In the second half of the nineteenth century early modern and modern philosophy became a more established part of the philosophy curriculum in Britain, and Hegel became influential, especially in Oxford and Scotland. T.H. Green (1836-82) and F.H. Bradley (1846-1924) were the most influential of the British idealists. We said that Sidgwick helped inaugurate analytical philosophy and especially analytical ethics. This analytical or rationalist movement was especially strong at Cambridge with Sidgwick, Russell, Moore, and Broad, among others. The Cambridge emphasis on rational analysis contrasted with the more abstruse and difficult writings of the British idealists at Oxford. But the British idealists, especially Green, conveyed a moral seriousness that won many undergraduate admirers. C.D. Broad expressed a characteristic Cambridge slant on the comparison between Sidgwick’s rationalism and Oxford idealism, lamenting the comparative influence of Green and Sidgwick.

The result [of Sidgwick’s philosophical care and thoroughness] is that Sidgwick probably has far less influence at present than he ought to have, and less than many writers, such as Bradley, who were as superior to him in literary style as he was to them in ethical and philosophical acumen. Even a thoroughly second-rate thinker, like T.H. Green, by diffusing a grateful and comforting aroma of ethical ‘uplift,’ has probably made far more undergraduates into prigs than Sidgwick will ever make into philosophers.¹

Broad would no doubt be gratified to witness the change in comparative philosophical fortunes of Sidgwick and idealists, such as Green.

This comment is an extreme expression of the view that Sidgwick himself takes when he dismisses as a candidate method of ethics doctrines of perfection and self-realization as being too indefinite to be part of a science of ethics (91-92). This sweeping dismissal includes the doctrines of Green and Bradley, as well as the Greek eudaimonists. It must be admitted that the writings of the British idealists were complex and sometimes obscure. But it doesn’t follow that they were unimportant or not worth taking seriously. Green sees his own views as combining the best elements of the ancient and modern traditions, especially the views of Aristotle, Butler, and Kant. Even if Aristotle, Butler, and Kant do not meet Sidgwick’s standards for definiteness, their contributions to the history of ethics are beyond dispute. If Green aspires to synthesize and articulate their commitments, his claims deserve our attention.

Green and Bradley have significant differences in substance, methods, and style. For instance, though both are influenced by Hegel in some ways, Green is usually regarded as

more Kantian than Hegelian and Bradley is usually viewed as more Hegelian than Kantian. Bradley is more polemical than Green, and Green is more interested in sympathetic engagement with the history of ethics than Bradley. Despite these differences, they share some important philosophical commitments.

1. Both reject empiricism and embrace idealist metaphysical and epistemological claims.
2. Though their ethical views sometimes reflect idealist principles, often their ethical claims can be understood and assessed independently of idealist metaphysics and epistemology.
3. Both reject incompatibilism about responsibility and determinism.
4. Both are critics of hedonism, both psychological and evaluative.
5. Both endorse a perfectionist ethics of self-realization.
6. Both reject the dualism of practical reason, arguing that proper self-realization requires a concern for others.
7. Both contrast their perfectionism with utilitarianism.

Though Bradley is often more colorful than Green, Green is the more systematic and subtle philosopher. We will start with Green and focus on him and then look briefly at one influential aspect of Bradley’s view.

GREEN

Green’s main philosophical work is the Prolegomena to Ethics, which was published posthumously in 1883.² That work critiques empiricism and its ethical expression in hedonistic utilitarianism and defends a form of perfectionism that aims to synthesize the best elements in ancient and modern traditions in ethics. Green paves the way for his own form of perfectionism by criticizing various naturalistic strands in ethics. After a general attack on empiricist metaphysics and epistemology, he criticizes forms of ethical naturalism that attempt to ground morality in a science of desire and pleasure. In particular, he targets those in the utilitarian tradition who defend hedonism. Green rejects the hedonist conception of motivation, arguing that moral agents have capacities for practical reason that allow them to distinguish between the intensity and authority of their desires, to deliberate about their desires, and to regulate their action in accordance with their deliberations. Agents needn’t act on their strongest desires; they can and should act on the basis of a judgment about what it is best for them to do. This, Green claims, is to act on a conception of one’s own overall good. In

²Much of Green’s influence on his contemporaries is to be attributed to his teaching, his lectures, and his political activities. He published a fairly small number of articles, reviews, and pamphlets during his lifetime. His principal publications during his lifetime were his influential critical commentary on Hume and British empiricism, “Introductions to Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature,” published in 1874, as part of the edition of Hume’s works edited by Green and T.H. Grose, and his “Lecture on Liberal Legislation and the Freedom of Contract,” published in 1881. Green’s other main philosophical works were published posthumously. These include his essay “On the Different Senses of ‘Freedom’ as Applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man,” his lectures on Kant, the Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, and the Prolegomena to Ethics. The Prolegomena was substantially completed prior to Green’s death, except for 20-30 pages that he had hoped to add. At Green’s instructions, A.C. Bradley oversaw the Prolegomena’s publication with the Clarendon Press in 1883. Green’s philosophical writings are collected in the Collected Works of T.H. Green, 5 vols., ed. P. Nicholson (London: Thoemmes Press, 1997).
so doing, Green aligns himself with the Greek eudaimonist tradition, which he interprets in terms of self-realization. Because Green derives the demand for self-realization from an understanding of agency itself, he regards its demands as categorical, rather than hypothetical, imperatives. Self-realization for Green requires self-consciousness, which requires proper cognizance of others. In this way, he agrees with those Greeks, such as Aristotle, who claim that the proper conception of the agent's own good requires a concern with the good of others, especially the common good. However, Green thinks that the Greeks had too narrow a conception of the common good. It is only with Christianity and enlightenment philosophical views, especially Kantian and utilitarian traditions in ethics, Green thinks, that we have recognition of the universal scope of the common good. This leads Green to claim that full self-realization can take place only when each rational agent regards all other rational agents as ends in themselves on whom his own happiness depends. In such a state, there can be no conflict or competition among the interests of different rational agents. The achievement of this non-competitive common good constitutes, for Green, a distinctive and distinctively valuable form of freedom. Like Hegel, Green thinks that moral progress consists in the gradual recognition and advancement of this sort of freedom, which for Green requires the progressive realization of the common good. Moreover, in combining these disparate traditions, Green aims to reconstruct the essential elements of moral progress within the Western tradition. This style of argument makes for interesting perspectives on a variety of influential figures in the history of ethics and a systematic proposal that deserves anyone's serious consideration.

IDEALIST METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The ethical argument of Books II-IV is largely, though not completely, independent of the details of Green's idealist metaphysics and epistemology. Consequently, we will not focus on Book I. We might identify four main metaphysical and epistemological claims Green wants to defend there.

1. Green wants to reject the commonsense view, inherited from the empiricists, that knowledge can be analyzed into two separable components -- the deliverances of the senses and the operations of the understanding -- in which what is given by nature is real and the contributions of the understanding are not (§§9-10, 20, 70). By contrast, Green wants to argue, there is no such thing as deliverances of the senses that do not reflect operation of the understanding. Even the simplest experience, he thinks, presupposes relations to other elements of a self-conscious mind.

2. The attack on empiricism and atomism is supposed to support the idealist claim that in some sense nature is the product of the understanding (§20). Green's attack on empiricism is clearly indebted to Kant's claims in the Critique of Pure Reason, especially Kant's account of the synthetic unity of apperception in the Transcendental Analytic. But, in defending idealism, Green argues that Kant did not carry his idealist principles to their logical conclusion (§41); he rejects the Kantian dualism of appearances and things-in-themselves (§§11, 30-41).

3. In order for the idealist to distinguish between appearance and reality, it is necessary to posit an "eternal" and "unalterable" system of relations in a self-conscious corporate agent that includes the finite systems of relations contained in the self-conscious minds of individual agents (§§13, 26, 69).

4. Much of the first book of the Prolegomena is concerned with the role of self-consciousness in the possibility of apparently discrete episodes of experience. But Green is
also concerned with the role of self-consciousness in knowledge. Knowledge requires more than acting on appearances; it involves assenting to true appearances for good reasons. This requires the ability to distance oneself from appearances and assess the evidence for appearances, especially with other elements of consciousness. This sort of epistemic responsibility requires self-consciousness (cf. §§84, 120, 125).

RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WILL

In Book II Green picks up this theme about the role of self-consciousness in epistemic responsibility and explicitly makes the parallel argument about the role of self-consciousness in practical responsibility and moral personality. In chapter 1 he denies that determinism is a threat to moral responsibility; responsibility presupposes self-consciousness, not indeterminism. In chapter 2 he explains the role of desire, intellect, and will in responsible action.

Responsibility neither is threatened by determinism nor requires indeterminism; it requires self-consciousness (§§87, 90, 106, 109-110). Moral responsibility requires capacities for practical deliberation, and practical deliberation requires self-consciousness. Non-responsible agents, such as brutes and small children, appear to act on their strongest desires or, if they deliberate, to deliberate only about the instrumental means to the satisfaction of their desires (§§86, 92, 96, 122, 125). By contrast, responsible agents must be able to distinguish between the intensity and authority of their desires, to deliberate about the appropriateness of their desires and aims, and to regulate their actions in accord with these deliberations (§§92, 96, 103, 107, 220). Here, Green shows the influence of Butler, Reid, and Kant. This requires one to be able to distinguish oneself from particular desires and impulses -- to distance oneself from them -- and to be able to frame the question about what it would be best for one on the whole to do (§§85-86).

Green thinks that the process of forming and acting on a conception of what it is best for me on the whole to do is for me to form and act from a conception of my own overall good (§§91-92, 96, 128).

A man, we will suppose, is acted on at once by an impulse to revenge an affront, by a bodily want, by a call of duty, and by fear of certain results incidental to his avenging the affront or obeying the call of duty. We will suppose further that each passion ... suggests a different line of action. So long as he is undecided how to act, all are, in a way, external to him. He presents them to himself as influences by which he is consciously affected but which are not he, and with none of which he yet identifies himself .... So long as this state of things continues, no moral effect ensues. It ensues when the man's relation to these influences is altered by his identifying himself with one of them, by his taking the object of one of the tendencies as for the time his good. This is to will, and is in itself moral action ... [§146].

Presumably, adopting something as one's end in this way is not sufficient for morally good action, but rather for morally assessable action.

Green considers the apparent threat to responsibility resulting from the claim that agents necessarily act on their strongest desires (§§103-106, 139-42). He thinks that the threat is specious, because it rests on an ambiguity. The intensity of some desires is stronger than others; their force is stronger. The action of non-responsible animals is just the vector sum of these forces; they do act on their strongest desires, in this sense. But responsible
agents, who can distinguish between the strength or intensity of desire and its authority and act on these judgments, need not act on their strongest desire. Green associates regulation of one’s action by such deliberations with strength of character and claims that strength of character can overcome strength of desire. But strength of character, Green thinks, is no threat to responsibility; rather, it’s a precondition of it. It’s only by failing to distinguish these two different kinds of strength, he thinks, that one could see a threat to responsibility here.

Another way to put Green’s point is this. The claim that one must act according to one’s strongest desire either (a) associates strength of desire with its felt intensity or (b) associates it with whatever desires move one to act after due deliberation. On the (a)-reading, the alleged necessity of acting on one’s strongest desires would threaten responsibility but is false; whereas, on the (b)-reading, the alleged necessity is perhaps true, but no threat to responsibility.

We might find this account of moral personality and responsibility attractive. But we might wonder why Green assumes that in acting on some conception of an overall good I am thereby acting on a conception of my own good. Green makes the same connection in an earlier passage.

By an instinctive action we mean one not determined by a conception, on the part of the agent, of any good to be gained or evil to be avoided by the action. It is superfluous to add, good to himself, for anything conceived of as good in such a way that the agent acts for the sake of it, must be conceived as his own good, though he may conceive it as his own good only on account of his interest in others, and in spite of any suffering on his own part incidental to its attainment [§92].

Doesn’t this confuse the ownership of the conception of the good (whose conception it is) with its content (whether it is a conception of my good or simply of what is good)? It’s like the ambiguity, which we noticed earlier, in talking about an individual’s interests, where we might refer to that which interests her or what is in her interest. It would appear to be a similar mistake to assume that everything that interests an agent must be in her own self-interest.

Green may think that the transition from ownership to content is not illicit. He may think that when one adopts an end as good and structures his plans, emotions, and desires around it that one thereby makes that end one’s own and makes it part of one’s personal good such that the value of the end and one’s success in achieving it determine in part the quality of one’s life. If I exercise my will by adopting the end of being a parent, then the constitutive aims of being a good parent, including the success of my children, become part of my good such that the well-being of my children directly affects my own happiness or personal good.

Are there any limits to this strategy for colonizing the good of others? At the very least, mere adoption of an end seems insufficient. One needs to be sufficiently invested in good ends for their achievement to be good for you. It seems one needs some definite history of planning around and commitment to an end to incorporate it into one’s own good.

AGAINST HEDONISM

Green develops his ideas about the personal good further in Book III. There he both criticizes Mill’s conception of happiness and develops his own perfectionist claims. Hedonism can be a psychological doctrine and an evaluative doctrine about the personal good. Bentham arguably embraced both psychological and evaluative doctrines. Sidgwick thinks that Mill also combines both doctrines, though we disputed this. Mill is not a psychological hedonist,
and he is best interpreted as a perfectionist, rather than a hedonist, about the personal good. Sidgwick clearly distinguishes the two forms of hedonism, rejecting psychological hedonism for Butlerian reasons, and defending evaluative hedonism. Green seems to think that the two forms of hedonism are connected. He thinks that Mill’s conception of happiness, especially his higher pleasures doctrine, is fundamentally anti-hedonist but he thinks Mill fails to see this because he tacitly assumes psychological hedonism. Since Sidgwick explicitly accepts evaluative hedonism while rejecting psychological hedonism, Green must argue differently against Sidgwick. Green’s view seems to be that once we strip evaluative hedonism of spurious psychological hedonist support we will see that there is little to recommend the hedonist claim that the only thing worth wanting is agreeable consciousness.

Green agrees with Butler that psychological egoism (hedonism) is implausible but that people mistakenly accept it because they mistake the pleasure that can be expected to attend the satisfaction of desires for the object of desire. Because the pleasure is consequential on the satisfaction of desire, the object of desire cannot be that pleasure. This Butlerian point is relevant, Green thinks, to Mill’s alleged evaluative hedonism (§§162-69). Green notes that in Mill’s higher pleasures doctrine and in the proof that Mill seems to assign intrinsic value to what we called objective pleasures, that is, to activities and pursuits, rather than mental states or sensations. Green thinks that these claims about the superior value of such activities are anti-hedonistic, but he thinks that Mill fails to see this only because he focuses on the (subjective) pleasure that is expected from engaging in such activities. But this confuses, Green thinks, what we value and a by-product of what we value.

As we saw in discussing Mill, Green focuses on Mill’s explanation of the preferences of competent judges for modes of existence that employ their higher faculties. Higher pleasures are those things (e.g. activities) that a competent judge would prefer, even if they produced less pleasure in her than the lower "pleasures" would (ii 5). But why should competent judges prefer activities that they often find less pleasurable unless they believe that these activities are more valuable? Mill explains the fact that competent judges prefer activities that exercise their rational capacities by appeal to their sense of dignity.

We may give what explanation we please of this unwillingness [on the part of a competent judge ever to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence] ... but its most appropriate appellation is a sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or other, and in some, though by no means in exact, proportion to their higher faculties ... [ii 6].

Green thinks that the dignity passage undermines hedonism (§164-66, 171). In claiming that it is the dignity of a life in which the higher capacities are exercised and the competent judge’s sense of her own dignity that explains her preference for those activities, Mill implies that her preferences reflect judgments about the value that these activities have independently of their being the object of desire or the source of pleasure. We take pleasure in these activities because they are valuable; they are not valuable, because they are pleasurable.

Green is perhaps right to see Mill’s higher pleasures doctrine as requiring anti-hedonistic commitments. It is perhaps unfortunate that although Green claims to find the doctrine of higher pleasures uplifting and acknowledges a considerable debt to Mill (§162), he fails to do justice to significant similarities between Mill’s higher pleasures doctrine and his own perfectionist theory of the good.
Green not only criticizes the evaluative hedonism he finds in Mill; he also rejects evaluative hedonism outright. One argument he makes is that evaluative hedonism is actually inconsistent with psychological hedonism. Evaluative hedonism says that our ultimate aim ought to be to maximize net pleasure or to seek the largest sum of pleasures, whereas psychological hedonism claims that pleasurable experience is the ultimate object of desire. But a sum of pleasures is not itself a pleasure, and so, according to psychological hedonism, we could not act on the requirements of evaluative hedonism (§221). This is a problem for someone who combines both evaluative and psychological hedonisms. However, this is not a problem for the sort of evaluative hedonist, such as Sidgwick, who eschews psychological hedonism (§222; cf. §§334, 351). Green must offer some other argument against the person who thinks a self-conscious agent would identify his personal good with pleasure.

I think that Green's real disagreement with Sidgwick is just whether the only things reflectively desirable for an agent are her own states of consciousness. Green recognizes "ideal goods" for an agent that involve her own activities and her relations to other members of her community (§§159-61, 357; contrast Methods 113-15). But this will be clearer when we see Green's positive perfectionist doctrine.

**SELF-REALIZATION**

Green wants to argue not only against hedonism but also for self-realization. He suggests that it is the very capacities that make moral responsibility possible in the first place that determine the proper end of deliberation (§176). Responsible action involves self-consciousness and is expressive of the self. The self is not to be identified with any desire or any series or set of desires; moral personality consists in the ability to subject appetites and desires to a process of deliberative endorsement and to form new desires as the result of such deliberations. So the self essentially includes deliberative capacities, and if responsible action expresses the self, it must exercise these deliberative capacities. This explains why Green thinks that the proper aim of deliberation is a life of activities that embody rational or deliberative control of thought and action (§§175, 180, 199, 234, 238-39, 247, 283).

One can ask about any conception of the good why one should care about the good, so conceived. Why should the good, so conceived, be normative? Green's defense of self-realization makes the content of the good consist in the exercise of the very same capacities that make one a rational agent, subject to reasons for action, in the first place. This promises to explain why a rational agent should care about the good conceived in terms of self-realization.

This justification of self-realization also explains why Green treats the imperative of self-realization as a categorical imperative. Like Kant, Green seeks an account of the agent's duties that is grounded in her agency and does not depend upon contingent and variable inclinations. The goal of self-realization, Green thinks, meets this demand.

At the same time, because it [self-realization] is the fulfilment of himself, of that which he has in him to be, it will excite an interest in him like no other interest, different in kind from any of his desires and aversions except such as are derived from it. It will be an interest as in an object conceived to be of unconditional value; one of which the value does not depend on any desire that the individual may at any time feel for it or for anything else, or on any pleasure that ... he may experience. ...[T]he desire for the object will be founded on a conception of its desirableness as a fulfilment of the capabilities of which a man is conscious in being conscious of himself. ... [S]elf-
realization] will express itself in [the] imposition ... of rules requiring something to be done irrespectively of any inclination to do it, irrespectively of any desired end to which it is a means, other then this end, which is desired because conceived as absolutely desirable. [§193].

Because the demands of self-realization depend only on those very deliberative capacities that make one a responsible agent, they are categorical imperatives.

Green recognizes that his conception of the good in terms of self-realization, perfection, or the exercise of deliberative capacities is abstract and perhaps vague in comparison with the apparent definiteness of the hedonist's conception of the good (§193). Moreover, he thinks that one is unable to specify fully the content of self-realization independently of its embodiment (§193). This claim may reflect Hegelian themes about the form of an individual's good being historically conditioned. It may also reflect the more familiar ideas that the perfection of one's capacities is an ideal that one can at most hope to approximate and that any conception of perfection by imperfect beings must be defeasible. Nonetheless, Green's conception of the good in terms of self-realization or the exercise of deliberative capacities is not empty.

**SELF-REALIZATION AND THE COMMON GOOD**

In particular, Green links self-realization and a common good. He believes that full self-realization can take place only in a community of ends (§§183-84, 190-91, 199, 232) in which each person cares about others for their own sakes (§199). I must view others as my "alter egos" (§§191, 200) and aim at a common good (§202, 236). But why?

At one point, Green suggests that this concern for others, at least for those within one's immediate circle, is given or natural.

Now the self of which a man thus forecasts the fulfilment, is not an abstract or empty self. It is a self already affected in the most primitive forms of human life by manifold interests, among which are interests in other persons. These are not merely interests dependent on other persons for the means to their gratification, but interests in the good of those other persons, interests which cannot be satisfied without the consciousness that those other persons are satisfied. The man cannot contemplate himself as in a better state, or on the way to the best, without contemplating others, not merely as a means to that better state, but as sharing it with him [§199].

Green might simply be invoking this familiar concern that one has for one's intimate associates. But this would not justify the claim that another's good is part of my own.

He might be appealing to his account of the personal good. If I do care about the welfare of my associates, and these desires survive deliberative endorsement, then, according to Green, I make their welfare part of my own personal good (§§91-92). But this may make an agent's interest in others dependent on her contingent desires. To explain how the demands of the common good are categorical imperatives, we need to explain how pursuit of a common good is an ingredient in self-realization.

We would do well to attend to Green's claims that a rational agent's interest in others is rooted in her search for a "permanent" good (§§223, 229-32, 234). Rational action must be responsible action. This requires impulse control and the ability to distinguish myself from my appetites and frame the question what it would be best for me -- a temporally extended
agent -- on the whole to do. This will involve endorsing some goals as good and as worth making short-term sacrifices or investments for. This is to value goals and projects in which I am involved that have some degree of permanence. Green seems to think that the right sort of association with others extends this permanence in a natural way -- indeed, that it provides a kind of counter-balance to mortality or surrogate for immortality.

That determination of an animal organism by a self-conscious principle, which makes a man and is presupposed by the interest in permanent good, carries with it a certain appropriation by the man to himself of the beings with whom he is connected by natural ties, so that they become to him as himself and in providing for himself he provides for them. Projecting himself into the future as a permanent subject of possible well-being or ill-being -- and he must so project himself in seeking for a permanent good -- he associates his kindred with himself. It is this association that neutralizes the effect which the anticipation of death must otherwise have on the demand for a permanent good [§231].

Green's claim here is reminiscent of Plato's claims about how interpersonal love for the virtue of another is the next best thing to immortality and Aristotle's claims that familial love is for "another-self" and extends one's interests. Perhaps Green's idea is that interpersonal permanence is a form of self-realization. As we've seen, Green insists that the self is not exhausted by any set of beliefs and desires. A responsible self exercises deliberative capacities that assess beliefs and desires and regulate action in accord with these deliberations. On this view, the persistence of the self ought to involve the continuous employment of one's deliberative capacities to regulate beliefs, desires, and actions. In the intrapersonal case, I preserve myself when the actions and intentional states of a future self depend in the right way on the actions and intentional states of my present and past selves. But interpersonal association involves deliberative connections between associates, in which the intentional states and actions of each depend on those of the other. This might explain why Green thinks that I more fully realize my capacities in association with others and why I should treat the good of my associates as part of my own good. This reading is reinforced by Green's notes on Aristotle's conception of friendship in which he comments favorably on how Aristotle's account of friendship permits a reconciliation of self-love and altruism.

THE SCOPE OF THE COMMON GOOD

Green accepts Aristotle's claims about the importance of the common good in self-realization; it is Aristotle's conception of friendship that justifies his claims; and Green's own justification parallels Aristotle's in important respects. But Green does not accept Aristotle's account of the scope of the common good. Whereas Aristotle recognizes significant restrictions on the scope of the common good, Green thinks its scope should be universal (§§205-17, 249, 253, 271, 285).

Though there are important differences between virtue-friendship, which serves as Aristotle's principal model for friendship, and political association, Aristotle can extend the central elements of his eudaimonist defense of friendship to political association, because political communities that are just have to a significant degree the two features that are crucial to the justification of virtue-friendship and familial-friendship: there is commonality of aims among members of the political association, and this commonality is produced by members of the association living together in the right way, in particular, by defining their
aims and goals consensually (1167a25-8, 1155a24-8). This establishes a common good among citizens, each of whom has a share in judging and ruling (Politics 1275a22-33). Justice aims at a common good (1129b15-18), and this is how Aristotle can construct a eudaimonist defense of justice.

But this conception of the common good is still quite limited. Restricted as it is to those whom Aristotle thinks are fit for citizenship, it excludes women, barbarians, slaves, and manual laborers (1278a3-9). It is these restrictions on the common good that Green finds unacceptable.

The idea of a society of free and law-abiding persons, each his own master yet each his brother's keeper, was first definitely formed among the Greeks, and its formation was the condition of all subsequent progress in the direction described; but with them ... it was limited in its application to select groups of men surrounded by populations of aliens and slaves. In its universality, as capable of application to the whole human race, an attempt has first been made to act upon it in modern Christendom [§271].

As the last part of this passage suggests, Green's own conception of the common good is universal; full self-realization and the securing of a really permanent good occurs only when each respects the claims made by other members of a maximally inclusive community of ends (§§214, 216, 244, 332). In this respect, Green's belief that eudaimonism can and should support cosmopolitan concern for others is closer to the Stoic than the Aristotelian view.

THE CONTENT OF THE COMMON GOOD

Green thinks that philosophical ethics characteristic of the Enlightenment -- in particular, Kantianism and utilitarianism -- are correct to recognize the wide or universal scope of the common good. He regards the philosophical and political influence of utilitarian and Kantian conceptions of impartiality as progressive influences (§§213-14). According to the utilitarian conception, everyone should count for one and no one for more than one (§213). According to the Humanity formula of Kant's Categorical Imperative, one must treat humanity, whether in your own person or in others, always as an end in itself and never merely as a means (§214). While acknowledging the progressive influence of the utilitarian conception, Green argues in favor of the Kantian conception, chiefly on the ground that the latter is distributionally sensitive in ways that the former is not (§§215, 217).

SELF-REALIZATION vs. UTILITARIANISM

In Book IV Green asks how moral philosophy might serve as a guide to conduct. In particular, he is interested in comparing and contrasting the guidance offered by utilitarianism and by his own ethics of self-realization. Green compares perfectionist and utilitarian accounts of what ought to be done. Both conceptions make duty depend on the effects of our actions. Green thinks we must consider effects for whom and which effects. On the first issue, Green thinks utilitarianism got it right. Its impartiality -- in particular, its wide scope -- requires that we consider the effects of our actions on all parties, and not just some select few. It is this impartiality, rather than a specifically hedonistic conception of the good, that accounts for the progressive influence of the social and political aspects of utilitarianism (§§329, 331-33). Though the perfectionist and utilitarian agree about the wide scope of morality, they disagree about which effects are morally significant, because they disagree in their conceptions of the good.
In considering which effects are important, Green acknowledges that hedonism appears the more definite and scientific standard (§§193, 315, 337, 358). Here he recognizes Sidgwick’s grounds for preferring hedonism to perfection (Methods 91-92). But Green thinks this appearance is deceiving. In part, he seems to think that calculations of the expected long-term pleasure and pain associated with different options, both for a single individual and for humanity at large, are just too uncertain for hedonism to offer a practical and reliable guide (§§316, 344). In discussing Sidgwick, we saw that we can distinguish conceptual and empirical complexity and uncertainty. Sidgwick seems to think conceptual determinacy much more important than empirical determinacy. But Green seems less confident that empirical difficulty is less important than conceptual difficulty.

Green also seems somewhat ambivalent about the amount of guidance provided by his own perfectionist conception of the good. On the one hand, he seems to think that self-realization can provide comparative guidance in the form of guidance about when particular actions allow one to better approximate an ideal of perfection (§§306, 353). At other times, Green seems to think that the precepts of conventional morality and one’s own conscience are adequate guides to conduct and that the goal of moral philosophy should be not so much to reform or to resolve perplexity but provide understanding of familiar moral precepts (§§308, 313, 327, 382).

Perhaps surprisingly, Green suggests that there isn’t likely to be much difference in the real-world applications of perfectionism and hedonistic utilitarianism (§332, 356). This may reflect confidence in the extensional adequacy of the quantitative hedonist defense of higher pleasures. But it’s not obvious that we should think hedonistic utilitarianism and perfectionism are extensionally equivalent. Quantitative hedonism does not have any intrinsic concern for the source of pleasure, and it’s not clear why the consistent quantitative hedonist should not favor adaptive strategies in which agents adapt their preferences to fit their circumstances, rather than changing their circumstances. But such adaptive strategies might favor the cultivation of simple and passive pleasures. By contrast, perfectionists prize active lives in which individuals develop and exercise their deliberative capacities. Like Mill, Green thought perfectionism called for various moral and political reforms. It would be surprising if perfectionism and hedonistic utilitarianism were extensionally equivalent.

However, inasmuch as the perfectionist critique of hedonism is not a critique of utilitarianism’s consequentialist structure, it is not clear that Green wants to reject utilitarianism or consequentialism as such. Hedonism is only one conception of happiness. It is open to the utilitarian to adopt some other conception of happiness. In particular, it’s unclear why a utilitarian couldn’t be a perfectionist about happiness. We said Mill is. If Green’s main complaints about utilitarianism are really complaints about hedonism, then he may have no objection to utilitarianism, as such. Much of Green’s own ethical theory might plausibly be interpreted as reflecting a perfectionist form of utilitarianism, not unlike Mill’s.

 Nonetheless, is at least one qualification that must be made to the case for reading Green as a perfectionist utilitarian. Traditional utilitarians view utilitarianism as the ultimate right-making factor. But Green’s utilitarianism, on this reading, is a derived, rather than ultimate, commitment. For he is a utilitarian insofar as this is compatible with his interpretation of the common good, but the common good is itself an ingredient in the more basic demand for self-realization. Green could perhaps defend a form of perfectionist utilitarianism, if at all, only as a subordinate aspect of self-realization.
A DUALISM OF SELF & OTHERS?

While *The Methods of Ethics* discusses Green's critique of hedonism only in passing and simply dismisses Green's positive ethical doctrine, Sidgwick does offer a more sustained assessment of Green's views in his *Lectures on the Ethics of T.H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau*. There Sidgwick explains and criticizes both the metaphysics and epistemology and the ethical theory of the *Prolegomena*. I'd like to look briefly at an ambiguity that Sidgwick detects in Green's conception of perfection or self-realization between (a) the exercise of the full range of an individual's rational capacities and (b) the exercise of specifically moral capacities connected with the common good (46, 61, 71). Sidgwick thinks that Green's waffling between (a) and (b) explains his vacillation about whether the virtuous person is really self-sacrificing or not (65-68). If perfection involves only moral capacities -- (b)-perfection -- then it's hard to see how morality could demand genuine self-sacrifice. However, morality might demand genuine self-sacrifice if the agent's perfection includes the exercise of various rational capacities, not just moral ones, that is, (a)-perfection. Sidgwick clearly thinks that Green could be entitled at most to the broader notion of perfection, (a)-perfection. For this reason, Sidgwick thinks that despite all of Green's talk about a common, non-competitive good, he cannot really avoid recognizing his own dualism of practical reason between perfection of the agent and perfection of others (56, 78, 106).

There is something to Sidgwick's concern. On Green's view, proper self-realization implies that the good of others includes in part the good of others. This conclusion, he thinks, undermines the popular contrast between self-love and benevolence (§232). We should view those with whom we participate in such associations as "alter egos," for whom we care as we care about ourselves (§§191, 200). We should weight their interests with our own, and see ourselves as compensated when we make what would otherwise be sacrifices to them and to our common projects (§376). Indeed, Green goes so far as to claim that when each is engaged in proper self-realization, there can be no conflict or competition of interests (§244). But this completely non-competitive conception of the common good seems hard to believe. Even if the good of others is a necessary and distinctively valuable part of an agent's overall good, it can only be a proper part of the agent's good and cannot exhaust his good. For if the good of each consisted only in the good of others, there would be nothing to ground anyone's good. A's good would refer to the good of B-D, B's good would refer to the good of A and C-D, and so on. To make sense of the good of each being part of the good of each, there must be some part of the good of each that can be characterized independently of the good of others. But then even if the good of others is part of an agent's overall good, it appears to be one aspect of an agent's overall good that must interact and may compete with more self-confined aspects. When I expend intellectual, emotional, and financial resources on meeting the legitimate claims of others, this may contribute to my overall good in distinctive ways. But it also consumes resources that might have been spent on my own education, vocation, or avocations. There are opportunity costs to every commitment, even especially important commitments, and sometimes the opportunity costs of important commitments are themselves important.

This would seem to vindicate Sidgwick's claim that (a)-perfection and (b)-perfection are distinct, even if they are not independent. But then many sacrifices that the perfection of others demands will be genuine, and not all of them will be fully compensable. And this is enough to raise the specter that there will be a kind of dualism of practical reason, not exactly between self and others, but between self-confined and other-regarding aspects of one's own perfection.
But we know from Sidgwick's own dualism of practical reason that he cannot think that commitment to dualism, as such, is a fatal flaw. So there remains the question whether it's better to think of the conflict between self and others in hedonistic terms, as Sidgwick does, or in perfectionist terms, as Green does.

There is a large conceptual gap between the demands of Sidgwick's two methods -- the agent's own pleasure and total pleasure. The gap can be narrowed by appeal to strategic considerations. But there is no intrinsic connection between the two ends. By contrast, the conceptual gap between Green's two demands seems smaller. Self-realization has an essential other-regarding component such that one cannot fully realize himself without seeking a larger, permanent, and interpersonal good. Moreover, the common good is conceived in terms of the Kantian Humanity formula, which seems to impose distributional constraints that simple hedonistic utilitarianism does not. That implies a conception of the common good in which each must participate and which cannot use some as a mere means to the improvement of others. This gives us some reason to think that any dualism that Green must recognize is not as polarizing and recalcitrant as the dualism that Sidgwick recognizes.

BRADLEY

As I noted above, Green and Bradley agree on several issues. Like Green, Bradley accepts a form of compatibilism about determinism and responsibility (Ethical Studies, Ch. I); he rejects psychological egoism (252-62); he is critical of hedonism and believes that Mill's higher pleasures doctrine is anti-hedonistic (118-20); he rejects hedonistic utilitarianism, though not non-hedonistic forms of utilitarianism (140-41); and he defends an ethics of self-realization (125, 224-25) that he thinks reduces the conflict between the individual's own good and the good of others (Ch. V). We also said that Green and Bradley mix their Kant and Hegel in different ratios, with Green being significantly more Kantian (and Aristotelian) than Hegelian and Bradley being significantly more Hegelian than Kantian. This contrast is on display in Bradley's account of the role of a social or common good in self-realization in Ethical Studies. For here we see the Hegelian critique of Kantian morality (moralität) and the defense of the situated ethical life (sittlichkeit).

In his essay "Duty for Duty's Sake" Bradley critically examines Kant's doctrine of the good will. Though this is its ostensible focus, the real focus seems to be on Kant's universality formula of the Categorical Imperative and the notion of a rational, as distinct from an empirical, will. Bradley regards the universal law formula as a formal requirement of consistency, and so, like Hegel, he concludes that it is empty and has no content. In fact, he thinks that the idea of a purely rational will is incoherent, as willing requires content and not mere form (153). Here, he seems to ignore Kant's claim that rational nature is an objectively necessary end. Bradley claims that you cannot move from form to content, so he implicitly rejects Kant's attempts to link the universality and humanity formulas of the Categorical Imperative.

MY STATION AND ITS DUTIES

Bradley has already claimed that the end of ethical life is self-realization, and he has now criticized hedonistic and Kantian conceptions of the end. In "My Station and its Duties" he argues that our social world is what supplies the content for the moral law. He begins by criticizing individualism as a metaphysical and moral thesis (163-74). The main claim is that one's personality and character are shaped from the beginning by the communities -- especially the family, civil society, and the state -- to which one belongs.
What we mean to say is, that he is what he is because he is a born and educated social being, and a member of an individual social organism; that if you make an abstraction of all this, which is the same to him and in others, what you have left is not an Englishman, nor a man, but some I know not what residuum, which never has existed by itself, and does not so exist [166].

Bradley thinks that this sort of social embeddedness supplies the content of self-realization. Because each is essentially part of a community (or set of communities), her self-realization requires embracing her "station and its duties" (173).

Leaving out of sight the question of a society wider than the state, we must say that a man’s life with its moral duties is in the main filled up by his station in that system of wholes which the state is, and that this, partly by its laws and institutions, and still more by its spirit, gives him the life which he does live and ought to live [174].

In this way, Bradley claims, socially embedded self-realization solves the problem of emptiness in Kantian ethics (174-76).

Bradley thinks that this conception of self-realization also allows us to overcome what would otherwise be the dualism between my good and the good of others. For someone like Sidgwick, who conceives of the good hedonistically, my own good and the good of others are conceptually independent, which makes the dualism between duty and interest especially recalcitrant. But if the good of each consists in performing her social role, then there seems to be no inherent competition in the good of different individuals. Bradley asks why socially embedded self-realization does not recognize a conflict between duty and interest.

It is because ‘my station and its duties’ teaches us to identify others and ourselves with the station we fill; to consider that as good, and by virtue of that to consider others and ourselves good too [181].

This doctrine also paves the way for the Hegelian value of reconciliation, which allows agents to overcome alienation toward and affirm membership in their social world (184).

**DOUBTS ABOUT SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS**

There are at least two kinds of worries about my station and its duties. One worry concerns Bradley’s *anti-individualism*. Individuals may be parts of groups, but it seems wrong to identify their interests with that of the group. Groups can apparently harm their members. A strong form of individualism would assert the priority of the individual to the group, in direct contrast with Bradley’s claim. A different view could be more concessionary to Bradley. One might well agree that individuals are raised and develop within groups and that their natures are profoundly affected by group membership. But this is compatible with recognizing that social groups are composed of individuals and that the nature of the groups can depend on the nature and contributions of individual members. One might reject simple individualism without embracing simple collectivism, preferring the view that the two levels are mutually dependent.

Another worry concerns Bradley’s *conservatism*. He seems to think that existing social relations -- my place in a social network -- determines not only *to whom* I have social duties
but also the content of these duties. But this seems very conservative. What if my social group is hierarchical and discriminatory or my role in my family or political community is that of subordinate with responsibilities and no privileges? Bradley seems to think that it is my duty to conform to existing social roles. But it’s hard to see why that should be my moral duty or why I should conceive my good to lie in that direction. Perhaps my good is socially embedded in the sense that I can only achieve a fuller more permanent good for myself (to use Green’s language) by participating in a larger group that has further reach and extends beyond me. Perhaps my existing social relations even determine whose good I should make my own, as both Aristotle and Green believe. But why should the social role I’ve inherited be perpetuated if that is not in my interest or theirs? Here the Kantian idea that I have interests as a moral person that have authority over my contingent and partly socially determined interests and desires, which Green embraces and Bradley rejects, provides one basis for criticizing existing forms of social organization and interpersonal relations.

This conservatism fits with Bradley’s Hegelian historicism. Bradley thinks that it is philosophy’s job to understand the world and its social condition, not to change or reform it.

How do I get to know in particular what is right and wrong? And here again we find a strangely erroneous preconception. It is thought that moral philosophy has to accomplish this task for us .... Well, we first remark, and with some confidence, that there cannot be a moral philosophy which will tell us what in particular we are to do, and also that it is not the business of philosophy to do so. All philosophy has to do is ‘to understand what is,’ and moral philosophy has to understand morals which exist, not to make them or give directions for making them [193].

At some moments, Bradley suggests that this conservative role is appropriate for moral philosophy because there is no distinction between positive morality and critical morality, no moral standard independent of mores of a given historical period and society (189-90). Here Bradley clearly abandons the standard of practical reason that Kant, Mill, and Green think allow us to measure the adequacy of existing institutions and relationships and call for progressive reforms.

LIMITATIONS IN MY STATION AND ITS DUTIES

In this connection, it is interesting that Bradley concludes this chapter by suggesting that the moral doctrine of my station and its duties is incomplete (202-06). In particular, Bradley mentions four concerns about the claim that performing my socially defined role assures my personal good (203-04).

1. My community and socially defined role might be objectionable.
2. In the best community, the interests of the individual and the interests of the whole are generally but imperfectly coincident.
3. Even a good community cannot prevent bad fortune from befalling individuals.
4. Members may have to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the community.

These claims seems to take back much of what went before.

(1) seems to contradict or at least significantly qualify Bradley’s historicism and relativism. It presupposes a standard against which existing communities can be measured and on the basis of which reforms might make sense. Perhaps the standard itself is imminent
in history and has to be tied to future social evolution (204). But if there is a norm, such as freedom, that is imminent in history and imperfectly embodied at particular historical moments, then it seems problematic to appeal to existing social relations to determine the content of one’s moral obligations.

It is somewhat unclear what Bradley’s reasons are for (2). But perhaps (2)-(4) are tied together. Earlier, Bradley claimed that because I am essentially part of a group my good must be specified in terms of my role within the group. (3) clearly recognizes harms that can befall compliant members of a group, which requires that an individual’s good not be exhausted by his social role. One wonders what the exact nature is of these autonomous aspects of an individual’s good. But if a person’s social good is only a proper part of his overall good, then it becomes possible that his social role will require him to make personal sacrifices, as (4) claims. But then it’s doubtful that Bradley’s anti-individualism fully overcomes the dualism between the agent’s good and the good of others.

These issues are pursued further in the next essay, “Ideal Morality,” in which Bradley suggests that the picture of self-realization involving my station and its duties is one-sided. Though the details are quite fuzzy, he does claim that self-realization has both social and non-social dimensions (219). Since he seems to think that morality is pervasive, extending to every conceivable practical issue (216-17), this is apparently a distinction within moral duty, not one between duty and interest (224-25). The chief part of the non-social element of perfection seems to be the pursuit of truth and beauty embodied in the personal pursuit of sciences and arts (222-23). It’s not clear if this rather intellectualist conception of non-social good is meant to be exhaustive. It does open up the possibility of conflicts between the social and non-social aspects of perfection. Bradley’s basis for supposing that such conflicts will be limited remains unclear. Sidgwick’s concern that Green must recognize his own kind of dualism of practical of practical reason within self-realization applies equally to Bradley’s conception of self-realization. We said that Green’s dualism may be less polarizing and dramatic than Sidgwick’s. But that depended in part on Green’s Aristotelian and Kantian claims about the perfection and the common good. It’s harder to see if Bradley is in a position to justify his optimism about the congruence of social and non-social aspects of self-realization.