

THE PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF T. H. GREEN:
An Idealistic Conception of Liberal Politics

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ABSTRACT

As a critical advocate of the philosophy of Enlightenment, Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) reconsidered the development of the empiricist and naturalistic philosophies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and held that their development was connected in intricate ways to various quite specific issues arising in nineteenth-century British society. In order to respond to these issues, he established a comprehensive framework of philosophical thought as the foundation for his practical activities. In this framework, the core argument focuses on the relationship between consciousness and action. However, though Green's philosophy has been widely investigated, no study has, as yet, focused exclusively on Green's practical philosophy, and in particular his idea of the ethical citizen. This thesis undertakes this task and argues firstly that viewing the relationship between consciousness and action as the nexus of the human condition, Green's practical philosophy is a coherent and consistent philosophical system which includes metaphysics; moral and ethical theory; and social and political theory. I then go on to argue that, by virtue of his philosophical system, Green founded political activity on the basis of metaphysical and moral ideas, on the one side, but on the other side, provided politics with a deep *raison d'être*; that is, to maintain and to provide the equality of opportunity for individuals by means of state power. Finally, I argue that while Green accordingly established a justification for state action, the nature of such state action relates closely to the self-government of individual citizens. Hence, Green's practical philosophy provides an ethical theory of politics which underpins an important legacy for contemporary liberal political philosophy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. An exploration of Green's practical philosophy

The aim of this thesis is to explore Thomas Hill Green's practical philosophy (1836-1882), focussing particularly on his explication of the complex relation between human consciousness and human action in ethical and political life. The scope of Green's writings covers literary criticism, hermeneutics, theology, metaphysics, philosophy, ethics, history, and social and political theory. The breadth and the depth of his intellectual vision inspired many subsequent philosophers, politicians and social activists, including Edward Caird (1835-1908), F. H. Bradley (1846-1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), R. L. Nettleship (1846-1892), Henry Jones (1852-1922), Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison (1856-1931), D. G. Ritchie (1853-1903), R. B. Haldane (1856-1928), H. H. Asquith (1852-1928), J. H. Muirhead (1855-1940), Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883), J. S. Mackenzie (1860-1935), L. T. Hobhouse (1864-1929), H. S. Holland (1847-1918), Charles Gore (1853-1932) and Charles Loch (1849-1923).¹ With such a broad impact on the development of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century British philosophical theory and social and political practice, Green's moral, social and political ideas have offered a significant research topic for scholars. However, the central crux of his systematic practical philosophy has remained unclear; that is, his innovative account of the complex relation of consciousness and action. While some commentators have considered the structure of Green's philosophical thought, such as Colin Tyler (1997, 2010,

¹ In *An Autobiography*, R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) has described Green's school as that: '[t]he "Greats" school was not meant as a training for professional scholars and philosophers; it was meant as a training for public life in the Church, at the Bar, in the Civil Service, and in Parliament. The school of Green sent out into public life 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' (Collingwood, 1978: 17).

2012), Maria Dimova-Cookson (2001), and Ben Wempe (2004), the main thread of the interaction between consciousness and action, by means of which Green integrates metaphysics, ethics and politics into a system, has not been sufficiently explored. By focussing on his explication of the relationship of consciousness and action, this thesis attempts to undertake a systematic exploration of Green's practical philosophy, with critical consideration given to contemporary interpretations. I argue that, firstly, metaphysics, moral and ethical theory, and social and political theory (in Green's philosophical system) are about different subject matters, but they are correlative with each other via Green's sophisticated account of the relation between consciousness and action. Secondly, on the grounds of this innovative perspective of the complex between consciousness and action, Green's practical philosophy signifies an idealistic conception of liberal politics that advances classical liberalism to a constructive, ethical and socialist doctrine of political life, to such an extent that Green's practical philosophy remains insightful for contemporary political philosophy.

2. Consciousness, action and ethical politics

In this section, I will review some contemporary research on Green's theory of consciousness and action and his conception of politics in order to indicate the originality and the contribution of this thesis to the existing studies of Green.

Regarding the role of the concept of consciousness in Green's practical philosophy, Ritchie, as a follower of Green's philosophical and political ideas, has accurately indicated that '[i]n this fact of self-consciousness, discovered by examination of mental phenomena, Green finds the metaphysical basis of Ethics; on the other side the interpretation of self-realization as the realization of a common good is what makes the connection between Ethics and Politics' (Ritchie, 2004: 169). Following this suggestion and the observation of the crux of Green's practical philosophy, current studies of Green's theory of consciousness and

action can be divided into two kinds: one regards this theory as psychological and phenomenological, while the other considers it as metaphysical and ontological.

In *The Moral Philosophy of T. H. Green* (1987) Geoffrey Thomas contributes an elaborate study of Green's philosophical ethics on the basis of a psychological account of Green's theory of moral action. Thomas argues that 'Green offers a cogent alternative to the two standard models of action explanation, here termed the belief-desire theory and the cognitive model; that he sketches a subtle and plausible account of the rationality of moral action; and lastly that his account of agency both (i) discloses a more comprehensive view of the agent than is familiar, a view of the integral agent, and (ii) presents a challenge alike to Kantian and to utilitarian constructions of the traditional schema of motive, action and consequence' (Thomas, 1987: 72). To Thomas, against Humean moral psychology, Green develops a multi-perspectival model of human deliberation by virtue of his self-consciousness principle. This in turn provides a comprehensive explication of moral action and builds up a theory of self-intervention as the foundation of his philosophical ethics (Thomas, 1987: chap. 4). He argues that 'Green applies his "self-conscious principle", by which the mind unites sensations, also to the phenomena of impulse and desire. A person is able ... to detach himself from his own desires, to revise them, and to form a systematic structure of desire, so as to achieve "an abiding satisfaction of an abiding self", by means of self-intervention' (Thomas, 1987: 242). However, while Thomas focuses on expounding Green's moral psychology as the foundation of his philosophical ethics, as well as his social and political philosophy, he then confines the psychological account of a moral person to a subjective conception of the self-conscious individual agent, and thus fails to recognise the ontological commitment of the society and the state to the individual. This entails that he cannot but take the state as a mere instrument of society composed by individual persons and

consequently conceives of Green's view of politics as both derivative and instrumental (Thomas, 1987: chap. 8).

Taking Green's moral psychology as a phenomenological theory of human practice, Dimova-Cookson also appraises the merit of Green's sophisticated account of moral action. While Dimova-Cookson identifies Green's theory of human practice with a theory of the will, she also claims that '[i]t is in the theory of the will that Green's philosophical originality begins to be clearly exhibited' (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 40). To Dimova-Cookson, beginning with the concept of self-consciousness, Green indicates two important characteristics of human practice: self-distinguishing and self-seeking. She indicates that '[b]y claiming that human beings are motivated by "concept", Green is arguing that human action is not guided by impulse. An agent can distance himself from his urges and from the circumstances surrounding his action. Through this distancing he is prevented from "coinciding" with his impulses' (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 41). Nonetheless, like Thomas, Dimova-Cookson confines Green's theory of human practice to a subjective and internal account of moral action. This latter argument does not adequately address the ontological implication of a social and political life for the individual person as well.

On the other hand, in *T. H. Green's Theory of Positive Freedom* (2004), Ben Wempe provides an ontological and metaphysical exposition of Green's theory of consciousness. Wempe explores the intellectual connection between Hegel's philosophy of consciousness and Green's, and suggests that Green develops an inseparable view of the relation between the self-conscious individual subject and the external object. He claims that '[i]n the same way as Hegel, Green proceeded from the view that reason manifested itself in the world and that our experience and the events of the world were to be understood in the light of this process' (Wempe, 2004: 93). To Wempe, by adopting a Hegelian doctrine of the self-assertion reason, the central theme of Green's moral psychology 'was that the development in

the practical conception of an individual human agent will exhibit an ever progressing rationalisation' (Wempe, 2004: 149). Wempe therefore indicates that, according to Green's theory of human consciousness, 'man will recognise the same force directing his own willing in the work of reason as exhibited in the objective social world' (Wempe, 2004: 150). However, by underscoring Hegel's influence on Green's philosophy of consciousness, Wempe nonetheless does not consider sufficiently the significance of Green's idea of the ethical citizen: thus the difference between Hegel's concept of the ethical life and Green's has not been fully investigated.²

Colin Tyler, in contrast, emphasises the importance of Green's idea of the conscientious individual citizen through a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the logical connection between Green's analysis of the metaphysical structure of human consciousness and his philosophical ethics. Tyler argues that on the ground of the analysis of human consciousness, Green 'developed powerful ethical and political philosophies with radical implications for the existing structure of society and politics' (Tyler, 2010: 2). However, rather than drawing upon the ontological implication of the society and the state, Tyler claims that 'the collective life expressing those norms and practices would have worth only so far as the individuals participating in that life endorsed it after critically reflecting upon its key features and fundamental values' (Tyler, 2010: 166). It appears that Tyler does not therefore fully consider the idea that Green's conception of social community has profound ontological commitments for the individual person, placing more emphasis on the external circumstances for each individual person to initiate his or her critical reflection and moral evaluation. Hence, though Tyler addresses the importance of Green's idea of the

² Wempe does indicate that 'Green's work constitutes an important improvement on Hegel in that he emphasised the individual as an end in itself' (Wempe, 2004: 198). Nonetheless, while he explains Green's idea of positive freedom in detail, he has not investigated Green's idea of the ethical citizen comprehensively and systematically. Meanwhile, although Thomas does not note Green's inseparable view of the relation between the subject and the object and overstates the primacy of the individual person without noting the ontological implication of the society and the state, he is aware of the difference between Green's philosophy of consciousness and Hegel's. See Thomas, 1987: 193-194.

practical citizen, on the basis of his analysis of the metaphysical structure of human consciousness, he nonetheless maintains an internal and subjective conception of Green's idea of the self-conscious individual person and thus considers social and state actions as wholly external (Tyler, 2010: 5). He thereby understates the significance of the society and the state in Green's practical philosophy.

Contesting these interpretations of Green's theory of consciousness and action and Green's conception of politics, I argue in this thesis that the main thread underpinning Green's practical philosophy is his theory of consciousness and action. Additionally, from a starting point of the analysis of the relationship between human consciousness and human action, Green not only explores the ontological condition of the individual person, but also addresses the ontological commitments of the social community to the individual, including both the society and the state. By virtue of this consideration of human ontology, the distinction between the internal and the external in Green's view is, in my argument, a false dualism that cannot simply be applied to signify the relationship between the individual subject and the objective social world. Further, on the basis of the theory of consciousness and action, Green's practical philosophy integrates metaphysics, ethics and social and political theory as a systematic whole. Moreover, by virtue of this systematic practical philosophy, the other main theoretical contribution Green made concerns his idealistic conception of liberal politics. Against the pervasive atomistic individualism in nineteenth-century British social and political philosophy, Green advocated the importance of the collective social life for each individual person and proposed an ethical conception of politics in which each individual person, as a citizen, entertains active interests in public affairs and is inclined to direct participation in local and municipal politics. With this focus on the ethical and collective meaning of social and political life, Green nonetheless maintains the plurality and the diversity of values and ideas in his conception of the society and the state.

In addition to the above main arguments, this thesis contributes to a critical consideration of the practical implications and limitations of Green's philosophical thought with a special focus on the issue of contemporary pluralism concerning political theorists. By adopting Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics in relation to the pluralism issue, the tension between the individual (who holds plural and diverse values and ideas) and the political authority (the task of which is to maintain social stability and integration) can be relieved through the active social and political practices of each individual citizen. In this sense, the doctrine of the contemporary political liberalism can be enriched through considerations and discussions of Green's practical philosophy and his idealistic conception of liberal politics. I cannot explore and expound this innovative contemporary perspective as fully as I wish in this thesis, but I will try to draw upon this potential contribution of Green's practical philosophy to contemporary political philosophy.

3. The scope and the outline of the thesis

My key aim is to explore systematically Green's practical philosophy, from his metaphysical, moral and ethical theories and to show their impact on his social and political theory. My methodology is mainly focused on the 'textual analysis' approach: that is to interpret the contents and the implications of the text, and to analyse the logical coherence and consistence within it and with other texts. Moreover, I will also investigate the relevant context of the text in order to identify its original purposes and to provide a comprehensive background for my systematic exploration.

There are some limitations to the scope of this thesis. Firstly, by virtue of the considerable body of work which constitutes both the studies of and writings of Green himself, I will focus my discussion and give primary consideration to his philosophical doctrines given in his published works, only investigating such parts of his literary criticism

and theological writings as relate to his theory of consciousness and action and his understanding of ethical politics. Secondly, I will not examine Green's comments on the international relations of Great Britain with other countries such as the United States of America, Russia, India, Turkey and other European nations. While these comments contain some fascinating ideas, I will nonetheless concentrate my investigation on his domestic theory of liberal politics.

The thesis includes eight chapters. Chapter One introduces the aim and the structure of the thesis in order to provide a concise overview. Chapter Two aims to provide and establish the context of Green's practical philosophy. Living in nineteenth-century British society, Green wanted to deal with three consequences arising out of the Enlightenment's achievements: social inequalities and the deficiency of representative government, the decline of spiritual morality and social virtues, and the externalised and naturalised view of the relationship between human beings and the world. Along with these discussions of the historical and intellectual context of Green's practical philosophy, this chapter identifies the main reasons as to why Green intended to establish a theory of consciousness and action as the keystone of his philosophical system.

Chapters Three and Four deal with two aspects of Green's human ontology respectively. Chapter Three explores Green's metaphysical theory of human agency, in which he builds on Kant's philosophy of consciousness against the overwhelming empiricist and naturalistic philosophy of nineteenth-century Britain. With an exploration of the metaphysical theory of human agency, this chapter establishes a preliminary account of Green's concept of human consciousness, and responds to three contemporary criticisms of Green's determinism. Chapter Four considers Green's developmental view of human consciousness and his theory of the moralisation of human consciousness as part of an interactive relationship with social and cultural institutions. By addressing the logical connection between the metaphysics of

knowledge and the metaphysics of moral action in Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, this chapter recognises the complementary relationship between two metaphysics in Green's thinking, a complementarity which contends that there can be a positive idea of human freedom. This is set against the hedonistic utilitarian moral philosophy; it also identifies the significance of Green's idea of the ethical self in opposition to Hegel's concept of the ethical state.

Chapter Five investigates the ontological implications and the ethical commitments of Green's conception of society in which every individual is regulated by a principle of the common good postulated in each form of social community, whereas the attainment of the non-exclusive and non-competitive common good society can only be achieved in and through the joint efforts made by all individuals to recognise and to care for each other as their alter egos. This chapter also argues that Green's theory of 'rights recognition' identifies civil inequalities and economic inequalities in social practice, and that the inherent nature of human consciousness prescribes the boundary of what human beings can achieve in pursuit of the ideal social harmony. The argument maintains that social conflict and value diversity remain persistent in human society; consequently, social and state intervention is required in order to eradicate social inequalities and to redistribute natural resources in the provision of fair and equal opportunities for individuals.

Chapter Six explores Green's view of the ethical relationship between the self-government of each individual citizen and the sovereign power. While the difference between social and state actions, in response to issues implicit in the social world, can be identified as sovereignty used as a compelling power, Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics focuses on the moral significance of a rich social and political life for each individual person by employing the sovereign power as a means to self-cultivation and self-discipline. I therefore contend that Green's practical philosophy embodies a theory of ethical politics by

applying his idea of the ethical self to an idea of the ethical citizen. This chapter also offers a response to Avital Simhony's criticism of Green's ignorance of the potential danger of state power in his moral justification for state action.

Throughout Chapters Three to Six, I explore systematically Green's practical philosophy combined with critical examinations of contemporary interpretations. From this starting point, I go on to apply Green's practical philosophy and his idealistic conception of liberal politics to the contemporary issues of pluralism in Chapter Seven. I will confine my discussion to Berlin's value pluralism and Rawls's reasonable pluralism, comparing Rawls's doctrine of political liberalism with Green's theory of ethical politics in order to argue that despite the fact that Green's practical philosophy cannot be applied directly to solving the contemporary issues, it does nonetheless contain many insights that are inspiring and illuminative for contemporary political theorists. In summary I therefore argue that Green's legacy is embodied in his idealistic liberalism.

Chapter Eight forms the conclusion of the thesis, confirming the notion that Green's idealistic liberalism is one of the most important legacies of his systematic practical philosophy, integrating metaphysics, moral and ethical theory, and social and political theory into a consistent and coherent whole, and advocating an idea of the ethical citizen that is the central tenet of his practical idealism.

CHAPTER TWO

AFTER ENLIGHTENMENT:

THE CONTEXT OF GREEN'S PRATICAL PHILOSOPHY

1. Introduction

As Nicholson indicates, 'because philosophers have to grasp the essential as it appears to them in a particular form at a particular time, their comprehension of the essential is specific to them and their experience' (Nicholson, 1997b: xxx). Before exploring Green's systematic practical philosophy, it is important to grasp his central questions and to understand the context of his thought.

The context of Green's philosophical thought has two aspects: the religious and theological background and the development of the social and political claims in nineteenth-century Britain. Melvin Richter (1964) indicates that Green's evangelical background had a profound influence on the development of his thought. In this context the idea of conscience is of crucial importance for grasping his liberal theory of citizenship. Scholars such as Denys Leighton (2004) and Alberto de Sanctis (2005) have concurred with Richter's perspective. Leighton also addresses the role of the social and political environments in which Green developed his moral and political ideas, which remained significant for later generations of British politicians. He thus claims that there was 'the Greenian moment' in the social and political history of Britain (Leighton, 2004: 317-324). Andrew Vincent concludes that there were four issues facing a Victorian like Green: the corruption and collapse of the Christian religion, the undermining of free will and moral agency by natural science, the practical thought of moral conduct premised on the concept of will and the idea of character, and the combination of an intensive belief in industrialism with a responsible concept of the state that

moralises capitalism (Vincent, 1986a: 2). These evolving religious, moral, social and political issues in nineteenth-century Britain, in Vincent's view, worried Green. On the other hand, instead of addressing the religious background of Green's social and political philosophy, Colin Tyler argues that there is a romanticist inclination in Green's philosophical thought that is part of a counter-movement in Enlightenment philosophy.³ He indicates that Green was deeply interested in Romantic literature, such as Goethe's *Faust* or Wordsworth's poems (Tyler, 2010: 28-34). With his main concern being the establishment of a liberal socialism interpretation of Green, Tyler's exploration of Green's romanticism nonetheless discloses an important context for Green's philosophical thought: that is, 'After Enlightenment'.⁴

The Enlightenment movement in general was, as Peter Gay suggests, 'a volatile mixture of classicism, impiety, and science' (Gay, 1973: 8). Enlightenment philosophers favoured classical literatures from Ancient Greece and Rome; most had complex ambivalent attitudes towards the Roman Church, in the sense that they sometimes expressed admiration for the noble virtues of priests, but at other points vehemently criticised the hypocrisy of priests. Meanwhile, along with the success of natural science, such philosophers had a strong faith in enlightening the world and moving away from the obscurantism of medieval theology towards modernity. Nonetheless, while there is a tension between Christianity and the Enlightenment and modernity, in Green's view, the Enlightenment is actually a moment that is consistent with the spirit of the Reformation. Together they indicate the rise of a sense of subjective individuality (Green, 1867a: 148-151). The idea of individual spiritual freedom

³ A well-known exploration of the intellectual connection between the Enlightenment and Romanticism is Isaiah Berlin's *The Roots of Romanticism* (1999).

⁴ The term 'After Enlightenment' I used here has two meanings. One is in the chronological sense that the so-called Enlightenment emerged from the seventeenth century and developed in the eighteenth century, and the age Green lived in was the nineteenth century; the two are successive. The other is in the intellectual sense that from the French and the Scottish Enlightenment to the German, legacies of the Enlightenment in general gradually encountered reactions and criticisms, such as German and British Romanticism (Brown, 2010; Thorslev, 2010). In Green's case, the focus is how to reconcile the tension between religion and science, faith and reason, spirituality and materiality. Green was influenced by Romanticism and was critical of the rationalism and scientism of the Enlightenment, however the way he reconciled these tensions was not to abandon a rational science perspective but rather to redefine what reason means (Green, 1877a).

was elevated from the Reformation and came to be the intellectual inspiration of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers. It was used to conceptualise individual rights and to theorise personal enjoyments of freedom and conscience (Green, 1906e: 120-122; Green, 1906k: 278-282). Thus the modern spirit of the Enlightenment is ‘to be free, to understand, to enjoy’ (Green, 1906e: 94).⁵

However, along with the development of the Enlightenment from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, life in European society changed dramatically. The great advances of technology, the profound achievements of natural science, and the revival of Greek and Roman philosophical thought, led to the transformation of economic, social and political structures in Europe. In particular, the emergence of empiricist and rational thinking, which prevailed among intellectuals, became increasingly influential, permeating throughout society. For instance, the significance of facts, which underscored eighteenth-century naturalistic philosophy, influenced the public through turning literature, especially poetry, away from the inwardness of humanity and towards the outwardness (Green, 1906c: 21-29). That thinking considers human beings as being natural consequences of the forces of external circumstances, in accord with the laws of nature in their pursuit of a world of pleasure and fulfilment. However, the sublimation of the human introspective spirit, which is elevated in poetry, is consequently degraded (Green, 1906c: 26, 28).⁶ One further consequence of

⁵ A caution should be made here, namely that Green’s understanding of the Enlightenment was influenced by German philosophers and did not refer to the more common notions of the French Enlightenment. In his 1868 essay ‘Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life’, Green used the German term ‘Aufklärung’ to signify the Enlightenment, and furthermore, the term ‘popular philosophy’, which Green regarded as Locke’s child, was related to the *Popularphilosophie*, as a German intellectual movement resuming the empirical tradition of Locke as opposed to Kant’s philosophy (Green, 1906e: 92-93; cf. Beiser, 1987: chap. 6). Moreover, it is rare that Green comments on the French enlightenment philosophers, such as Denis Diderot (1713-1784) or Voltaire (1694-1778), in his writings. With this in mind, the reason why Green takes the Reformation and the Enlightenment as succeeding events seem clearer, given his emphasis on individual spiritual freedom. For, concerned with the tension between religious faith and scientific reason, many eighteenth-century German philosophers considered the spirit of Protestant individualism as a possible way out, see Beiser, 1987: 1-15, 16-18, 50-52, 60-61.

⁶ Although Green was critical of the claim of the significance of facts, his philosophy, as de Sanctis says, ‘had an empirical basis and his positions were constantly moulded in the light of the facts’ (de Sanctis, 2005: 75). However, there is an important distinction between his understanding of facts and the eighteenth-century naturalists and the Enlightenment philosophers’. For Green, as for Kant, facts, or phenomena and experiences,

empiricist and rationalist thinking was that inequalities among different social classes were interpreted as a normal aspect of natural competition. Social evils were consequently often ignored (Green, 1906c: 41-44).

Living in the age after the Enlightenment, there are three issues with which Green is mainly concerned: the decline of Christianity, social inequality and the deficiencies of representative democracy. With these concerns in mind, Green identified the fundamental root underpinning these issues as the atomistic and naturalistic conception of the human person. Something which also underpinned a great deal of Enlightenment philosophy. In what follows I will focus my discussion on the task of exploring the ways in which Green connects these issues with Enlightenment philosophy. The discussion will also show that Green's approach blends social and political issues together with questions of morals, ethics and metaphysics. In my reading he therefore establishes a system of practical philosophy.

2. Two social and political issues in a modern democratic state

2.1. Social equality, individual freedom and state action

One of the more significant issues in nineteenth-century Britain was the aggravation of social inequality. At that time, British society went through a dramatic transformation, moving from being a primarily agricultural to an industrial society. The resultant massive change within economic and social structures caused many traditional values to be challenged and even abandoned. For example, new theories and concepts formulated by biologists and geologists impacted adversely on religion, morality and social ideas. This was particularly the case with Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and Sir Charles Lyell's *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man* (1863) (Vincent, 1986a: 2-7).

are not simply given from the outside but are involved with our consciousness and are thus products of the human mind. This understanding of facts then is a starting-point of Green's metaphysics and moral philosophy against naturalistic and empiricist moral philosophy, especially in regard to the question of human agency.

Along with the transformation of society, one of the most important social problems of the age was the social inequality existing between different classes, especially between farmers and landlords, and labourers and capitalists. As Green pointed out in his 1867 speech for the Oxford Reform League, ‘A rich man in England may grow richer more quickly than in any other European country. In that sense it is a most prosperous country, but it is a prosperity in which the agricultural labourer has no share at all’ (Green, 1867b: 228). Although the wealth of the country seemed to be increasing, farmers had no share in this. To comprehend this issue, for Green, takes more than an understanding of the laws of supply and demand (Green, 1872a: 239; Green, 1874a: 247). The situation was the result of an inability of farmers to gain an increase in wages unaided. In particular, for cottagers or tenant farmers, the situation was made worse because landlords tended to keep wages low unless they had to raise them in order to ameliorate their own wealth and fortune. Secondly, farmers did not have either the resources or knowledge to argue and negotiate with landlords. As an example, Green described the problem facing Yorkshire labourers, who enjoyed better rates of pay than their Dorsetshire equivalents mainly because they had the ability to negotiate. However not every farmer or labourer had such abilities. Green went on to contend that the objectives that the National Agricultural Labourers’ Union should strive for included increasing the wage levels and the creation of a fund for farmers, which would assist them when moving from place to place in order to secure better wages, or to negotiate with their landlords in case a dispute made them lose their income (Green, 1874a: 246). In contrast to these social supports, the mechanism of the free market, in accord with the law of supply and demand, did not function well. Rather the self-interested desire for profit undermined such socialising mechanisms (Bellamy, 1992: 3-4).

If the mechanism of the free market were to function perfectly, under the condition of the ideal equilibrium, there would be no extra benefit as profit. This meant that to produce

profits would hinder the operation and the function of the free market. However, though the theoretical ideal was not equal to the practical situation, classical liberals (or what Bellamy called ethical liberals) such as Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill, still ‘believed that the profit motive could be superseded by the desire to do something well for its own sake’ (Bellamy, 1992: 4). While they ‘acknowledged that some state regulation was necessary both to preserve the market from attempts to undermine it and to remedy its deficiencies in providing certain public goods’, they had faith that ‘the evolution of human sentiments would ultimately overcome these anti-social tendencies’ (Bellamy, 1992: 4). Nonetheless, the social situation in nineteenth-century Britain was not as optimistic as these latter liberals thought. The development of human sentiment was not transformed from the egotistic into the altruistic. Contrary to these liberals, then, Green considered social inequality as ‘an evil which no individual benevolence can cure’ (Green, 1868a: 235); rather, the intervention of government was required.

However, there was a reason for such liberals to persist in the view that the solution of the inequality issue was predicated on the development of a social sentiment that they believed to be the primacy of self-cultivation and the idea of character. The idea of character was influential among a number of nineteenth-century British intellectuals (Collini, 1985; Leighton, 2004: 287-293). With the influence from Evangelical Christianity, this view embodied ‘the vision of life as a perpetual struggle in which one’s ability to resist temptation and overcome obstacles needed to be subject to constant scrutiny’ (Collini, 1985: 38). This implies a process of self-control to resist temptations through the exertion of one’s own will, without interference or assistance from others. In effect it is viewed as a person’s moral responsibility to strive for character. The idea also had subtle links to the concept of negative

freedom, that is, the freedom from interferences or restraints.⁷ On the basis of this idea, overcoming social inequality is considered a personal moral issue with which the government should not interfere. Hence, with this ethical implication underpinning their views, liberals advocated the importance of individual autonomy versus state intervention.⁸ As Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) argues,

The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done *for* men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance or over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless.

... Moreover, it is every day becoming more clearly understood, that the function of Government is negative and restrictive, rather than positive and active; being resolvable, principally into protection – protection of life, liberty, and property. (Smiles, 1859: 1-2; quoted from Greenleaf, 1983: 31) (*italic in original*)

The role of the state is to protect individuals from interventions and overt harms. It is thus an essentially negative claim. However, Green had a different understanding of the relationship between individual freedom and state action. He believed that state action ‘need not at all

⁷ Bellamy has indicated the wide meanings covered in the idea of character – that it is of ‘self-culture, self-control, energy, industry, frugality, thrift, prudence, patience, perseverance, honesty, integrity, temperance, sobriety, independence, manliness, and duty’ (Bellamy, 1992: 6).

⁸ A famous and extreme proponent of this idea of individual freedom was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), whose philosophy has been called by Greenleaf ‘a philosophy of anti-statism’ (Greenleaf, 1983: 48). However, as Peter Nicholson argues, Spencer is not against state action entirely, but only opposes the government interference which prevents the natural progress of human society. Concerning discussions of Spencer’s attitude towards state action, see Greenleaf, 1983: 48-88; Nicholson, 1990: 133-140. As to the general discussion of the relation between Spencer’s philosophy and liberalism, see also Algazy, 1986: 7-15; Gray, 1990.

interfere with the independence and self-reliance of those whom it requires to do what they would otherwise do for themselves' (Green, 1986b: 203). In fact, the fundamental disagreement between W. V. Harcourt (1827-1904) and Green in regard to the Licensing Act of 1872 and the Permissive Bill was closely related to these different understandings of the relationship of individual freedom and state action.

The Licensing Act 1872 and the Permissive Bill were both related to the abuse of alcohol during the nineteenth century. When the social situation for people (such as farmers or labourers) became increasingly distressing, alcohol allowed them an escape from the dire social and economic realities of their lives. However in Green's view alcohol not only worsened the condition of the working class, but also clouded their political judgements, in the sense that brewers could manipulate working people through cheaper or free beer (Green, 1875a; Green, 1875b). With his personal experience of failing to assist his brother to abstain from alcohol in 1862, the temperance movement eventually became an important social activity for Green, who engaged with it from 1872 (Nettleship, 1906: cxv-cxvii; de Sanctis, 2005: 89-92). Moreover, the 'question of the liquor traffic was the only one upon which he was ever drawn into anything like political controversy' on the basis of his moral and philosophical thought (Nettleship, 1906: cxv).

The controversy Nettleship indicates concerns Green's debates with Vernon Harcourt in 1873. On 4 January 1873, the editor of the *Oxford Chronicle* received a letter from Green, in which Green expressed his anxiety about Harcourt's attitude towards belated social reform, which might detain Parliament from focusing its attention on what he argued was an urgent social issue. Harcourt's speech on the Licensing Bill in 31 December 1872 showed his disagreement with the nature of current reform efforts (Green, 1873a: 217-219). In Harcourt's view, the nature of the Licensing Bill was against his liberal faith that 'when you have put everybody into prison you will not have made your population virtuous. No more will you

have made the nation moral, when you have compelled them to be sober against their will'. He continued: 'What really makes sobriety valuable is the voluntary self-control – the deliberate self-denial which resists temptation and leads a man, for the sake of himself and others, to abstain from vicious indulgence; and this is a thing which you cannot create by Act of Parliament' (Green, 1873a: 217, n. 1). After he had noted Green's letter to the editor of the *Oxford Chronicle*, he wrote to Green on 8 January and contested that 'people who are sober are generally respectable and the conclusion is drawn that if you could only make every one sober you would make every one (or at least most people) respectable. But that seems to me a fallacy. Whilst the thing is voluntary and optional people are sober because they are already respectable and not respectable because they are sober' (Green, 1873b: 448, n. 66). For Harcourt, state action could not make people respectable, although he did support some social reform. In his reply to Harcourt, Green pointed out the inconsistency of Harcourt's attitudes towards the demand for social reform (Green, 1873b: 452). He argued that Harcourt was not aware of how serious and severe were the conditions in which the working classes lived (Green, 1873b: 450-451). For Green, social reality required the so-called respectable classes to take action rather than just stand aside. Nonetheless, Green explicitly expressed his agreement with Harcourt about the moral worth of voluntary self-control, namely 'that the Law cannot make men good, that its business is to set them free to make themselves good, I quite agree'. He continued that '[t]he question is how these truisms are to be applied' (Green, 1873b: 452). That is to say, Green was a man with ideals, but he was also practical. He agreed with the moral ideals that most liberals advocated, but he also questioned whether or not the ideals and principles could be applied in practice consistently and adequately.⁹

In January 1881, Green gave a lecture entitled 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract' for the Leicester Liberal Association in which he demanded government

⁹ For details of the controversy between Green and Harcourt in regard to the licensing question and state action, see Nicholson, 1986; Nicholson, 1990: 177-188. As to Green's distinctive idea of character and its influences, see also Leighton, 2004: 287-299.

intervention into social issues relating to the working condition of labourers, the inequity between farmers and their landlords in contractual terms, and the matter of intoxicating drinks (Green, 1986b). In this lecture, Green introduced a positive idea of individual freedom which is compatible with the need for state action:

When we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others. We mean by it a power which each man exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow-men, and which he in turn helps to secure for them. (Green, 1986b: 199)

In other words, not only can the idea of individual freedom be compatible with benevolent support, but it also implies the moral requirement for such support. Further, this moral and mutual support will be more efficient if it is institutionalised, and then state action can have a positive role for individual freedom. Thus by proposing a positive idea of freedom, Green justified state action as a necessary means for addressing social equality (Carter, 2003: 32-36). For him, social equality was an important condition through which individuals might achieve true freedom. Yet this required government interference to maintain social equality whilst not interfering in the development of a person's moral character (Green, 1986b: 203). Hence, it is as one of his pupils suggested: 'we have not abandoned our old belief in liberty, justice and self-help, but we say that under certain conditions the people cannot help themselves, and that then they should be helped by the state representing directly the whole people' (Toynbee, 2011: 219). Green's thought thus entwined the concepts of social equality, individual freedom and state action. In addition, this argument also relates closely to his reconsideration of the function of modern democracy.

2.2. Class conflict, representative democracy and active citizenship

One of the main problems of modern democracy in Green's mind was related to Toynbee's last sentence, quoted above, namely: 'they should be helped by the state representing directly the whole people'. Ideally, as Green maintained, '[i]f the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves, we are right in refusing to ascribe the glory of freedom to a state in which the apparent elevation of the few is founded on the degradation of the many' (Green, 1986b: 200). But in reality, political power was still controlled by a few people, whom Green called the privileged classes. Genuine liberals continued to fight against this situation with various dimensions of social reform (Green, 1986b: 195-196). In his speech in 1867 on the Government Reform Bill, Green indicated that 'four-fifths of the members of the lower House are either great landowners or belong to the families of great landowners. The present conflict, too, differs from previous ones in this respect, that the landowners have now to a great extent got the commercial class and that which calls itself the educated class on their side' (Green, 1867b: 227). This was because many capitalists would buy estates and lands once they had sufficient budgets to ensure their offspring being able to purchase baronet status, thus gaining membership of the privileged class. In Green's view, the social and political constitution of Parliament was thus leading the country towards aristocracy or oligarchy status, and was 'incompatible with any healthy political life' (Green, 1867b: 228). To be clear, a state with such a constitution could not represent the whole people; on the contrary, for Green, it would be controlled by a privileged few, and its actions and interventions regarding social issues would hardly be legitimate.

One possible solution to this corrupt situation is universal suffrage. At the time when Green celebrated the passing of the Reform Bill of 1867 (in his 1868 speech), with a strong

conviction that universal suffrage would lead to the political and social reform of Parliament, he said, '[t]he whole nation wins by a measure which makes us for the first time one people' (Green, 1868a: 234). Four years later, in a speech for the Agricultural Labourers' Union in 1872, he referred to the Reform Bill again and urged the importance of the enfranchisement of all his fellow countrymen. As the *Oxford Chronicle* reported:

... [the labourers] knew that five years ago [1867] household suffrage was granted to householders in towns, but the labouring poor in the country were left out. What was the result? Why, within the past five years more measures had been passed for the good of the labourers in towns than had ever been passed in the whole century before. The speaker [Green] made reference to several measures which had been passed, among which he specially mentioned the Sanitary Bill and the Licensing Bill. All this, he said had been done for the people in the towns, but nothing had been done for the people in the country, and would not be till the labouring people had votes. (Green, 1872a: 241)

It is important to be clear that Green was an advocate for universal suffrage. He believed that once each adult had equal political rights and the freedom to express their opinions within the political constitution, the state could then truly represent the whole people and the political power of privileged few would be no longer be viable. However, the situation was not as Green expected.

The result of the general election of Parliament in 1874 was that the Liberal party was defeated by the Conservatives. Having been an advocate of the Liberals, Green was considerably upset, and remarked that 'the country had been passing through a phase of sudden and unexampled commercial prosperity ... Money quickly made was quickly spent, and it seemed as if all classes were disposed, not exactly to rest and to be thankful, but at

least to take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry. In this state of things, in the middle of this general political inertness came the election of 1874' (Green, 1876: 270). Green suggested that money and beer were the crucial factors causing the defeat of the Liberal party; in particular, many Conservatives were either landowners or brewers (Green, 1875b: 256; de Sanctis, 2005: 100-102). However, the political and social situation was much worse than Green surmised in the sense that corruption permeated both major political parties.

In 1880, the Liberal party won the general election, while Harcourt also won his campaign against the Conservative brewer, A. W. Hall (1838-1919), as a Member of Parliament for Oxford. However, Harcourt was soon appointed Home Secretary and was required to stand again. The result of the re-election was Harcourt's failure, and Hall, as his opponent, won. But during the election, the bribery and the corruption of the Conservatives were exposed; they were discovered spending large amounts of money improperly. Hall was then unseated and a Commission of Enquiry was established, but the result of investigation was not good for either party. The Commission of Enquiry found that not only the Conservatives were involved with bribery and corruption, but also the Liberals. They established that during the re-election, the Liberals spent £3,275 and the Conservatives spent around £5,611 in ten days (John, 1990: 142). Green, as an instigator of the petition for the enquiry, was in an awkward position among the Liberals, but he felt confident that the Corrupt Practices Bill, which was brought in after this event, would make the political system healthier (Green, 1881: 374-375; Green, 1882: 385). As he stated in 1881, '[p]ublicity was a great cure for the sort of disease with which they had been suffering in Oxford for the last few years' (Green, 1881: 374). He still believed that whether the representative system of modern state could be free from the bias of private interests or class interests depended on extending the scope of this active participation to the whole people (Green, 1986a: 93-94; Tyler, 2006a: 85-88). For Green, the nation would not 'have a Parliament which had the

interest of the struggling and suffering classes of society at heart' as long as the Parliament was still 'a sort of club of rich men' (Green, 1882: 382). That is to say, a legitimate government ought to represent the common interests of the whole nation, and the way to make sure of this was through universal suffrage and people's active participation. In addition to this, there are further ethical implications which follow from Green's idea of the active citizen.

As we have seen above, Green defined his idea of positive freedom as the freedom of self-realisation. He believed this to be equal to 'the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good' (Green, 1986b: 200). In terms of this definition of his positive idea of freedom, to secure every individual having equal opportunities is one condition for self-realisation, and the other condition for self-realisation is that it should make 'contributions to a common good'. That is to say, the realisation of one's true and moral freedom requires one first having a conception of the common good, and second, partaking in contributions to this common good. For Green, the best way for a person to have a conception of the common good and to partake in it was to engage in political activities. If a person intended to have 'a higher feeling of political duty, he must take part in the work of the state', and only thus can he 'learn to regard the work of the state as a whole, and to transfer to the whole the interest which otherwise his particular experience would lead him to feel only in that part of its work that goes to the maintenance of his own and his neighbour's rights' (Green, 1986a: 97). In other words, through participating in public affairs and in politics, an individual can develop an idea of the common interests of the whole nation. The individual, as an active citizen, can learn what his duty is and have the opportunity to reflect on that social duty as the starting-point for his moral development (Green, 1986c: 246-249). Green's idea of self-realisation, as Nicholson points out, thus 'entailed the creation of a democratic society in which all its members had genuine opportunities for self-realization and, as an

important part of that, the opportunity through the institutions of democracy to participate in political life and social reform. In the terms of Green's theory, to be an informed and active citizen was part of the good life: it was through living this life that a person perfected him or herself' (Nicholson, 1997b: xxv).

It is clear, then, that Green's critical considerations of social inequality and the deficiency of representative democracy are underpinned by a positive idea of individual freedom and an ethical conception of citizen participation. Within his concerns regarding the practical social and political problems concerning a democratic state, Green developed his political and ethical ideas, and these ideas were in turn premised upon his metaphysical view of the human condition.

3. The legacy of Christianity and the need for philosophy

In his 1858 essay 'The Force of Circumstances' Green felt that '[t]he mere phrase "force of circumstances" seems to remind us that there is some want of harmony between ourselves and the outer world' (Green, 1906a: 3). Thus the primary human condition is directed towards reconciliation within the universe. However, the prevailing naturalistic view of the relation between the world and mankind from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries conceived each individual as the centre of external powers and the result of the force of circumstances. By virtue of this view, Green indicated that 'external suffering gets its first strong hold on us just when we are beginning to discover that this world is not our home' (Green, 1906a: 3). Humans become slaves of the natural world, for there is no human freedom but only external forces and the laws regulating the operation of these forces. Green was as against this view as he was against Hume's account of the idea of self: that it is 'nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity' (Hume, 1969: 300; cf. Green, 1885a: 295-299). To Green, a human

being is not merely a natural consequence of external forces, but a being having free agency to strive for what he or she desires. Nevertheless, Green was also against the view of the world as a mere creation of the human mind. He argued,

To regard this vast environment merely as the outcome of the workings of the human mind, seems nearly as far from the truth as to regard ourselves as its creatures or its slaves. Its true influence on us is to raise our thoughts in various ways to the spirit in whom ‘we live and move and have our being,’ while it teaches us at once that he made us and not we ourselves, and that he made us after his own likeness. (Green, 1906a: 4)

While ‘the spirit in whom “we live and move and have our being”’ implies a notion of an immanent being in the world; it is important to be clear that in this early essay of Green’s, there was a sort of theological notion underlying his thought which had a definite influence on his apprehension of the human condition. Thus there appears to be some form of hyper-being immanent in the world and in human life, which drives us to towards self-realisation and reconciliation with the world, and this would constitute the perfect freedom for human beings (Green, 1906a: 4-7). However, while Enlightenment philosophy had prevailed since the eighteenth century, the naturalistic view of the relationship between human beings and the natural world eventually overwhelmed theological notions. Without empirical evidence and rational explanation, theological notions were considered as mere dogma.

Critics have suggested that Green was intending to philosophise theology ‘as the basis of a philosophy of practice’, but the project remained unsuccessful (Sidgwick, 1884: 179).¹⁰

¹⁰ Sidgwick, as one of Green’s life-long friends, commented that Green’s philosophy, especially his moral philosophy, was full of confusions of theological and philosophical ideas. For Sidgwick, ‘we ought not to use these theological notions, while yet unpurged of such palpable inconsistencies, as the basis of a philosophy of practice’ (Sidgwick, 1884: 179). In his ‘Green’s Metaphysics of Knowledge’ A. J. Balfour (1848-1930) comments on Green’s philosophy in a similar vein, namely that Green’s doctrines ‘in their form appear rather to resemble theological mysteries than philosophical conclusions’ (Balfour, 1884: 85-86). However, as I will

Nevertheless Green was neither an apologist nor did he simply intend to restore the dominance of Christianity.¹¹ In a letter to Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) in 1868, Green indicated that ‘religious men, who have broken with dogmatic Christianity as dogmatic, should come to some mutual understanding, so as to have a chance of reorganizing worship and religious beneficence when the present fabrics break up’ (Green, 1868b: 423). For Green, it had been acknowledged by intellectuals that there were dogmatic teachings in Christianity, but the collapse of the Christian theological and clerical system did not mean that religion as such should be disregarded as well. In his letter to Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918) in 1869, Green mentioned this idea of having ‘broken with dogmatic Christianity’ and remarked that ‘[i]f there seems now to be a reflective morality, which yet is not religious, this is not really unreligious, but its religion is for the time dumb; and this dumbness mainly results from the action of philosophy upon the dogma of the revelation of God in Christ’. He continued: ‘When it is found that this dogma (though in a wrong, because dogmatic, form) embodies the true idea of the relation of the moral life to God, the morality of speculative men will find its religious tongue again’ (Green, 1869: 426). That is, in Green’s view, dogmatic theology should be reduced, but it does not follow that there is no value in its teaching. On the contrary, to reflect on dogmatic theology critically can help us to reconsider the relationship

argue, Green was clearly aware of the difference between theology and philosophy, though he did intend to save the moral ideas in theology, with the help of philosophy, in order to restore social morality in nineteenth-century Britain.

¹¹ Green’s father Valentine Green was the rector of Birkin in Yorkshire, and his uncle David Vaughan (1825-1905), who was close to him, was the vicar of St Martin’s, Leicester, and was also well-known as an active Christian Socialist. Green was raised in a clerical family and was familiar with a clerical life. However, in his letter to Holland in 1872, he expressed frankly his doubts regarding contemporary theology and clergy, saying ‘[f]irst, you must not think that I have any animosity to the clerical profession, as such. All the best influences of my life have been due to those who belonged to it, my own strongest interests have always drawn me towards it, and I still regard it as an opening to a nobler life than, except by very few, can be otherwise found. Perhaps this sometimes causes a certain bitterness in the thought that the entrance to it is guarded by the profession of opinions which to me seem untenable; and the bitterness is sometimes aggravated when I find those who are able to pursue the calling making by word or manner sacerdotal pretensions which seem to me practically mischievous and a parody on the true dignity of their vocation. This is the worst of my ill feeling towards the clergy’ (Green, 1872b: 441-442). It seems that he was a person with religious faith but without faith in parochialism. As to the influences of Green’s family on his understanding of theology and morality, see Richter, 1964: chap. 2; Leighton, 2004: 142-160.

between religion and philosophy. In accordance with this thought, Green engaged in the work of articulating a critical understanding of Christianity.

By adopting a critical method for his historical exploration of Christianity, something he learnt from the Tübingen School¹² and Hegel's philosophy of history¹³, Green not only detected critical reasons for Christianity to be identified as dogmatic theology, but also rediscovered the original teachings of Christian belief. On the basis of his research, there are different stages in the development of Christian belief. At first, it was a faith based on personal experiences that were the direct experiences of the twelve apostles. But then this faith gradually turned into an intuitive conception of God that led Christianity to be a dogmatic theology (for the intuitive conception of God basically forbade a reflective mind). As a consequence, Christianity lost its original meaning as guidance for moral practice and came to be an authoritative and dogmatic regime. Moreover, without being aware of the distortion of its own spirit, after the Reformation, Christianity, having been dogma of the Church, became a dogma of the individual (Green, 1906i: 163-182).

¹² The Tübingen School refers to a group of scholars who agreed with Hegel's philosophy and developed a historical approach for biblical criticism. Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (1804-1872) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) were three important figures in this group. According to Richard Lewis Nettleship (1846-1892), Green was fascinated by Tübingen School theology and translated F. C. Baur's *Geschichte der christlichen Kirche* (1859) between 1862 and 1863 (Nettleship, 1906: xxxvii). Nettleship's brother Henry Nettleship (1839-1893) also recalled that he heard Green's reading of an essay on Christian Dogma in *The Old Mortality*, a reading group in Oxford, in 1863 or 1864 (Tyler, 2008: 40-43). It has also been argued that Green's familiarity with Hegel's philosophy may also contain influences from the Tübingen School. See Nettleship, 1906: xxxviii-xxxix; Richter, 1964: 102-103; Vincent and Plant, 1984: chap. 2; Vincent, 1986a: 2-5; Reardon, 1986: 40-44; Leighton, 2004: 162-165; de Sanctis, 2005: 57-60. For the general context of the development of historical criticism, see Stuhlmacher, 1979.

¹³ According to his study, Nicholson remarks that in Green's 1860 and 1861 Ellerton essays, 'Life and Immortality brought to light by the Gospel' and 'The State of Religious Belief among the Jews at the Time of the Coming of Christ', we can see the influences of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (Nicholson, 1997a: xvii-xix). Green's explorations of the development of theological notions, such as life, immortality or the meaning of the coming of Christ, cover ancient religions to Platonic philosophy, and have similar patterns as Hegel's as expressed in his *Philosophy of History*. To Hegel, the development of history in this sense is the process of a spirit as the God moving to actualise itself through different nations and peoples in different places and times (Hegel, 1975: 27-124). In Nicholson's view, Green's historical consideration of the development of those theological notions also focused on 'how man's ideas of God develop at particular times and in particular places' towards a spiritual idea of God (Nicholson, 1997a: xviii). Meanwhile, Hegel's influence on Green can also be seen in Green's 'Lectures on the English Commonwealth', and 'Lectures on Moral and Political philosophy' as well, as Green utilised Hegel's idea of history as the evolution of spirit through individuals and the world, the subjective and objective phases, to explore the development of the English Commonwealth and the evolution of moral and political philosophy from the ancient to the modern. See Green, 1867a; Green, 1906k; cf. Boucher and Vincent, 2000: chap. 1.

In contrast with doctrines of dogmatic theology, to Green, the original teaching of Christianity contains a significant view of human agency that had been concealed by the naturalistic thinking of Enlightenment philosophy. For Green, Christian belief signifies a teaching of moral practice that not only affirms the importance of human agency, but also indicates that the ideal of human life is self-realisation. The resurrection of Christ indicates that every person has the capability of abandoning a carnal life and of resurrecting in a spiritual and moral life, which signifies that human beings have the ability to develop a moral life and to be self-masters, rather than being mastered by external circumstances. For, as Green maintains, ‘the process constituting the moral life’ is ‘according to our interpretation of it’, and this ‘can in consequence so set before myself the realisation of my own possibilities as to be a moral agent’ (Green, 1906j: 226). On the basis of the capability of conceiving an idea of self, there is a possibility for us to transcend sensuous and sentient life and move towards a moral life, which is the only source of every true theology (Green, 1906j: 223).

Moreover, while the Jewish idea of ‘the chosen’ was gradually transformed through ‘[t]he break up of the nationality, followed by a very imperfect restoration and by the permanent isolation of many of the Jews among heathen communities’ and ‘prepared the people for the general adoption of those views of God’s spiritual omnipresence which had been consistently foreshadowed by the Prophets’ (Green, 1861: 91-92), moral resurrection seemed to be possible for each individual, and was not confined to a specific nation. As there is the ‘inner spiritual seed, which forms a specialty, a peculiarity, in all men, and which, when it had been quickened into life by the breath of the Holy Ghost, grew into the Church of Christ’ (Green, 1861: 99), the life of a better self is therefore not egoist or individualistic, but a practice which should be within a community. For Green, a moral person, like St. Paul, who ‘[i]n his own body bore about the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest therein’. ‘But’, he continued, ‘there was another body, which was his as it was

Christ's, the body of Christian fellowship, where he found such reality of demonstration as mere introspection could not give' (Green, 1870: 15-16). That is, a moral life implies a community in which the person can pursue his or her self-realisation. Christian moral teaching not only signifies man's ability to attain self-transformation and self-realisation, but also implies an idea of community in which each individual person as a Christian citizen is fighting for the human spirit, universal humanity and the common good of all human beings (Vincent, 1986b: 60; de Sanctis, 2005: 121-125). On the basis of such views of the human condition, it seems that a human person is not, as many Enlightenment thinkers argued, the natural consequence of the force of various circumstances, but rather, there is a potentiality immanent in each person to go beyond what he or she is now and to actualise a better self in accord with his or her own will, within a communal life. Nonetheless, this original teaching of Christianity was not only distorted by dogmatic theology, but was also concealed by the rationalist and empiricist thinking of Enlightenment philosophy. By virtue of such positioning of the Christian belief system, Green argued that 'Christian dogma, then, must be retained in its completeness, but it must be transformed into a philosophy' (Green, 1906i: 182). That is, theological notions need to be clarified by philosophers and to be free from dogmatism and unreflective intuitions. The relationship between philosophy and theology accordingly is not one of rivalry, but is rather 'as the flower to the leaf' (Green, 1906e: 121). However, since the tenets of Enlightenment philosophy are against those of Christianity, there must be some other sort of philosophical thinking which is compatible with theology. To Green, this is the idealist philosophy.

4. Empiricism and idealism: an issue of the human condition

While in both 'The Force of Circumstances' (1858) and 'An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times' (1862) Green showed his discontent with

the naturalistic and empiricist tendency of Enlightenment philosophy, it was not until his 1868 essay 'Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life' that he made a systematic critical study of the Enlightenment movement in Britain. For Green, Enlightenment philosophy was the popular philosophy of Britain, its parent Locke beginning a process whereby his successors developed and transformed it into the utilitarian and hedonistic philosophy of his day (Green, 1906e: 93-95, 117-124). Green argued that Locke and Hume, as two of the most influential empiricist philosophers, developed a view of human condition on the basis of their theory of knowledge that furthered the dualism of matter and mind, dividing the human condition into two worlds, that is a being of sensibility and a being of rationality. For Green, 'when man has reached the further or philosophic stage of reflection on self, when he begins to ask himself what his own nature is, he observes and classifies them as he might things in the outward world, in fancied separation from the self-conscious activity in virtue of which alone they are there to be observed. They are put on one side as "feelings", thought or reason on the other, and it is asked what is the function of each according to our inward experience' (Green, 1906e: 105). That is to say, while it has been argued that there are two worlds confronting human beings, it has been suggested also that these are actually two sides of the same consciousness and are products of the constructive ability of human beings. Nevertheless, the 'natural philosophy' of man continuously separates humans into two worlds, conceiving of humans as passive recipients of outward irritations and active observers of inward sensations at the same time. Humans are therefore isolated from the natural world, on the one hand, and on the other hand, are natural consequences of the forces of circumstances. Green, however, was not satisfied with this view of the human condition. Under the influence of the Christian view of human life, he believed that human beings have the ability to go beyond circumstances rather than to be determined by them. Nonetheless, as indicated, the

Christian view of human life requires philosophical thought in order to transform it. The philosophical thought Green assimilated is German idealism.

In Wempe's research, it is suggested that the first time Green studied German philosophy systematically, especially Hegel's philosophy, was not before the summer of 1861 (Wempe, 2004: 21). Leighton, agreeing with Wempe, claims that '[a]s early as 1861, by which time he was a tutor and a fellow of Balliol, Green had embarked upon serious study of Kant and Hegel, perhaps in continuation of Jowett's interrupted efforts' (Leighton, 2004: 51-52). However, Nicholson contests the idea, maintaining that Green might already have been familiar with Hegel's philosophy during the late 1850s (Nicholson, 1995: 61-62). He indicates that during his undergraduate period (1855 to 1859) Green's tutor at Balliol was Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893), who was interested in Hegel and German philosophy and who encouraged his pupils to study their work (Nicholson, 1995: 61; cf. Richter, 1964: 70-71). Green might also have known Hegel's thought from T. C. Sandars, another pupil of Jowett's, who gave a lucid summary of the *Philosophy of Right* in 1855, or alternatively from J. Sibree, whose translation of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1857) was available in Bohn's Library from 1858 (Nicholson, 1995: 62). Accordingly, Green's systematic study of German philosophy most likely began earlier than Wempe and Leighton claim. Nonetheless, despite the difference between Nicholson, Wempe and Leighton regarding the point at which Green became familiar with Hegel's philosophy, it has been widely acknowledged that German idealism was influential in his whole understanding of contemporary issues. As Green comments, '... man, above all the modern man, must theorise his practice, and the failure adequately to do so, must cripple the practice itself. Hitherto, except from a school of German philosophers, which did not make itself generally intelligible, no adequate theory has been forthcoming, and hence that peculiar characteristic of our time, the scepticism of the best men' (Green, 1906e: 124).

A difference between German idealism and British empiricism is in their metaphysical views of the human condition with which Green concerned himself. The empiricist and naturalistic view of the human condition gradually became dominant in Britain and evolved into a hedonist and utilitarian theory of human life, as well as a positivist psychology (Green, 1885b: 373-385; Green, 1906e: 117, 124). Contingently, the development of the Enlightenment within British empiricism, via Hume's scepticism, formed another branch in Germany, where Kant's critical philosophy transformed it. When his masterpiece the *Critique of Pure Reason* was first published in 1781, Kant remarked that it was Hume's scepticism awakening him from his 'dogmatic slumber' (Kant, 2002: 57-60). Hume's sceptical attitude towards the traditional rationalist metaphysics inspired Kant to formulate his own critical project. This was aimed at examining the boundary of reason in order to test the legitimacy of metaphysics as the foundation of human knowledge (Kant, 1999: 6; cf. Green, 1886a: 13-34). By virtue of this critical project, Kant therefore reconfigured the human condition based on the distinction between phenomena and noumena, with the unknowable noumena setting a boundary of human reason, which our sensibility and understanding cannot cross. What human beings can have knowledge of are phenomena that are, by reference to the dual self-conscious activity, products of sensibility and understanding. Nevertheless, though Kant implied that sensibility and understanding are related and unified within a concept of 'self-consciousness', he did not explicitly claim that self-consciousness was the unifying root of the dual human capabilities, but rather used it as a heuristic device for expounding his epistemology (Henrich, 2003: 37-45). It seems that the conception of the human condition, on the grounds of Kant's critical project, indicates a constructive capability on the part of human beings, which potentially liberates us from the bondage of circumstances. However the assumptions of the unknowable noumena and the duality of sensibility and understanding still

maintain a substantial distinction that divides human nature into a duality, a dualism that troubles Green.

For Green, Kant's dualism of phenomena and noumena was achieved by virtue of his distinction between 'the constitution of a relation between feelings' and 'the conception of a relation between them'. It separated the order of nature from the unity of experience. The former is seen as beyond human agency and the latter is articulated via human agency (Green, 1886a: 25-30; cf. Green, 2003: 42-58; Dewey, 1890; Henrich, 2003: 46-52). With an intention to overcome the dualism of phenomena and noumena, Green therefore sought help from the German idealist philosophy which developed after Kant. The reason for this was that philosophy in Germany did not take the concept of 'self-consciousness' as merely a heuristic device, but conversely intended to build up a theory of self-consciousness which might offer a way out of Kant's dualism. To be sure, the immediate development of German idealist philosophy, after Kant, struggled to develop a system of philosophy from a theory of self-consciousness. In this manner, a philosophy of subjectivity – inexplicable from Hume's perspective – was gradually unfolded. It is as Henrich says: Kant 'really gave only the introduction into the critical philosophy, leaving the task of development to his students' (Henrich, 2003: 43).

The development of the task which was to complete the critical project started by Kant involved the efforts of three distinctive philosophers: Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich W. J. Schelling (1775-1854), and G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831).¹⁴ Though Green's intellectual relationship with Fichte and Schelling remains more obscure,¹⁵ it is nonetheless

¹⁴ In fact, many other scholars and philosophers were involved in the development of critical philosophy in eighteenth-century Germany, such as J. G. Hamann, F. H. Jacobi, Moses Mendelssohn, K. L. Reinhold, J. G. Herder, Friedrich Hölderlin and G. E. Schulze (Beiser, 1987; Henrich, 2003). Nonetheless, due to my focus is on the intellectual context of Green's practical philosophy here, I have confined my discussion to Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. As to the development of German idealism from Kant through Fichte and Schelling to Hegel, see Seth, 1882; Beiser, 2002.

¹⁵ It is worth pointing out that Nettleship demonstrated that one of the last books Green read was *The Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox* (1881) (Nettleship, 1906: cxlv), and in these letters and diaries, Fox had mentioned other British writers' views of Fichte's and Schelling's writings, as well as offering her own perspective.

important to introduce their thoughts before going on to address Hegel's work, for they paved the way for Hegel to establish a system of philosophy. With the ambition of overcoming Kant's dualism, Fichte tried to work out a theory of self-consciousness as the foundation of an idealistic system of philosophy in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, The Science of Knowledge, between 1794 and 1814. However, Fichte's work reverted to the danger of the dogmatic subjectivism found in Berkeley's philosophy (Green, 1885a: 155-161), namely that nature and the external world are viewed as objects posited by the self, rather than things in themselves. Thus the existence of objective things, for Fichte, is nothing but an assumption made by the self. The objectivity accordingly is negated, whereas the absoluteness of the self is affirmed (Seth, 1882: 15-51; Seth, 1888: 39-73; Henrich, 2003: 246-276). In order to resolve the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, Schelling learnt the lesson of Fichte and started from the idea of nature as a holistic organism constituted with everything in the universe. For him, nature was not an object posited by a subjective self, but rather the original identity of object and subject. Thus for Schelling nature is the unity from which all things in the universe are differential products (Dunham, Grant and Watson, 2011: 131-138). From nature to intelligence or from matter to mind: these are aspects of the self-differentiating process of the unifying nature. Moreover, based on this idea of nature, Schelling contested that self-consciousness was not the transcendental condition of the science of knowledge, but rather a domain of the unconsciousness. There is always an existing thing which is an object prior to self-consciousness. Nevertheless, in his view, the absolute identity of object and subject can only be realised in the consciousness of art via 'intellectual intuition' (Seth, 1882: 52-67; Dunham, Grant and Watson, 2011: 129-143). This is a consciousness in which the

Nettleship also remarked that Green read more of Fichte in his later years (Nettleship, 1906: cxxv). Following these clues, the influences of Fichte on Green was noticed by Paul Harris and John Morrow (1986: 7) and contended by Alberto de Sanctis (2005: 43, 64-65, 139, 156, 166) and Colin Tyler (2010: 29-30; 2012: 7, 34, 129-139, 244-245). In a different context, Leighton has also signified the impact of Fichte on Green (Leighton, 2004: 135-142). Nevertheless, there is barely direct evidence in Green's writings in terms of substantial proof which might identify the role of Fichte's philosophy in Green's thought, with the exception of one quotation in *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Green, 2003: 222).

distinction between nature and intelligence or matter and mind is once again obliterated. Under the influence of Schelling's view, Hegel subsequently developed a systematic philosophy (Beiser, 1993).

Similarly to Schelling, Hegel contends that the subject and the object are not separate and independent from each other, but are rather interdependent within the development of the spirit. In this view, nature is a moment or phase through which spirit transcends its abstract subjectivity, moving into a higher and concrete stage by negating the negation of the object opposing the subject. This development is therefore a dialectical process in which the spirit passes through its subjective and objective phases, ultimately to return to itself. It is a journey of the spirit's self-consciousness and self-completion, which, in Hegel's view, embodies itself in the civil state and the entire world history (Harris, 1993; Pippin, 1993; cf. Seth, 1882: 68-88; Dunham, Grant and Watson, 2011: 144-158). The process of the reunion of the spirit is thus to Hegel quite different from Schelling's 'intellectual intuition'; instead, it is a process of rational self-assertion through 'sublation' (*Aufhebung*). On the basis of this ontological view of the universe, the human condition manifests through the dialectical process of the immanent spirit. An individual person is driven by the spirit towards his or her self-realisation through reconciling with external otherness, such as the natural world or other people. Human action is not an act performed by an individual isolated from other individuals and the world. It is rather an act performed in and through an interrelating whole in which the world and human beings are intertwined and ultimately moving constantly towards self-realisation (Wempe, 2004: 25-44).

At this point, the critical project proposed by Kant turned into a comprehensive philosophical system through the efforts of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, and formulated a markedly different view of the human condition in contrast with the empiricist and naturalistic perspectives. The idealistic view of the human condition indicates a constructive

dimension of human nature and conceives otherness, such as the natural world, as an indispensable part of an individual person, where the otherness does not determine the person, but is rather the necessary interactive object. The empiricist and naturalistic view of the human condition, on the other hand, deprives human beings of constructive ability and positions us as natural consequences of external circumstances, and, in this sense, we are determined by circumstances. Inheriting the idealistic view of the human condition, Green was highly critical of the empiricist and naturalistic view and keen to undermine its influence on the development of social and political philosophy in nineteenth-century Britain, where the empiricist and naturalistic view of the human condition evolved into a hedonistic and utilitarian theory of human action. In this case the motive of each action was considered to follow the principle of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain and ultimately the maximisation of utility. An individual person was thus determined by sensations, experiences, feelings and desires; reason only functions in accordance with the hedonistic and utilitarian principle. On the basis of this conception of the human person, the claims for negative freedom and non-interference in government merely promoted the idea of the self-interested individual. Individuals had to suffer the consequences of their own choices. Green, on the contrary, aimed to develop a different view of human beings on the basis of the idealistic conception of the human condition, and to establish an argument for justifying his claim for state action.¹⁶

The first major achievement of Green's work accordingly is his 'Introduction to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*' in 1874. Nonetheless, Green did not accept the idealistic view of the human condition without critical reservation. Between the 1870s and 1880s, he continued his critical studies on both empiricism and idealism. This included his lectures on Kant's philosophy (from 1874 to 1879), reviews of Edward Caird's and John Caird's books in 1877 and 1880, and the further reviews of Herbert Spencer's and G. H. Lewes's empiricist

¹⁶ As indicated before, the argument is about Green's positive idea of individual freedom and ethical conception of citizen participation which I will consider in subsequent chapters.

psychology, between 1877 and 1881. In particular, Edward Caird and Henry Sidgwick both identified Green's dissatisfaction with Hegel's philosophy. In his preface for the book dedicated to Green, *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* (1883), Caird wrote that '[t]o Hegel 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 over again," he once said, meaning that the first development of idealistic thought in Germany had in some degree anticipated what can be the secure result only of wider knowledge and more complete reflexion' (Caird, 1883: 5). In Sidgwick's 1901 essay 'The Philosophy of T. H. Green', Sidgwick noted, '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". I remember, on the other hand, that in the last philosophical talk I had with him, he said, "I looked into Hegel the other day, and found it a strange *Wirrwarr*"; – the sentence startled me; and the unexpected German word for "chaos" or "muddle" fixed it firmly in my mind' (Sidgwick, 1901: 19). That is to say, though Green assimilated the philosophical ideas of German idealism against British empiricism, he nonetheless learnt them in a critical way.¹⁷ In addition, Green's leaning on Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, was also an important factor in his development of a systematic practical philosophy.

The influence of Greek philosophy on Green have been widely recognised by scholars (Richter, 1964: 200-201; Vincent, 1986a: 10-13; Thomas, 1987: 36-39; Simhony, 1993b; 2001; Brink, 2003: 44-55; Wempe, 2004: 49-54; Tyler, 2010: 26-27). As W. L. Newman (1834-1923) recalled, Green greatly admired Aristotle's *Politics* (Tyler, 2008: 27). He also

¹⁷ Green's critical views of Kant and Hegel can also be found in his reviews of Edward Caird's, John Caird's and John Watson's books. See Green, 1906f; Green, 1906g; Green, 1906h.

appreciated Plato's and Aristotle's ethical and political theory of citizenship and the state as forming 'the foundation of all true theory of "rights"' (Green, 1986a: 36-37). Further, Green's own mentor, Benjamin Jowett, had a considerable reputation for his abilities in Greek studies (Richter, 1964: 52-63; Turner, 1981: 414-446). Under Jowett's guidance, though Green once declined the suggestion of editing a new version of *Thucydides*, he did contribute to an edition of *Nicomachean Ethics* (Nettleship, 1906: xxxvii; Wempe, 2004: 51). In sum it is clear that Green's practical philosophy was influenced considerably by the Greeks. Ritchie's comments on Green's philosophical thought are worth noting here: '[i]f we are to connect him with any particular names of philosophers, it would be least misleading to say that he corrected Kant by Aristotle and Aristotle by Kant', and 'this is just what might have been said of Hegel himself' (Ritchie, 2004: 168). However, Green did not accept Plato's and Aristotle's teaching uncritically. In the 1866 article 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', he made some weighty criticisms of Plato's and Aristotle's metaphysical and moral treatments by appropriating Hegel's philosophical ideas (Green, 1906d). In addition in his 1867 lectures on moral and political philosophy, he also explored the status of the Greek philosophy in the history of moral and political philosophy from a Hegelian perspective (Green, 1867a). This suggests that, while Greek philosophy was an important intellectual resource for Green, as Frank Turner has noted, 'the nineteenth-century exploration of Greek antiquity constantly manifested the wider intellectual life of the day and opens the latter for more complete consideration. Writing about Greece was in part a way for the Victorians to write about themselves' (Turner, 1981: 8). For Green, as for other Victorians, Greek philosophy was like a mirror: through inspecting it, they were reflecting on the issues and queries in nineteenth-century British society. In other words, it is important to bear in mind that the issues Green

dealt with were the questions of his age, whereas his diagnosis was often predicated on the influences of the Enlightenment philosophy.¹⁸

5. Conclusion

It has been argued that Green's considerations of social and political issues are related to his moral and ethical ideas. Further his considerations of moral and ethical issues are correlative with his ontological view of the human condition and indeed human agency. His thinking on these diverse issues evolved into a philosophical system which includes metaphysics, ethics and politics, with the centre of the system concentrating on the ontology of human freedom and equality. Accordingly, to Green, the social and political issues arising in nineteenth-century British society, which led to debate about the role of the state in liberal democracy, cannot be separated from metaphysical and moral controversies. A true reformer, for Green, has to rise above the atmosphere of his circumstances, 'on which he throws the light of his own being, penetrating even to those who still wander beneath it' (Green, 1906a: 10). Green's ideas became a vital part of the very foundation of nineteenth-century liberal political philosophy, identifying Enlightenment philosophy as the root of contemporary issues. In this sense, Green was a critical advocate of a particular understanding of the Enlightenment. In the following chapter, after a preliminary view of Green's practical philosophy and its general context discussed above, I will begin my exploration of his practical philosophy, starting with his metaphysical treatment of the human condition. This will aim to show how the concept of self-consciousness becomes the primary foundation of his philosophical system.

¹⁸ As to the wide influences on Green's thought, can also see Tyler, 1997: 4-7; Tyler, 2010: 24-34.

CHAPTER THREE

A METAPHYSICAL TREATMENT OF HUMAN AGENCY: GREEN'S CONCEPT OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Introduction

It has been suggested that the critical issues in nineteenth-century British society were, in Green's view, related to the metaphysical ideas and moral claims developed by Enlightenment philosophy. In order to establish a comprehensive and adequate treatment of these issues, Green concentrates on expounding a different metaphysical notion of the human condition from the one advocated by the mainstream Enlightenment, and in particular British empiricism, by adopting German idealist philosophy. The purpose of this chapter is to explore that metaphysical foundation of Green's philosophical system, with the focus on an ontological idea of human agency immanent in his metaphysics of knowledge. This is human consciousness understood as free agency.

Regarding the function of Green's metaphysics in his thought, by and large, there are five perspectives among scholars. Firstly, scholars like Ann Cacoulios or Geoffrey Thomas conceive Green's metaphysics as a dispensable part of his philosophical thought. For Cacoulios, Green's philosophical contribution cannot be taken from his metaphysical doctrine, but his ethical arguments, in particular his metaphysics, may potentially undermine the validity of his ethical claims (Cacoulios, 1974: 34). Thomas also remarks that 'the ethical theory and moral psychology which Green offers do not really depend for their interest on the ambitious metaphysics of PE, Book I' (Thomas, 1987: 123). He indicates that Green's metaphysics was used to justify the ideas of free will and moral responsibility against naturalistic determinism. But to establish that justification, for Thomas, does not require

Green's 'full-blown metaphysics' (Thomas, 1987: 150). In a similar vein, Brink suggests that 'Green's theory of moral personality and his claims about the role of the common good in self-realization, rather than his views about objectivity or epistemology, provide the resources for his best defence of the sort of corporate agency required to maintain extreme harmony' (Brink, 2003: 66). For Brink, Green's metaphysics and epistemology, unlike his moral psychology, cannot provide a consistent justification for his social and political philosophy. With a subtle distinction, Maria Dimova-Cookson contends that Green's philosophical thought does not require the metaphysics of knowledge that he developed in the first book of *Prolegomena to Ethics*, it was not only unnecessary for Green's philosophical argument but also directed him into a discussion which he did not need, that is, the discussion of the origins of nature. To Dimova-Cookson, while that discussion is highly contestable, Green's metaphysics of moral action in the second book, offers a compelling explanation of the spiritual nature of human action. Hence, '[i]t is not that Green does not need metaphysics, but that he does not need metaphysics of knowledge' (Dimova-Cookson, 2003b: 140; cf. Vincent, 2006: 98, n. 78).

Different again from these interpretations of Green's metaphysics, the third perspective suggests that Green's metaphysics implicates theological residues. Green's contemporaries, such as Henry Sidgwick (1884) or A. J. Balfour (1884), argued that Green was concerned to philosophise theological notions in order to secularise Christian morality, creating a humanistic and spiritualistic moral doctrine. Nonetheless, in their views, Green's philosophising work eventually failed. While Green expounded a metaphysical idea of the eternal consciousness, referring to God in his *Prolegomena to Ethics*, he could not make a consistent philosophical case for the relation of human consciousness with that eternal consciousness, namely, the one he claimed to be manifest in history (McGilvary, 1901: 492, 495; cf. Laurie, 1897: 130). Along with this view, Richter (1964), Vincent and Plant (1984),

Reardon (1986), Leighton (2004), and Armour (2006) also recognise Green's philosophical thought, especially his metaphysics, contains theological notions that are assimilated with nineteenth-century British social ideas. But they do not conceptualise this theological aspect of Green's metaphysics as a failure; on the contrary, the theological aspect and the metaphysics are considered as indispensable for the development of Green's moral and political philosophy. Sharing the view that Green's metaphysics is indispensable for his moral and political philosophy, some scholars try to indicate an ontological view of the human person in Green's metaphysical and theological ideas. For example, Peter Nicholson (2006) explicates a minimal interpretation of the eternal consciousness that indicates enabling social convictions for human action. Similarly, Vincent suggests an immanent reading of Green's metaphysics such that 'the philosopher can try to grasp what is and can discuss the relative merits of the various moral formula (as Green put it) as a way of enabling the moral agent, but it still remains sceptical of any full-blown injunctive argument' (Vincent, 2006: 99-100). He suggests, further, that Green's metaphysics is a social epistemology proposing 'a more multifaceted, anthropological view of the self' which is 'fluid and developing in the context of ordinary human conventions, social practices, and historical circumstances' (Vincent, 2006: 103-104). While Simhony (1991a), Wempe (2004) and Tyler (1997; 2010) also develop an interpretation of Green's metaphysics respectively, which is related to a conception of the human condition, their interpretations do not underscore the role of theological notions in Green's thought.¹⁹

¹⁹ In her 'Idealist Organism: Beyond Holism and Individualism' (1991a), Simhony develops an idealistic social ontology that 'cannot be adequately viewed as either an aggregate of wholly independent individuals, nor a supra-personal entity with its own laws, its own development, its own life independent of its individual members' (Simhony, 1991a: 522). It is a relational society in which 'individuals help to create their own interpretation of a social reality which itself is the outcome of prior interaction; or, social unity which is constitutive of individuals, exists and operates only in and through those individuals which it binds together' (Simhony, 1991a: 522). Wempe, on the other hand, introduces Hegel's doctrine of the self-assertion of reason to explicate Green's metaphysical and ontological ideas of the human condition (Wempe, 2004: 25-34, 92-105). And Tyler establishes a two-fold elucidation of Green's metaphysics that is on the one side about a self-interventionist theory of free will and on the other side about a spiritual determinism doctrine (Tyler, 1997: chap. 2; Tyler, 2010: chaps. 5-6).

In this chapter I will pay attention to the ontological argument underlying Green's metaphysics. This, I argue, indicates a specific account of human agency and is the foundation of his moral and social philosophy. However Green's metaphysics does not, as some commentators indicate, implicate a determinist doctrine. In the first section, I will briefly discuss Green's critical reviews of empiricist psychology as the starting-point from which he reconsidered questions of contemporary philosophy. Afterwards, I will consider Green's elaboration of the idealistic theory of knowledge, which contains a notion of the human condition by which he delimits a concept of human agency. In this manner, I will consider different views of Green's determinism and argue that even though Green's philosophical language may lead to some confusion, his metaphysics is by no means a deterministic doctrine.

2. Green's critique of empiricist psychology and naturalistic determinism

Green's well-known philosophical work, 'Introductions to Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*', was first published with T. H. Grose's new edition of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* in 1874. In it, Green articulates a philosophical context which embraces the work of Bacon and Descartes, through Locke, Berkeley and Hume, to Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel (Green, 1885a: 2-4). To him, while it is common to find Locke and Hume considered as empiricists rather than rationalists (such as Leibnitz, Kant or Hegel), yet they share a rational spirit with other philosophers in the sense that 'the spirit ..., however baffled and forced into inconsistent admissions, is still governed by the faith that all things may ultimately be understood' (Green, 1885a: 5). On the grounds of that faith, the nature of human understanding is the fundamental question of their philosophies. Interestingly, in order to answer the question, Locke and Hume have not begun from the point of investigating the nature of understanding *per se*, but from determining the nature of the object of human

knowledge. By presuming the philosophical method to be introspection, they believe that the object of human knowledge, on the one hand, is what we observe with our minds, and on the other hand, the object observed is an external thing making an impression on our mind. The primary issue of Locke and Hume's approach, therefore, is to explain how the external thing can impress and be observed by us, and be transformed into an idea. Nonetheless, by virtue of that view, human knowledge does not start from our active knowing actions. Rather it starts from external interventions, and is a process of discovery by empirical observations and rational inferences, which is in order to identify the nature of the corresponding external world. However, in Green's view, this empirical inquiry of human understanding and human knowledge confuses two essentially different questions: one is metaphysical, 'what is the simplest element of knowledge', and the other is physiological as well as psychological, 'what are the conditions in the individual human organism in virtue of which it becomes a vehicle of knowledge' (Green, 1885a: 19).

Learning from Kant's philosophical criticism as an approach to investigating human understanding, for Green, philosophers proceed to the investigation by delimiting the necessary logical conditions for human understanding and for human knowledge to be possible. Kant's critical method, as David George Ritchie (1853-1903) defines it, is to 'discover the *a priori* element in knowledge, *i.e.*, that element which, though known to us only in connection with sense-experience, cannot be dependent upon sense-experience for its validity, is the business of a philosophical theory of knowledge' (Ritchie, 1893: 14). Additionally, it '*may* logically precede any or all of the special sciences, although it is only the advance of science that has suggested the need of such an examination' (Ritchie, 1893: 15). A philosophical enquiry of the nature of human understanding accordingly does not begin from the speculation concerning empirical objects of human knowledge, but from the metaphysical and logical 'analysis of the conditions which render this experience possible'

(Green, 2003: 19; cf. Tyler, 2003a: 130). Nevertheless, empiricist psychologists seem to ignore the metaphysical and logical question, and simply consider their primary task to establish how human psychological cognition functions. But, in Green's view, that 'inquiry into the subjective process through which the individual comes by his knowledge can have only an illusive result, for it will be assuming an answer to a question of which the bearings have not been considered, and will therefore be at the mercy of crude metaphor and analogy in its assumption' (Green, 1885b: 377). On the other hand, by adopting Kant's philosophical criticism, Green excavates three logical factors of understanding and knowledge: the object, the subject and the logical relation between them. The object of knowledge covers every different thing what we intend to understand, such as the natural world, artificial works, the human body or human action. The subject of knowledge refers to us, the human beings – the ones who perform the act of knowing and understanding. As to the relation between the object and the subject, Green indicates, there seems to be an agreement amongst modern philosophers that there 'are certain accepted doctrines of modern philosophy – *e.g.*, that knowledge is only of phenomena, not of anything unrelated to consciousness, and that object and subject are correlative' (Green, 2003: 14). The object and the subject of knowledge are considered as correlative with each other for they are both related to consciousness. Yet there are different views as to how consciousness makes the object and the subject of knowledge related. For empiricists, the role of consciousness is taken as an actually existing medium and is an important empirical object for psychology and physiology to study; but for Green, consciousness is a concept wherein the logical condition is presupposed to make the relation between the object and the subject intelligible (Ferreira, 2003: 48-49). At this point, as Seth comments, the meaning of 'consciousness' is ambiguous. This is because the state of consciousness can be considered as either a psychological occurrence or a logical condition. It is therefore open to the possibility of confusion in relation to the psychological study of the

human cognition process and the metaphysical study of logical conditions in which human understanding is possible (Seth, 1883: 15-16; cf. Haldane, 1883).²⁰

This confusion is the focus of Green's critique of his contemporary empiricist psychologists: namely, that they confuse the object of knowledge as a logical concept with a self-existent thing. In 'Mr. Spencer on the Relation of Subject and Object' (1877) Green contends that empiricist psychologists misconceive the relation between the object and the subject. He claims Spencer 'ascribes to the object, which in truth is nothing without the subject, an independent reality, and then supposes it gradually to produce certain qualities in the subject, of which the existence is in truth necessary to the possibility of those qualities in the object which are supposed to produce them' (Green, 1885b: 388). The object of knowledge is taken as a self-existent reality impressing its qualities onto the subject of knowledge which through the deliverance of consciousness is then represented in the human mind. That relation between the object and the subject is conceived 'as antithetically opposed divisions of the entire assemblage of manifestations of the unknowable', and is external and has mutually independence (Green, 1885b: 385; cf. Spencer, 1873: 311). However, though psychologists have provided an explanation of how these two mutually independent entities can be related through consciousness and conceived qualities, this explanation in Green's view is merely a deceptive assumption rather than a reasonable account (Green, 1885b: 386-402). The psychologists presuppose the existence of consciousness and the qualities that are used to justify their empirical approach, while the presupposition *per se* cannot be empirically verified.

However, in terms of the empirical psychologists' view, the distinction between the object and the subject, the natural world and human beings, is not merely reasonable but a

²⁰ Seth's original point here is to indicate that when understanding transcendental philosophy as related to a psychology, the Kantian philosophical criticism as a criticism of conceptions is easily confused with a criticism of faculties. Nonetheless, in Kant's view, rational psychology and empirical psychology are different. See Schurman, 1898: 135-136; Ameriks, 1992: 259; Hatfield, 1992.

truism. Instead, Green's criticism is undertaken on the basis of the denial of the existence of an independent reality outside the human mind which is false and against common sense. In 'Professor Green as a Critic' (1880), Hodgson contends that the existence of a real world apart from human consciousness is the truism 'which every step in Science takes for granted, and which no metaphysician ever for a moment succeeded in expelling from consciousness' (Hodgson, 2004: 117). To him, to presuppose the existence of a real world outside the human mind is common sense, whereas it seems that idealists like Green refuse to accept it (Hodgson, 2004: 116-118; cf. Spencer, 2004: 134-135). However, Hodgson's claim that the existence of an external world is a truism is exactly the point of Green's criticism, which indicates that empiricist psychologists make such presuppositions without realising that this is contrary to their empirical methodology. When Hodgson asserts that the existence of a world outside the human mind is a truism, he is confirming Green's criticism rather than refuting it. Ironically, G. H. Lewes also confirmed Green's criticism, saying that a psychologist 'has only direct knowledge of a change of feeling following some other change; he *infers* that this change originated in the action of some external cause, *infers* that it is accompanied by a neural process' (Lewes, 1876: 159). The existence of an external world is thus an inference which psychologists make but cannot verify.

Moreover, Green does not, as Hodgson claims, deny the existence of a real world. As Green says, '[i]t certainly does not depend on ourselves – on any power which we can suppose it rests with our will to exert or withhold – whether sensations shall occur to us in this or that order of succession, with this or that degree of intensity' (Green, 2003: 52). He does acknowledge that there might be a self-existent world as the cause of our sensations. But pertaining to a theory of knowledge, a self-existent world is not the primary logical condition under which human knowledge is possible. To be sure, idealistic philosophy does not deny the existence of a natural world, but devotes itself to delimiting the necessary logical

conditions for the natural world as the object of human knowledge to be intelligible. For Green, true idealism ‘trusts, not to a guess about what is beyond experience, but to analysis of what is within it’ (Green, 1885c: 449). But to conceive an external world as independent from human experience is going beyond experiences, while the externality of a world is only possible in consciousness as a conception formulated by the activity of human mind (Green, 2003: 69-70): the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge cannot be independent from each other but are correlated within consciousness. As Mander points out, ‘[s]uch an idealism we might denote “conceptual” as opposed to epistemological. What Green is offering us is an analysis of the concept of “reality” and, whatever may be said about our *knowledge* of reality, our *conception* of reality is not one of something fenced in by our current awareness of it’ (Mander, 2011: 102) (italics in original).

To sum up, Green believes that it is the confusion of psychology and metaphysics which has led empiricist psychology to advocate a false view of the human condition and thence a misleading moral and political philosophy. For him, that false conviction rests ‘on a metaphysical mistake, on an attempt to abstract the individual from his universal essence, *i.e.* from the relations embodied in habitudes and institutions which make him what he is; and that thus to unclothe man, if it were possible, would be to animalise him’ (Green, 1906e: 116-117). At the time that empirical philosophy prevailed in Britain, there came to be a practical conviction among the general public that ‘I always do what pleases me because it pleases me, and it is impossible that I should do otherwise’ (Green, 1906e: 111). An individual whose actions and thoughts are delimited by impressions and feelings derived from an external world is, on the one side, separated from all other things but him or herself as an atom, and on the other hand, is a creature who is regulated and determined by the laws of nature, and is not far from an animal. In order to correct this metaphysical error and save moral and political philosophy, Green therefore developed a relational ontology of human consciousness.

3. An idealistic theory of knowledge and human consciousness as free agency

Between the 1870s and 1880s, Green was trying to establish a new metaphysical treatment of the human condition by critically reconsidering both empiricist and idealistic metaphysics. He commented that '[t]he current theories about soul and mind have got too far apart from, if not ahead of, the question which Hume (in effect) raised and Kant took up, to be brought back to it by any inquiry into the antecedents which rendered it inevitable, or by any exposition of the logical obligations which it imposed on the next generation, but which English psychology has hitherto failed to recognise' (Green, 1885b: 374). He therefore resumed the task of modern philosophy proposed by Hume and Kant. He conceived the work of metaphysics as delimiting the necessary logical conditions of human knowledge, though 'there can be neither proof nor disproof of such necessity' (Green, 2003: 18). Nevertheless, while he contested empiricist philosophy's founding on a false metaphysics, as indicated above, he also intended to advance Kant's achievements in idealistic metaphysics. His contention was that Kant had not solved the dualism of the object and the subject.

While the concepts of experience and the existence of a real world are not repudiated by the idealist philosophy, there remains a dualism in Kant's metaphysics in that he makes a sharp distinction between the object and the subject. Kant claimed that the source of feelings is the unknowable things-in-themselves and thought develops via human reason. However the things-in-themselves, as unknowable, subsist in an antithetical relationship with human reason. Kant therefore maintained the duality of the self-existent world and human mind. Regarding this dualism in Kant's philosophy, Green contended that it stems from Kant's failure to apprehend that 'the constitution of a relation between feelings' and 'the conception of a relation between them' are not two different functions of human consciousness, but one act of the consciousness (Green, 1886a: 25, 28-30). For Green, by conceiving that the

constitution of a relation is from external things and the conception of relation is from human reason, Kant concealed his actual philosophical achievement. The distinction between the object and the subject is implied in the idea of thought *per se* as two complementary factors in the whole of self-consciousness. As Green argued, ‘thought cannot be conscious of itself except in distinction from an object’ (Green, 1886b: 181, 182; cf. Green, 1885b: 400). By identifying Kant’s failure, Green contended that feelings and thoughts are ‘inseparable and mutually dependent in the consciousness for which the world of experience exists, inseparable and mutually dependent in the constitution of the facts which form the object of that consciousness’ (Green, 2003: 55). However, from another perspective, Green’s metaphysics of knowledge seems to surrender objectivity to the constructive power of human consciousness, for he claims on a number of occasions that the world of experience exists in consciousness.

Nonetheless, as indicated, Green did not repudiate the existence of a natural world outside of human awareness. Rather he intended to delimit the necessary logical conditions for human knowledge. While he claimed that the distinction of the object and the subject stems from self-consciousness, he went on to explore how transient sensations and feelings can be the object of knowledge. Since the main attribute of sensations is appearing in time, which means that the sensation we perceive at this moment will vanish in the next second, there has to be a combining agency to detain successive sensations and to present them simultaneously for human understanding to be possible. And that agency in Green’s view was human intelligent consciousness:

With such a combining agency we are familiar as our intelligence. It is through it that the sensation of the present moment takes a character from comparison with the

sensation of a moment ago, and that the occurrence, consisting in the transition from one to the other, is presented to us (Green, 2003: 33).

Hence, it is ‘the action upon successive sensations of a consciousness which holds them in relation, and which therefore cannot itself be before or after them, or exist as a succession at all’ that sensations and feelings can be intelligible as the starting-point of human knowledge (Green, 2003: 81). Yet it is implied that there is a concept of relation as a logical condition for sensations and feelings to be intelligible experiences as well (Green, 2003: 33-37, 62-78; Mander, 2006: 196-201). For Green, as for Locke, each sensation or feeling will remain indeterminate and unknowable without comparison, but by comparison an idea of relation among sensations is constituted. In other words, for sensations and feelings to be intelligible objects of human knowledge, logically there has to be a consciousness presenting them simultaneously and constituting a relation among them. For Green, this meant delineating the necessary logical conditions for human knowledge to be possible and intelligible, and did not entail denying the existence of a natural world.

However, though Green’s metaphysics of knowledge did not refute the existence of an external world outside the human mind, the truth or the falsity of knowledge was not dependent upon whether an idea corresponded with the external world or not. In the first place, our consciousness of the external world is derived from the act of self-consciousness, and it would be tautological if we asserted that the criterion of truth is the external world.²¹ For Green, objectivity subsisted in relation to a consciousness: it is ‘through [this] ... there is *for us* an objective world; through it that we *conceive* an order of nature, with the unity of which we must reconcile our interpretations of phenomena, if they are to be other than

²¹ The so-called correspondence theory of truth, which empiricists and naturalists generally adopt, maintains that knowledge as the work of human mind is not real and its truth or falsity is dependent on whether it corresponds to the objective world or not. Nonetheless, this theory of truth is in opposition to the idealistic understanding of the truth, a coherence theory of truth. For the discussion about these two theories of truth and its relation to idealism, see Boucher and Vincent, 2012: 38-42.

“subjective” illusions’ (Green, 2003: 18) (*italic in original*). Moreover, as Green indicated here, the distinction between subjective illusion and objective truth lies in how to ‘reconcile’ our different and diverse conceptions of the external world.²² While the contents of knowledge comprise the relations among diverse experiences and ideas, the truth or the falsity of knowledge in Green’s view was dependent on whether those relations constitute a coherent system. The criterion for judging the system is coherent or not is an idea of a single and unalterable order of relations. As he holds,

The terms “real” and “objective”, then, have no meaning except for a consciousness which presents its experiences to itself as determined by relations, and at the same time conceives a single and unalterable order of relations determining them, with which its temporary presentation, as each experience occurs, of the relations determining it may be contrasted. (Green, 2003: 17)

For him, the idea of a single and unalterable order of relations is ‘the presupposition of all our enquiry into the real nature of appearances’ (Green, 2003: 31). It is the reference against which we consider whether the relations between an individual experience and other experiences are unalterable or not. Nonetheless, ‘[t]here may always remain unascertained conditions which may render the relation between an appearance and such conditions of it as we know, liable to change’ (Green, 2003: 31). That idea of a single and unalterable order of relations is accordingly a regulative principle. It enables us to reconcile experiences and ideas into a coherent system in which each experience or idea is interlocked with others (Tyler,

²² The concept of reconciliation here is related to the idea of the truth and indicates a danger when Green’s metaphysics evolves into ethics and politics; that a person’s self-realisation is in relation to his idea of the true self and is about the reconciliation of his reason with will, while self-realisation and reconciliation are also correlative with the composition of a political society and the employment of political powers. In this sense, the concept of reconciliation is in relation to truth and the power and is the reason for Isaiah Berlin’s claim that Green’s idealistic metaphysics has the potential to lead liberal politics towards totalitarianism. Nonetheless, I will argue that Green avoided that danger. See my discussions in chapter four and chapter six.

2010: 60-65; Tyler, 2012: 10-11). In Green's view, it also indicated that if a related system of ideas was more complete than others in the sense that its colligation explains more phenomena and contains more ideas and experiences as a coherent whole, this system would be truer than the others (Green, 1886c: 295). That is, Green did not build human knowledge on mere subjective perspectives, but rather a coherence theory of truth.²³ Hence, while Green elevated the constructive ability of the human mind and claimed that the object of knowledge, such as the natural world or sensations, was conceived and constituted by human consciousness, he did not argue that human knowledge is purely subjective. By referring to a coherence theory of truth, Green believed that he could determine the truth or the falsity of human knowledge. At this point, therefore, by refuting the notion of the human condition implicated in empiricist philosophy and in Kant's misconceived metaphysics, Green developed an idea of the human condition in which human beings are not determined and regulated by natural circumstances, but instead are capable of conceiving and transforming the circumstances by reference to 'self-consciousness'. We are our own 'free causes'. We are not conditioned or determined by an outward or external world (Green, 2003: 85). However, when Green remarked that there is an intelligent consciousness 'implied in the existence of the world; but *what* it is we only know through its so far acting in us as to enable us, however partially and interruptedly, to have knowledge of a world or an intelligent experience' (Green, 2003: 58), he then proposed the idea of an eternal consciousness. This appears to signify a consciousness not only different from, but directing human consciousness towards the end determined by it, concealing human free agency once again.

4. Criticisms of Green's determinism

²³ A classical elucidation of the coherence theory of truth is H. H. Joachim's *The Nature of Truth: an essay* (1906). That the truth is an organic unity or significant whole 'such that all its constituent elements reciprocally involve one another, or reciprocally determine one another's being as contributory features in a single concrete meaning' (Joachim, 1906: 66). Nonetheless, Bertrand Russell is against Joachim's account for the truth. See Russell, 'On the Nature of Truth' (1906).

To Green, the empiricist account of the external relation between the subject and the object implies that human beings (as the subject) are restrained and conditioned by an external world. We do not have the free agency to construct our unique characteristics on the basis of our will. It is also argued that the human condition is therefore prescribed by natural laws; however, if we have full knowledge of these laws, we can have the knowledge by which to achieve happiness (Green, 2003: 3-11). Against this naturalistic and deterministic view of the human condition, Green developed a metaphysical account of the human condition in which the world and each object of human knowledge is constituted by human consciousness. By virtue of such an account, he therefore restored human agency, moving away from naturalistic determinism. However, when he concluded his metaphysics of knowledge with a spiritual principle, which indicates a consciousness that ‘not only presents related objects to itself, but at once renders them objects and unites them in relation to each other by this act of presentation; and which is single throughout the experience’ (Green, 2003: 37), it seems that he depicted a different consciousness that was subtly distinct from humans’. With respect to that consciousness, Green further remarked that ‘[w]e must hold then that there is a consciousness for which the relations of fact, that form the object of our gradually attained knowledge, already and eternally exist; and that the growing knowledge of the individual is a progress towards this consciousness’ (Green, 2003: 80). Further, ‘[h]uman action is only explicable by the action of an eternal consciousness, which uses them as its organs and reproduces itself through them’ (Green, 2003: 93). It is then clear that Green employs a concept of ‘eternal consciousness’, and this eternal consciousness seems to be an invisible being behind the world directing humanity to the realisation of its end.²⁴ At this point,

²⁴ Green admittedly employs different terms to signify the conception that ‘the eternal consciousness’. For example, when he criticises Locke’s empirical philosophy, he remarks that ‘[t]aking for his method the imaginary process of “looking into his own breast”, instead of the analysis of knowledge and morality, he could not find *the eternal self* which knowledge and morality pre-suppose’ (Green, 1885a: 115) (italic added). In his lectures on Kant’s metaphysics of knowledge and on logic, he uses different terms, such as ‘eternal self’, ‘eternal subject’ or ‘eternal mind’, to refer to the logical presupposition of knowledge and morality (see Green,

Green's metaphysical treatment of the human condition seems to be lapsing into a distinct form of determinism, which various commentators have criticised and discussed.

Pertaining to Green's determinism, commentators have elaborated at least three different kinds of argument: a rational determinism, a theological determinism and a spiritual determinism. I will elucidate these deterministic interpretations of Green's metaphysics briefly in sequence. The first kind of deterministic reading of Green is not closely related to his idea of the eternal consciousness, but is related rather to the rationalistic inclination of his idealism. Ben Wempe, in his *T. H. Green's Theory of Positive Freedom*, argues that while Green contends that there is an eternal and unalterable system of relations by reference to which we can differentiate the truth and falsity of human knowledge, his metaphysics of knowledge implies accordingly 'an essentially closed and therefore *a priori* conception of human knowledge' (Wempe, 2004: 105; cf. 102-104). Human knowledge in this sense is predetermined by a presupposed eternal and unalterable system of relations. Meanwhile, following her criticism of Kant's transcendental philosophy, Dimova-Cookson also claims that Green makes an argument, in his theory of knowledge, that the existence of reality is constituted and predetermined by a doctrine of 'pure thought' (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 31-32; Dimova-Cookson, 2003b: 140-143). For Green, as for Kant, there is a sharp distinction between feelings and thought, and this leads to the supposition that we cannot have any knowledge independent of rational categories which predetermine our perceptions and conceptions of the reality and then our behaviour (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 27-53). According to Wempe and Dimova-Cookson, therefore, Green's metaphysics of knowledge contains a rational determinism. This embodies the idea of an *a priori* concept, that is an

1886a: 28-29; Green, 1886c: 178-179, 182). In the *Prolegomena to Ethics*, meanwhile, Green also utilises the term 'eternal intelligence' once to indicate the presupposition 'realised in the related facts of the world, or as a system of related facts rendered possible by such an intelligence, partially and gradually reproduces itself in us, communicating piece-meal, but in inseparable correlation, understanding and the facts understood, experience and the experience world' (Green, 2003: 41). Discussions in relation to the idea of the eternal consciousness are not only confined to the determinism issue, however. Another important issue is that of the eternity of the idea of the question of 'time'. See, for example, Armour (2006); Mander (2006).

eternal and unalterable system of relations or ‘pure thought’ which determines human knowledge and human practice.

On the other hand, Sidgwick’s theist reading and Tyler’s spiritualistic interpretation of Green’s determinism are both related to the idea of eternal consciousness. As mentioned, when Green makes the claim that the eternal consciousness is the underlying principle in human consciousness, directing our actions towards the end it wills, he seems to substitute the will of an invisible and highest being for that of human free agency. In Sidgwick’s view, this eternal consciousness actually refers to God and is an intellectual by-product of Green’s work in philosophising theological notions. Sidgwick contends that the ultimate end of human action, to Green, is to realise the end of the eternal consciousness. This envisages the human mind as ‘a self-realisation of the divine principle in man’ (Sidgwick, 1884: 170; Sidgwick, 1902: 8). Thus the annulment of human agency is but a consequence of Green’s failure to complete the work of philosophy (Sidgwick, 1884: 171-179). Meanwhile, as distinct from the theist reading of Green, Tyler argues that Green’s metaphysical treatment nonetheless implicates a spiritual deterministic argument. Human consciousness and human action are thus seen to be driven by an innate spirit towards the most coherent system of beliefs and ideas as the *telos* of human nature (Tyler, 2010: chaps. 4-6). For Tyler, Green’s metaphysics, in this reading, maintains an idea of human agency similar to Bosanquet’s in that it is ‘the self-generation of particular actions from the interaction of the individual’s mind with circumstances’ (Tyler, 1997: 35; Tyler, 2010: 90-91). With the intention to de-anthropomorphize Green’s idea of eternal consciousness, which is considered as a weakness of Green’s philosophy, Tyler therefore tends to stress the concept of ‘the unconscious’ in Green’s metaphysics (Tyler, 2010: chap. 4; cf. Tyler, 2003a: 133-137). He believes that ‘the unconscious’ is a significant but missing part in comprehending Green’s idea of the eternal consciousness. He asserts that while the eternal consciousness signifies an innate spirit of

human nature, the unconscious indicates ‘the realm of instinct’ and ‘the realm of inchoate rational mental processes ... in which human nature begins its struggle for self-expression’ (Tyler, 2010: 106). However, by addressing a possible intellectual connection between Green and the philosophy of the unconscious (developing in Germany), Tyler’s spiritual determinism interpretation of Green is actually a doctrine of psychological mechanism in the interpretation of the human mind (Tyler, 2010: 98-107).

Throughout these varying readings of Green’s determinism, the underlying contention is nonetheless related to different perspectives on Green’s notion of human agency. For instance, when Sidgwick contests Green’s idea of eternal consciousness – as requiring humans to realise the end to which a higher being is directing them, not only disregarding the significance of desires and impulses in the moral issues but also concealing human autonomy – his contention is made on the grounds that the significance of morality is confined to the notion that human beings are responsible for their behaviour (Sidgwick, 1902: 15-22, 62-63). He implies, though, that Green’s religious belief has led him to dismiss human agency. Meanwhile, Wempe and Dimova-Cookson respectively indicate a rational determinism in Green’s metaphysics of knowledge, but their purpose is to stress the importance of Green’s metaphysics of moral action. As Wempe claims, ‘the point of a number of arguments in Green’s pure metaphysics only emerges when they are considered in the light of the analogous argument which he seeks to defend in his metaphysics of morals’ (Wempe, 2004: 85; cf. Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 40-53; Dimova-Cookson, 2003b: 143-146). For preserving Green’s notion of human agency with no taint attached to it, the metaphysics of knowledge that Green establishes is a dispensable part of his philosophical thought. Tyler, on the other hand, intends to maintain Green’s metaphysics of knowledge, but he also underscores the idea that there are two possible readings of Green’s metaphysical treatment of human agency. One is spiritual determinism, and the other is a self-interventionist theory of free will

signifying that ‘once certain minimum social conditions are met, the agent can choose whether or not to develop a virtuous character and then to act virtuously’ (Tyler, 2010: 90). In other words, there is a dual line of argument lurking in Green’s thought.

So far, I have explored three kinds of deterministic reading of Green’s metaphysics, and also indicated that these readings of Green relate to different perspectives of the relation between Green’s metaphysics of knowledge and his notion of human agency. Up to this point, scholars have contended that Green’s metaphysics contains a notion of the human condition and human agency. Green, contrary to the tenets of empiricist philosophy, develops a theory of human consciousness in which human beings are not determined by the natural world and the laws of nature, and are instead capable of conceiving and transforming the world. In other words, though Green has not directly stated a theory of moral action here, his metaphysics of knowledge, in terms of this view, prepares the ground for his systematic practical philosophy. Further, Green’s metaphysical treatment of human agency also connotes an important feature of his thought: that is, immanence. In the next section, in the context of my responses to the above deterministic readings of Green, I will argue that Green’s metaphysics is by no means a deterministic doctrine, but is rather immanentist.

5. Philosophy, theology and human agency

While a rational deterministic reading contends that Green’s metaphysics of knowledge implicates an *a priori* concept by which human knowledge and human practice are determined, Green’s philosophical thought nonetheless should not be viewed as deterministic in this context. In the first place, the term ‘*a priori*’ here has two meanings for Green, but neither of them is inherently deterministic. Firstly, the term refers to a necessity, indicating in mathematics a principle ‘which renders observation of nature possible can’t itself be derived from such observation, but such observation exhibits it’ (Green, 2005a: 61). The *a priori*

necessity in this sense indicates that there is a principle, understood as a logical presupposition, for what concerns the intelligible and conceivable, such as ‘two straight lines can’t enclose space’ of a triangular form (Green, 2005a: 59-60). Secondly, it refers to a necessity, as a given disposition, that is ‘involved in maintenance of institutions and habits’ and is ‘found necessary to organization of society’ (Green, 2005a: 60; cf. Green, 1906d: 58). The *a priori* necessity, in this latter sense, is used to indicate that there are prior and indispensable conditions for enabling human consciousness and human action, such as social habits and moral conventions. In either sense, *a priori* does not imply a deterministic argument, but signifies the necessary logical conditions, or the indispensable enabling dispositions presupposed in knowledge and action.²⁵ Hence, Green’s metaphysical inquiry is not to suggest a rational deterministic doctrine; rather, it is to assure the necessary conditions for human knowledge and human action to be possible. In this sense, it is instead an immanentist treatment.²⁶

Moreover, by virtue of Green’s contra-intellectualism position, it is hard to claim him as a rational determinist. In Green’s essay ‘Life and Immortality brought to light by the Gospel’ (1860), he shows a suspicion of overt intellectualism. He contests that whilst Platonic philosophy elevates an idea of ‘spirit’ and develops it into a doctrine of ‘emanation’,

²⁵ For Green, ‘it cannot be said that you first act morally by consideration of results of action and then gradually come to have the conception. As facts to a priori speculative conception, so are determinations of will to a priori practical conception. Consideration of what is involved in “facts” makes *us aware* of former: consideration of what is involved in *determination of will* makes us aware of latter’ (Green, 2005a: 60).

²⁶ For this immanentist reading I am indebted to Professor Vincent’s account of Green’s metaphysics. As indicated before, he suggests that ‘the philosopher can try to grasp what is and can discuss the relative merits of the various moral formulae (as Green puts it) as a way of enabling the moral agent, but it still remains sceptical of any full-blown injunctive arguments’ (Vincent, 2006: 99-100), that Green’s metaphysical treatment of the human person is ‘the “grey on grey” argument, which adopts a more multifaceted, anthropological view of the self – fluid and developing within the context of ordinary human conventions, social practices, and historical circumstances’, this perspective ‘sees reason as immanent within human practices and institutions, and subject to historical contingency and fallibility – although it also considerably weakens the spiritual teleology’ (Vincent, 2006: 103-104). Green himself also explicitly argues that ‘[i]deas do not first come into existence, or begin to operate, upon the formation of an abstract expression for them. This expression is only arrived at upon analysis of a concrete experience which they have rendered possible’ (Green, 1986a: 15). An idea as such is not existent *a priori* but comes into existence by the very act of self-consciousness which distinguishes it from a chaotic and indeterminate but concrete mass of perceptions and feelings. Each idea, speculative or practical, in this sense, is immanent in unknown experiences.

by reference to Plato's 'ideal forms', this is purely intellectual and contemplative and does not relate to a practical life (Green, 1860: 64-72; Green, 1861: 90-91, 94-95). Moreover, in 'The Philosophy of Aristotle' (1866), Green's contra-intellectualism position is clearly manifest when he argues that the most practical of philosophers, Aristotle, is actually advocating a contemplative and self-contained life rather than a practical life. He claims that Aristotle, adopting Plato's 'ideal forms', exalted a doctrine of pure thought, which is fixed, final and eternal. This implied a self-contained life that could only be reached by accessing 'pure thought' as a process of appropriation without the need for others (Green, 1906d: 88-90). The tenet of intellectualism espoused in Greek philosophy that, 'if a person knows what is right, he cannot do what is wrong', in Green's view, however, undermines the importance of human agency and free will. It encourages a self-contained and self-conceited contemplative life (Green, 1867a: 120-121; Green, 1906d: 90). Against this overt intellectualism, Green claims that theoretical human activity, particularly philosophy, must endeavour to 'disentangle the operative ideas from their necessarily imperfect expression, and to explain that the validity of the ideas themselves' in order to advance humans towards the freedom of perfect understanding (Green, 2003: 383). As Lamont notes, for Green, 'the business of the philosopher is not to create – not even to advocate – moral ideals, but simply to understand them, analysing their nature and demonstrating their implications' (Lamont, 1934: 20; Boucher and Vincent, 2012: 88).

On the basis of these general features of Green's perspective on philosophy, his metaphysics of knowledge does not, as Wempe or Dimova-Cookson argues, imply a rational determinism doctrine. Firstly, with his criticism of Kant's dualism, Green does not adopt the Kantian transcendental method to deduce an *a priori* doctrine of thought and to predetermine human knowledge and human practice. On the contrary, he stresses the mutual independence of feelings and thought, experiences and ideas, and develops a notion of the human condition

in which the relation between the object and the subject, the world and human beings, is dependent on the way in which we human beings conceive and constitute. Human knowledge and human action are not determined *a priori* by a ‘pure thought’; instead, they are dependent upon our articulation of our unknown experiences and feelings, and on the way we achieve a coherent view of the world. On the other hand, Green’s metaphysics of knowledge does not, as Wempe claims, presuppose an *a priori* and enclosed conception of human knowledge. As indicated previously, Green’s idea of a single and unalterable order of relations is the logical presupposition for human knowledge to be possible and is a regulative principle guiding the advance of our knowledge. This is not to assert that there is an *a priori* and unalterable system of relations determining how human knowledge will be; it is but a working hypothesis and a heuristic device (Tyler, 2010: 65, 80, 147; cf. Wempe, 2004: 79-80).

With respect to the theist and the spiritual determinisms, there is one common feature in that they both conceive of the eternal consciousness as ‘something’ transcendent beyond human beings or innate in human nature (cf. Brink, 2003: 19). Theist determinism claims that Green’s idea of the eternal consciousness is the God whose will determines human knowledge and human action, while spiritual determinism assumes that the idea of eternal consciousness indicates an innate spirit in human nature prescribing the end of human activity. Nevertheless, firstly, eternal consciousness to Green is not equal to God, although he does make an analogy between the two:

... if ‘nature’ is at the same time thought of, as it almost inevitably is, under attributes only applicable to the world of phenomena, and thus as excluding the spiritual principle which that world indeed implies, but implies as other than itself. In that case, to ascribe independence or self-containedness to it – if for a moment the use of theological language may be allowed which it is generally desirable to avoid – is to deify nature

while we cancel its title to deification. It is to speak of nature without God in a manner only appropriate to nature as it is in God. (Green, 2003: 62)

However, as the quotation shows, Green is obviously aware of the difference between the eternal consciousness as the absolute presupposition for human activity to be possible, and God as the omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent being worshiped in religion and theology.²⁷ He also claims explicitly that employing the term ‘spiritual’, rather than the ‘natural’, to indicate the underlying principle for human activity to be possible is to prevent its confusion with naturalistic philosophy and ‘must only be on a clear understanding of its metaphorical character’ (Green, 2003: 61).²⁸ For Green, this does not suggest any supernatural idea, but articulates the concept of nature as the necessary logical condition (Nicholson, 2006: 146-149). Further, eternal consciousness should not be interpreted as an innate spirit or the unconscious.

On the one hand, if the spirit innate in human nature, a notion Tyler identifies as present in Green’s thought, is not ‘something’ existing in human beings, it seems to be an indicative term used to signify a probable principle of human activity, or, as mentioned above, a spiritual principle – the logical presupposition for human activity to be possible –

²⁷ To be sure, Green does not conceive God as an anthropomorphic presence or an external highest being determining what each human being has done and will do. Against a hypostatized mystical and external conception of God, to him, God is immanent in us; ‘a God present *in* the believing love of Him and the brethren, a Christ within us, a continuous resurrection, – these are mere thoughts of our own; they are not “objective”’ (Green, 1870: 32). The divinity exists in our consciousness and manifests in our will to be good; it is not a gift bestowed upon us by a mystical and external being. Nonetheless, he knows clearly that it will be hard for us to conceive of God when discarding ‘the anthropomorphic formulae in which we have been used to express to ourselves the presence and action of God as an external person moulding nature to His purposes and intervening in it when and how He will’ (Green, 1877a: 93-94).

²⁸ As Green suggests in his essay ‘The Value of the Argument from Analogy’ when using analogies, we ‘must be master of them’ and not they of us (Green, 1997: 44); in using analogy, we are comparing and connecting different ideas with each other and assuming that there is some resemblance between them. However, we cannot forget that these ideas are ultimately different. He reminds us, then, that some rhetorical fallacies can be ‘derived from the metaphorical character of language’ (Green, 1997: 44). Nonetheless, when he discusses how to express metaphysical conceptions, he does claim that using metaphor might be possible, while the more legitimate way is through practical action (Green, 1886b: 175-176). In terms of this view, however, while Green employs the term ‘the eternal consciousness’ in his metaphysics of knowledge to signify the underlying principle of human activity, it is nothing but a metaphor and should not be conceived of uncritically as God.

rather than a term suggesting a deterministic argument. However, on the other hand, if innate nature is a thing existing in the human mind, but different, it seems to be contradictory with Green's claim that '[w]e have not two minds, but one mind' (Green, 2003: 79). For Green, the eternal consciousness does not signify a mental phenomenon in time as each human consciousness, but a logical and metaphysical concept which takes account of 'the system of thought and knowledge which realises or reproduces itself in the individual through that process, a system into the inner constitution of which no relations of time enter' (Green, 2003: 79). There is only one mind, but it offers two different perspectives, metaphysical and psychological. Meanwhile, to suppose that Green's idea of the eternal consciousness connotes a realm of the unconscious accordingly seems equally inadequate, given that the unconscious in Green's usage refers to a state of mind in which we have not been aware of the conceptions and ideas immanent in our perceptions and behaviours. When he uses the term 'unconscious' experiences to indicate our unreflective and habitual thoughts and actions, he makes a clear distinction between unreflective thinking, and natural instinct and nervous reflex. That 'the word "unconscious" ... is sometimes applied in a strict sense to a process which is not one of consciousness at all, but merely nervous or automatic, sometimes in a less strict sense to a process of consciousness not attended to or reflected upon' (Green, 2003: 114, n.1). For Green, nonetheless, there is no perception or behaviour without consciousness at all. The reason that ordinary people would conceive a state of mind in which there is no consciousness, Green suggests, is because they are unaware of 'any activity of thought having contributed to constitute the things of which they have experience' (Green, 1886b: 194). 'The unconscious' is therefore a state of mind to which we are so accustomed, with its process for chaotic and indeterminate perceptions, and feelings transformed into intelligible experiences by the act of self-consciousness, that we are not aware of this process and we do not make any reflection on it. The unconscious in this sense, however, is nothing but our

habitual and conventional thoughts and actions internalised as constituent parts of us. To this point, it is as Green says: ‘an unconscious always precedes a conscious morality; that men act on moral principles, embodied in law and custom, which have never distinctly become part of their individual consciousness’ (Green, 1906d: 58). What is implicit in Green’s concept of the unconscious is a process of self-examination by which to articulate immanent principles. It is not, then, a deterministic argument.

Meanwhile, while Green’s metaphysical treatment is not deterministic, it is an immanentist doctrine: ideas are immanent in unconscious experiences as unreflective perceptions or feelings. Moreover, by adopting the Kantian philosophical criticism as an approach through which to reconsider empiricist and idealist metaphysics, Green depicts a view of the human condition and articulates the necessary conditions for human knowledge and human action to be intelligible and explicable. He then reaches the idea of eternal consciousness, as the underlying spiritual principle in diverse human activities. Nonetheless, the idea of eternal consciousness is just a philosophical language through which to express the common principle immanent in human activities, just as the ideal in aesthetics and the notion of God in theology expressing a similar spiritual principle (Green, 1877a: 86-88; Green, 1906b: 14; Green, 1906d: 90). For Green, as for Hegel, among diverse and different human activities, philosophy, art and religion are peculiar and peculiarly significant, for the absolute fusion of thought and things is represented in them (Green, 1906c: 22-23; cf. Taylor, 1979: 19-21). As Green claims,

[Burke] saw the rottenness in which the ‘metaphysics’ of the eighteenth century resulted, but had nothing with which to replace them. The practical reconstruction of moral ideas in England was to come, not directly from a sounder philosophy, but from the deeper views of life which the contemplative poets originated, from the revival of

evangelical religion, and from the conception of freedom and right, which Rousseau himself popularised, and which even in his hands had a constructive as well as an anarchical import. (Green, 1906e: 117)

Art, religion and philosophy are important for human beings to articulate and to retain the spiritual principle away, as distinct, from materialism and naturalism. Nevertheless, since visionary poetry and practical religion seem to be in conflict with scientific beliefs, in Green's view, philosophy is the most important field of human knowledge, in the sense that 'anything calling itself philosophy should seek to systematise them [poetry and religion] and to ascertain the regions to which they on the one side, and the truths of science on the other, are respectively applicable' (Green, 2003: 2). The results of Green's philosophical work are a metaphysical treatment of the human condition and human agency, and a spiritual principle as the absolute presupposition of human activity. In this manner, he refutes empiricist philosophy and its naturalistic determinism, and advances idealist philosophy such that he ensures a concept of free agency without lapsing into dualism.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored Green's metaphysical treatment of the human condition and human agency, which is the primary foundation of his practical philosophy. In the first place, I introduced his critique of empiricist psychology and indicated that Green focused on its misconception of the relation between the objective world and the human subject. On the basis of that critique, Green also tried to improve the idealistic metaphysics developed initially by Kant. What Green therefore achieves is an affirmative perspective of human agency at the core of which is a theory of human consciousness. I have also considered the determinism issue in Green's metaphysics, which includes rational, spiritual and theist forms.

In indicating that these deterministic readings are inadequate, I also argued that Green's metaphysics is actually an immanentist doctrine: 'to gain, or rather perhaps to regain, such a view of things as shall reconcile us to the world and to ourselves' (Caird, 2004: 26). That metaphysical treatment of human agency is to clear the ground, for Green, in order to build up a more adequate theory of humanity. On the basis of the treatment of human agency, in the next chapter, I will discuss Green's idea of ethical self and his moral philosophy the centre of which is the quest for the reconciliation of human consciousness and human action.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERFECT FREEDOM AND THE ETHICAL SELF: GREEN ON THE DYNAMICS AND THE MORALISATION OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that opposing a naturalistic and empiricist view of the human condition, Green developed a metaphysical treatment of the human condition and human agency; he advanced Kant's philosophy by overcoming the dualism between a world of the things-in-themselves and the human mind. Green's metaphysics of knowledge therefore ensures a firm foundation for developing his moral claims against the utilitarian and hedonistic moral philosophy. In this chapter, my exploration of Green's practical philosophy turns to the latter dimension in that he developed an account for the moral development of human consciousness and proposed a perfectionist ethics with a positive idea of human freedom, while the ideal of human morality was conceived as the actualisation of human perfection in a reconciliatory world.

However, before going on to discuss Green's view of the moralisation of human consciousness, it should be noted that Green's liberal philosophy so formulated has been challenged by Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997), one of the most influential liberals in the twentieth century. In his famous lecture 'Two Concepts of Liberty' (1958), Berlin asserts that Green's liberal ideal implies a philosophy of objective reason that espouses a holistic and monistic view of the world and has an intellectual affinity with totalitarianism. For Berlin, the philosophy of objective reason maintains the Platonic ideal: 'in the first place that, as in the

sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors; in the second place that there must be a dependable path towards the discovery of these truths; in the third place that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another – that we knew a priori’ (Berlin, 2013: 6). Philosophers who have faith in that ideal accordingly believe that there is a universal truth of the world that human reason can acquire, and by reaching that universal (and rational knowledge), we can then achieve happiness by following its instructions (Berlin, 2002: 178-200). While Berlin himself is against the philosophy of objective reason, he argues that Green not only shares the holistic and monistic philosophical ideal, but also has faith that there is a true self as the very end (innate in human rational nature) for every individual person to pursue. In Berlin’s view, while Green distinguishes the true self from the empirical self, he proposes a positive idea of freedom, namely that ‘the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves’. This ‘entails that if a man chose some immediate pleasure – which ... would not enable him to make the best of himself ... – what he was exercising was not “true” freedom: and if deprived of it, he would not lose anything that mattered’ (Berlin, 2002: 180, n. 1; cf. Green, 1986b: 200). However, to Berlin, though Green’s intention is to indicate the importance of individual freedom, that account of human freedom can easily become the excuse by which a tyrant might justify her oppression and coercion in the name of ‘the universal rational truth’. On the grounds of a metaphysical doctrine of the two selves, a genuine liberal like Green unfortunately obscures the value of free choice for each individual by means of the rational ideal of the true self (Berlin, 2002: 41, n. 1, 53; cf. Weinstein, 1965; Bellamy, 2000: chap. 2).

Regarding Berlin’s criticism of Green’s liberal thought, Simhony has made an excellent and lucid point:

Berlin's argument about totalitarian theories of positive freedom proceeds in three steps. The first step relates to a shift from freedom as doing as one likes to do to what one really wants to do. 'The metaphysical doctrine of the two selves' underpins that shift. The second step is the claim that positive freedom is realizable only in a certain kind of society with which one identifies oneself as one's wider social self - 'the individual streams versus the social river in which they should be merged' - as in the case of Rousseau. The third step is to claim that that kind of society is excessively oppressive in the name of freedom. (Simhony, 1991b: 305)

On the basis of this analysis, Simhony contests that Green does not propose a certain kind of society oppressive to the concept of freedom, but rather that it is enabling (Simhony, 1991b: 305, 316-318). The function of social institutions is to maintain equal opportunities for each individual in pursuit of their self-realizations, thus Green's idea of human freedom indicates a conception of freedom as ability. For Simhony, instead of implying the danger of justifying totalitarianism, Green's challenge to the separation of freedom and ability marks an important difference in Green's idea of freedom versus Berlin's idea (Simhony, 1993a). In a similar vein, Dimova-Cookson also draws upon the conception of freedom as ability in Green's thought. She indicates that Green's positive freedom contains two meanings. One is freedom as ability that signifies the capability of human beings to choose and to contribute to a social good in pursuit of self-perfection, and the other is the true freedom that 'does not contain choice and opportunity' but indicates 'the experience of achievement and completion'; the former is the capability of being a moral agent and the latter is the ultimate achievement of the moral agency (Dimova-Cookson, 2012: 151; cf. 146-150). As to the juristic/negative freedom, this signifies the social and political circumstances under which human agency

might develop. With this distinction between the different senses of freedom in Green's thought, Dimova-Cookson indicates that Green's theory of freedom not only maintains the value of free choice but also implies a justification for liberty as welfare (cf. Dimova-Cookson, 2003a; Simhony, 2005: 140-144).

According to Simhony's and Dimova-Cookson's interpretations of Green's theory of human freedom, Green is not, as Berlin claimed, providing a dangerous philosophical argument. The distinction between the empirical self and the ideal self, and freedom as ability and the true freedom in Green's thought, is to indicate a developmental account of human morality (cf. Nicholson, 1990: 116-131). Meanwhile, though Wempe and Tyler also indicate the internal relation of different senses of freedom in Green's thought, their responses to Berlin's criticism focus on Green's ontology of human consciousness instead. In Wempe's view, Green's theory of positive freedom is profoundly influenced by Hegel's doctrine of the self-assertion of reason, whereby 'the essentials of his political and ethical theory may be derived from an analysis of the structure of human consciousness' (Wempe, 2004: 118, 141-151). Negative freedom and positive freedom, in Green's thought, are not two dichotomous ideas but rather two dimensions of human consciousness, that is an empirical self with an impulsive desire and an ideal self with a universal law.

On the other hand, Tyler argues that Berlin 'presupposes a sharp distinction between the latter two conceptions ('negative' and 'positive' freedom), whereas Green recognised what he calls true freedom as including in its logical structure the notion of freedom from interference by others (juristic freedom)' (Tyler, 2010: 117). Hence, he claims that it is futile to employ Berlin's distinction of negative and positive freedom to analyse Green's discussion of freedom. Meanwhile, regarding the criticism of Green's monism, Tyler contests that in Green's view plural and diverse ideas and values as such are not incompatible; instead, it is the imperfection of human beings which lead us to believe so. He comments that '[t]he

ultimate harmony of true beliefs and values is an assumption each of us is driven to make instinctively, in order to give hope and direction to our efforts to understand more clearly ourselves and our world' (Tyler, 2010: 147; cf. 145-146). Green's ontology of human consciousness indicates that there is an innate drive in human nature directing us to express a holistic and monistic notion of the ideal harmony.

What we can see clearly in these discussions is that, firstly, Green's liberal philosophy contains a developmental view of human morality, and secondly, this view of human morality is in relation to an ontology of human consciousness. However, though the connection of Green's ontology of human consciousness with his two conceptions of the self and theory of freedom has been addressed, the developmental account he offers in relation to human consciousness has not been sufficiently considered. Wempe has remarked that there is a 'developmental logic of human consciousness' underlying Green's view of the development of human morality, but his elaboration of that logic is overwhelmed by use of Hegel's philosophy of consciousness (Wempe, 2004: 116-120; cf. 25-46).²⁹ For this reason, Wempe seems to overlook an important difference between Green and Hegel: the actualisation of absolute freedom for Hegel is attainable, but for Green, it is not. With his exploration of the development of human consciousness, Green establishes an idea of the ethical self which he substitutes for Hegel's concept of the ethical state.

In this chapter, my exploration of Green's liberal ethics will thus centre on his view of the moralisation of human consciousness, addressing the ways in which Green develops his ideas of the ethical self and human freedom on the basis of that view. In the meantime, I will argue that Green's establishing of a developmental view of human consciousness in his metaphysics of moral action completes his human ontology. To establish the connection between Green's concept of human consciousness and his liberal ethics, I will first introduce

²⁹ As to Tyler's view of Green's ontology of human consciousness, see my discussion in chapter three and Tyler, 2010: chaps. 4-6.

Green's criticism of hedonism and utilitarianism, in particular his debate with Henry Sidgwick. I will then explore his developmental view of human consciousness through which he confronts hedonist moral psychology. In the process of the latter argument Green formulates a philosophical ethics that depicts a dialectical process focusing on the moralisation of human consciousness. In this latter context individual freedom and social institutions are envisaged as two dimensions of a single process in which a self-conscious human agent strives for the actualisation of a reconciliatory world. Finally, I will argue that though Green proposes that the ideal of human life is our perfection and reconciliation with the world, his remarks on the ultimate true good as 'an end in which the effort of a moral agent can really find rest' is the very epitome of his entire vision of human life (Green, 2003: 195-196). With that thought in mind, Green substitutes an idea of the ethical self for Hegel's ethical state.

2. Against hedonism and utilitarianism: freedom and the concept of self

While Green was establishing his metaphysical treatment of the human condition, by critically reconsidering empiricist and idealistic metaphysics between the 1870s and 1880s, his main purpose was to develop a solid and justifiable moral argument against the prevailing hedonistic and utilitarian moral philosophy. As Wempe maintains, '[i]n Green's opinion the social condition of his times was characterized by a discrepancy between theory and practice. The practice of social reform was ahead of the social theory by reference to which these reforms were defended. The sort of affairs Green saw as desirable could not well be defended on the basis of an argument proceeding from utility' (Wempe, 2004: 155). The thinking in terms of the principle of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, or the maximisation of utility, is in the final analysis defective for supporting the demands of social and political reforms. To Green, utilitarian philosophy has a practical function in that it 'furnishes a test by which the

competing claims of the different laws, or those of law on one side and individual conviction on the other, may be put on the test' (Green, 2003: 398). It has done a great work 'in rationalising the order of social and political life' and propagating the idea of the equal status of each person, from which there are some social reforms proceeding (Green, 2003: 402-403). However, regarding individual morality, the utilitarian philosophy 'is likely to be abused in order to justify selfish conduct' (Wempe, 2004: 165; cf. Green, 2003: 398-399). Pleasure is a transient feeling as an appendage of an object which is the conclusion that an individual's action is intended to achieve, and utility is a manipulative notion reliant on the idea of the good defined as pleasure; they are merely excuses for an individual making decisions in favour of his or her private interests. Hence, Green acknowledges the practical value of the utilitarian and hedonistic philosophy but fears that 'it may itself induce practical evils, from which deliverance must be sought in a truer analysis of the ultimate good for man' (Green, 2003: 402-403). That definition of a moral good, in Green's view, cannot be encapsulated by pleasure and utility. However, in terms of Sidgwick's view, the hedonistic and utilitarian principles are justifiable and tenable.

Green and Sidgwick were both educated at Rugby. After they graduated from the school, they continued to correspond from time to time; they also visited Germany together with other friends in 1862 and 1863, and appear to have been close friends. However, after Green's introductions for T. H. Grose's edition of Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* published, Sidgwick wrote three critical reviews of Green's comments on empiricism and hedonistic utilitarianism philosophy between 1874 and 1875, in which he implied that Green's comments were confusing rather than illuminating (Sidgwick, 1874; Sidgwick, 1875a; Sidgwick, 1875b). Although Green noted Sidgwick's disagreement and expressed his sorrow for failing to convince Sidgwick in 1874 (Green, 1874b), the dispute between them continued to cause tension in 1877. In the article 'Hedonism and Ultimate Good' Sidgwick

contests that though pleasure as a feeling is transient, as an idea, it is the good that each individual seeks. For him, there may be conditions under which pleasure is conceivable, but ‘we can perfectly well compare a pleasure felt under any given conditions with any other, however otherwise conditioned, and pronounce it equal or unequal’ (Sidgwick, 1877: 36). Sidgwick accordingly contends that the utilitarian principle (the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people) is intelligible and can be a practical criterion for making public decisions. It is not, as Green claims, the case that hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy will cause a practical evil in that it might justify selfish conduct; on the contrary, the principle can provide justifications for public action to protect the interests of the majority. Up to this point, the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy had established a rational and universal argument for each individual to test existing moral and social rules. Nonetheless, as indicated, Green does not disagree with such a point of view, but emphasises the potential problems implicit in such philosophy.

In Green’s view, in the first place, the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy embodies certain inconsistencies by virtue of its empiricist and naturalistic metaphysics and psychology. In his reply to Sidgwick’s 1877 article, Green indicates that, if pleasure as a mere feeling, can stimulate the will to act without being represented in idea, there is no notion of good as pleasure represented in an individual’s consciousness. Thus the action is merely instinctively following the laws of nature, no matter whether we act consciously on an idea of good or not. On the other hand, even though pleasure can be conceived by us and is an idea of goodness that we consciously pursue, it is just one definition of good that we conceive and define and is not the ultimate criterion (Green, 1877b: 267-268). To Green, it is as if pleasure were not a transient feeling but rather an intelligible idea; it has to be an objective idea that the act of self-consciousness produces and is a product of human thought. However, while pleasure is conceived as an idea in the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy, the philosophy

obscures the function of self-consciousness in operation and thus confuses pleasure as an idea with pleasure as a feeling that is taken as the natural inclination for human beings to determine what is good.³⁰ Nonetheless, at this point, the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy lapses into a naturalistic determinism, as empiricist philosophy implies. A human being, in this reading, is not the person or agent who makes decisions and choices consciously and autonomously, but is conversely a creature whose conduct and behaviour is in accordance with natural inclinations and the laws of nature. There is therefore no free will involved in making decisions and human actions. In brief, though the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy in Sidgwick's view provides a rational and universal argument through which to explain what is good for human beings, it nonetheless conceals the fundamental fact of human agency.

Against that hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy, Green, on the basis of his metaphysical treatment of human agency, argues that an idea of good is related to how a person conceives an objective for which he or she strives, because that objective is related to how the person projects an ideal state of his or her self. As Tyler indicates, human 'agents seek the attainment of a state of their own being through the attainment of their object, rather than simply seeking the object itself' (Tyler, 2010: 110). Human beings, as self-conscious agents, are not necessarily creatures following the guidance of the laws of nature and pursuing pleasures alone, but are also capable of reflecting on whether their objective is truly

³⁰ It is what Green calls 'the privilege of self-consciousness' which also brings with it 'the privilege of self-deception' in his 1868 'Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life' (Green, 1906e: 105). He comments, '[i]t is only as fixed by relation to a permanent subject, that passing acts and sufferings are substantiated in language, but as thus substantiated they seem to have a separate reality of their own apart from this relation. ... They are put on one side as "feelings," thought or reason on the other, and it is asked what is the function of each according to our inward experience. ... Thus, as constituents of knowledge, they are assumed either to be copies of, or to be themselves, permanent cognisable things. As sources of moral action ('passions' or 'emotions'), they are taken to be either permanent objects of consciousness, or to be consciously caused by such objects, or to involve the idea of them ... as Hume announced in a formula that sticks to one, "reason is and ought to be only the slave of the passions"' (Green, 1906e: 105). Empiricism, hedonism and utilitarian philosophy all assume the function of self-consciousness to explicate how human knowledge and moral action as possible, but these philosophies also omit this assumption in their arguments and this fact then leads the arguments into inconsistency. These latter ideas form the foundation for Green to make more far-reaching criticisms in his 'Introductions to Hume's Treatise of Human Nature'.

good by reference to an ideal state of themselves. The very act of self-consciousness enables an individual to distinguish the object from the subject, as others distinguished from his or her own self. The definition of good is therefore reliant on emerging human thought, and is not dependent upon pleasure. In Green's view, pleasure is an appendage to the good object which a person strives for. It can be an intelligible idea, but to confine the definition of the good to pleasure is misleading and will cause human morality and human agency to be concealed. In particular, that hedonistic and utilitarian conception of the good obscures the distinction between the personal good and the moral good and disguises human selfishness in the name of social utility (Green, 2003: 397-402). Nonetheless, before considering this point further, it will be necessary to first explicate Green's view on the development of human consciousness. This explication will furnish us with a more comprehensive view of Green's discussion of the relation between the concept of the self and the concept of good. The mutual debate between Sidgwick and Green ended with Green's death in 1882. However Green's posthumous book, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, offered a substantive discussion of Sidgwick's hedonistic utilitarian doctrine. Further Green's philosophical ethics remained a topic for study for Sidgwick until his death in 1900.³¹

3. The development of human consciousness and the rational will

As indicated, Green's moral arguments against hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy are correlative with his metaphysical treatment of human agency and the distinction between the object and the subject. In particular, the ability to define an object as good in his view is related to an ideal state of the human self. Human consciousness as free agency and the

³¹ Between 1884 and 1900, Sidgwick published several articles and lectures on Green's metaphysics and ethics which are collected in his two posthumous books – *Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green*, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau (1902) and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant and other philosophical lectures and essays* (1905). His last philosophical lecture delivered on 21st May in 1900 was also on 'the philosophy of T. H. Green'.

concept of the self are therefore the centre of his liberal moral philosophy. However, though Green's metaphysical treatment of human agency provides a preliminary view of the relation between the concept of the self and the concept of freedom, it is his developmental account of human consciousness that completes his human ontology and advances his moral arguments. This latter account, which contains in his metaphysics of moral action, signifies a dialectical relation between individual freedom and social institution in pursuit of human perfection. Accordingly, I shall now turn to Green's discussion of the development of human consciousness.

Green's metaphysics of moral action has been taken by Dimova-Cookson as a compelling theory of human practice (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: chap. 1; Dimova-Cookson, 2003b: 140). Meanwhile, Thomas comments that Green's moral psychology contains more valuable insights than his metaphysics of knowledge (Thomas, 1987: 1-5; 123). Nevertheless, in terms of the ontology of human consciousness, Green's metaphysics of knowledge and metaphysics of moral action are complementary. The former establishes a treatment of human agency against empiricist and naturalistic philosophy by virtue of a concept of human consciousness, and the latter explicates a dynamics of human consciousness, understood as a development from intellect (theoretical reason) and desire, to will and practical reason.

In Green's thought, a self-conscious human agent has four distinctive capabilities: desire, intellect, will and practical reason. Intellect is the theoretical reason we take part in the knowing activity as 'the effort of such consciousness to take the world into itself', and desire is the reflected impulses of the effort of the consciousness 'to carry itself out into the world' (Green, 2003: 154-155; 162). While impulse as such is different from desire, it is the animal instinct driving us to fight for survival (Green, 2003: 97-105). The intellect and desire, though they are different modes of human consciousness, have a significant common feature, for there is a consciousness of the opposite distinction between the self and the world in

intellect and in desire both, and this causes human beings to feel out of place in the world (Green, 2003: 147). The efforts along with the two modes of human consciousness are therefore finally directed towards reconciling human beings with the world, making us feel at home, which is to say that the desire and intellect urge us to transform and improve ourselves to accommodate our circumstances and also to make the circumstances more suitable for us. As human agents, we are therefore constantly striving for reconciliation with the world. Meanwhile, the intellect and the desire in Green's view accompany each other in each human thought and action. When we are learning, it must indicate that we desire to know, and on the other hand, when we desire something to satisfy our impulses, a discursive function is also essential to present an idea of an object for us to desire (Green, 2003: 151-152). Human activity in this sense is the coordination of desire and intellect, while its ideal is the reconciliation of human beings with the world.

With respect to the will, for Green, this is a mode of human consciousness in which the intellectual object is an idea of self which is also the object of desire. We represent ourselves as an object in relation to certain circumstances, or other persons, as a unity through the effort of intellect. This unity is determined through the effort of desire as an object to strive for (Green, 2003: 150-151, 154-155). In this sense, the will is a crucial mode of human consciousness in which we come to take ourselves as an object, without limiting the objects of the intellect or the desire to non-self things. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the will and the coordination of desire and intellect. In willing, we identify ourselves with a desired object as an ideal state of ours, but in the mere coordination of desire and intellect, the object is not an idea of the self. Green indicates that desires 'are influences or tendencies by which the man, the self, is affected, not a motion proceeding from him. They tend to move him, but *he* does not move in them; and none of them actually moves him unless the man takes it into himself, identifies himself with it, in a way which wholly alters it

from what it was as a mere influence affecting him' (Green, 2003: 163) (*italic in original*). In theoretical thinking we consider and study an external object, the object as non-human, not an ideal state of ourselves. But in willing there is, as Green observes, 'a new principle that supervenes upon them [impulses] *through the self-conscious subject's identification of itself with one of them*, just as a perception is not a sensation or congeries of sensations, but supervenes upon certain sensations through a man's attending to them, *i.e.* through his taking them into self-consciousness and determining them, as in it, by relation to others of its contents' (Green, 2003: 164) (*italics added*). The significant difference between the will and the coordination of desire and intellect accordingly is self-identification. In willing, an individual identifies a certain desired object with an ideal state of his or her own self. That is, as Green says, '[t]he will is simply the man' and 'it is only the feeling, thought and desire represented by the act of will, that the man recognises as for the time himself' (Green, 2003: 173). The will thus represents an empirical self that is what we actually are at a certain time and in a certain place.

In addition, Green claims that the willed object which a person for the time being identifies his or her self as a good thing for him or her is an object relating to an ideal state of the person in that the person's certain desire can be satisfied (Green, 2003: 158-159). Nonetheless, though the satisfaction of desires can bring pleasure for the person, which hedonistic and utilitarian philosophers conceive as the ultimate criterion of good, Green does not share this same view. He argues that, '[w]e cannot think of an object as good, *i.e.* such as will satisfy desire, without thinking of it as in consequence such as will yield pleasure; but its pleasantness depends on its goodness, not its goodness upon the pleasure it conveys' (Green, 2003: 194). The pleasure is only an appendage of the willed object for which we strive. It is not the good itself. For Green, instead, the ultimate criterion of good is immanent in human agency and is related to our capability of practical reason.

As a matter of fact, an object we conceive as good in the end may not really satisfy us, and therefore we continue to strive for other objects. To Green, that ‘practical struggle after the Better, of which the idea of there being a Best has been the spring, has taken such effect in the world of man’s affairs as makes the way by which the Best is to be more nearly approached plain enough to him that will see’ (Green, 2003: 197). In the meantime, through our constant efforts towards achieving a better state of ourselves, we can acquire a plain conviction that being the Best is the ‘ultimate moral good to guide our conduct’, that there are such things as the true self and the true good, and that they are best for us (Green, 2003: 197). The peculiar capability of a self-conscious agent, which makes constant efforts continuously seek the ‘better way of life’, is in point the core of practical reason. It is a capacity ‘on the part of such a subject to conceive a better state of itself as an end to be attained by action’ (Green, 2003: 201).³² Hence, while Green contends that the ultimate ideal of human morality is the state in which our empirical self is identical with the true self, it is the state in which practical reason and will are reconciled with each other. The ultimate criterion of good is the self-realising principle immanent in each human person directing human activity towards the perfect freedom. That freedom is the state in which human beings are living with the world in harmony. They feel at home in the world because the subject and the object of consciousness are reunited and the opposition of the world and human beings is overcome (Green, 1986c: 242-244; Thomas, 1987: 187-188).

At this point, it is obvious that Green interlocks the dynamics of human consciousness, the doctrine of the two selves and the concept of freedom with each other, that practical reason and will, as two modes of human consciousness, refer to an ideal self and an empirical

³² Thomas indicates accurately that the centre of Green’s theory of moral action is a reply to Hume’s claim that practical reason is only slave of passions and desires (Thomas, 1987: 160). For Green, an individual’s action is not under the reign of passions and desires alone, but is capable of acting on a practical reason. On the other hand, Tyler’s claim, that once the intellect formulates an object, the will will automatically direct itself at that object and this leads to action, seems to swing the pendulum back too far (Tyler, 2010: 128-129). For the function of practical reason in this latter point of view is assimilated with intellect, the theoretical reason, and this is distinct from Green’s point of view.

self respectively. The reconciliation of practical reason and will is therefore the identity of the ideal self and the empirical self, and that reconciliation and identity indicates the perfect freedom of human beings. Accordingly, Green's human ontology is thus enclosed by a developmental view of human consciousness, from a self-distinguishing and self-objectifying consciousness to a self-improving and self-realising agent.

To summarise, Green's discussion of the development of human consciousness signifies four kinds of capability of a self-conscious human agent: intellect (theoretical reason), desire, will and practical reason. The distinction, meanwhile, between intellect and desire is the different objects towards which the effort of self-consciousness directs us. The will refers to the mode of human consciousness which encourages self-identification with an idea of the object, and practical reason refers to the mode of evaluating the willed objects as the true good to strive for. Hence, Green's developmental view of human consciousness indicates that the perfect freedom of humans is the reconciliation of practical reason and will and the reconciliation of human beings with the world. The underlying theme of his idea of positive freedom is, as Simhony and Dimova-Cookson claim, related to a conception of freedom as ability. Nonetheless, Green's definition of freedom, in the positive sense, is about 'the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good' (Green, 1986b: 200). That process of the reconciliation of practical reason and will towards perfect freedom in his view is a dialectical relation between the individual and the society. As he claims,

The moral progress of mankind has no reality except as resulting in the formation of more perfect individual characters; but on the other hand every progress towards perfection on the part of the individual character presupposes some embodiment or expression of itself by the self-realising principle in what may called – to speak most

generally – the organisation of life. It is in turn, however, only through the action of individuals that this organisation of life is achieved. (Green, 1986c: 247)

The actualisation of the perfection of freedom and the ideal state of human beings is inseparable from certain social and cultural conditions in which human consciousness initiates its moralisation.

4. The moralisation of human consciousness and the ethical self

As mentioned, Green's critique of the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy is two-fold. On the one side, he indicates the inconsistency in the philosophy that, by confusing the pleasure as an idea and the pleasure as a feeling, it tends to conceal human morality and human agency rather than to uphold them. On the other side, the empiricist and hedonistic psychology conception of what is good for human beings obscures the significant distinction between personal good and moral good. It has been shown that Green's first questioning of the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy is premised on the grounds of his ontological theory of human consciousness; that is, the ultimate criterion of good is immanent in human consciousness and human agency as such. In this section, I revert to Green's second aspect of the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy, namely that its conception of the good obscures the distinction between the personal good and the moral good as well as heteronomy and autonomy.

In Green's view, by virtue of the good being exclusively defined as pleasure, the good must be personal and private. The pleasant feeling is always private and cannot be transferred. Whereas pleasure as an idea is to be conceived as comparable, the good is therefore to be measurable and transferable. At this point, a psychological account of a personal approbation or disapprobation of what is good and valuable underpins an

assumption for social and moral claims. Since the goodness so defined is always private and personal, the reason that an individual cooperates and lives with others is in accordance with the principle of maximising the greatest amount of his or her own pleasures. The most important social virtue in this context is expediency, while the principle is referred to the concept of social utility (Green, 1867a: 156-158; Green, 2003: 255-268; Green, 2005a: 53-59). Thus if the constitution of society is conducive to the maximisation of an individual's pleasures, the maintenance of the society is reliant on the maximisation of most individuals' pleasures. However, Green argues that, despite the fact that it is claimed that pleasure as an idea is comparable and measurable, this cannot change that each pleasant feeling *per se* is always personal. To define the good exclusively as pleasure has already confined the good to the personal and private realm from the outset. While a person may follow the hedonistic and utilitarian guidance to calculate his or her own well-being with others', and intends to help others in accordance with the concept of social utility, what the person can provide to others is not pleasure, but a certain determinate object, such as food, drink or shelter. As Green indicates,

[h]e seeks to help them in attaining objects which he supposes to be common to them with him, and these objects, not being pleasures in his case, cannot be pleasures in theirs. In the realisation of the objects there must be pleasure for the others, on supposition of their interest in the objects, as for himself, and in anticipating their realisation of the objects he will doubtless also anticipate the pleasure incidental to it; but it is primarily the objects which he seeks to help them in gaining, the pleasure only as incidental to the attainment of particular objects. (Green, 2003: 277-278)

That pleasure is always personal and private, so the person who helps others cannot share her altruistic pleasure with them, but can only help others with the projection of her own pleasant experiences, and then anticipate that these others may feel pleasant if they acquire some particular and determinate objects. By identifying the good with personal pleasure, hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy therefore advocates that a person who can choose what he or she prefers without interventions entertains perfect individual freedom. The main spirit of individual freedom is to do what a person prefers.

However, in Green's view, that personal good is not good in the moral sense, for the moral good implies a normative ideal by which to distinguish the good from the bad, and 'the distinction between the good and bad will must lie at the basis of any system of Ethics' (Green, 2003: 175). To him, hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy fails to set an adequate moral standard. Since the ultimate criterion of good is pleasure, our thoughts and actions accordingly should proceed to the end of maximising pleasures, as that is the desirable ideal in absolute terms. However, by virtue of that moral standard, '[m]an or society would alike be only perfect in relation to the production of feelings which are felt, with whatever differences of quantity, by good men and bad, by man and brute, indifferently' (Green, 2003: 224). For no matter what ends or means we chose and applied, the morally good simply becomes that which produces most pleasure. But such comprehension of the moral good and the moral ideal, to Green, is heteronomous. It is not treating human beings as ends in themselves (Green, 2003: 224; cf. 175-177).

Against this heteronomous moral standard, Green contends that a moral standard should have a distinctive feature. It is irrespective of our particular and transient inclinations or desires, but is rather the absolute desirable end immanent in human agency (Green, 1986a: 92; Green, 2003: 222). That absolutely desirable end immanent in human agency, to him, is the ideal of human perfection. He argues,

... the goodness of man lies in devotion to the ideal of humanity, and ... the ideal of humanity consists in the goodness of man. It means that such an ideal, not yet realised but operating as a motive, already constitutes in man an inchoate form of that life, that perfect development of himself, of which the completion would be the realised ideal itself. Now in relation to a nature such as ours, having other impulses than those which draw to the ideal, this ideal becomes, in Kant's language, an imperative, and a categorical imperative. It will command something to be done universally and unconditionally, irrespectively of whether there is in any one, at any time, an inclination to do it. (Green, 2003: 225)

And that moral standard for judging what is good or bad and immanent in humanity is the ideal of human perfection. This is the reconciliation of practical reason and will that we have discussed earlier. Nonetheless, the ideal of human perfection so defined lacks concrete and determinate contents, and is a formal condition of the moral standard (Green, 2003: 331). Green's account of the moral ideal is therefore empty and indeterminate (Sidgwick, 1902: 72-76). It seems that Green's notion of the moral ideal encounters a difficulty here in that if the moral ideal concerns autonomy and this is immanent in human agency, it will be empty and indeterminate. But if the moral ideal is concrete, it will be heteronomous and refers to something external to human agency, such as pleasure.³³ However, Green is clearly aware of the emptiness charge. He argues that since the moral ideal is human perfection and the reconciliation of practical reason and will, the concrete and determinate content of the moral

³³ This point can be compared with Green's note on Kant's moral philosophy, that '[f]reedom is internal not external; you are not less free because you can't control the physical world; your will and the state of it are in your own power. ... Freedom is meaningless except as involving duty; the correlative of I can is I ought. ... But duty is a form requiring a content; and so this I ought or I can must have a concrete. As this is abstract or self-determined it is the autonomy of the will. The other element is like and dislike; pleasure and pain are the heteronomy of the will, different in different men. These two elements contain the springs of action' (Green, 1867a: 170-171).

ideal can only be completely known when the ideal is actually realised. Prior to that, '[w]e know it only according to the measure of what we have so far done or are doing for its attainment' (Green, 2003: 225). Consequently, 'the gradual filling up and definition of the idea of human perfection' are in social institutions, recognised duties and actual virtues (Green, 2003: 204, 228).

The charge of emptiness in Green's notion of the moral ideal has a practical consequence – namely that it cannot provide the determinate guidance and instruction for individuals to make judgement and to take action. However Green's account of moral agency articulates an elementary notion of normativity which is implicit in the capability of practical reason. Practical reason provides a person with a 'better' idea of the self for his or her will to identify with. This makes the person feel that he or she *should* desire the actualisation of that idea (Green, 2003: 204). But this elementary notion of normativity can only come to be concrete in a society. To Green, the moral standard with the determinate normative efficacy is a common good embodied in social institutions and conventional morality. He indicates:

a prior morality, founded upon interests which are other than the pure interest in being good, and governed by rules of conduct relative to a standard of goodness other than that which makes it depend on this interest, is the condition of there coming to be the morality of a character governed by interest in an ideal of goodness. Otherwise this ideal would be an empty one; it would be impossible to say what the good actions were, that were to be done for the sake of their goodness; and the interest in it impossible, since it would be an interest without an object. (Green, 1986a: 14)

And a prior morality here refers to a recognised common good that expresses itself in a form of social requirement, such as a moral law by which individuals can judge what is good and

bad (Green, 2003: 232). For Green, the moral law signifies a primitive morality that ‘consists in the observance of rules established for a common good, yet this “outward” morality is the presupposition of the “higher”’ (Green, 1986a: 92). As to the formation of the idea of a common good, this is brought about by the unity of practical reason and natural sympathy of human beings. While a person can exercise the capability of practical reason to conceive a good, the affection to care about others is based in natural sympathy. Green indicates that it is ‘an ultimate fact of human history ... that out of sympathies of animal origin, through their presence in a self-conscious soul, there arise interests as of a person in persons’ (Green, 2003: 231). The function of rational self-consciousness is to formulate an idea of the good, but it is through the operation of natural sympathy that an idea of a common good is able to be conceived (Green, 2005a: 56-57). A common good is therefore founded on a unity of rational self-consciousness with natural sympathy which is recognised by each individual who lives in the same community as the absolute desirable object (Green, 2003: 232-233). It seems, then, that, on the basis of such an idea of a common good, Green maintains the distinction between personal good and moral good without making any empty claim.

At the same time, Green does not therefore omit the importance of the personal good. According to Dimova-Cookson, because Green is eager ‘to reject entirely the hedonistic utilitarian theory of pleasure’, he ‘effectively disqualifies the ordinary good from being good at all’ (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 97). She argues that this ‘devaluation of the ordinary good is related to his neglect of the importance of the self-centred framework of general human practice’ (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 97). A person’s idea of a common good is incapable of the same interest as others, and it is impossible to equalise the idea of a common good as the moral ideal for each person (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 92-97; Skorupski, 2006). For her, a person’s idea of a common good is always subjective and is personal; in other words, it is a sort of personal good as well. It cannot be the true good equally for each individual person,

but an ordinary good for them as ‘a group of people buy a house and each contributes an equal share of money’ (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 100). Nevertheless, Green, on the one hand, does not ignore the importance of the personal good, and on the other hand, does not conceive a common good in the way that Dimova-Cookson claims. As he says, ‘[o]ur ultimate standard of worth is an ideal of *personal* worth’ (Green, 2003: 210), a good common to a person with others is the person’s own good no doubt, and the good can bring a satisfactory feeling as pleasure for the person indeed. However, these are not the reasons why Green claims that a common good is the moral law and the absolute good for each individual in the same society. For him, it is when a good common to individuals has been recognised that that recognised common good is to be absolute for them. Even though a person may conceive diverse ideas of a good common to others, it does not mean that these ideas will be the absolute good for them. The distinction of a common good as the moral good with the personal good is not dichotomous, but is rather a good with different attributes. In this sense, as Simhony indicates, Dimova-Cookson’s separation of the moral good from the ordinary good ‘is bold since it goes against Green himself by introducing a duality to his view of the individual which he denies’ (Simhony, 2005: 135).

Nonetheless, an individual person’s recognition of a common good in Green’s view is neither trying to ‘create’ a common ground for each individual nor ascertaining whether he or she will concur with it or not. For him,

[i]t has become a common-place among us that the moral susceptibilities which we find in ourselves, would not exist but for the action of law and authoritative custom on many generations of our ancestors. ... The most elementary moralisation of the individual must always have arisen from his finding himself in the presence of a requirement, enforced against his inclinations to pleasure, but in an interest which he can recognise

as being his own, no less than the interest of those by whom the requirement is enforced. The recognition of such an interest by the individual is an outcome of the same reason as that which has led to the maintenance of the requirement by the society he belongs to. All further development of morality – all articulation of duties, all education of conscience in response to them – presupposes this primary recognition. (Green, 2003: 237)

A common well-being recognised by individuals is immanent in their social duties and social conventions. It is ‘only so far as we are members of a society, of which we can conceive the common good as our own’ (Green, 2003: 209). Accordingly, Brink’s claim that Green’s emphasis on the role of conventional morality ‘displays a disappointing form of moral complacency’ seems to be misleading (Brink, 2003: 73). While Brink suggests an individualistic interpretation of Green’s idea of a moral self and claims that individuals define the idea of a common good separately, he omits the importance of conventional morality in Green’s thought. Instead, he proposes a deliberative and prudent idea of the individual self. This self invents an idea of the common good, by measuring the compensations from caring for others, on the basis of his or her psychological bonds with them (Brink, 2003: 42-69; Simhony, 2005: 137-138). Nonetheless, Green’s idea of a common good is not conceived and recognised in this ‘creation’ sense, but is rather immanent in the conventional morality. Outside the context of a conventional social life, an individual person is incapable of conceiving a common good. It is living in a society that enables the person ‘to give that effect to the idea of himself as the object of his actions, to the idea of a possible better state of himself, without which the idea would remain like that of space to a man who had not the senses either of sight or touch’ (Green, 2003: 218). Conventional morality is thus essential to an individual person’s conception of a recognised common good. However, since a common

good as the moral law regulating individuals is embodied in social and cultural institutions, the question therefore arises – is it not heteronomous rather than autonomous as well?

The short answer to the above question is no. For Green, on the one hand, an individual can only form his own personality by living within a society, and that individual person who is grown and educated in a society inclines to follow the instructions and requirements of the society. To fulfil the duties of a station is a primary aim for the person, for it makes what he or she is (Green, 2003: 209-210). On the other hand, as a self-conscious human being, the person also has the capability to reflect on what his empirical self is at present and to conceive a better state of that self. But the conception of a better self may be in conflict with his current social duty and the recognised common good in the current social and cultural institutions. Hence, the individual person can reflect on the current conception of common goods through his or her self-reflection. Green's idea of a common good as the moral law, therefore, is concerned with autonomy, present within practical reason, and is not absolute but conversely transformable. In the meantime, it is precisely by virtue of that self-conscious capability that the moralisation of human consciousness can be initiated.

It has been shown that in opposition to the hedonistic and utilitarian conception of the good as pleasure, Green develops an alternative conception of moral good in accordance with the concept of a recognised common good, whereby he situates the moral ideal within human agency, and this also embodies individual autonomy. Nonetheless, individual autonomy is not a project which can be completed; instead, it is a perpetual process of striving for an individual. For Green, individual autonomy is therefore an achievement drawn from the moralisation of human consciousness.

With regard to the moral development of an individual person, as Harris indicates, Green distinguishes three stages (Harris, 1989: 546-547). At first, an individual person is following the instructions and requirements of a society habitually and uncritically, whereas

‘a direction of a man’s will to the highest possible realisation of his faculties is the common ground of every form of true virtue ... but the habit even in its earliest and least reflective stage was to be under the direction of reason, as embodied in law or acting through a personal educator’ (Green, 2003: 298; cf. Nicholson, 2006: 151-152). That individual’s primitive consciousness of moral ideas is imbued with the conventional morality as ‘the *a priori* furniture’ of his or her mind (Green, 2003: 387-388). Nonetheless, the motive of the individual, in following the cultivation and discipline of social and cultural institutions, is still self-interested (Harris, 1989: 546). But after a process of reflecting on this conventional morality, the individual will come to have an idea ‘of something that universally should be, of something absolutely desirable, of a single end or object of life’ (Green, 1986c: 247). The individual can come to an awareness of the distinction between the particular moral ideas embodied in the current social and cultural institutions and the universal and absolute moral ideal.

For Green, this is a critical moment in the moral development of the individual. On the one hand, before the individual recognises the social requirements and expectations of him as the duties in the fulfilment of which he can satisfy himself and contribute to the society and other individuals, he will still consider the conventional morality as imposed from without, whereas the individual in this scenario is inclined to revolt against its strictures. On the other hand, if the individual can reconcile the turbulence in his mind, and seek an ideal object the realisation of which can contribute to the advance of human perfection, he will then achieve the third and highest stage of this process of moralisation as well as maintaining his autonomy. At such a stage the individual person not only reconciles his practical reason with will, but also reconciles the objective reason embodied in the conventional morality with the individual’s subjective reason. Green indicates that ‘the objects to which the will is directed are not merely determined by customs and institutions which are due to the operation of

practical reason in previous ages, but are embodiments or expressions of the conception of what absolutely should be as formed by the man who seeks to satisfy himself in their realisation' (Green, 1986c: 249). That is to say, what has been expressed in conventional morality are the ideal objects that previous people conceived as contributory to the achievement of human perfection: 'the systematic custom & law of society [is] really [a] projection or expression of the universality of [the] self though never fully adequate. In being determined by it, man is determined by [the] self. Thus [he] realizes [the] idea of duty. But this implies conformity to custom &c, be loyal i.e. for its own sake, & according to [the] spirit not to [the] letter' (quoted from Wempe, 2004: 141). Nonetheless, the individual who questions conventional morality by reference to the ideal of human perfection can suggest different conceptions of the object: '[h]e is like a judge who is perpetually making new law in ostensibly interpreting the old. He extracts the higher meaning out of the recognised social code, giving reality to some requirements which it has hitherto only contained potentially' (Green, 2003: 360). The individual person who is capable of suggesting a new ideal object for the society in pursuit of human perfection, for Green, is 'a conscientious man' (Green, 2003: 354-355). Thus, the moralisation of human consciousness has three stages in Green's view: the first is an unreflective consciousness in which an individual just follows the instructions and expectations of a society to think and to act; the second is a turbulent consciousness in which an individual encounters a choice between acknowledging social conventions voluntarily and giving new moral ideas to the society; the third is a reconciliatory consciousness in which an individual finds a way to reconcile new moral ideas with existing social conventions. While conceptions of the common good embodied in social and cultural institutions are the representations of previous ideal objects, an individual person as a self-conscious agent is capable of reflection on both embodiments and representations, and can conceive a different version within altered circumstances.

Nonetheless, though Green indicates that a person with doubts about the existing social and cultural institutions is regarded as conscientious, he does not advocate a sceptical atmosphere. Firstly, the person's moral conscience is cultivated by social and cultural institutions, from which he develops a moral ideal that has not been expressed perfectly in the current society; it is a consciousness of a moral principle derived from social convention and moral habit (Green, 1997: 36-37; Green, 2003: 387-389).³⁴ Accordingly, in Green's view, before the person can critically examine conventional morality, he should first have a comprehensive and coherent understanding of the moral ideas expressed in the society. Secondly, Green remarks that the people who are focused on questioning social and cultural institutions, and are proud of themselves for so acting, are worse than a person who does not question at all. This kind of person is self-conceited and merely intends to earn his or her own reputations through criticism (Green, 2003: 355-356). For Green, then, '[a] man's approach to the ideal of virtue is by no means to be measured by the clearness or constancy of his reflection upon the ideal' (Green, 2003: 355). Thirdly, while scepticism has constantly challenged our practical moral ideas, as embodied in the current social and cultural institutions, these ideas are still the furniture of our conscience, which can assist us in making judgement and action. To Green, the task of moral philosopher is 'in counteracting the advantage which scepticism may otherwise give to passion against duty' (Green, 2003: 385). A philosophical criticism aims to disentangle the current imperfect expressions of moral ideas and to explain the validity of the ideas coherently against absolute scepticism.

It may be doubted, whether the apparent mischief, which arises in a speculative age from the habit of asking a reason why for the rules of respectability, does more than affect the excuses made for acts of self-indulgence of which men, innocent of criticism

³⁴ For more considerations of Green's notion of conscience see Richter (1964) and also Leighton, 2004: chap. 4; de Sanctis, 2005: chap. 2; Tyler, 2012: chap. 4.

or speculation, would equally be guilty. But ... it remains true that the value of the Dialectic which asks and gives such an account of ideal good as at once justifies and limits obedience to practical authorities, is conditional upon its finding in the individual a well-formed habitual morality. (Green, 2003: 395-396)

The dialectical processing of individual conscience and social institution towards the ideal of human perfection is inseparable from a habitual and conventional moral life, in Green's view. It is a dynamics of human consciousness in that an individual self engages in self-examination and self-assertion within a social life in pursuit of the perfect reconciliation with the world.³⁵ With such a developmental and, to a certain extent, optimistic view of human moral life, on the basis of a human ontology, Green's liberal moral philosophy thus proposes an idea of ethical life with an idea of the perfect freedom. Nonetheless, there is a sceptical element in Green's vision of human life, in that he does not share the same faith in the ethical state with Hegel. Consequently the ideal of human perfection after all is unattainable.³⁶

5. History, freedom, and the human ideal

So far I have given an account of Green's view on the moralisation of human consciousness and his ideas of the ethical self and human freedom by reference to his developmental account of human consciousness. I have also indicated that Green's main intention – to establish such a system of ethics on the ground of a metaphysical and ontological treatment of the human person – goes against the prevailing hedonistic utilitarian philosophy in nineteenth-century Britain. In order to expound that comprehensive philosophical doctrine of

³⁵ That '[t]he whole moral life is, in fact, a process in which, though it be sometimes like a stream that seems to run backward, man, as an unrealised self, is constantly fusing the skirts of the alien matter that surrounds him, and fashioning the world of his desires to a universe adequate himself' (Green, 1906d: 86).

³⁶ Regarding to Green's criticism of Hegel's concept of the ethical state, Nicholson has developed an inspiring and lucid argument. See Nicholson, 1995.

human morality, Green learnt much from Kant and Hegel, and critically adapted their arguments. In the preceding chapter, it has been shown that Green advanced Kant's philosophy by overcoming the dualism between a world of the things-in-themselves and human mind that Kant left. Nonetheless, Green also tries to advance on Hegel's moral and political philosophy by substituting an idea of the ethical self for Hegel's concept of the ethical state.

Green's attitude towards Hegel has been mentioned before. He claimed the philosophical work of Hegel's should be done over again (Caird, 1883: 5). Nettleship also indicates that Green was taking Hegel's systematic thought to be 'the last word of philosophy', but he 'did not occupy himself with the exposition of it, but with the reconsideration of the elements in Kant of which it was the development' (Nettleship, 1906: lxxxv-lxxxvi). A significant result of that critical consideration of Hegel's philosophy is Green's comment on Hegel's concept of the state. In 1867 lectures on moral and political philosophy Green explicates Hegel's concept of the state. He notes that (1) 'In society first arise those distinctions which are recognized by others besides the two parties. Wealth is unequally distributed and difference of ranks arises, as step to forming a state' (Green, 1867a: 176); (2) 'The society without the state is a mere body ... and the state is the reason and soul' (Green, 1867a: 177); (3) 'The state is an individual, a society is not. Societies differ from one another in point of number. But states like men have not their individuality in their bodies or organism. Individuality is negative; in being an individual you must be determined by negation of others, and hence states stand in a negative position to other states' (Green, 1867a: 178); (4) 'States pass into history. One state asserts its principle over another and then disappears. So history gives a representation of moral philosophy' (Green, 1867a: 178); and (5) 'The realization of freedom is the establishment of a perfectly free state. At first sight you might say you are not free, for your individuality is repressed. But this is to lose sight of what

is the highest in man. When a man grasps a truth theoretically and practically as duty, he ceases to care for himself and becomes a part of the state' (Green, 1867a: 181). That is to say, according to (1) (2) (3) and (5), Hegel's concept of the state, in Green's understanding of it, is the actualisation of the spiritual, rational and perfect freedom, and reigns over society and the individual person.³⁷

However, according to such an apprehension, Green argues that 'Hegel's account of freedom as realised in the state does not seem to correspond to the facts of society as it is, or even as, under the unalterable conditions of human nature, it ever could be' (Green, 1986c: 233). For him, Hegel obscures the difference between the ideal and the actual, and therefore ignores the fact that 'under the best conditions of any society that has been such realisation of freedom is most imperfect' (Green, 1986c: 233). At the same time, an important distinction between Green and his view of Hegel is that the state for him does not reign over individuals, but rather protects and ensures the necessary conditions in which the individuals can actualise their ideas of the best self. Nonetheless, Green's comments on Hegel's concept of the state are to some extent misleading, as Hegel's concern in the *Philosophy of Right* is not to justify the reign of any current state, but rather to give a philosophical account for the *raison d'être* of the modern state. It 'is not a description of any one actual state, although it is full of empirical detail, but of the inherent rationality of the modern state as such' (Forbes, 1975: xxiii). Forbes argues that the actualisation of freedom in Hegel's ethical state is not final and absolute. It is conversely the objective side of freedom which will reconcile with the

³⁷ The five distinctive features of Hegel's concept of the state that Green identified are not far away from what Hegel himself expounded. In *Philosophy of Right*: '[t]he state is the actuality of the ethical Idea - the ethical spirit as substantial will, manifest and clear to itself, which thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows in so far as it knows it. It has its immediate existence ... in custom and its mediate existence in the self-consciousness of the individual ... in the individual's knowledge and activity, just as self-consciousness, by virtue of its disposition, has its substantial freedom in the state as its essence, its end, and the product of its activity' (§ 257); 'The state is the actuality of the substantial will, an actuality which it possesses in the particular self-consciousness when this has been raised to its universality; as such, it is the rational in and for itself. This substantial unity is an absolute and unmoved end in itself, and in it, freedom enters into its highest right, just as this ultimate end possesses the highest right in relation to individuals ... whose highest duty is to be members of the state' (§ 258) (Hegel, 1991: 275).

subjective side in the absolute of art, religion and philosophy, and ultimately, the absolute is realised in history (Forbes, 1975: xxiii). A state as '[t]he "earthly God" is seen to suffer the fate of everything mortal and finite in what appears at first glance to be a realm wholly given over to the play of the contingent and the unforeseen. International law between sovereign states is no more than an "ought"; there is no higher court of judgment than history – the world's court' (Forbes, 1975: xxiii). As Hegel himself claims, '[w]orld history is the expression of the divine and absolute process of the spirit in its highest forms, of the progression whereby it discovers its true nature and becomes conscious itself' (Hegel, 1975: 65). Green's apprehension of Hegel's concept of the state is accordingly not correct and leads to his criticism being misleading (cf. Nicholson, 1995: 67-70).

Hence, while Green has identified that the modern state in Hegel's thought is doomed and will pass into history (4), he nonetheless ignores this point and misinterprets Hegel's concept of the state. But this misconception of Hegel discloses a significant insight into Green's view on the ethical life, suggesting that the perfect freedom which each individual strives for is, after all, unattainable. An exogenous reason is, as mentioned, the necessary social conditions for the individual to achieve the realisation of the perfect freedom are always imperfect. However, the more important reason for human imperfection is the human condition, as such. Tyler contends that that imperfection stems 'from the fact that the process via which each of us individually instantiates this principle involves the medium of our animal body: that is, each of us is a spiritual being with a physical existence that brings its own needs and limitations' (Tyler, 2010: 95). Nonetheless, he argues, there is an abstract and indeterminate drive innate in human nature moving us towards the ultimate harmonious system of values and ideas as the apotheosis of human perfection (Tyler, 2010: 87, 128-129). In Tyler's view, therefore, the animal and instinctive part of human beings for Green is the cause of our finitude and imperfection in relation to real freedom.

Yet animal impulses and desires are not a sufficient reason to explain Green's claim that the human ideal is unattainable. On the one hand, the impulses and desires are not limitations on human beings in pursuit of the perfect freedom, but an indispensable condition of ethical life. For Green, the exercise of rational will is inseparable from desires and feelings. They are necessary constituents of our conception of goods and ideas. Without that animal part, we human beings are incapable of realising the distinction between vices and virtues (Green, 2003: 199-200). On the other hand, the reason for that ideal of human perfection to be unattainable is inherent in the very capability of being a moral agent *per se*. As Green observes,

... regarding the good generically as that which satisfies desire, but considering the objects we desire to be by no means necessarily pleasures, we shall naturally distinguish the moral good as that which satisfies the desire of a moral agent, or that in which a moral agent can find the satisfaction of himself which he necessarily seeks. The true good we shall understand in the same way. *It is an end in which the effort of a moral agent can really find rest.* (Green, 2003: 195-196) (italics added)

It is when intellect, desire, will and practical reason, all these modes of human consciousness, are finally at rest that we achieve the human ideal. If moral agency is still in action, the ideal objects and the moral goods so conceived cannot be the absolutely desired object. Nonetheless, if the moral agency is at rest, the distinctive condition for us being human will vanish. It is precisely because human beings are moral agents, as well as animal organisms, that the reformation and amelioration of human society is in demand (Green, 2003: 360-363). The reason that Green claims that the political state is always failing to meet the necessary

social conditions in which individuals achieve perfect freedom is accordingly inherent in the very conditions necessary to being human.

By virtue of this point – that the ideal of human perfection is after all unattainable – Green’s idea of moral progress in history is obviously not as optimistic as some commentators assert in that the progress of human history is inevitable as the manifestation of the will of God (Richter, 1956: 458-460; Lewis, 1962: 36-41; Hoover, 1973: 556; Armour, 2003). Instead, it is as Tyler indicates: ‘progress is something we must work for and not wait for’ (Tyler, 2012: 169). The idea of progress in Green’s view is but ‘a hermeneutic principle for studying past societies and ... a critical standard whereby they could be judged’ (Bellamy, 1990: 136). As Green claims, the task of moral philosophy ‘is to find a criterion of moral categories’ and ‘[t]he best criterion proposed is that of historical succession: the category that comes after is better than that which comes before’ (Green, 1867a: 117). An idea of progress is to provide us with the guidance for having a better understanding of what the moral ideal is from human history (Green, 1867a: 117; cf. 108). It is not to suggest that there is a metaphysical force directing the process of history, but to remind us that there are practical moral ideas immanent in history, which contains diverse instantiations of the idea of a common good conceived and recognised by past generations (Boucher, 1985: 48; Tyler, 2006a: 88-90; cf. Green, 2005c). Nonetheless, the motivation for an individual to study human history and to comprehend the manifestations of the moral ideal is one of self-examination and self-improvement whereby the dialectical progress between the individual and the society may be initiated.

6. Conclusion

Thus far it has been argued that in order to establish a liberal moral philosophy contrary to hedonistic utilitarian philosophy, Green begins with the ontology of human consciousness

and depicts a dialectical development of individual freedom and social institution moving towards the ideal of human perfection, the reconciliation of practical reason with will as well as the reconciliation of human beings with the world. Nonetheless, the ontological condition for us to be human prescribes the boundaries of what our rational will can achieve. Hence the ideal of human perfection is nothing but an unattainable future which indicates that the development of human history is endless. With this sceptical notion in his mind, Green therefore developed an idea of the ethical self to substitute for Hegel's concept of the ethical state, though social and political institutions in his view still have the task of providing and ensuring a certain necessary condition which allows individuals to pursue their own self-realisation. In the next chapter accordingly I will move to Green's social and political thought, in which he explores an idea of 'the common good' in society based on his philosophical ethics. We will see that the divergence of social consciousness causes persisting conflicts and inequalities in human society.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL CONFLICT AND STATE ACTION: GREEN'S IDEA OF THE COMMON GOOD SOCIETY

1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have demonstrated that contrary to hedonistic utilitarian philosophy, which is founded on the empiricist and naturalistic metaphysics, Green established his own philosophical ethics on a metaphysical and ontological conception of the human person, and a moral and developmental theory of human freedom. The moral perfection that each human person strives for is the ideal, leading to the dialectics of individual freedom and social institution. As a self-conscious agent, the individual is capable of developing his or her own abilities within a social community in pursuit of a better life, while the social and political institutions established in that community require transformations and reformations constantly, as the necessary provisions that institutions should provide for individual self-realisation are, unfortunately, always imperfect. The focus of this chapter, then, turns to the necessary internal contradiction in Green's idea of the common good society, which is the result of his human ontology: the gap between social conflicts and the ideal social harmony.

Green's idea of the common good has been located at the centre of his social and political philosophy. As Harris and Morrow say, '[t]his idea of common good is absolutely central to Green's theory. It provides the basis on which he discusses the social and political structures and conditions necessary to the realisation of human potentialities, and the extent to which political authority could be used to facilitate the pursuit of self-perfection' (Harris and Morrow, 1986: 6; cf. Simhony, 2009a: 31). To Nicholson, it is 'Green's ultimate moral

criterion' for state intervention and moral dispute (Nicholson, 1986: 82). Focusing on the relationship between the right and the good, Grygienc, on the other hand, indicates that, Green's idea of the common good has a procedural and a teleological nature suggestive of the formulation of political rights (Grygienc, 2012: 74-75), that Green's idea of the common good is used to signify a moral principle concerning the reconciliatory and well-ordered society. But, Milne argues, when Green suggests that the common good, as the foundation of a society, is non-competitive, he seems to omit the effort and the sacrifice each individual person has made for the society. He also underestimates the impact of differences and conflicts between persons in reality (Milne, 1986). In a similar vein, Horton also indicates that Green overemphasises the non-competitive feature of the common good and ignores the conflicts existing in reality (Horton, 2010: 74-76). Countering these criticisms, Tyler contests that Green does recognise that there are conflicts and competitions between social members, while the non-competitive ideal of the common good is not philosophically untenable (Tyler, 2012: 58-60). He argues that to take the common good principle as an ideal is not to assert that there is no conflict in reality; on the contrary, the concept of conflict in Green's thought provides an account of the 'inevitable and potentially progressive political phenomenon' (Tyler, 2006a: 73-74). Nonetheless, Tyler's response retains a gap between the practical reality and the theoretical ideal in Green's idea of the common good.

In this chapter, I will argue that Green's idea of the common good society does imply ideas of conflict and diversity, and it provides a justification for social and state action to intervene and to reconcile that conflict and diversity in human society. In the following sections, I will first introduce Green's organic view of society in order to indicate that, to Green, having an idea of the common good is a necessary condition for the formation of human society, and this idea also signifies a universal moral principle that can only be embodied and achieved in and through the transformation and the development of each

particular society. I will then explicate the notion that though the idea of the common good as a universal moral principle regulates an ideal just and liberal society for which human beings strive, according to Green's rights recognition thesis, conflicts and inequalities will persist in human society and will always require collective actions in order to maintain a system of rights. Green therefore develops a justification for state action. Nonetheless, I will suggest that, while Green underscores the importance of collective action, he does not abolish individual and social differences. The divergence of social and moral ideas, in his view, is inherent in the ontological condition of the human person, and conflict and diversity are indispensable factors to the development of human society.

2. Social organism and the common good

It has been argued that Green's idea of society is organic (Simhony, 1991a). For Simhony, among British idealists the idea of society is mainly one of a non-holistic relational organism. It is not a mere aggregate of individual persons or a holistic whole in which differences are demolished and assimilated (Simhony, 1991a: 520-523). In her view, the relational organism idea of society maintains the notion that individuals and social institutions are interdependent. They are constituents of an interactive structure of social relations in pursuit of the ideal of self-realisation and common good. With this organic view of society, with which L. T. Hobhouse would concur, it is the conception of society 'towards which Mill worked through his career, and which forms the starting-point of T. H. Green's philosophy alike in ethics and in politics' (Hobhouse, 1994: 60). Nevertheless, Hobhouse reminds us that the term 'organism' is easily abused, for the term has also been adopted by naturalists and evolutionists, such as Herbert Spencer, whose work Green is set against (Hobhouse, 1994: 60). Recently, Tyler has also suggested that there is a danger in applying the term 'organic' to Green's social ontology, as it may lead us to believe that in Green's view individual persons

can only achieve true freedom ‘by referring to the impersonal meta-perspective of society conceived as a single, integrated mechanism’ (Tyler, 2012: 33; cf. 27-32). Cacoullous, meanwhile, claims that Green’s theory is not organic at all, for the social community in Green’s thought exists to promote the moral development of its individual members and is purely instrumental (1974: 14).

Thus, there are three issues: first, the distinction between the relational and the holistic view of organism; second, the relation between the means and the end; lastly, the difference between natural and spiritual organisms. Henry Jones (1852-1922) has made a lucid response to these issues in terms of idealist argument. He contends in his ‘The Social Organism’ (1883) that the main point of the organic conception of society is to signify that ‘an individual has no life except that which is social, and that he cannot realise his own purposes except in realising the larger purposes of society’ (Jones, 1997: 9). But the relation of the individual to society is not merely a means to an end (Jones, 1997: 7-8), as the individual and society are mutually constituent: together they contribute to the realisation of an end. Meanwhile, ‘the social organism’, as Jones argues, ‘is not only “sensitive” in every part, but it is self-conscious in every part’ (Jones, 1997: 15). It is not a natural organism in which each individual part cooperates with others mechanically without consciousness. It is rather an organism in which each individual voluntarily and consciously devotes themselves to a common purpose.

In a similar vein, Green adopts the term ‘organism’ in *Prolegomena to Ethics* to address the ways in which an organic whole and its constituent parts interrelate with each other in contributing to an end, suggesting that ‘the constituent elements of an organism can only be truly and adequately conceived as rendered what they are by the end realised through the organism’ (Green, 2003: 90). Meanwhile, Green continues that the idea of social organism is used to signify a condition in which each individual person ‘voluntarily’ lives

with other persons by reference to a social purpose, which therefore unites them. In other words, this is not a claim that there is an ultimate end for which human beings naturally and mechanically struggle (Green, 1986a: 98-99, 119; Simhony, 1991a: 532-533). Hence, though the term 'organism' has been applied in physiology and biology, for Green, it is still possible for it to be used in a social and moral sense without confusion. The social purpose for which the individual strives is a consciousness of the absolutely desirable object shared by all social members, namely the common good.

Grygienc has identified two important characteristics of Green's common good. On the one side, it is objective in a historical and geopolitical sense, and on the other side, it is normative and absolute as the *telos* innate in human nature (Grygienc, 2012: 74). From a historical and geopolitical point of view, there are different forms of social community at different points in history, such as the family, tribe, city-state, civil association, kingdom, confederation, empire and the modern state. But the primitive reason for persons to live with each other is simply a question of natural sympathy and survival (Green, 2003: 229-231). Nonetheless, though an individual person needs to cooperate with others to survive from time to time, it does not mean that he will not disown this social life if the situation changes. There has to be a practical reason for an individual person to remain in the society and to care about the subsistence of this form of life (Diggs, 1973: 289). In Green's view, this reason is an idea of good as an absolute desirable common interest shared and recognised by individual persons. It is an idea of a common good immanent in social institutions and conventional morality which, as indicated before, is the expression of the dominant interests identified by previous generations. The idea of the common good in this sense is therefore historical and particular.

On the other hand, Green's idea of the common good in the absolute and normative sense indicates that the formulation and the organisation of a social community is necessarily

undertaken with reference to a universal interest, rather than any particular interests. For Green, 'neither trade nor conquest by themselves would have helped to widen the comprehension of political union, to extend the range within which reciprocal claims are recognised of man on man, and ultimately to familiarise men with the idea of human brotherhood' (Green, 2003: 332-333). To unite individuals within a community requires an intellectual and spiritual object willed jointly. It is 'a good in the effort after which there can be no competition between man and man; of which the pursuit by any individual is an equal service to others and to himself' (Green, 2003: 335). Although each individual who lives in a community may be not conscious of that good as that which he or she contributes to, a shared interest as the common good 'must have been pursued in order to the formation of the most primitive tribal or civil society' (Green, 2003: 336). The idea of the common good in this view is therefore immanent and fundamental as the necessary logical condition underlying every form of social life.

Regarding the normative aspect of Green's idea of the common good, Tyler suggests that it is close to Kant's categorical imperative in that it is the true and objective moral law which denotes a kingdom of ends (Tyler, 2012: 54-58), because individuals living in the society, as suggested, are in harmony with each other, and are 'interested in each other as persons in so far as each, being aware that another presents his own self-satisfaction to himself as an object, finds satisfaction for himself in procuring or witnessing the self-satisfaction of the other' (Green, 2003: 218). Accordingly, it is a society in which each individual is treated as an end in itself. However, though the common good principle, in this sense, is related to Kant's categorical imperative, as Green himself indicates the two concepts are still different. While the categorical imperative discloses the universal and absolute principle operating and immanent in the process of social organisation (which is formulated by individuals), it nonetheless ignores the concrete and determinate embodiments in social

institutions and conventional morality (Green, 2003: 249-250). Pertaining to the principle of the common good, Green postulates that:

We convey it in the concrete by speaking of a human family, of a fraternity of all men, of the common fatherhood of God; or we suppose a universal Christian citizenship, as wide as the Humanity for which Christ died, and in thought we transfer to this, under certain analogical adaptations, those claims of one citizen upon another which have been actually enforced in societies united under a single sovereignty. (Green, 2003: 238)

This suggests that the principle of the common good is an abstract ideal gradually disclosed in social practices and individual articulations. Tyler argues, therefore, that the universal feature of the common good is denoted by its logical and philosophical attributes rather than any sense of a universal compelling moral law which pays no regard to an individual's endorsement. It is thus not the true and absolute moral law, but 'a heuristic fiction' by which a critical citizen might articulate a better idea of his moral self (Tyler, 2012: 71; cf. 58, 60). The common good principle in this sense is not normative, but is rather a logical reference point with which the individual can examine critically existing social and moral ideas (Tyler, 2012: 46, 69-76, 87-90).

However, Green's common good principle connotes two normative features: non-exclusive and non-competitive (Nicholson, 1990: 80; Simhony, 1991b: 317-319; Simhony, 2009a: 33). It has been indicated that for Green the idea of the common good is a spiritual and ideal object after which there is no competition between individual persons and each individual person is equal as the end in him or herself. Green's idea of the common good principle, as the moral ideal driving the development of human society, is accordingly with

two normative features, non-competitive and non-exclusive. However, while the principle of the common good in this sense is a universal moral ideal of human society, it is nonetheless abstract. Green therefore provides two complementary arguments with which to remedy this abstractness. Firstly, while he notes the abstract nature of Kant's categorical imperative as drawn from Hegel's criticism, he emphasises the determinations of the common good principle in historical development. For Green, 'Kant's ethics seem unpractical; this is only because he gives a mere schema, a form: his ethics are entirely abstract and formal, not concrete' (Green, 1867a: 172). Nonetheless, 'by Hegel's moral philosophy we can explain Kant's. The philosophy of history is the succession of abstract conceptions, each becoming more and more universal' (Green, 1867a: 173). Drawing on Hegel's idea of how an ethical community comes to be, the idea of the common good as a normative principle can explain and guide the development of human society towards ideal harmony. But this can only be seen in the concrete manifestations of this principle in human history. Secondly, despite the fact that Green adopts Hegel's critical view of Kant's abstract moral principle, with his doubts over Hegel's concept of the ethical state, Green absorbs the Greek ethics of virtue into his account of the common good principle. He remarks that 'a direction of a man's will to the highest possible realisation of his faculties is the common ground of every form of true virtue. This direction of the will, according to both Aristotle and Plato, was to be founded on habit' (Green, 2003: 298). That habit, in Green's view, is 'of qualities that make the good member of a family, or good tribesman, or good citizen' and cultivates individual persons to be interested in social good and social merits (Green, 2003: 287-288, 290-291). The embodiment of the common good principle is an ethical self-realisation of an individual person in a good and social life. It is not the actualisation of absolute freedom in an ethical state. In brief, Green's idea of the common good is embodied in the development of social institutions, which form the moral standard by which each individual distinguishes good from

bad. It is neither abstract nor egoistic, but is manifested in concrete social activities (Nicholson, 1990: 61-64; Simhony, 2009a: 39-44). To Green, ‘... if it is only the conscience of the individual that brings the principle of human equality into productive contact with the particular facts of human life, on the other hand it is from the embodiment of the principle laws and institutions and social requirements that the conscience itself appropriates it’ (Green, 2003: 249). Thus, the principle of the common good is that the moral ideal regulates the development of society, contributing to the progress of human perfection. The embodiment of the ideal is in and through a dialectical relationship between the social and the individual, and relates to the moralisation of human consciousness.³⁸ That is to say, the common good principle does have normative efficacy, but this efficacy is not derived from an abstract, formal and universal logical argument, it is rather embedded in concrete, substantial and particular social practices.

In contest with the normative feature of Green’s common good, Milne argues that this principle ignores the inevitable conflicts happening between individuals, and the sacrifices these individuals have made in order to maintain social harmony. For him, the finitude of human beings and the scarcity of resources limit what each individual person can have and achieve in an unequal manner. Hence, he claims that ‘[t]he implications of finitude which Green manifestly failed to grasp, preclude optimism about universal human wellbeing’ (Milne, 1986: 75; cf. Sidgwick, 1902: 68-74; Vincent, 1986a: 13). However, Green is by no means an optimist, suggesting that social life is ‘a war, indeed, in which the neutral ground is constantly being extended and which is itself constantly yielding new tendencies to peace, but in which at the same time new vistas of hostile interests, with new prospects of failure for the weaker, are as constantly opening’ (Green, 2003: 289). The ideal society for which the common good principle prompts us to struggle is not achievable ‘so long as anything else

³⁸ See my discussion of Green’s view of the relation of individual autonomy and social convention in section four of chapter four.

than self-devotion to an ideal of mutual service is the end' (Green, 2003: 288). To Green, there is a distinction between the actual determinations of the idea of the common good and the common good principle itself (Green, 2003: 431-432; cf. 227-228). As Carter says, 'Green used the notion of common good to mean the final satisfaction of our potential or the true fulfilment of our being. He also used common good to mean an interest or value that is shared by members of a community. The distinction appears to be put by Green as the difference between the common good (being the true end) and a common good (one version or attempt at it)' (Carter, 2003: 28; cf. Smith, 1981: 194-198; Dimova-Cookson, 1999). The principle of the common good is not merely an abstract ideal, but is also immanent and manifest in concrete historical and social conditions, and in individual practices, although it requires a well-organised society to ensure the condition for that particularisation is possible.

3. Green's rights recognition thesis and social inequality

The above discussion indicates that Green's common good principle is immanent in every form of social community as a condition necessary to maintaining a united community. Through the development of social life, the principle gradually discloses itself and instils the ideas of equality and freedom into each social member's mind. In this sense, the principle of the common good is a normative ideal regulating the progress of human society in contributing to human perfection. However, the finite nature of human beings and the scarcity of resources nonetheless may lead to wars and competitions where human selfishness is the primary impediment to the achievement of the social harmony. Hence, for Green:

unless a discipline and refinement of the natural impulses, through the operation of social institutions and arts, went on *pari passu* with the expression of the idea of perfection in such institutions and arts, the direction of the impulses of the individual by

this idea, when in some form or other it has been consciously awakened in him, would be practically impossible. (Green, 1986c: 247)

Since the moral progress of an individual person relates to the development of the person's rational will, and this may be different for each individual, social regulations are a necessary condition to guard against human selfishness.³⁹ The task of social and cultural institutions is to reconcile the divergence of individual consciousness with the idea of the common good and to ensure each individual is given equal opportunities to achieve his or her self-realisation. The practical result – so formulated in the development of human history – is therefore a general fabric of rights maintained by a social community. However, according to Green's rights recognition thesis, a system of rights itself entails conflicts and inequalities in reality, and there are inevitably some people who will be excluded from the system. In the case of nineteenth-century British society, the primary exclusion related to the franchise (Carter and Mears, 1953: 795-811, 867-869; Cowling, 2005).⁴⁰

As we have seen, Green concerned himself with the inequality prevalent in the nineteenth century, and in particular with the inequalities between labourers and capitalists, farmers and landowners. To him, '[t]he civilisation and freedom of the ancient world were

³⁹ Regarding the issue of human selfishness in Green's thought, Tyler has given a comprehensive discussion. See Tyler, 2012: 61-69, and also Dewey, 1893: 661-662; Greengarten, 1981: 38-39; Simhony, 2005: 131-132; Simhony, 2009a.

⁴⁰ After the 1832 Reform Act passed, the qualification for a voter was lower and the number of people who were entitled to vote was therefore increased. Nonetheless, the extension of franchise only covered landowners and the wealthy, such as landlords or capitalists. Most of the workers and farmers still did not have the right to vote. The situation changed in 1866, after Lord Palmerston (1784-1865) died in 1865, and the radicals in the Liberal party came to be more active. Meanwhile, the Conservative Lord Derby (1799-1869) came to be Prime Minister in 1866 and the government was under the lead of the Conservative party, which was against a new reformation of the parliament. Nonetheless, when the demonstration organised by the Reform League in Hyde Park, which was supported by radical liberals, drew the attention of the whole nation to the issue, Lord Derby and the Conservatives could not but forward a new reform bill, under such social and political pressure. The bill was eventually passed by Parliament. The number of voters was further extended to each householder in towns and this was considered a win for the radical liberals. However, the reformation of the British government at this stage still left many people behind, for example, women or the labourers who did not live in towns. This meant that there were still people who could not fully enjoy and practise their citizenship and civil rights. This civil inequality for Green was one of the most urgent issues in nineteenth-century Britain (Tyler, 2003b; Tyler, 2006a: 59-100). See my discussion in chapter two.

short-lived because they were partial and exceptional. If the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves, we are right in refusing to ascribe the glory of freedom to a state in which the apparent elevation of the few is founded on the degradation of the many, and in ranking modern society, founded as it is on free industry, with all its confusion and ignorant licence and waste of effort, above the most splendid of ancient republics' (Green, 1986b: 200). In order to eradicate the inequalities persisting in society, Green advocated the importance of the extension of franchise, whilst urging the necessity of repealing unjust social regulations in order to ensure equal opportunities for each individual person. His justification for this intervention claim began from his innovative perspective on the constitution of individual right.

Green's well-known definition of 'right' is 'a power claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good' (Green, 1986a: 79). In opposition to the natural rights tradition, Green claims that humans do not entertain individual rights by nature, but rather powers and capabilities that can be claimed and recognised to be rights in a social community. For him, '[n]o one ... can have a right except (1) as a member of a society, and (2) of a society in which some common good is recognised by the members of the society as their own ideal good, as that which *should be* for each of them' (Green, 1986a: 25). While the natural right theorists believe that before the existence of human society there must be a natural law prescribing human activity and giving the right to each individual person to exercise his or her natural powers, Green asserts that '[t]here can be no right without a consciousness of common interest on the part of members of a society. Without this there might be certain powers on the part of individuals, but no recognition of these powers by others as powers of which they allow the exercise, nor any claim to such recognition, and without this recognition or claim to recognition there can be no right' (Green, 1986a: 29). A

right in his view indicates a normative domain that an individual person has power over, on which others should not trespass. This can only be formed by mutual recognition that the power is contributory to a shared common good among the society.⁴¹

However, since a right is not naturally held by an individual and cannot be held by a mere self-assertion without social recognition, it seems that an individual cannot entertain and enjoy his or her rights until the society authorises him or her to do so. Green's right recognition thesis therefore seems to be a justification for social oppression rather than for social reform. Sir W. D. Ross (1877-1971) has commented that 'it is plainly wrong to describe either legal or moral rights as depending for their existence on their recognition, for to recognize a thing (in the sense in which 'recognize' is here used) is to recognize it as existing already. The promulgation of a law is not the recognition of a legal right, but the creation of it, though it may imply the recognition of an already existing moral right' (Ross, 2002: 50-51; cf. Richter, 1964: 164-165). To Ross, though the creation of legal rights may require social recognition, the existence of moral rights comes before the institution of legal rights. There has to be 'something' there before we come to recognise it, otherwise, '[i]t would imply that slaves, for instance, acquired the moral right to be free only at the moment when a majority of mankind, or of some particular community, formed the opinion that they ought to be free, i.e., when the particular person whose conversion to such a view changed a minority into a majority changed his mind' (Ross, 2002: 51). Gerald Gaus, meanwhile, argues that to recognise a person having a right does not require presuming something existing first, but to create a new status for that person. To him, Green's idea of recognition 'seems more akin to a chair at a meeting who, in recognizing a speaker creates a status; to recognize that someone has the floor just is to give him the floor' (Gaus, 2006: 211). Further, Gaus claims that Green's rights recognition thesis indicates that 'one can have a right against

⁴¹ As to Green's consideration of natural rights tradition, Rex Martin has made a clear and comprehensive discussion. See Martin, 2011.

a person only if that person's rational deliberations lead her to recognize the correlative moral duty' (Gaus, 2006: 224). However, this rational mutual recognition in Gaus's view is just an ideal, for an irrational person may not recognise the correlative duty with a right-claim. To Gaus, this is the reason why the rights of the slave may not be recognised socially. It is not because the rights of the slave cannot be rationally justified, but because the others are not sufficiently rational as to recognise them.

Nonetheless, such rational and conceptual analysis of right as a right-creation thesis is unfortunately unsatisfactory. First of all, as David Boucher indicates, when Gaus remarks that the rational recognition creates a right, he nonetheless presumes there is something existing before the right is created, because 'something has to be recognised to give it the status of a right' (Boucher, 2011: 758). To Boucher, there are already some moral ideas and claims existing in a society waiting to be justified and recognised as rights, and to be institutionalised. A right is not a product of rational deliberation, but is immanent in social practices and ordinary dealings, though we may not notice their existence.⁴² In a similar vein, Rex Martin indicates that '[a] way of acting or of being treated, so secured, through some such form of mutual acknowledgement, is a right. When identified in law and protected by legal devices it is a civil right; when underwritten by mere collective conscientiousness, without color of legal status or enforcement, it is a natural right' (Martin, 2011: 98). A right in the first place presents in moral habits and social conventions as a collective conscientiousness rather than in positive laws. It is 'a moral claim that becomes a right in being recognised and acknowledged as a power that ought to be accepted as necessary to the

⁴² Boucher gives us an interesting and illuminating example: 'Two people are in the habit over two years of meeting every Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. in the same bar. Neither feels it necessary to make any arrangements; it is simply assumed that they will see each other the following week. One week one of the friends fails to turn up and conveys no apology. Up to this point each has been acting as if they have rights and obligations in relation to each other, but neither had explicitly thought about it. It is at this point when expectations are not met that at least one of the friends feels that the other has not fulfilled an obligation, and at least in principle the other can be persuaded to acknowledge this. In other words, he is recognising a right and expects his friend to do so too ... The social practice creates the right, or recognises it in the first of Green's senses, and the acknowledgement of it occurs in this example, when it is somehow violated and has to be addressed' (Boucher, 2011: 758).

promotion of the common good' (Boucher, 2011: 758). Nevertheless, though Martin and Boucher both acknowledge that in Green's rights recognition thesis the distinction between a moral claim and a right is crucial, they are different in the sense that Martin conceives the recognition of a collective conscientiousness as a rational justification for a moral claim to be a right, but Boucher contests that the recognition is not a rational justification, consciously made, but is instead implicit and immanent in social practices. The right exists in conventional and habitual action and gradually emerges into human consciousness via contingency (Boucher, 2011: 758-759; cf. Martin, 2011: 92-101).

In summary, according to the above interpretations of Green's rights recognition thesis, the constitution of a legal right for Green requires, firstly, a moral consciousness that there is a power contributing to a recognised common good, and secondly, that individual persons recognise that contribution of the power and accept it as a right for all. In the meantime, a right so formulated implies two conditions for a person to acquire the right: (1) whether the person has been recognised as capable of exercising that power in contributory to the common good, and (2) whether the person's right-claim has been acknowledged and accepted by the public.⁴³ As Green himself asserts, '[t]he fact that the individual would like to exercise the power claimed as a right does not render the exercise of a right, nor does the fact that he has been hitherto allowed to exercise it render it a right, if social requirements have newly arisen under changed conditions, or have newly come to be recognised, with which its exercise is incompatible' (Green, 1986a: 112). A social recognition of a power as contributory to a shared common good in society is necessary for the power to be a right.

⁴³ Ann Cacoullou has distinguished three meanings of recognition in Green's thought: (1) the recognition of a claim of a kind of action to be a right; (2) the recognition of a common good in the sense of being 'conscious' of it; (3) the mutual recognition between people. For Cacoullou, these three meanings of recognition represent different aspects of constituting rights, but they together compose the idea of a right. See Cacoullou, 1974: 88-89.

Thus, just as it is not the exercise of every power, properly claimable as a right, that is a right in the full or explicit sense of being legally established, so it is not every power, of which the exercise would be desirable in an ideal state of things, that is properly claimable as a right. The condition of its being so claimable is that its exercise should be contributory to some social good which the public conscience is capable of appreciating – not necessarily one which in the existing prevalence of private interests can obtain due acknowledgement, but still one of which men in their actions and language show themselves to be aware. (Green, 1986a: 113)

However, according to this rights recognition thesis, there will be people in a society not taken as right-holders, such as slaves or immigrants. They are parts of society and have a part in contributing to a common good shared by all social members, and accordingly they are not only capable of a social life but also members of the society, but if they are not recognised and entitled to be competent right-holders, they cannot have equal opportunities to strive for self-realisation. That is, while there are rights that can protect and provide fair opportunities to people in pursuit of self-realisation, a person who is not recognised by others will not share these opportunities. As Vincent indicates, the ‘[l]ack of recognition is the root to all injustice, inequality, unfreedom, and oppression’ (Vincent, 2010: 182; cf. Nesbitt, 2001: 429-431). Since not every individual person has been recognised as a right-holder sharing the same opportunities, civil inequality persists. Hence, as Green claims, ‘rights have no being except in a society of men recognising each other as *isoi kai homoioi* [equals]’ (Green, 1986a: 108). A person who is not recognised as equal as others fails to meet the requirements of a right-holder. The primary task for actualising the principle of non-exclusivity in practice, accordingly, is to recognise every human person as a competent right-holder (cf. Nicholson, 1990: 84-93; Tyler, 2012: 143-146).

Nonetheless, though non-exclusion is an important condition for a human society moving towards the ideal harmony, Green is cautious about the potential consequences following rapid social and political changes, such as the destruction of the social order (Green, 1986a: 116). To him, the practical condition under which an immanent moral idea can come to be claimable as a right, as indicated, is conditioned by the development of a public conscience through social practice, and cannot be settled by radical movements or compelling forces (Green, 1906k: 330). He contends that it is more important to maintain the current system of rights if the overthrow of unfair social regulations and the institutionalisation of new rights will lead to anarchy, which is 'not merely in the sense of the dissolution of this or that form of civil combination, but of the disappearance of conditions under which any civil combination is possible' (Green, 1986a: 116). Hence, according to Green's rights recognition thesis, a system of rights in practice is not always non-exclusive and there are civil inequalities in a society that can lead to social conflicts. Not until the divergence of social consciousness among individual persons has achieved its identity can the necessary transformation be achieved.

In addition, there is a reasonable inequality in society that Green acknowledges. To Green, a society may provide and ensure each individual person has fair and equal opportunities in pursuit of his or her own ideal self, but it is each individual's freedom to choose the manner and purpose of his or her self-realisation. He notes that '[i]f we leave a man free to realise the conception of a possible well-being, it is impossible to limit the effect upon him of his desire to provide for his future well-being, as including that of the persons in whom he is interested, or the success with which at the prompting of that desire he turns resources of nature to account' (Green, 1986a: 172). Since an artist, a labourer, a soldier and a philosopher have different functions and require different conditions to fulfil their functions in contribution to society, their free efforts will not be equal. By means of different stations

and duties in society, each person can have the number of resources and possessions due to them, but that number will vary. In Green's view, enforcement that gives each individual person the same number of possessions and quantity of resources transgresses individual autonomy rather than enables it.

The artist and man of letters require different equipment and apparatus from the tiller of land and the smith. Either then the various apparatus needed for various functions must be provided for individuals by society, which would imply a complete regulation of life, incompatible with that highest object of human attainment, a free morality; or we must trust for its provision to individual effort, which will imply inequality between the property of different persons. (Green, 1986a: 172)

In other words, Green does 'not concern [himself] with the equal ownership of resources or equal distribution' (Boucher and Vincent, 2012: 93).⁴⁴ However, since the task of social and cultural institutions is to ensure each individual has access to equal opportunities in pursuit of self-realisation, natural and social resources will unavoidably be reallocated and redistributed through the social organisation to maintain basic conditions of life (Plant, 2006: 31-32). The question here comes to be whether the reallocation and redistribution will transgress the individual right of property or not.

A classical account for the right of property, as Green indicates, is given by Locke: '[b]y the same law of nature and reason by which man has "a *Property* in his own *Person*", "the *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands ... are properly his" too' (Green, 1986a: 167) (italics in original). The property is that in which a person invests his or her labours, be

⁴⁴ Boucher has indicated that the concept of equality can be distinguished into the equality of outcome and the equality of opportunity, and the British idealists in general incline to apprehend the concept of equality in the latter sense. On this point, their conception of equality is different from what Rawls advocates in his *A theory of Justice* to contemporaries. See Boucher, 1998.

it a thing or a work. According to this view, society cannot appropriate an individual's property unless he or she consents to it. Property is not just a thing but also a work impressed with the individual's labours, and is thus an extension of his or her personality. Nonetheless, for Green, property is a determination and actualisation of a personal will, but it is a will which 'at once explains the effort to appropriate, and the restraint placed on each in his appropriations by a customary recognition of the interest which each has in the success of the like effort on the part of the other members of a society with which he shares a common well-being' (Green, 1986a: 168; cf. Hegel, 1991: 73-103). Thus, the right of property is correlative with a recognised common good, as is every type of right. The action to reallocate and redistribute resources in a society, which is in accordance with the common good, does not transgress the individual right of property, since the right is not inherent in human nature as a law of nature and God, but a power claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good. The property right in this sense exists to ensure that each individual can appropriate needful resources in order to pursue self-realisation and to contribute the society.

However, by virtue of his acknowledgement of the economic inequality and the individual right of property in a free society, Green's social and political theory is taken as a defence 'justificatory, not merely of the social legislation of nineteenth-century England, but of the capitalist market system itself' (Greengarten, 1981: 6). Following MacPherson's view, Greengarten argues, Green's social and political theory is based on a dual conception of human person (Greengarten, 1981: 10, 100-106; cf. MacPherson, 1973: 114, 175). On the one hand, a human is an appropriative individual with unlimited desires, but on the other hand, a human is also striving for the perfect realisation of human capacities. The former is a self-interested individual looking after the maximisation of utility, and the latter is a self-realising individual chasing human perfection. For Greengarten, 'Green's concept of man, therefore, is of two fundamentally antagonistic aspects, or natures, coexisting within one being, one

organism' and '[h]uman history is for Green the history of the subordination of man's animal self, of the gradual accession of his spiritual nature, his rationalization and moralization' (Greengarten, 1981: 101). That is, it is because Green's retention of the utilitarian notion of a desiring subject with the moral idea of a self-realising agent that a free market system and social legislation are both essential to the actualisation of human perfection. As a result, Green 'held fast to the belief, not merely that capitalist forms no serious impediment to the actualization of his democratic ideal, but also that it is a condition of its attainment. This belief rendered his analysis inherently short-sighted and his vision ultimately self-defeating' (Greengarten, 1981: 129).

In response to this claim, Tyler argues that the reason Green supports the right of property is for self-realisation, and not for the maximisation of utility or pleasure. Neither Greengarten nor MacPherson is able to conceive an idea of right which is not related to the maximisation of utility. They consequently misunderstand Green (Tyler, 2012: 219-220). The property right is to protect a power which is claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good by individuals, and in this sense the exercise of the right requires a sense of common interest. It is not driven by unlimited personal desires (Green, 1986a: 169-170; Nicholson, 1990: 100-102). Tyler further argues that 'although market transactions can be used to exploit the poor, it is not inevitable that such transactions will be anything except the facilitators of a truly just distribution of resource' (Tyler, 2012: 225). He claims that the social distribution in Green's view could occur by two methods: one is by society and the other, as indicated before, is to trust individuals to acquire the resources and means they need. For Tyler, Green's conception of a free market system signifies an ideal of economics; as Green claims, '[t]he institution of property being only justifiable as a means to the free exercise of the social capabilities of all, there can be no true right to property of a kind which debars one class of men from such free exercise altogether' (Green, 1986b: 200). Yet Green

knows that the practical function of a market system is always imperfect, and urges the necessity of state action to remedy the dysfunction of the society to ensure and to provide equal opportunities for its members (Green, 1986a: 170-178; Leighton, 2004: 119-120). He indicates that '[a] man who possesses nothing but his powers of labour and who has to sell these to a capitalist for bare daily maintenance, might as well, in respect of the ethical purposes which the possession of property should serve, be denied rights of property altogether' (Green, 1986a: 170). Thus, though each individual has different talents and different conditions to live in a society, state action is indispensable to the actualisation of the common good principle in order to achieve the ideal harmony of human society.

4. The well-organised society: state action and value diversity

Now it is clear that Green's idea of the common good indicates a moral ideal regulating the organisation of a society, yet his rights recognition thesis maintains inequalities and conflicts in social practice. While the task of a social regime is to assist individuals in pursuit of self-realisation within a harmonious environment, the dysfunction of social and cultural institutions requires reformations from time to time. In the meantime, since that dysfunction supports inequalities and conflicts in society, state action is a remedial measure. Nonetheless, the claim that state action is a remedy for social dysfunction was not welcome in the nineteenth century.

As we have seen, the intervention of collective action into the distribution of social and natural resources without consent was considered as a transgression of the individual right of property, while in Green's view the intervention is not a transgression. Nevertheless, besides this concern, there is a claim on the grounds of a popular moral conviction against state action in nineteenth-century British society. That is, moral merits were seen as reliant on an individual's own efforts alone, and consequently the society or the government should not

intervene. While social conflicts were intensifying in society, some liberals, such as Richard Cobden (1804-1865), Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), insisted on the importance of self-restraint, self-cultivation and self-reliance for a person to be independent and respectable. On the basis of this libertarian notion of individual virtue, for them, social conflicts were but a competition of individual development. Meanwhile, with the influence from the empiricist and naturalistic philosophy, a liberal ideology involving with this moral idea is what has been often taken as the main feature of Classical Liberalism and '*laissez-faire*' (Greenleaf, 1983: 24-29, 30-102). Social conflicts will then be settled naturally once the society reaches its ideal harmony, as there is an invisible hand directing the operation of the society. In this context, conflicts are part of a process of human society towards its ideal state, which regulates itself by the law of nature.

Mill and Green, meanwhile, developed an argument that could justify state action and reconcile this with individual virtue at the same time. Mill, often identified as the founder of modern liberalism (Gray, 1993: 285), argues that no political authority or sovereign can rightfully compel an individual to do things against his will, even if it claims to be for the good of the individual. For him, the moral merit of virtue is reliant on an individual's own efforts as long as he or she does not deprive others of their freedom; each individual is the sovereign over his or her own body and mind within the domain that only concerns him or her self (Mill, 1989: 13). Nonetheless, Mill attempts to reconcile state action with individual freedom by virtue of utilitarian thinking. Being capable of rational calculation, an individual can formulate a hierarchy of pleasures as his or her happiness and choose different means to achieve it. However, firstly, not every individual person has competent talents and instruments with which to pursue happiness. Secondly, even if there are sufficient conditions for individuals to pursue happiness, each may have different conceptions of happiness and this may lead to conflict between them. To Mill, non-intervention and *laissez-faire* are

general principles, but individuals may be too selfish to care about each other, and conflicts and competitions would be overwhelming. He therefore indicates that '[i]n the particular circumstances of a given age and nation, there is scarcely anything really important to the general interest, which it may not be desirable, or even necessary, that the government should take upon itself, not because private individuals cannot effectively perform it, but because they will not' (Mill, 1965: 970; cf. Bellamy, 2000: 31). Government intervention accordingly is important for social harmony and individual freedom, for 'embarking on the reforms necessary must require the action of government' because 'peasant proprietorship and industrial cooperatives will not spring up spontaneously' (Greenleaf, 1983: 121). But the justification for the intervention nevertheless is the maximisation of social utility. To Mill, the intervention of government is confined to advance utility for the majority in society, and to ensure the conditions for the most people to entertain their maximum satisfaction (Nicholson, 1990: 140-147; Bellamy, 2000: 30-33). It is a means to the end of individual happiness and aims 'to maximize utility by protecting the security of tangible, divisible goods' (Krouse, 1982: 516; cf. 513-515).

Nonetheless, while Mill's utilitarian philosophy has the practical function of supporting necessary government intervention, Green warns us of the potential danger in the utilitarian argument. According to the hedonistic utilitarian assumption of individual behaviour, whether an individual person will obey the instructions and regulations of state action or not is dependent upon the expediency of it in their perception. He notes that '[i]t must be a pleasure or pain which he looks for from the agency of others, who have power to reward or punish him – to reward or punish him, if with nothing else, yet with an approval or disapproval to which he is so sensitive that the approval may in his imagination outweigh every other pleasure, the disapproval every other pain'. 'Thus', he continues, 'the consciousness "I ought to do this or that" must be interpreted as equivalent to the

consciousness that it is expected of me by others, who are “stronger” than I am in the sense that they have power to reward or punish me – whether these “others” are represented by the civil magistrate or by some public opinion...’ (Green, 2003: 421). This is to say that the utilitarian justification of state action has the potential to lapse into an argument for authoritarianism, either by the will of the majority or by the will of the stronger. Hence, though Green acknowledges the practical function of Mill’s argument, he nonetheless suggests a different one.⁴⁵

Regarding Green’s claim for state action, it has been shown that he urges the necessity of practical actions to remedy the potential issues left from the dysfunction of social institutions. Contrary to the view of classical liberals, in Green’s view, to leave a person in a severe and distressful situation, whilst claiming that it is his or her own responsibility to struggle free of it, cannot be moral.⁴⁶ For him, the realisation of true freedom is a harmonious society where every individual person can enjoy his or her life with others, jointly contributing to a shared and recognised common good. Thus, objecting to the principle of *laissez-faire*, Green claims that the fundamental spirit of liberalism is not to elevate an atomistic idea of individual freedom, but rather to fight for social equality against class interests (Green, 1986b: 195-196). State action is accordingly needed to reform the current social organisation and to remedy inequalities existing in it. Instead of being a night watchman, the modern state as ‘the society of societies’ is the supreme ‘reconciler and

⁴⁵ Instead of that comment made by Green, scholars have considered Mill’s liberal democratic theory implies a paternalist and elitist tendency. That Mill, with his concern with the tyranny of the majority, on the one hand advocates the importance of education to enlighten the public, and on the other hand, grants the necessity for the government to be led by the “instructed minority”. Nonetheless, it has also been claimed that Mill’s ideas of social expediency and social utility indicate a way for him to avoid the paternalist and elitist tendency. See, for example, Holloway, 1960; Arneson, 1982; Strasser, 1984; Nicholson, 1990: 140-157; Bellamy, 2000: 26-33; de Sanctis, 2005: 35-51.

⁴⁶ As Green urges, ‘[t]he justice of the punishment depends on the justice of the general system of rights – not merely on the propriety with reference to social well-being of maintaining this or that particular right which the crime punished violates, but on the question whether the social organisation in which a criminal has lived and acted is one that has given him a fair chance of not being a criminal’ (Green, 1986a: 146). To Green, the social distress and the moral corruption in a society are not natural consequences of the competition between human beings but the sign of the dissolution of a society. As to Green’s theory of punishment, see Brooks, 2003; Tyler, 2012: 151-156.

sustainer of the rights that arise out of the social relations of men' (Green, 1986a: 111). It maintains and accommodates diverse types of rights deriving from different forms of social community, such as families, tribes, civil associations, by appealing to laws as its primary means. In a word, the business of a state 'is to maintain certain conditions of life – to see that certain actions are done which are necessary to the maintenance of those conditions, others omitted which would interfere with them. It has nothing to do with the motive of the actions or omissions, on which, however, the moral value of them depends' (Green, 1986a: 19). It cannot and will not directly improve and advance an individual person's moral character and freedom, but it can ensure the necessary conditions for the person to develop (Green, 1986a: 20-22, 161-162). However, state action in practice cannot advance non-competitive and non-exclusion principles directly; the task of an empirical state is to remedy the social dysfunction and to maintain the existing system of rights, while the ideal state fulfils the duty to ensure each individual citizen has rights to fair opportunities in pursuit of self-realisation (Tyler, 2012: 171-172). The filling of this gap between the empirical state and the ideal state is achieved by social practice. The actualisation of the common good principle in effect relies upon the advance of the collective moral consciousness in society, and this in turn is dependent upon the moral development of each individual person. Nonetheless, based on his conception of the ideal state, Green has made a theoretical justification for state action.

By virtue of this advocacy for state action, Green's social and political philosophy has been considered as collectivist (Greenleaf, 1983: chap. 4; Arblaster, 1984: chap. 16; Bellamy, 1992: 9-57). But some scholars have not fully appreciated this collectivist inclination in Green. Lewis has remarked that Green's moral and political philosophy suggests 'the view that the rights of all, being mainly negative, are strictly identical and "non-competitive", brings us to the same collectivist conclusion which has little respect for the variations of individual opinion or the distinctive needs and rights of individuals' (Lewis, 1962: 89). In

Lewis's view, when Green emphasises the necessity of state action, the central meaning of individual rights shifts from enabling the self-realisation of individuals to regulating and prohibiting behaviours. To him, Green's thought 'is apt to come full circle from an unqualified individualism to a rigid and intolerant collectivism' (Lewis, 1962: 89). Richter, meanwhile, claims that it is not correct to consider Green's social and political philosophy simply as 'collectivist', for the term, which is employed by A. V. Dicey (1835-1922), has obscured the intellectual connection between Green and the Manchester school (Richter, 1964: 341-342). He thinks nonetheless that Green's social and political philosophy has an oppressive tendency. For him, since an individual person's rights and self-realisation require social recognition and a recognised common good to enable them, the individual's thought and action are confined to a certain type of moral character. Green's social and political philosophy implies, then, 'the danger of allowing a government to aim consciously at the creation of a particular kind of human being.' (Richter, 1964: 258).

However, as Green argues in his 'Lecture on "Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract"',

[w]e are often warned nowadays against the danger of over-legislation; or, as I heard it put in a speech of the present Home Secretary in days when he was sowing his political wild oats, of 'grandmotherly government'.⁴⁷ There may be good ground for the warning, but at any rate we should be quite clear what we mean by it. The outcry against state interference is often raised by men whose real objection is not to state interference but to centralisation, to the constant aggression of the central executive upon local authorities. (Green, 1986b: 202)

⁴⁷ It is referring to the speech given by W. V. Harcourt (1827-1904) in 1873. See my discussion in chapter two.

That is, the opposition to the state action claim in Green's view implies two different concerns. He indicates that '[i]t is one question whether of late the central government has been unduly trenching on local government, and another question whether the law of the state, either as administered by central or by provincial authorities, has been unduly interfering with the discretion of individuals' (Green, 1986b: 202). To the first question, Green's solution is to advocate citizens' participation in local politics. Since the justification of state action is drawn from the recognised common interests in a society, and the recognition of the common interests is based on social practices, the best measurement for centralisation is citizen participation in local politics. On this point, Hobhouse, who appreciated Green's work of transforming the moral and political claims of Liberalism, has explicated the idea that '[t]he development of social interest – and that is democracy – depends not only on adult suffrage and the supremacy of the elected legislature, but on all the intermediate organizations which link the individual to the whole' (Hobhouse, 1994: 112). For Hobhouse, though citizen participation in local politics may be crushed by a centralised bureaucracy, it is essential that democracy extends the intelligent interest to all manner of public things and assists the formation of a common will as the unifying mind in society (Hobhouse, 1994: 111-112). To entertain the franchise and to participate in public affairs are therefore both important ways in which individuals can supervise the operation of central government, and maintain concrete social interests shared with each other in local communities as the actual basis of the unity of a society (Tyler, 2012: 191-196). Self-examination and self-assertion in social and political life is thus the best way for individuals to prevent centralisation.

Furthermore, based on this contention of the importance of citizen participation, pertaining to the second question, Green's justification for state action does not transgress individual freedom. Firstly, while state action is necessary for remedying social dysfunction

and to ensure fair and equal opportunities for individuals to pursue their self-realisations, the vitality of a civil and public life, as indicated, is drawn from each individual citizen's participation (Green, 1986a: 94-96). Secondly, since rights require social recognition as contributory to a common good, state action cannot prevent that recognition being made by individuals jointly, for it is an intellectual and voluntary action performed by each individual and cannot be prohibited or promoted by external interventions (Green, 1986a: 113-115).⁴⁸ Thirdly, since state action cannot intervene in an individual's discretion, it means that what the individual conceives as his or her ideal self-realisation will not necessarily be confined to a certain type of moral character regulated by the state. On the contrary, as a self-conscious agent, each individual's conception of the best self will be different, and accordingly, there are diverse conceptions of the best self as the ultimate good. Green claims that 'under any conditions possible, so far as can be seen, for human society, one man who was the best that his position allowed, would be very different from another who was the best that *his* position allowed' (Green, 2003: 220) (italic in original). Having different talents and different social conditions, each individual person can therefore have different values and ideas. The task of the state is to reconcile and to accommodate these diverse ideas and values in the society rather than to restrict them. Nevertheless, whether these values can be protected and maintained in a system of rights or not is dependent upon the social recognition of their contributions to a shared common good immanent in existing social conventions and moral habits. For this reason, Green's social and political philosophy does have a conservative inclination.⁴⁹ In brief, for Green, there are diverse values and ideas in a society that a dutiful and rightful state has to reconcile, and it must reallocate social and natural resources in order

⁴⁸ A state may use its compelling power to prevent individual citizens from reaching such necessary recognition; however, as I will suggest in the next chapter, Green indicates a certain measurement for citizens to use in supervising the exercise of state power.

⁴⁹ Green distinguishes the true spirit of conservatism from conservatism in an ideological sense: (1) it is a general political principle which emphasises a reverence of the past; (2) it is a political ideology, the tenet which the British Conservative party espouses (Green, 1997: 28). Regarding the conservative inclination of Green's thought, see Green, 1906e: 116-117; MacCunn, 1910: 229-230; Nicholson, 2006: 151-152; Vincent, 2006: 81.

to enable individuals to entertain and to pursue them.⁵⁰ Accordingly, it is hard to claim that when Green urges the importance of state action, he neglects the value of individual freedom.⁵¹

To conclude this section, an idea of the common good which justifies state action does not necessarily cause state and social oppression. First of all, the idea of the common good, as Diggs indicates, ‘is served not by promoting the interests of some persons, in oblivion or at the expense of others, but by finding ways of serving the interests of all persons, or all concerned, fairly and equitably’ (Diggs, 1973: 291). Meanwhile, a state, by reference to such an idea of the common good, is the society of societies ‘so organised that everyone’s capacities have free scope for their development’ (Green, 1986a: 134-135; Simhony, 1993b: 240-241). That is, each individual as a constituent part of the society should be provided with fair and equal opportunities for self-realisation, and concrete determinations of the common good may alter by virtue of innovative articulations made by individuals, and in this sense state action is constantly under monitoring. Hence, for Green, the state is a social organism in which individual practices and social institutions interact with each other in the pursuit of

⁵⁰ Although Green’s moral and social philosophy does acknowledge the persistence of value diversity, whether he could conceive a pluralistic world such as the one in which we live today is still in question (Vincent and Plant, 1984: 164; Carter: 2003, 29-30; Tyler, 2012: 38-40). As Boucher and Vincent have pointed out, ‘[i]n our present world, affected by claims of postmodern fragmentation, distinct forms of life, strong ethnic or national difference and multicultural theory, and the like, Green’s vision could look remote on one level’. ‘But’, they continue, ‘on the one hand, it is important to realise that Green’s vision does not ignore group difference or individual autonomy. Yet, on the other hand, neither does it celebrate difference in itself. It rather argues that this fragmentation is the *result* of modernity, but modernity also embodies historical and metaphysical teleological themes’ (Boucher and Vincent, 2000: 51). The role of Green’s practical philosophy in pluralistic issues of contemporary liberal politics will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

⁵¹ Tyler has suggested a perspectivalist interpretation in response to the collectivist and oppressive apprehension of Green’s social and political philosophy. To him, the common good is a heuristic principle indicating the direction in which each individual should proceed for critical examinations of the moral ideas embedded in social and cultural institutions (Tyler, 2012: 69-72). On the basis of this view, Tyler contends that to Green ‘[s]ocial relationships derive their imperative character from the citizen’s careful judgement that engaging in them tends to facilitate the performance of distinctively human actions’ (Tyler, 2012: 163). Thus, in his view, with this idea of the common good as its foundation, Green’s idea of the state is to indicate a conceptual and critical standard against which each individual citizen can measure and judge the legitimacy of state action (Tyler, 2012: 172-175). Nonetheless, while Tyler’s perspectivalist reading of Green’s social and political philosophy provides a strong defence against the collectivist and oppressive contention, his interpretation of Green’s idea of the state does not cover Green’s consideration of the danger of state power in practice, nor how he resolves this danger. I will consider this practical dimension of Green’s political thought in the following chapter.

human perfection, while social conflict and value diversity persist in human society as the result of the divergence of human consciousness driving the dialectical process.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been shown that Green's idea of the common good society implies a universal moral principle regulating the development of human society. Nonetheless, the concrete manifestations of the idea of the common good are various and diverse in virtue of the divergent moral ideas and values held by individuals, and therefore require a well-organised society to reconcile and to accommodate the divergence. Founded on a system of rights, evolving through the development of human society, the well-organised society is the ideal state in which social conflicts and value diversity in the system are reconciled. However state action in accordance with a recognised and accepted common good is always in demand for an empirical state. Thus, while the common good principle is the ideal of human society, to Green, the distinction between the actual society and the ideal society, and the empirical state and the ideal state, is in relation to the moralisation process of human consciousness. It is dependent upon whether each individual person can recognise other persons and devote themselves to a non-competitive and non-exclusive society, or not. In the next chapter, I will argue that while for Green the task of social and state actions is to maintain fair and equal opportunities for each individual person in pursuit of self-realisation, he nonetheless articulates an important connection between the sovereign power and the moralisation of human consciousness. Self-government is thus an important condition necessary for an individual citizen to achieve the ideal of human perfection and moral autonomy in a reconciliatory society.

CHAPTER SIX

SELF-GOVERNMENT AND SOVEREIGN POWER: GREEN'S ETHICAL POLITICS

1. Introduction

So far it has been suggested that Green's social and political philosophy has a firm foundation in his human ontology and philosophical ethics. In particular, he formulates an idea of the common good society as the moral ideal regulating the development of human society, and establishes a justification for state action to ensure and to provide each individual person fair and equal opportunities in pursuit of self-realisation. In the meantime, he indicates that self-consciousness is a distinctive feature of human beings, enabling us to conceive and to pursue diverse values and ideas, whereas social conflicts and value diversity persist in a society and constantly require state action. The divergence of social consciousness is accordingly a negative condition for state action, while the positive condition is by reference to the principle of the common good. Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that an empirical state, as a form of social community, is still an imperfect way of establishing ideal social harmony, it is different from other social communities in the sense that it has a compelling power to accommodate the social issues which other communities fail to tackle; that state is the supreme sovereign beyond individuals and communities. However, for Green, the basis of the state is the rational wills of individuals, and in this sense the state would not be an absolute ruler to individuals. That is, sovereign state as a form of social community is nonetheless founded on a recognised and accepted common good, and the recognised and accepted common good is immanent in social practices and is transformable through individual

articulations. Thus, the state, in so far as its actions are in accordance with that common good, is just for these individuals.

Nevertheless, Simhony indicates that a result from 'Green's apparent uncritical acceptance of the belief that self-government means good government' is 'a complete elimination from his thought of any concern for checking state power which was a central theme of classical liberalism' (Simhony, 1991b: 320). While Green contends the importance of citizen participation in local politics and claims that the fundamental principle of state action is a recognised and accepted common good and is under the supervision of individuals, he seems to be ignorant of the danger of the extension of state power, but rather trusts the sovereign state so organised. It seems to be that, though Green has doubts with Hegel's ethical state as the actualisation of the absolute freedom overwhelming individuals and communities, and suggests an idea of the ethical self to substitute, he nonetheless still fails to take the danger of state power in practice seriously enough.

In this chapter, I will argue that, firstly, Green is not so naïve as to trust the sovereign state completely. Conversely, he incorporates what former classical liberals argued for into his conception of the state, and maintains the separation of powers, whilst reminding us of the danger of the collision between powers. Secondly, and more significantly, through the sophisticated explication of the nature of the sovereignty in his *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, Green discloses the dynamic feature of liberal politics by means of which he advances his idea of the ethical self to an idea of the ethical citizen, suggesting that the self-government of the individual person is an important condition for moral autonomy and human perfection. In the following sections, accordingly, I will consider two meanings of power that Green employs to refer to the right of the state and the right of the individual respectively. Then I will discuss the constitution of the state with the role of the active citizen in Green's thinking, and indicate that the sovereign is not held by the state or citizens, but is

rather present in the moral consciousness immanent in social conventions and moral habits. This signifies an ideal object for each individual citizen and the state to fight for, while the subject of the sovereign, conversely, is the object of the consciousness. Hence, according to this account of Green's idea of the sovereign, I will argue that the dynamics of politics in Green's thought is stirred by the opposition of the sovereign, as the object of consciousness, and citizens as the subject of the consciousness, and it is not until the two come to be identical, as the self-government of individual citizens, that we can settle a firm ground for self-realisation and the actualisation of the common good society.

2. Sovereignty and might

On the basis of the idea of the common good, Green's conception of the sovereign state is correlative with his intention 'to consider the moral function or object served by law, or by the system of rights and obligations which the state enforces, and in so doing to discover the true ground or justification for obedience to law' (Green, 1986a: 13). As he argued, the first question of political philosophy is 'the origin of State ... which is exactly correlative the question as to nature of political obligation' (Green, 2005b: 72). The common good, political obligation and the sovereign state, in his view, are correlated with each other. However, challenging this correlation of Green's, scholars have offered criticisms of his theory of political obligation in works, such as John Plamenatz's *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation* and H. A. Prichard's *Moral Obligation, and Duty and Interest*. For Plamenatz, while Green argues a conception of political obligation on the basis of an idea of the common good, he nonetheless fails to make that argument convincing, for there is no single good that can be shared by individuals commonly. Nevertheless, Plamenatz indicates that Green has not claimed that the common good shall be universal, but always conceives it as particular (Plamenatz, 1968: chap. 3; Nicholson, 1990: 68, n. 1). On the other hand, Prichard argues that

the most important flaw in Green's theory of political obligation is that he presumes the question about 'why we should obey the sovereign state' is valid, but fails to explain why we should obey this or that particular state. Instead of developing a sophisticated theory to explain why individuals should obey the state, Prichard claims that that reason is fairly simple: that 'obedience to the ruler is contributory to the public interest, and therefore to our own good, and this being our purpose obedience is necessarily a duty' (Prichard, 1968: 74; 80). In Prichard's view, to obey the state is just what a deliberate person will do for his or her own self-interest. In contrast, thus, Green's theory of political obligation implicates an authoritarian notion of the state in taking an idea of the common good as the true ground for individuals to obey, in that each individual person is forced to identify and observe a single idea of the good as their self-interest.

Nonetheless, it has been pointed out previously that a conception of the common good, to Green, is always held by each individual, and that that conception in this sense is personal. As a 'common' good, it is the notion of good as an absolute desirable object for which every person who lives in a society strives. It is immanent in social and cultural institutions as a common interest to which individuals make contributions when they fulfil their social duties. However, as Simhony notes, '[f]or Green, the good does pertain to society as a whole which is, strictly speaking, the collective sense; but he employs "society as a whole" distributively, meaning each and every member of society individually, though jointly and not separately' (Simhony, 2009a: 33-34). Moreover, since a conception of the common good is personal, each individual can have different apprehensions of it, and in this sense the reflected idea of the common good immanent in a society may lead to disagreement. A conception of the common good in Green's thought is thus personal and may vary from one person to another (Monson, 1954; Nicholson, 1990: 68-71). Hence, while the task of the state is to reconcile these differences among individuals, Green's idea of the common good is not a justification

for an authoritarian state. Nonetheless, as he says, '[t]he essential thing in political society is a power which guarantees men rights' (Green, 1986a: 73). The right of the state to reconcile and to accommodate diverse conceptions of the common good and the disagreement among individuals is involved with a compelling power.

Here, it is important to distinguish two different meanings of the term 'power' in Green's usage. The first meaning of the term 'power' is used to indicate 'the capability on the part of an individual for making a common good his own' (Green, 1986a: 26). This is the capability each human person has to pursue the perfection of his or her rational will within a community. Rights therefore exist to secure the equally free exercise of the capability of each person to bring about a recognised common good in society. As Green indicates, '[t]he essence of right lies in its being not simply a power producing sensible effects, but a power relative to an insensible function and belonging to individuals only in so far as each recognises that function in himself and others' (Green, 1986a: 36). A power in this sense is the moral capability that each individual person can advance in and through a social life. However, the mere fact that the power can produce sensible effects nonetheless implies that it is an important feature of sovereignty.

In his criticism of Spinoza and Hobbes's conception of natural rights, Green indicates that a right in their view refers to a mere power: a physical capacity to act or to affect others. It is the power and the strength of each individual person by nature against other things or persons (Green, 1986a: 29-30, 40-41; Martin, 2011: 94-95). On the basis of this understanding of a right, the compelling power of a state, which is called sovereignty, is the combination of the powers of individuals: '[i]t is simply the *naturalis potentia* of a certain number of men combined; "of a people which is guided as if by one mind"' (Green, 1986a: 30). However, in Green's view, though Spinoza and Hobbes both employ the term 'power' to explicate the nature of right, Spinoza is more consistent in using the term than Hobbes. For

Spinoza, since sovereignty is the combination of the powers of individuals, if the majority is against the sovereignty, the sovereignty as such simply disappears and is replaced. If an individual can exercise his or her power against the sovereign state, the individual 'is so far not a member of the state and the state is so far imperfect' (Green, 1986a: 31). The sovereignty accordingly is relative not absolute. But Hobbes 'supposes his sovereign power to have an absolute right to the submission of all its subjects, singly or collectively, irrespectively of the question of its actual power against them' (Green, 1986a: 39). Instead of accepting that sovereignty is relative, Hobbes introduces an idea of covenant to argue that when individuals consent to transfer their natural powers to the sovereign, they have given up the personal discretion to exercise them perpetually, and obey rather the absolute authority of the state. As Green observes, '[i]n order, however, to get a sovereignty, to which there is a perpetual obligation of submission, Hobbes has to suppose a covenant of all with all, preceding the establishment of sovereignty, and to the observance of which, therefore, there cannot be an obligation in the sense that the sovereign punishes for the non-observance ... but which no one can ever be entitled to break' (Green, 1986a: 42). Nonetheless, to Green, this idea of a covenant is the flaw in Hobbes's discussion of the sovereignty, for the existence of a covenant that prescribes an obligation to observe it is only possible after the sovereignty is established. Before the establishment of the sovereignty individual persons are in the war of all against all, and they do not follow any obligation but their own self-interest and self-preservation. By introducing an idea of covenant into his argument, Hobbes renders it inconsistent.

However, for Green, neither Spinoza's nor Hobbes's account of right is adequate. He contends that when Spinoza and Hobbes conceive a right as a power held by each individual person naturally, their conception of that state of human persons, which precedes the existence of civil society, is negative. As Green argues, '[i]t was a state which was *not* one of

political society, one in which there was no civil government; i.e. no supreme power, exercised by a single person or plurality of persons, which could compel obedience on the part of all members of a society and was recognised as entitled to do so by them all, or by a sufficient number of them to secure general obedience' (Green, 1986a: 46). Instead, a right for Green exists on the basis of a power claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good by individual persons. The power so claimed and recognised is not a mere physical capacity, but is rather a moral capability of human beings: 'It is not in so far as I can do this or that that I have a right to do this or that, but so far as I recognise myself and am recognised by others as able to do this or that for the sake of a common good, or relative to this end' (Green, 1986a: 36). However, if the definition of right is reliant upon the moral capability belonging to each human being, which is our rational will, at this point a crucial question arises as to whether or not a state can hold the right to rule and to govern individual citizens.

To state the question more specifically: does the state constitute a person who has the moral capability of rational will and therefore is entitled to hold a right or not? In the first place, a person or a group of persons may be considered to be representative of the sovereignty. A king, a prince, a committee, a parliament, or the majority of people can all be the sovereignty *de facto*. However, these offices in a society are not the state *per se*. For Green, a state 'is a body of persons, recognised by each other as having rights, and possessing certain institutions for the maintenance of those rights' (Green, 1986a: 103). It is the society of societies organised by individual persons and social communities, and does not refer to any determinate person or persons unless these persons are equal to the total amount of the people constitutive of the society. But, considering the scope and the complexity of the organisation of a modern state, Green thinks it impossible for all people as a whole to be the representatives of the sovereignty and to exercise the right of the state collectively (Green,

1986a: 61; Green, 1997: 31). In brief, a determinate person who is not equal to a state as such cannot be the holder of the sovereignty.

However, though a determinate person cannot be the holder of the sovereignty, we may conceive a legal personality as an analogy to a determinate person who has the moral agency. That is, a state is the society that ‘has a conscience’ as ‘the elements love and hate, the mind has hands and eyes’ (Green, 1997: 44); the state as the society of societies to the individual is ‘as mother is to child so is mother country to colony’ (Green, 1997: 44). However, Green argues, this analogical argument is a rhetorical fallacy, ‘of which the plausibility is derived from the metaphysical character of language’ (Green, 1997: 44). It is therefore a misuse of language and a confusion of different ideas. Moreover, Green also claims that an idea of a legal personality is ‘derived from the possession of right, not *vice versa*’ (Green, 1986a: 27). It is when the right of the state has been recognised and institutionalised that a legal personality can be conceived. In other words, a legal person cannot be the holder of the right of the state before we recognise that right.

It seems to be, then, that the sovereignty is not a right at all, for there is no moral agency belonging to the state that can be claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good. The sovereignty is but a mere power ‘to protect those rights from invasion, either from without, from foreign nations, or from within, from members of the society who cease to behave as such’ (Green, 1986a: 103). However, it has been indicated before that a common good immanent in social and cultural institutions is an objective reason conceived by previous people. It is the absolute desirable object recognised and accepted by past generations, and is achieved and embodied in conventional morality. Accordingly, though a society is not a human person who has the moral agency, it is endowed with an agency that is acting for a common good. The right of the state that implies a claimed and recognised moral

capability as contributory to a common good indicates an agency derived from the objective reason embodied in social and cultural institutions.

[W]hen the power by which rights are guaranteed is sovereign (as it is desirable that it should be) in the special sense of being maintained by a person or persons, wielding coercive force not liable to control by any other human force, it is not this coercive force that is the important thing about it, or that determines the habitual obedience essential to the real maintenance of rights. That which determines this habitual obedience is a power residing in the common will and reason of men, i.e. in the will and reason of men as determined by social relations, as interested in each other as acting together for common ends. It is a power which this 'universal' rational will exercises over the inclinations of the individual, and which only needs exceptionally to be backed by coercive force. (Green, 1986a: 74)

The right of the state as such is accordingly not referring to the coercive force, but to an agency upholding individuals and communities as a whole.

At this point it is clear that the right of the state, which is called the sovereignty, does not lead the state to be authoritarian; however, the coercive force that accompanies the sovereignty nonetheless implies the possibility of oppression and coercion. The questions for Green's idea of the sovereign state are therefore, firstly, 'how a state unites individuals and communities as a whole and maintains a system of rights without using coercion?' and secondly, 'is there any measurement in the state that can prevent the force from misuse?' To consider these questions leads us to Green's view on the constitution of a state and the role of an individual citizen in a political society.

3. The constitution of the state and the separation of powers

In Green's view, the first condition for the constitution of a state is a systematic law harmonising diverse rights. For him, the existence of a state is to reconcile and to define the recognised rights subsisting in a society, and is to institutionalise these rights and harmonise them in a systematic law (Green, 1986a: 104). He suggests that 'the state, or the sovereign as a characteristic institution of the state, does not create rights, but gives fuller reality to rights already existing' (Green, 1986a: 103). However, since the state does not create rights, and rights are recognised moral claims immanent in a society, the constitution of a state is founded on some other forms of social community in which some moral claims and moral capabilities are recognised as rights. To Tyler, this view of societies prior to the state has two significant meanings:

Firstly, temporally: early societies (families and tribes) had no formalised political structures, whereas modern ones tend to have them. Secondly, conceptually: the definition of 'a state' entails the concept of 'a society'. The state is 'for its members the society of societies – the society in which all their claims upon each other are mutually adjusted'. ... A crucial point here is that a state is an internally-complex relational entity and, as such, each part can function as it should only to the extent that every other part does so as well. (Tyler, 2012: 167)

The state so organised is a political institution for reconciling, regulating and protecting the diverse rights of each social member and each social community in order to enable them to pursue and contribute to human perfection; it is 'simply society's political instrument for carrying out certain aspects of this task' (Tyler, 2012: 175).

Geoffrey Thomas, in a way, shares this instrumental view of Green's concept of the state. He claims that 'in his philosophical work Green had slight sense of the autonomy of politics. The role of politics is instrumental' (Thomas, 1987: 23). However, Thomas notes that the distinction between the state and the society in Green's thought is not so definite as to assert that the state is merely an instrument of the society. He indicates that 'as the activity of the state extends to secure the fundamental interests of individuals, so the distinction between state and society blurs. In the first place and obviously the state forms certain social roles through its own activity; and secondly the fundamental interests which the state aims to secure are crucially subject to interpretation through the expectations which any given level of state activity itself engenders' (Thomas, 1987: 345). It seems that a state is not a mere instrument for maintaining and organising rights derived from a society, but has more diverse functions. Besides the rights of citizens and the franchise that are included in political life, Green indicated that 'the administration of the state gives rise to rights; to the establishment of powers necessary for its administration' (Green, 1986a: 105). In other words, there are rights recognised after the social organisation as the state emerges. A state accordingly is not merely an instrument for organising the rights derived from other social relations, but is also a social relation in which some rights are able to be recognised.

Meanwhile, as indicated, the right of the state is derived from a recognised common good immanent in society, and is an agency supporting individuals and communities as a whole. If the state is not a social relation among individuals and communities in which such common good and agency are immanent, a state cannot be formed. As Green argues, an idea of the state is that 'which has been operative in the minds of the members of the societies which have undergone the changed described [from recognised rights to a systematic law]⁵²,

⁵² Green remarks that change in the following paragraph: 'In other words, it is true only on supposition that a state is made a state by the function which it fulfils of maintaining the rights of its members as a whole or system, in such a way that none gains at the expense of another (no one has any power guaranteed to him through another's being deprived of that power). ... It secures and extends the exercise of powers, which men,

an idea only gradually taking shape as the change proceeded, and according to the more explicit and distinct idea of it which we form in reflecting on the process' (Green, 1986a: 104). '[B]ut', he continues, 'as a matter of fact we never apply it except in cases where it has gone some way, and we are justified in speaking of the state according to its idea as the society in which it is completed' (Green, 1986a: 104). That is to say, the constitution of a state is an ongoing process in society; when the rights existing in the society are eventually reconciled by a systematic law, and we are conscious of the completion of that systematic law, a state therefore comes into being.

When such a general law, has been arrived at, regulating the position of members of a family towards each other and the dealings of families or tribes with each other; when it is voluntarily recognised by a community of families or tribes, and maintained by a power strong enough at once to enforce it within the community and to defend the integrity of the community against attacks from without, then the elementary state has been formed. (Green, 1986a: 104-105)

Hence, a state as the society of societies should not be merely a formal and instrumental institution, but a concrete social relation 'in that impalpable congeries of the hopes and fears of a people bound together by common interests and sympathy, which we call the general will' (Green, 1986a: 70). In Green's view, as Horton says, '[t]he state is a moral entity that derives its character from its effective incorporation of the essential condition of the common good' (Horton, 2010: 72). In the meantime, the persistence of a state is thus reliant on the public recognition of a systematic law in accordance with an idea of the common good, while

influenced in dealing with each other by an idea of common good, had recognised in each other as being capable of direction to that common good, and had already in a certain measure secured to each other in consequence of that recognition. It is not a state unless it does so' (Green, 1986a: 103).

the way to maintain the recognition of all individuals and communities is in turn dependent upon a practical device.

It has been indicated that the sovereignty is an agency immanent in the society which supports different individuals and diverse communities as a whole. Nonetheless, in order to protect the state from external or internal attacks that may endanger the well-ordered society, a compelling force is needed as the second condition of the constitution of a state (Green, 1986a: 103-105). However, Green suggests that there is a common misconception which sees the state as virtually equal to the sovereign state, and identifies the state solely with the idea of compelling force. He says that ‘the mischief of beginning with an inquiry into sovereignty, before the idea of a State has been investigated, is that it leads us to this abstract notion of sovereignty as merely supreme coercive power, and then, when we come to think of the state as distinguished by sovereignty, makes us suppose that supreme coercive power is all that is essential to a state, forgetting that *it is rather the state that makes the sovereign than the sovereign that makes the state*’ (Green, 1986a: 102) (italics added). The last sentence of Green’s argument makes the point discussed above clear, that is, for Green, the state is not merely a formal and instrumental institution, but rather a concrete social relation. It is when a social relation comes to have a systematic law regulating and reconciling existing rights that a state is formed and the right of the state is then recognised. On the other hand, it also indicates that the compelling force – which goes with the sovereignty – cannot be exercised rightfully without according to the common good immanent in the social relation. Green emphasises that ‘[i]t is not ... supreme coercive power, simply as such, but supreme coercive power, exercised in a certain way and for certain ends, that makes a state; viz. exercised according to law, written or customary, and for the maintenance of rights’ (Green, 1986a: 102). A supreme coercive power alone is not the rightful way to maintain the public recognition and the legitimacy of such a systematic law for the maintenance of rights.

At this point, for Green, the formation of a state is therefore important. On the one hand, it should inspire and maintain the common interests and sympathy of citizens as the public spirit uniting individuals and communities as a whole, and on the other hand, it also needs to measure the compelling force of the state and to judge whether it is in accordance with the public spirit. Regarding the former, Green suggests, it is a question of patriotism and ‘the active interests of the citizens in the commonwealth’ (Green, 1986a: 94, 97). Patriotism, according to his definition, is ‘quickened by a feeling of which the patria, the fatherland, the seat of one’s home, is the natural object and of which the state becomes the object only so far as it is an organisation of a people to whom the individual feels himself bound by ties analogous to those which bind him to his family – ties derived from a common dwelling-place with its associations, from common memories, traditions and customs, and from the common ways of feeling and thinking which a common language and still more a common literature embodies’ (Green, 1986a: 97). With that feeling in mind, ideally, an individual can share an idea of the common good with other fellow citizens. However, by virtue of the scope and the complexity of a modern state, it is not easy for a person to have and share the active interest in the service of the state with others, and consciously contribute to the subsistence of the state. Green observes that ‘there is a lowering of civil vitality as compared with that of the ancient, and perhaps of some exceptionally developed modern, commonwealths’ (Green, 1986a: 94). It is more difficult to advocate the ideal of active and direct participation of each citizen in the function of a modern state than in a Greek city-state. Green’s idea of an active citizen is therefore not a citizen who participates directly in making political decisions with other citizens. As Simhony points out, ‘Green recognizes the need of the active citizen to “have a share, direct or indirect, by himself as a member or by voting for the members of supreme or provincial assemblies, in making and maintaining the laws which he obeys”. But

the activity of Green's citizen is not as strictly political as that; rather, it embraces activities of "mutual helpfulness" in the "maintenance and furtherance of a free society," which may be described as "obligation of support" (Simhony, 2001: 87). That is an obligation to support the state as long as it fulfils its task of ensuring fair and equal opportunities for each citizen.

However, it has been argued earlier that Green does encourage citizens to participate in local politics and to scrutinise state action. For him, although the direct participation in ruling and governing a state can be somewhat remote from individual citizens, and the idea of the common good immanent in the entire state can appear obscure for many citizens, it is by involving themselves in public affairs through local communities that citizens can still have 'a clear understanding of certain interests and rights common to himself with his neighbours' and have 'the needful elementary conception of a common good maintained by law' (Green, 1986a: 96). Nonetheless, Green also argues that it is the duty of the state to inspire the public spirit of citizens which is 'necessary for the maintenance of a government in the public interest' (Green, 1986a: 86). If a common good maintained by the law cannot be recognised by individual citizens, '[i]t is a sign that the state is not a true state – that it is not fulfilling its primary function of maintaining law equally in the interest of all, but is being administered in the interest of classes' (Green, 1986a: 96). However, it should be noted that for Green the government is not the same as the state, as he indicates: 'the state in modern times operates through three organs – the civil government, the national church, and the voice of usage of society' (Green, 1997: 33-34). A state as a concrete social relation is different from a civil government as actual ruler and governor of political society.⁵³ In this sense, while Green claims that it is the duty of a state to maintain the public spirit of citizens, he is not only referring to the civil government but to the church and to civil society as well. Nonetheless,

⁵³ Green's usage of the term 'society' is to some extent confusing. He sometimes describes a civil society in which a form of the state has not been explicit, but sometimes also regards the state as a sort of society, the society of societies (Green, 1986a: 110). In order to prevent this confusion in what follows, I will use 'the political society' to refer to the state and 'the civil society' for the society in the state respectively when I mention them at the same time.

the civil government plays an important role in a political society, for its administration holds the law-imposing and enforcing power that is associated with the coercive force of a state (Green, 1986a: 74-75).

So far it has been shown that, for Green, citizen participation and state action are both important ways to ensure individuals sharing a common spirit, which is in turn necessary for the public recognition of the legitimacy of the sovereign state and its legal system. However, to a modern democratic state, these important and necessary practices are to a certain extent institutionalised and presented in the representative government. It is known that a modern representative government in general has two departments: the administration and the legislature. The representatives who are elected by people to institute laws and to supervise the administration, on the basis of public interests, compose the legislature. An executive institution to enforce laws and to make policies in order to protect and to provide liberal and equal social conditions for each social member is the administration. But in Green's view a representative government founded on atomistic philosophy (which was prevailing in nineteenth-century British social and political theories) is misleading. He argues that a founding on atomistic individualism means that 'the bottom of representation is simply the idea of preventing any one material interest being swamped by another. Thus the executive is simply police. The function of government is purely negative prevention of unfair measures', and '[t]here is no reason why this government should be obeyed, except that my wish is the wish of one, its order is the wish of the majority' (Green, 1867a: 155). With the idea that each individual person is an atom and the state should prevent each person from harm or intervention, the function of the government is merely preventive and is one of policing (Green, 1867a: 155-156). Countering this atomistic theory of representative government, Green contends that '[i]t is so far as a government represents to them a common good that the subjects are conscious that they ought to obey it, i.e. that obedience to it is a means to an end

desirable in itself or absolutely' (Green, 1986a: 79). For him, the legitimacy of the government to represent and to govern the people is grounded on the idea of the common good as the absolute desirable object for the people.

In the meantime, Green nonetheless maintains the distinction between the administration and the legislature within his idea of representative government:

Whether the legislative and administrative agencies of society can be kept in the main free from bias by private interests and true to the idea of common good without popular control – whether again, if they can, that 'civil sense', that appreciation of common good, on the part of the subjects, which is as necessary to free or political society as the direction of law to the maintenance of common good, can be kept alive without active participation of the people in legislative functions, is a question of circumstances which perhaps does not admit of unqualified answer. (Green, 1986a: 93)

Furthermore, in Green's view, the administration comprises the imposition of law and the enforcing of power in a political society, but the legislature is primary. As he notes, '[t]he prime business of the political society, once formed, is to establish the legislative power' (Green, 1986a: 50). The legislature as the representation of the people is more significant than the administration in relation to the legitimacy of the government. However, the difficulty in a modern state, as the quotation indicates, for Green, is how that representation can be legitimate without the direct participation of the people in the making of political decisions.

The central purpose of Green's consideration of the social contract theory in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* is precisely to discover the foundation of the legitimacy of a modern state. In his view, social contract theorists, such as Hobbes, Locke

and Rousseau, invented a conceptual device concerning the covenant of all with all. In this context individuals consent to be ruled by an independent government: '[t]his they [the individuals] no doubt are so long as the government is exercised in a way corresponding to their several wishes, but so long as this is the case, there is no interference with their "natural liberty" to do as they like' (Green, 1986a: 89). But Green argues that if the legitimacy of a government is founded on a covenant of all with all, this government seems to be irresistible, for the scope and the complexity of a modern state makes it too difficult to make the same covenant of all with all. Instead, Green indicates, '[i]f the authority of any government – its claim on our obedience – is held to be derived not from an original, or from any, covenant but from the function which it serves in maintaining those conditions of freedom which are conditions of the moral life, then no act of the people in revocation of a prior act need be reckoned necessary to justify its dissolution. If it ceases to serve this function, it loses its claim on our obedience' (Green, 1986a: 53). To Green, the function of a state, as discussed before, is to ensure and to provide liberal and equal opportunities for all citizens in pursuit of their self-realisation through a system of law; further the right of the state to rule and to govern is founded on an idea of the common good recognised by these citizens. Thus, the legitimacy of a government, as the actual ruler and governor of a state, is therefore dependent upon whether it can ensure and provide fair opportunities for all citizens, and fulfils this function by reference to a recognised common good immanent in society. Therefore, according to this view, the legislature is the institution which represents the recognised common good, enacting laws and policies for the administration to enforce and to impose upon individual citizens with the compelling force. In addition, the compelling force in this design for the separation of powers can thus be under the supervision of the legislature in accordance with the idea of a common good.

To summarise, it is clear that to participate in local politics and public affairs in local communities, for Green, is a direct and important way of preventing the state from using compelling power to maintain its unity. The public spirit holding individuals and communities as a whole can be maintained, to a certain extent, by involving the neighbourhood. However, as Simhony indicates, it is also dependent upon whether the state and the government have fulfilled their duties and functions properly. Meanwhile, the formation of a representative government, which generally includes the legislature and the administration, provides an institutional measurement for citizens to supervise the use of the compelling power. That is to say, Green has not overlooked the potential danger to the individuals of the compelling force accompanying sovereignty. Despite therefore clearly articulating the grounds for individuals to obey the law, he nonetheless still holds firmly to the idea of the separation of powers. Moreover, while he contends that the true foundation of political obligation lies in an idea of the common good rather than a covenant of all with all, he discloses an important dynamic feature of modern democratic politics.

4. Citizens, the sovereign and the dynamics of politics

It has been argued that Green depicts the moral development of an individual person as being founded on an ontological account of the dynamics of human consciousness, and indicates that the ideal of human perfection is after all unattainable, even though human self-consciousness keeps driving us in pursuit of the ideal. With that rational desire moving us to strive for self-realisation, a system of rights, which is formulated by reference to a recognised common good immanent in a society, is a necessary condition for providing fair and equal opportunities for each of us to satisfy that desire. For Green, the task of social communities and the sovereign states is to maintain and to improve that system in accordance with the common good. Meanwhile, the device of the separation of powers institutes a measure for the

supervision of the exercise of compelling force accompanying the sovereignty, and constitutes the essence of representative government, which is an indispensable element of a modern democratic state. Green's idea of a modern state, thus, does not as Simhony argued ignore the importance of the check of powers in a liberal state. Furthermore, looking on his explication of the nature of the sovereignty *de jure*, Green discloses the dynamic feature of a state, which is missing in the common view of the liberal democracy.

The liberal democratic view of a modern state in general regards the general election of the British Parliament as the periodic change of politics. It is claimed that when members of Parliament are re-elected and the administration is reformed within a certain period, the usurpation of political power can be prevented. The dynamics of politics are therefore confined by the regular election of the Parliament. However, Green contests this view of liberal democracy, and claims that 'the question of what really needs to be enacted by the state in order to secure the condition under which a good life is possible, is lost sight of in the quest for majorities' (Green, 1986a: 57). He continues: 'as the will of the people in any other sense than the measure of what the people will tolerate is really unascertainable in the great nations of Europe, the way is prepared for the sophistries of modern political management, for manipulating electoral bodies, for influencing elected bodies, and procuring plebiscites' (Green, 1986a: 57-58). Confining the dynamics of politics to the periodic election (thought of as the expression of the will of the people) is misleading, in Green's view. On the one hand, the result of the election cannot represent the real will of the people; as indicated, Green observes that the election can be manipulated by means of sophistry and populism. On the other hand, the true foundation of a political society is not votes, but the recognised common good immanent in the society. Green does not trust the transient wills expressed in the votes, for these votes are inclined to be influenced by wilful desires rather than the general will. He argues that '[i]t is only as the organ of this general interest that the popular vote can endow

any law with the right to be obeyed’, and ‘as the popular vote is by no means necessarily an organ of the general interest, so the decree of a monarch or of an aristocratic assembly, under certain conditions, might be such an organ’ (Green, 1986a: 80). For Green, the foundation of a democratic state and its sovereignty is by no means the aggregation of the will of the people. However, though Green claims that the true foundation of a democratic political society and its sovereignty is an idea of the common good immanent in the society, it seems that to conceive and to recognise a conception of the common good as equal for all is as difficult as to represent as the will of all people. It is difficult for all people to agree what the exact conception of the common good is, as the foundation of a political society. Nonetheless, since Green claims that the idea of the common good is immanent in a society, as an objective reason conceived by and embodied in previous generations, the notion of habitual obedience seems to be concrete evidence for the legitimacy of a political society.

Concerning the distinction between the sovereignty *de jure* and the sovereignty *de facto*, Green introduces Austin’s notion of habitual obedience, remarking that according to Austin, ‘[i]f a *determinate* human superior, *not* in a habit of obedience to a like superior, receive *habitual* obedience from the *bulk* of a given society, that determinate superior is sovereign in that society, and the society (including the superior) is a society political and independent’ (Green, 1986a: 67).⁵⁴ That is, the idea of the sovereignty so defined is the habitual obedience of a certain people to an independent political ruler. Nonetheless, Green contests that Austin’s definition of sovereignty is not referring to the sovereignty *de jure*, for ‘it considers the essence of sovereignty to lie in the power, on the part of such determinate person or persons, to put compulsion without limit on subjects, to make them do exactly as it pleases’ (Green, 1986a: 67). To Green, habitual obedience, as indicated earlier, is instead

⁵⁴ Bentham has made a similar claim of the sovereignty that: ‘[w]hen a number of persons (whom we may style subjects) are supposed to be in the habit of paying obedience to a person, or an assemblage of persons, of a known and certain description (whom we may call governor or governors) such persons altogether (subjects and governors) are said to be in a state of political SOCIETY’ (Bentham, 1977: 428; cf. Boucher and Kelly, 1994: 21-22).

dependent upon an idea of the common good recognised and shared by people who live in a society. That is to say, the sovereignty *de jure* is the idea of the common good, not habitual obedience. Here, it is clear that a habit of obedience to a determinate person or persons cannot be the real justification for the legitimacy of a state. It is not habit providing grounds for a political society to demand people's obedience, but a recognised common good immanent in the society.

Nonetheless, for Green, habitual obedience is to some extent the manifestation of the sovereignty *de jure*. There are two actual cases that he considers: the Roman Empire and the British power in India. In the first place, he indicates that the foreign power maintaining the inherited laws and the social conventions of the subject people is the sovereign in the proper sense. Both the Roman Empire and the British power in India, in Green's view, meet this condition. He remarks that 'just so far as the Roman Empire was of this sovereign, i.e. law-making and maintaining, character, it derived its permanence, its hold on the "habitual obedience" of its subjects, from the support of the "general will"' (Green, 1986a: 72). As to the British power in India, he comments that 'an "habitual obedience" may fairly be said to be rendered by the Indian people to the English government ... because the English government presents itself to the people, not merely as a tax-collector, but as the maintainer of a customary law, which, on the whole, is the expression of the "general will"' (Green, 1986a: 72). Thus, insofar as the Roman Empire and the English government maintain and protect the customary or written laws of occupied countries and prevent further aggression or invasion from other countries, the habitual obedience of the people manifests their ruling meeting the conditions of the sovereignty *de jure*.

However, while a recognised common good immanent in the society for Green is an expression of the objective reason, regarded by previous generations as the absolutely desirable object for human perfection, the sovereignty *de jure* is not as stable as the notion of

habitual obedience implies, but is transformable and changeable instead.⁵⁵ Each individual citizen as a self-conscious agent is capable of reflecting on the recognised common good as a willed object currently shared in the society, and each individual can also conceive a new object to substitute. The sovereignty *de jure* – as an individual citizen’s consciousness of this object – therefore does not indicate an absolute authority such as Hobbes justifies, but an ethical idea dependent upon the joint recognition of citizens of their absolutely desirable object embedded in social conventions and social practices. Thus, in terms of Green’s explication of the nature of the sovereignty *de jure*, the dynamics of politics is about the interaction between the sovereignty *de jure*, as the willed object of citizens, and the citizens as the subject of the sovereignty.

Along with the dynamic process, if the willed object of individual citizens is identical with the sovereignty *de jure* as the foundation of state action, the individual citizen in this sense will achieve his or her self-government in a social and political life. Green argues that,

it remains true that only through a recognition by certain men of a common interest, and through the expression of that recognition in certain regulations of their dealings with each other, could morality originate, or any meaning be gained for such terms as ‘ought’ and ‘right’ and their equivalents.

Morality, in the first instance, is the observance of such regulations, and though a higher morality – the morality of the character governed by ‘disinterested motives’, i.e.

⁵⁵ In *Prolegomena to Ethics* Green claimed that ‘there is an idea which equally underlies the conception both of moral duty and of legal right; which is prior, so to speak, to the distinction between them; which must have been at work in the minds of men before they could be capable of recognising any kind of action as one that *ought* to be done, whether because it is enjoined by law or authoritative custom, or because, though not thus enjoined, a man owes it to himself or to his neighbour or to God. This is the idea of an absolute and a common good; a good common to the person conceiving it with others, and good for him and them, whether at any moment it answers their likings or no. As affected by such an idea, a man’s attitude to his likes and dislikes will be one of which, in his inward converse, the “Thou shalt” or “Thou must” of command is the natural expression, though of law, in the sense either of the command of a political superior or of a self-imposed rule of life, he may as yet have no definite conception’ (Green, 2003: 232-233). That is, for Green, there is no definite conception of the common good as the final and universal truth for human perfection. See my discussion in the section five of Chapter Four.

by interest in some form of human perfection – comes to differentiate itself from this primitive morality consisting in the observance of rules established for a common good, yet this ‘outward’ morality is the presupposition of the ‘higher’. (Green, 1986a: 92)

He then continues:

Morality and political subjection thus have a common source – ‘*political* subjection’ being distinguished from that of a slave, as a subjection which secures rights to the subject. That common source is the rational recognition by certain human beings – it may be merely by children of the same parent – of a common well-being which *is* their well-being, and which they conceive as their well-being whether at any moment any one of them is inclined to it or no, and the embodiment of that recognition in rules by which the inclinations of the individuals are restrained, and a corresponding freedom of action for the attainment of well-being on the whole is secured. (Green, 1986a: 92)
(italics in original)

While moral subjection to conventional morality is the initial stage of an individual’s moral development, in which the individual uncritically follows instructions of conventional morality and unreflectively engages in the fulfilment of social expectations, the natural impulses and the selfishness of the individual are a matter of discipline and cultivation. Furthermore, while political subjection to sovereignty is, at the beginning, an individual citizen’s habitual obedience to a system of law, in which the individual obediently follows social and political regulations of the sovereignty and reciprocally entertains individual rights, the natural impulses and the selfishness of the individual are a matter of discipline and cultivation as well. Nonetheless, since an individual’s moral development requires protection

by a state, political subjection is an intermediate but indispensable phase for the individual to advance to a higher morality, whereas self-government in social and political life is a condition for moral autonomy.

It has been indicated before that, for Green, the self-realisation of the individual in the common good society is the achievement of the ideal of human perfection and moral autonomy. Moreover, there are two conditions for the achievement: (1) the provision of equal opportunities to each individual citizen, and (2) each individual person devoting himself or herself to the mutual service and interests of the common good shared and recognised by all (Green, 1986a: 159-162; Green, 2003: 288). Accordingly, while the nature of human self-consciousness signifies the ideal is impossible to achieve unless it is at rest and the distinctive feature of being human has vanished, the self-government of an individual citizen nonetheless means that the second condition is met and the first condition is being worked on. For, while it is fair to say that, the practice of self-government indicates that an individual citizen has recognised an idea of the common good as his or her absolutely desirable object, it can also be argued that the foundation of state action, which is to provide and to ensure equal opportunities for each individual citizen to pursue self-realisation, is precisely the recognised common good as the sovereignty *de jure*. Thus, though the ideal of human perfection and moral autonomy in Green's view is not possible to achieve, the self-government of the individual citizen is an important condition for the achievement of that ideal. Hence, behind Green's advocacy of the enfranchisement and the democratic practice of each individual citizen there is a strong moral implication in which his idea of the ethical self moves on to become an idea of the ethical citizen.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Scholars have noted the significance of the idea of the ethical citizen in Green's social and political thought; however, the relationship of the idea with Green's notion of sovereignty has not been addressed yet. See, for example, Boucher and Vincent, 2000: 47-50; Vincent, 2001: 208-216; Tyler, 2006b; Hann, 2014; Martin, 2014; Simhony, 2014a: 442, 452-455.

However, while the dynamics of politics in Green's view relates to the interaction between the sovereignty (as a willed object of individual citizens) and the individual citizens (as the subject of the sovereignty), there is a latent danger of collision between powers in such dynamics, in that the change of the foundation of sovereignty indicates at least two discrepant conceptions of the common good existing in the state, and the right of the state to exercise its coercive force through the administration is consequently brought into question. Green has given us two examples of this danger. The first is historical. In his 'Four Lectures on the English Commonwealth', Green indicates that between the King and the Parliament, between the Royalists and the Presbyterians, there was 'a right hitherto unasserted in Christendom, which, while the old recognized rights were in the suspense of conflict, became a might' (Green, 1906k: 327). For him, the Presbyterians and Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) had recognised the rise of a new spirit along with the development of the Reformation and came to elevate the importance of protecting the liberty of conscience for each person. They did not integrate this new conception of the common interest into an existing system of rights, but instead founded it on their own reformatory enthusiasm. Green remarks that their claim 'was not gradually to transmute, but suddenly to suppress, the feeling of the many by the reason of the few; a claim which all the while belied itself, for it appealed to popular, and even natural right, and which implied no concrete power of political reconstruction'. He then continues, '[i]t was a democracy without a *δημος* [demos], it rested on an assertion of the supremacy of reason, which from its very exclusiveness gave the reason no work to do' (Green, 1906k: 330). That is, when citizens come to have a new conception of the common good and intend to promote a new idea of right, a current system of rights may be challenged and the first condition of the constitution of a state – to regulate and to reconcile existing rights within a systematic law – would thus not be met. In the meantime, since there are conflicting conceptions of the common good, the required social recognition for both the new

and the old rights is suspended. They therefore fail to meet the requirement of being a right and come to be mere powers.

Green's second example is more general. He says that,

in periods of conflict between local or customary, and imperial or written, law, between the constituent powers of a sovereignty, such as King and Parliament in England, of which the relation to each other has not become accurately defined, between a fallen and a rising sovereign in a period of revolution, between federal and state authorities in a composite state, the facts are best represented by saying that for a time there may be no right on either side in the conflict, and that it is impossible to determine precisely the stage at which there comes to be such a right on the one side as implies a definite resistance to right on the other. This of course is not to be taken to mean that in such periods rights in general are at an end. It is merely that right is in suspense on the particular point at issue between the conflicting powers. (Green, 1986a: 82)

To Green, though there may be powers competing for sovereignty in a society, not all rights come to be mere powers, but the right of the state in particular, for the disorganisation of the society and the collision between powers, indicates the two conditions for the constitution of a state both fail to be met (Green, 1986a: 83-84). That is to say, while the dynamics of politics in Green's thought signifies an important idea, namely the ethical citizen who strives for the ideal of self-realisation and human perfection within a social and political life, nonetheless there are potential dangers lurking in a state, particularly when the citizen transforms the conception of the common good and changes the foundation of the sovereignty. In this latter context the citizen's obedience to the sovereign and to the

systematic law is suspended.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, though Green has noticed the disorganisation and the disorder that may accompany the interaction between the sovereignty and individual citizens, in his view, there is no immediate solution with which to restore the social and political order until one of the competing powers meets the conditions for constituting a state, namely to maintain diverse rights in social relations by means of a systematic law and to ensure the integration of the state with the coercive force in accordance with a recognised common good.

In brief, according to Green, the dynamics of politics stems from different conceptions of the common good conceived by citizens. The changes of social and political constitutions are the results of the emergence of these differences. That is to say, politics is not merely about institutional measures, but also relates to actions and thoughts of the individual citizens who are the constituent parts of the state and who struggle for self-realisation and human perfection in a social and political life. It is not a mere instrument of the civil society, but an indispensable part of the common good necessary for the moral autonomy of each individual. Thus, Green's social and political philosophy, on the one hand, does not overlook the danger of state power in practice; instead, he not only maintains the idea of the separation of powers but also notes the danger of the collision between powers. On the other hand, while he addresses that an individual citizen's moral development is reliant upon the state providing and securing certain conditions, he also contends the importance of each individual citizen participating in public affairs and engaging in the practice of self-government. As Simhony remarks, 'in Aristotelian fashion, Green believes that the state is "a society of which the life is maintained by what its members do for the sake of maintaining it"' (Simhony, 2014a: 454;

⁵⁷ In this very context there is an issue of the duty of disobedience about which Green distinguishes four cases: (1) when the legitimacy of the sovereignty and the system of rights is doubtful and in dispute; (2) because of the government's conduct there are no legal means to repeal a law; (3) when the political society and whole system of rights are corrupted and controlled by private interests and against the common interests of the public; (4) when resisting an objectionable or disputable law would not infringe the foundation of social order and the authority of the entire system of rights (Green, 1986a: 80-81). Tyler has offered a profound discussion of Green's idea of civil disobedience, see Tyler, 2012: chap. 8.

cf. Green, 1986a, 37; Simhony, 2014b). This mutuality and reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens is therefore an important point in which ‘Green departs notably from the Hegelian model’ (Hobhouse, 1918: 118). Viewing the ideal of human perfection and moral autonomy as the unattainable *telos*, Green’s moral and political philosophy, as Bernard Bosanquet claims, contains a pessimistic view of human life (Bosanquet, 1899: 289). But it is also thanks to this sceptical element in his mind that his practical philosophy is more humane and less doctrinaire.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Green’s idea of the sovereign state and its relation to practical and autonomous citizens in society. In response to Simhony’s argument that Green has omitted the danger of state power in practice, thus missing an important lesson of classical liberalism, I argue that while Green’s *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* focuses on the explication of the true ground of the individual’s obedience to the law and the state, it also develops a moral justification for state action as well as the foundation of the political legitimacy, by which Green indicates the boundary of state power. Meanwhile, along with his consideration of the nature of the sovereignty, Green not only maintains the notion of the separation of powers in his conception of a modern state but also notes the danger of the collision between powers. Furthermore, Green’s social and political philosophy also has a focus on the importance of citizen participation in social and political life and the integration of a state. That is, for Green, any potential disintegration of a state depends upon whether individual citizens conceive and recognise an absolutely desirable good as their shared common good or not, and the practice of self-government by each individual citizen is thus a necessary condition for the actualisation of the common good society. At this point, Green’s systematic practical philosophy is therefore completed in a dynamic account of liberal

politics and an understanding of the self-cultivation of individual consciousness in social and political life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GREEN'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONCEPT OF LIBERAL POLITICS IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

1. Introduction

The preceding chapters explore Green's practical philosophy. This latter philosophy is built upon a metaphysical treatment of human agency, a concept of the ethical self, an idea of the common good society, and a dynamic notion of politics. On the basis of this practical philosophy, Green not only addresses the complex relation between consciousness and action in moral and political activities, but also attempts to restore the autonomy of moral philosophy from the naturalistic and empiricist metaphysics and the hedonistic and utilitarian philosophy, and to rearticulate the spirit of Liberalism in a social and political sense. By providing a moral justification for state action to intervene and to improve each citizen's social and economic conditions, the fundamental spirit of Liberalism, in Green's view, is one which assists the people in fighting against arbitrary privileges and levelling social and political inequalities. The aim is ultimately to achieve an ideal society in which every individual person can realise his or her true self. A sovereign state accordingly has a moral function for individual persons, whereas it cannot directly foster a person's moral character and freedom. In contrast with so-called Classical Liberalism, for which *laissez faire* is the main tenet, Green's re-articulation of Liberalism therefore maintains a moral ideal. He is thus concerned to both advocate and to protect individual freedoms, on the one hand, whilst on the other to secure equal and fair living and working conditions for each person in society, no

matter to which social class he or she belongs. This latter theme underpins the claim that Green has, minimally, potential sympathies with a form of liberal socialism.

On the basis of this systematic exploration of Green's practical philosophy, the main task of this chapter is to consider a theoretical potentiality of Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics with regards to two correlative issues of the contemporary liberal political philosophy. The first issue is one of pluralism. The rise of contemporary understandings of pluralism in modern social and political philosophy can be traced back to the writings of Isaiah Berlin. It has been suggested previously that Berlin criticises the philosophy of monism and holism vehemently.⁵⁸ For him, there is no absolute and final coherent system of truth. Every idea or value is incompatible with each other. For Berlin values and ideas are thus tragically plural and irreconcilable. He claims that while 'monism, and faith in a single criterion, has always proved a deep source of satisfaction both to the intellect and to the emotions', it is 'used to justify the a priori barbarities of Procrustes – the vivisection of the actual human societies into some fixed pattern dictated by our fallible understanding of a largely imaginary past or a wholly imaginary future' (Berlin, 2002: 216). Opposing the philosophy of monism and holism, Berlin argues, pluralism is 'a truer and more humane ideal' than the goal of seeking rational, universal and absolute knowledge of humankind. The plurality of values and ideas is the actual condition of human thought, based on the human characteristic of free choice. Hence, stemming from notions of individual freedom, there are many incompatible and incommensurable values in human society, for 'there is no "common measure or ranking"' and 'there is no other determinate and general procedure for solving conflicts, such as a lexical priority rule' (Berlin and Williams: 1994: 306). Accordingly, the challenge of Berlin's value pluralism to modern liberal politics is that if there is no common measure and no systematic law in a society to accommodate these incompatible and

⁵⁸ See my discussion in the section one of Chapter Four.

incommensurable values, can a liberal democratic state maintain the integration of the society without transgressing individual freedom or not?

The second issue relates to political liberalism. While Berlin proposes a value pluralism challenge to modern liberal politics, John Rawls (1921-2002), an influential political philosopher in the twentieth century, indicates that the fact of pluralism has been undeniable since the Reformation. The plurality of religious belief ‘fragmented the religious unity of the Middle Ages and led to religious pluralism, with all consequences for later centuries. This in turn fostered pluralisms of other kinds, which were a permanent feature of culture by the eighteenth century’ (Rawls, 2005: xxii). Coming from the principle of toleration, which is the result of the religious wars in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, a doctrine of political liberalism is seen to develop. This doctrine advocated a constitutional democratic state to protect the liberty of conscience and the freedom of thought in response to ‘the fact of reasonable pluralism as a pluralism of comprehensive doctrines, including both religious and nonreligious doctrines’ (Rawls, 2005: xxiv). However, though Rawls contends the incompatibility of these plural comprehensive doctrines, his political liberalism maintains a rational foundation for liberal and democratic politics. That is, while there are diverse and conflicting comprehensive doctrines in a society, each individual citizen as a rational person has two important moral powers: a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good. With these two moral powers, Rawls claims that ‘[t]he point of the ideal of public reason is that citizens are to conduct their fundamental discussions within the framework of what each regards as a political conception of justice based on values that the others can reasonably be expected to endorse and each is, in good faith, prepared to defend that conception so understood. This means that each of us must have, and be ready to explain, a criterion of what principles and guidelines we think other citizens (who are also free and equal) may reasonably be expected to endorse along with us’ (Rawls, 2005:

226). Hence, on the basis of this reasonableness, Rawls contends that rational persons can constitute an overlapping consensus, as neutral ground, on which a liberal and democratic constitutional state might accommodate diverse and incompatible comprehensive doctrines. This can be done whilst maintaining social and political stability and without using compelling force. However, while Rawls conceives metaphysical doctrines as comprehensive, which cannot provide a ground for the overlapping consensus, his ontological conception of the rational human person nonetheless is metaphysical. Thus, an issue arises as to whether liberal political philosophy should disown any metaphysical doctrine in response to the challenge of pluralism or not.

Focusing on these two issues, in this chapter I will argue that although Green's practical philosophy is an intellectual work of nineteenth-century British society, its idealistic conception of liberal politics is still useful in approaching these two contemporary issues. On the basis of this idealistic conception of liberal politics, firstly, it will be clear that a metaphysical doctrine is essential to the liberal political philosophy, and secondly, Green's dynamic view of the relationship between practical citizen and state action in a liberal and democratic society can provide a possible response to the challenge of pluralism, in which the ideas of human freedom and human equality are not necessarily incompatible. However this potential compatibility, in practice, is nonetheless an ideal. In the meantime, I will discuss two contemporary interpretations of Green's moral and political thought – Carter's ethical socialism and Tyler's liberal socialism – in order to indicate the legacy of Green's practical philosophy, namely, an idealistic liberalism.

2. A question of pluralism

In order to introduce Green's practical philosophy into the contemporary pluralism issue, the first question a commentator has to answer is 'how a nineteenth-century Victorian could conceive the complexity of the pluralistic world nowadays?'

Some commentators have attempted to answer this question already. We have noted that Boucher and Vincent comment that the pluralistic and fragmented society we encounter in the twentieth and twentieth-first centuries seems remote from Green's age, but it should be borne in mind that this plurality and fragmentation are the result of historical development.⁵⁹ To them, Green, as distinct from Rawls, 'does offer a notion of comprehensive unity premised upon a historical development of ideas, although it is an equivocal unity' (Boucher and Vincent, 2000: 51). Green's practical philosophy in this sense is important for us to comprehend how the world we are living in came to be. On the other hand, in tackling this difficulty of Green's nineteenth-century philosophy in the context of contemporary pluralism such as we ourselves encounter in modern society, Carter appeals to the plurality in nineteenth-century British society. He argues, 'Green also accepted that there can exist a difference in the moral values and beliefs in society in the way he dealt with the rights and duties that can be shared by groups at a level below the nation-state. So it is possible for ethnic, religious or national groups to recognise rights for themselves, without these rights being recognised by society' (Carter, 2003: 31). That is to say, according to Carter, a pluralistic world to this extent was not unforeseen by Green.

On 10th January 1882, Green suggested that '[s]ociety was becoming every day more complicated, and they [the people] wished so to order, so to arrange, that complicated society that everyone, whatever his station, whether peer or peasant, capitalist or labourer, townsman or countryman, should have a fair chance of making the best and most of himself' (Green, 1882: 385). To Green, it was exactly because the modern society was becoming increasingly

⁵⁹ See footnote 50 in section four of Chapter Five.

complex and complicated that the practice of the common good principle was more and more significant for a liberal democratic state. Also, he claimed that '[t]he special features of the object in which the true good is sought will vary in different ages and with different persons, according to circumstances and idiosyncrasy', thus 'in all its forms the interest has the common characteristic of being directed to an object which is an object for the individual only so far as he identifies himself with a society, and seeks neither an imagined pleasure nor a succession of pleasures, but a bettering of the life which is at once his and the society's' (Green, 2003: 281). In Green's view, the relationship between the individual and the society is mutual and reciprocal. It is a fact that individuals can have different values and ideas by virtue of having different circumstances and personalities, but these values and ideas are nonetheless articulated in relation to a certain form of social life. For him, the relation between the individual and the society in which he or she exists is organic. They are not independent from each other, but rather interdependent for a certain purpose and at a certain time. A society, or any other form of civil combination, in which there is no common aim shared and recognised by its constituent individuals, is just inconceivable.

On the other hand, it is because the common aim in a society has not been accepted and recognised by individuals that the compelling power of a state is in action. As discussed previously, for Green, a state may use compelling power to maintain a system of rights and to ensure each individual citizen has fair and equal opportunities for self-realisation, and the justification for this state action is in accordance with a recognised common good immanent in the society and the system of rights. A right, as a power, claimed and recognised as contributory to a common good is the fundamental condition for the individuals and the state to exercise their powers. Thus, if there is no common good but incompatible and incommensurable values held by individuals, the condition for the individuals or the state to exercise rights vanishes, and the rights become mere powers. That is to say, though the

plurality of a modern society is the result of human history, in Green's view, it cannot be denied that there is a recognised common good in the society, as the condition necessary for individuals and the state to exercise their rights. Furthermore, without this necessary condition for determining a right and for a society to be possible, there is no pluralistic society, but conversely fragmentary individuals set against each other.

At this point, it is clear that Green does acknowledge a certain kind of pluralism, but one which should be maintained in a social and political framework. However, even though Green can conceive a pluralistic issue in the liberal democratic society, a second question arises: 'what kind of pluralism is possible in Green's thought?'

I have indicated that the pluralistic issue under consideration here is the one which Berlin and Rawls have attempted to address previously, and therefore, I will confine my discussion of the second question to whether the kind of pluralism in Green's thought relates to Berlin's or/and Rawls's pluralism or not. Regarding the difference between Berlin's pluralism and Rawls's, Rawls himself has remarked that '[f]or Berlin the realm of values is objective, but values clash and the full range of values is too extensive to fit into any one social world; not only are they incompatible with one another, imposing conflicting requirements on institutions; but there exists no family of workable institutions that can allow sufficient space for them all. That there is no social world without loss is rooted in the nature of values and the world, and much human tragedy reflects that. A just liberal society may have far more space than other social worlds but it can never be without loss' (Rawls, 2005: 197, n. 32). According to Rawls, Berlin's pluralism is one of diverse objective values that exist in the human society as a matter of fact. This kind of pluralism, as Crowder points out, is 'the claim that there are, in fact, multiple goods that contribute, objectively, to human well-being—that is, the notion of value pluralism may be understood as a set of normative claims' (Crowder, 2007: 131). These objective values, for various individuals and communities, are

normative claims that regulate and guide their forms of life, but they are incompatible, incommensurable and irreconcilable with each other. Therefore, when choosing some of them as the normative standard in a society, others are unavoidably excluded. A perfect reconciliatory human society is therefore impossible.

As to Rawls's pluralism, he defines it as that '[a] modern democratic society is characterized not simply by a pluralism of comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines but by a pluralism of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines. No one of these doctrines is affirmed by citizens generally. Nor should one expect that in the foreseeable future one of them, or some other reasonable doctrine, will ever be affirmed by all, or nearly all, citizens' (Rawls, 2005: xvi). For Rawls, the pluralistic issue in a modern society is founded on the nature of human reason, by which each rational individual person can claim diverse reasonable values and goods against others. The problem lies not with the simple fact that there are diverse, plural and conflicting conceptions of the good, but with the existence of incompatible yet reasonable comprehensive doctrines, the 'convictions and attachments help to organize and give shape to a person's way of life, what one sees oneself as doing and trying to accomplish in one's social world' (Rawls, 1985: 241). Taking a different stance from Berlin, the pluralistic issue Rawls addresses, in a doctrine of political liberalism, is the notion of plural and diverse conceptions of good conceived and claimed by individuals with practical reasons, not objective existence of values and goods.

According to these interpretations of Berlin's and Rawls's work, the pluralism in Green's thought is closer to Rawls's than to Berlin's. For Green, each individual person as a self-conscious agent has the capability of conceiving different ideal objects as the good for which he or she will strive. By means of the effort of practical rational will that each individual person has, there are diverse and plural conceptions of good existing in a society. However, Green also believes that there is an ideal of common good in accordance with

which a non-competitive and non-exclusive society can be organised, and every individual person can access fair and equal opportunities in pursuit of self-realisation. That is, Green, unlike Berlin, does have an idea of the harmonious and reconciliatory society for which humanity struggles.

The very possibility, however, of raising the question whether men are really the better for the acceptance of humanitarian ideas, indicates the extent of their actual currency. Their influence may be traced alike in the positive law, and institutions maintained by law, of civilised nations; in the law of opinion, the social sentiments and expectations, prevalent among them; and in the formulae by which philosophers have sought to methodise this law of opinion. ... Given the idea of a common good and of self-determined participators in it – the idea implied, as we have seen, in the most primitive human society – the tendency of the idea in the minds of all capable of it must be to include, as participators of the good, all who have dealings with each other and who can communicate as ‘I’ and ‘Thou’. With growing means of intercourse and the progress of reflection the theory of a universal human fellowship is its natural outcome. (Green, 2003: 242)

To Green, along with the developments made by the Stoic philosophers, the Roman jurists and Christendom, an idea of common humanity evolved in the ordinary intercourse of different people and different nations. Nonetheless, he recognises the self-interested motives, the geographical demarcations, the national antagonisms that are all impediments to the ideal being achieved and realised (Green, 2003: 251). He claims that ‘its retardation by those private interests which have made it inconvenient for powerful men and classes to act upon it, and have led them to welcome any counter-theory which might justify their practice; such,

e.g., as the interests which led some of the American communities, after claiming their own independence on the ground that “all men are born free and equal”, to vindicate negro slavery for nearly a hundred years and only to relinquish it after a tremendous war in its defence’ (Green, 2003: 242-243). In brief, while Green acknowledges the plurality of reasonable values in the social world, he advocates the ideal of the common good society as a moral and practical principle for which each human person strives. The problem is how to proceed to the ideal without using force in such pluralistic world.

3. Political liberalism: with or without metaphysics?

In response to the issue of reasonable pluralism, Rawls, as indicated before, assumes a conception of the human person. For him, each individual citizen as a reasonable person has realised his or her two moral powers – a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of good – to a sufficient degree to be ‘free and equal citizens in a constitutional regime, and who have an enduring desire to honor fair terms of cooperation and to be fully cooperating members of society’ (Rawls, 2005: 55). Based on this conception of the human person, Rawls conjectures two kinds of consensus that could be achieved and formulated by individual citizens. The first is a constitutional consensus that ‘at a certain time, because of various historical events and contingencies, certain liberal principles of justice are accepted as a mere *modus vivendi*, and are incorporated into existing political institutions’ (Rawls, 2005: 159). It is a set of basic liberal political principles by which individual citizens can constitute democratic procedures ‘for moderating the political rivalry, and for determining issues of social policy’ (Rawls, 2005: 163). By means of these procedures, individual citizens as reasonable beings can come to agreement about constitutional essentials, a social and political entity ‘required to give due weight to the idea of society as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal citizens, and not to regard it, in practice if not in speech,

as so much rhetoric' (Rawls, 2005: 166). This reasonable agreement so constituted is an overlapping consensus. The public reason by reference to which a political society and a government make political decisions and institute social and political structures accordingly enables a just and liberal society.

Public reason is characteristic of a democratic people: it is the reason of its citizens, of those sharing the status of equal citizenship. The subject of their reason is the good of the public: what is the political conception of justice requires of society's basic structure of institutions, and of the purposes and ends they are to serve. Public reason, then, is public in three ways: as the reason of citizens as such, it is the reason of the public; its subject is the good of the public and matters of fundamental justice; and its nature and content is public, being given by the ideals and principles expressed by society's conception of political justice, and conducted open to view on that basis. (Rawls, 2005: 213)

On the grounds of this notion of public reason, Rawls therefore argues that the legitimacy of exercising coercive force to maintain political stability in a pluralistic society exists 'only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational' (Rawls, 2005: 217). That is, while there are conflicts among diverse reasonable comprehensive doctrines, individual citizens, as reasonable persons, can construct and constitute a liberal and just political institution with which to maintain the integration of society and to reconcile plural comprehensive doctrines jointly.

Interestingly, Green's idea of the common good society has features in common with this Rawlsian view of a just and liberal society. Firstly, the capability of practical rational will

for Green is not a moral agency that can only present in each individual person's thoughts and actions. It is also an agency that presents in social and cultural institutions as the embodiments of objective reasons which are recognised conceptions of the common good by previous generations. These are the legitimate foundation on which the current social and political society regulates and reconciles diverse rights in social relations. Secondly, Green's idea of the common good society as the principle of justice also signifies an ideal just and equal society in which individual persons can pursue diverse and plural ways of self-realisation with each other non-exclusively and non-competitively. Thirdly, individual persons who live in a just and equal society and are entitled to be competent right-holders are recognised by each other as equal free citizens. Accordingly, it seems that while Green and Rawls both recognise the issue of reasonable pluralism evolving in the liberal and democratic society, their responses to this issue are also similar.

Nonetheless, there is an important difference between Green and Rawls, which means that Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics is still relevant to contemporary liberal political philosophy, and is to do with their different views of the status of metaphysics in social and political philosophy. As indicated, Rawls considers metaphysics to be a kind of comprehensive doctrine. For him, '[p]hilosophy as the search for truth about an independent metaphysical and moral order cannot, I believe, provide a workable and shared basis for a political conception of justice in a democratic society', for 'the conception of citizens as free and equal persons, need not involve ... questions of philosophical psychology or a metaphysical doctrine of the nature of the self' (Rawls, 1985: 230-231). Bearing in mind the fact of reasonable pluralism being the actual condition of human society, Rawls devotes himself to developing a theory of the just and well-ordered society on the grounds of a constructivist conception of individual person. By ensuring his conception of a reasonable person is not metaphysical but political, as the one is a part of the public culture shared in the

Western liberal democratic society, Rawls believes that a moral and political conception of the individual person can be separated from a metaphysical doctrine of the human person. In his view, the conception of reasonable person is ‘a moral conception, one that begins from our everyday conception of persons as the basic units of thought, deliberation and responsibility, and adapted to a political conception of justice and not to a comprehensive moral doctrine’ (Rawls, 1985: 232, n. 15). It is not a conception of the human person based upon a precisely articulated system of moral, religious, or philosophical values or beliefs, but a conception developed from social practice and historical development. For Rawls, the ideal just and liberal society is a political idea ‘rooted in the basic intuitive ideas found in the public culture of a constitutional democracy’ (Rawls, 1985: 246). It is separable from those comprehensive metaphysical and moral doctrines as the source of conflicts and disagreements among individual persons. In response to the question of pluralism, there is no need for political liberals to begin with comprehensive philosophical and metaphysical doctrines.

Nonetheless, as Boucher and Vincent point out, ‘to deny metaphysics absolutely is, paradoxically, to affirm metaphysics’ (Boucher and Vincent, 2000: 45). While Rawls makes a strong stand against metaphysics, this stand as such is a metaphysical claim. For Boucher and Vincent, ‘we might redescribe Rawls’s ideas as plausible metaphysical assumptions about human beings and their relation to society. Metaphysics is not about blind prejudice, it rather refers to the most deep-rooted, yet often quite reasonable presuppositions we make about the character of our reality’ (Boucher and Vincent, 2000: 45). Meanwhile, Charles Taylor has also pointed out that the contemporary controversies of liberal political philosophy, particularly the so-called liberal-communitarian debate, contain a confusion of ontological issues with advocacy issues. Taylor argues that the ontological issues ‘concern what you recognize as the factors you will invoke to account for social life’ (Taylor, 1995:

181). Such as atomism, which is distinct from holism, is about beliefs in '(a), the order of explanation, you can and ought to account for social actions, structures, and conditions in terms of properties of the constituent individuals; and in (b) the order of deliberation, you can and ought to account for social goods in terms of concatenations of individual goods' (Taylor, 1995: 181). On the other hand, the advocacy issues concern moral and political stands or policies one adopts, such as the distinction of individualism and collectivism, in that the former gives primacy to individual rights and the latter to the community life or the collective goods (Taylor, 1995: 182). Thus, clarifying the distinction between ontological and advocacy issues, Taylor argues that the confusion of this distinction in contemporary debates causes scholars to fail to go beyond the dualism between atomistic individualism and holistic collectivism. This means that they are incapable of conceiving a holistic individualism position, a position which could assist liberals to remedy the error of atomism. To Taylor, atomistic individualism 'fails to take account of the degree to which the free individual with his own goals and aspirations, whose just rewards it is trying to protect, is himself only possible within a certain kind of civilization; that it took a long development of certain institutions and practices, of the rule of law, of rules of equal respects, of habits of common deliberation, of common association, of cultural development, and so on, to produce the modern individual; and that without these the very sense of oneself as an individual in the modern meaning of the term would atrophy' (Taylor, 1985: 309). On the contrary, taking the position of holistic individualism, the significance of social and moral horizons, which are the background for an individual shaping conceptions of his or her self and the good life, can be restated. While liberals such as Rawls have related their moral and political conception of the individual person to a particular context – the public culture of liberal democracy – they cannot provide an adequate explanation of how culture or context is important and indispensable to an individual person on the basis of the atomism ontology. This is because

they have not taken the concepts of community and communal identity seriously enough. While community and communal identity, as a matter of fact, have influences on individuals' conceptions and judgements in constituting an overlapping consensus, the atomistic individualism resolves community and communal identity into compositions of individual persons, and conceals the presence of them as such. Hence, by drawing upon the importance of the ontological issues for explicating the conception of human person, Taylor has correctly indicated a fundamental query in relation to contemporary liberal political philosophy: the omission of the importance of a metaphysical and ontological doctrine of the human person and its relation to society.

Green, on the other hand, not only contends the importance of a valid and consistent metaphysics as his criticism of empirical and naturalistic philosophy, but also founds his systematic practical philosophy on a metaphysical treatment of human agency. It has often been suggested that Green expounds a human ontology as the primary foundation of his ethics and politics, and explicates the complex relationship between human consciousness and human action. He therefore provides a comprehensive and sophisticated account of the moral and political person. In particular, on the basis of this comprehensive and sophisticated account of the moral and political person, Green avoids two defects in Rawls's concept of liberal politics, and in this sense, has a more adequate apprehension of the nature of liberal democracy.

The first issue relates to the priority of the right over the good. By separating comprehensive doctrines from public affairs, Rawls holds that the basic right of each individual citizen to have a just and liberal circumstance in which to live occurs prior to the diverse conceptions of the good in the political agenda. For him, the contestation of diverse and plural conceptions of good is not a political issue that can be settled by political powers insofar as the contestation does not endanger and transgress the basic social and economic

structures that provide and secure fair and equal opportunities for each individual citizen. In terms of the political conception of justice, Rawls contends that to ensure each individual person has basic rights is more important than deciding which conception of good is the moral ideal for which each person should struggle (Rawls, 2005: 173-211). However, while the political conception of justice has its historical origins and social circumstances, this conception *per se* is not a mere abstract and *a priori* principle regulating thoughts and actions of individual persons. Conversely it is a particular and historical conception recognised and accepted by these persons and embodied in social and cultural institutions through their social practices. According to Green's view, this recognised and embodied conception of justice is indicating precisely the idea of the common good shared by individual persons in a society. For him, the principle of justice is developing and evolving in 'the language in which we most naturally express our conception of the duty of all men to all men indicates the school – that of tribal, or civil, or family obligation – in which we have been trained to the conception' (Green, 2003: 238). Nonetheless, for Green the constitution of rights comes before the actualisation of good in a society. The principle of justice, as an idea of the common good, is immanent in the society, but each individual person can still have different ideas of self-realisation by reference to that common good. Therefore, in order to prevent competitions and conflicts among individual persons, by virtue of these different ideas, and further to provide each of them with fair and equal opportunities to pursue diverse ways of self-realisation, rights are the necessary condition for the actualisation of the good in which individual persons can achieve his or her ideal self. Thus the relationship between the right and the good in Green's view is dual. On the one hand, the principle of justice as the foundation of rights is a common good recognised by individual citizens, and in this sense, the good is prior to the right. On the other hand, while the actualisation of different modes of self-realisation, that different individual citizens strive for, requires fair and equal

opportunities provided and ensured by the political society, rights are an indispensable condition in which individual citizens can obtain their desired state of common good (Simhony, 2009b: 9-14). In other words, compared with Rawls, Green provides a more comprehensive account of the relation between the right and the good on the ground of his human ontology, rather than asserting the priority of the right over the good and omitting the importance of community life.

The second relates to Rawls's conception of politics. While Rawls makes a sharp distinction between comprehensive doctrines and political conceptions, his conception of politics has two important conditions. Firstly, it is 'presented as freestanding and expounded apart from, or without reference to, any such wider background' and 'is a module, an essential constituent part, that fits into and can be supported by various reasonable comprehensive doctrines that endure in the society regulated by it. This means that it can be presented without saying, or knowing, or hazarding a conjecture about, what such doctrines it may belong to, or be supported by' (Rawls, 2005: 12-13). Secondly, it is 'not' about 'conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of familial and associational relationships, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole' (Rawls, 2005: 13). That is, though Rawls also addresses the moral and conventional features of a political conception, the above two conditions delimit his conception of politics within a doctrine of neutral proceduralism: to 'formulate a definitive list of rights, principles and institutional arrangements that are unassailable and will create the basis of a consensus that is both moral and neutral' and to 'create the conditions necessary to deliver indisputable results' (Mouffe, 2005: 138-139).

However, Rawls's conception of liberal politics has encountered certain criticisms. Gerald Gaus indicates that while Rawls holds that the exercise of state power can be justified in accordance with public reasons, which are founded on an overlapping consensus of

reasonable persons, there are possibilities for the state power to be exercised without public grounds. He contests that Rawls's overlapping consensus and reasonable agreement are both confined to the issue of constitutional essentials and are important for the constitution of a just and liberal society. However, Rawls has not made it clear how the exercise of state power would be prevented from becoming oppressive if there is no public grounds concerning issues of non-constitutional needs. Gaus remarks that 'a Rawlsian state will not be grossly oppressive, as it must respect the publicly justified essentials; it does, though, allow many small coercive impositions that are explicitly justified on what seem manifestly non-public grounds. In its day-to-day operations, political liberalism sanctions the majority's use of state power to advance its "comprehensive doctrines"' (Gaus, 1999: 273). Instead of trying to constitute a consensus of reasonable persons, Gaus claims that constitutional politics 'is not the realm of *consensus*, but of *conclusive* justifications – those not open to reasonable doubt' (Gaus, 1999: 275). For him, liberal politics is nonetheless of 'the justification of coercive authority that is not open to reasonable doubt' (Gaus, 1999: 276). According to Gaus, what Rawls's conceptions of reasonable person and overlapping consensus indicate is that Rawls has underestimated the severity of reasonable pluralism and the necessity of authoritative judgment in the political arena.

Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, contends that this is a general misconception in the liberal view of politics. She argues that '[w]hen we look at the argument closely, we see that it consists in relegating pluralism and dissent to the private sphere in order to secure consensus in the public realm. All controversial issues are taken off the agenda in order to create the conditions for a "rational" consensus. As a result, the realm of politics becomes merely the terrain where individuals, stripped of their "disruptive" passions and beliefs and understood as rational agents in search of self-advantage – within the constraints of morality, of course – submit to procedures for adjudicating between their claims that they consider

“fair” (Mouffe, 2005: 139-140). To Mouffe, while Rawls assumes the conception of a reasonable person as the foundation from which to develop a doctrine of political liberalism in response to the question of pluralism, he has concealed the most significant feature of politics, that is, the antagonism among diverse values, genders, nations, ethnicity, and groups, which is driven by passions and desires as well as practical reasons. In other words, Rawls’s concept of a reasonable person implies a common ground for each individual citizen to constitute an overlapping consensus, and at the very outset the validity of reasonable pluralism as an issue is resolved. In Mouffe’s view, Rawls’s political liberalism fails to comprehend the necessity of conflict and antagonism which constitutes politics as such, and is thus a negation of politics.⁶⁰

Therefore, according to Gaus’s and Mouffe’s criticisms of Rawls’s conception of liberal politics, it can be concluded that, firstly, Rawls overstates the role of practical reason in justifying the exercise of state power. This is because, secondly, he has not taken the inherent role of antagonism and conflict in politics seriously enough.

Green’s idealistic conception of liberal politics, in contrast, meets the second requirement, by addressing the function of animal instinct and impulse for an individual person’s moral development, within a social and political life. In the first place, it has been suggested that while the distinctive feature of human action is self-conscious, the animal part of human beings is indispensable, because the motivation for our action and the drive of our thinking both rely upon our animal wants and natural impulses. On the other hand, it is when we come to discipline and cultivate these wants and impulses in and through conventional morality and habitual obedience to a social and political regime that we can be capable of

⁶⁰ For Mouffe, ‘[t]he liberal claim that a universal rational consensus could be produced by an undistorted dialogue, and that free public reason could guarantee the impartiality of the state, is only possible at the cost of denying the irreducible antagonistic element present in social relations, and this can have disastrous consequences for the defence of democratic institutions. To negate the political does not make it disappear, it only leads to bewilderment in the face of its manifestations and to impotence in dealing with them’ (Mouffe, 2005: 140).

conceiving a shared and recognised idea of the common good and an ideal of the universal moral principle. For Green, ‘the perfection of the human soul may involve the constant presence of a lower nature, consisting in certain tendencies, never indeed dominant, but in conflict with which alone the higher energies of man can emerge’ (Green, 2003: 327). The animal nature of human beings, in this sense, is an impediment to our moral development in pursuit of the ideal of human perfection, but it is also a necessary condition for development to be possible. Moreover, starting from this view of the human condition, for Green, there are social conflicts and value diversities persisting in society which demand state action for reconciliation. While animal wants and natural impulses can encourage an individual’s moral development, they can also make the person selfish and self-conceited. Thus, due to the existence of human selfishness, there are people suffering in society to whom fair and equal opportunities, in pursuit of self-realisation, are unavailable. State action, as the representation of the self-government of individual citizens, is therefore important for society to be improved and to advance towards an ideal harmony. Nonetheless, since self-consciousness and the animal nature of the human organism are both essential parts of being human, the process of self-government is perpetual and endless. In other words, a social and political life for individual citizens always contains social conflict and value diversity in relation to self-cultivation and self-government. Hence, it is clear that with a basis in a metaphysical and ontological treatment of human agency, Green’s conception of liberal politics not only addresses the non-rational dimensions of an individual person, but also indicates the significance of conflict and diversity in a social and political life.

To sum up, for Green, as for Rawls, the question of pluralism relates to the fact that there are diverse and plural reasonable conceptions of good, and they may lead to conflicts in society. In response to this pluralism issue, Green and Rawls both propose an idea of a just and liberal society in which individual citizens can formulate a public and objective reason as

the justification for the state to exercise its coercive force if necessary. Nonetheless, while Green begins his idea of the just and liberal society with a metaphysical and ontological treatment of human agency, Rawls refuses to do so. As a consequence, Green's response to the issue of reasonable pluralism is more adequate than Rawls's, for Rawls's conception of a reasonable person has presumed a common ground for individual persons to reach an overlapping consensus and invalidates the issue at its very start. Meanwhile, the conception of liberal politics so formulated which underpins Green's idea of the common good society can avoid two criticisms to Rawls's political liberalism as well. Green's conception of liberal politics notes the non-rational parts of a human person, and the inherent role of conflict in social and political life, and in this sense, Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics is not a negation of politics. However, whether this conception of liberal politics can meet the requirement of providing a justification for making authoritative judgement in the political arena, simultaneously being closed to reasonable doubt, yet managing not to infringe individual freedom, is the question to which I return now.

4. Practical citizen and political authority: Green's idealistic liberalism

There are two distinctive contemporary interpretations of Green's social and political philosophy: one is Carter's ethical socialism, and the other is Tyler's liberal socialism. Carter claims that 'Green and the idealists were not supporters of Classical Liberalism, which they associated with the Manchester school of political economy and with individualist notions of human relations' (Carter, 2003: 136). Instead of advocating the *laissez-faire* idea, Green and his idealistic followers elucidated 'concepts like the common good and a proactive state providing a basic minimum of conditions act as the foundations for a "Constructive" Liberalism' (Carter, 2003: 137). At the same time, Carter argues that '[i]t is also true that they were socialists as well' (Carter, 2003: 144). For Carter, while the idealists articulated a

doctrine of constructive liberalism and were influential in the formation of New Liberalism, ‘they also redefined their thought as a form of ethical socialism’ (Carter, 2003: 150).

The essential features of this new idealist-inspired ideology were: a belief in a common good, which could unite the interests of different individuals; the support for equality of opportunity, to help create a less class-ridden society; a positive view of liberty, meaning more than simply freedom from interference; and the belief in the role of the state as more than a ‘policeman’, but as the representative of the whole community and able to help shape social conditions for the better. It is these features which distinguished the idealists’ work from traditional liberalism, and these elements which they turned into a justification for socialism. (Carter, 2003: 3)

In terms of this view, Carter contends that though Green, as well as his idealist followers, were not committed socialists, their idealist philosophical arguments made contributions to the development of ethical socialism in Britain, such as R. H. Tawney’s social and political thought.

On the other hand, while Tyler agrees with Carter’s claim that Green and his idealist followers were influential for the development of ethical socialism, he nonetheless argues that Carter’s claim ‘fails to place due weight on the fact that Green saw individual conscientious self-determination and personal responsibility as the central, necessary features of a virtuous, “free life”’ (Tyler, 2010: 4). To Tyler, Green was clearly aware of the danger that ‘inappropriate state action would create what is now termed a “culture of dependency”’ (Tyler, 2010: 4). He argues that Green values the importance of individual self-development and maintains that ‘the state should concern itself primarily with the removal of hindrances to the individual’s own efforts to develop themselves according to their respective

understandings of what their development would consist in' (Tyler, 2010: 5). That is, state action is to remove external hindrances to an individual person's moral development, but it cannot directly assist that moral and internal development. This is the work of each individual's internal conscience. Therefore, according to this argument, Green's liberal concern is with the boundary of legitimate state action. Thus Tyler contends that 'the term "liberal socialism" is more apposite than Carter's "ethical socialism"' (Tyler, 2010: 5).

However, the distinction between the internal, as individual conscience, and the external, as state action, is actually misleading for our understanding of Green's practical philosophy. For Green, personal action and state action both relate to the individual human consciousness: both are but representations of particular rational wills which an individual or a group of individuals conceive when striving for actualisation. This is the underlying tenet of liberal democracy: self-government as an important condition through which an individual person can engage in an ethical life. The legitimacy of state action in this sense is limited by the wills of individual citizens. However in practice the device of representative government remains something which can be manipulated by politicians. Further the particular rational wills of individual citizens within a democracy may also clash. At this point, the pluralism issue in Green's thought is not a question challenging liberal democratic states, but rather reflects reality, in that the particular rational wills of individual citizens are both plural and conflicting. States always have to tackle this plurality in order to maintain the stability of a social and political life.

Returning to the question of whether Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics can meet the requirement of providing a justification for making authoritative judgements in the political arena, this accordingly relates to Green's explication of the relation between self-government and state action. Firstly, the conflict and antagonism in a society take place among diverse and plural representations of particular rational wills held by different citizens;

however, for Green, this is a normal phenomenon of human social life. Meanwhile, in Green's view, diverse and plural representations of particular rational wills nonetheless have a common source, namely, as the condition in which the individual citizens entertain the idea of the good life. This is the current social and cultural institution in which the citizens grow up and live. Thus Green argues that:

[t]he idea of the good ... is an idea, if the expression may be allowed, which gradually creates its own filling. It is not an idea like that of any pleasure, which a man retains from an experience that he has had and would like to have again. It is an idea to which nothing that has happened to us or that we can find in existence corresponds, but which sets us upon causing certain things to happen, upon bringing certain things into existence. Acting in us, to begin with, as a demand which is ignorant of what will satisfy itself, it only arrives at a more definite consciousness of its own nature and tendency through reflection on its own creations – on habits and institutions and modes of life which, as a demand not reflected upon, it has brought into being. (Green, 2003: 284)

For Green, individual persons can only have an idea of the self and the idea of the good in and through a social life, and accordingly, there is a common ground behind their plural and conflicting values that is the basis of the current social and cultural institutions, and the source of legitimacy for state action. Nonetheless, unlike Rawls's overlapping consensus, presupposing a rational and universal ground, this common ground in Green's view is rather an enabling condition necessary for diverse ideas and values to be possible, not a reasonable solution for the pluralism issue.

Secondly, while plural and conflicting individual values, the common ground upholding existing social and cultural institutions, and the source of the legitimacy for state action all exist in relation to the rational wills of individual citizens in different ways, the individual citizens are conversely capable of transforming society and the state, despite holding plural and conflicting values. That is, to Green, value conflicts can be reconciled if individual citizens can recognise an idea of the common good shared for all and through which state action is authorised: it is because we conceive ourselves as self-interested individuals that we confine our ideas of the good life to private pleasures and personal happiness and come to be hostile to political authority. If we can limit our selfishness and instead care about each other, we could attain a better knowledge of our relationship with other people and with society, and struggle for the ideal of a reconciliatory society jointly. Nonetheless, the ideal can only be achieved in and through our social practices and ordinary dealings with other people in the community.

In knowledge so derived, where from the nature of the case our judgments are incapable of verification in the ordinary sense by reference to matters of fact – for the motive which an act expresses is not what we commonly mean by a matter of fact – there is, no doubt, much liability to arbitrariness in the interpretation of the self-consciousness to which alone we can appeal. Against such arbitrariness, it would seem, we can only protect ourselves by great circumspection in the adoption of our formulae, so that they may be as nearly adequate as possible to the inner experience which we mean them to convey, and by constant reference to the expression of that experience which is embodied, so to speak, in the habitual phraseology of men, in literature, and in the institutions of family and political life. (Green, 2003: 105)

Once we realise that there is a common interest to which it is important that each of us contribute and which is indispensable to the actualisation of our self-realisations, state action can be justified in accordance with the common interest as a necessary condition for the persistence of social and political life.

Finally, since state action and political authority can be justified insofar as they are for the maintenance and the protection of the common interest, they are to an extent not contrary to individual freedom. As indicated, in Green's view, the abuse of state power can be prevented through the self-government of individual citizens. That is, the self-government of all individual citizens can maintain the common interest and the public spirit in society and supervise political decisions, laws and policies made and enforced by the government and parliament. Even though the privileged classes in a liberal democratic state may have the ability to manipulate the measurements for state action, *i.e.* the representative government and the general election, and their particular interests may therefore overwhelm the recognised common good for all, active interests and the direct participation of all citizens in public affairs can nonetheless prevent the abuse of state power. Further, the self-government of individual citizens is also a necessary condition for the citizens to achieve moral autonomy. While the exercise of the sovereign power has to be in accordance with the recognised common good in society under citizens' supervision, it is also a means for individual citizens to cultivate their natural impulses and animal instincts towards the reconciliation of their practical reason with their will, of their subjective rational wills with objective rational wills immanent in the society, and of their selves with the world. Hence, according to Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics, whether political authority is open to reasonable doubts is not an issue, for the formation and the exercise of the authority should be both dependent upon the self-government of all citizens, which themselves are also

on the basis of social practices and ordinary dealings and are indivisible parts for citizens to achieve their moral autonomy.

To conclude, in response to the pluralism issue in a liberal and democratic society, Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics indicates the necessity of practical participations of individual citizens in public affairs. Nonetheless, making political decisions and instituting laws and policies remain the tasks of the government and parliament. Meanwhile, political authority and state action are important for the moral development of individual citizens; these are constituted in relation to the self-cultivation and the self-discipline of the citizens. Such self-discipline limits selfish inclinations, and establishes the conditions necessary for transforming individuals into caring citizens. Therefore if all individual citizens can recognise and establish basic respect for each other and strive for the actualisation of social harmony jointly, the pluralistic issues can one day be reconciled in a non-competitive and non-exclusive society. However the actualisation of the harmonious and reconciliatory society remains an unattainable ideal for human beings. Thus, to an extent, Green, as Tyler indicates, 'could agree with Berlin that, "To demand more than... [value pluralism] is perhaps a deep and incurable metaphysical need; but to allow it to determine one's practice is a symptom of an equally deep, and more dangerous, moral and political immaturity"' (Tyler, 2012: 40). Green's idealistic liberalism does provide a metaphysical ground for human beings to work towards perfect reconciliation with the world and with each other. But it does not offer a metaphysical doctrine arguing that human activities must be determined *a priori*. It rather takes the form of a philosophical investigation of the complexities of the human condition. Based on his sophisticated account of the relationship between consciousness and action and the ways in which this relationship develops and evolves in moral, social and political life, Green's systematic practical philosophy suggests

an idealistic conception of liberal politics which continues to offer substantive arguments for contemporary political philosophy.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the potential theoretical contribution that Green's practical philosophy can provide for contemporary political philosophy. We have seen that while the pluralistic issue in Green's mind was different from Berlin's objective value pluralism, it is nonetheless closer to Rawls's conception of reasonable pluralism. However, Green's metaphysical exploration of human ontology provides him with a more adequate perspective with which to explain that pluralistic phenomenon in a modern liberal and democratic society. It is thus possible to avoid some of the defects remaining in Rawls's suggestions regarding the pluralism issue. Accordingly, this indicates that, firstly, though the status of metaphysics in contemporary political philosophy is in doubt, such an approach does offer scholars the chance to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the human condition. Secondly, on the basis of an idiosyncratic theory of human ontology, the centre of Green's conception of liberal politics is the interaction between human consciousness and human action. It is neither proceduralism nor an instrumental view of politics, but is rather a view that explores the complex relationship between morality and politics as well as the autonomous domain of politics.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

1. Green's practical philosophy and idealistic conception of liberal politics

This thesis has argued that Green's practical philosophy starts from a sophisticated theory of consciousness and action and articulates an idealistic conception of liberal politics. The contents of this systematic practical philosophy include a metaphysical treatment of human agency, an idea of the ethical self, an idea of the common good society, and a dynamic notion of political activity, while the final achievement of this philosophical system – until Green's sudden death on 26th March 1882 – is a theory of ethical politics, a creative work consolidating Green's theoretical visions and practical commitments.

In response to the prevalent social and political issues in nineteenth-century British society – the aggravation of social inequalities, the deficiency of representative government, the decline of spiritual morality and social virtue – Green insisted in starting from a different metaphysics of knowledge and moral action in order to clarify and to remedy the metaphysical mistakes inherent in the empiricist and naturalistic philosophy. Learning and adapting aspects of German idealist philosophy Green developed an innovative approach to critical reflection. Of particular interest here was his critique of certain key aspects of Enlightenment philosophy. Thus Green's first important systematic accomplishment was his introduction to David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. At the core of his critical examinations of the empiricist and naturalistic philosophy was his concern with the human condition in a rapidly changing social reality. As Chapter Two illustrated, worrying about the naturalistic and materialistic view of the relationship between human beings and the world, Green utilised the teaching of German idealist philosophy to transform the doctrine of

Christian theology, developing a spiritual and moral understanding of the human condition. With that notion in mind, Green therefore aimed to establish a rich metaphysical and ontological theory of human agency. The concise but illuminating result of these studies was encapsulated in his criticisms of late nineteenth century naturalistic and evolutionistic theory.

However, Green was not just a blind follower of German idealist philosophy. As Chapter Three argued, while Green adopted the teaching of German idealist philosophy to examine British empiricist and naturalistic philosophy, he nonetheless intended to develop and modify its core arguments. Green thus identified the remaining dualism present within Kant's philosophy. He then amended it by developing a theory of human consciousness which provided a firm foundation from which he could then build up a systematic practical philosophy. Recognising the self-distinguishing and self-objectifying nature of human consciousness, Green argued that human consciousness is the core content of each individual person's free agency. With this reflective agency they can come to conceive and to understand the idea of the self, other persons and the world. Thus, he outlined the first crucial aspect of his human ontology and restored human free agency against the strictures of all forms of naturalism and determinism.

On the basis of the work accomplished in his metaphysics of knowledge, Chapter Four explored Green's elucidation of a developmental account of human consciousness, particularly in the second book of *Prolegomena to Ethics*. This focused on his metaphysics of moral action. Exploring natural and instinctive impulses of human beings, Green argued that the two distinctive features of human consciousness – that is the self-distinguishing and the self-objectifying capacities – can transform instinctive drives into the coordination of desire and intellect. By means of the coordinating efforts of desire and intellect, Green indicated that each person can form an idea of the object distinguished from an idea of the self. The human will signifies the state of consciousness in which the person identifies his or her self with a

particular idea of the object as the good for satisfying certain kinds of desires in his or her mind. Practical reason, in Green's view, indicates the state of consciousness in which the person can learn and come to realise that there is always a better kind of the good for self-satisfaction. The agent consequently acquires a primitive conception of the moral law, that is, the reconciliation of practical reason with the will as the ideal of human perfection.

Beginning with this developmental account of human consciousness, firstly, the metaphysics of knowledge and the metaphysics of moral action are two parts of Green's human ontology. These enable Green to complete his ontology by applying the idea of a self-distinguishing and self-objectifying consciousness to the actual self-improving and self-realising agent. Secondly, through this explication of human ontology Green indicated the ontological and ethical commitments of the society for the individual person. Against the egoism and the atomism of hedonistic utilitarian moral philosophy, Green specified the significance of a collective life for each individual person. While the personality of each individual can only be formed and developed in a social community, the social life can cultivate and educate the individual person, particularly with regard to the idea of living with and caring for other persons in pursuit of a shared common interest. In this sense the instructions and expectations of the society form a moral law with which the individual person judges what is good and what bad. Thirdly, by exploring this ontological and moral relationship between the individual and the society, Green depicted the process of the moralisation of human consciousness. This moves from unreflective social obedience, via a turbulence stage in which a person may revolt against society and cannot find a way to reconcile his or her own moral and social ideas with the society, to the final stage in which the person either accepts the instructions of the society as his or her duties in pursuit of the ideal of human perfection, or finds a way to reconcile his or her own subjective moral ideas with social conventions and moral habits. According to this depiction of the moralisation of

human consciousness, Green proposed an idea of the ethical self, largely as a substitute for Hegel's concept of the ethical state. For him, each individual person, as a self-conscious agent, has to strive constantly for his or her moral autonomy and perfect freedom within a social life. It is the nature of self-consciousness will to persistently lead the person to conceive a better idea of the good to act upon. This is unlike Hegel's contention that human beings can achieve absolute freedom in the ethical state.

Bearing this sceptical notion in mind, Green's idea of the common society contains a necessary internal contradiction with which he is able to justify state action. Social conflict and value diversity are irresolvable in human society. The maintenance of a system of rights, that provides each individual citizen with fair and equal opportunities with which to pursue self-realisation and human perfection, requires state action. Unlike the classical liberals who espoused the tenets of non-intervention and *laissez-faire*, for Green, as for Mill, state action and government intervention were necessary for tackling social inequalities. However, since Mill and Green founded their justifications for state action on different moral and social philosophies, there are marked disagreements between them. In particular, Green attacked Mill's hedonistic conception of individual morality and claimed that Mill's utilitarian justification for state action could lapse into the 'politics of the stronger'. Instead, Green's ethical justification for state action maintains value diversity, on the one hand, and on the other hand, advocates the importance of citizen participation in local communities and public affairs. For him, the liberal anxiety, concerning the collectivist tendency underlying state action claims, can be organised into two concerns. There are, firstly, the centralisation of state power, and secondly, the demolition of individual freedom and social differentiation. These concerns, however, can be dismissed if individual citizens are not just passive recipients of the living provision and the social welfare provided by the government, but are also active participants in local and municipal politics. This participatory dimension ensures that a public

spirit is recognised and shared. Chapter Five therefore concludes that Green did provide a reasonable justification for state action. Such a justification maintains the stability and the equality of opportunity for all in a society, though Green also acknowledged that there is a gap between the empirical state and the ideal state.

Along with this view of the relationship between individual freedom and state action and the distinction between the empirical state and the ideal state, Chapter Six posits that Green did not overlook the danger of state power in practice. Conversely he retained the notion of the separation of powers in his conception of the modern democratic state. That is, the legislature and the administration have different functions and different duties. The former makes political decisions and constitutes laws, and the latter executes and enforces these decisions and laws. Meanwhile, for Green, members of the legislature represent the recognised and accepted common good of all citizens as the fundamental criterion to rule and to govern the country. The officers in the administration follow the concrete and determinate requirements from the legislature in order to actualise and to contribute to a recognised and accepted common good. With respect to the representation of the idea of the common good, recognised and shared by all citizens, Green nonetheless claimed that a general election is not sufficient. He emphasised the importance of citizen participation in local and municipal politics and public affairs.

The crucial reason for Green to contend the importance and vitality of citizen participation is not only the democratic dimension of state power, but also relates to the moral development of each individual citizen. The moral subjection to a conventional morality and the political subjection to a political sovereign are indispensable for an individual person to both discipline and to cultivate her animal wants and natural instincts as the primary root of human selfishness. Thus, the self-government of each individual citizen is a necessary condition with which to achieve moral autonomy and ideal social harmony. The sovereignty

de jure of the state in this sense is only the social and political expression of that practice of self-government.

At this point, Green's practical philosophy has evolved from a metaphysical and ontological theory of consciousness and action, through a moral theory of the human society and the liberal state, to an ethical and practical conception of politics. Hence, if my systematic exploration of Green's arguments is sustainable and tenable, it then follows that Green's practical philosophy has three distinctive features. (1) *Immanence*: according to the characteristics of his elucidation of human consciousness – self-distinguishing, self-objectifying, self-improving and self-realising – an individual's thoughts and actions are developing, constituting and transforming in and through daily practices within social relations. Before the individual comes to reflect upon these practices, he or she is merely following the instructions and expectations of social conventions and moral habits. Thus the core argument is that, in Green's view, moral and social ideas are immanent and operating in each individual person's mind before they are fully recognised and understood.

The idea, in its various forms, of something that human life should be, of a perfect being for whom this 'should be' already 'is', cannot proceed from observation of matters of fact or from inference founded on such observation, though in various ways (on which we cannot here dwell) it regulates that observation and inference. Such ideas or principles of action, at work before they are understood, not only give rise to institutions and modes of life, but also express themselves in forms of the imagination. (Green, 2003: 381-382)

(2) *Dialectical*: while moral and social ideas are immanent in each individual person's mind, as a self-conscious agent, the individual person is capable of reflecting and conceiving

different conceptions of these ideas and is able possibly to challenge and to change current social and cultural institutions. By virtue of that self-reflection and social criticism, an individual person can foster his or her personality, moving towards a caring and conscientious character, while the individual may also potentially become a sceptic or a simple speculator. In the meantime, along with the reflections and reformations that can be experienced by the individual, a society is also possibly transformed and reorganised by reference to a different conception of moral and social ideas, that is insofar as the conception is recognised by all individual citizens as their common good. The process of social reformation accordingly is slow. It cannot be accomplished by social or political revolutions suddenly. For Green, radical revolution may lead to anarchy and may cause greater social evils. Nonetheless, Green recognised the dialectical development relation between individual freedom and social institution. He further held that movement towards the ideal of human perfection is, in the final analysis, unattainable, by virtue of the ontological limitations of human beings. Thus, the dialectical movement, as well as human history in this sense, is endless.

(3) *Mutuality*: while the relationship between individual freedom and social institution is dialectical, it is also argued that the dialectic is not premised on two completely separable entities, that is, the individual and the society. On the contrary, for Green it is a dialectic between two interdependent parts of a spiritual whole. Thus, the formation of society is dependent upon the embodiment of an objective reason, conceived by people who recognise the reason as signifying the absolutely desirable good common for all. However, when an individual person reflects on the current idea of the common good and has a new conception of the ideal object, recognised and accepted by all citizens, the transformation of society takes place. In terms of this view, the persistence of a social and political life is reliant upon the *mutual* support of the society and the individual. Since they are two constituent parts of an

organic whole, not two separable entities, society should ensure equality of opportunity for the individual, and the individual should engage in social services and public affairs in order to maintain public spirit.

2. The legacy of idealistic liberalism

Having identified the three distinctive features of Green's practical philosophy, in Chapter Seven, I draw upon Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics and his systematic practical philosophy in order to examine the pervasive and complex issue of contemporary pluralism. Firstly, I argue that there is a certain kind of pluralism in Green's thought which is closer to Rawls's reasonable pluralism than to Berlin's objective pluralism. Secondly, by comparing Rawls's political liberalism with Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics – in response to the pluralism issue – I explore the idea that Green's perspective is better equipped to answer the problems of pluralism than Rawls's in at least two aspects: (1) Green's ontological theory of consciousness and action includes both the rational and the non-rational parts of the human person. This is unlike Rawls's overstatement of the role of reasonableness in the formation of a constitutional consensus and the constitution of an overlapping consensus; (2) Green's sophisticated explication of human ontology acknowledges that conflict and antagonism are indispensable factors for the development of human society, providing a justification for state action and government intervention in order to maintain social and political stability. Nonetheless, the most important vision that Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics articulates is his ethical understanding of self-government. Although a modern liberal democratic state has several constitutional devices and mechanisms for measuring and supervising state powers, each individual citizen's participation in public affairs is still the most significant way to prevent the state coming to be authoritarian or oligarchic. Furthermore, Green also identified an ethical commitment in

social and political life that relates to self-cultivation and the self-discipline of each individual person in their pursuit of the actualisation of moral autonomy. Green's conception of politics in this sense is not simply negative and instrumental. Politics is to prevent individual freedom from harm or interventions and to remove the hindrance to the individual's self-realisation. However there is also a positive dimension. Politics is indispensable for the moral development of the individual, in the sense that the individual's practice of self-government is a necessary condition for achieving his or her moral autonomy. On the basis of this conception of politics, Green's idealistic liberalism unfolds a different set of possibilities for contemporary political theorists to conceive and to envisage the meaning of political life.

In addition to the legacy of Green's idealistic liberalism, I believe that it is precisely because Green's systematic practical philosophy and conception of liberal politics contain vibrant intellectual resources and ideas that his social and political philosophy remains significant in the history of political philosophy. As Dimova-Cookson and Mander observe, '[t]he return to Green in the 1980s was caused by an interest in his social ontology: his specific way of explaining why individuals are social beings. This return was an attempt to counterbalance the dominant influence of liberalism. Later, in the context of the liberal-communitarian debate, Green was seen as someone who offered a better form of communitarianism. What made him particularly interesting was that his "communitarian" ideas had liberal underpinning. In the 1990s, Green's liberal-communitarian reconciliation model was well noted' (Dimova-Cookson and Mander, 2006: 2; cf. Sweet, 2009). In a word, although Green's practical philosophy, as an intellectual and historical product of nineteenth-century British society, seems to be remote from contemporary social and political issues, its philosophical and theoretical visions, and its passionate and practical commitments, are still worthy of investigation today.

3. Limitations and prospect of Green's ethical theory of politics

In spite of the innovatory character of Green's idealistic liberal philosophy there are nonetheless several limitations within Green's ethical theory of politics. One such limitation is the conservative tendency of Green's social and political claims. We have seen that, according to Green's rights recognition thesis, the reform of a system of rights requires the collective moral consciousness to uphold this notion; without meeting this requirement, the legitimacy of the reform remains in doubt. Holding that moralised view of a social and political reform, Green's idealistic liberalism has been considered by Richard Bellamy to be conservative. He argues that 'Green sought to foster the Victorian ideal of self-improvement, not to challenge it. ... As a result, Green's approach to social reform increasingly served a conservative purpose' (Bellamy, 1990: 148). To Bellamy, Green's philosophical visions are limited by the historical circumstances of nineteenth-century British culture. In a similar vein, Michael Freeden also indicates that Green's idealistic liberalism has a conservative tendency. To Freeden, Green's social and political philosophy seems not to have been an indispensable factor for the rise of the New Liberalism, which advocated more radical social reforms than Green expected (Freeden, 1996: 197). Such a conservative interpretation of Green's social and political philosophy should probably be understood as an assertion, supported by a historical judgement, that Green shared self-regarding virtues with other Victorians, and thus tended to maintain social and political stability rather than espouse radical social and political reforms. Nevertheless, Green not only contests the dualism of self-regarding and other-regarding tendencies, which lurk in many British moral doctrines, but also claims openly that '[a]ll virtues are really social; or, more properly, the distinction between social and self-regarding virtues is a false one'; that is, every virtue involves a person's rational will and is in this sense self-regarding, but the moral merit of the virtue – its goodness or badness – is by

reference to a recognised common good immanent in the society (Green, 1986a: 190). Hence, while we may consider Green's social and political philosophy as potentially conservative by virtue of his rights recognition thesis, we should also be cautious about any assertion that Green was simply a conventional or unremarkable Victorian.

Some scholars have also claimed that, in terms of historical and social circumstances, Green's social and political philosophy insists on a homogeneous conception of the nation-state, and accordingly is not applicable to a multi-national and multi-cultural society. Will Kymlicka, for example, argues that '[f]or liberals like Mill, democracy is government "by the people", but self-rule is only possible if "the people" are "a people" – a nation. The members of a democracy must share a sense of political allegiance, and common nationality was said to be a precondition of that allegiance. Thus T. H. Green argued that liberal democracy is only possible if people feel bound to the state by "ties derived from a common dwelling place with its associations, from common memories, traditions and customs, and from the common ways of feeling and thinking which a common language and still more a common literature embodies"' (Kymlicka, 1995: 52; cf. Green, 1986a: 97). For Kymlicka, the homogeneous notion of the state is a distinctive feature of nineteenth-century liberal political philosophy, and therefore, the rights of the minority for Green as well as for Mill was not a significant issue (Kymlicka, 1995: 50-53).

It is true that Green's notion of the nation or the people is homogeneous, and he may not have had an idea of a multi-national or multi-cultural society. However, while Green does not advocate radical and sudden social and political transformation, his ethical theory of politics nonetheless suggests a radical implication that an individual citizen, as a self-conscious agent, is capable of proposing and conceiving new conceptions of the common good or right, though this may potentially lead to a collision between the old regime and the new. In particular, instead of being a conservative interested only in maintaining the current

system of rights, Green was a radical liberal who believed, for example, that demonstrations organised by farmers, labours and workers could exert positive pressure on politicians and statesmen to consider necessary reformations of existing social and political institutions. He was thus a social activist who fought for the welfare of the working class and other minorities in society, such as women and ordinary working people (Green, 1867b: 230-232; Anderson, 1991; cf. Rodman, 1964). Hence, it would be a fair conjecture that if Green had lived in our own age, he would also have urged the rights of the minorities in a liberal and democratic society, as Kymlicka suggests. In a word, the criticism of Green's homogeneous notion of a nation-state and a people should be understood as a historical limitation of Green's imagination, rather than a theoretical limitation of Green's social and political arguments.

However, though there are certain historical limitations in Green's practical philosophy, his distinctive theory of consciousness and action and the ethical conception of politics remain insightful and inspiring for contemporary political philosophy. It has also been suggested that Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics contains a different perspective of political life from the view found in contemporary political liberals (that is a rational proceduralist notion of the neutral state). Instead, Green's ethical theory of politics advances the significance of citizen participation and the ethical meaning of the sovereign power. At the same time his conception of politics also suggests a cosmopolitan idea, namely that the ideal of human life and human society is a non-competitive and non-exclusive common good society in which each human person can obtain fair and equal opportunities in pursuit of his or her self-realisation. In particular, as Leighton observes, '[b]y 1900 Green's reputation as a moral and political philosopher extended throughout the British empire, Europe, the United States, and even to China and Japan' (Leighton, 2004: 62). Green's practical philosophy and his idealistic liberalism, as such, have not only a range of theoretical potentialities which are worthwhile for political theorists and international relations theorists

to study, but its wider historical influence is also a compelling topic for academic investigation in terms of a genealogy of knowledge perspective. However, such research is beyond the scope of this thesis. What has been achieved, though, in this thesis, firstly, is a systematic exploration of Green's practical philosophy, which has given particular attention to his theory of consciousness and action. This is a theory of consciousness which successfully integrates his metaphysics, moral and ethical theory, with his social and political theory. Considered together these form a coherent whole. Secondly, I have explored Green's idealistic conception of liberal politics. The central aspect of this liberal politics is Green's account of the ethical citizen, which embodies valuable philosophical resources for contemporary political philosophers to reconsider the nature of liberal politics. To conclude, this thesis has thus excavated and re-assessed Green's philosophical works, particularly in order to re-engage critically with his social and political ideas and then ultimately to show how they can throw considerable light on current debates and issues in contemporary political theory.

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