thraldom of these desires'.[39] Once a man is brought to recognise his true self in the wider social whole, he comes to see just how narrow and constraining his more limited self-identity has really been. More specifically, the submission to moral law frees us from irrationality

and selfishness. Indeed, it equates the two. For if we are social creatures, if we are what we are precisely in and through our relations to others, then to seek to free ourselves from their influence is precisely to seek our own self-destruction. As Caird puts it: 'I, in my true self, have no positive existence except in and through the relations from which selfishness seeks to be delivered.'[40]

What are we to make of all this? The shade of Isaiah Berlin looms large at this point,[41] and into the reader's mind may spring scary thoughts of someone *else* (the State) presumptuously offering you 'real freedom' and claiming to speak for 'your true self'. But such concerns should be put to one side (at least for a moment), for what Berlin so feared and hated he was led to caricature, and the doctrine deserves a fair hearing.

To begin with, we should note that there are two questions for us to separate here: firstly, whether reference to the social whole in which we are situated offers us a real or important sense of freedom, and, secondly, if it does, whether that in turn provides us with any real or important sense of our own identity. As to the first question, of course, there is virtually no end to the library of discussions of Hegelian or Idealist political theory, and it would be foolish to attempt to settle in a few sentences what they have considered at such length. But Caird's central point—that if we compare living *outside* to living *within* the moral structures of a rationally organised society, with respect to the possibilities of life which each opens up and closes off to us, then the greater freedom lies with the latter—is surely a plausible one. But (turning to the second question) does such 'social' freedom really reveal anything to us about our 'true selves'? Arguably, it does. One way to appreciate this is to think about the connections between freedom, rationality, interest and selfhood.[42] Following the broad lead set by both Kant and Hegel on the Idealist scheme of understanding, to be free is to be rational; reason is precisely the sphere of autonomous self-determination. But there can be no rational demand for self-realisation, no rational concern for self, which does not recognise the equally legitimate claims of other rational beings to the same thing and which is not equally concerned with the aims and desires of all. A rational being, therefore, must have wider interests than simply his own. A rational being must place value on the satisfaction of all purposes and desires. Now, a plausible way to understand the compass of our identity

is precisely by reference to the compass of our desires and interests; my self is that part of reality for which I have primary concern. And putting these thoughts together, it follows that my true or rational self will be as wide as my true or rational concern. Some of the best Idealist treatments of this line of thought are to be found in their discussions of immortality, where it is argued that if what matters most to us is our community or our values, then we live for as long as they do regardless of how protracted our own particular role may be. Interestingly, this is an idea which has recently been revived. Mark Johnston, in his latest book *Surviving Death*, suggests that a good person can truly *identify* with all of humanity, and in so directing the locus of his being in line with this concern, continues to live after his physical death in the 'onward rush of humanity'.[43]

Teleology

Leaving behind the question of freedom, we turn to consider one last aspect of the Idealist doctrine of the true self, namely its teleological character. The philosophical problem of personal identity may be expressed as that of the search for a self which endures through time when nothing that endures is worth being and nothing that is worth being endures. If we find anything constant at all—some replicating pattern of DNA, some immaterial substratum, some bare, self-reflecting consciousness—what we light upon seems too thin and abstract ever to constitute the felt and unique 'I' whose continuing life I feel myself to live. Isolating a transect of my conscious being at any one moment yields something closer to the felt reality of my selfhood, but if we locate our identity here, since that precise pattern lasts no more than a second, we are led to the unpalatable consequence that who I truly am changes from moment to moment. This puzzle is a familiar one, but the Idealists offer a little-known and very interesting diagnosis of the problem. In effect, they argue that whether you choose a broad and general focus or a narrower and more specific one is simply irrelevant—if you are looking *in the wrong direction*. To find my true self I must direct my attention not at who I am *now*, however that be conceived, but at the person I shall become—at my *future or end*.[44]

To understand this strange suggestion, it will help to consider what Caird maintains in his first series of Gifford Lectures about the concept of *religion*, for the approach taken is exactly the same.[45] When we consider all of the world's religions, they are so many and diverse that if we find anything at all which every one of them has in common, it will likely be too vague and abstract to be of any explanatory interest; it will be simply their lowest common factor. However, continues Caird, there is no need to give up on talk about religion in general. The solution is to trace instead the *evolution* of religion. By finding a germ and following it through the different stages of its growth and development, we come to see the significant underlying unity which would otherwise go unnoticed amid the vast array of different and complex patterns. Like Hegel, Caird sees this as a methodological principle applicable beyond just the religious case. Perfectly illustrated by the way in which it is *development* that tells us caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly are all in fact the same creature, historical evolution, Caird urges, is 'the most potent instrument for [combining] difference [and] identity which has ever been put into the hands of science'.[46]

It is easy enough to see how this method can be extended to understanding the self. Where teleological explanation is the order of the day, beings and processes are accounted for by their *goals*, by what they seek to bring about.[47] Now, my *true self* is precisely the root of my being, that which grounds and explains why I am the way I am. It is tempting, therefore, to identify these two concepts and to urge that my *true self* be understood as my *goal*. On this suggestion, we learn most about ourselves by looking to our end; our deepest identity is revealed by uncovering our *telos*, or goal, or *destiny*. We most really *are* what we are aiming to become. 'The real nature of anything is that which it has in it to become, rather than that which it already is,'[48] argues Muirhead, which consequence for personal identity in particular Henry Jones draws, urging that 'the true ethical ideal… is the individual's future self, it is that which he conceives himself able to work into his own character, and what he wishes to be. By attaining it he attains his true self.'[49]

Even if we grant that a diachronic rather than a synchronic strategy might be more illuminating of our personal identity, most likely Caird's approach will still seem odd, for common sense surely tells us it makes

more sense to hunt for the key to personal identity in our *origin* or *beginning* than in our purpose or goal. However, to follow common sense in this matter is to go counter to a methodological and metaphysical principle that runs right through the very centre of Idealist thinking. Rather than starting at the bottom and working upwards to the top, Idealists argue that the explanatory order must be reverse- whole explains the parts, the most complex explains the most simple, and the end explains the beginning. As Caird puts it, development must be read *backwards,* not *forwards.*[50] It is only in the light of the knowledge of end-states that origins are identified or found interesting; where I *came from* appears significant only in the context of an understanding of where I am *headed.* And thus, whatever measure of truth may be captured in Wordsworth's thought that 'the child is the father of the man', the true self is not something simple and primitive, something we need to *return to* or to *recover from* underneath the corruptions and encrustations of life in the world. Rather, it is something greater and more complex than our current consciousness, something to be built and striven for.

As it stands thus far, this teleological theory of true selfhood is incomplete. For it faces two pressing questions: Do I really have a destiny or *telos*? And if so, what is it? From Green's Eternal Consciousness to Bradley's Absolute, the metaphysical resources of British Idealism offer various answers to those questions. Since many of these have already been discussed at length in the literature, it may be of interest to consider a different, lesser-known example, that of Edward Caird. Caird's metaphysical and theological system was most fully set out in his 1893 set of Gifford Lectures (*The Evolution of Religion*) and may be briefly outlined in six steps as follows.

1. Ordinary experience reveals a distinction—even (we might say) an opposition—between two elements, subject and object. The subject is that which separates itself from its object, while the object is that which stands outside the subject as other than or external to it. But at the same time we must acknowledge the essential relativity of subject and object. No more than there could be a stick with one end only, could there be a subject not grasping some object or an object not grasped by some subject. This, of course, is the fundamental thesis of Idealism.[51]

2. Caird next argues that, since any pair of reciprocally dependent terms must both be regarded as abstractions from a higher unity-in-difference which incorporates them both, the primary reality here must be understood as what we might term *self-conscious experience*, while the notions of purely inner or purely outer reality alike must both be relegated as the more or less false products of limited or selective attention to that wider felt whole.[52]

3. But if we may not think of ourselves as inner only without at the same time recognising our deeper unity with what first seems to fall outside of us, no more is it possible to think of ourselves as *finite* only, Caird continues. As Descartes intimated, but as Hegel first demonstrated, the very recognition of our finitude proceeds on the basis of a deeper infinitude.[53] This coming together of the finite and the infinite, embracing as it does all other oppositions, is nothing less than the idea of an absolute *unity* which binds all things together, the unconditioned oneness of the whole. As such it is divine, and so it may be concluded that we find ourselves most truly only within God; or to put the same point another way, we find God most truly only within ourselves.[54] In the words of Caird's pupil John Watson, '[O]nly in unity with the Infinite can man realize himself'.[55]

4. Thus it is possible to chart the mind's ascension to God in three very simple steps, but it must immediately be added that that is an immensely un-Caird-like thing to do. For if the summary can be grasped by one reader in one short set of moves, fleshing out that abstract pattern of recognition must involve the knowledge of all humanity through all of historical time. To be able to name the final destination is not to know the way. Specifically, focus on *our own* personal experience might lead us to think here in purely individualistic terms, but a key step in transcending subjective finitude lies in the recognition of *other selves* and in the realisation that anything we personally may grasp is just the tiniest fragment of knowledge itself. And so, in the belief that it is worthless simply to state the conclusion without spelling out the precise steps by which we must get there, the bulk of Caird's academic writing, like Hegel's before him, is spent sketching out the fuller details of the process by which human consciousness comes into the complete knowledge of itself.[56]

5. Thus far the presentation of Caird's argument would seem to have been describing the development of *knowledge*, a story in which it is learned that something of a given sort (the subject) is neither separate from other things of the same sort (other subjects) nor ultimately separate from a range of things which seem to be of a wholly different sort (the objects of which the subject is aware). And to some degree that is indeed what it has been doing. But at this point it needs to be remembered that the item of which we are speaking is *consciousness*, and this is something which *itself* changes as a result of those changes in its own self-understanding. Because to alter our own

consciousness of self is *ipso facto* to modify the very self of which one is conscious, the path towards a truer *self-understanding* is necessarily at the same time a path of *self-transformation*. Selfhood is dynamic and self-critical and part of the process of coming to see the way in which one experiences oneself as but one stage along a greater path—it is in fact to take the next step along that path. Self-knowledge becomes a process of self-realisation.[57] In reaching for our true or higher self, our life itself becomes a goal-oriented process which can find ultimate rest only in union with God.[58]

6. There is one last point to make in order to complete this story, a further puzzle to add to this already puzzling tale. It is indeed the case for Caird and his Idealist followers that the true self is something potential which we must work to create, build and maintain,[59] but strangely enough, at the same time it is something already there for us to find. For the deeper, higher self with which our whole life and being strives to become identified is, of course, nothing less than the infinite, universal and absolute life of reason itself, something which is already—or perhaps we ought better to say, eternally—real.[60] Time is the arena in which the real progressively manifests itself. It might be complained that this just adds paradox upon paradox—and certainly it was a way of thinking which much annoyed G.E. Moore[61]—but if that is so, it is at least worth noting that this is not a paradox unique to Idealism. It is one also central to the Christian message of a salvation already won for us by Christ but yet still needing to be worked out by our own efforts. What Caird is offering us is a philosophical version of the religious thought that we must become what we already are in Christ.

Conclusion

This paper has presented four ways of explicating what the British Idealists mean when they speak of the true self—by reference to the moral ideal, the concept of obligation, the idea of freedom and the notion of teleology. To conclude the discussion, it will be helpful to look briefly at three problems which the foregoing account might raise.

It has been claimed that the Idealist doctrine of the true self is a complex and multifaceted conceptual structure, something that can be properly grasped only by understanding its role in many different areas of philosophy. Four aspects of the concept were listed, but arguably there are others too. However, this raises a problem. Modern philosophers will suspect that we have in play here several separate senses of 'true self'.

Why should we believe that that which completely satisfies us, that which obliges us, that which would most fully set us free, and that which is our proper goal are all one and the same? How can we be sure that we have not got here four *different* concepts rather than four different approaches to or perspectives on the same concept?

It is important to see that this criticism presupposes an understanding of concepts to which no Idealist would ever subscribe. It takes concepts as clearly definable, with sharp edges and precise identity conditions. Of course, concepts *can* be neatly drawn up like this if we so choose, but the Idealists would say only the most superficial and artificially constructed concepts are amenable to such straight-forward characterisation. Living concepts are not self-contained, able to be demarcated by analysis down to their elements, but rather they are to be made sense of by appreciating their inter-connections to all other concepts. They colour and are coloured by their conceptual neighbours, with whom they share porous boundaries. They boast vast reserves of significance that we might find in them, or even that they might unfold for us, but certainly which stretch out of sight beyond the horizon of our immediate vision.[62] They can never be given exhaustive identity conditions. Indeed, to the Idealists the aim of philosophy is to explain experience as a whole, and on this way of thinking the larger and more diverse the sphere of influence of any given concept—the more fingers it has in various different pies—the stronger its claim to characterise ultimate reality. Since the most significant universals manifest themselves precisely in and through their differences, a relatively loose congruence between these various different aspects of true selfhood is no obstacle to our treating them together as complementary sides of a single overarching theoretical structure.

To take a second objection, in each case it might be worried if the presentation has not got things back to front. Rather than that which satisfies us, the source of our obligation, proper understanding of freedom, or the discovery of our proper goal each lighting up for us our true identity, have we not here a speculative theory of our true selfhood making for us contentious claims about value, obligation, freedom and purpose in life?

It seems to me unnecessary to rebut this complaint, for I do not believe it possible to establish priority in this matter either way. All of these notions are contested, but we may still learn a great deal by mapping out

their inter-relations with one another. Only a ruthlessly analytic style of working in which concepts are rigorously divided into the 'basic' and the 'derived' need feel threatened by such mutual illumination and inter-definability. As Caird himself put it, neatly summarising the coherentist credo, there is no harm in thinking in a circle so long as the circle itself is wide enough.[63]

Last of all, it must be acknowledged that the doctrine as a whole raises important and difficult questions about the relationship between true selfhood and time. Is the true self a state of being realised in part today but that will one day be realised in full? Is it perhaps something that can never in fact be reached but only asymptotically approached; something coming ever closer but never ultimately attained? Or should it rather be thought of as something strictly timeless expressed in and through the very process of historical moral growth? Closely linked to these questions about time are further puzzles about contingency and free-will. If my true self is somehow already and eternally realised, is its progressive manifestation in time an inevitability? Or does the ever-present possibility of stalling or even reversing the moral development of my character force us to think of the true self as simply a possibility and a hope rather than as some sort of underlying reality?

It must be confessed that the Idealists were neither clear nor unanimous on these difficult questions. The answer favoured by most of them, drawing sustenance from the general position outlined in Kant's mathematical antinomies, was that since genuine infinity must appear to finite minds as indefinite extension, the true self is something that must appear to us as ever in our future, to be worked towards, despite being in its true metaphysical reality something already timeless and complete. It is the final destination towards which our paths inevitably lead, infinitely distant; we remain free at all times to take steps closer towards it or further away from it.

Notes

1. Luke 9:23–24. Caird, *Hegel*, p. 44.
2. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, p. 173.

3. Mackenzie, *Manual*, p. 148.
4. Nettleship, *Lectures On the Republic of Plato*, p. 111.
5. Green, 'The Word is Nigh Thee' p. 227; John Caird, *University Sermons*, 84; John Watson, *Philosophical Basis of Religion*, 14; A.C. Bradley, *Ideals of Religion*, pp. 242, 247, 248.
6. Moore, *Principia Ethica* §67, pp. 114–5.
7. Green, 'The Word is Nigh Thee' p. 223.
8. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §171.
9. Skorupski, 'Green and the Idealist Conception of a Person's Good' p. 55.
10. *Prolegomena To Ethics* §85, 220.
11. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §234.
12. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §171.
13. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §§181, 195, 247.
14. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §173.
15. *Prolegomena to Ethics*, §§178, 196, 239, 288.
16. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §91.
17. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §201, §202.
18. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §257.
19. *Prolegomena to Ethics* §319.
20. Green, 'The Word is Nigh Thee' p. 227.
21. Firth, 'Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer'.
22. *Hamlet*, Act 1, scene 3, line 78.
23. *Manual of Ethics*, 138. We find essentially the same view in Henry Jones ('Social Organism' p. 206) and also in Muirhead (*Elements of Ethics*, p. 78).
24. 'Notes on Moral Philosophy' p. 189. See also his *Prolegomena to Ethics* §196. Bradley uses the same idea to argue for the ultimate incoherence of ethics, that the 'ought' which gives content to morality must destroy itself in its own realisation (*Ethical Studies*, p. 313ff).
25. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 4:412–14, 4:439.
26. *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 52.
27. *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 100.
28. *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 111.
29. *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 100.
30. Nicholson, *Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, p. 204.
31. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, p. 114.
32. This view of freedom is associated with Hegel especially. Action is that expression of the will that may be said to be 'mine' (*Philosophy of Right* §4A, §113).
33. Another figure to clearly articulate the connection was Bosanquet. *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 221.
34. The Revolution was to society what suicide is to the individual, says Caird (*Ethical Philosophy* p. 20).

35. *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, II:561.
36. *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, II:401.
37. *Lay Sermons*, pp. 10–11.
38. *Ethical Philosophy*, p. 19.
39. *Ethical Philosophy*, p. 22. See also *Ethical Philosophy*, *p*. 24.
40. *Ethical Philosophy*, p. 22.
41. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty'.
42. A rather fuller sketch of this argument may be found in John Watson, *The Interpretation of Religious Experience*, II:114.
43. See, for example, John Caird, 'Corporate Immortality', or Bernard Bosanquet, 'Unvisited Tombs'.
44. Caird's solution to this 'enduring abstraction or detailed time-slice' dilemma about personal identity was not the only one available to the Idealists. A slightly different answer to the problem was Bradley's idea that the self is a concrete universal.
45. *Evolution of Religion*, ch.2. That the same answer should apply in both domains should not surprise us, for religion just is the expression of self-consciousness.
46. *Evolution of Religion*, I:26.
47. It should perhaps be added here that the kind of teleology Caird and his followers have in mind here is, of course, immanent or natural rather than artificial or externally imposed teleology.
48. Muirhead, 'Is the Distinction between "Is" and "Ought" Ultimate and Irreducible?' p. 94. See also Bosanquet, *Philosophical Theory of the State*, p. 122.
49. Jones, 'Social Organism' p. 206.
50. *Evolution of Religion* I:44. We find exactly the same view expressed by both John Caird (*Introduction to Philosophy of Religion* p. 108) and T.H. Green, ('The Word is Nigh Thee' pp. 224–5).
51. *Evolution of Religion* I:65–6, 130, 132–3.
52. This is Caird's way of formulating Hegel's triadic notion of 'dialectic'. *Evolution of Religion* I:66, 67, 79; *Hegel*, p. 136. On self-consciousness as a unity-in-diversity see *Hegel*, pp. 147–9.
53. *Evolution of Religion* I:136; *Hegel* p. 57; 'Metaphysic' p. 475.
54. It must, of course, be remembered here that the infinite in question is the *Hegelian* infinite. It cannot be understood as the 'endless beyond' or never finding any limit—Hegel's bad or false infinite. It is not merely that which is opposed to the finite, but that which includes and explains it. For more on Caird on the infinite see *Evolution of Religion* ch.4.
55. *Philosophical Basis of Religion*, p. 14. We could also add here the voice of Caird's own brother, John (*Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, 87, 114–125; *University Sermons*, p. 84).
56. *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* I:52.

57. The language of individuality is hard to resist. And all the time it must be remembered that this is a social story. The development of the individual towards his *telos* cannot be understood as a process independent of the development of society/humanity to *its* goal or destiny.
58. *Philosophical Basis of Religion*, p. 465.
59. We see this clearly in John Watson (*Christianity and Idealism*, p. 240), Bernard Bosanquet (*Principle of Individuality and Value*, p. 338) and Pringle-Pattison (*Life and Finite Individuality*, p. 111, 125).
60. *Evolution of Religion* 1:182, 1:171. The same point may be seen in T.H. Green (*Prolegomena to Ethics* §179) and A.C. Bradley (*Ideals of Religion*, p. 137).
61. *Principia Ethica* §67, §70.
62. Jones, 'Education of the Citizen' p. 225.
63. Temple, *Studies in Spirit and Truth of Christianity*, p. 43.

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15

Persons, Categories and the Problems of Meaning and Value

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Persons and Categories

Persons seem to outrun all possible categories. If we say something like "to be a person is to be a rational animal", we are at once made edgy. We can imagine persons who are not animals at all—perhaps they are some non-carbon-based life form which simply does not fit any of our notions of animality. And all of us, I fear, now and then lose our rationality, though hopefully we do not thereby cease to count as persons.

When someone says "men and women are just what their bodies are", we are troubled not just because we wonder if any concept of "body" can adequately account for personhood, but also because we seem to be faced with a kind of category mistake. It is true that the people we know are associated with bodies and that they express themselves through their bodies. How else could we meet people, unless perhaps through

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some psychic phenomenon? And then they would express themselves, evidently, through our bodies. It is our brains which register the events. But it seems doubtful in an age of organ transplants that we need to have a particular body to be a particular person, and in any case bodies and persons do not change concomitantly. You or I can be the same person through a lot of bodily changes.

But the problem is not to find better characteristics with which to define persons. People have characters and intelligences. You may be a person of good character, but a good character is not a person. You may be a person with a powerful intellect, but a powerful intellect is not a person.

Nor is a person just a stretch of a human life, for such stretches of lives are characterizable in ways that persons are not. We can definitively say that five years of daily bank-robbing make for a bad life, but the person may reform in the next instant and perform a heroic act of surpassing goodness. Then we shall say, "She wasn't such a bad person after all."

Is there not, though, at least one more likely candidate for the office of necessary and sufficient condition for personhood? Much effort has gone into trying to clarify the notion of consciousness on the ground that consciousness is very closely connected with personhood. It is certainly true that personhood is invariably expressed through consciousness. But it is evident that a person might be unconscious for very long periods of time without ceasing to be a person, and it is possible that not every conscious being is a person. Suppose that a machine capable of much advanced calculation but little else also gave evidence that it was aware of the calculations it was making. It is not likely that anyone would want to call it a "person", though we would surely want to use Pascal's expression and call it a 'thinking machine'.

Our reason for doubt would surely have to do with the limitations with such a machine envisaged. Roughly, if you can confine anything to a single function whose scope can be fully predefined, the thing is not a person. A Turing machine which could calculate anything calculable and happened to know that it could, and also that it could not do anything else, would be an object of interest and perhaps even of moral concern, but it would not be a person.

Confusion about this may well stem simply from the way in which consciousness is essential for the expression of personhood. Hence we

are concerned about whether a fetus has a capacity for consciousness and about whether an elderly brain-damaged patient can ever become conscious again. But such questions are subtle. In some sense everything in the universe has the capacity to form part of some entity which is conscious, and what is interesting about unborn infants is not whether they—like any hydrogen atom in the universe—may eventually share in the life of some conscious being. The argument that newly fertilized ova are persons has no more weight than the argument that burning gases in distant stars should be protected because they may eventually cool and form part of planetary life. Indeed, perhaps we should be careful not to disturb things we know little about, including galaxies in formation, supposing we were to find the technology to do it, but the reason surely cannot be that they may one day become conscious. Any matter may someday enter into consciousness. What is interesting about unborn infants is whether or not there is some inner life which they cannot yet express, and what is interesting about brain-damaged persons is whether they have some inner life which they cannot any longer express. These are very important questions because it may be that various events can damage unborn infants so that they will suffer psychological disabilities after they are born, and because brain-damaged persons may be undergoing troubling experiences or may have something important to express which will be lost if we treat them poorly. But the unborn infants with inner lives must be in a fairly advanced state of development, and the brain-damaged persons who worry us must continue to have some brain functions. And we must remember that all our difficulties about categorizing persons very strongly reinforce the conclusion that consciousness is not personhood, but rather something through which personhood is expressed. Thus we discover very important questions about whether or not the states of consciousness of all of us can be altered by drugs, electric shock, brain-washing and so on in such a way that our personhood cannot be expressed.

Surely the personhood which is to be expressed is far more than consciousness. I shall argue that issues about meaning and value make this intelligible.

But we might begin with this notion: To be a person is to structure a whole world, to suffuse all experience with thought and feeling in such

way as to create an intelligible world on which there is a viewpoint which is not itself within that world.[1] Hence anything which imposed a finite function on the self would destroy its function. Our conscious calculator is confined to a fraction of any possible world. An ordinary human world as perceived by a single observer radiates from a single center of experience, and the self runs all through any such world. (More than one self may run through the world—we may, that is, share worlds—because we have language. Our language is not an individual invention.) I shall argue that this sense of being outside is part of what leads to something which at first seems odd: I am a person if I can successfully utter the claim to be one. It will turn out that this is not, though, the kind of action which has sometimes been called a "performative utterance". Uttering the claim is a sign and conclusive symptom rather than a cause of being a person, though ordinary human selves are constantly under construction.

Evidently, though, this elusive quality of transcending all of our categorizations makes all judgments about persons difficult, but not all such judgments may be avoided. People do have to be judged and rendered responsible, for we have to decide who will make a good president of the United States; who it would be as well to hold up as a model to the young; who, for the time being at least, needs to be locked up for the protection of the rest; and who had better receive psychiatric treatment.

Yet sensible people pass such judgments reluctantly, for each time we do so we wedge the person into sets of categories which are too small to yield an adequate notion of personhood.

One way of getting around these difficulties is to argue that there is a distinction between what people really are and the ways in which they figure in their own and other people's lives. The problems, I shall argue, stem above all from confusions between the psychological nature of persons, persons as they appear in the experiences of others ("social persons"), and persons as elements in the civil order ("legal persons" and so forth). Admittedly, these distinctions will prove to be difficult. The crux of the matter concerns what people really are, but the confusions have chiefly to do with the relations of persons as the source of values in the world and persons as psychological, social and civil entities. Though these

concepts permit judgments, they do so only in a way which renders all such judgments tentative and provisional. "Ontological persons" would seem to be the natural name for what "people really are", but there is a difficulty with this expression, and it has become a term of abuse in some circles in which the infinity of personhood tends to be emphasized—among the followers of Emmanuel Lévinas, for instance. If "ontological person" suggests a specific thing-like mode of being, then of course it defeats the purpose here. So I shall try to avoid the word "ontological" in favor of "what people really are when they are considered as transcending all categories". I mean by this the mode of reality which persons actually have. I shall suggest in the end that "axiological person"—the person as associated with values—is the best notion.

Persons, Values and Meanings

It is the particular way in which persons are associated with reality which makes them overflow all the categories which we might want to apply to them. Most fundamentally, persons are associated with the coming-to-be of values in the world. People are not the only objects of value. Some others are paintings, poems and plays, mountains which make us pause, haunting vistas, and jungles which express a plethora of hidden virtues. But they do not emerge as values in the world if they can never be seen by anyone. Even a magnificent piece of scenery is only splendid in the shapes and colors which strike the human eye. If some things or states of affairs are objectively good (or bad), their values do not depend for their existence on the persons who grasp them; yet they cannot come fully into being without recognition by some sentient creature. It would be foolish to hold that the Mona Lisa should be protected against damage by being locked away forever in an airtight safe, or that "the good" should be protected from corruption by eliminating all persons from the universe and thereby eliminating all the evil acts.

Persons are similarly related to meanings. Two computers may talk to each other, printing out miles of paper tape. But the process is no more meaningful than the endless grinding of the grains of sand in the Sahara until some person gives them a meaning. Notice that the

machine must always choose between discrete states and has only a finite set of them to choose from, but there is no such limit on the meanings which can be assigned to the texts they print out. And each assignment has a place in a context of assignments, which whoever gives them meanings decides upon. Computers can interpret, but the final judgment as to whether or not a given sentence is an illuminating interpretation of the text in question depends on someone who must make this judgment. Literary criticism is a fascinating and frustrating enterprise precisely because no set of purely formal rules about what counts as an interpretation will produce results which everyone or anyone always regards as illuminating. This has to do with the metaphorical element in all language. Language, that is, has to function by suggesting that one thing is like another, and interpretation is particularly dependent on metaphor.

If, however, persons are sources of an element which is essential for value and meaning, then persons themselves cannot be given a value except by themselves or some other person. If we are not the source of our own meaning, then someone else is, and someone else is never the whole value of a given person if each person can originate some of the elements of value. Even if, as is often thought, we draw some of our meaning and value from some other source (from a god or from a community), we also originate some of it. To be a person is different from being a computer in that the person adds something to the process of reality which does not simply derive from a pre-existing program or from chance. A person forms a link in the community of meaning which would be different were someone else to occupy it.

One computer can replace another without any change necessarily resulting. Two computers can converse with no change in the meanings of their words. For they can (if they are so programmed, though they need not) repeat the words without using them. Two human beings cannot do this, for each occasion of the use of a word by a person applies the word to a new and unrepeatable situation. This uniqueness comes from the fact that each of us is in the center of our own experience and cannot escape from that center or be replaced by another subject. The computer can always escape to another program or be replaced by a twin.

The Failures of Classification

We should notice some examples of the absurdity involved in the value classification of persons before we take the issue further. The imagined justification of capital punishment is based upon the proposition that someone may forfeit his or her claim to continuance as a person by performing some sequence of acts of which society particularly disapproves. One of the evident difficulties which anyone must face who seeks to defend capital punishment is that very small distinctions between the details of those descriptions result in the saving or taking of lives. Few people would, in fact, express much confidence in the distinctions involved. Frequently, for instance, the distinctions depend upon such notions as that of clear and prolonged deliberation. Thus a woman with a long, unblemished career and a good character may hang because she carefully planned and plotted the murder of a husband who reminded her for hours at a time of her failures, while a man with a life-long habit of responding instantly to the wishes of his underworld bosses may keep his life even though he punched a member of a rival gang in the jaw and smashed his head against a water fountain. One premeditated; the other did not.

All attempts to provide an account of what amounts to a lack of worthwhileness in persons suffer from the same defect. If we were to allow euthanasia to those in great pain, we should have to define the amount and perhaps the kind of pain. I can well imagine that there would be bodies of citizens who would want to distinguish purely psychological pain from psychosomatic pain, and mental pain from pain with a real physiological basis. They would then argue that those with the first two sorts of pain are evidently not in their right minds and so do not count as persons entitled to demand euthanasia. We know that societies must face up to these problems, and yet we also know that in the end, morally, decisions about the end of life have to be personal decisions, and that if they cannot be made by the person whose life is ending they must be made by someone in whose own inner life these people have a genuine place.

I think the basis of the problem is this: My continuance as a person is not dependent upon any particular physical state nor on the

continuity of any specified group of such states. It does not follow that personality is manifested without any such states. If we come in contact with a person whose brain has been rendered completely non-functional, we know that the body concerned is unlikely to manifest personality. No particular set of physiological states forms a necessary condition for such an existence, and this interferes with the likelihood of producing the neat, tidy classifications which would be demanded by those who want to define the worthwhileness of life in some objective way. I may now think my life worthless, but in the future I may look back and see it differently. It is this future reference which is crucial to our ordinary discussions of these questions. It is not the severely damaged brain that leads us to the view that a body which exhibits a monotonous lack of activity has ceased to be a person. It is that we see no way of revivifying activity of a certain kind—no feasible route from the present state to one which is likely to exhibit the activities of a person. If we could repair the damaged regions of the brain, we should certainly take a different view. In these circumstances, someone with exactly the physical condition of our present patient would count as a person in every way.

Even if a person is rationally persuaded that his or her life is worthless, he or she may not have good grounds for demanding euthanasia. I may listen to Marxist philosophers and become convinced that as a bourgeois idealist I am a menace to progress and to the working class. But tomorrow I may be able to answer their argument. The most obvious reason for treating me as a human being with whatever rights and duties this implies is not, primarily, that I have a birth certificate testifying to the fact that I was born of human parents, but that I have asserted my human existence in the usual ways, primarily by entering into arrangements and commitments with and to other people. I am thus part and parcel of a fabric which others might deny only at the cost of denying their own humanity as well. And it seems natural to extend this acceptance to beings who are like us in central respects even if for the moment they do not manifest all the signs of personality. So we do not easily abandon new-born babies, however damaged their bodies and brains may seem to be. We want to keep watching for signs of the expression of personality as long as we can.

Language, Rights and Personhood

This brings us, I think, to the crucial point. There is a clear sense in which I am a person if I say I am—saying that someone is a person is not a way of offering a description of a human state but of making a claim. Rights which follow from being a person follow from the fact that such a claim is made. We may think that such claims could be rebutted. And so they could, perhaps, but only in a Pickwickian sense. Rebuttals cannot be made successfully if the claim is really made; for if I can really claim to be a person then I am one. The creature born a "human vegetable", for instance, poses moral problems for us. But such a creature poses problems precisely because no claim is coming from it. Someone else must make the claim. We can sometimes show that the claim is confusing or misleading. Someone may claim twice to be a legal person so as to count twice in an election. Or the claim may have improper overtones, so that someone wrongly implies that he or she is a citizen or an unmarried person. But the claim to be a person still stands. A Czech in Slovakia still has human rights despite the breakup of Czechoslovakia. Seeming claims to be a person can be made by a recording, a computer or a robot. But we have seen that what counts in these cases is just how language is used. The issue is not about having mechanical parts. There may well be people with all and only mechanical parts in the future, and they will have to be accepted. The issue is about uniqueness and about the complexities of language use. Because we have already established our claims—had them, that is, woven into the social fabric, and ourselves become individuated through them—we are not disqualified from the status of human being even by extremely aberrant behavior. Thus, in the face of aberrant behavior, what is crucial is not just what some person claims, but the fact that this person has established a place in the system. And ultimately, to make sense, the system in question will have to be more than merely human.

By analogy, we permit such places to creatures who show signs and symptoms which identify them with those of us who have made successful claims in the past. New-born babies are accepted. Creatures like them have, after all, almost always been successful in such claims. Most dogs and some horses and cats win fairly widespread acceptance because they show the signs of friendship and social patterning which meet some of the

important specifications. Sensitive people discern traces of the grounds for acceptance in a vast variety of creatures. The rule is a wide one.

Even so, this notion of analogy with already successful claimants to personhood is not what is at the heart of the matter. The analogy is merely one of the reasons which we might have for supposing that personhood may be expressed, if not now, then at some time in the future. Our most pressing concern with new-born babies is with their prospects, and so is our concern with brain-damaged old men and women who seem temporarily to have lost the capacity to manifest personhood. Inference from analogy with established persons is only one way in which they come to our attention. A more important way, in all likelihood, is through our own imaginations.

We should grasp, indeed, that the claim to be a person is not normally an adversarial claim. The capacity to form friendships is very likely the most important single ingredient in normal and successful claims. Friendship occurs naturally and without question.

People, after all, do not merely exist in their own right. They also figure in our experience and in our imaginations. They are tied to whole communities by these representations. Our image of the new-born baby, the old friend who is now comatose, or even the animals with whom we have a kind of real contact, plays a vital and—I shall argue—justified role in our thinking about such matters. But though friendships naturally sustain claims to be a person, failure to form friendships does not cause such claims to fail. For the person is more than a potential social person.

Psychological Personhood, Social Personhood and Civil Personhood

To understand how judgments about persons can be made—tentatively and provisionally, and always with the understanding that the person really transcends such categories—we must clarify the notions involved, especially those of the psychological person, the social person, the civil person, and the relations between them.

We are all psychological persons in the sense that each of us is self-conscious. Self-consciousness appears as a field of experience. But we

know that something lies beyond it. There is more to the potential of experience than our immediate awareness, and the self which appears at the center of our affairs is really only a center from which we form perspectives which change over time. The psychological self can become distorted by the inputs it receives from a troubled nervous system, and there can be a suppression of awareness—whether literally in the unconscious, as some people believe, or merely as a kind of defected sub-awareness. The psychological self can become wretched, in need of treatment, the source of trouble to itself and others. But the notions that we may have a duty to consider how the psychological self ought to be treated and that there is sometimes a duty to consult with others about its treatment suggest that there is more to the person than can be found in any such self. Still, rights and duties apply, and the psychological self can be categorized in many ways so long as we do not make the mistake of supposing it to be the whole self.

Each of us exists not just as a psychological self but also in the minds of others. It is this existence in the minds of others which is most troubling when we consider how to treat the severely brain-damaged elderly person who may never become rational again. For such persons exist not just in and for themselves but for others as well, and so anything we do affects all those others. Though no one is responsible for the image others have, and though people cannot claim absolute rights over their representations in the lives of others, rights and duties do arise. Each of us has a duty not to create false hopes and fears in others. Projecting wrong self-images can do just this. And each of us has a duty to be considerate to others in whose lives we have, willy-nilly, found a place. Others, too, have a duty not to recklessly adopt images of persons they know or encounter which have no bearing on reality, and to adapt their images when the facts are presented to them. We share our lives whether we want to or not, and many genuine moral questions arise out of the ways in which that sharing takes place. But the bases of the moral concerns here are obvious, even if the very complexity and ambiguity of the social self make it impossible that we should ever be able to reduce such concerns to formal rules.

Finally, it is the relations between the self as it really is, the psychological self, and the social self which make it imperative to envisage a civil self. We cannot set rules for dealing with every aspect of the social and the

psychological self, and no rules whatever can be found which finally grip in an adequate way the self as it is. For, if the self outruns all possible categories, then there is a clear sense in which it is infinite. But it is the infinity of persons as they really are which makes it essential that we create a civil self, a legal being with rights and duties, especially with the power never to be wholly absorbed and overtaken by any finite set of rules.

It is usually useful to think of the psychological and the social person as a kind of unity. Thus it is reasonable to associate the distinction between this social self and the psychological self with the distinction I have been making, the distinction between that part of a person's claim on life which depends upon the fact that he or she will make claims, and that part which depends upon the fact that what entitles a person to be protected against even his or her own momentary whims—like a passing ill-considered urge to suicide—is that all of us have entered into certain social relations with those who have made such claims (As social beings, mere capacity for friendship makes us vulnerable to the concerns of others).

Originating Claims Upon the World

We thus return to the idea of a person as someone who originates claims upon the world. This is the axiological person, the person considered as a source of values. To enter into the world in this way, a person must be outside the simple order of classifiable space-time entities. It is absurd to think of collections of atomic particles making claims on one another. It is absurd because the claim is something new, something which was not previously in the world, and something unique. No one's claim to be treated as a person can be responded to by according some privilege to another person or thing.

The elements of the natural world are not unique. Every hydrogen atom must be just like every other. And no hydrogen atom initiates anything. It is a truism of physics that every later state of affairs must be explained by the contents of previous states of affairs, supplemented only by whatever notions of chance are inherent in the statistics of the situation.

But it is not the irruption of events not predictable by physics which counts. What concerns us is the emergence of a new kind of inter-relation

which we at once recognize as valuable. Most of us might well agree with G.E. Moore: The highest good that we can know or imagine is some kind of fellowship.[2] When it emerges, no one doubts that persons are involved, or that they really are sources of value that cannot be analyzed into simple categories—for a person admitted into our fellowship does not need to claim civil rights or prove to us that any special psychological state exists. But such a person must also be more than a social person. It is the person, not the reflections in our mind and in the minds of others, which ultimately fascinates us. Once we recognize this we can perhaps also learn that the claim of the outsider is just as valid, and that whoever can claim to be a person is equally a prospective friend.

None of this settles the case for idealism, but it does suggest that we need an ontology in which persons are fundamental. And within the context of idealist debates it does help us to understand why the debates between absolutists and pluralists and between "personalists" and their opponents have been so deep-rooted. For it shows us that persons are inter-related and that the very concept—in casting doubt on our basic categories—forces us to begin to see how individual and community might be related.

Notes

1. Hence Wittgenstein's remark (*Notebooks 1914–16*, second edition, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979, p. 82 e) that "I do not find myself in the world as an object". Rather, he suggested, I find myself as a kind of boundary. This does not mean that the self is inert, but rather that it intrudes by organizing everything on one side of a boundary.
2. G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1903, Sections 122, 123, pp. 203–207. Moore counts certain aesthetic properties amongst the highest good we can imagine, but he argues that "in the case of personal affection, the object itself is not merely beautiful while possessed of little or no intrinsic value, but is itself, in part at least, of great intrinsic value". The expression "of little or no intrinsic value" relates to the fact that, as I suggested earlier, we would not value aesthetic objects in the absence of perceiving persons.

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