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British Idealism: Philosophy with a Conscience

David Boucher and Andrew Vincent[1]

Abstract

In this article we propose to argue that the general philosophical tendency that the British Idealists exhibited was distinct from Kantianism and Hegelianism, and worthy of study in its own right. British Idealism served a number of cultural and political purposes in a society which was transformed by the effects of rapid and comprehensive industrialisation, modernisation, and secularisation. It general philosophical background provided assumptions and principles that counterbalance the harsher versions of individualism and market-based liberalism, or the more insensitive variants of utilitarianism. British Idealism offered in their place an emphasis on social cohesiveness giving due weight to individual and collective responsibility. The imperative of positive social citizenship became an important theme in early twentieth century politics, rights discourse and welfare theory. Idealists offered an elevated view of the relation between humanity and nature, which challenged the naturalism of Darwin and Spencer. God (or the Absolute Spirit) was immanent in the development of freedom in the world and Spirit expressed itself through the finite centres of individual lives.[2] Idealism emphasised both the responsibilities of individuals to seize the opportunities to make themselves more

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[2] Bradley (and to some extent Bosanquet) had his own more idiosyncratic views. Oakeshott is different again, although the volume of Oakeshott's writings, edited by Tim Fuller, *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993) does something to change our perspective on Oakeshott, qua religion.

virtuous, and of the owners of industrial capital to transform their factories and workshops into schools of virtue. The role of the state in all this was to ensure that any impediments to self-realisation were removed.[3]

In the last decades there has been a great deal of scholarly work done on German Idealism in all fields of humanistic study, devoted particularly to the philosophies of Kant and Hegel and to a lesser extent Fichte and Schelling. However, in comparison a great deal less had been done, until recent times, on the work of the British Idealist school.[4] In the last thirty years there has been a proliferation of studies, particularly on Green, and the later Idealists R. G. Collingwood and Michael Oakeshott who have series dedicated to them by Imprint Academic. In addition, the this journal, has done a great deal over the last quarter of a century to provide an outlet for studies devoted to all aspects of Idealism..

Within the broad and complex movement of analytic philosophy during the twentieth century there was a strong tendency to dismiss Idealism, out of hand, as a defeated and bankrupt philosophical rival. F. H. Bradley was something of an exception because he was taken to be more analytic and hence more philosophically serious than his fellow Idealists. On the whole Idealism was seen to be mired in nebulous metaphysics and loose religious speculation, liberally punctuated with quotations from poetry. However, even within the late twentieth century Hegelian scholarship fraternity, British Idealism was regarded with some unease and suspicion.

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[3] There are considerable variations between Idealist thinkers.

[4] See David Boucher and Andrew Vincent, *British Idealism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, Continuum, 2011), and W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011). For a comparison of Ancient, German and British Idealism see Jeremy Dunham, Iain Hamilton Grant and Sean Watson, *Idealism, the History of a Philosophy* (Durham, Acumen, 2011).

British Idealists were regarded as unimaginative slavish imitators of Kant or Hegel.[5] Such a judgement is, though, utterly misplaced. There is in fact a rich and independent vein of Idealist philosophical thought in Britain, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which has not often been studied in any great depth or mentioned except in passing – although the political and moral philosophy has always retained a consistent minority following amongst political theorists. British Idealism took as its targets English and Scottish empiricism, and also the Scottish Common-Sense philosophy of Reid and Hamilton. Idealism was introduced into Britain primarily through the scholarship and translations of Scottish philosophers, and continued flourish in the hands of David Ritchie, Edward Caird, Andrew Seth, and J. S. Mackenzie and others, in addition to their more well-known English counterparts, T. H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, and F. H. Bradley.[6]

This article aims to re-examine the movement of Philosophical Idealism in British philosophy, during the period 1870 to 1930. The key influences on this movement were Kant, Hegel and to a lesser extent Herman Lotze, although in each case the philosophical influence is moulded and adapted to new historical and cultural circumstances. This essay is underpinned by three background assumptions: primarily, British Idealist arguments are valuable in their own right; second, Idealists' writings, through their critical philosophical commentaries, throw considerable light on the work of many of their philosophical, scientific and political contemporaries; and, thirdly, , their work is important to contemporary philosophical and political

[5] For example, J.N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-examination* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1958), 21; Paul Owen Johnson, *The Critique of Thought: A Re-examination of Hegel's Science of Logic* (Aldershot, Avebury, 1988), 5.
[6] David Boucher, ed. *The Scottish Idealists: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Exeter, Imprint Academic, 2004).

concerns, a theme we have explored elsewhere.[7] By way of introduction we will initially give , a brief historical overview of the movement and its general philosophical outlook, before going on to argue that their critical interventions in the diverse and often specialised problems of their day in evolution, religion, moral and political controversies exhibit a unity by remaining faithful to the general philosophical outlook..

Historical Overview

British Idealism began to establish its roots in Scotland and Oxford during the middle of the nineteenth century and rapidly became the dominant philosophy, through the writings and personal influence of such exponents as Fraser Campbell, Edward Caird, T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, Bernard Bosanquet, Henry Jones, Andrew Seth, D. G. Ritchie, J. S. Mackenzie, William Wallace, W. R. Sorley, J. M. E. McTaggart and John Watson, until the early twentieth century when its fundamental doctrines were challenged by 'Realist' philosophers such as John Cook Wilson, G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell and the young Wittegenstein. Although having been initially incubated in the Scottish universities and Oxford, and to a lesser extent at Cambridge, it is worth noting that it was rapidly exported throughout the English speaking world in the white settler colonies of the British Empire. In response to the growing demand for university teachers, following the founding of new universities throughout England and Wales, and in the British colonies and the USA, the pupils of many of the first generation British Idealists were the vehicles through which Idealism colonised Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa, and the United States of America up to the 1930s. Most of the key academic philosophical chairs in these countries, in the early period of

[7] It is explored though by David Boucher and Andrew Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory*

the twentieth century, in all apart from the USA, were occupied by Idealists, often inspired or taught by the British philosophers. However, from the early twentieth century, the march of Idealism was hindered, and by the 1920s it was in slow, if partial, retreat. Yet, the British Idealists still managed, through their writings, teaching and personal influence, to permeate the whole English speaking world with their doctrines. Even after the death of its leading exponents in the mid 1920s - Bradley, Bosanquet, Jones, and McTaggart - it continued to dominate the professoriate into the 1930s and was able to count in its ranks able young converts such as R. G. Collingwood in Oxford, who published *Speculum Mentis* in 1925, and Michael Oakeshott in Cambridge, who published *Experience and its Modes* in 1933.

In many ways, Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990) was the last well-known exponent of the Idealist tradition. The impact of Collingwood and Oakeshott on later twentieth century British philosophy is a testament to the breadth and longer-term impact of the Idealist movement. However, neither of the latter thinkers were part of the heyday of British Idealism. Both worked in a world which was largely antagonistic to Idealism and where the historical and cultural circumstances had changed significantly. This marks out the character of their work. In this sense, many of the religious, moral, biological, ideological and economic preoccupations which underpin thinkers such as Green, Bosanquet, Bradley, Jones and Ritchie do not apply to the cultural milieu of Collingwood and Oakeshott, although in their early writings they display a fascination with religion, a subject which was central to the concerns of their Idealist predecessors. Equally, both clearly rearticulated (in their own terms) the Idealist view of experience, in Collingwood's case viewing the 'totality' as a linked hierarchy of forms, and, in Oakeshott's, as co-ordinate *modes*, or *arrests*, with philosophy constituting the concrete

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(Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

totality of experience as a whole. Thus, despite their subtle differences from their previous British Idealist predecessors, it is important to include them in its number because Collingwood and Oakeshott have made a considerable impact in keeping the spirit of Idealism alive, not only in social and political philosophy, but also in aesthetics, metaphysics, and the philosophy of history and the social sciences.

Despite many subtle internal differences of opinion, Idealism was a philosophy that was deeply responsive to many of the cultural concerns of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. It directly addressed many of the deep and pervasive religious anxieties of the time. It provided a coherent and attractive alternative to conventional utilitarian and naturalistic philosophies of the time. It also supplied a lucid discussion and, in many cases, justification for a changing conception of the state – particularly the movement towards a more social, welfare-orientated or collectivised conception of the state. In so doing, the Idealist movement engaged in a constructive dialogue with the more radical political ideologies of the period, including libertarianism, socialism and syndicalism. It was, in addition, closely linked with contemporaneous developments in the social and natural sciences, particularly evolutionary theory and the burgeoning discipline of sociology.[8] In this context, it has been little noticed the extent to which British Idealism, at its peak, rode the wave of enthusiasm for evolution, which swept through European thought. Essentially, it critically adapted evolution to its own ends by eschewing its naturalistic form and emphasising the developing spiritual or 'mindful' unity of existence. Although they did not present a united front on the question of imperialism, with Bradley, Bosanquet and Haldane proving to be far more enthusiastic in their

[8] See essay 'The Philosophy of Sociology and the Sociology of Philosophy' in Boucher and Vincent, *British Idealism and Political Theory*.

support, the majority including Caird, Mackenzie, Muirhead, and Bosanquet, sympathised with the criticisms voiced by J. A. Hobson and L. T. Hobhouse.[9]

Idealism was able to bind together many dimensions of human experience and provide coherent answers to pressing cultural problems. Thus, at a time when religion was under attack from many dimensions of the scientific orthodoxy, Idealism was able to provide a rational basis for belief, which together with its emphasis upon the unity and evolutionary development of human potential, provided, at the same time, a philosophical basis for radical social and political reform. They maintained that everything in experience is related to everything else. There could be no isolated individuals or facts. In the theory of knowledge this led to the coherence theory of truth, and in social philosophy it resulted in a strong form of liberal communitarianism, which posited the mutual inclusion of society and the individual. Many of the early generation of British Idealists, with the marked exception of F.H. Bradley, were also actively engaged in social and political practice. Later in the twentieth century, Collingwood and Oakeshott, although more wary and sceptical than the early generation of Idealists, still became deeply engaged in the political, religious and moral controversies of their own times. Collingwood never tired of warning of the different threats to civilisation, including Nazism and Fascism, during the 1930s. Oakeshott, although affecting the philosophical guise of disinterestedness, none the less continuously warned against the dangers of the rationalist politics, manifestations of which he saw most pronounced in the drift towards socialism in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s.[10]

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[9] Nazli Pinar Kaymaz, *British Idealism and International Thought: The Development of Human Rights* (Exeter, Imprint, 2020).

[10] Most of the Idealists, with the exception of Bradley and Oakeshott, were ‘social liberals’; namely, liberals who eschewed classical liberalism in favour of a more statist and welfare-inclined liberalism.

The Idealist World-view

The world view of British Idealism, at its inception, was initially something of an aberration in a philosophical culture characterised by the influence of the positivism and empiricism of Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Thomas Reid, Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. The root of the Idealist view was well expressed by Andrew Seth, who complained that thinking always involves a relation between the thinker and an objective world, but that it is a fallacy to begin by assuming that only one side of the dualism exists (the objective world or thought) independently of the other.[11] It was largely from Hegel that the British Idealists imported this idea of the complex unity of experience. From this starting point, the question of how the unity is differentiated into all its various modes became the central philosophical issue. This remained a central theme within Idealism up to Collingwood and Oakeshott. Ideas essentially unite the mind and its objects in mutual inclusion, rather than antagonism. This is not to deny the distinction between thought and reality. As Henry Jones suggested, no Idealist denies this distinction. None asserted that knowledge of a fact *was* that fact. Objects did not disappear when we turned ours backs.[12] Hastings Rashdall summed up the general position when he said that Idealism assumed ‘that there is no such thing as matter apart from mind, that what we commonly call *things* are not self-subsistent realities, but are only real when taken in their connection with mind - that they exist for mind, not for themselves’.[13]

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[11] Andrew Seth, *Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1890: 2nd ed.), 11. Seth became one of the leading exponents of Personal Idealism which took its lead from Lotze and Rudolph Eucken..

[12] Henry Jones, *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Lotze* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1895), 273. The idea that things exist only in being known is what J. S. Mackenzie calls ‘False idealism’. See ‘Edward Caird as a philosophical teacher’, *Mind*, n.s., 18 (1909), 519.

[13] Hastings Rashdall, ‘Personality: Human and Divine’, in Henry Sturt, ed., *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays* (London, Macmillan, 1902), 370. Rashdall as a Personal Idealist distinguished himself from Absolute Idealists.

Taking the isolated subject as the starting point in philosophy inevitably leads to a dilemma, since, in order to pronounce on the different forms of experience and their relation to reality genuine, a criterion of genuine knowledge has to be presupposed in advance of undertaking the investigation designed to establish it.[14] When thinking is taken to be the process by which Spirit, Mind or God realises itself, the subjective and objective are not separated by ideas, but instead are the differentiations of the one comprehensive unity.[15] Hegel's importance for the British Idealists here, then, is that he basically dispenses with the problem of epistemology and provides a metaphysic, which is also a logic of the process and development of mind.[16] Edward Caird sums up Hegel's position thus: the highest aim of philosophy 'is to reinterpret experience, in the light of a unity which is presupposed in it, but which cannot be made conscious or explicit until the relation of experience to the thinking self is seen, - the unity of all things with each other and with the mind that knows them'.[17] For T.H. Green, Hegel's importance here was that he showed that the world is essentially an interrelated spiritual whole in which all that is real is the expression and activity of 'one spiritual self-conscious being'. We are related to this self-conscious being, not as parts to a whole, 'but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and

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[14] Richard Norman calls this the 'Dilemma of Epistemology' in his book *Hegel's Phenomenology: a Philosophical Introduction* (London, Chatto and Windus for Sussex University Press, 1976), chapter one.
[15] Edward Caird, Hegel (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1903), 55.
[16] Henry Jones gives a detailed and critical account of the development of the epistemological dilemma through Hegelian eyes in his 'Idealism and Epistemology', *Mind*, n.s. II (1893), in two parts. See David Boucher and Andrew Vincent, *A Radical Hegelian: The Political and Social Philosophy of Henry Jones* (Cardiff and New York, University of Wales Press and St Martin's Press, 1993), ch. 2; and David Boucher, 'Practical Hegelianism: Henry Jones's Lecture Tour of Australia', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51 (1990), 429-32.
[17] Edward Caird, 'Metaphysic', *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1892), 442.

distinguishes itself from the world; [and] that this participation is the source of morality and religion; this we take to be the vital truth which Hegel had to teach.'[18]

It should be noted, however, that none of the major British Idealists accepted the stylised dialectical method which Hegel used to address the process of differentiation. Green, for one, complained that the dialectic method actually hindered Hegel in reaching his conclusions, and consequently accused another British Idealist, Principal John Caird, of too slavishly following Hegel's method.[19] Rather than the 'invariable self-repeating formula', it was the principle, rather than the method of dialectic, that attracted the Idealists, a principle that was to be even discerned, for many, in Plato.[20]

In summary, British Idealists were dissatisfied with all 'dualisms' and sought to demonstrate that there could be no absolute ontological divisions, for example, between mind and nature, nature and environment, individualism and collectivism, or person and state. Each element includes something of the other. Their apparent opposition is overcome in a unity, not one which obliterates differences, but a genuine 'unity in diversity'.[21] This point is illustrated - on a political note - in Edward Caird's and Henry Jones' insistence that true socialists and true liberal individualists have to acknowledge what is good in the views of their adversary, for any political progress to take place. Thus the dualism of state and individual had to be overcome. Individualism needed to develop or evolve within the richer framework of an ethical state. Such an overcoming would be an 'identity in difference'. Individuality was not lost but preserved and sanctified in the higher unity of the state. In fact, both state and individual were viewed as different manifestations of the one self-revealing spirit. As Jones liked to assert, the

[18] T. H. Green, 'Review of J. Caird, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*', in *Works*, III, (London, Longman Green, 1883-6) 146.
[19] T.H. Green, *The Works of T.H. Green,* (London, Longman, 1888), volume III, 146.
[20] Seth, *Scottish Philosophy*, 198.
[21] See Caird, 'The Problem of Philosophy at the Present Time', *Essays on Literature and Philosophy,* vol. 1 (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1892), 205-6.

coming of socialism was also the coming of individualism.[22] Both Jones and Oakeshott, for example, also typically address theoretical problems by setting-up opposing views, both sides of which are then convicted of being one-sided, that is, failing to take account of the other perspective. The dualism is invariably then overcome in a synthesis that unites the element of truth expressed in both.[23]

However, it is also important to realise that there were internal philosophical divisions, both among the Absolute Idealists and between Absolute and Personal Idealists. Jones, for example, accused both Bernard Bosanquet and F.H. Bradley of failing to overcome the dualism between appearance and reality, in positing an absolute that was ultimately beyond experience. For Bradley, our experience of the Absolute is most complete at the sentient level when it presents itself as an undifferentiated whole. Thought differentiates, or mutilates, the unity of experience. He therefore argues that, speaking properly, there is nothing which is perfect except the Absolute itself. For Bradley, the absolute is so perfect it cannot even be linked with God. He is categorical on this issue - 'The Absolute is not God. God for me has no meaning outside the religious consciousness, and that essentially is practical'.[24] The Absolute is all encompassing, comprehensive and universal, but is related specifically to *nothing* - a point that some twentieth Indian Vedantic philosophers have found an attractive idea.[25] Because the Absolute is related to nothing (and is thus wholly comprehensive and perfectly individual) it cannot have any particular or practical relation to any finite individuals or objects. Everything short of the Absolute is appearance. Thus, to envisage the Absolute as an object or thing is to

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[22] Henry Jones, *The Working Faith of a Social Reformer* (London, Macmillan, 1910).
[23] Cf. John Watson, *The State in Peace and War* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1919), 250.
[24] F.H. Bradley, F. H.,'On God and the Absolute' in *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968), 428.
[25] 'Bradley' logic ultimately ends in the denial of all relations and in the affirmation of the one single, indivisible, timeless, real absolute; and the philosophy of Asvaghosha reminds us of such an absolute wherein all distinctions have vanished', Surendranathn Dasgupta, S., Indian Idealism (Cambridge University Press, 1962), 107ff.

immediately particularise or lessen it. Bradley did not, however, completely sever appearance from reality. He maintained their relation by means of two fundamental principles. First, the principle of non-contradiction. All reality must be consistent. If it is contradictory, it must be appearance. Appearance, nevertheless, in some way belongs to, or qualifies, reality. Secondly, consistency and non-contradiction is a matter of degree, therefore, there are degrees of reality, and not a yawning chasm between appearance and reality.[26] Collingwood takes Bradley's crucial argument here as a denial of the whole British subjectivist or phenomenalist tradition associated with John Locke, William Hamilton and Herbert Spencer.[27]

Absolute Idealists, such as Caird and Jones, while agreeing with the monistic unity of the whole, give much more emphasis than Bradley or Bosanquet to the reality of the appearances. For Caird and Jones, the unity embodies the principle of rationality which is expressed in and through all the differentiations of the whole. Jones argues that whilst Idealism repudiates the psychological introspective method of beginning a philosophical inquiry from the inner life of the subject, it does not attempt to do without that inner life altogether. Activity, emotions and purposes are all incorporated, but what is denied is any fundamental distinction between subject and object. These are distinctions made within an ontological unity. This ontological unity, Jones argues, is not incompatible with 'their equally real difference'.[28]

The above case is not so simple with regards to the contemporaneous Personal Idealist movement, which objected to the propensity of all Absolute Idealism to undervalue

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[26] F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1897: 2nd ed.), 217. Also see Boucher and Vincent, A Radical Hegelian, 43-7.

[27] R. G. Collingwood, 'The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley: An Essay on *Appearance and Reality'*. manuscript, Collingwood Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Published in R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Philosophical Method,* ed. with an introduction and additional material by James Connelly and Giuseppina D'Oro (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), 227-252.

[28] Henry Jones, *The Philosophy of Martineau* (London, Macmillan, 1905), 20-1. See Boucher and Vincent, *Radical Hegelian*, ch.2, also Andrew Vincent, 'The Individual in Hegelian Thought', *Idealist Studies,* Vol XII, no.2 (1982), 156-68.

the individual, and to run the risk of allowing the individual of becoming absorbed into the Absolute. They none the less acknowledged that some monist exponents were closer to Personal Idealism than others.[29] Henry Sturt, for example, did not think that either Henry Jones or the American Hegelian, Josiah Royce, were as philosophically suspect. Equally, Sturt believed that the movement to which he belonged was a development of, rather than a departure from, the Idealism of Green, Bosanquet and Bradley. Following Rudolph Eucken, another Personal Idealist, Boyce Gibson, contended that the central idea of Absolute Idealism - that the real is rational - was also upheld by Personal Idealism, but 'from the point of view of the personal experient'.[30] It is worth noting here that Absolute and Personal Idealism both had a common philosophical enemy in naturalism. But, Absolute Idealism was still regarded as largely deficient in two important respects. First, it criticised human experience, not from the vantage point of human experience itself, 'but from the visionary and impractical standpoint of human nature'.[31] Secondly, it refused to give adequate recognition to volition in human nature. In Andrew Seth's view, Absolute Idealism was always in imminent danger of consigning the individual to insignificance.[32] Yet, despite criticism, Absolute Idealism remained the most dominant element within the Idealist movement as a whole. Most of the key British Idealist philosophers were committed to versions of Absolute Idealism, even the representatives of the new generation, Collingwood and Oakeshott.

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[29] Seth, for example, objected to Absolute Idealism's 'unification of consciousness in a single Self'. Andrew Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality* (Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1888), 215. There was also a great deal more internal variety among Personal Idealists than among the Absolute Idealists. Among the more distinguished exponents of Personal or Subjective Idealism were Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, Hastings Rashdall, Henry Sturt, W. R. Boyce Gibson, the American Brand Blanchard, and the idiosyncratic James McTaggart Ellis McTaggart, see also Vincent, 'The Individual in Hegelian Thought'.

[30] W. R. Boyce Gibson, 'A Peace Policy for Idealists', *The Hibbert Journal*, 5 (1906-7), 409.

[31] Henry Sturt, ed., *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays* (London, Macmillan, 1902), p. x.

[32]A. Seth Pringle Pattison, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1920), 266 and Vincent. 'The Individual in Hegelian Thought'.

The Evolutionary Dynamic

When reading the Idealists one is often struck by the extent to which they alluded to and directly addressed issues in evolutionary theory. This is not surprising given the prevalence of this form of thinking during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Evolution was the first scientific theory to be more accessible to, and, to capture the imagination of the educated public. The unity of Nature and Spirit in the theory of evolution held out the possibility of a common form of explanation in the natural and social sciences. The allure of such an all-encompassing way of understanding the whole of existence was almost irresistible. It found expression not only in biology, geology, palaeontology and anthropology but also in history, philosophy, poetry and even religion. [33] In poetry, for example, the works of Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Edward Fitzgerald and Algernon Charles Swinburne dwell extensively upon the imagery and ideas of evolution.[34]

The extent to which Darwin influenced social evolutionists has been greatly exaggerated.[35] Long before Darwin, as he acknowledged, evolutionary ideas were being entertained and taken seriously by many eminent scholars.[36] For example, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck argued in 1809 that species developed and transmuted. Idealist argument self-consciously took on evolutionary imagery and vocabulary to strengthen its conclusions. Evolution was an immensely adaptable form of argument which could be invoked to support almost any conclusion, and which has endured to this day in the sociobiology popularised by Richard Dawkins and the social theory of W. G. Runciman. However,

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[33] The success of Darwin's theory was, of course, possible because of the great strides made in geology and palaeontology in establishing that the Christian view that the earth was created a little over four thousand years ago was a gross underestimation.
[34] Lionel Stevenson, 'Darwin Among the Poets' (1932). Reprinted in *Darwin*, selected and edited by Philip Appleman (New York, Norton, 1979), 519.
[35] J. W. Burrow, Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966), 20 and 100.
[36] Darwin added an historical sketch of his precursors to the third edition of *The Origin of Species* (1862). He expanded upon the sketch in subsequent editions.

during the time that the first generation of British Idealists wrote, political debate was dominated by the vocabulary of evolution. It was, for example, used in politics to support both socialist, anarchist and extreme individualist positions. Herbert Spencer, Leslie Stephen and Benjamin Kidd were household names among the British educated classes, and biologists such as Lamarck, Darwin, Wallace and Huxley were often drawn upon to support conclusions relating to issues of social policy, poverty, democracy, imperialism, social responsibility and education. Ideas relating to Lamarck's theory of inherited characters, espoused in conjunction with or opposed to Darwin's natural selection, permeated all serious discussion of social issues.[37]

Further, Herbert Spencer's populist biology, philosophically conceived – which was quite clearly inadequately grounded in empirical research, and only analogously applied to society - was, none the less, received with immense enthusiasm by the reading public. Like Darwin, Spencer derived a good deal of impetus for his evolutionary theories from Robert Malthus's theory of population. As early as 1852 Spencer applied a novel interpretation of Malthus's theory to social development. Whereas Malthus had argued that population pressures placed limits on the development of society and tend towards equilibrium, Spencer adapted the theory to show that population pressures lead to a competition which eliminates the unfit and generates human progress.[38] Spencer, and Darwin for that matter, were thus frequently cited not as the originators of evolutionary theory, but as those most responsible for impressing it upon the popular consciousness.[39] One of the crucial points of contention among evolutionists was the question of heredity. Did natural selection eliminate those least well fitted to the environment, leaving those who survive to pass on

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[37] David Boucher, 'British Idealism and Evolution' in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteeth Century*, ed. W. J. Mander (Oxford, Oxford University Press), 306-323.
[38] Herbert Spencer, 'A Theory of Population Deduced from the General Law of Animal Fertility', Westminster Review, lvii (1852), and 'The Development Hypothesis' reprinted in Herbert Spencer, Essays (New York, Appleton, 1907)

their qualities through inheritance, or, could the environment modify organisms, by use or disuse, the modifications of which were then inheritable? Both forms of explanation are invoked, for example, in the political theories of Walter Bagehot and Spencer. Even though Spencer coined the term the 'survival of the fittest', and Darwin began to favour it in preference to his own 'struggle for existence', Spencer was far less convinced by the explanatory force of natural selection than by Lamarck's theory of 'use inheritance', or inherited character.

The British Idealists, overall, tended to reject the Lamarckian principle of inherited characters, or at least gave little significance to it, while at the same time stressing a strong environmental influence upon human personality. Natural selection, David Ritchie argued, is an 'indisputable fact', and insofar as use inheritance, or inherited character, is still in doubt we should not revert to dubious or unknown causes when there are known causes that are sufficient.[40] Natural Selection was thus deemed to be at work in nature and society. Human beings inherit capacities which are capable of being developed or retarded by the social environment or civilization which is inherited, but not biologically, by successive generations. Language, Ritchie argues, makes possible the transmission of experience which is not biologically inheritable. The possession of consciousness, the ability to reflect, and the use of language give human beings a tremendous advantage in the struggle for existence. The origins of these human powers or capacities is best explained, however, by the hypothesis of natural selection.[41]

Ritchie, and most other British Idealists writers on evolution theory, rejected naturalistic versions of evolution; they also discarded the disjunction between natural and

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[39] David G. Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel with other Philosophical Studies* (London, Swan Sonneschein, 1893), 42.
[40] David Ritchie was probably the most prolific and interesting writers on evolution amongst the British Idealists.
[41] D. G. Ritchie, *Darwinism and Politics* (London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1901), 100-101. Also see, 131-2.

ethical evolution posited by T. H. Huxley. On the Hegelian principle of unity - explored in the previous section - they could not accept the dualism of Nature and Spirit. In Hegel's perspective, a part or particular is understood only by looking at it as part of a whole. The early stages of something are only properly understood when they are seen as the early stages of something more fully developed. This is the case in all specialist fields of knowledge.[42] In Ritchie's view, for example, Spencer's evolutionary theory failed to acknowledge Aristotle's dictum that the true nature of a thing is to be found not in its origin, but in its end.[43] Edward Caird makes a similar point when he urges that: 'in the first instance at least, we must read development *backward* and not *forward*, we must find the key to the meaning of the first stage in the last.'[44] Elsewhere he argues that Spirit cannot be explained in terms of matter, and that matter itself is intelligible only in the context of the Spiritual World.[45] Similarly, Henry Jones, in a directly parallel line of thought, argues that evolution is nothing other than another name for the development of Spirit. Evolution is the hypothesis which provides 'the methodising conception which we employ to render intelligible to ourselves the process which spirit follows in becoming free'.[46]

By the time that Collingwood and Oakeshott write their seminal restatements of Idealism, the cultural popularity of both Idealism itself and evolutionary theory had waned considerably. We still, however, find in these latter-day exponents of Idealism, the Hegelian principle of *emanation* at work – namely understanding what comes first in terms of what comes later – but the overt evolutionary vocabulary is largely jettisoned. In fact,

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[42] See Ritchie, *Darwin and Hegel*, 47.
[43] D. G. Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference*, 2nd ed. (London, Swan Sonnenschein, 1896), 44.
[44] Edward Caird, *The Evolution of Religion* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1899), vol. I, p. 45.
[45] Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Kant* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1889), vol. I, p.35.
[46] Henry Jones, *Idealism as a Practical Creed* (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1909), 29.
Elsewhere he argues that the power of the idea of evolution has 'transfigured the world'. Henry Jones, *Working Faith of the Social Reformer*, 36.

both thinkers tend to assert the autonomy and integrity of history as a form of knowledge, and resist any attempt to corrupt it with the import of natural scientific methods.[47]

Religion and Philosophy

Religion was viewed by the British Idealists, in general, as an inextricable part of the process of evolutionary self-realization. Again, this was a view which was derived largely from Hegel. For many Idealists, God was immanent in the world – a view which could have many different theological ramifications. The divine and the human constituted the inseparable spiritual unity of the world. For T.H. Green and David Ritchie, for example, Christ was incarnate in the world, reflecting the unity of God and man. For Ritchie, God was thus not merely the Creator, but revealed himself in humanity.[48] For Green, Christ 'dying in us' was another way of saying that we had developed a new intellectual consciousness, which transformed the will and action of the agent and this was the basis of a new moral life. Christ was what all humans were in potentiality. The Christ figure was thus part of the eternal objectification God in the world. This, for many Idealists, was the root Christian idea. Religion became active morality. This was the substance to the free subject, the Christian citizen. The movement toward this subject was the energy which underpinned the Reformation and its aftermath. Thus, Green further contended that the test of the morally worthwhile existence was the extent to which the individual attempted to do God's work in the world, by achieving his or her own potential and contributing to the common good. Social reform and moral development were therefore closely linked with religious self-realization in what was essentially a civic conception of religion.

This was not to say that all the Idealists took the same view of religion. On the question of the relation of God to the Absolute, for example, there were serious

[47] See David Boucher, 'Human Conduct, History and the Social Sciences in the philosophy of Michael

metaphysical disagreements. Thus, for Bradley, as mentioned earlier, the meaning of God was tied to the religious consciousness. The Absolute, however, was complete experience. To worship it was to transform it into an object and therefore to make it into something less than infinite. To attribute a personality to God was to posit a self and an 'other' that was not omnipotent. Religion, for Bradley was therefore a contradictory form of experience, because it at once demanded and rejected the idea of a perfect God.[49] Henry Jones, on the other hand, contended against Bradley that the unity of the Absolute does not demand the absorption of personality, but, on the contrary, wills that are freely able to unite. The Absolute was thus realised in finite centres, and all the more so when they are spiritual. Man is what he is by virtue of God's presence in him.

Evolutionary theory tied closely into the unorthodox religious beliefs of Idealism. For many Idealists, the idea of evolution enabled us to comprehend religious experience and God all the better. Thus, evolution for Edward Caird, bridges the divide between the present and the past, revealing the unity in the diversity of humanity by identifying 'the one spiritual principle which is continuously working in man's life from the changing forms through which it passes in the course of its history'.[50] For Jones also 'evolution suggests a solution of the ultimate dualism of mind and its objects, and contains the promise of boundless help to religious faith'.[51]

Idealism, Morality and Society

Although some nineteenth and twentieth century critics have inveighed against Hegel for the practical implications of his political philosophy, Hegel himself was clear, in his own

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Oakeshott and R. G. Collingwood', *New Literary History*, 24 (1993)

[48] David G. Ritchie, *Philosophical Studies* (London, Macmillan, 1905), 241.

[49] Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1935), 428. For debates on this area see Boucher and Vincent, *Radical Hegelian*, ch.3, also Sell, Philosophical Idealism.

[50] Caird, *Evolution of Religion*, vol. 1 p. x. Cf. 24-5, and 27

[51] Henry Jones, *A Faith that Enquires*, 98.

mind, that philosophy had little contribution to make to practical life. In *The Philosophy of Right*, for example, he maintains that philosophy always arrives too late to offer any practical advice.[52] However, for many British Idealists, with a few exceptions - notably Bradley, McTaggart and Oakeshott - philosophy *was* integrally related to practical life and should be directed to improve the condition of society.[53] Henry Jones, for example, thought that the most important work of the philosopher was to improve the condition of ordinary working people.[54] Further, in the development of social work theory and practice, the British Idealists have frequently been identified as probably the dominant influence. They showed the unity of theory and practice, and the relevance of philosophy to social problems.[55] Many Idealists were also directly engaged in extending university education to men and women throughout the community. Further, Idealist social and political thought became central to the development of public administration theory well into the inter-war period.[56] As R.G. Collingwood noted in his *Autobiography*, T.H. Green's major effect on a generation of students was to send out into public life 'a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that philosophy... was an important thing, and their vocation was to put it into practice... Through this effect on the minds of its pupils, the philosophy of Green's school might be found, from 1880 to about 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every part of the national life'.[57] After Green's death, in 1882, he also left a powerful legacy, and, in part, mythology, concerning his practical achievements, which carried through to the early twentieth century. Many academics, churchmen, politicians and public servants, for

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[52] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans T.M. Knox (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 7

[53] Henry Jones, for example, believed that the practical purpose should be broad enough to make the universe an accomplice in the plot. Henry Jones, 'Francis Hutcheson', a discourse delivered in the University of Glasgow on Commemoration Day, 18 April 1906 (Glasgow, Maclehose, 1906), 20.

[54] Henry Jones, *Working Faith of the Social Reformer*, p. x.

[55] Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship: The Life and Thought of the British Idealists* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), 116.

[56] Jose Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940', Past and Present, 135 (1992), 123.; also see Vincent and Plant, *Philosophy Politics and Citizenship*.

[57] R.G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970), 15-17

example, men like Herbert Asquith, Edward Grey, Alfred Milner, Arthur Acland, A.C. Bradley, Arnold Toynbee, Bernard Bosanquet, R.L Nettleship, J.H. Muirhead, Charles Gore and Henry Scott Holland, were all Green's pupils and were imbued with this practical ethos.

The religious backgrounds of many Idealists often predisposed them towards this idea of doing 'practical works' or performing the 'duties of citizenship'. Caird, Green, Muirhead, Jones, Watson and Mackenzie all had early practical aspirations to join the religious ministry before succumbing to the temptations of philosophy.[58] W. R. Boyce Gibson, the Personal Idealist, expressed the Idealist sentiment well. He saw a clear practical value in the application of speculative thought to the spheres of education, sociology and economics. In addition, he emphasised the extent to which religion finds itself in need of philosophy, specifically in trying to rationally reconstruct the religious life via such concepts as love, communion and redemption. In this, he argued, the barrier between philosophy and theology can become permeable.[59]

Nineteenth century individualists often viewed society either as an aggregate of separate atoms or an organism. The communitarian inclined theories of the Idealists thus had to combat both utilitarianism individualism and the organic liberal individualism of Herbert Spencer and Leslie Stephen. Utilitarianism was one of the more dominant vocabularies and Bradley and Green, amongst others, criticised it for failing to account for moral and political activity. Morality, for Idealism, was always social in character. Acting morally entailed a reciprocal concern for others, and not merely a desire to achieve a

[58] Despite pressure from his father to enter the Anglican Priesthood, Green only gave a fleeting thought to becoming a Dissenting minister. Again the religious element is not to the fore in McTaggart and Bradley, nor in fact in Bosanquet who was one of the leading social reformers among the Idealists. Green's religious views, nevertheless were broadly accepted by most of the Idealists. Vincent and Plant summarize the basic views in the following terms: 'The pursuit of a life greater than our own, to find the best that we know, to try to see the ideal in all our everyday activities, civic and personal, to unite the infinite with the finite, these were the basic views of religion shared by the Idealist philosophers.' *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, 16-17.
[59] Boyce Gibson, 'A Peace Policy for Idealists', 407.

private state of mind like happiness or utility. Green and Bradley both associated morality with self-realisation, which unlike pleasure, was the object of moral action. Bradley, for example, argued that self-realisation was a moral duty. We had a duty to realise our best self. Self-realisation was thus directly associated with the common good. The common good was inconceivable apart from membership in a society, and the self that was to be realised through moral activity was 'determined, characterised, made what it is by relation to others'.[60]

Individualist theory did not necessarily view society as a simple aggregate. Both Spencer and Stephen thought individualism deficient if it did not take account of the social factor and understand society as an organism. Both Spencer and Stephen, thus, simultaneously attempted to sustain the organic metaphor for society, but failed to liberate themselves from naturalism.[61] For Idealists, they therefore neglected the spiritual nature of the social organism, which is neither mechanical nor biological, but instead depends upon the relation in which each person stands with every other. The sinews and ligaments of society are the moral ideas and personal relations, without which a society would be a mere aggregation. For all British Idealists, the state is comprised of numerous social organisms - the family, class, clan, church, and city - and each individual inevitably belongs to multiple groupings and associations. Each social organism, Ritchie maintains, is thus engaged in a form of struggle for existence and competes for the allegiance of their members.[62] The state for the Idealists is therefore not only the apparatus of governance, but is also inclusive of the whole social organism. Furthermore, as Bosanquet suggests, it is important to distinguish the ideal character from the empirical fact of the state. By associating sovereignty with the state, Idealists posited a general will which was the 'real will' of the

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[60] F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962), 116. Cf. Green, Prolegomena to Ethics (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907), section 184.
[61] Leslie Stephen, 'Ethics and the Struggles for Existence', Contemporary Review, 64 (1893), 165.
[62] D. G. Ritchie, 'Social Evolution', *International Journal of Ethics*, vi, (1896-6), 168 (p. 000).

community and of which the real will of each individual was a manifestation. Organised society is seen to embody an ideal of life, along with the will to pursue more elevated and rewarding ends than any single individual can attain on their own.[63]

The state for the Idealists was a therefore a moral agent, with ideals and purposes which it formulated and pursued for the betterment of society as a whole. Thus, Ritchie saw the state as the most adequate representative of the general will in the community.[64] For Bosanquet, it was the sustainer of the rights which underpinned any good life. Without the state the individual was nothing. This did not mean that the individual owed the state blind obedience. Contrary to the views of critics, such as Herbert Laski, C.E.M. Joad, L.T. Hobhouse and J.A. Hobson, the state for the Idealists was only a moral absolute when acting in conformity with its purpose of promoting and sustaining the common good. As Jones emphatically maintained, no individual can delegate responsibility for making judgements about what is right and wrong.[65] States which contravened their purpose and promoted factionalism had to be resisted on moral grounds. Green, for example, imposed no unconditional duty on the citizen to obey the law at all costs, 'since those laws may be inconsistent with the true end of the state, as the sustainer and harmoniser of social relations'.[66] It must be remembered here that Green was a great admirer of the revolutionary impetus and achievements of the English civil war. He recognised that resistance, in certain circumstances, was absolutely necessary. Similarly, Ritchie argued that if a law was so at odds with a person's conscience, it must be disobeyed at any cost, otherwise one's self-respect and character would be degraded. The state had, however, no

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[63] The single best expression of this idea, J.H. Muirhead suggests, is Bosanquet's essay 'The Reality of the General Will', see J. H. Muirhead, 'Recent Criticism of the Idealist Theory of the General Will', parts I, II and III, *Mind*, xxxiii (1924). For Bosanquet's essay see D. Boucher (ed), *The British Idealists* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.130-41.

[64] Ritchie, *The Principles of State Interference*, 138.

[65] Henry Jones, *The Principles of Citizenship* (London, Macmillan, 1919),

[66] T. H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (London, Longmans Green, 1917), 148.

duty to find in favour of the individual, and an individual's resistance might, in fact, only be vindicated in the fullness of time.

Freedom and individuality were for most of the Idealists inextricably linked to citizenship, that is, to the idea of self-development within a civilized state. Freedom was not therefore associated with the absence of constraints, but, rather with acting in accordance with the higher good, or general will of the community. Freedom was associated with choice, yet to act rationally was to make choices in conformity with one's higher interests. The existence of poverty, social deprivation and appalling conditions of work were quite simply incompatible with these ideals. Economics had to be made subordinate to morality, and the state as the sustainer of the moral community, had to take an active role providing the conditions in which this transformation could take place. Rights thus always belong to individuals as members of a community. They are justifiable claims recognized as rational and necessary for the common good.

In many respects, even though they were suspicious of the Idealists' emphasis upon the moral character and higher personality of the state, New Liberals, in the period 1906-1914, such as J. A. Hobson, L. T. Hobhouse, H. A. L. Fisher, C. F. G. Masterman, H. W. Massingham, and to some extent Herbert Asquith, shared the same general moral and political ideals as Green, Caird, Ritchie, Bosanquet, Jones, and Haldane.[67] It was widely recognised that liberalism had a duty to raise all members of society to a civilized condition of life. This necessarily entailed positive state intervention - although there were strong disagreements about the desirable level of intervention. Within the Idealist camp, Green and Bosanquet, for example, were much less overtly interventionist than Ritchie, Jones or Haldane. The disagreements always focused on the question of the right balance between individual and collective responsibility. Bosanquet thus endorsed the desirability of

civilised society exercising its will through the state to encourage progress in the condition of its members, but not to the extent that it weakened the 'character' of the individual. As Muirhead remarked: 'What the State could do was to remove hindrances to the free action of what for lack of a better name moralists call "conscience" - a faculty that might be deadened rather than quickened by a hasty ill-considered collectivism'.[68] In one context, this reading of the state invoked a particular liberal reading of socialism, which was developed in the writings of Henry Jones, Edward Caird and David Ritchie, amongst others.

Thus, Jones, like many of his fellow Idealists, including Caird, distinguished between true and false socialism. True socialism was ethical and communitarian in nature and provided conditions for individual moral development. False socialism allowed no scope for individual freedom. For many of the civic-minded Idealists, it was the large cities, faced with the consequences of rapid industrial growth, that had to confront the issue of the extent to which the community should 'interfere', in order to ameliorate the plight of the disadvantaged. The Idealists refused to accept that there was an absolute opposition between the individual and the state. True individualism, that is the self-realisation of one's capacities in the context of society, was enhanced by the true socialism, which used the state to advance freedom of choice by removing the obstacles. For the Idealists, morality presupposed freedom of choice. Necessity might produce results that could be condemned as wrong, but they could not be immoral if the actor was deprived of the element of choice. The liberal socialist state could not make citizens moral, but, it could remove the obstacles to self-realisation. For Green and Muirhead, social improvement was dependent upon the individual's power of seizing and making the most of external conditions. State action could not be ruled out or ruled in a priori, but instead had to be judged on its merits. Thus,

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[67] See Vincent and Plant, *Philosophy Politics and Citizenship* for full study of these themes. On the New Liberals see especially ch.5.

the criterion of state action, for Henry Jones, was the contribution that legislation could make to moralising existing social relations, and in this respect Jones' views can be compared directly with R. H. Tawney's Christian Socialism.[69]

However, we still must not lose sight of the fact that there was considerable disagreement among the Idealists over the extent to which the state should intervene. Bosanquet and Green give a great deal of emphasis to self-reliance. Improved housing conditions, in themselves, do not improve moral character. People have to will self-improvement. Consequently, whereas Bosanquet took a harder, more minimalist line on poor relief, other Idealists, such as Jones and Muirhead, were much more sympathetic to its extension.[70] It is worth noting here that Collingwood also stood firmly in the social liberal tradition (qua Jones and Muirhead) and believed that blatant inequalities of wealth reflected unequal relations of force, which effectively undermined individual development and freedom of choice. The state, for Collingwood, thus had a positive role in eliminating force from relations among individuals in the same body politic, and between diverse bodies politic. Alternatively, Oakeshott (more in line with Bosanquet and Green), tended towards a more limited conception of state activity, in which its role was seen as upholding non-instrumental laws which provide conditions for individual initiative or choice.

Conclusion

In summary, the philosophical movement of British Idealism fulfilled a number of cultural and political roles in a society which was experiencing the effects of rapid and comprehensive industrialisation, modernisation, and secularisation. It acted as a

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[68] J. H. Muirhead, *Reflections by a Journeyman in Philosophy* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1942), 160.
[69] Tawney was a powerful influence on twentieth century British socialism
[70] On Bosanquet's work see Andrew Vincent, 'The Poor Law Reports of 1909 and the Social Theory of the Charity Organization Society' *Victorian Studies*, vol 27, no.3 (1984), reprinted in David Gladstone (ed) *Before Beveridge: Welfare before the Welfare State* (London, Institute of Economic, Affairs, 1999).

counterbalance to the harsher versions of individualism and market-based liberalism or the more brash variants of utilitarianism, offering, in their place, a philosophy that gave a much needed emphasis to social cohesiveness and to the closeness of the relation between individual and collective responsibility. Its emphasis on the importance of active social citizenship became an important theme in early twentieth century politics, rights and welfare theory. Against the conception of humanity in naturalistic theories of evolution, Idealists offered an elevated view of the relation between humanity and nature. For many of them, God (or the Absolute Spirit) was immanent in the development of freedom in the world and Spirit expressed itself through the finite centres of individual lives. This would be true of virtually all the Idealists.[71] Idealism was thus, during its early twentieth century phase, often an intensely moralistic, hermeneutically and aesthetically inclined philosophy, more than willing to condemn social, political or economic evils. It emphasised both the responsibilities of individuals to seize the opportunities to make themselves more virtuous, and of the owners of industrial capital to transform their factories and workshops into schools of virtue. The role of the state in all this was to ensure that any impediments to self-realisation were removed.[72] In summary, British Idealism was not just an academic philosophical movement concerned with the systematic development of a new metaphysics, ontology, logic and epistemology. This would have been for most Idealists an impoverished view of the role of philosophy. It did not visualise itself as just an academic enterprise. It rather envisaged itself as actively involved in the world interpreting all facets of human experience. The study of the British Idealist movement consequently reveals a rich, coherent and diverse pattern of thought, incorporating virtually all dimensions of philosophy, interacting in complex ways with the world of human action.

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[71] Bradley (and to some extent Bosanquet) had his own more idiosyncratic views. Oakeshott is different again, although the volume of Oakeshott's writings, edited by Tim Fuller, *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993) does something to change our perspective on Oakeshott, qua religion.

[72] Again there are considerable variations here between Idealist thinkers.