Introduction

Historical consciousness is common across Western cultures. This is a study of what is involved in that consciousness. The meaning and implications of modern historical consciousness are examined through an account of R. G. Collingwood's thought on moral philosophy and history.

The existence of a way of viewing our place in the world that emphasises contingency, context and process is of inherent interest. The interest is heightened because the historical way of viewing the world may appear to compete with others founded on natural science and technology. One aim of these prevalent conceptions is to enhance control over circumstances, including human activity. Where an historical outlook appears to offer no more than understanding or wisdom, a study based on perceived regularity and law holds out the prospect of manipulation.

To see solely a conflict between historical and scientific conceptions of the world is, however, too simplistic. The scientific manipulation of nature, or the various attempts to offer a social science that permits the manipulation of people, themselves aim to achieve human ends that are situated in history. Rather, it would be better to say that human ends develop in, and are accepted or rejected through, history. The relationships between history, natural science and technology are complex and varied. Collingwood, for example, argued that natural science is dependent on historical thought to understand observations and theories. Understanding what history is must therefore be a requisite to understanding what nature is.[1]

To the extent that Western cultures share an historical consciousness, this is something over and above the existence of a moderately successful competitor in a contest for intellectual dominion. Viewing the world historically is part of our self-conception. If a concern

[1] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of Nature*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1945. p. 177.

with subjectivity is one of the defining characteristics of modernity and, in particular, of much philosophy from Descartes to Hegel and beyond, how we understand subjectivity is fundamental to what we are. Collingwood detected the rise of a new form of history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, meaning principally the emergence of a new activity or way of understanding the human past. He argued that the development of history in his own time represented a new stage in the development of human capability. This study will show how Collingwood's concept of history permitted such a conclusion.

The underlying idea of the study (and which I take to be Collingwood's), is that to give an account of history is to give an account of action, and to give an account of action is to give an account of history. Neither idea can be stated in isolation, but each is dependent on the other. Neither idea is stated once and for all, but each develops. Each idea reflects, but also gives form to, a conception of the world where the primacy belongs to activity and process. Historical consciousness is self-awareness of this world and of what is possible within it.

Historical consciousness permeates our culture, but it does not do so in a single, simple, way. Rather, it takes many forms in different areas of life and thought. Not only are there differences between ways of thinking historically, some of which use narrative and others which eschew narrative, but there are also fundamental differences between those who emphasise persons and their deeds and those who see history as a product of more structural and impersonal elements.

In academia, the historical approach can be seen across several disciplines. In philosophy, it has been maintained that the deep distinctions between philosophers are between those who conceive the world and thought about it historically, and those who hold a view of eternal truths which has its origins in Ancient Greece.[2] In the philosophy of mind, many have come to see mind not as a 'natural organism', but as a grouping of capacities. On this conception, mind 'is a product of human history and artifice.'[3] In academic history, a wide range of movements has broadened the scope of histories to cover people and issues that were previously neglected. In recent decades, history from below, gender studies and feminism, race-studies, post-colonial history and the analysis of popular cul-

[2] Richard Campbell, *Truth and Historicity.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992. p. 412.
[3] William Lyons, *Matters of the Mind.* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2001. pp. 251-252.

ture have each contributed to showing that all human beings and societies are historical, and that they are historical in the most fundamental aspects of their being. Within archaeology, strong arguments have been put for renewed links between archaeology and history; processual and structural approaches to archaeology have been criticised in the light of approaches that emphasise individual human agency.[4] In literary studies, the issues of historical production and context have assumed great significance. While some theorists have sought to dispense with authors and their intentions in favour of textuality, there have also been moves to restore contingency and complex relations to particular literary studies.[5]

Outside academia, narrative histories, novels and films flourish, though broader intellectual developments have stimulated a great diversity of approaches, styles and subjects. The daily newspaper and electronic media coverage of politics, sport, the economy and culture supply episodes in a number of narratives, together with the commentary that connects them. Television soap-operas and drama series focus most explicitly upon deeds and motives, their interest depending upon the internal logic of relationships and characters together with the influence of external developments upon that logic. In countless forums, but particularly over food and drink, gossip gives narrative form to the deeds of friends and acquaintances. Each of these cultural manifestations represents a form of historical consciousness. It is, however, possible to see each form of historical consciousness as pointing to a more general and deeply rooted feature of humanity. Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, has argued that histories that are narrative, intentional and situated comprise the 'basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions.'[6] On this view, the structure of narratives lies not simply in the fantasy of writers, but in the way that human lives are lived.[7]

Academic practices are important when they show standards of thought at their most developed, but an account of historical consciousness that was limited to academic themes would be significantly deficient. Yet, simply acknowledging diverse forms and uses

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[4] Ian Hodder, *Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology. Second edition.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991. See also Ian Hodder, *The Archaeological Process: An Introduction.* Blackwell, Oxford, 1999.

[5] For example, see Robert Dixon, *Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation and Colonial Governance.* University of Queensland Press in association with the API Network, St. Lucia, 2001.

[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory. Second edition.* Duckworth, London, 1985. p. 208.

[7] Ibid. p. 212.

of historical thinking would also be inadequate. If historical thought and practices are part of our culture, what would our culture be like if it became more thoroughly and consistently historical? Collingwood's argument was that our self-knowledge and freedom to act are fully dependent on our historical reason. If that is so, then a change in historical consciousness must involve a change in how we can act. The bold, tantalising and provocative possibilities of this idea may seem to merit rapid rejection.

There is no shortage of studies of Collingwood that state, and then dismiss, particular arguments. As with other thinkers who typically write dialectically, and who change their perspective and shift the meaning of terms through constant re-working, Collingwood offers up relatively little when studied in that way. An alternative is to seek ways to bring out the plausibility of Collingwood's key ideas about moral philosophy and history. Rather than engage too quickly in criticism it may be fruitful to establish what Collingwood's views were, how far particular criticisms depend on particular expositions of those views and whether such criticisms would hold under other plausible reconstructions of his views. Criticism proceeds on a surer foundation when it originates in the attempt to understand a writer's views.

In his outline for *The Principles of History*, which he intended as his life's major work but did not finish, Collingwood gave a characteristically bold statement of his intent

> III. The main idea here is that history is the negation of the traditional distinction between theory and practice. That distinction depends on taking, as our typical case of knowledge, the contemplation of nature, where the object is presupposed. In history the object is enacted and is therefore not an *ob*ject at all. If this is worked out carefully, there should follow without difficulty a characterisation of an historical morality and an historical civilization, contrasting with our 'scientific' one. Where 'science' = of or belonging to *natural* science. A scientific morality will start from the idea of *human nature* as a thing to be conquered or obeyed: a[n] historical one will deny that there is such a thing, and will resolve what we are into what we do. A scientific society will turn on the idea of *mastering* people (by money or war or the like) or alternatively *serving* them (philanthropy). A[n] historical society will turn on the idea of *understanding* them.[8] [*sic*]

In *An Autobiography*, Collingwood famously proclaimed that '[t]he chief business of twentieth-century philosophy is to reckon

[8] R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History: and other writings in philosophy of history. Edited with an introduction by W. H. Dray and W. J. van der Dussen.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999. p. 246.

with twentieth-century history.'[9] He had earlier argued that the great task of twentieth-century philosophy was to provide a 'reasoned conviction that human progress is possible and that the problems of moral and political life are in principle soluble.'[10] The role of a philosophy oriented towards history was to provide such justification and conviction.

It is necessary to expand upon Collingwood's statements in order to understand them. In particular, Collingwood's argument in the outline for *The Principles of History* turned on his idea of historical knowledge. For Collingwood, historical thinking does not stand outside its object. In that sense, history has no 'object' at all in the sense in which natural sciences stand outside their objects. History is an activity, or act, which involves the historian in performing other actions. Specifically, the historian enacts that which constitutes or differentiates the original acts he is studying — their thought element. For the historian, knowing the action means performing the action again, and thus his act of knowledge is of practical importance to his life; by understanding the past he has become different to what he was before.

Historical knowledge is never merely theoretical, but always practical in the sense of self-creation.[11] From his doctrine of self-creation, Collingwood thought that there would follow certain ideas about civilisation. Historical knowing is important as a kind of acting which permeates all other activities. As his account in *The Idea of Nature* suggests, Collingwood thought that this was not simply a special feature of historical thinking, but also of natural scientific thought. Collingwood contrasted the present 'scientific' ways of thinking and the civilisation built upon them with the historical approach and the kind of civilisation which would emerge in a social community where historical thinking was as fundamental as the scientific approach is today.

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[9] R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography*. Oxford University Press, London, 1939. p. 79.

[10] R. G. Collingwood, 'The Present Need of a Philosophy', *Philosophy*. Volume IX, No. 35, July 1934, pp. 262-265. p. 264. (This letter to the editor of *Philosophy* is reprinted in R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in Political Philosophy. Edited with an introduction by David Boucher.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989. pp. 166-170.)

[11] Michael Hinz has argued that self-creation is fundamental to Collingwood's account of metaphysics. See Michael Hinz, *Self-Creation and History: Collingwood and Nietzsche on Conceptual Change*. University Press of America, Lanham, 1994. Hinz approaches the question of self-creation in history through metaphysics, whereas I approach a similar set of issues through the theory of action, which I take to be more central to the broad range of Collingwood's concerns.

The natural scientific approach was said by Collingwood to generalise about 'human nature' and to develop rules by which to approach human behaviour. Collingwood presented a similar argument in his moral philosophy, where he identified 'regularian', rule-based thinking, where the rules govern 'human nature'. We submit behaviour to rules, and conquer others so that they obey our rules rather than another set. We influence behaviour by finding keys to making that behaviour conform to our ideas of what it should be. Money provides incentives for behaviour that follows one of the rules of 'human nature'. War is a device for gaining our ends by enforcing conformity. The obverse of mastery is service, where we submit ourselves to obeying a certain set of rules existing in society. Collingwood pointed to philanthropy as the most highly developed form of such service, because it is the highest form of submission of the self to a community embodying a particular set of rules.

As with all thinkers who portend a coming civilisation, Collingwood was particularly sketchy on the subject of 'historical civilization'. His principles of historical thinking preclude the idea that we could predict the future. We can talk about the coming civilisation only in so far as it already exists in a nascent form in our own times. Collingwood clearly thought that historical thinking had reached an advanced state of development in his own time, and it ought therefore to be possible to discern some of the features of the civilisation built upon historical thinking. In his last work, *The New Leviathan* (1942), Collingwood emphasised the rational and dialectical ways in which agreement can be reached between people who start out from different positions. In *The Principles of History*, Collingwood intended to emphasise the way in which we must relate to other people on the basis of their acts, and their acts must be understood.

On my reading, therefore, Collingwood's 'historical civilization' is one in which agreement between people is reached by each enacting the thought of others in an attempt to comprehend views that are initially outside each other. By, in this sense, sharing the same acts, people become other than they were. The emphasis in an historical civilisation would be on the individuality of situations and problems, and on the rational processes by which solutions are found to those individual problems. An historical civilisation will be one of discussion and mutual effort, where the aim is to replace disagreement with a more comprehensive view. In such a civilisation, each person exists not to be mastered but to be understood. This form of

liberalism emphasises the critical reason of free agents; each recognises the other as free.

Collingwood's brief picture is a philosophical interpretation of certain elements that already exist within our present civilisation. Collingwood supposed that such values would continue to be realised even during the crisis years of the 1930s and 1940s. Yet, even the most optimistic enthusiast for Collingwood's vision could say only that the historical civilisation remains a future to be attained rather than a present already achieved. It is clear, however, that an historical civilisation as Collingwood envisaged it could not be brought into existence by engineering or design. Rather, an historical civilisation could come about only if people understood themselves to be self-creative persons in individual situations, pursuing individual solutions to individual problems.

It will be clear from even this brief summary that the concepts of action and of history carry a heavy philosophical burden in Collingwood's thought. Arriving at or understanding these concepts is fundamental to making sense of his broader vision. On Collingwood's view, history is a universal dimension of action present in each and every act. Action, for Collingwood, constitutes the human past, present and future. It is a practical as well as theoretical concept. History, then, involves understanding the human past in a way that enables a grasp of the present and, in some defined and important way, shapes the future.

For Collingwood, historical thought is an activity that plays a constructive or reconstructive role in understanding the world. The constructive theme has been common in discussions of history from F.H. Bradley to Croce, Collingwood, Oakeshott and Foucault. In many cases, an emphasis on the activity of historical thought has led to scepticism about historical knowledge, but in writers such as Croce and Collingwood the argument formed the basis for an account of history as knowledge. Nevertheless, the one word 'history' has both epistemological and metaphysical dimensions, where the metaphysics of history involves a theory of the object that historians study. Collingwood's theory of historical knowledge was inseparable from his account of the object of history. While his account of historical knowledge is relatively well understood, his account of the character of the object of history is less frequently discussed. By implication, improving our understanding of Collingwood's account of one must lead to a better understanding of the other.

Collingwood argued that history, as an object for study, is a process of human actions. It was his account of human actions that led

him to the view that history involves freedom and the capacity for progress. Such views are controversial in the context of more recent trends in the philosophy of history to place particular importance on epistemological issues, and neglect or dismiss metaphysical considerations. A strong unease about the possibility of a metaphysics of history also arises in the context of the dominant role played for much of the past century by the philosophy of language, which has tended to reject, or at least to constrain, any form of metaphysics.

On a thoroughly sceptical epistemological position, the only historical process is that of the historian constructing history. Any talk of history as an object, rather than about the historian's thought, is simply illegitimate. Yet the idea, underlying many such criticisms, that each historian works in an historical situation, presupposes the existence of historical processes, and therefore implies that we can give some account of them. We require metaphysical inquiries to show how the world must be in order that we can study in the ways we do. If this is so, then any philosophy of history must investigate the general features of history as an object and this metaphysical inquiry must be involved in the account of historical knowledge.

General notions about history are involved in every judgement an historian reaches about various acts or occurrences. An epistemological investigation of specific historical works will bring out that an historian has made certain assumptions and judgements in the course of his inquiries. The metaphysical investigation of his works will examine the relationships between the various elements in his conception of history, particularly their logical priority and their mutual coherence. Metaphysical investigations of this sort can show the tensions between various elements of an historian's underlying conception of the past, and therefore whether his approach to history can be sustained or must be altered or transformed in some way.

The sceptical epistemological position on history can be turned to produce a view such as I take Collingwood's to have been. Since the mind of the historian is active in historical thinking the minimum metaphysics of history is an account of action. Any more complex metaphysics of history will be based upon a theory of action. This does not mean that all discussion of structures or entities such as classes will be illegitimate, but it does render illegitimate any entity that cannot be expressed as an action or a complex organisation of actions. But these are, at best, criteria for metaphysics, rather than an account of the metaphysics of history. We need to look beyond the criteria towards theories that would meet them. As an example, one

account of the requisite type (which will provide a useful reference for this study) is Jose Ortega y Gasset's idea that radical reality takes the form 'I am I and my circumstance'. That formula represented Ortega's reworking of Descartes' *cogito*, based on the criticism that the act alone is the unmediated datum of thought in the act of living, and that such living is a radical reality, prior to any Cartesian doubt.[12] In this study, we will need to examine whether Collingwood had a similar theory.

Criticisms of the possibility of a metaphysics of history may be drawn from philosophy of language, but it is also possible to see how much the philosophy of language and the metaphysics of history have in common. Michael Dummett, for example, has characterised analytical philosophy in terms of the view that, firstly, a philosophy of thought is to be attained through philosophy of language and, secondly, that a comprehensive account of thought is only possible in this way.[13] On Dummett's view, metaphysics is possible, but it must follow from and be consistent with a 'meaning-theory'.[14] On his account, philosophy aims only to give a clear view of the concepts with which we think about the world, and therefore how we represent the world in thought. Philosophy, therefore, starts with the structure of thoughts and takes the philosophy of language as the way to approach thoughts. In Dummett's words, 'there can be no account of what thought is, independently of its means of expression…'.[15]

Language, in Dummett's view, is objective, external to mind, embodies thoughts, is accessible and is governed by the criteria and standards of a community.[16] Much, then, depends on how the boundaries of language are drawn and what counts as the expression of a thought. Collingwood shared the conviction that thought can be accounted for only in terms of language, but he drew the boundaries of language more broadly than is the case in much contemporary philosophy. In *The New Leviathan*, he wrote that '[w]ithout language there is no thought. Without thought, and

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[12] My account of Ortega's philosophy draws in particular on Antonio Rodriguez Huescar, *Jose Ortega y Gasset's Metaphysical Innovation: A Critique and Overcoming of Idealism*. Translated and edited by Jorge Garcia-Gomez. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1995. See esp. pp. 29, 32, 40, 48.

[13] Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993. p. 4.

[14] Michael Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1991. p. 305.

[15] Ibid. p. 3.

[16] Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*. p. 25.

thought of a somewhat highly developed kind expressible only in a somewhat highly developed form of language, there is no will.'[17] In his draft for *The Principles of History*, Collingwood wrote of how 'every action has the character of language: every action is an expression of thought.' Thought that has been expressed is language — broadly conceived to include gesture.[18] In *The New Leviathan*, Collingwood maintained that language is speech, but it is also 'any system of bodily movements, not necessarily vocal, whereby the men who make them *mean* or *signify* anything.'[19] Meaning, therefore, belongs to forms of human activity that can be embodied in both linguistic and non-linguistic actions. For Collingwood, therefore, consciousness and language develop together through 'the mere "register" of feelings' to conceptual and propositional thought, and then to reason as 'demonstrative discourse'.[20]

Collingwood's account of language and thought shared many of the elements that have motivated the philosophy of language over the past century. Collingwood, however, developed a more general account of the objectification of thought. On Collingwood's account, thought is objectified in action, and an account of action is an account of the metaphysics of history. Thought is objectified in history, where history encompasses both linguistic and non-linguistic expression. This clearly placed Collingwood within a tradition that reached from Vico, through Hegel and down to Croce. A central insight of this tradition was that there is reason in human history; history shows an immanent reason.[21] The development of this tradi-

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[17] R. G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan, or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism. Revised edition, edited and introduced by David Boucher, with 'Goodness, Rightness, Utility' and 'What "Civilization" Means'*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992. para. 28.16.

[18] Collingwood, *The Principles of History*. p. 49.

[19] Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*. para. 6.

[20] Ibid. paras. 6.41, 6.58, 6.59.

[21] An opposing view would be that reason, if it existed at all, had nothing to do with history or, alternatively, that reason did relate to history, but had nothing to do with what human beings did, but only (for example) with what God did. The idea that reason is imposed upon past actions by the mind of the historian is an incomplete and inconsistent version of this theory. The idea that reason is imposed on history asserts that some people — historians — possess and exercise reason, but does not recognise the sense in which every agent is an historian, and therefore neglects how every act involves reason. A consistent version of the immanent reason theory would say that all acts involve reason, and would go on to argue about the character of action and the relationship between history and action. On such a view, historians exercise reason because they are agents; the kinds of history reflect the kinds of reasoned action, and these develop in the historical process.

tion and of its rivals may be seen through Collingwood's eyes in *The Idea of History*.[22]

The idea that thought is objectified in history can be expressed in a variety of idioms, and is by no means foreign to more recent thought. Donald Davidson, for example, has developed an account of language that centres on learning and language acquisition in situations that 'triangulate' between two or more agents and a shared world. Words and meanings have what Davidson has sometimes referred to as a 'natural history', but can be properly described as a social and human history, which determines them. Language learning involves stimulus and observed repetition, and interpretation is continuous. Thought emerges only through such triangulation. Indeed, Davidson has cited Collingwood as holding a very similar view to his own in arguing that the discovery of the self is possible only with the discovery of other minds and a shared world.[23] A similar point was also made in a very different idiom, Ortega's view that 'I am I and my circumstance' — self and circumstance are dependent on each other in 'my life'.

If language can be analysed only in relation to situations that involve Davidson's triangulation of self, others and a shared world, a focus on narrowly defined linguistic entities is an abstraction from such circumstances. The focus of analysis of language ought properly to be on the situations in which thought and language develop and on the relations that constitute such situations. Similarly, the problem of interpretation is too narrowly defined if it is expressed solely in linguistic terms. An act undertaken without linguistic expression raises a problem of interpretation simply because it is an act. That is, the problem of interpretation arises just in so far as an act is intentional and particular, involving self, others and a shared world, rather than because it is expressed through, or can be translated into, linguistic terms. But the situations in terms of which interpretation takes place are historical — they are dated and located

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[22] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History. Revised edition, with Lectures 1926-1928, edited with an introduction by Jan van der Dussen.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993.

[23] Donald Davidson; *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2001. p. 219. Davidson quoted R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1938. p. 248, where Collingwood wrote that 'the child's discovery of itself as a person is also its discovery of itself as a member of a world of persons.' From the next paragraph, Davidson quoted Collingwood's view that 'The discovery of myself as a person is the discovery that I can speak, and am thus a *persona* or speaker; in speaking, I am both speaker and hearer; and since the discovery of myself as a person is also the discovery of other persons around me, it is the discovery of speakers and hearers other than myself.'

within specific circumstances. To the extent that such situations are also described or understood in mental terms, they form part of human history. If we continue to hold that thought requires language and communication, understanding language to understand thought implies understanding history.

Prior to Collingwood, various forms of the tradition that thought is objectified in history, and history has an immanent reason, had encountered a number of difficulties. At some point, the various accounts of the world fell apart into distinct spheres such as Providence and human history, or human history and nature, or the logical and the temporal, and the conceptual and the actual. Depending on how these tensions were resolved, further tensions might arise between the emotional and the rational. Collingwood's focus on the mutual dependence of history and action was a way to overcome such difficulties.

The principal tension in the immanent reason tradition has been between human history and some form of conceptual or logical history. This was particularly pronounced in Vico, and reached an extreme form in Kant and Hegel. Vico saw man as the maker of the civil world, the world of the 'gentile' nations. On his account, the maker can truly know that which they have made. Behind this principle there lay, as Isaiah Berlin pointed out, the scholastic doctrine that to know something fully is to know it through its causes.[24] As people have made the civil world, Vico held that the principles of nations could be rediscovered in the nature of the human mind.[25] Language, myth and custom could be studied as a history of ideas, revealing the metaphysical stages of development of the human mind. Vico attempted to discover the 'ideal eternal history, traversed in time by the histories of all nations, in their birth, growth, perfection, decline and fall.[26] Nature, by contrast, was not made by people and so could be known truly only by God. But human his-

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[24] Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas.* Chatto and Windus, London, 1980. p. 13.

[25] Croce argued, in a book translated by Collingwood, that knowing what you have made through its causes, in Vico's sense, 'is an ideal repetition of a process which has been or is being practically performed.' Human beings may have full knowledge, therefore, only of that which they have themselves brought about, and they know it by repeating the process in their own minds. Benedetto Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico.* Translated by R. G. Collingwood (1913). Reprinted by Russell & Russell, New York, 1964. p. 5. This interpretation of Vico prefigures Collingwood's account of historical knowledge, to be discussed in later chapters.

[26] Giambattista Vico, *Vico: Selected Writings. Edited and translated by Leon Pompa.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982. p. 206.

tory, too, showed Providence at work, for though people made the nations, the mind that created the nations was superior to that of human beings with their limited ends. Mankind was moved in its creativity, in its intelligence and choice, and particularly in its emotions, by religion and Providence.[27]

If human beings and Providence are both elements in history, what is the relationship between them? If Providence is fully outside history, why does it become involved in finite human being? If Providence is essentially in history, how can it also be divine? In Kant and Hegel, similar tensions were ultimately resolved in favour of the conceptual or universal element in history. Kant continued the search for universal laws, and thought that human actions only appeared to reveal a free will. For Kant, the laws that governed human actions were those of nature.[28] A special philosophical study of history, supervening upon empirical histories, would reveal a 'history with a definite natural plan for creatures who have no plan of their own.'[29] Yet it was only in the movement of history that Kant saw the possibility of mankind creating 'a new "nature" which embodies a moral and human meaning.'[30] Although history obeys the laws of nature, it culminates in mankind imposing a 'system of rational ends upon the causal system of nature.'[31] Kant reached his conception of history only by abstracting from empirical history. He therefore left unresolved the issue of how empirical history and rational history could be reconciled.

With Hegel, the endpoint of his philosophy favoured the logical or universal, but its origins held the promise of reconciliation between these elements and actual or empirical history. Hegel's entire philosophy can be seen as a philosophy of history, in the sense that his various philosophical works showed the movement of consciousness as being fundamentally historical. For Hegel, the whole world revealed reason at work within its various forms. There were logical structures behind the phenomena of nature as well as those of human history. Nature and history were, nevertheless, quite distinct because they had different logical structures. Movements of nature were repetitive and cyclical, while the movement of consciousness

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[27] Ibid. pp. 265-266.

[28] Immanuel Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View', in Immanuel Kant, *On History. Edited, with an introduction, by Lewis White Beck.* Library of Liberal Arts, New York, 1963. p. 11.

[29] Ibid. p. 12.

[30] Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History.* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1980. p. 73.

[31] Ibid. p. 134.

was a genuine development from one concrete and determinate form to another. The history of the world was the history of the movement of consciousness through a series of logically structured determinate forms. The movement from one form to the next was necessarily mediated by the movements that had already occurred, so that the self-knowledge of mind was simultaneously the creative force in history and its outcome. In a famous phrase, Hegel described history as 'Spirit emptied out into Time',[32] thereby showing a link between logic and human action, and at the same time leaving open the issue of what specific relationship could exist between the sequence of logical forms and historical events.

Hegel bequeathed to subsequent philosophy the first serious attempt to fully grasp the significance of a world conceived historically, and to the philosophy of history a gap between history studied philosophically and history as the story of finite agents and their deeds. The origins of Hegel's account of history, rather than the final form it took, have been most important in seeking resolutions for the earlier dichotomies. Hegel made the concept of action central to the philosophy of history; in this light, history itself must be both a series of actions and the study of those actions. Hegel recognised that passions, limited ends and specific needs were the 'sole springs of action — the efficient agents in this scene of activity.' Reason was not revealed in history because people were motivated by the ideal of Reason.[33] Rather, in passion and private interests there was a structure which existed initially only as an 'implicit form', made conscious and explicit only through the course of history.[34] Individual actions of finite human beings could advance the development of mind because they had consequences beyond the agent's intentions and a structure beyond their immediate comprehension. Only through passions did reason develop, by what Hegel called the 'cunning of reason'.[35] As he put it in *The Philosophy of Right*, '[t]he history of mind is its own act. Mind is only what it does, and its act is to make itself the object of its own consciousness.'[36] How acts are to be understood, and therefore how mind is to be understood, determines the

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[32] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit. Translated by A. V. Miller, with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay.* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977. p. 492.

[33] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History.* Translated by J. Sibree. Bell, London, 1890. p. 21.

[34] Ibid. p. 26.

[35] Ibid. p. 34.

[36] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right. Translated with notes by T. M. Knox.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1942. p. 216.

form of much philosophy of history since Hegel.[37] Avoiding the tension between the logical and the actual has meant coming to understand reason in history as the product of the individual actions of finite beings.

Croce set the broad terms for Collingwood's own resolution of the logical and the actual in history. Croce sought the origins of Hegel's philosophy of history in his logic, and developed his own account of history through a criticism of that logic. In Croce's view, one of Hegel's principal advances was his doctrine that pairs of opposite terms are united in one concrete, synthetic, concept. If opposites require one another, they are really aspects of one term, which shows a logical development through various forms. Out of this doctrine came Hegel's emphasis on 'movement' and 'development', and his rejection of merely formal logic in favour of a study of the 'concrete universal'.[38] Croce could not, however, accept Hegel's theory that distinct concepts also have unity. Yet it was out of this set of doctrines that Hegel had derived his concept of an 'ideal eternal history' that must be altogether outside time.[39] By rejecting Hegel's theory on this point, Croce was led to reject Hegel's abstract philosophy of world history in favour of recognising 'the autonomy of historiography', by which he meant the 'history of the historians.'[40]

By treating the concrete universal as the 'pure concept', and abstract, classificatory concepts as 'pseudo-concepts', Croce linked history with philosophy: each dealt with the same kind of concept.[41] History required the logical dimension of concepts in the same way

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[37] For the Marxists, for example, action should be seen through its logical structure, but that structure should be located in economic action. Marx's theory of history continued to differentiate between the logical sequence and the complications of empirical history. Although Hegel placed the seat of reason in history in the structure of passions, his philosophical history was highly abstract and rational. Similarly, he had drawn a very tight distinction between nature and history. Dilthey, by contrast, rejected Hegel's account of history as being too focused on reason, and tried to substitute for reason 'life in its totality (experience, understanding, historical context and power of the irrational)'. Dilthey thereby reopened the question of how a scientific history is possible and revealed the need for the philosophy of history to deal more explicitly with what constitutes historical acts. See W. Dilthey, *Selected Writings. Edited, translated and introduced by H. P. Rickman*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976. p. 195.

[38] Benedetto Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead of the Philosophy of Hegel*. Translated by Douglas Ainslie (1915). Reprinted by Russell & Russell, New York, 1969. pp. 19-20, 27.

[39] Ibid. pp. 86, 93.

[40] Ibid. p. 137.

[41] Benedetto Croce, *Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept*. Translated by Douglas Ainslie. Macmillan, London, 1917. p. 256.

that philosophy required their historical development. Narratives, then, raise, clarify and solve 'philosophic problems'. A new philosophical system shows its value and importance by virtue of the fact that it allows a new interpretation and narration of history.[42] Where Hegel had proposed 'the identity of *philosophy and history of philosophy*', Croce proposed 'the identity of *philosophy and history*.'[43]

Croce had seized upon the element of immanence in accounts of reason, and of reason in accounts of history, since the time of Vico; he attempted to make each theme both more explicit and more complete. From this perspective, Vico's conception of Providence, and Hegel's conception of the cunning of reason, incompletely united the historical and the conceptual. The result was, in Vico, Kant and Hegel, abstract accounts of reason as well as of history. In reality, on Croce's view, it was not possible to separate 'the result from the process or actual acting, in which alone the former is real'.[44] On Croce's own view, there was in history 'no end that has not been realized, as well as it could, in the process, in which it was never an absolute end — that is to say, an abstract end, but both a means and an end.'[45] Ends must be realized in history because there could be no purely transcendental concept or end. Transcendence was a feature of phases in a development that was at once historical and logical. Reason and passion must be related in the same way, not as alternatives but as moments in the one process.

Earlier thinkers such as Hegel had foundered on the relationship between the logical and the actual. Croce pointed to a solution that would lie in developing a more fully immanent conception of reason. Hegel had started from a rich conception of action, with his emphasis on emotion, but his account of reason ended in the overly logical schematism of his philosophy of history, set against 'actual human events'. Croce, however, developed his solutions in perceptive and suggestive essays, rather than in a systematic way. In his account of immanence, Croce also left a significant unresolved problem concerning the relationship between historical processes and nature. Although he held that the so-called history of nature was only a 'pseudo-history', Croce had also maintained that it was possible and necessary to become a blade of grass in order to under-

[42] Ibid. p. 325.
[43] Ibid. p. 487. (Emphasis in original.)
[44] Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice.* Translated by Douglas Ainslie (1921). Reprinted by Russell & Russell, New York, 1960. pp. 102-104.
[45] Ibid. p. 104.

stand its history.[46] In response to Croce's suggestion Collingwood later wrote: 'my scepticism reaches the point of rebellion.'[47]

Collingwood, like Croce, placed the concept of action at the centre of his philosophy of history; he took the 'history of the historians' as his philosophical laboratory. To show that thought is objectified in history, and that reason is therefore immanent in history, is to conceive history and action as jointly dependent, and to conceive action in terms that move from emotion to thought and to logic. History is composed of self-creative actions, differentiated from the processes of nature because they involve thought. Historical thinking has an essential constructive role in the world of action, and historical self-knowledge creates possibilities for further action. Collingwood's thought was systematic in the sense that the concepts of action and history can be traced across the full range of his concerns, but his writings were not systematising in any more obvious sense. He pursued moral philosophy, the philosophy of history and the practice of archaeology in close relationship to each other, although the links between each can be seen only with close interpretation of his work. Each of these areas of concern supported the others and, together, constituted a broader philosophy that encompassed fields such as logic, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, the philosophy of art and political philosophy. To the extent that Collingwood succeeded in developing his philosophy without the problems encountered by his predecessors, we would have powerful tools through which to understand the significance of our modern historical consciousness. How far he did succeed, to what extent his views need to be restated, and what problems might nevertheless remain, is a matter for the body of this study.

To draw out the roles of action and history in Collingwood's thought, it will be necessary to examine the works he published in his lifetime, but also his posthumous publications and unpublished manuscripts. The availability, since the 1970's, of extensive additional unpublished material, has gradually transformed the way in which Collingwood is understood. Much of the earlier scholarship on Collingwood discussed *The Principles of Art* (1938), *An Essay on Metaphysics* (1940, revised edition 1998) and the posthumously edited and published *The Idea of History* (1946, revised edition 1993). Collingwood's *An Autobiography* (1939) was also cited in accounts of

[46] Ibid. pp. 134-135.
[47] Collingwood, *The Idea of History*. p. 200.

his metaphysics and history. These works alone do not show the full range of Collingwood's interests, which we can now see extended across fields as diverse as religion, political philosophy, cosmology, the history and archaeology of Roman Britain, the study of folklore and commentary on contemporary events. Despite the broadening of our understanding of the range of issues that were of interest to him, much of the extensive critical and scholarly work on Collingwood continues to emerge in response to perceived idiosyncrasies, unorthodoxy or paradoxes in his thought. It has been less common to approach Collingwood out of a sense that his concerns relate to more contemporary themes.

Parallels have been drawn between Collingwood and writers as diverse as Vico, Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, Green, Bradley, Croce, de Ruggiero, Gentile, C. S. Peirce, G. E. Moore, Samuel Alexander, Whitehead, Wittgenstein, Dewey, Heidegger, Ortega y Gasset, Ryle, Popper, Oakeshott, Kuhn, Gadamer and Foucault, amongst others. In terms of the common distinction made between Continental and English-language philosophy, John Passmore observed that '[i]n certain, although not in all, respects Collingwood conforms to the Continental rather than to the British philosophical ideal'.[48] In Passmore's view, many of Collingwood's themes are more commonly found in Continental writing, while his style and temper are more at home in the English-language tradition of thought. Important earlier commentators such as Louis Mink generally eschewed the quest for resemblances and resonances because such quests presume that the main lines of Collingwood's thought have already been firmly understood.[49] The breadth of Collingwood's thought means that Mink's injunction should continue to have weight. Nevertheless, not to see Collingwood within the context of a tradition is to miss significant opportunities to understand his goals and problems.

Until at least the late 1950s, interest in Collingwood's thought tended to focus on specific or isolated doctrines within the philosophy of history.[50] In the 1960s and early 1970s several writers attempted to provide broader and more systematic accounts of his

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[48] John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy, Second edition.* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980. p. 302.

[49] Louis O. Mink, *Mind, History, and Dialectic: The Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1969. p. 6. (Reprinted by Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 1987.)

[50] There is a good survey of the critical reception of *The Idea of History* in W. J. van der Dussen, *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood*. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1981, Chapter 3. A shorter discussion of this theme can be

philosophy. By the 1980s and 1990s there were renewed efforts to reinterpret Collingwood broadly, particularly utilising unpublished material not available to earlier commentators. From an early stage, rival interpretations aligned Collingwood with particular traditions or directions in philosophy. Collingwood's posthumous editor and former student, T. M. Knox, assimilated his thought to idealism.[51] By contrast, Gilbert Ryle, Collingwood's successor as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at the University of Oxford, presented Collingwood's account of absolute presuppositions as a precursor both to his own criticisms of 'category mistakes' and to his attack on dualisms of mind and body.[52] Ryle's behavioural focus on practices itself informed early studies of Collingwood's work by Patrick Gardiner and W. H. Dray. Each work paid particular attention to historical practices in preference to broader philosophical themes.[53] Alan Donagan, in the first sustained treatment of the broad range of Collingwood's philosophy, painted

found in the same author's 'Editor's Introduction' to R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History. Revised edition, with Lectures 1926-1928, edited with an introduction by Jan van der Dussen.* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993. pp. xxiii-xxviii.

[51] Knox desired to isolate and preserve certain of Collingwood's works or doctrines, and consequently to criticise other work which presented a different view, and this approach lay behind the account of Collingwood's philosophy in Knox's *'Editor's Preface'* to *The Idea of History* (1946). Knox tried to salvage *An Essay on Philosophical Method* by denying the apparent relativism and historicism of *An Essay on Metaphysics*, *An Autobiography* and, to a lesser extent, *The Idea of History*. For Knox, Collingwood's book on method was most clearly identifiable as a mature work in the idealist tradition, with philosophy given an independent role not reducible to history, as in his earlier *Speculum Mentis* (1924). Since the later works did not seem to maintain the old positions, Knox conjectured that Collingwood had undergone a radical change of view during the mid-1930s. Part of the reason for change was supposed to lie with Collingwood's own practice of reflecting chiefly on whatever else occupied him at the time. Another part of his supposed fall from earlier heights was attributed to illness. Knox's speculations about Collingwood's health began what was later termed (by Lionel Rubinoff), the 'radical conversion' hypothesis of his development.

[52] Gilbert Ryle, *Philosophical Arguments: An Inaugural Lecture, Delivered before the University of Oxford, 30 October 1945*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1945. pp. 3-4.

[53] Patrick Gardiner, *The Nature of Historical Explanation*. Oxford University Press, London, 1952; William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History*. Oxford University Press, London, 1957. Dray's book was one of the most important works in subsequent philosophy of history. Dray focused on historical writings for his account, which drew strongly on Collingwood's theory that historians re-enact the thought of the historical agents they are studying. Collingwood, however, had emphasised not historical writing but historical thinking and, in particular, historical research. In an early article, Collingwood had been highly critical of philosophers who reflected on the natural sciences by examining the thinking which was involved, but who examined only the 'finished product of thought, the fully-compiled historical narrative' when they paid attention to history. He

an image of Collingwood that was one of a philosopher moving towards a position like that of Ryle, but hamstrung by his idealist intellectual origins, which prevented him from moving fully in that direction.[54]

Donagan opened up debate about what kind of unity existed in Collingwood's work. There were two broad means by which to express the inter-relationship of doctrines in Collingwood's philosophy. Firstly, it was possible to show the unity of his thought in terms of some central principle or concern within that philosophy. Secondly, his philosophy could be approached through his way of philosophising, particularly his dialectical method. Neither of these excluded the other, but any account was likely to give an emphasis to one kind of unity over the others.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Louis Mink and Lionel Rubinoff saw a unity of principle in Collingwood's published work. Mink took *Speculum Mentis* (1924) and *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (1933) as the keys to a view that mind is an ascending scale of levels of consciousness. Mind develops from pure feeling, through appetite and imagination to desire and perception, and finally to will and intellect. In this development, we move from conceptual thinking, through propositional thinking to rational thought. Corresponding with these changes, experience moves from Art, through Religion, to Science, Philosophy and History as three forms of fourth level, rational thinking.[55] Rubinoff took a similarly schematic view, finding in *Speculum Mentis* a 'master plan' which formed the basis for a highly

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argued that many apparent differences between natural science and history vanish when 'both are regarded as actual inquiries', and history was not merely a 'dead, finished article.' R. G. Collingwood, 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?', (1922), reprinted in *Essays in the Philosophy of History: R.G. Collingwood* (edited by W. Debbins). McGraw-Hill, New York, 1966. pp. 23-33. See esp. pp. 32-33.

[54] Donagan took seriously, in an extended examination, a range of Collingwood's work, particularly *The New Leviathan* and *The Principles of Art*. In that sense, Donagan inaugurated the serious attempt to show the relationship between various doctrines that Collingwood had propounded. The limitation of his book was that it was only a partially integrated account of Collingwood's thought. In the first instance, Donagan did not analyse the full text of *The New Leviathan* and neglected the essentially political nature of the work. Secondly, Donagan restricted his focus to Collingwood's 'later philosophy', but not to the apparently 'historicist' and 'relativist' elements in his later works. Third, Donagan justified these restrictions by dismissing Collingwood's earlier work, particularly *Speculum Mentis* and *An Essay on Philosophical Method*. Alan Donagan, *The Later Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1962. [Reprinted, 'with a new preface and corrections', by University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1985.]

[55] Mink, *Mind, History, and Dialectic,* pp. 3, 17, 117.

complex schematism in which each subsequent work was shown to fill in a piece of the one puzzle. Under this schema, Collingwood was a 'transcendental historicist', arguing that the process by which historical truth is revealed is historical, but that what the process reveals 'at any given time in history is nevertheless absolute and transhistorical'. Collingwood, then, could be seen in terms of a tradition that included Hegel, Husserl, Rickert, the early Heidegger, Cassirer and E. L. Fackenheim.[56]

Schematic interpretations of Collingwood's work, particularly those that emphasise earlier works such as *Speculum Mentis*, inevitably neglect the dialectical elements within Collingwood's own work.[57] Looking back on *Speculum Mentis* from the perspective of 1938, Collingwood wrote that

> If much of it now fails to satisfy me, that is because I have gone on thinking since I wrote it, and therefore much of it needs to be supplemented and qualified. There is not a great deal that needs to be retracted.[58]

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[56] Lionel Rubinoff, *Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1970. pp. 14, 24, 123, 127, 131-132, 146, 243.

[57] Mink's interpretation, while serving to emphasise the links between various elements in Collingwood's account of mind, ended by drawing boundaries too clearly and stretching connections too tightly. Mink was forced to ignore Collingwood's *Autobiography* and to jettison many of his claims, particularly the proposed 'logic of question and answer'. Consequently, he interpreted Collingwood's 'absolute presuppositions' as a free-standing account of *a priori* concepts, rather than a feature of Collingwood's logic, and sought to argue away the apparent historicisation of philosophy in *An Autobiography* and *An Essay on Metaphysics*. Mink's book importantly attended to Collingwood's concern with both practical and theoretical reason. He did not, however, place as much importance on these issues as Collingwood had in many of his works, including *Speculum Mentis*, *An Autobiography*, *An Essay on Metaphysics* and *The New Leviathan*. Nor did Mink consider Collingwood's political philosophy. Rubinoff, like Mink and Donagan, took the philosophy of mind to be the central concern in Collingwood's work. Like Collingwood himself in his later writing, Rubinoff saw the relationship between philosophy and history as central. Rubinoff's complex schematism required him to engage in extended arguments in order to draw links between the various elements of Collingwood's philosophy. Rubinoff paid little attention to Collingwood's practical concerns and political philosophy and, like Mink, did not focus on Collingwood's historical and archaeological practices. Subsequently, in a more recent work, Rubinoff has focused instead on the dialectical nature of Collingwood's thought about history, while recognising the importance of some of his unpublished material, such as that on folklore. Lionel Rubinoff, 'History and Human Nature: Reflections on R. G. Collingwood', *International Studies in Philosophy*. Vol. XXIII, No. 3, 1991. pp. 75-89.

[58] Collingwood, *An Autobiography.* fn. 1, p. 56.

It has since become clear that Collingwood did envisage a series of books, but that *Speculum Mentis* had no part in that series.[59] The relationship between Collingwood's earlier and later work is therefore more complex than can be captured in the idea of a single programme implemented over time. It is now more common to see Collingwood's later works, such as *The New Leviathan*, as representing the latest stage of a personal development. We can see the elements of his later thought emerging and being altered over time. The question, then, is which ideas played the key roles in that process.

Since the 1970s, the availability, and subsequent publication, of many of Collingwood's manuscripts has tended to reinstate the plausibility of his own account of his intellectual development. It has also made it more difficult to argue that any particular view of Collingwood's does not sit with another. It is now clear that Collingwood was able to write *An Autobiography* with his papers around him; he was not working solely from memory, but from documents that can be independently scrutinised.[60] At times Collingwood paraphrased, in different language and with different emphasis, dated papers now available to scholars.[61] Two of the key documents to which Collingwood referred, his 'Die' manuscript of 1928 and some earlier lectures on the philosophy of history, were published in the revised edition of *The Idea of History*. Other important manuscripts mentioned by Collingwood, including a copy of his 'Libellus de Generatione', thought to be destroyed, and a chapter of his unpublished 'Truth and Contradiction', similarly thought to have been destroyed, have also survived and are in the Bodleian Library. Only one important document to which Collingwood drew attention in his autobiography seems not to have survived, or is not

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[59] The series is described in van der Dussen's 'Introduction' to the revised (1993) edition of *The Idea of History*. p. ix.

[60] It is therefore possible to avoid much of the debate around the 'radical conversion' hypothesis — at least in so far as it is taken to be an account of Collingwood's intellectual development. Instead, we should see the conversion thesis as a means by which certain authors, who recognised that Collingwood sought to develop an integrated philosophy, were nevertheless able to isolate particular works and themes from their accounts of that philosophy.

[61] The first significant study of Collingwood in the light of his manuscripts was van der Dussen's *History as a Science* (1981). Van der Dussen used manuscript material to illuminate Collingwood's development, in particular, to show his historical work, archaeology and philosophy of history in mutual relation. Van der Dussen was able to undermine the 'radical conversion' thesis; to bring in to focus many themes which had lain unexplored (particularly the idea of history as a process); and to throw light on a large range of concepts and controversies surrounding Collingwood's philosophy of history.

readily identifiable amongst his surviving papers. That paper is one he gave on returning to Oxford at the end of the War of 1914-1918, criticising the forms of realism then current.[62]

Access to Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts shows that his work was unfinished not only in the sense that he never completed his projected series of books, but because the systematic elements which were present in his work require further development. The role of a contemporary commentator is, therefore, to see how various themes were implicated across a range of Collingwood's concerns. Such commentary will portray how Collingwood revisited and restated his views in different ways, over a number of years, and in different contexts. Commentary of this type will show that understanding what Collingwood said means understanding how he came to say it. In this way, contemporary commentary can serve to clarify the issues on which Collingwood worked, and contribute to their further development.

The availability of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts brought into focus the key role of moral philosophy in the development of his views. Neither moral nor political philosophy had received much attention in earlier commentary on Collingwood's work.[63] Collingwood's extensive unpublished lectures and manuscripts on moral philosophy show a strong developmental continuity from the early 1920s to the 1940s. Many of his key concerns in other areas arose from, or were illuminated by, moral philosophy; *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, for example, developed from his moral philosophy lectures of the 1920s. The 1940 lectures on moral philosophy were presented as introducing Collingwood's lectures called 'The Idea of History'.[64] The strength of Collingwood's interests in this area, and the implications for our overall conception of his philosophy, were first brought to notice in David Boucher's *The Social and Political Thought of R. G. Collingwood* (1989), and expanded in editions of his writings on politics and related themes.[65] Boucher's

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[62] Collingwood, *An Autobiography*. Chapter VI, esp. p. 44.

[63] The notable exception was A. J. M. Milne, *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism.* George Allen and Unwin, London, 1962. Milne discussed several of Collingwood's ideas alongside those of idealist thinkers such as Green and Bradley.

[64] R. G. Collingwood, 'Goodness, Rightness, Utility', in Collingwood, *The New Leviathan, Revised edition,* pp. 391-479. See p. 477.

[65] David Boucher, *The Social and Political Thought of R. G. Collingwood*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in Political Philosophy, Edited with an introduction by David Boucher*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989; R.G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan*. *Revised edition*.

work has, for the first time, given systematic attention to Collingwood's moral and political philosophy. Collingwood's thought now appears clearly within a broader historical context of European liberalism. This study takes its lead from that reorientation towards moral philosophy.

In this study, I will follow Collingwood's ideas of action and history into fields such as archaeology, history and philosophy of history. As we shall see, the two concepts illuminate much of his philosophy. For example, Collingwood took action as a primary exemplar of a concept that develops in an ascending scale of forms, where each succeeding form of the concept more adequately expresses its essence. A scale of forms, however, develops only in a process in which gains already made are retained in each and every further advance. Collingwood gave an account of how thought and concepts can develop in his 'logic of question and answer', where each new question in a series presupposes the answers already given in the history of thought about a particular topic. On Collingwood's view in *An Essay on Metaphysics*, every question has a presupposition that allows a question to arise or, in other language, to be logically posed. Some presuppositions, such as that the world exists, are not in fact answers to previous questions, but are presupposed absolutely in each particular attempt to think seriously about the world. The burden of Collingwood's historical survey in *The Idea of Nature* was that modern scientific thinking involves a view that the natural world is in process. In *The Idea of History,* Collingwood showed that modern historical thought involves the view that the human world is created by processes of human action. The distinction between action and other forms of process underlay his distinction between the natural and the properly historical. To give a philosophical account of the concept of action is, therefore, to give an account of the historical presuppositions of current Western thought about the world.

I aim to show that the views I attribute to Collingwood were his, and that the concepts of action and history illuminate those of historical consciousness and historical civilisation. Chapter 1 shows that action was one of a number of closely related philosophical concepts which Collingwood applied across a broad range of fields and at various stages in his development. Action was, however, one dimension of his overall account of the world as process, which forms the subject of Chapter 2. To support the ideas of action and the world as process, Collingwood required an account of thought. In Chapters 3 and 4, Collingwood's logic of question and answer is pre-

sented as an account of thought that places the logic of history within the realm of human action.

Chapters 5 to 8 draw out a number of dimensions to history as action. In Chapter 5, I show how Collingwood's moral philosophy and philosophy of history became increasingly aligned. Chapter 6 relates how Collingwood's idea of 'duty' united moral philosophy with history. The concept of duty highlights the need both for a theory of historical knowledge and for a theory of the object of history. The nature of the historical object is discussed in Chapter 7, while Chapter 8 discusses Collingwood's theory of historical knowledge, particularly through his historical practice.

The significance of knowing the historical process is that it gives rise to self-knowledge, and in Chapter 9 Collingwood's accounts of action, history and historical knowledge are brought to bear to characterise historical consciousness. If an historical consciousness is developed fully and consistently, it gives rise to historical civilisation. Chapter 10 concludes the study by examining Collingwood's attempts to characterise such a civilisation.