

DAWES HICKS LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY

ABSOLUTE IDEALISM

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I

PHILOSOPHICAL movements lead two different lives. On the one hand a body of ideas is formulated, published, accepted, and finally superseded; on the other, at the institutional level, leading positions in the academic system are occupied by the exponents of the movement's ideas. Naturally these two careers are not coincident in time. New ideas are normally produced by unimportant people; the holders of important posts disseminate the ideas they acquired in their comparatively unimportant youth. As a result the dating of a philosophical movement is a slightly complicated business.

Considered as a purely intellectual phenomenon the interesting episode of absolute idealism in British philosophy can be dated with a fair degree of precision. The first seriously professional publications in which this point of view is to be found came out in 1874. That was the year of T. H. Green's long and arduously destructive critical introduction to his and Grose's edition of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, of F. H. Bradley's first essay *The Presuppositions of Critical History*, of William Wallace's translation of Hegel's smaller logic (viz. Book I of the *Enzyklopädie*), and also of the beginning of the translation of Lotze's *System of Philosophy* by a group of distinguished British idealists. Two years later the first classic of the school came out: Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, the most explicitly Hegelian of his works.

Green was the acknowledged leader of the school and in many ways its most compelling personality. Beside his career of active responsibility in education and in public life that of Bradley looks pretentious and self-indulgent. Outside the field of technical philosophy narrowly conceived, Green was certainly the most influential of the idealists. He died in 1882 soon after the school was established. The year after, a group of his admirers brought out *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, in which his more or less Hegelian methods were applied over a broad range of subjects, and his own chief work *Prolegomena to Ethics*

was published, as were also the first edition of Bradley's *Principles of Logic* and Caird's short but substantial book on Hegel.

Green's death deprived the school of a prime unifying factor, but its intellectual dominance continued for the next twenty years. Seth, five years after editing the memorial volume to Green, sounded the first note of protest against the dissolution of the theist's God and of the free and immortal human soul in the all-engulfing Hegelian Absolute in his *Hegelianism and Personality*. This introduced a style of opposition to idealist orthodoxy that was to culminate in the system of McTaggart. On the way it made a detour through pragmatism, which never amounted to anything very much in this country, for all the polemical energies and copious productiveness of F. C. S. Schiller. At Oxford Cook Wilson carried on a somewhat furtive resistance to the reigning opinions from the end of the century (his lectures, *Statement and Inference*, were not published until 1926, eleven years after his death). At Cambridge Sidgwick represented an older way of thinking, but Sorley was an adherent and so, more brilliantly and heretically, was McTaggart.

The first really fundamental assault on idealism did not come until 1903, the year of Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* and Moore's *Refutation of Idealism*. Russell and Moore initiated a wholly opposed style of thought. Its uninterrupted development and augmentation of strength make it reasonable to date the end of idealism's full intellectual dominance from that year, just a decade after the idealist movement's most imposing expression in Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*.

But idealist professors continued to head university philosophy departments for a considerable time after 1903. In Oxford J. A. Smith and Collingwood occupied the chair of metaphysics in succession from 1910 to 1941. In Cambridge, although Moore was appointed to a chair in 1925, the year of McTaggart's death, Sorley remained professor of moral philosophy until 1933. In other universities the idealist hegemony was more enduring and persisted in Scotland until very recent years. Until well into the 1920s idealists held nearly all the leading positions in the philosophy departments of British universities and continued to be the largest group in the philosophical professoriate until 1945. Nothing shows the intellectually anachronistic character of this state of affairs more poignantly than the very high level of technological unemployment of idealists within the philosophical profession. A remarkable number of them nimbly overcame this misfortune by becoming

vice-chancellors. The Hegelian mode of thought, with its combination of practical realism and theoretical nebulosity, is a remarkably serviceable instrument for the holders of high administrative positions.

Absolute idealism, then, exercised its full intellectual authority in Britain in the three decades between 1874 and 1903. I shall try to explain the rapidity with which it secured its hold to the absence of any very compelling alternative, to the fact that it arose in something very like a philosophical vacuum. For the two decades after 1903 it remained the best entrenched movement institutionally and it still constituted a considerable intellectual force. But after the deaths of Bradley and McTaggart, in 1924 and 1925, and Moore's appointment to a chair in Cambridge in the latter year, no new idealist works of any significance appeared in Britain except those of Collingwood. Twenty years later still its institutional hold was finally lost.

This episode in the history of British philosophy raises a number of interesting questions. The first I shall attempt to answer is that of why it began when it did and, arising out of that, how idealism managed to establish itself so rapidly. This leads on to the problem posed by the very late according of serious attention to Hegel and to the connected problem of the extent of absolute idealism's dependence on him. I shall defend the conventional view that British idealism is, more than anything else, Hegelian in inspiration. I shall end with a brief presentation of the main theses of absolute idealism as systematically dependent on the principle of internal relations, which is itself an ontological expression of the nature of the distinction between reason and understanding as it was conceived by Hegel.

II

First, then, why did absolute idealism emerge in Britain when it did, two-thirds of the way through the nineteenth century, around the time of Stirling's *Secret of Hegel* (1865) and the beginning of Green's career as a philosophical teacher? Perhaps the most substantial reason is that it met two ideological needs that were being felt with a particular intensity. The first of these was for a defence of the Christian religion sufficiently respectable to confront the ever more formidable scientific influences that were working to undermine religious belief. The second was the need for a politics of social responsibility to set against triumphant

laissez-faire, of political altruism to counter the idea that uninhibited competition between self-interested individuals was the indispensable engine of human progress.

The religious scepticism of the Enlightenment had been directed more against the particular details of Christianity than the fundamentals of religious belief of any kind. Deism was a more common position than atheism; Voltaire, with his belief in a Newtonian regulator of the order of nature, a more typical figure than Hume, with his altogether more radical assault, both philosophical and historical, on all forms of religion. The Incarnation, the literal inspiration of the Bible, the mysteries of the Sacraments and the Apostolic Succession were the targets—not the existence of God. Furthermore, general arguments against religion like Hume's did not depend on any special knowledge for their force, only on a combination of acuteness and courage.

In the nineteenth century, however, autonomous developments in science, undertaken with no thought of their bearing on religion, exerted a dissolving influence upon it in a way that Newtonian physics had not. Geology, for example, by discarding the orthodox conception of the age of the world, supplied a counter-religious account of the nature of the universe in time parallel to that supplied by Copernicus about its nature in space. This, however, was more a difficulty for Christianity, as currently conceived, than for religion in general. The same is true of historical scholarship about the Bible, as exhibited in such works as Strauss's *Leben Jesu*. There is, indeed, no real irony in the fact that the British defenders of religion in the late nineteenth century should have gone for help to the Hegel who, earlier in the century, had inspired the Biblical criticism which had contributed to the need for a defence. Hegel may have been, in a broad sense, a religious philosopher in view of his insistence on the essentially spiritual nature of the world. But the Christianity he was prepared to endorse, however laudatory the terms in which he spoke of it, as for instance, the 'absolute religion', was remote from the literalism of prevailing religious orthodoxy. His ideas about religion involved a massive disencumbrance of faith from rationally indigestible elements, which were demoted by him to the status of figurative representations of metaphysical truth.

The scientific development that collided with religion in general, rather than orthodox Christianity in particular, was, of course, the evolutionary biology of Darwin. His theory of the

emergence of man on the earth, as the result of competitive selection from random variations thrown up among more primitive animal species, struck at the foundations of religion as a whole in two ways. In the first place it disqualified the largest and most emotionally important range of evidence that existed for the argument from design. The gratifying adaptedness of man to the natural world in which he finds himself was now revealed as the outcome, explicable on mechanical principles, of a vast sequence of minute accidents. It no longer demanded to be understood as fulfilling the purpose of an infinite and benevolent intelligence. The argument from design was thus enfeebled, not, as at the hands of Hume, in its more or less elusive logic, but, with much more devastating effect, in its factual premisses.

Secondly, Darwinism seemed to refute the dualistic conception of man as a compound of immortal soul and perishable body, of divine reason and animal passion. Dualism of this kind is a central feature of all the higher religions. It had also been a cardinal principle of the great tradition of European philosophers from Plato and St. Augustine to Kant. The idea that man is a material constituent of the natural order, whose distinguishing peculiarities are susceptible of the same kind of mechanical explanation as those of ordinary natural objects, had been confined hitherto to more or less scandalous speculators like Hobbes. The members of the associationist tradition that derived from him had often been enthusiastically religious, for example, Hartley. If the utilitarians proper, in whom this tradition culminated, had hardly been devout, the last and greatest of them, John Stuart Mill, had allowed in his late essay on theism that the hypothesis of a limited God had a fair measure of probability and he had insisted both on the radical distinctness of mind and body and on the irreducibility of the mind to its component experiences. But with Darwin the conception of man as wholly a part of nature acquired a kind of solid factual support that it had never had before, and which had been only faintly anticipated by Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood. Darwin did not, of course, strictly prove that man is a natural object, like, if more complex than, any other. The implication could be circumvented by regarding the evolutionary development that Darwin described as the instrument by which God created an earthly vehicle for the immortal soul. But the immediate impact of Darwin's views, supposing them to be true, seemed fatal to the religious view of man and the world.

Darwin's most brilliant expositor, T. H. Huxley, began his career of elaborating the wider implications of Darwinism with *Man's Place in Nature* in 1863, the year of Lyell's geological demonstration of the errors of orthodoxy about the antiquity of mankind. In 1871 Darwin's own *Descent of Man* was published, explicitly extending his principles to the human species. Thus, Stirling's *Secret of Hegel* in 1865 and the group of more professional Hegelian writings in 1874 were very timely, if help for religion was to be looked for in that direction.

Indeed, as a means for the defence of religion, the philosophy of Hegel had two great merits. First, Hegel succeeded in steering religion clear of a head-on collision with science by jettisoning the more factually concrete details of Christianity and by reinterpreting those elements of the faith to which the new scientific developments were most destructive as poetic images of the abstract metaphysical principle of the spirituality of the world. Darwin was fatal to a literal reading of the story of Adam and Eve, but not to the Hegelian reinterpretation of that story as a metaphor for the emergence of man on earth as a crucial point in the self-externalization of the Absolute Mind.

Secondly, Hegel was himself, in a very large sense of the word, an evolutionist. The dialectical process could be and was understood as setting out the stages of the development of forms of existence in time, though as a matter of rational necessity not cumulative accident. Admittedly, in the little read and regarded part of his work that contains his philosophy of nature, Hegel rejected biological evolution. 'It has been an inept conception of earlier and later "*Naturphilosophie*"', he wrote (*Encyclopedia*, sec. 249), 'to regard the progression and transition of one natural form and sphere into a higher as an outwardly actual production. . . . Thinking consideration must deny itself such nebulous, at bottom, sensuous, conceptions as . . . the origin of the more highly developed animal organizations from the lower.' Nevertheless, the dialectical process is a matter of the emergence of higher entities out of a conflict between their less developed anticipations. If Hegel denies its application in a temporal sense to non-human nature as much as to the pure concepts of logic, he does take it to be temporal in its application to the individual mind, in its ascent from sense-certainty to absolute knowledge, and again to human society, in its passage from the primitive tribal family to the fully rational state. It would be no great modification of Hegel's system to regard the dialectic as temporal in nature as well as in mind and society.

The Absolute Idealists themselves testify to the serviceability of their doctrines for the purposes of religious apologetic and reveal the attractions that this fact held for them. As Muirhead says, 'British idealism has been from the first a philosophy of religion' (*The Platonic Tradition*, p. 197). Stirling, the first in the field, is disarmingly explicit about it. Hegel, he wrote, 'is the greatest abstract thinker of Christianity', and again, 'the Hegelian system supports and gives effect to every claim of this religion'; Hegel's views 'conciliate themselves admirably with the revelation of the New Testament'. T. H. Green was a seriously religious man in his plain, earnest, non-sacerdotal way, an evangelical who sought rational foundations for his faith and laboriously worked them out in his conception of the 'eternal consciousness', the 'spiritual principle in man and nature' expounded in the first part of his *Prolegomena to Ethics*. In a Kantian fashion he argues that nature, as we know it, is a related and orderly system, which presupposes the ordering work of the knower's mind in its construction. But for this knowledge to be more than subjective improvisation, unintelligibly set off by a Kantian thing-in-itself, for it to be genuinely objective knowledge, an all-inclusive mind must be presupposed of which our finite minds are in some sense parts. Green affirms that 'there is one spiritual and self-conscious being of which all that is real is the activity and expression; that we are all related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes itself and distinguishes itself from the world . . . and that this participation is the source of morality and religion' (*Works*, vol. iii, p. 145). If this seems pantheistic, on a natural interpretation, so does Hegel. What is unquestionable is its positively religious intention.

The religious interest is even more prominent in the other, and more unreservedly Hegelian, initiator of British idealism: Edward Caird. His main constructive work, as distinct from the elaborate interpretations of the philosophy of Kant which make up the bulk of his output, are his Gifford lectures of 1893: *The Evolution of Religion*. In them God is defined as the infinite, but not Kantianly transcendent, being that is the unity that includes and fulfils all things. In his little book on Hegel Caird describes him as, and praises him for, securing 'the moral and religious basis of human existence'.

The two great later idealists, Bradley and McTaggart, were not defenders of religion in any ordinary sense and were far from

being Christians. Bradley's Absolute is not a mind but a harmonious tissue of experience and in his system metaphysics transcends and surpasses religion much more radically and dismissively than it does in his more Hegelian predecessors. McTaggart, defining religion as 'an emotion resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large' (*Some Dogmas of Religion*, p. 3), accepts this conviction in a form which excludes God altogether, in however dilute a conception. For McTaggart the Absolute is a community of immortal and disembodied finite souls who are related by love. But the lesser lights of idealism, in particular Caird's pupils Jones, Muirhead, and Mackenzie, followed him in treating metaphysics as a rational fulfilment of the religious impulse.

III

The second large intellectual need that absolute idealism catered for was that for a political theory which, by taking a more exalted conception of the state than that traditional in Britain since Locke and the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy, could provide a more rational solution to the social problems of the age than unhindered economic competition was able to offer. By the mid nineteenth century the transfer of ultimate political power from the landowning class to the proprietors of industry, symbolized by the repeal of the Corn Laws, was well under way, even if it was not to be finally completed until the time of Bonar Law and Baldwin. Liberalism, at this time, was the party of the manufacturing interest. The freedom from state interference required by industrialists for their economic activities allied with them the parallel interest of dissenters in removing the disabilities imposed for the protection of the established church, an interest whose chief political effect in the later part of the century was to obstruct, complicate, and enfeeble the national system of education. The traditional instruments of government had failed to respond adequately to the major social changes of the period: the great increase in population, the rapid growth of large industrial cities, and the special problems of destitution to which the new forms of social living gave rise.

The progressive, reforming impulse has expressed itself in a fitful and irregular way in the history of British political thought. In the civil war there was an outburst of democratic radicalism of varying degrees of extremity. It seems to have gone under-

ground, even to have disappeared altogether or to have emigrated to the American colonies, until well on towards the end of the eighteenth century. But, since it was at least latently active in the developing social attitudes of the American colonists, when it came to the surface in the American Revolution it evoked a response in Britain from Paine, Priestley, and Price. This type of radicalism, sympathetic to both the American and French Revolutions, achieved its extreme theoretical expression in Godwin's *Political Justice*, but its doubly scandalous character, as unpatriotic in its fondness for the allied national enemies, France and the United States, and as destructive in its attitude to religion, ensured that its influence would be marginal. (Price and Priestley were both devout ministers of religion, but Paine was at best a deist while Godwin, for all his Sandemanian beginnings, was an atheist.)

Thus in the early nineteenth century the only effective reforming tendency in British political thought was the philosophical, rather than democratic, radicalism of Bentham and his followers. In its early phases the utilitarian movement was concerned with the mainly negative task of legal and political reform. This task was negative because seen as one of clearing away the complex and irrational encumbrance of ancient laws and institutions behind which 'sinister interests' lurked and profited. Freed from these obstructions, men, it was expected, would improve themselves and their conditions of life by their own initiative and efforts. The aim of the utilitarians was to clear the path for individual self-realization. Paine's idea that the community should take positive responsibility for the welfare of its citizens in the largest sense, for their bodily needs by social services, for their spiritual needs by an effective educational system, was altogether opposite in tendency to utilitarian optimism about the self-redemptive potentialities of the free individual.

By the middle of the century much of the work of the movement had been done. The reform of parliament, accepted more in principle than in practice by the Reform Bill of 1832, was more substantially realized in 1867. The chief representatives of secular individualism were Mill and Spencer. In the end Mill came to acknowledge that his paramount aim, the greatest possible liberation of the human individual, needed to be qualified because of the more or less accidental differences of strength between individuals, as is shown by his mildly socialistic revisions in the later editions of his *Principles of Political Economy*.

Spencer affirmed individualism with uncompromising ferocity. Where Bentham had, broadly speaking, ignored problems of education and social welfare, Spencer explicitly asserted, on the basis of the evolutionary account of the progress of mankind, that any state interference with the natural elimination of weak and uncompetitive individuals would disastrously impede, if not reverse, the ascent of man up the evolutionary scale. 'The survival of the fittest' is, after all, Spencer's phrase. 'The ultimate result of shielding men from folly', he wrote in his *Autobiography*, 'is to fill the world with fools.' The only proper tasks of the state are the repression of violence and the enforcement of contracts. Spencer expressed these views as early as 1843 in his essay on *The Proper Sphere of Government* and held firmly to them until his best-known exposition of them in *Man versus the State* in 1884. With him individualism (and the celebration of industrial society) reaches its greatest intensity. His dissenting origins disposed him against authority; his unimaginative rationalism was enchanted by the brute productiveness of industrial capitalism, while obscuring from him its destructive side-effects; his evolutionary interests enabled him to see unrestricted competitiveness in human society as an application of the law of all progress.

One of Green's most quoted observations is his injunction to his juniors to close up their Mill and Spencer and to turn to Kant and Hegel. In saying this he must have had in mind not merely the empiricism of the British philosophers but also the political individualism of which Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is a sustained criticism. For Hegel Britain was the paradigm *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* and Mill and Spencer were its prophets at the height of its career. Green exemplified in his own life the ideal of socially responsible politics he propounded in theory. He was a town councillor, the founder of a free secondary school, and an active temperance reformer. When he died he was buried in a municipal cemetery. Collingwood, in his *Autobiography*, says that the Greats school in Oxford under Green's influence 'was not meant as a training for professional scholars and philosophers; it was meant as a training for public life', that it sent out 'a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that philosophy, and in particular the philosophy they had learnt at Oxford, was an important thing and that their vocation was to put it into practice. This conviction was common to politicians so diverse in their creeds as Asquith and Milner, churchmen like Gore and Scott Holland, social reformers

like Arnold Toynbee' (p. 17). It was under Asquith's government that the foundations of the modern welfare state were laid. Gore and Scott Holland were leaders of the Christian socialist movement in the Church of England which sought to detach the church from its association with the propertied classes and those bound to them by habitual deference and to involve it constructively in the life of the neglected urban masses.

Green's theoretical and practical commitment to a new view of the state's responsibilities was also to be found in Bosanquet, who was both author of *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (1899) and secretary of the Charity Organization Society. Many followed them in both aspects of this concern for an actively benevolent state. Among lesser idealists Henry Jones wrote *The Working Faith of a Social Reformer* (1916) and *The Principles of Citizenship* (1919), J. H. Muirhead *The Service of the State* (1909), works whose titles clearly declare the social and political attitude expressed in them. Here again, as in the matter of religion, Bradley and McTaggart are exceptions. Bradley's chapter on 'My Station and its Duties' in *Ethical Studies* gives a conservative, hierarchical interpretation to the main themes of the Hegelian theory of politics. McTaggart's chapter on 'the conception of society as an organism' in his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* understands that conception in a purely ideal sense: the organic society is realized in the ultimate community of mutually loving immortal souls, not in any historically actual state.

Green's responsible collectivism still exhibited some of the native distrust of state power. (Cf. R. Metz, *A Hundred Years of British Philosophy*, p. 283.) The state cannot make men good, it can only create conditions favourable to their moral perfection of themselves. Yet despite this, and despite his insistence that rights are created not by the politically sovereign power but by the indwelling moral consensus of society, his underlying commitment to the Hegelian idea that the state is an essentially moral institution, absorbing and even superseding the individual morality of its members, comes out in his surprising contention that Czarist Russia is not a state. His famous lecture of 1880, 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', opposed the defence of privilege and unequal strength by appeals to liberty. He thought little of the liberty that would be infringed by forbidding tenants to contract away their game-rights to landlords, by limiting the sale of alcoholic drinks, and by compelling employers to assume liability for injuries sustained by their employees. Green argued for these infringements, perhaps

questionably, as contributing to a larger general freedom. This way of presenting his ideas made them more acceptable to progressive theorists of liberalism like L. T. Hobhouse, despite his hostility to the Hegelian foundations of Green's concrete political doctrines. It is not fanciful of A. B. Ulam (*Philosophical Foundations of English Socialism*) to see in Green an ancestor of the modern labour party.

IV

A question is raised by the rapidity with which idealism became the dominant philosophical school in British universities. For its success was undoubtedly rapid. In 1865 Stirling communicated his turgid version of the Hegelian message in *The Secret of Hegel*, the first work in English on Hegel that was both detailed and enthusiastic, even if, as I shall show later, Stirling was not by any means the first to bring news of Hegel to Britain. In less than ten years a series of works came out, bearing a strong Hegelian imprint, from those who were to be the leaders and inspirers of a whole generation of British philosophers. For the next thirty years absolute idealism maintained an unchallenged primacy, both in volume of publications and in its hold over the loyalties of university students.

The reasons for this swift conquest are two: first, the debility of the native philosophical tradition, both in the predominant form in which it was radically opposed to idealism and in the form in which it had some broad affinity with it, and secondly the revival of the universities from the torpor of the preceding age. In the 1860s, on the eve of the emergence of idealism, the party-lines in philosophy were much the same as they had been more than twenty years earlier, as described by Mill in his essays on Bentham and Coleridge. The school of experience, of which Mill himself was now the senior luminary, confronted the school of intuition. In the early part of the century the empiricist tradition deriving from Locke and Hume had been most alive in the ethics and psychology of Bentham and James Mill. Although the latter had applied Hume's associationism with mechanical thoroughness to the whole range of mental phenomena, no member of the utilitarian school had addressed himself seriously to epistemological issues before John Stuart Mill and none introduced significant modifications, as Mill did, into the body of inherited empiricist assumptions in this area.

On the other side, the school of intuition to which Mill

referred was the Scottish philosophy of common sense. It had been initiated by Thomas Reid in the late eighteenth century as the most respectable of the numerous 'answers to Hume' put out by his contemporaries. It had been laboriously, if elegantly, expounded in the writings of Dugald Stewart between 1792 and his death in 1828. The leadership of the school had then passed from him to Sir William Hamilton, who replaced Stewart's polite facility with a vast accumulation of insecure and heavily-borne learning. Hamilton's ideas were presented in a series of *Edinburgh Review* articles between 1829 and 1833. The first was a metaphysical agnosticism that rested on the thesis that all our knowledge is inescapably relative and conditioned. Secondly, Hamilton upheld a 'natural realism' about perception, which he took to be an immediate awareness of external reality, at least through the sense of touch. Finally, Hamilton added some fairly footling amendments and complications to the syllogistic logic traditionally taught in universities.

Hamilton died in 1856 and from then on the chief exponent of intuitionism was, until his death in 1871, H. L. Mansel of Oxford (in his last few years Dean of St. Paul's), the first leading figure of his school to come from outside its country of origin. He seems to have left no immediate disciples. Spencer and G. H. Lewes drew on his conception of the Unknowable to round out their eclectic and encyclopedic systems. But they did not use it, as he had, to impose a Kantian limit on the possible scope of human knowledge so as to leave room for faith. For them it was at most a respectful gesture towards the idea that natural science, for all its splendid gifts of enlightenment, cannot answer all the questions that men feel impelled to raise about the ultimate nature of things. It could also be seen as an emblem of the open-ended and incompletable nature of scientific inquiry.

After Mansel's death the Scottish philosophy remained alive only in the United States, through the influence of James McCosh, president of Princeton. Calderwood and Veitch were unable to stem the tide of idealism in Scotland and from Oxford it appears to have disappeared without trace. Such resistance as there was in late Victorian Oxford to the school of Green came from the physical realism of the Aristotelian scholar Thomas Case and, later, from the pragmatism of F. C. S. Schiller and his quaint group of associates and from the sporadic critical activity of Cook Wilson, which was only to take the form of an articulate philosophical standpoint after the turn of the century in the work of his pupil Prichard.

By the 1860s, then, the established version of rationalism was, in effect, sustained by one man, Mansel, and after his death soon petered out altogether. Reid had praised Hume for supplying empiricism with a *reductio ad absurdum* by the thoroughness and penetration with which he developed the implications of its assumptions that only ideas, and not real things, are perceived and that the organizing principles of thought are of empirical origin. Against the second assumption he held that the principles of substance, cause, and the like are self-evident *a priori* truths. This theory of first principles resembled Kant's in its results, but it achieved them, not by the honest if exhausting toil of Kantian deduction, but by postulation combined with an appeal to candour. A naïve and diluted Kantianism of this kind could offer no serious resistance to a philosophy such as Hegel's, which started from a reasoned rejection of Kant's findings, in particular of the doctrine of unknowable things-in-themselves, and developed by way of a thorough criticism of the detailed reasoning that Kant had provided for them.

As a general current of thought empiricism, or perhaps one should say naturalism, the philosophy which takes the natural sciences to be the paradigm of human knowledge, received a marked, but somewhat too intoxicating, stimulus from Darwinism. Huxley embraced the doctrines of Hume as a philosophical foundation for his general beliefs; G. H. Lewes those of Auguste Comte. But the richness and variety of the fields which presented themselves as fit for the application of the evolutionary principle (not just organic life but inanimate nature, on the one hand, the mind, morality, and social institutions on the other) caused attention to be drawn away from the more strictly philosophical bases of triumphant naturalism to the more congenial business of finding ever-new confirmations in the world of natural fact for the explanatory power of the new master-principle. The only significant exception to this tendency away from the central and towards the peripheral among naturalistic philosophers of the period is to be found in the work of W. K. Clifford who died in 1879 at the age of thirty-four. Clifford left behind the raw materials for a British equivalent of the philosophy of Mach. In the end this was to be set out systematically by the statistician Karl Pearson in *The Grammar of Science* in 1892.

Now just at the time when the naturalistic philosophy dominant outside the universities was becoming increasingly unphilosophical under the influence of Darwinism and when its rationalistic opponent within the universities was dwindling

away, as much, one might feel, from lack of intrinsic intellectual vigour as from a shortage of gifted exponents, the universities themselves were beginning to respond to the effects of reform. The disquiet of the educated public about their ossified condition, in which intellectual weakness and social exclusiveness reinforced each other, had been expressed through the reforming commissions. Against dogged obstruction by the universities themselves the commissions had sought to create an effective professoriate for the sake of improved scholarly standards and to remove barriers to admission, both of teachers and undergraduates, so as to ensure an academic population fitted to sustain and profit by them. Those like Mark Pattison who were most concerned about the low scholarly level of the ancient British universities looked to Germany for their models. It is not surprising that the new philosophical movement should be inspired by the last German philosopher about whose classical status there was broad agreement in his own country. There is a certain irony in the fact that Hamilton, whose philosophy was completely swept away from the intellectual scene of Oxford after reform, had been the most vehement propagandist for change. The effective chairs for which he had called so stridently were to be occupied by Hegelians who had no use for him.

In a cursory survey like this it is easy to exaggerate the changes brought about by a reforming movement. Oxford in the early nineteenth century had not been the Oxford of Gibbon's and Bentham's scornful recollections, even less, no doubt, than eighteenth-century Oxford had been. The general level of academic work had been raised by the introduction of competitive, or, at any rate, classified, examinations and the stimulation of serious effort among the taught had not gone without a response from their teachers. The circle of Noëtics at Oriel in the 1830s, led by Whately, had been an indication of intellectual vitality among the younger fellows of colleges. But Whately, although a clever and intellectually vigorous man, had no substantial new doctrine to teach. His logic, somewhat like that of Ramus, had been more a removal of petrified complications than a really new forward movement. Furthermore Whately's initiative had had an altogether too disturbing outcome. The one really major intelligence among his pupils had been that of Newman. The result of the Oxford movement was that its adherents either joined the Roman church and left the university altogether or retreated into a frightened or taciturn conformity about fundamental questions. But twenty years after, in the

1860s, the distrust in the free play of mind engendered by this episode was beginning to dissipate.

V

British idealism is commonly assumed to be largely Hegelian in inspiration. Although this assumption has been questioned, it is, as I shall argue later, substantially correct. The unsurprising facts that the British idealists were by no means unselective in their attitude to their German master and that they had ideas of their own to develop within the framework with which he provided them do not undermine it. It is, at any rate, clear that they owed more to Hegel than to anyone else.

I have argued that Hegelianism was appropriate to religious and political needs present in the 1860s and 1870s, and that its success here was accelerated by a lack of competition from a moribund intuitionism which had no political implications and underwrote a bleakly authoritarian and fideistic attitude to religion and from a naturalism that, intoxicated with Darwin, was ignoring fundamental issues about scientific knowledge for the more agreeable task of systematizing and extrapolating from the findings of science.

These considerations do not wholly answer the question of why it was not until more than thirty years after his death that Hegel should receive serious study and endorsement in Britain. In Germany by the 1840s the Hegelian school had disintegrated. By the mid 1860s it was alive only as a style in the history of philosophy, as practised by Erdmann, Zeller, and Kuno Fischer. In 1865, the year of Stirling's excited welcome to Hegel, Liebmann was issuing the call of 'back to Kant' which was to be the slogan of most academic philosophizing in Germany until well after the end of the century.

The explanation needed is, however, implicit in what has been said about the state of British philosophy in the early part of the nineteenth century. Poor communications with the philosophy of the outside world were the result of the parochialism, inertia, and markedly practical bias of the British philosophy of the age. There is a striking contrast between the speed with which knowledge of Kant became available in this country as compared with that of Hegel. Introductory expositions of and selections from Kant's writings were published in Britain in the 1790s, a decade after the first edition of the *Critique of Pure*

Reason and a decade before Kant's death in 1804. The only reference in British philosophical writing to Hegel before his death in 1831 is to be found in Hamilton's essay on 'The Philosophy of the Unconditioned' in 1829 and there he is mentioned only in passing, along with Oken, as one of the distinguished followers of Schelling (*Discussions*, p. 21).

Eight years earlier, in a supplementary dissertation to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, recounting the history of philosophy in Europe since the revival of letters, Dugald Stewart makes no mention of Hegel, although, after some vapid remarks about Kant, he stigmatizes the doctrines of Fichte and Schelling as 'sad aberrations of human reason', despite admitting that he cannot make anything of Fichte and cannot read German anyway. The translation in 1832 of the abridgement of Tenenmann's history of philosophy gave some account of Hegel's views. But it was not until 1846 that a fairly reasonable account of the main outlines of Hegel's system came from a British writer, in J. D. Morell's book on recent European philosophy. Morell is lumped together with his quite hopeless near-contemporary Robert Blakey (who made some vague remarks about Hegel in the fourth volume of his *History of the Philosophy of Mind* in 1850) by Muirhead as exemplifying the theological prejudice which blinded the eyes of British readers to the illumination available to them in the works of the German idealists. The entirely reasonable comments on Hegel by Morell which provoke this condemnation are that in his system 'theism . . . is compromised . . . the hope of immortality likewise perishes . . . religion, if not destroyed by the Hegelian philosophy, is absorbed in it'. The objection that Hegel is altogether too costly a defender of religion in divesting man of immortality and God of both personality and real transcendence is precisely that voiced by Pringle-Pattison and a host of other personal idealists after him against both Hegel and Bradley.

Morell, who had studied philosophy at Bonn in the early 1840s and whose subsequent career as an inspector of schools is approximately contemporary with that of Matthew Arnold, gives a reasonably detailed, accurate, and intelligible account of the main ingredients of Hegel's system and of the dialectic which is its generating principle. Anyone interested by what he had to say about Hegel must have been led to share his theological disquiet by another publication in the same year which was of ultimately Hegelian ancestry: Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, translated into English by George Eliot.

In 1844, two years before Morell's book, Jowett had made a visit to Germany with A. P. Stanley, largely for purposes of philosophical study. By 1845 he was writing about the study of Hegel, 'one must go on or perish in the attempt, that is to say, give up Metaphysics altogether. It is impossible to be satisfied with any other system after you have begun with this.' Jowett's biographers, Abbott and Campbell, report that he and Temple began a translation of Hegel's 'logic' (they do not say whether it was the greater or the smaller one) but that in 1849 it was 'broken off by Temple's being summoned away to public life' (Abbott and Campbell, vol. i, p. 129). 'Hegel is a great book', they report Jowett as saying, 'if you can only get it out of its dialectical form.' He had a high regard for Hegel as a critic of Greek philosophy and said 'the study of Hegel has given me a method'. Metz and Faber are surely right in ascribing to Jowett a large part of the responsibility for the effective introduction of Hegel's thought into this country. Even if he did it through teaching and conversation rather than writing books, the people he taught, above all Green and Caird, were those who were to establish the school of Absolute Idealism.

Jowett's attitude to Hegel itself underwent a dialectical change. By the 1870s, suspicious of the effect of Green's earnest obscurities on the undergraduates of Balliol, he was complaining that 'metaphysics exercise a fatal influence over the mind'. But by 1884, accepting the gift of a bust of Hegel for the Balliol library from Lord Arthur Russell, he adopted a more favourable posture. 'Though not a Hegelian', he wrote, 'I think I have gained more from Hegel than from any other philosopher.' Of the bust itself he added, 'Hegel looks quite a gentleman'. We may perhaps see this as a symbol of the satisfactory absorption of Hegelianism into British intellectual life.

Hamilton returned to Hegel in 1852, when preparing his early essays for publication as a book. In a massive footnote to his essay of 1829 he objected to the dialectic as founded 'on a mistake in logic and a violation of logic' (*Discussions*, p. 24). In an appendix on 'Oxford as it might be', he says: 'I have never, in fact, met with a Hegelian (and I have known several of distinguished talents, both German and British) who could answer three questions, without being driven to the confession that he did not, as yet, fully *comprehend* the doctrine of his master, though *believing* it to be all true.' It would be interesting to know who the distinguished British Hegelians of the early 1850s were, but Hamilton was never much obsessed with mere fact.

Like his further remark, 'I am told that Hegelianism is making way at Oxford', it may be an echo of Jowett's teaching.

At this time two independent British philosophers of an idealist tendency, critical both of Mill's empiricism and the Hamiltonian philosophy which opposed it, were active: J. F. Ferrier in Scotland, whose main work *The Institutes of Metaphysic* came out in 1854, and John Grote of Cambridge, whose scattered and somewhat desultory writings on the theory of knowledge appeared in the two volumes of *Exploratio Philosophica*, the first in 1865 a year before his death, the second not until 1900.

Ferrier, according to G. E. Davie's well-documented account in *The Democratic Intellect*, was a dissident Hamiltonian, provoked into speculative extravagance more by his hostility to evangelical pressures against freedom than by any positive affinity to German idealism (he described his own, rather Berkeleian, philosophy as 'Scottish to the core') or, for that matter, by much knowledge of it. He wrote a short note about Hegel for a biographical dictionary in the late 1850s. Perhaps his relation to Hegel is best brought out by a story of Stirling's who 'found him diligently engaged on a work 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 tried the other way in desperation' (Davie, *op. cit.*, p. 335). There is only a single reference to Hegel in Grote in which he is mentioned, along with Schelling, as an object of such distaste to Mill as to bring him into agreement with Hamilton on a certain point.

Before Stirling's book, then, although it was possible to find a short but not too cursory account of Hegel's philosophy in Morell, and from 1855 a translation of the Subjective Logic, brought into English by way of a French version of the original, the only really effective presentation of Hegel's ideas must have been in the personal teaching of Jowett. By 1860, the year Green became a fellow of Balliol, another Oxford philosopher, Hamilton's follower Mansel, gave a competent survey of Hegel's ideas in half a dozen pages of his *Metaphysics*, whose footnotes make clear his direct acquaintance with Hegel's text. It was in Oxford at any rate that the chief exponent of Absolute Idealism in Scotland, Edward Caird, acquired the views which, from his appointment in 1866 to the moral philosophy chair in Glasgow, he was to present to his fellow Scotsmen and which soon came to dominate the philosophy teaching of the Scottish universities.

Jowett, it would seem, had prepared the ground in such a way that Stirling's book, instead of sinking into the oblivion to which its bizarre and tumultuous style might have destined it, was able to exert a serious influence.

VI

The view that British idealism is a late flowering of the philosophy of Hegel is sometimes challenged in an authoritative-seeming way. The point can be made with examples involving the three chief leaders of the school. Green is quoted as saying 'I looked into Hegel the other day and found it a strange *Wirrwarr*'. Taken by itself this suggests unfamiliarity with, as well as incomprehension of, Hegel. It is pointed out that Caird wrote a massive two-volume work on Kant, and republished it in a substantially revised form twelve years later, but produced only a small, and to a considerable extent biographical, book on Hegel. As for Bradley, there is Collingwood's description of his books as 'criticisms of Mill's logic, Bain's psychology and Mansel's metaphysics by a man whose mind was the most deeply critical that European philosophy has produced since Hume, and whose intention, like that of Locke, was to make a bonfire of rubbish' (*Autobiography*, p. 16).

In fact Green's remark about 'looking into Hegel' comes from some recollections of him by Henry Sidgwick (in *Mind* for 1901). In the paragraph in which it occurs Sidgwick writes, "'Hegelian" is a term that I should never have applied to the author of the *Prolegomena to Ethics*'. He goes on, 'I think, indeed, that the term might be defended in relation to some of his earlier utterances; and that his thought during his life moved away from Hegel. . . . I remember writing to him after a visit to Berlin in 1870 and expressing a desire to "get away from Hegel"; he replied that it seemed to him one might as well try to "get away from thought itself".' So all that is shown is that Green came to think of himself in later years as free from his early dependence on Hegel. As for Caird's concentration on Kant, it must be made clear that he subjects Kant throughout to criticism from a Hegelian point of view and singles out for acceptance from the former just what is absorbed into the philosophy of the latter.

Collingwood's thesis about Bradley is a little more complicated. It comes as part of a general endorsement of the idealists' repudiation of the description of them as Hegelians. If 'they had some knowledge of Hegel', he says, they had 'a

good deal more of Kant. The fact of their having this knowledge was used by their opponents, more through ignorance than deliberate dishonesty, to discredit them in the eyes of a public always contemptuous of foreigners.' Green, Collingwood goes on, 'had read Hegel in youth but rejected him in middle age; the philosophy he was working out when his early death interrupted him is best described, if a brief description is needed, as a reply to Herbert Spencer by a profound student of Hume'. Collingwood's reference to the national suspicion of foreigners is significant. Writing as almost the last member of the Idealistic rearguard and during the inter-war period when Hegel was widely regarded as somehow responsible for the German aggression of 1914, as in Hobhouse's indictment *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*, he was anxious to clear his predecessors of war-guilt by association. In general Collingwood's sporadically brilliant works abound with shrill assertions of false or dubious statements about matters of fact which he found annoying.

A much more sensible view is to be found in the remarks by Edward Caird on the subject in his introduction to the *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, which Green's admirers brought out as a memorial to him in 1883, the year after his death. 'To Hegel', Caird said of Green, 'he latterly stood in a somewhat doubtful relation; for while, in the main, he accepted Hegel's criticism of Kant, and held also that something *like* Hegel's idealism must be the result of the development of Kantian principles rightly understood, he yet regarded the actual Hegelian system with a certain suspicion as something too ambitious, or, at least, premature. "It must all be done again", he once said' (*Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, p. 5).

It is undoubtedly true that no British idealist stood in the kind of discipular relation to Hegel which the more authoritative type of philosopher regards as a criterion of really understanding his message. Such subservience usually presupposes personal contact, which was chronologically ruled out in this case. Nobody, in other words, swallowed Hegel whole. But there is, after all, a great deal of Hegel to swallow. In particular the dialectic, conceived in Hegel's way, as a rigorous and systematically deductive ordering of all the categories from being and not-being, through the abstractions of logic and the increasingly concrete notions of nature and spirit, to terminate in the absolute idea, is nowhere embraced in the work of a British idealist. McTaggart took it seriously enough to devote his first

book to a scrupulously rational criticism of its detailed workings. Bradley's distantly respectful attitude is more typical of the movement. In *The Principles of Logic* he writes: 'I need hardly say that it is not my intention comprehensively to dispose in a single paragraph of a system which, with all its shortcomings, has been worked over as wide an area of experience as any system offered in its place' (p. 147). Again, he says: 'In this speculative movement, if we take it in the character it claims for itself, I neither myself profess belief nor ask it from the reader' (p. 189). The most he will do is to 'profess that the individual is the identity of universal and particular' (ibid.). Even the devoted Stirling is assailed by doubt when he contemplates the ceremonial elaboration of the dialectic: 'the fact is, it is all maundering, but with the most audacious usurpation of authoritative speech on the mysteries that must remain mysteries' (*The Secret of Hegel*, vol. i, p. 73).

The British idealists were not, then, slavish adherents of Hegel in all the detailed effrontery of his system. They were thoroughly selective in their approach to him and they had original ideas of their own as well as original applications of his principles to contribute. But it is implausible to suggest, as Collingwood comes near to doing, that their philosophy is an original native growth. In Caird's words they 'agree in believing that the line of investigation which philosophy must follow . . . is that which was opened up by Kant, and for the successful prosecution of which no one has done so much as Hegel'. If Coleridge was chiefly influenced by Schelling and Carlyle by Fichte, the professional philosophers owed little or nothing to either and made negligible reference to them. The only serious alternative to Hegel as the chief influence on their thought is Kant.

Although a certain community of basic vocabulary between Kant and Hegel may at first glance suggest that it is an open question which of the two the idealists most closely adhere to, brief reflection is sufficient to show beyond doubt that they are essentially Hegelian in their views about both reality and knowledge. In Kant's view ultimate reality, the realm of noumena, is unknowable by the human mind, except, inconsistently, in the three respects that it exists, that it contains a mental as well as a non-mental aspect, and, by implication, that the latter exercises some kind of determining influence on the sensory raw material which it is the business of the understanding to articulate into knowledge. For all his condemnation of transcendent metaphysics, Kant is himself, marginally but essentially,

a practitioner of the forbidden art. Hegel, on the other hand, recognizes Kant's inconsistency about the transcendent nature of reality and overcomes the difficulty by taking reality, in the form of his Absolute, to be, not something altogether beyond experience and of a wholly different nature from it, but as a logically ideal completion or totality of experience. In this respect the British idealists follow Hegel exactly.

The point is clearly made in a remark of Green's I have quoted before: 'there is one spiritual self-conscious being of which all that is real is the activity and expression . . . we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes itself and distinguishes itself from the world' (*Works*, vol. iii, p. 143). In less ethereal terms, our minds and their experiences are not cut off from reality itself, but are, somehow, parts of it. Bradley, again, does not take reality, the harmonious absolute experience that lies above the level of relations, to be something quite distinct from the appearances which are the objects of discursive thought. For him appearances are all constitutive parts of reality; indeed he suggests that reality is nothing more than the totality of appearances, harmonized into a fully rational system. For the British idealists, as for Hegel, there is only one world, which we apprehend with varying degrees of adequacy, from the crude intimations of sense at one extreme to the absolute knowledge of philosophy at the other. For Kant, on the other hand, there are two worlds, quite distinct from each other; the unknowable or barely knowable order of noumena and the order of phenomena, jointly produced by sensation and the understanding.

The epistemological affinities of British idealism are equally Hegelian rather than Kantian. For Kant there are three distinct faculties involved in our acquisition of knowledge, or our claims to it, at any rate: sense, understanding, and reason. Sense is a passive receptivity and, by itself, is disorderly and inarticulate. Only if its deliverances are synthesized by the understanding can we achieve objective knowledge of phenomena, material or mental. In reason the intellect is exercised independently of the sensations which are the indispensable content for its formative activity. The result is transcendent metaphysics, not knowledge at all, but only a delusive chimera, a 'natural and unavoidable illusion' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 298, B 354). Reason is dialectical, then, where this means that 'we conclude from something

which we know to something else of which have no concept, and to which, owing to an inevitable illusion, we yet ascribe objective reality' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 339, B 397). Its arguments are 'sophisms, not of men, but of pure reason itself'.

Hegel, of course, reverses Kant's comparative estimate of understanding and reason. Understanding, operating in accordance with the fixed principles of formal logic, yields us knowledge of an inferior sort in common life and the sciences, knowledge that is abstract, partial, and deficient. True knowledge is only to be obtained by the employment of philosophic reason, in accordance with the principles of the dialectic. Reason is not the source of errors which, just because so natural and interesting to us, have to be rooted out; it is the only discoverer of ultimate truth. If ultimate reality were, as Kant supposes, noumenal, then reason, with its dialectical procedure, would be delusive. But, in Hegel's view reality is not noumenal; it is, rather, total, infinite, and all-inclusive, and only the dialectical reason of philosophy, apprehending it as a harmonious and unitary system, can give us genuine knowledge of it as it really is and that surpasses the abstraction and limitedness of the understanding.

In this conception of the nature, object, and cognitive potentialities of reason as compared with understanding the British idealists are at one with Hegel. They agree that since reality is not noumenal, not transcendent of experience, reason can give knowledge of it. Where they differ from Hegel is in regard to the supposition that the philosopher, armed with all the powers of reason, can apply it to provide a detailed, systematic, and demonstratively rigorous account of reality as a whole in which are finally ordered all the partial apprehensions of reality through which we progressively approximate to a true and absolute knowledge of it. That is what is meant by Green's remark that it must all be done again. It is the point of Bradley's repeated insistence that we can be sure that all the disharmonies of appearance are *somehow* reconciled in the absolute. The British idealists suspect the presumption with which Hegel applies his leading principles to the detail of the world and thought. But they unreservedly endorse the principles themselves.

VII

There is a comical immodesty about the titles G. E. Moore gave to the two influential works he published in 1903. It is more

obvious in the case of *Principia Ethica* with its implied comparison with Newton's masterpiece. But there is a measure of presumption also in the title of his essay of that year: *The Refutation of Idealism*. It lies not so much in the claim, which Moore himself soon abandoned, to have succeeded in the work of refutation but rather in the supposition that the doctrine to which he was objecting, Berkeley's principle that to be is to be perceived, is the essence of idealism. For it was Hegel's, not Berkeley's, idealism that was a live issue at the time he was writing. If the Hegelian philosophy had a slogan it was rather that all reality is spiritual in nature or, even more fundamentally, that there is no truth or being short of truth and reality as a whole.

Russell's essay on *The Nature of Truth* which came out three years later supplies a more perceptive account of the main theme of idealism. He begins by objecting to the coherence theory of truth, in Joachim's version, that it is self-refuting. The thesis that nothing short of the whole truth is more than partially true is itself less than the whole truth. But he does not confine himself to this kind of direct criticism of the coherence theory. He goes on to say: 'the doctrines we have been considering may all be deduced from one central logical doctrine, which may be expressed thus: "every relation is grounded in the natures of the related terms"'. Let us call this the *axiom of internal relations*' (*Philosophical Essays*, rev. edn. p. 139).

One way of showing that Russell's account of the theoretical core of absolute idealism is preferable to Moore's is by considering the main issues with which the idealists actually concerned themselves. Green's lengthy critique of Hume is preoccupied with Hume's atomism, with his conception of reality as an aggregate of items of feeling or sensation, externally related to one another. The same theme is pursued positively in the early, metaphysical, part of his *Prolegomena to Ethics*. Bradley's main object in the first, critical, part of *Appearance and Reality* is to show the incoherent, contradictory character of the categories of the understanding of discursive or relational thought. The central argument here is that the understanding falls into contradiction by seeking to conceive reality as a complex of things that are at once distinct from each other and from the relations between them.

Another consideration that supports the view that the principle of internal relations is fundamental to idealism is that all the more specific doctrines of the school can be seen as applications of it to comparatively specific problems. Five of these applications are fairly comprehensive.

(1) The first is monism, in Spinoza's sense, the theory that there is only one true substance, the absolute or reality as a whole. It follows from the basic principle, together with the reasonable assumption that everything is related, directly or indirectly, to everything else. It is perhaps most plausible in the causal form given to it by Blanshard (*Nature of Thought*, chaps. 31 and 32). If causality is more than regular succession, it seems it can only be some kind of logical relation of entailment. So, if all events are causally related, they are also all internally related.

(2) The second is the coherence theory of truth. A proposition cannot be considered as true on its own, abstracted from its involvement with other propositions. Furthermore, a proposition cannot be conceived as externally related to the equally abstract fact that the correspondence theory supposes to verify it. The terms of the truth-relation must be systematic and possess a community of character. Proposition and fact are both abstractions from the judgement, understood as a kind of assertive experience, and the ultimate bearer of truth is the total system of coherent judgements which is also the system of experiences that constitutes the world.

(3) The third is the theory of the concrete universal which is put forward to replace the Aristotelian conception of an object as the instantiation by a bare particular of a cluster of abstract universals.

(4) The fourth is the thesis that reality is essentially mental or spiritual in nature. There are two ways in which the doctrine of internal relations supports this conclusion. On the one hand minds are more real, and so more adequate paradigms of reality itself, than material things, because they are more rational and unitary systems. On the other, there is the consideration that thought and being are not distinct and externally related, an idea intimated by the coherence theory of truth.

(5) The fifth application of the doctrine of internal relations is the theory that mind and its objects are internally and thus necessarily related, a particular version of which is the object of Moore's polemic.

There are further, more particular applications of the principle in the fields of art, politics, and religion. In each case the understanding is seen as operating with incoherent abstractions which it is the task of reason to supersede: form and content, state and citizen, the divine and the human.

This system of ideas certainly satisfies two of its own criteria of adequacy. On the one hand it is extremely comprehensive: all

sides of human experience, all objects of human interest, except, perhaps, mathematics and natural science, are catered for within it. On the other it is highly systematic and internally coherent. In each of its applications the basic principle of idealism is used to reject an opposition of diverse abstractions developed by the understanding and to establish in its place a concrete and internally related system, which, in its freedom from inner contradiction, is acceptable to reason.

The enchantment of the doctrine is plain enough. But is that a sufficient reason for accepting it? It is clearly not a correct account of the conceptions of things with which we actually think. What is necessarily true of, and thus internal to, an object is, as is often pointed out, relative to the sense of the description we choose to identify it with. As things are none of our descriptions of things involves a conception of their total nature, of everything that is true of them. Our conceptions of individual things are not Leibnizian individual concepts. Critics of the doctrine usually go on at this point to add that the choice between alternative identifying descriptions of a thing is in the end arbitrary. Things have no essences for nothing is internal to the thing itself.

Yet, on the other hand, it is easy to see the attraction of the idea that the fullest possible description of a thing, the one that implies everything that is true of it, is the best or most adequate description of it there could be. To some extent, indeed, the advance of our knowledge of the world seems to confirm this idea. The concepts of science, for example, imply more about the things they identify than the concepts of common observation, which contribute to their development. But the supposition that this process could, in principle, ever be completed is highly questionable. To know everything about anything, as the idealists themselves would admit, must be to know everything about everything. But even if this goal were in principle one that could be achieved, there can be no short cut to it as the doctrine of the cognitive superiority of the reason assumes. It is only by the patient accumulations of the understanding that our conceptions can be enriched.