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THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN BRITAIN
FROM 1860 TO 1950
A Non-Revolutionary Account

1. A REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY?

In 1956, a series of BBC radio talks was published in London under the title *The Revolution in Philosophy* (Ayer et al. 1956). This short book included papers by prominent British philosophers of the day, such as Sir Alfred Ayer and Sir Peter Strawson, with an introduction by Gilbert Ryle. Although there is precious little in it concerning the precise nature of the ‘revolution’ alluded to in the title, it is quite clear that these lectures were meant to celebrate in an insular manner the birth of ‘analytic philosophy’ at the hands of Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein.¹ According to Ryle,

[...] attempts to trace our proximate origins [...] are valuable [as] they help the student to understand the contemporary scene – partly by disabusing him of fashionable misconceptions of what is going on. (Ryle 1956, 1)

As it applies to the collection of essays it introduces, this remark is somewhat disingenuous, since no reader will ever be disabused of any ‘fashionable misconceptions’ about the birth of ‘analytic philosophy’ by reading these essays. On the contrary, *The Revolution in Philosophy* is

better understood as an attempt at foisting on it readers a particular set of misconceptions. To see this, one needs only to consider the title, which is plainly misleading. The Oxford English Dictionary gives as one of the possible meanings of the word ‘revolution’:

The complete overthrow of an established government or social order by those previously subject to it; an instance of this; a forcible substitution of a new form of government.

The use of the word ‘revolution’ to describe the birth of ‘analytical philosophy’ and its rise to near complete dominance in the British universities thus carries with it connotations of a forcible substitution of one philosophical order by a new one that itself owed nothing to the past. To me, however, this talk of ‘revolution’ carries with it a false view of the history of British philosophy: it isn’t ‘historical’ at all, just ideological; it was introduced for a strategic purpose, namely that of encouraging new generations of students to avoid reading the work of earlier philosophers or becoming interested in the problems that concerned them.

The volume does include an essay on F. H. Bradley, however, written by Richard Wollheim (Wollheim 1956). But, Wollheim presents Bradley mainly as having set the stage for the coming revolution through his criticism of psychologism (about which more below). Predictably, this break too is implied to have happened between, on the one hand, Moore and Russell and, on the other, their teacher’s generation, the so-called ‘British Idealists’ or ‘neo-Hegelians’. We are thus told that Bradley had, erroneously, linked his anti-psychologism with a form of monism, according to which reality is an indivisible whole (Wollheim 1956, 13), a thesis notoriously rejected by Moore and Russell.² In this paper, I shall not be in the business of denying the truth of better-known theses about the origins of ‘analytic philosophy’ such as this one, but it is my belief that the historical reality was far more complex – and far more interesting – than a simplistic account in terms of ‘revolution’ would lead us to believe. It is undeniable that a major shift happened that would transform philosophy in the long run – to get an impression of this it suffices indeed that one compares Russell’s ‘On Denoting’ with other papers in the issue of *Mind* in which it was published in 1905 (Russell 1905). The problem I see is rather with the idea that early analytic philosophers,

e.g., Moore and Russell, merely found convincing arguments against the philosophical establishment of their times (in this case, Bradley, McTaggart, Joachim, etc.) and started afresh, taking very little from them. Even if one grants the validity of some of their criticisms of their elders, it can't be that Moore and Russell are a new *miracle grec*, to use Renan's misleading expression (Classical Greek culture did not come about spontaneously, with no relation to its past).

This ideology of a clean break with the past has been severely undermined in the last decades, in particular by the wealth of scholarship establishing the roots of analytic philosophy in the work of Bolzano,³ as well as establishing affinities with and influence from what has come to be called the analytic phenomenology that originated in the Brentano School.⁴ But we are talking here about recognizing, through some *comparison*, the 'analytic' value of some sort of 'pre-analytic' work by non-British philosophers. An even more interesting set of studies has emerged out of this, where evidence of a *direct* influence of the Brentano School (including figures such as Twardowski and Husserl, the case of Meinong being already well-known) on Moore and Russell, especially through their teacher G. F. Stout, who recognized the importance of the Brentano School on his thinking in *Some Fundamental Points in the Theory of Knowledge* (Stout 1911).⁵ This is not the place to report on this at length, so let me merely give a particularly symbolic example: it has always been assumed that the notion of 'sense-data', which is, needless to say, quite an important one in the early decades of analytic philosophy, was introduced in Moore's 1910-11 lectures, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (Moore 1953) but that is actually not the case: it appeared earlier in a little-known paper, 'The Subject-Matter of Psychology' (Moore 1910a, 57f.), which is practically a commentary on Husserl (when not on Stout), and in an even lesser known review of August Messer's *Empfindung und Denken* (Messer 1908), where Moore, after recognizing that Messer had correctly distinguished between the object of perception and the consciousness of it, used '*Empfindung*' for the former. As Moore says: "Dr. Messer means by a 'sensation' [...] what I would prefer to call sense-data" (Moore 1910b, 397). Messer, a member of the school of *Denkpsychologie* at Würzburg, had written what is in fact an excellent summary of Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen*.

Perhaps the word 'influence' is too strong, but the input from philoso-

phers of this foreign tradition is undeniable and important. But what about the tradition of British philosophy itself? Was all of it flushed? There are also now a spate of studies that provide a better understanding of major figures from the 'Idealist' movement, such as Bradley and Collingwood, showing their relevance for a proper understanding of the first decades of the analytic movement as well as, in some cases, for contemporary debates.⁶ What I suggest here is, if anything, *complementary*. I wish to take a look at what is arguably the true heartland of British philosophy since the 18th century, the theory of knowledge.⁷ I shall sketch the broad outlines of a landscape that involves, when limited to the specific topic of the theory of knowledge, *no* radical break, where no entirely new order replaces an older one: the options, so to speak, and even some of the arguments are the same before and after the *soi-disant* 'revolution'. As one looks at the history of British theory of knowledge from the 1850s to the 1950s, one realizes the centrality of the debate about phenomenalism, with the development of new arguments on both sides at regular intervals. As I shall argue, if there is any meaningful 'break', it actually comes with F. H. Bradley, who was the first to reject the phenomenalism of which the early incarnation of 'analytic philosophy' in Cambridge (Moore and Russell in some of their phases), was actually a resurgence. And, as I shall further show, 'realist' critics of this new form of phenomenalism, from John Cook Wilson to J. L. Austin, ended up, in a quasi-paradoxical manner, on the same side as the reviled 'idealists', even sharing arguments with them. The idea of a 'revolution' in philosophy peddled by philosophers such as Ryle could only blur this picture and bring about misunderstandings.

In order to make my point, I shall avoid discussion of the impact of modern logic or of the 'linguistic turn'. Though this may seem unusual, it is my opinion that when Russell decided, after concluding his work on the monumental volumes of *Principia Mathematica* around 1912, to apply modern logic to the theory of knowledge, he had *already* taken sides in a rather traditional debate in the theory of knowledge that I am about to discuss: it was only in the working out of his solution that he made use of formal logic. Russell's idea was to provide a *logical* construction of the objects of the external world on the basis of 'sense-data' (and a peculiar knowledge of universals). He thus used logic as a tool, but the fundamental position he argued for – in essence a form of phenominal-

ism with a dose of Platonism about universals – was inherited from the tradition, which forms the context relative to which Russell’s moves get their sense.⁸ Wishing, therefore, to go deeper than the changes induced by the introduction of modern logic in this context, I shall focus primarily on the main issues in the theory of knowledge that were raised in the British tradition.

In what follows, I shall use as my guide a very interesting posthumous paper from R. G. Collingwood, ‘The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley: An Essay on “Appearance and Reality”’, written in 1933 but published only in 2005, as an appendix to the revised edition of his *Essay on Philosophical Method* (Collingwood 2005, 227-252).⁹ In it, Collingwood offers an unorthodox but insightful interpretation of Bradley, which allows us to see that some of his critics are actually closer to his positions than they would like us to believe. I shall extend this reading to a broader sketch of the debates between phenomenism and its adversaries in British philosophy, roughly from 1850 to 1950. (As one might expect, the following is merely a sketch, and I shall, of necessity, remain silent on many details.) A lot of what follows hangs indeed on a reconsideration of the place of Bradley in the history of British philosophy.¹⁰

2. A BRIEF EXCURSUS ON BRADLEY’S ANTI-PSYCHOLOGISM

Both Ryle, in *The Revolution in Philosophy*, and Wollheim, in his book on Bradley, had already noted that it was Bradley and not Frege – even less Husserl, who is not even mentioned – who steered British philosophy away from psychologism:

[Bradley and Frege] were in revolt against ‘psychologism’, in revolt, that is, against one dominant element in the teachings of John Stuart Mill. Mill, transmitting the legacy of Hume, had tended to treat problems of logic and epistemology as problems to be solved by associationist psychology. Frege and Bradley in different ways and with different emphases distinguished sharply between psychology on the one side and philosophy and logic on the other; between the ideas, impressions, and feelings that were the subject matter of psychology and whatever it was that formed the subject matters of philosophy and logic. Next, both de-

tected the same philosophical superstition behind the associationist account of thoughts, namely the assumption that any thought (or judgement or proposition) is a concatenation of separately existing and separately inspectable pieces. [...] Finally, in the hands of both Frege and Bradley the notion of Meaning became, what it has remained ever since, an indispensable, if refractory, instrument of philosophical discourse. (Ryle 1956, 6-7)

This whole theory of the mind which I have attributed to the Empiricists, and, even more, the conception of philosophy and logic that went along with it, Bradley utterly rejected, ‘In England at all events’, he wrote, ‘we have lived too long in the psychological attitude’. Now Bradley’s rejection of psychologism is of extreme importance, and for two reasons. In the first place it is one of the links, one of the very few links that bind him to the more eminent or advanced amongst his philosophical contemporaries. A striking parallel can be drawn between his strictures on the state of British Logic in his day and, for instance, what was being said, quite independently, of course, but exactly at the same moment, by Gottlob Frege. (Wollheim 1959, 25-26).¹¹

The refutation of ‘psychologism’ is also part of another official history, a German one where one tends to overplay the role of German philosophers – Frege and Husserl in particular, but also Hermann Cohen – to the point that it looks as if the whole affair had been strictly a German one.¹² One tends therefore to forget the obvious fact that ‘psychologism’ is a British invention deriving not only from John Stuart Mill, who took his lead from Hartley’s associationist psychology, but also from another founder of modern psychology, Alexander Bain, in *The Senses and the Intellect* (Bain 1864) and *The Emotions and the Will* (Bain 1865). It is also true, though less well known, that a form ‘psychologism’ was held by philosophers of the Scottish school. For example, Henry Longueville Mansel, an epigone of Hamilton at Oxford, published the aptly titled *Prolegomena Logica: An Inquiry into the Psychological Character of Logical Processes* in 1851.¹³ It was in fact this British ‘psychologism’ that was exported to the Continent later on in the second half of the 19th century.¹⁴ Bradley’s critique of it, in the first edition of

The Principles of Logic in 1883 (Bradley 1928), is almost twenty years earlier than Husserl's much-vaunted critique in the prolegomena to his *Logische Untersuchungen*.

We just saw that Ryle and Wollheim attributed to Bradley the definitive critique of psychologism, as far as the British Isles are concerned. This was also Collingwood's opinion in the 1930s:

There is no such thing as a mere appearance. The real appears; appearances are appearances of reality. This flatly denies the whole subjectivist or phenomenalist philosophy, from Locke down to Mansel and Herbert Spencer. [...] simple though the achievement may seem when it has been effected, it closed an epoch. By making this point, apparently so obvious, Bradley made it impossible in the future for any philosopher to substitute psychology for metaphysics, as every philosopher at least in Great Britain had done since the middle of the seventeenth century. (Collingwood 2005, 243-244)

It is important to notice, however, that the critique of 'psychologism' attributed to Bradley by all these authors has actually little to do with the better-known critique by Frege and Husserl, who focus on the thesis that logic is part of psychology or, in other words, that logical processes of inference are based on mental processes. It is not that this thesis was foreign to British philosophy. It was already argued for by Mansel in 1851,¹⁵ while a well-known formulation of it can be found in J. S. Mill's *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* published in 1865:

I conceive it to be true that Logic is not the theory of Thought as Thought, but of valid Thought; not of thinking, but of correct thinking. It is not a Science distinct from, and co-ordinate with Psychology. So far as it is a science at all, it is a part, or branch, of psychology; differing from it, on the one hand as part differs from the whole, and on the other, as an Art differs from a Science. Its theoretic grounds are wholly borrowed from Psychology, and include as much of that science as is required to justify the rules of the art. A

consequence of this is, that the Necessary Laws of Thought [...] belong exclusively to Psychology. (Mill 1979, 359)

But, in contrast, the 'psychologism' that Bradley is said here to refute looks more like 'associationist' psychology *simpliciter* and seems not to be focused in any special way at all on the foundations of logic. It is rather the claim that one must provide an explanation of the meaning of concepts and propositions, or, in more traditional terms, 'judgements', in terms of mental processes.

Of Bradley's critique, it is important to mention one key aspect, namely the role played in it by the notion of 'ideal' or 'logical content', as a 'universal meaning' which is opposed to the 'occasional imagery' of the psychologist, as one can see from the passage of *The Principles of Logic*:

The idea in judgement is the universal meaning; it is not ever the occasional imagery, and still less can it be the whole psychical event. [...] Judgement proper is the act which refers an ideal content (recognized as such) to a reality beyond the act. [...] The ideal content is the logical idea, the meaning as just defined. [...] In the act of assertion we transfer this [wandering] adjective to, and unite it with, a real substantive. And we perceive at the same time, that the relation thus set up is neither made by the act, nor merely holds within it or by right of it, but is real both independent of and beyond it. (Bradley 1928, vol. I, 10)

Bradley's notion of 'ideal content' plays a role roughly equivalent to that of kindred notions in Husserl and Frege. One should note *en passant* that Bradley did not get this idea from either of them (since they published later), nor from Bolzano, whom he probably never heard of. Rather, he acquired it from Hermann Lotze's chapter on 'The World of Ideas', contained in Book III of his *Logic* (Lotze 1884, 434-449).¹⁶ This would have been a fact well known to Bradley's contemporaries, though it is one that has, along with Lotze himself, been long forgotten since.¹⁷ This last remark points at the tip of an iceberg, as the influence of Lotze is everywhere to be felt in the late 19th century but hardly ever studied;¹⁸ a thorough study is a most pressing need.

3. BRITISH PHILOSOPHY IN THE MID-19TH CENTURY AND HAMILTON'S 'GREAT AXIOM'

We just saw Bradley's historical role in the critique of psychologism within the British tradition. The peculiarity of Bradley's critique was that it wasn't limited to protecting logic against any encroachment from psychology, but that it opened up to a critique of associationist psychology as a whole. I do not wish to discuss further these aspects of Bradley's critique,¹⁹ but focus instead on the connections it had with some fundamental issues in the theory of knowledge. Bradley severely undermined associationist psychology in *Principles of Logic* through a critique of its 'atomism', as Stout was to recognize (Stout 1896, vol. 2, 47f.). But he also produced a critique of its 'phenomenalism', which is, I believe, far reaching in its consequences. These are interrelated since the basis of associationist psychology is that the working of the mind begins with sensory data that are 'atomic', in the sense of standing or having an existence on their own, separately and independently of other such data. Phenomenalism, as the term will be used here, is the thesis that there is nothing behind the 'veil' of sense data, for example Mill's definition of matter as the "Permanent Possibility of Sensation" (Mill 1979, 183) (there are, of course, other versions, such as Mach's (Mach 1959)). Although there might not be a logical connection between 'phenomenalism' and 'atomism', they are both united in Mill's philosophy, and this will play a crucial role in the story I am about to tell.

Now the main claim of this paper is that *it was Bradley who actually opened the way to realism in Britain through a critique of phenomenalism, which underlies his critique of 'psychologism'*. This thesis might well come as a surprise since Bradley was an 'idealist', so some explaining is in order. One needs first to step back and look at the broader picture. I would therefore like to suggest a rough sketch of the situation in British philosophy in the mid-19th century. This period is generally not well-known and certainly poorly understood, so I shall spend some time explaining what happened, before coming back to Bradley, in order to explain the centrality of his role. The following figure (Fig. 1) provides some facts and dates, ranging from the mid-1850s to the mid-1870s that will be woven into the extremely simplified narrative that follows it.

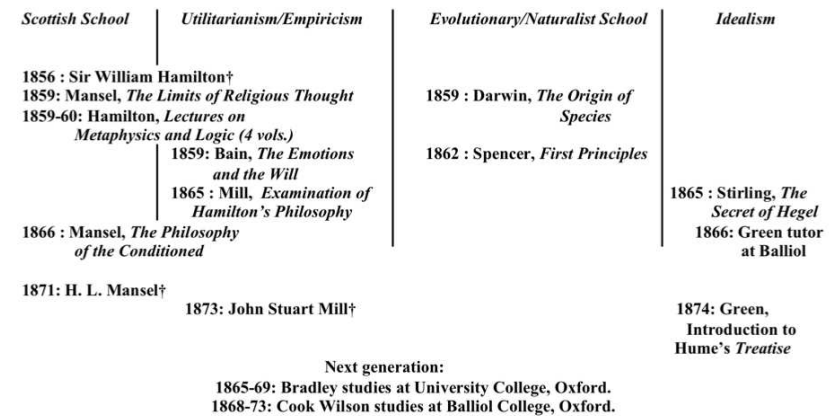


Figure 1.

During the span of these 20 years, the face of British philosophy was fundamentally altered. It had inherited from the 18th century a debate between empiricism, now represented by the likes of Bain and Mill, and the Scottish School of 'common sense', which began with Thomas Reid's critique of the empiricism of Locke and his followers, and whose main representatives in the mid-19th century were Sir William Hamilton in Glasgow and, south of Gretna Green, Henry Mansel in Oxford. Hamilton died in 1856 and Mill was to publish almost ten years later, in 1865, a lengthy and scathing review in *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (Mill 1979). Mill's book can hardly be counted as one of his best, but it is nevertheless very important in many ways, in particular for its treatment of issues in the theory of knowledge, as can be seen from Alan Ryan's introduction (Ryan 1979) to a reprint of that book in the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Mill 1979), which I shall be using here. One finds in it, for example, his famous definition of matter as the "Permanent Possibility of Sensation" (Mill 1979, 183).²⁰ Mill's main target was what Hamilton dubbed the 'great axiom' of the 'relativity of human knowledge', which he set forth in his *Lectures on Metaphysics*

and Logic (Hamilton 1866, vol. I, 96). This ‘great axiom’ was part of an attempt to marry the doctrines of Reid with those of Kant, which resulted in the claim that there cannot be any knowledge of the noumenal world, or, in Hamilton’s words, of the ‘unconditioned or absolute’. This “strange farrago of misunderstood gleanings”, as Collingwood put it (Collingwood 2005, 234), reads as follows:

I now proceed to expound the import of the correlative terms phaenomenon, subject, et. But the meaning of these terms will best be illustrated by now stating and explaining the great axiom, that all human knowledge, consequently that all human philosophy, is only of the relative or phaenomenal. In this proposition, the term *relative* is opposed to the term *absolute*; and, therefore, in saying that we know only the relative, I virtually assert that we know nothing absolute, – nothing existing absolutely; that is, in and for itself, and without relation to us and our faculties [...] But as the phaenomena appear only in conjunction, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to think them conjoined in and by something [...] But this something, absolutely and in itself, – i.e. considered apart from its phaenomena – is to us as zero. It is only in its qualities, only in its effects, in its relative or phenomenal existence, that it is cognizable or conceivable; [...] the term *matter* or *material substance* [...] is the name of something unknown and inconceivable. (Hamilton 1866, vol. I, 96-97).

One should note *en passant* that Hamilton’s thesis was put to use by Henry Mansel in his Bampton lectures on *The Limits of Religious Thought* (Mansel 1859), where he argued on the basis of this ‘unconditioned’ that men are simply unfit to know anything about God, this being of itself grounds for worship. As Bradley was to put it later:

Where we know nothing we can have no possible objection to worship. (Bradley 1930, 111)

This prompted him to comment in typically sarcastic fashion:

It seems a proposal to take something for God simply and solely because we do not know what the devil it can be. (Bradley 1930, 111n.)²¹

Although made to seem absurd at the hands of Bradley, Mansel’s defence of theism was part of the philosophical staple of his days: it was, for example, adopted by Herbert Spencer.

As we shall see, Mill criticized Hamilton’s statements for their ambiguity. The Scot seems indeed to conflate two theses: on the one hand, the epistemic thesis – not to say, truism – that all we know of the external world, we know through and relative to the senses (the ‘phenomenal’) and, on the other hand, the ontological or metaphysical thesis that there exists a substrate or ‘matter’ which is in itself ‘unknown’, i.e., that there is something like a Kantian ‘thing-in-itself’ behind the veil of the ‘phenomenal’.²² It is the latter, ontological thesis that Mill disagreed with, especially since he had an alternative one to offer in his definition of matter as the “Permanent Possibility of Sensation”, which is also *the* statement *par excellence* of the thesis of phenomenalism:

Matter, then, may be defined, a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. If I am asked, whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this definition of it. If he does, I believe in matter: and so do all Berkeleians. In any other sense than this, I do not. But I affirm with confidence, that this conception of Matter includes the whole meaning attached to it by the common world, apart from philosophical, and sometimes from theological, theories. The reliance of mankind on the real existence of visible and tangible objects, means reliance on the reality and permanence of Possibilities of visual and tactual sensations, when no such sensations are experienced. (Mill 1979, 183)

Mill’s book created quite a controversy, attracting in particular a reply a year later by Mansel in *The Philosophy of the Conditioned* (Mansel 1866), but it ultimately brought about the demise of the Scottish School, which never recovered from this fatal blow. Mansel was to leave Oxford a few years later to become Dean of St. Paul’s and he died in 1871, soon to be forgotten. The Scottish School survived with even more obscure figures such as John Veitch, who was to live and publish until the mid-1890s, but it had clearly run out of steam. It is fitting to notice here that, just a few years after this controversy, John Cook Wilson began his studies at Oxford, initially under T. H. Green. Cook Wilson was to develop influential views that were clearly akin to Reid’s and Hutcheson’s

(to whom he hardly ever refers), which were at the basis of the Oxford Realist movement, one of the sources of analytic philosophy. Therefore, although the Scottish School disappeared by the end of the century, it was to be replaced in its role against empiricism by Oxford Realism.²³

The Scottish School was not alone in suffering such a fate: along with its political wing, the Radicals, the utilitarian-empiricist movement was also to run out of steam after Mill's death in 1873. Bain, who died only in 1903, retired at Aberdeen in 1880, and, henceforth, the only two noteworthy representatives in British universities were Bain's student George Croom Robertson in London – who was to be replaced by another first-rate psychologist, James Sully – and Henry Sidgwick in Cambridge.

While these two movements, the Scottish School and empiricism, disappeared, they were replaced by two new ones during the crucial decades from the 1850s to the 1870s. First, one finds the evolutionism of Herbert Spencer, who actually published his ideas on evolution before Darwin gave the concept maximum visibility with his *Origin of Species* in 1859 (Darwin 1859). Darwin's book, and the controversy that surrounded it, had a profound influence on the course of British philosophy. Spencer quickly became the most read philosopher of his times, with literally hundreds of thousands of his books sold in Britain and the United States. However, because of the alleged threat to religious beliefs implicit in Darwin's theory of evolution, Spencer became the 'public enemy number one', so to speak, for religiously-minded philosophers of the Victorian era, and this reaction provided what is probably the most important impetus behind the rise and later domination of the very rich and complex British idealist movement, of which Bradley was a central figure. Both his rejection of 'psychologism' and his critique of 'phenomenalism', to be discussed below, can be seen as part of a larger reaction against the encroachment of materialism or, in today's jargon, naturalism on the sphere of the religious.²⁴

In the context of this paper, one should note that Spencer actually took on board ideas from Hamilton and Mansel, adumbrating their views on the 'unconditioned' or, as he puts it, the 'unknowable', in the first part of the first instalment of his *Synthetic Philosophy* in 1862. His book *First Principles* (Spencer 1886) contains paraphrases and lengthy quotations from both in its chapter IV on "The Relativity of All Knowl-

edge'. Therefore, although the Scottish School was on the way out, an essential element of the doctrines of Hamilton and Mansel remained alive through Spencer's writings. And it is in the guise of Spencer's 'Unknowable' that it was attacked by Bradley in chapter XII of *Appearance and Reality*.

4. MILL AND THE 'GREAT AXIOM': PHENOMENALISM

Collingwood's innovative idea in the paper mentioned above is to see Bradley as addressing this very situation when writing his masterpiece, *Appearance and Reality*, first published in 1893. As he put it,

[...] my suggestion is that Bradley's *Appearance* is in the first instance a polemic against Mansel. (Collingwood 2005, 236)

I think that Collingwood is right to brush aside here the influence of German idealism, Hegel in particular. Bradley may have been disingenuous when he downplayed it,²⁵ but the whole thing is at all events just a red herring: to insist on labels, foreign or not, does not help anyone to understand what is at stake. It is nevertheless *prima facie* difficult to agree with Collingwood's interpretative thesis, since Bradley never refers to Mansel. Collingwood argues, however, that there was no need for Bradley to do this in 1893 (the year of the publication of *Appearance and Reality*), because "everyone [...] knew where the cap fitted" (Collingwood 2005, 236). This reply might look weak, but I think that Collingwood is nevertheless right: not only is it the case that Bradley hardly ever cites his sources in general (so the fact that he keeps mum about Mansel proves nothing), but also, if my above narrative is correct, it is Hamilton and Mansel and their 'great axiom' that are the target of Bradley's criticism, even though it is only Spencer who is explicitly mentioned.²⁶

My main point, however, is that one would also need here to add Mill among Bradley's targets. This might come as a surprise, since, as I pointed out, Mill is known for his critique of Hamilton – moreover, he was equally critical of Spencer for following Hamilton (Mill 1979, 10).²⁷ It might thus appear incongruous at first to put him on the same side of the barrier with Mansel, Hamilton, and Spencer. However, when

one looks at the arguments and the theses actually put forth by these thinkers, instead of the superficial narrative concerning them, one sees that this point is obvious: Mill's critique of Hamilton does not imply a rejection of phenomenalism, he was *the phenomenalist par excellence*. Mill's critique consists in pointing out that there cannot be a conciliation of Reid with Kant, as Hamilton proposes, unless one misunderstands both. But the real target Mill is aiming at, a target just behind Hamilton's shallow syncretism, is Thomas Reid.

The point deserves clarification. For this, let us start with the well-known dualism of 'subject' and 'object' and represent the relation of knowledge as holding between a subject and an object thus:²⁸

(1) S – O

The idea that this relation might be mediated by an epistemological intermediary is symbolized here by the Greek letter Δ :

(2) S – Δ – O

Such intermediaries or 'representatives' were common in modern philosophy, from Descartes' 'idées', to Locke's 'ideas' and Hume's 'sense-impressions' and, under some readings, Kant's 'Vorstellungen', the idea being that the mind is *immediately* aware only of its own modifications, perhaps as they are caused by the object, but not of the object itself. There is of course a lot to be said about the 'subject' side of (1) and (2), which will not be discussed here. A useful historical point of departure is Thomas Reid's forceful critique of the very notion of an epistemological intermediary. Reid famously thought that "to think of any object by a medium, seems to be words without meaning" (Reid 1969, Essay II, ix), in other words: nonsense. Reid thought that Berkeley's idealism or Hume's scepticism were the consequence of the introduction of such intermediaries:

I apprehend, therefore, that if philosophers will maintain, that ideas in the mind are the only immediate objects of thought, they will be forced to grant that they are the *sole* objects of thought, and that it is impossible for men to think of any thing else. Yet, surely Mr. Locke believed that we can think of many things that are not ideas in the mind; but he seems not to have perceived, that the maintaining that

ideas in the mind are the only immediate objects of thought, must necessarily draw this consequence along with it. The consequence, however, was seen by Bishop Berkeley and Mr. Hume, who rather chose to admit the consequence than to give up the principle from which it follows.' (Reid 1969, Essay II, ix)

In other words, one would end up raising the question of the existence of the 'object' side, symbolized here by the question mark:

(3) S – Δ – ?

Reid saw such consequences as a *reductio* of the very idea of epistemological intermediaries. So (3) captures part of Reid's opposition to positions of the type held by Berkeley. Maybe this is not a proper understanding of Berkeley's position, but it seems that this is how it was understood at the time. At all events, my purpose here is not to discuss Berkeley or Reid, but to try and find out what Mill was doing in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, and here the point seems to be simply that Mill sided with Berkeley and against Reid, who was indeed his real or at any rate his ultimate target in his critique of Hamilton. Although the gist of Mill's critique of Hamilton was that the latter could not reconcile Reid with certain key ideas from Kant (mainly the 'thing-in-itself'), it is noticeable that it was not meant to motivate, by the same token, a rejection of the philosophy of Berkeley. Indeed, Mill defined his own 'phenomenalism' in direct reference to Berkeley.²⁹ This can be gathered from a little known review of an edition of Berkeley's complete works in 1871, in which he expressed his agreement with Berkeley's denial of the existence of Matter, or, as he put it:

[Berkeley's] denial of Matter as defined by philosophers; for he always maintained that his own opinion is nearer to the common belief of mankind than the doctrine of philosophers is. Philosophers, he says, consider matter to be one thing, and our sensible impressions, called ideas of sense, another: they believe that what we perceive are only our ideas, while the matter which lies under them and impresses them upon us is the real thing. The vulgar, on the contrary, believe that the things they perceive are the real things, and

do not believe in any hidden thing lying underneath them. And in this I, Berkeley, differ with the philosophers, and agree with the vulgar, for I believe that the things we perceive are the real things, and the only things, except minds, that are real. But then he held with the philosophers, and not with the vulgar, that what we directly perceive are not external objects, but our own ideas; a notion which the generality of mankind never dreamed of. (Mill 1978, 459)

We can see here that Mill understood Berkeley as holding a view along the lines of (3) above. While quoting a passage where Berkeley comes very close to phenomenalism, Mill criticized him only for having misunderstood the nature of the ‘permanent element’ in Δ , linking it to existence in a Divine Mind, as opposed to being merely a ‘potentiality of sensations’:

[Berkeley] had not thoroughly realized the fact, that the permanent element in our perceptions is only a potentiality of sensations not actually felt. He saw indeed, quite clearly, that *to us* the external object is nothing but such a potentiality. “The table I write on,” he says in the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, “I say exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed – meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit does perceive it.” But in itself the object was, in his theory, not merely a present potentiality, but a present actual existence, only its existence was in a mind – in the Divine Mind. (Mill 1978, 460-461)

Of course, by ‘potentiality of sensations’ Mill refers here to the ‘Permanent Possibility of Sensation’ in the above-quoted passage from *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy*, which, incidentally, contains an allusion to Berkeley. Earlier in that book, Mill had already silently placed himself on Berkeley’s side, when writing in a passage that states clearly his adherence to the thesis of the ‘relativity of human knowledge’, that

[Sensations] do not, indeed, accompany or succeed one another at random: they are held together by a law, that is,

they occur in fixed groups, and a fixed order of succession: but we have no evidence of anything which, not being itself a sensation, is a substratum or hidden cause of sensations. The idea of such a substratum is a purely mental creation, to which we have no reason to think that there is any corresponding reality exterior to our minds. Those who hold this opinion are called by the name Idealists, sometimes by that of Sceptics, according to other opinions which they hold. They include the followers of Berkeley and those of Hume. [...] These philosophers maintain the Relativity of our knowledge in the most extreme form in which the doctrine can be understood, since they contend, not merely that all we can possibly know of anything is the manner in which it affects the human faculties, but that there is nothing else to be known; that affections of human or of some other minds are all that we can know to exist. (Mill 1979, 6-7)

With this, one is now in a position to understand the essence of Mill’s critique of Hamilton. On the face of it, it concerns Hamilton’s attempt at marrying Reid’s direct realism with an ontological version of the thesis of the ‘relativity of human knowledge’. As just seen, Mill supported what he himself described as a ‘most extreme form’ of that thesis, according to which there is nothing to be known behind the veil of sensations. But Hamilton held a more Kantian version, according to which there exists a substratum behind phenomena that is absolutely unknowable in itself, since all we know of it is relative to our senses. Mill’s argument is simply that the existence of this ‘unknowable’ is incompatible with Reid’s direct realism. As it turns out, Hamilton claims that we know the object directly only when primary qualities are involved. Nevertheless, this is incompatible with the thesis of the ‘relativity of human knowledge’, unless one trivializes it, as Mill points out:

[Hamilton] affirms without reservation, that certain attributes (extension, figure, & etc.) are known to us as they really exist out of ourselves; and also that all our knowledge of them is relative to us. And these two assertions are only reconcilable, if relativity to us is understood in the altogether trivial sense, that we know them only so far as our

faculties permit. (Mill 1979, 22)

Mill is adamant on this last point:

[Hamilton] certainly believed that he held [the thesis of the ‘relativity of human knowledge’]. But he repudiated it in every sense which makes it other than a barren truism. (Mill 1979, 22)

So much for Hamilton’s attempt at marrying Reid with Kant. One should note, however, that the point of Mill’s critique of Hamilton is that the proper understanding of the thesis of the ‘relativity of human knowledge’ is his own ‘most extreme’ Berkeleian form, not the pseudo-Kantian version peddled by Hamilton or the truism to which he ends up reducing it. Therefore, if we adopt the Berkeleian form, then it is Reid’s direct realism, even in the limited version defended by Hamilton, that must go. I do not know, however, of any direct argument by Mill in support of his ‘most extreme form’ in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy*. He seems only to reason by *reductio*, pointing out inconsistencies in Hamilton.

5. BRADLEY’S CRITIQUE: PHENOMENALISM AS SUBJECTIVE IDEALISM

It is fitting to note here that in the 20th century both Husserl and Russell recognized Berkeley’s immaterialism as an ancestor of their views.³⁰ Indeed, a case can be made that Russell nearly always reasons along the lines of schema (2).³¹ A ‘realist’ such as Russell did share with phenomenalist one key premise, namely that the point of departure must be our sense-data. In other words, they agree on the presence of the epistemological intermediary Δ in the above schemata (2) and (3), but, while a strict phenomenalist will adhere to a version of (3), a Russell would claim – that being the ‘realism’ part, against Mach – that there are objects behind the sense-data – therefore adhering to a version of (2) – and seek a ‘logical construction’ of these objects.

I insisted in the previous section on the affinity with Berkeley simply because it allows us to classify Mill and later phenomenals, such as Russell at one stage, but also some ‘realists’ such as Russell most of the time, on the side of what was then called ‘subjective idealism’, as opposed to ‘objective idealism’. This is an important distinction at work in

Bradley’s days, although I have not been able to find any sustained discussion of it. Berkeley’s denial of the existence of matter on the model of (3) is constitutive of ‘subjective idealism’. At least one strain of the British Idealists, to which Bradley belonged, took its lead from Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, where the expression ‘objective idealism’ occurs for the first time (to describe Plato), in propounding a reverse form of monism for which ‘Reality is one’, as Bradley puts it (Bradley 1930, 460). What this meant for Bradley is that it is the ‘subject’ side of (1) which *disappears*. It is indeed clear that there really is no concept of ‘subject’ of the sort found in the utilitarian-empiricist tradition operative in Bradley’s conceptions. This can be seen from the well-known opening chapters IX and X on the reality of the self, and in the infamous essay ‘My Station and its Duties’ (Bradley 1927, 160-206).³² The clearest statement occurs in *Essays on Truth and Reality*:

The notion of myself as a thing standing over against the world, externally related to it in knowledge, and dividing with it somehow unintelligibly the joint situation or result, must once for all be abandoned. This point of view rests on the ideal construction which we call the soul or the mind, and it assumes this construction to be an absolute fact. [...] if we are to understand knowledge and judgment, we must discard the doctrine of a self which by itself is or could be real. (Bradley 1914, 326-327)

Thus we are left only with the object side of (1), the ‘objective’. But, on the ‘object’ side of (1) ‘Reality’ is not made of matter: it is ‘spirit’, hence the idealism.³³ This train of thought might strike one as odd, but one needs, in the context of this paper, to use it only as a key to interpreting British philosophy in the second half of the 19th century, without, of course, committing oneself to it. As a matter of fact, one need not discuss here ‘objective idealism’; it is only important to notice that, under this categorization, Mill and the phenomenals after him appear definitely on the side of ‘subjective idealism’.

We are finally in a position to understand better the point of Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*. To my mind, Collingwood was the first to see it clearly:

The main drive of Bradley’s argument, then, is directed

against the Oxford form of the Hamiltonian tradition; a tradition descended from Hume through Reid, but by no means uninformed of the work done by continental philosophers whether in Germany or France. But Bradley also attacks another tradition, descended from Hume through Bentham and James Mill: the tradition of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. These two were notoriously antagonistic - that fact had been proclaimed by Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, published in the sixties; but Bradley favours the one no more than the other. [...] Bradley is delivering a frontal attack on this tradition, and concentrating his attack on its right wing (so to say), the more philosophical, conservative, and learned variety of its doctrine, as held by Hamilton and Mansel; while at the same time he engages also the left wing, the more empirical associationist variety as held by Mill and Herbert Spencer. The importance of Bradley's work for the history of English thought lies in the fact that he is attacking all along the line: it is the phenomenalist or subjectivist or psychological philosophy as such that is the object of his polemic. (Collingwood 2005, 238)

As anyone can see from this quotation, the order of battle is simple: the line up in front of Bradley is a coalition formed of the remnants of the Scottish School, Mill, and Spencer. Indeed, one should simply note first that Spencer followed Hamilton and Mansel on the 'unknowable' and, secondly, that Mill did not refute the 'great axiom' of the 'relativity of human knowledge', but actually embraced a strong Berkeleyian version of it. Therefore, *Bradley could strike at the heart of British metaphysics by refuting the 'great axiom'*. This is precisely what he sought to do in Book I of *Appearance and Reality*, arguing that there are not two independent things standing in a relation, namely reality in itself and its appearance or, as Collingwood put it in the passage quoted at the outset, that "There is no such thing as a mere appearance. The real appears; appearances are appearances of reality" (Collingwood 2005, 243).³⁴ However, Bradley's arguments are, as usual, not always convincing. There is no point in listing and analyzing them here, but one should recall, for example, that in the chapter XI on 'Phenomenalism' (Bradley 1930, 106-107), he uses his own critique of the reality of rela-

tions, referring back to his infamous infinite regress argument at chapter III (Bradley 1930, 27-28), an argument which relies, according to Russell, on the antiquated subject-predicate form.³⁵ He also argues that defining something in terms of a series of phenomena cannot capture its 'real unity', as he puts it, appealing to Hegel's now discredited doctrine of the concrete universal.³⁶ However, some of his arguments hit home. In a passage taken from the following chapter, on 'Things in Themselves', he writes:

We have got this reality on one side and our appearances on the other, and we are naturally to inquire about their connexion. Are they related, the one to the other or not? If they are related, and if in any way the appearances are made the adjectives of reality, then the Thing has become qualified by them. It is qualified, but on what principle? That is what we do not know. [...] We must therefore deny any relation of our appearances to the Thing. But if so, other troubles vex us. Either our Thing has qualities, or it has not. If it has them, then within itself the same puzzles break out which we intended to leave behind – to make prey of phenomena and to rest contented with *their* ruin. So we must correct ourselves and assert that the Thing is unqualified. But, if so, we are destroyed with no less certainty. For a Thing without qualities is clearly not real. It is mere Being, or mere Nothing, according as you take it simply for what it is, or consider also that which it *means* to be. Such an abstraction is palpably of no use to us. (Bradley 1930, 112)

In relation to (2), one can see that part of the argument here consists in raising doubts concerning the relation that the representative Δ might have to the object O, since we are by definition not to have any direct access to the object O. The very same point was made by Bradley's nemesis at Oxford, Cook Wilson, in a passage from *Statement and Inference* that summarizes his objections to theories that postulate an intermediary Δ :

We want to explain knowing an object and we explain it solely in terms of the object known, and that by giving the mind not the object but some idea of it which is said to

be like it—an image (however the fact may be disguised). The chief fallacy of this is not so much the impossibility of knowing such an image is like the object, or that there is any object at all, but that it assumes the very thing it is intended to explain. The image itself has to be apprehended and the difficulty is only repeated. (Cook Wilson 2002, 803)

Since the role of Bradley in the refutation of psychologism in Britain was mentioned earlier, it is worth making explicit the link between this critique of phenomenalism and the refutation of psychologism. Collingwood made the point clearly enough to be quoted without comment:

The fundamental doctrine of phenomenalism in every form is that the world as we know it consists not of realities but of appearances, and that these appearances or phenomena are relative to the faculties of the human mind. Thus the mind is a reality, qualified by the appearances: they are grounded in it, and reveal its nature by the way in which they appear. For Hamilton, they reveal the nature of human faculties; for Mill, they display the necessary laws of the association of ideas. (Collingwood 2005, 240)

It is thus by destroying this underlying associationist doctrine that Bradley was able to give what seemed for generations to be a fatal blow to psychologism. Of course, Bradley's critique is multifaceted and this is only one aspect of it. Some of his other critiques are less felicitous, for example, when he criticized the empiricist definition of universals in terms of abstraction, and gets embroiled with Hegel's doctrine of the concrete universal.³⁷ So Bradley's critique need not appear convincing to us; nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, the fact remains that it was very influential in its days.

6. BRADLEY'S LEGACY AND THE RISE OF 'REALIST' SCHOOLS

Once we have granted that Bradley's target in *Appearance and Reality* was after all nothing but the 'great axiom' of the 'relativity of human knowledge', we are in a position to reassess his place in the history of British philosophy. (With the proviso that the foregoing is not meant as an exhaustive reading of the passages of *Appearance and Reality* referred

to; nor is it meant to make his views *look* acceptable: it is merely an attempt at understanding which position it is that he is truly arguing against.) One may thus go back to the earlier narrative of the history of British philosophy from the point of view of the theory of knowledge.

One first needs to see that, as in (Fig. 2), the realist reaction at the turn of the last century had three centres, not one:

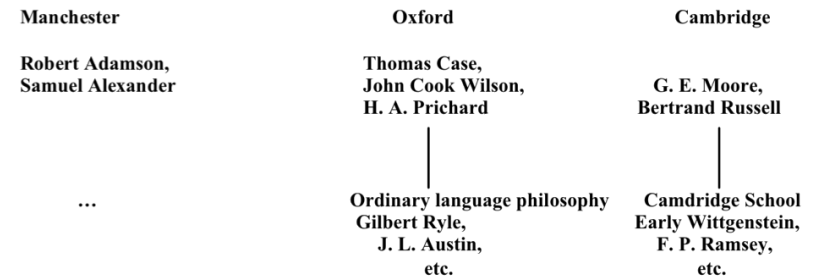


Figure 2.

Along with the official story of Moore and Russell in Cambridge, one finds the forgotten Manchester school of Robert Adamson and Samuel Alexander, who was a key player in British philosophy during the early decades of the 20th century, but who is by now mainly remembered by analytic philosophers because he sent a young Austrian engineer to study with Russell. In addition, there is also the Oxford Realist school whose true founder is John Cook Wilson, who stands, along with his epigone Prichard, at the origin of this second independent source of British analytic philosophy, 'ordinary language philosophy' or 'Oxford philosophy'. Indeed, Cook Wilson's ideas about knowledge not being, in McDowell's jargon, a 'hybrid' state are still at work today in the works of a variety of philosophers such as Jonathan Dancy, John McDowell, Charles Travis, and Timothy Williamson.³⁸

My point here is that, although there are no direct links between their philosophies, Russell should be seen as the heir to his own godfather, Mill, while the Oxford Realist School should be seen as having replaced the Scottish School. One can thus supplement (Fig. 1) with

(Fig. 3):

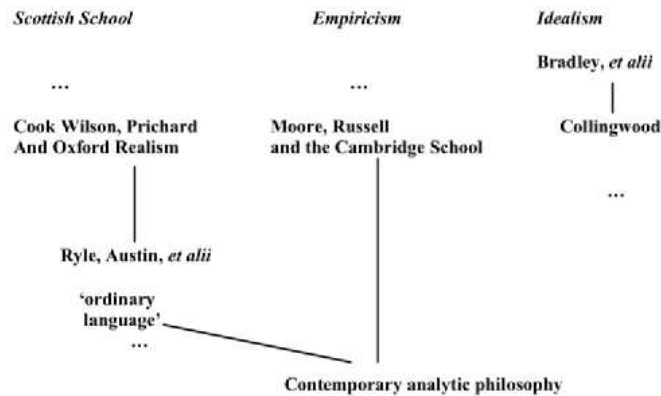


Figure 3.

Members of the Oxford Realist School first defended a form of direct realism against idealism, but later against Russell (at least in his phenomenalist phase), with the common denominator and target of criticism being the commitment, shared by Russell and certain of the idealists, to an underlying *subjective idealism*. Indeed, as idealism fades away, after 40-50 years of existence, the order of battle changes: it is no longer Bradley against the Scottish School, Mill and Spencer, but Oxford against Cambridge: Prichard and Austin against the phenomenism of Russell, Ayer, and Price.³⁹ Same battle, different protagonists. One excellent proof of this is H. A. Prichard's short 1906 paper 'Appearances and Reality', which argues, like Bradley did, against the view that:

[...] we know only 'phenomena' or 'appearances', certain elements within our own minds; reality proper is beyond the mind and is not known at all. This view sometimes, as in Kant, tries to treat the appearances as being objects in space and time. We know them but not the thing in itself. (Prichard 1906, 223)

To illustrate briefly this last but important point, I shall give three examples. The first one concerns the fact that the same arguments against phenomenalism are offered by both the idealists and the Oxford Realists. From the following quotations, one can see that Austin launches against Ayer in *Sense and Sensibilia* the same argument that Bradley's epigone, Alfred Taylor – the target of Moore's early realist papers – offered against the phenomenals of his own day:

But the very possibility of distinguishing such hallucinatory presentations from others as illusory, is enough to prove that this cannot be true of the whole physical order. It is precisely because physical existence in general is something more than a collective hallucination, that we are able in Psychology to recognize the occurrence of such hallucinations. [...] you are never justified in dismissing an apparent fact of the physical order as mere presentation without any further reality behind it. (Taylor 1904, 208)

Next, it is important to remember that talk of deception only *makes sense* against a background of general non-deception. (You can't fool all the people all the time.) It must be possible to recognize a case of deception by checking the odd case against more normal ones. If I say, 'Our petrol-gauge sometimes deceives us', I am understood: though usually what it indicates squares with what we have in the tank, sometimes it doesn't. (Austin 1962, 11-12)

The argument is simply that talk of our senses deceiving us presupposes, if it makes any sense at all, that they sometimes don't. As Austin puts it: 'you can't fool all the people all the time'. So one cannot generalize the argument from illusion to the whole of the deliverances of our senses, as the phenomenalist does. (The *locus classicus* of this move is chapter 1 of Ayer's *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* (Ayer 1940), one of Austin's targets.)

Secondly, the following pair of quotations shows an unexpected parallel between Prichard and Collingwood, on the nonsensicality of ascribing to sense-data adjectives that properly apply to physical objects:

By making the appearance into a new object, it admits of no distinction between what it is and what it is for perception.

The new statement, however, is obviously false. Not only is the assertion ‘the look of the moon is not as large as the look of the sun’ not the equivalent of ‘the moon looks as large as the sun’ but it is not sense. (Prichard 1906, 223)

It is equally false to say that we have an immediately-presented crooked sense-datum which represents a straight stick in water. What we really see is not a crooked appearance (as if that could mean anything) but a straight-stick-in-water. (Collingwood 1924, 71)

The third and final point might be even more surprising. As is well known, Wilfrid Sellars’ *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Sellars 1997) played, along with Austin’s *Sense and Sensibilia*, a key role in the final demise of phenomenalism in the middle of the 20th century. As it turns out, Oxford Realism lurks in the background, since in his autobiography, Sellars pointed out that his thinking on these issues derived from his having heard Prichard at Oxford in the 1930s (Sellars 1975, 284). They share a key argument, which is, I think much better laid out in Sellars’ parable of John in the tie shop at § 14-15 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* than it is in chapter 6 of Austin’s *Sense and Sensibilia*. The argument is to the effect that the phenomenalist ‘looks’-talk, which expresses how things merely appear, without further commitment to how things actually are, is not autonomous but parasitic on objective ‘is’-talk. Part of Sellars’ argument here was anticipated in a little-known 1924 paper by Collingwood, ‘Sensation and Thought’, if not put as well or as clearly as Sellars did:

If we show a stick obliquely inserted in water to a person unaccustomed to such puzzles and ask him whether it is bent or straight, he will naturally give one of the three answers. (a) He may say “It is bent”. (b) He may say “It looks bent”. (c) He may say “It is straight”. In the first case he is being “deceived by the appearances”; in the second, he is on his guard not to be so deceived – realizing by our manner, perhaps, that there is “a catch somewhere” – and in the third he is giving the correct answer. In no case would he naturally reply “it looks bent but it is straight”, unless he were trying to convince himself or to warn somebody else

of the danger of making a certain mistake, namely, the mistake of thinking the stick is really crooked. The case is precisely parallel to asking a soldier accustomed to the English climate to judge ranges in South Africa. Here again, there are three natural answers: (a) it is two hundred yards; (b) it looks like two hundred yards; it is five hundred yards; according as he is (a) merely applying his English standards; (b) on his guard against doing so; (c) applying a South African standard. If he said: “it is five hundred yards but it only looks two”, this would mean that he was warning himself or someone else not to judge the distance by English standards: that is, he was allowing for the possibility of two standards, a South African standard and an English standard. Now the empiricists whom I am venturing to criticize would say, if they admitted the parallelism of the case that the two hundred yards was to the soldier a pure sense-datum, but that he interpreted this sense-datum either wrongly, as indicating that the distance was what it appeared to be, or rightly, as indicating a South African five hundred. (Collingwood 1924, 66-67)

The parallel is somewhat difficult to see; it involves Sellars’ key point that ‘looks’-talk, as when we say of a straight stick plunged in water that ‘it looks bent’, as opposed to that ‘it is bent’, does not constitute an *endorsement*; as Collingwood puts it, one is here ‘on one’s guard’. Both Collingwood, and Sellars after him, were making this point in the midst of arguing against the idea that there could be a ‘pure sense datum’, not already part of an inferential process, i.e., against the ‘myth of the given’.⁴⁰

These three examples all support the view that idealists and direct realists shared some arguments against phenomenalism. Of course, there is no denying the differences between these two camps, the point here is simply to gain a vantage point from which they can be seen as sharing a common enemy. In the history of British debates in the theory of knowledge, if one were to bunch phenomenologists and direct realists, as early analytic philosophers breaking away from the past and therefore against the idealists, as we are invited to do by the false picture of the ‘revolution in philosophy’, one would not understand what was

truly at stake.⁴¹

In this paper, I have tried to sketch the broad outline of the central debates in British theory of knowledge from the 1850s onwards, with the key role played by Hamilton's 'great axiom' and Mill's critique of it, followed by Bradley's attack on the common core of Hamilton's 'great axiom' and Mill's phenomenalism (sections 3-5). The historical importance of this Bradley's critique, which, as we also saw, was underlying his attack on psychologism (section 2), is undeniable. But I have also tried to show, taking my lead from some remarks by Collingwood, that the 'realist' reaction at the turn of the century, of which the so-called 'revolution' initiated by Moore and Russell is only part, was in part an attack on a 'subjective idealism' which was not Bradley's, but rather closer to the phenomenalism of Mill. In that sense, early 20th century realists were rather in the same camp as Bradley and his epigones. The best proof of it is that, as I have just shown (this section), they actually used the same arguments against what is easily misunderstood as being different targets. These facts should force us to reconsider our understanding of British philosophy and the time of the birth of analytic philosophy, i.e. to shed the rhetoric of 'revolution' and improve our *Problemsgeschichte*.⁴²

Notes

¹ See (Gewirth 1957) for a similar complaint.

² Etymologically speaking, the name 'analytic philosophy' comes from the rejection of this thesis by Russell, as one can see from the opening sentences of (Russell 1992).

³ For example, on the notion of 'analysis', see (Lapointe 2008). See also (Lapointe forthcoming).

⁴ I am referring, of course, to the research programme initiated by the 'Manchester School', i.e. the writings of Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith.

⁵ To list three representative papers: (Künne 1991), (van der Schaar 1996), (Bell 1999).

⁶ It is perhaps not advisable to provide a full list here, but (Allard 2005) and (D'Oro 2002) are noteworthy.

⁷ I owe the idea that perception and the theory of knowledge are key to developments in British philosophy at the turn of the last century to James Bradley. This is not idiosyncratic at all, but actually confirmed when one looks at the matter closely, for example by R. G. Collingwood himself, in the paper discussed here, but also Bradley's essay 'Our Knowledge of the External World', reprinted in (Bradley 1914, 159-191) or James Ward's *Psychological Principles* (Ward 1918, chap. II, § 3).

⁸ In essence, my claim is that the premise behind almost all of Russell's thinking in

the theory of knowledge is schema (2), below. This is not to say that it is right to look at Russell's ideas as *merely* in continuity with the British empiricist tradition, as A. J. Ayer and David Pears proposed to do in, respectively, (Ayer 1972) and (Pears 1967). But this point cannot be discussed here. For a more nuanced presentation of Russell, arguing for the centrality of schema (2), below, in his thinking, see (Marion 2009a).

⁹ I found only one discussion of Collingwood's paper in the secondary literature, by Guy Stock (Stock 1998), whose discussion puts the emphasis elsewhere.

¹⁰ I am aware that in doing so I do considerable injustice to the role of T. H. Green, about whom I keep silent here. See, e.g., (Allard 2005, chap. 1) for a wider perspective that shows the role of Green.

¹¹ As mentioned, this point was already made in (Wollheim 1956, 13f.).

¹² Martin Kusch's *Psychologism* (Kusch 1995), which remains an otherwise excellent, thorough study, betrays this bias.

¹³ With a second edition, (Mansel 1860).

¹⁴ I am not denying, of course, that there were forms of 'psychologism' already in the first half of the 19th century on the Continent, e.g., with Victor Cousin, Maine de Biran or the *ideologues* in France and in some neo-Kantian schools in Germany, e.g., with Beneke, Fries, or Herbart.

¹⁵ It might come as a greater surprise that Mansel cites French philosophers, i.e., Joseph Duval-Jouve and Victor Cousin, as sources for his thesis that "Logic is subordinate to Psychology" (Mansel 1860, 19).

¹⁶ Also relevant here are the introduction and chapter I of Book I.

¹⁷ The influence of Lotze on Bradley's anti-psychologism is discussed further in (Marion 2009b).

¹⁸ The influence on Husserl and on Frege is, however, already documented: on Lotze and Husserl, see (Hauser 2003), while Gottfried Gabriel has written numerous papers on the influence on Frege, starting with (Gabriel 1986).

¹⁹ For a detailed study of these aspects of Bradley's critique of psychologism, see (Marion 2009b).

²⁰ This thesis actually occurs earlier in the *System of Logic* (Mill 1973, 58), but (Mill 1979, 183) is the *locus classicus*.

²¹ Collingwood quotes this line in (Collingwood 2005, 235-236), presenting it as a critique of Mansel's *Bampton Lectures*. However, in that passage Bradley mentions Spencer, not Mansel. Nevertheless, Collingwood is not far off the mark, since Spencer took his views on the 'unknowable' from Hamilton and Mansel.

²² Incidentally, Kant himself was for a long time understood in such phenomenalist terms, e.g., by H. A. Prichard (Prichard 1909). For a critique, see chapter 1 in (Bird 1962).

²³ On Oxford Realism, see (Marion 2000) and (Marion 2002).

²⁴ This point is also argued for, with more details, in (Allard 2005, chap. 1).

²⁵ When he wrote in the preface to the first edition of *The Principles of Logic*: "I never could have called myself an Hegelian [...] As for the "Hegelian School" which exists in our reviews, I know no one who has met with it anywhere else" (Bradley 1928, x).

²⁶ As David Sullivan pointed out to me, this might serve as an example of the method in the history of ideas pioneered by Collingwood, Quentin Skinner and the Cambridge School. It is only through a reconstruction of its context that Bradley's critique (and its target) can be properly understood, as would be the case if one wanted to explain a move

in a game of chess through a reconstruction of its context. See (Skinner 2001) for a presentation that also shows the Collingwoodian roots of the method.

²⁷ For Spencer's review of Mill's book, see (Spencer 1868).

²⁸ The proposed symbolisation is a variant of that introduced a long time ago by Russell (Russell 1984, 38).

²⁹ Mill's affinity with Berkeley is hardly surprising if one reasons historically: indeed, focus on Hume really came at the time of Mill's death with T. H. Green's criticisms in the preface to his 1874 edition of Hume's *Treatise* (Green 1885) and later, with the posthumous *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Green 1883). Furthermore, Mill was not inclined to side with Hume for the simple reason that, as a liberal, he had a profound dislike of Hume's scepticism, which he saw as underlying Hume's own conservative political views. On these points, see (Hamilton 1998, 141).

³⁰ For Husserl, see his preface to the English translation of *Ideen I*, where Husserl dissociates Berkeley (and Hume!) from Locke and presents them as precursors to his 'transcendental idealism' because, we are told, they have already advanced "beyond psychological subjectivity" (Husserl 1931, 22). On Husserl's 'idealism' and realism in British philosophy, see (Marion 2003). As for Russell, see, e.g., his *Outline of Philosophy*, where he claims that "our metaphysics will be essentially that of Berkeley" (Russell 1927, 291), after even agreeing with Berkeley's denial of the existence of matter (Russell 1927, 246). Of course, both comments by Husserl and by Russell need to be contextualized, but they cannot be left unaccounted for.

³¹ See (Marion 2009a).

³² Especially at (Bradley 1927, 166-167), where Bradley argues that, taken in abstraction from the social organism to which he belongs, i.e., the "the world of relations in which he was born and bred", an Englishman is "some I know not what residuum, which never has existed by itself, and does not so exist".

³³ Cf. the last sentence of *Appearance and Reality*: "Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and, the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real" (Bradley 1930, 489). Again, the influence of Lotze is to be felt here.

³⁴ For an introduction to Bradley's metaphysics, see (Mander 1994).

³⁵ For example, at (Russell 1900, 15) or (Russell 1903, § 99)

³⁶ On the notion of 'Concrete universal', see (Mander 2000), (Stern 2007) and (Marion 2009b).

³⁷ See (Marion 2009b).

³⁸ Again, see (Marion 2000) and (Marion 2002), but also (Williamson 2004, 147n.).

³⁹ Of course, (Fig. 3) is not 'exact': for example, Moore's rediscovery of 'common sense' would normally put him also – *horresco referens* – on the Oxford side: after all Austin owes a lot to him, not just to Cook Wilson. One could also point out that Russell was only briefly a phenomenalist. Nevertheless, one could argue that there is no change in the underlying premises of the scientific realism that he later espoused: as pointed out earlier, Russell more or less always worked along the lines of schema (2), above. On this, see (Marion 2009a).

⁴⁰ This parallel suggests that one might profitably look at the British Idealists as fore-runners to Brandom's 'inferentialism', although it is not clear at first what could be gained from this approach, over and above a better understanding of the Idealists.

⁴¹ The point here is not a suggestion that one should share any idealist view, but simply that one should recognize the idealists, not as some bizarre thinkers influenced by alien

ideas, who failed to assert anything and produced instead mere nonsense, but as *bona fide* philosophers, who asserted what are perhaps just falsehoods. As the false image of the 'revolution in philosophy' explodes, perhaps we should begin to give some of these forgotten figures the respect they deserve.

⁴² I would like to thank Sandra Lapointe, Andrew Spear and David Sullivan for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

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