

Language, aesthetics and emotions in the work of the British Idealists

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Abstract

This article surveys and contextualizes the British idealists' philosophical writings on language, aesthetics and emotions, starting with T.H. Green and concluding with Michael Oakeshott. It highlights ways in which their philosophical insights have been wrongly overlooked by later writers. It explores R.L. Nettleship's posthumous publications in this field and notes that they exerted significant influences on British idealists and closely related figures, such as Bernard Bosanquet and R.G. Collingwood. The writing of other figures are also explored, not least F.H. Bradley and J.A. Smith. The article concludes by introducing in turn the remaining articles that are found in this special issue.

Forgotten dimensions of British idealism

The theme of this special issue is the place of language, aesthetics and emotions in the philosophies of the British Idealists. Immediately, this prompts at least two key questions: who were these idealists?, and why should this theme be of interest today?

British idealism was the dominant philosophy in Britain and the English-speaking world during the last decades of the nineteenth-century and the early decades of the twentieth century. The British idealists who are most commonly discussed by contemporary philosophers and theorists are Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882), Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866-1925), Robin George Collingwood (1889-1943) and Michael Oakeshott (1901-1990). This is only a small proportion of the movement, whose prominent members also included John Caird (1820-1898), Edward Caird (1835-1908), William Wallace (1843-1897), Richard Lewis Nettleship (1846-1892), Henry Jones (1852-1922), David George Ritchie (1853-1903), John Henry Muirhead (1855-1940), Richard Burdon Haldane (1856-1928), Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison (1856-1931), John Alexander Smith (1863-1939) and Harold Henry Joachim (1868-1938). In addition, their Italian philosophical interlocutors, especially Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) and Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944) were important especially in relation to the development of later British idealist philosophies of art and the philosophy of history.

Even though they were often described as Hegelians, it is more accurate to say that the British idealists had a critical appreciation of both Kant and Hegel, but that they were not their followers or adherents to a common 'Hegelian' school (see Quinton, *Absolute Idealism*; Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 15-16;

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Mander, *British Idealism*). Moreover, many were influenced just as significantly by Plato and others by Aristotle and Fichteanism (Tyler, 'Individuality, freedom and socialism'; Tyler, 'Forms, dialectics and the healthy community'). It is important to note also that all of the British idealists set new standards for scholarly criticism based on firsthand knowledge of the original German, Italian and ancient Greek texts, often translating texts themselves, several of which remain the basis for standard English editions of foreign-language philosophical works. This new scholarship was produced primarily by Bosanquet, both Caird brothers, Green, Nettleship, Ritchie and Wallace. The most notable examples of now-standard translations are Hegel, *Logic of Hegel*; Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*; Hegel, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art*. Green initiated the translation of Lotze's *Metaphysic* and rendered Book 1 'On the Connexion of Things' and Book 2, chapter III 'Of Time'. Bosanquet and A.C. Bradley translated parts of the work, with Bosanquet editing the whole volume, with John Cook Wilson providing terminological advice on passages dealing with mathematics and physics. R.L. Nettleship contributed Book 1 of the associated translation of Lotze's *Logic*.

Furthermore, they inspired a generation of philosophers and social reformers with their differing views of the unity of experience and the interconnectedness of metaphysical, religious, moral, social, and political theorizing. They addressed pressing issues in contemporary religious, social, and political life and engaged in the critical assessment of contemporary philosophical viewpoints, including utilitarianism, empiricism, realism, and pragmatism. They were not merely critical: it can be said that British idealism introduced novel, radical and holistic ways of approaching philosophical problems at a time when the British philosophical atmosphere was stagnant. William Mander comments that: 'While there was, of course, much philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century, it is hard to resist Green's diagnosis that little, if any of it, was very creative or original. Native philosophical thought had never moved far from its central homes in classical empiricism and the Scottish commonsense school, and there was much ignorance of continental thought' (Mander, 'Introduction', 5). Whatever view one might take of the British idealists, it remains the case that they 'revitalized British philosophy by making it permeable to a rich variety of continental ideas' (Candlish, 'Bradley').

The philosophy of the British idealists is not a homogeneous project. Yet, there are some fundamental points of agreement which provided a degree of unity. Idealism has been described by Watts Cunningham as 'that philosophical doctrine which undertakes to show that, in order to think matter or the spatio-temporal order of events in its ultimate nature, we are logically compelled to think mind or spirit along with it as in some sense foundational to it' (Cunningham *Idealistic Argument*, 339). The essential thesis is one of mind's involvement in our understanding of the world. This is not the same as saying that mind creates the world in itself or that the world is in itself spiritual or mental. Rather, the claim is that thought or experience is paramount, and that the objects of experience cannot be properly conceived of without reference to experiencing subjects. In logic, the British idealists tended to conflate (to the modern eye) logic and epistemology; and they regarded logic, epistemology, ontology and metaphysics as necessarily intertwined. In ethics and politics they were inspired by Greek classical thought (especially the moral and political

philosophy of Plato and Aristotle), and by German Idealism (Kant and Hegel). With only the occasional exception, they stressed the importance of the relation between theory and practice. They focused on the logical interdependence between socio-political organization and the development of human capacities: self-realization was seen as a social, moral, and spiritual endeavor. The British idealist conception of the state *qua* state as 'the appropriate framework in which individuals have the opportunity to opt for the good life' (Nicholson *Political Philosophy*, 2) is one which seeks to safeguard both freedom and the common good. In their political philosophy, the state is viewed as an enabling structure whose interventions can facilitate self-realization and social well-being.

Later developments in philosophy led to a mistaken belief that only analytic philosophers and their successors took a serious philosophical interest in language, and that their predecessors were misled by their simplistic attitudes towards linguistic questions. In reality and not least through their philosophical writings, scholarship and translations, the British idealists showed themselves to be highly sensitive to consideration of language, its nature and its proper and improper uses. We can easily find examples of where British idealists made insightful contributions to philosophical issues surrounding language, as well as the other issues discussed in this special issue, emotions, and the aesthetic. Even though they are not noted now for having done so, this is largely because critics have not looked in the right places or sought to draw these themes out of the work of the British idealists. What follows below and in the other contributions to this special issue indicates where interesting material can be found.

The philosophy of aesthetics of the British idealists remains understudied. Many of them were deeply interested in works of literature, especially poetry and plays. Hence, Edward Caird (*Essays*) published substantial essays on Dante, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and others, while Henry Jones published a book on Robert Browning (*Browning*). However, while emphasizing the philosophical depths of their literary subjects, these works by Caird and Jones did not themselves attempt to be fully philosophical treatments of their respective subjects. Rather, they were essays aimed at the educated general reader. On the positive side, this extended their influence beyond the realm of technical philosophy. As a result, the British idealists inspired literary and classical scholars such as the classicist Henry Nettleship, Richard Lewis Nettleship's brother, who edited (without credit) many of Green's religious writings for the third volume of Green's works. Green's philosophy influenced his great friend and brother-in-law, John Addington Symonds, himself a significant literary critic and poet, who is now recognized as an important proto-queer theorist (see Tyler, 'J.A. Symonds'). Similarly, A.C. Bradley, F.H. Bradley's brother, is now remembered as an important scholar of literature, particularly of Shakespeare. However, the more philosophical and political of his writings indicate his own British idealist credentials. (This is particularly true of his essay 'International Morality: The United States of Europe'; and 'Hegel's Theory of Tragedy', as well as the lectures on Shelley and Keats in the same volume.) A.C. Bradley's standing within the movement is indicated by the fact that, in addition to his original contributions, he was entrusted to edit Green's magnum opus *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883), one of the movement's seminal texts. A.C. Bradley was also entrusted with editing the second volume of R.L. Nettleship's

Philosophical Remains (of which more later). He also translated the whole of the third book ('Psychology') of Lotze's *Metaphysic* mentioned above.

Green's reputation for being uninterested in aesthetics is understandable given that he wrote nothing on the subject apart from two early essays, one written for Oxford examiners and the other for the educated general readership of *The North British Review* (Green, 'Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times' and 'Popular Philosophy in its Relation to Life'). Nevertheless, that the reputation is ill-deserved is indicated by the recollections of his nephew John St Loe Strachey, who recounts Green's great fondness for Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Swift, among others (Strachey, 'Recollection'). Nevertheless, Green was very alive to language's centrality to philosophy, as is indicated by his reported advice to R.L. Nettleship to approach philosophy through the lens of language (see below). Green was also emphatic that an adequate philosophy of ethics and action must always take due account of natural instincts. As David Ritchie (*Principles of State Interference*, 133) observed: Green did not 'deny that Man is a part of Nature, and that human actions are natural events... [although he did reject the view that] Man can be understood if he be considered as *merely* a part of Nature and his actions *merely* as natural events.' It is for this reason that Green ('On the Different Senses of "Freedom"', section 17) built his idealism on what would now be called a theory of sublimation.

In order to [make] any approach to this satisfaction of itself, the self-realising principle ... must overcome the "natural impulses", not in the sense of either extinguishing them or denying them an object, but in the sense of fusing them with those higher interests, which have human perfection in some of its forms for their object. Some approach to this fusion we may notice in all good men, not merely in those in whom all natural passions – love, anger, pride, ambition – are enlisted in the service of some great public cause, but in those with whom such passions are all governed by some such commonplace idea as that of educating a family.

This issue has been analysed in the philosophical literature (Tyler, *Metaphysics of Self-realisation and Freedom*, chapter 5) and is developed still further in Janusz Grygiel's contribution in this special issue.

Other British idealists addressed the relationship of reason and emotions, of course. F.H. Bradley's philosophy is explored by Guillaume Lejeune and W.J. Mander in this special issue. Bradley argued that relational thought was beset by contradiction and paradox and hence that reality could not be grasped through its means. His views on the nature of thought, language and relations were opposed to those of Green (as expressed in Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*) and also to the more Hegelian views of those who, like Bosanquet, believed in the ability of thought to reach reality. Bradley's view was, then, neither Green's nor Hegel's – and this is sufficient to show both some of the internal differences among the British idealists and their relationship to Hegel. One result of this is that Bradley gives prominence to feeling, arguing that for a full understanding of reality, thought and language would have to be transcended in 'thought's happy suicide' in which something more akin to the immediacy of feeling or intuition would alone be sufficient to grasp reality. (See Baldwin, 'Thought's Happy

Suicide', Candlish 'The Truth about F.H. Bradley'; on the differences between Bradley and Hegel, see Bedell, 'Bradley and Hegel'.)

Nettleship's *Philosophical Remains* exerted a significant influence over other British idealists such as Bosanquet and even realists such as E.F. Carritt (of which more below). Nettleship's writings are infused with fascinating themes regarding the complex interrelationships of language, thought and expression. (Much the same could be claimed for Ritchie, for example, *Philosophical Studies, passim*.) A.C. Bradley ('Biographical sketch', lii,n) recorded that 'Green suggested to... [R.L. Nettleship] in early days [sic] that he might approach philosophy from the side of language; and various passages in his lectures and letters show an inclination to do so.' In fact, even this remark understates the attention which Nettleship paid to language in his philosophical writings. Certainly he recognized the limitations of language, even of philosophical language, there being a great deal, for example, that in no way 'admits of expression in language' (Nettleship, 'Pleasure', 11).² Nettleship ('Spirit', 30) traced much of '[t]he prejudice (sometimes right and sometimes wrong) against 'asceticism,' 'spirituality,' and the like,... [to] the fact that men *must* recognize a sort of average experience and express it in a sort of average language and habits.' Nevertheless, as he made clear elsewhere (Letter to A.C. Bradley, January 1887, 88), literary devices such as 'metaphor, simile, analogy, &c.' could convey meanings that were lost when one engaged in a '*translation*' of the poetic meaning into less figurative language. Part of the problem that was that the less symbolic mode of expression that characterized 'ordinary language... seems in most cases to mean little more than the customary or else the historically earlier.' (Nettleship, Letter to A.C. Bradley, January 1887, 88) Nettleship (Letter to A.C. Bradley, January 1890, 101) held this to be profoundly significant, because he understood words as being

a form of action like any other, and a form which has its own specific properties. I mean that one could define more or less the various powers of words (rhetorical, poetic, logical), and compare them with the powers of acting on men in other ways (by example, by look, by gesture, by music, pictures, &c.). It seems to me so enlightening to extend the physical notion of energy to everything (which is simply Aristotelianism), and to feel that *all* that we call things, properties, &c., are forms of action and reaction, and that this *is* "being." Language is an inviting subject...

Nettleship developed these ideas more fully in his lectures on logic. (He rendered the first book of Lotze's *Logic*, entitled 'Of Thought (Pure Logic)' for the British idealist-led translation of that work, noted above.) Nettleship began ('Lectures on Logic', 121) by emphasizing that the poet, the scientist and the philosopher all begin with 'common facts' but each 'carries us an enormous distance beyond them.' Yet, they travel in different directions. The poet uses metaphor and unusual associations between commonplace words and ideas to bring a new meaning to familiar images. The scientist and philosopher, on the hand, destroy the images in order to highlight the existing but previously-hidden significance of commonplace experience (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 121-

² Those of R.L. Nettleship's writings which are cited in this article appear in his *Philosophical Remains*.

22). Whereas the poet's audience might find itself so mired in sensuality that it is unable to appreciate the beauty that he is attempting to convey, the thought of the scientist and the philosopher can appear to their audiences as 'formal and pedantic, cold and unfeeling.' (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 123)

Yet, Nettleship saw at least the possibility of reconciling art, philosophy and science: 'Unless we are prepared to say that imagination is essentially irrational, there must be a common basis in logic or reason in both [thought and imagination].' (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 123) He based this claim on the belief (characteristic of the British idealists) that an utterance can be meaningful only to the extent that it is related to a self-conscious being who has interpreted the world using a rich and relatively coherent schema of symbols. These symbols might be constituted in any number of media – through words, gestures, music, or numerous other meaningful codes. Together these symbols constitute the individual's language and ultimately their *Weltanschauung* (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 129-31). Nettleship's ('Lectures on Logic', 129) underlying thought was clear: 'no human experience is isolated, and all human experience is ultimately a kind of language or symbolism.' The individual's existence is inescapably based on his acts of interpretation of the full complexities and intimations of the symbols which are evoked through these acts (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 129-30). Consequently, no act of interpretation can ever present a conscious awareness of the full 'ever-growing complexity' implicit within the current symbolic representation. Indeed, every interpretation is always driven beyond the initial meanings that it perceives in its object. Gradually, this process modifies existing symbols and creates new ones, thereby ensuring that potential meanings are constantly shifting. Obviously this entails that interpretations constantly shift as well.

It is clear that for Nettleship thought is not necessarily restricted by the language-user's facility with words. Rather, it is restricted by their command of symbols ('the language of gesture, and the expression of thought in action'). As these symbols are not necessarily words, the individual who has access to only a small stock of words might well still possess rich and insightful interpretative and expressive capacities through a command of other symbols: in short, 'it does not follow that people who are deficient in the use of [speech] are inarticulate.' (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 131) This recognition of a vast array of types of thought had significant implications for Nettleship's philosophy. For one thing, it encouraged him to be sanguine regarding the possibility of communication with other human beings, arguing that it presents little more difficulty than understanding one's own internal thoughts. He ('Lectures on Logic', 139) argued that failures to reach an understanding with other persons are often due largely to an unwillingness to communicate: 'truth is universal; it is ignorance, error, and prejudice that separate.'

Nettleship developed his position in numerous other ways as well. One of the most significant was his claim that the meaning of an utterance is inseparable from the mode in which it is expressed: for example, 'the feeling is not fully felt till it is expressed, and in being expressed it is still felt, but in a different way. What the act of expression does is to fix and distinguish it finally; it then, and then only, becomes a determinate feeling.' ('Lectures on Logic', 132) He argued ('Lectures on Logic', 129, 134) that this is true also when the expression relies on 'word-language', and not least when it involves the use of metaphor and analogy

as techniques by which to articulate meanings that a plain use of words cannot convey. He was argued that naming a thought or feeling which was previously unnamed achieves three things: (i) it gives the new meaning 'a more permanent position in our experience', (ii) it gives it a more distinct reality in our consciousness, and (iii) it tends to 'classify' and therefore 'identify' and locate it relative to our other named meanings (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 135-36). This process had significant implications, For example, even though all thinking requires abstraction, our thinking becomes more concrete the more we relate things to each other in thought (Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 142).

Nettleship's philosophical writings were cited frequently by other British idealists and his scholarship on Plato was read even more widely. Most notably, Bernard Bosanquet (for example, *Principle of Individuality and Value*, 55-65 *passim*, 379, 394; *Value and Destiny of the Individual*, 36-43 *passim*, 108, 198, 264, 296-97) cited Nettleship repeatedly in both sets of his Gifford lectures. As will become clear in the contributions by Grygieńć and Lejeune in this special issue, Bosanquet was an important contributor to the field himself, writing significant books on logic and emotions, as well as a lengthy *History of Aesthetic* and shorter related works such as *Three Lectures on Aesthetic*. Similarly, Nettleship seems to have influenced Collingwood. Possibly this was through the latter's tutor, the realist E.F. Carritt, who followed John Cook Wilson and H.A Prichard in epistemology and W.D. Ross in ethics. Carritt also took a keen interest in the Italian idealists Croce and Gentile, especially their work on aesthetics and the philosophy of history. Yet, in his early book *The Theory of Beauty*, Carritt discussed not only Croce's views, but also those of Nettleship. Carritt was especially struck by Nettleship's claim that modes of expression exerted a determining effect on the thought expressed (Carritt, *Theory of Beauty*, 264-5, quoting Nettleship, 'Lectures on Logic', 132). In another passage in the same book (182) Carritt explicitly related Nettleship's analysis to his (Carritt's) own discussion of such themes in Croce's philosophy. He liked the passage from Nettleship so much that, twenty years later, he reprinted it in his *Philosophies of Beauty*, (*Philosophies of Beauty*, 188). This interest appears to have fed through to the young R.G. Collingwood, who is likely to have read these and contiguous passages from Nettleship's discussion of language, possibly having been directed to them by either Smith or Carritt. Collingwood's later views were in harmony with both Nettleship's lectures on logic and Croce's aesthetics. Collingwood's *Principles of Art* developed and refined some of these reflections into a full account of language, art and expression. Whatever the precise line of influence, it is clear that, irrespective of the debts that the later Oxford idealists had to figures such as Croce, Nettleship's influential writings were sufficient to bring to their attention the importance of language and its relation to expression and the aesthetic. (On Collingwood, see the articles in this special issue by Guyer, Wiltsher and Wakefield.)

As noted earlier, there was a wider variance between the idealists than often recognized. Here it is important to briefly introduce J.M.E. McTaggart, who, despite many affinities, differed from the other British idealists, not least in espousing a form of personal idealism and an 'ontological idealism'. McTaggart ('Ontological Idealism', 251) summarized his position thus:

Ontologically I am an idealist, since I believe that all that exists is spiritual. I am also, in one sense of the term, a Personal Idealist. For I believe that every part of the content of spirit falls within some self, and that no part of it falls within more than one self; and that the only substances are selves, parts of selves, and groups of selves or parts of selves. On the other hand, I should say that epistemologically I am a Realist. I should say that knowledge was a true belief, and I should say that a belief was true when, and only when, it stands in a relation of correspondence to a fact.

McTaggart is not a substance monist or an absolutist; and he advocates a correspondence theory of truth. His focus is not primarily on experience, as Bradley's was, but on what is experienced, which he takes to be ontologically real. Hence he is an epistemological realist and his is a form of idealistic realism. McTaggart argues that our ordinary beliefs about material bodies and time are in error. He claims both that there are no material bodies, and that there is no change, and that without change, there can be no time. Hence, he argued, our ordinary understanding of parts, wholes, substances and their qualities, as well as time, are shown on closer inspection to be incompatible with the existence of material substances or the reality of time. McTaggart had a clear mystic bent. He argued that mysticism has two features: first, it asserts a greater unity in the universe than recognized in ordinary experience or science; secondly, it is possible to be aware of this unity in a way which brings the knower into a closer and more direct relation with what is known than can be done through discursive thought. His mystical insight reveals that our illusions about matter and time hide the true nature of reality from us. (Interesting contrasts can be drawn with Caird, 'Essay on Mysticism'.) It is not that he did not argue for this position, but for McTaggart the arguments are intended to bolster an initial intuition. In reality, he argued, what exists is a society of persons in loving relations. Persons are the ultimate reality, but they are not what we ordinarily believe them to be. Hence McTaggart presents us with a different ontology to the other leading idealists and the "community of loving souls" is the nearest he got to an absolute.

Significant research about McTaggart continues to be published. However, a British idealist who, like Nettleship, has often been unfairly overlooked is J.A. Smith. (A notable exception to this lack of scholarly interest is Paylor, 'J.A. Smith'.) Like so many Oxford philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Smith was a Greek and Latin scholar, a translator and philologist, who took a delight in language in all its shapes and forms. Philosophically his position was essentially derivative of Croce's, whose influence permeates both his inaugural lecture as Waynflete Professor in 1910 on *Knowing and Acting* and his later *The Nature of Art: An Open Letter to the Professor of Poetry*. This short booklet essentially sought to apply Croce's account of the aesthetic as a corrective to the views expressed in H.W. Garrod's Inaugural Lecture as Oxford Professor of Poetry, *The Profession of Poetry* (1924). It consists primarily of a presentation of Croce's view of art as knowledge of the individual. Its style, however, it has to be said, is rather irritating to the modern eye, especially in its reference to Croce not by name but as the 'master'. Smith also wrote on artificial languages and on other philological topics. Perhaps more importantly in some ways, Smith was a philosophical colleague of Collingwood's

from around 1909 to his death in 1939 and in a sense Collingwood was his protégé, Collingwood succeeding him as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy in 1935. Smith is perhaps best now considered as an influence and a sounding board for others, rather than as an original philosopher in his own right. Yet, this should not lead us to overlook the way in which he, and the other idealists, understood language, for example, as something existing only in use, not as a tool existent prior to its use and unmodified by it. In this Smith anticipates themes developed by Collingwood in *The Principles of Art* and previously (if briefly) explored by Nettleship.

Smith, together with Collingwood, Carritt and H. Wildon Carr, was instrumental in promoting the philosophy of the Italian neo-Idealists in Britain. The influence of the Italians can be found primarily in aesthetics and the philosophy of history, together with their accounts of the discrete activities of the knowing mind and their relations. Croce distinguished the theoretical, comprising art (and history), and philosophy from the practical, comprising the economic (or utility) and the ethical (or the good). Here the practical presupposed the theoretical (but not vice versa); and within each mode the second presupposed the first (but not vice versa). By contrast, Giovanni Gentile sought to capture a sense of thought in its activity rather than in its products. He termed thought in its actuality 'pensiero pensante' – the pure, creative act of thought or 'thought thinking'. By contrast, 'pensiero pensato' referred to the result of thought, to 'thought thought'. Within this he distinguished three typical moments: Art (the subjective or supposing moment), Religion (the Objective or assertive moment) and Knowledge or philosophy. This was an echo of Hegel's view. Croce, by contrast, repudiated much of Hegel, especially his dialectic and hence tended to regard forms of experience as static. Collingwood, in *Speculum Mentis*, distinguished Art, Religion, Science, History, and Philosophy as his forms of experience. This corresponds in part to Hegel's trio of art, religion and philosophy comprising 'absolute spirit'. But in fact it is closer to Gentile in that Collingwood divides the third part of Gentile's triad, 'Knowledge' into three moments to produce a quincunx. In this, Art, as the subjective or imaginative and 'supposing' moment, is answered by Religion, the objective or 'assertive' moment. This in turn gives way to the subjective or questioning moment of Science; the objective or answering moment of History and, finally, to the absolute synthesis of Philosophy.

Against this background, Michael Oakeshott can be understood as playing the same game of delineating modes of experience or different ways of understanding the world according to a set of defining presuppositions. Where Collingwood had delineated art, religion, science, and history as forms of experience, Oakeshott in *Experience and its Modes*, delineated the features of three modes of experience: science, history, and practice. Philosophy was experience without reservation, presupposition or arrest, in contrast to the modes which were characterized by the fact that they viewed reality from their own limited points of view, points constituted by their respective presuppositions (*Experience*, 347). In 1959 Oakeshott published *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind*, which added another mode, the poetic or aesthetic to his original characterisation of the modes of experience. Aesthetic or poetic activity consists of the mind being active in contemplating or delighting in objects and images irrespective of considerations of truth or utility (*Voice*, 32-3).

Underlying these different approaches is a common theme: the desire both to place different forms of experience on the map of human activity and the desire to account for the distinctive features of each form in itself, in the case of what we are considering in this special issue, this is the aesthetic in its various senses and associations.

The above discussion has sketched the wider context of this special issue on the British idealists' work on language, aesthetics and emotions. Before proceeding to articles themselves, it will now be useful to present brief introductions to each of them in turn.

The articles

This special issue contains seven articles covering a variety of overlapping themes. In 'The General Will and the Speech Community: British idealism and the foundations of politics', Janusz Grygieńć considers some of the most important yet understudied aspects of British idealist philosophy. By uncovering crucial intimations within British idealist social and political philosophy, Grygieńć exposes and explores the differing roles played by language within the writings of T.H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet. Grygieńć establishes that, rather than being side issues, the applied aspects of British idealism relied upon what would now be called a philosophy of speech communities and linguistic structures. He argues that Green and Bosanquet enrich Hegel's analysis of language, as well as developing new implications of their own. Grygieńć's analysis presents a challenge to those working on British idealist social and political philosophy to trace out further the significance of linguistic philosophy in the key theories of such pivotal concepts as identity-formation, moral and legal rights, and the common good.

In 'Emotion and Satisfaction in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley' William Mander is engaged, first, in the negative task of rebutting those, such as Russell or Stove, who seek to convict idealism of substituting emotion for reason in (typically) both their conclusions and their arguments. By focussing on Bradley Mander is able to show that, first, reason's demonstration of its own limits is inherently problematic and, second, that reason is bound to invoke feeling or emotion. Mander then goes on to explore the meaning of Bradley's much used (and ambiguous) terms 'satisfaction' and 'satisfactory', illuminating their meaning and steering the reader away from the view that the criterion of intellectual attainment or success could be merely a feeling of satisfaction.

In 'From the Bankruptcy of Relations to the Reality of Connections: Language and Semantics in Bradley and Bosanquet', Guillaume Lejeune explores a profoundly significant difference between these two leading British idealist philosophers regarding the relationship of language to reality. This divergence of view is important not least because it is a key disagreement between two philosophers who are usually seen as being closely akin in many other areas. For F.H. Bradley, language provides at best a clue to reality, whereas Bosanquet sees language as the medium through which reality is given concrete shape. Lejeune shows Bosanquet to be defending Hegel's claim that there is no ultimate distinction to be drawn between reality and language, a position that denies Bradley's distinction between felt reality and discursive reality. Underpinning this distinction is a fundamental disagreement regarding the relationship of

thought and reality, something that highlights a fundamental distinction within British idealism itself.

In 'Taking Love Seriously: McTaggart, Absolute Reality, and Chemistry', Joe Saunders defends McTaggart's emphasis on love as a central part of human life which can be reduced neither to feelings of pleasure nor to moral approval. Rather, love has a distinctive nature and value for individuals. Distancing McTaggart from Hegel's claim that love entails marriage, Saunders argues McTaggart is correct to see love as an intimate element of a unity of consciousness between persons. Nevertheless, Saunders disagrees with some important elements of McTaggart's philosophy, not least McTaggart's claim that love can bind everyone together in absolute reality. Moreover, Saunders argues that McTaggart's philosophy of love takes no account of the intensity and particularity of love, the 'chemistry' between particular people.

Paul Guyer, in 'Re-enactment, Reconstruction, and the Freedom of the Imagination: Collingwood on History and Art', makes a valuable contribution to the bringing together of different aspects of Collingwood's philosophy. It is one of the frustrations of Collingwood scholarship that books such as *The Idea of History* are so often read in isolation from *The Principles of Art* and *The New Leviathan* where his account of mind, feelings and emotions are developed. This has bedevilled discussions of key themes such as re-enactment, and thought in relation to feeling and emotion. In his paper Guyer discusses the danger of Collingwood going too far in the other direction by perhaps assimilating art to the model of historical re-enactment. Thus, Guyer engages in a dual discussion of the role of imagination in both aesthetic and historical experience and shows how historical re-enactment might be deployed in enriching Collingwood's account of aesthetic reconstruction. He shows both how the philosophy of history can illuminate aesthetics and vice versa, and also how it is necessary to ward off mistakes in the reading of the aesthetics or the philosophy of history.

In Nicholas Wiltsher's 'Feeling, Emotion, and Imagination: In Defence of Collingwood's Expression Theory of Art', we find an interesting counterpart to Guyer's paper. As a first step it valuably disambiguates the entanglements often produced by those critics who lump all so-called expressionist theories of art together. Wiltsher brings out very clearly some of the almost insuperable difficulties in advocating and defending a coherent expressionist theory of art – not least the problem of the identity of the emotion concerned. This is a generalizable problem: how is it possible to provide a plausible account of the activity of expressing an emotion in which we can assert that the emotion expressed shared an identity with the unexpressed emotion? The paradox seems to be that they need to be different for the act of expression to have meaning, but that if they are different then they lose their identity, whereas if they are the same there is nothing for the act of expression to do. No formulation of the expression theory seems easily able to get round this problem. Finally, in Wiltsher, as in Guyer, we again see the importance of imagination as the necessary middle term in the refining and clarifying of ideas.

This analysis of the role of imagination is important both for a fuller understanding of Collingwood's philosophy in its interconnections and also as helping to provide the link between thought, feeling and the other elements of the philosophy of mind which Collingwood addressed, and which Gentile sought to address within the framework of his actual idealism. Turning to Gentile, we

find in J.R.M. Wakefield's paper an important discussion of his attempts to account for 'Thinking and Feeling in Actual Idealism'. Giovanni Gentile is an awkward figure for modern idealism. His philosophical views are rather extreme in many ways, and his reputation is indelibly linked with his extreme political views – he was not known as the philosopher of fascism for nothing. Despite these unpromising beginnings, his reputation is beginning to turn. He is increasingly regarded as an important interlocutor with Croce and De Ruggiero, as an influence on British idealists such as Collingwood, and as a philosopher in his own right. Wakefield shows clearly that, despite its weaknesses, Gentile's late work on the philosophy of art is worth consulting for its attempt to address the issue of feeling. In addressing the question of feeling, it appears that Gentile asserts something that Bradley might be taken to be affirming – especially in relation to the notion of satisfaction. (Even though this is how some philosophers have read Bradley, arguably it was not actually his view.) Wakefield shows both the importance of Gentile's account of feeling and illuminates its potential. This was a potential which has escaped the notice of many observers because it was only published in English in 1972 and then it was associated solely with Gentile's philosophy of art, one of the lesser known parts of his philosophy. It is important, as Wakefield states, to show that Gentile's account of feeling is inseparable from his account of thinking, that is, it is part of thinking, part of any real thinking experience. This marks an interesting contrast with Collingwood, who was much influenced by Gentile, but much readier to give full value to feelings and emotions in a way which is, as Wakefield suggests, more phenomenologically accurate than the approach adopted by Gentile.

By now it should be evident that the British idealists accorded great significance to the philosophical ambiguities and dilemmas surrounding language, aesthetics and the emotions. Moreover, the following articles make clear that they devoted a great deal of care to developing new understandings of these crucial aspects of a rich human life. Finally, it should also now be evident that historians of philosophy – and indeed contemporary philosophers as well – should pay far more attention than they do currently to the profound insights that can come from careful and sustained research into these aspects of British idealism.

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