Abstract: Sidgwick reluctantly embraced a dualism of practical reason between egocentric and impartial hedonism. By contrast, the British idealists Green and Bradley criticized hedonism and embraced a perfectionist ethical theory of self-realization that promises to overcome the dualism between self and others by insisting that agents can only fully perfect themselves in a community that pursues a common good. Sidgwick rightly thinks that the idealists must face their own perfectionist version of the dualism. However, perfectionist and hedonistic dualisms are different. Hedonism sees no inherent connection between the good of different people, which produces a gap between self and others that can be bridged only by instrumental and strategic means. By contrast, perfectionism claims that the right forms of interpersonal association extend an agent’s interests and contribute constitutively to her self-realization. The idealists may not eliminate potential conflict between self and others, but they constrain its extent.

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Introduction

Henry Sidgwick famously concludes *The Methods of Ethics* by recognizing a dualism of practical reason between two of his methods of ethics—egoism and utilitarianism. Both are forms of consequentialism, one egocentric and the other impartial. Egoism says that an agent has reason to do something insofar as that would advance her own personal good or happiness, whereas utilitarianism says that an agent has reason to do something insofar as it would advance aggregate personal good or happiness. One might understand Sidgwick's dualism in purely structural terms, as a contrast between egocentric and impartial consequentialisms, abstracting from assumptions about the nature of the personal good or happiness. However, Sidgwick clearly embraces hedonism as a theory of the good, which shapes how he conceives of the two forms of consequentialism forming the dualism of practical reason. Because of the difference between egocentric and impartial demands, Sidgwick's dualism also represents a conflict between self and others.

By contrast, the British idealists T.H. Green and F.H. Bradley defend a perfectionist ethics of self-realization and reject hedonistic utilitarianism. Both reject Sidgwick's dualism by embracing his egocentric conception, rather than the impartialist one, at the most fundamental level, but interpreting the good in perfectionist, rather than hedonistic, terms. Though the ethics of self-realization is egocentric, the perfectionist character of the idealist conception of the good means that they conceive of the good of each as only being fully realized in a community. In this way, both Green and Bradley think

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3 Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* [1874], 7th edn. (London: Macmillan, 1907), hereafter ME.

that the good of each depends on a common good, though they differ in their conceptions of the common good. Green stresses a Kantian formulation invoking the Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative and its insistence that agents treat each other as ends in themselves and never merely as means. Bradley stresses a more Hegelian conception of \textit{sittlichkeit} in which the personal good of individuals cannot be understood apart from the community in which they live. In these different ways, both Green and Bradley believe that the proper understanding of self-realization will reconcile the demands of self and others.

Unfortunately, Sidgwick did not have much patience with the British idealists. In \textit{The Methods} he regards appeals to self-realization and perfection as too indefinite to justify sustained examination. However, in \textit{Lectures on Ethics of T.H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau} Sidgwick did subject Green’s idealist commitments to greater scrutiny.\footnote{H. Sidgwick, \textit{Lectures on Ethics of T.H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau} (London: Macmillan, 1902), hereafter \textit{Lectures}.} Though he recognized that Green thought his ethics of self-realization would reconcile the demands of self and others, Sidgwick claimed that Green was nonetheless committed to his own dualism of practical reason between the perfection of the agent and the perfection of others.

I want to reconstruct and assess the prospects of British idealism for overcoming Sidgwick’s dualism of practical reason. Sidgwick is right that the idealists cannot eliminate the tension between self and others. Nonetheless, a perfectionist version of the dualism may be less intractable than Sidgwick’s hedonistic version.

\textbf{1. Sidgwick’s Dualism}

In \textit{The Methods} Sidgwick aims to provide an impartial examination of different principles about what it is ulti-
mately reasonable to do that are recognized, perhaps implicitly, by commonsense morality and by various philosophical figures and traditions (*ME*, v, 14). Sidgwick focuses on three methods—egoism, utilitarianism, and intuitionism. Egoism claims that one ought to do that action that most promotes one’s own good or happiness, whereas utilitarianism claims that one ought to do that action that most promotes aggregate good or happiness. Intuitionism comes in wide and narrow varieties: in its wide form, intuitionism designates a foundationalist moral epistemology in which moral knowledge rests on self-evident moral beliefs; in its narrow form, intuitionism claims that a plurality of deontological moral rules or precepts are self-evident. Sidgwick is critical of the narrow, deontological form of intuitionism but defends the wider, epistemological form of intuitionism. In particular, he defends a form of epistemological intuitionism known as *philosophical intuitionism* that locates fundamental intuitions at the level of first principles. As an epistemological doctrine, philosophical intuitionism is normatively neutral. Sidgwick believes that the two remaining methods of ethic—egoism and utilitarianism—is each the object of a fundamental intuition, which is what produces the dualism of practical reason.6

Sidgwick’s understanding of the dualism is informed by his hedonistic theory of the good. He takes the good to

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consist in pleasure and evil to consist in pain. A pleasure is any agreeable sensation or feeling that the subject likes and is disposed, other things being equal, to continue, whereas a pain is any disagreeable sensation or feeling that the subject dislikes and is disposed, other things being equal, to discontinue (ME 42–3, 125–7, 398).

Sidgwick’s dualism consists in the conflict between hedonistic versions of egoism and utilitarianism.

How exactly Sidgwick understands the dualism depends on how he understands a method of ethics. At several points, he describes a method as a principle or procedure determining ‘what an individual ought to do’ or what it is ‘ultimately right’ or ‘reasonable’ or ‘rational’ for him to do (ME v, 1, 4, 6, 8–9 77, 83–4, 96, 496). There are several assumptions that Sidgwick might be making here. First, it is noteworthy that in these passages he seems to equate moral requirements with demands of reason. Insofar as this is true, Sidgwick is a rationalist about morality. It also suggests that he uses <ought> in a way that is univocal or unitary, identifying ethical demands as demands of practical reason. At least in these passages, he doesn’t seem to be a pluralist, who thinks that moral demands involve one kind of <ought> and demands of rationality.
involve another kind of $\textlangle\text{ought}\rangle$. Second, there is a question of how to understand Sidgwick’s focus on what is ultimately reasonable to do. This might indicate a verdictive interest in what is all-thing-considered or on-balance right or reasonable.\(^8\) Alternatively, it might indicate an interest in what is non-derivatively right or reasonable, that is, what is right or reasonable in its own right and not because it can be subsumed by some other, more fundamental normative factor. Different interpretations of the dualism result from different ways Sidgwick might be understanding the commitments of egoist and utilitarian methods.

According to one interpretation, Sidgwick thinks that both methods use $\textlangle\text{ought}\rangle$ verdictively and univocally — call this the verdictive-unitary reading. On this reading, the dualism consists in rival claims about the ultimate right-making property: egoism says that it is the property of maximizing the agent’s own happiness, and utilitarianism says that it is the property of maximizing aggregate happiness. Moreover, the two methods yield conflicting directives as long as the two methods are not extensionally equivalent.\(^9\)

In his discussion of happiness and duty (ME II.v) and in his Concluding Chapter, Sidgwick examines attempts to reconcile the requirements of egoism and utilitarianism. He argues that there are often good egocentric reasons for agents to conform to the requirements of other-regarding morality, because we each have egocentric reasons to comply with familiar other-regarding moral norms of cooperation, forbearance, and aid, even when doing so involves costs. Each individual has an interest in the fruits of interaction conducted according to these norms. Though it might be desirable to reap the benefits of other people’s

\(^8\) T. Hurka, *British Ethical Theorists from Sidgwick to Ewing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014) claims that Sidgwick believed that $\textlangle\text{ought}\rangle$ is both unitary and verdictive.

compliance with such norms without incurring the burdens of one’s own, the opportunities to do this are infrequent. Noncompliance is generally detectable, and others won’t be compliant toward those who are known to be non-compliant. For this reason, compliance is typically necessary to enjoy the benefits of the continued compliance of others. Moreover, communities can improve this reconciliation by monitoring compliance and encouraging compliance and discouraging non-compliance.

However, the coincidence between self-interest and duty is imperfect (ME 175, 503). The egocentric justification of other-regarding morality is limited in scope and fragile. Sidgwick considers the possibility that though the earthly coincidence of duty and interest is imperfect, God might ensure their perfect coincidence by ensuring that virtue is rewarded and vice punished in the afterlife. While Sidgwick thinks that the truth of this theological claim might resolve the dualism, he is skeptical or at least agnostic about its truth. We might have reason to want these theological claims to be true, but an independent ethical science must appeal to reason, not wishful thinking (ME 507). This leads Sidgwick to conclude, reluctantly, that we must accept the dualism (ME 507-08).

If Sidgwick accepts the verdictive-unitary reading, it’s puzzling that he thinks that these theological claims could remove the conflict between the two methods. For, as C.D. Broad notes, the perfect coincidence of the two methods would not seem to remove their theoretical inconsistency, because, even if their demands coincided perfectly, they would still make incompatible explanatory claims about the ultimate right-making property.10

There is another problem involving the dualism on the verdictive-unitary reading. The dualism depends on egoism and utilitarianism each being an object of an intuition.

On the verdictive-unitary reading these two methods make incompatible claims, whether or not there is a perfect coincidence in their demands. But it is a condition of self-evidence that self-evident claims, taken together, are mutually consistent (ME 341). This seems to introduce an incoherence in the doctrine of the dualism that rests on several assumptions.

1. <Ought> is verdictive.
2. <Ought> is unitary.
3. Hence, egoism and utilitarianism make incompatible claims about the ultimate right-making factor.
4. The dualism consists in egoism and utilitarianism each being the object of a fundamental intuition.
5. Fundamental intuitions must be consistent.

These five claims are mutually inconsistent, which means that something has to go.

Perhaps Sidgwick resists (4) and claims that the alleged intuitions of egoism and utilitarianism are only apparent, not real. But then why think we have a dualism of practical reason? There could still be an epistemic conflict about which if either principle to accept, given that they can’t both be self-evident. But this would be revisionary inasmuch as Sidgwick’s dualism involves a normative, rather than an epistemic, conflict.

A second interpretation of the dualism results if we reject the verdictive reading of <ought>. The verdictive reading is one interpretation of the Sidgwick’s claim that the methods articulate principles about what is “ultimately” reasonable to do. Sidgwick thinks that first principles articulate claims about ultimate or non-derivative moral factors. But if we read him this way, we need not accept the verdictive reading of moral principles. We might call the resulting reading of the dualism the ultimate-unitary reading.\(^\text{11}\) This reading allows us to under-

\(^{11}\) Irwin’s treatment of Sidgwick’s dualism in The Development of Ethics §§1153–61, 1201–6 seems to be an ultimate-unitary reading.
stand moral principles as making claims about an ultimate right-making factor, rather than incompatible claims about the ultimate right-making property. On this reading, the dualism is a form of pluralism about ultimate right-making factors. There is nothing inconsistent about recognizing multiple right-making factors, so this reading avoids the worry about the verdictive-unitary reading that egoism and utilitarianism cannot each be an object of a fundamental intuition, because intuitions cannot be inconsistent. But, of course, that raises the question in what sense the dualism, on this reading, poses a conflict. The proponent of ultimate-unitary reading of the dualism should say that the conflict is practical, rather than theoretical. Provided the two methods are not extensionally equivalent in their demands, the practical problem is that one cannot always satisfy both sets of demands. Moreover, it does seem that if God could ensure that their coincidence was perfect, then this practical problem would vanish, but Sidgwick thinks we can have no independent scientific grounds for confidence in this divine reconciliation.

Yet a third interpretation of Sidgwick’s dualism results from rejecting the unitary assumption that all methods and all <oughts> are of the same kind.12 This yields a pluralist reading, which can be combined with either a verdictive or ultimate reading of <ought>. Sidgwick frequently describes the dualism as involving a conflict between duty and interest (ME xv–xvi, 5, 163–75, 503, 508). That suggests that utilitarianism is a theory of moral duty and that egoism is a theory of individual rationality. On this reading, the dualism represents the traditional amoralist worry about whether it is rational to be moral. If so, there are two kinds of <ought> in play—the moral

and the <ought> of individual rationality. This means that the two methods can both be true, because they make different claims about different domains, rather than rivals claims about the same domain. So, this pluralist reading avoids the theoretical inconsistency that is hard to square with Sidgwick’s belief that each method is the object of a fundamental intuition, which plagued the verdictive-unitary reading. But if there is no theoretical incompatibility between utilitarian morality and rational egoism, we need to ask what kind of conflict the pluralist reading can recognize. The pluralist reading, like the ultimate-unitary reading, can recognize a practical conflict. There is a practical conflict between the two methods just in case the coincidence in their demands is imperfect. For then it will not always be possible to act so as to satisfy the demands both of morality and rationality. Here too, a divine reconciliation of the demands of utilitarianism and egoism would remove the practical conflict, though Sidgwick thinks we have no good evidence of this supernatural hypothesis.

Unless we are prepared to treat Sidgwick’s dualism as a mere epistemic conflict, we have good reason to avoid the verdictive-unitary reading. We should reject either the verdictive assumption, the unitary assumption, or both. There is good reason to prefer the non-derivative reading of ultimacy to the verdictive reading. We could then accept the ultimate-unitary reading of Sidgwick’s dualism, treating the conflict as practical, rather than theoretical. But insofar as Sidgwick also treats the dualism as a conflict between duty and interest, rather than as conflict between duty and duty, there is also reason to take seriously the pluralist reading of the dualism, which rejects the unitary reading. The pluralist reading will also treat the dualism as a practical, rather than theoretical, conflict. In effect, the choice is between a rationalist reading of the dualism that is unitarian about <ought> but treats meth-
ods of ethics as ultimate but non-verdictive and a pluralist reading that treats the dualism as raising questions about the rational authority of morality. Each of these readings has an anchor in Sidgwick’s text, and I don’t see any clear evidence resolving the matter.

Fortunately, we need not decide between these two interpretations for purposes of assessing whether the British idealists face their own dualism. Both readings of Sidgwick’s dualism treat it as a conflict between egocentric and impartial demands and, hence, as a conflict between self and others.

2. Green on Self-Realization and the Common Good

Green’s Prolegomena to Ethics 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. After a general attack on empiricist metaphysics and epistemology, he criticizes forms of ethical naturalism that ground morality in a science of desire and pleasure. Green rejects the hedonist conception of motivation, relying on Bishop Butler’s distinction between the power and authority of desire. Agents need not 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. Here, 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. He agrees with those Greeks, such as Aristotle, who claim that the agent’s own good requires a concern with

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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 the universal scope of the common good is made explicit. This leads him 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. Green thinks that moral progress consists in the gradual recognition and advancement of the common good.\textsuperscript{14}

Implicit in this narrative is a reconciliation of the dualism between the agent’s own good and the good of others. The key components of this reconciliation are Green’s conception of moral personality, his perfectionist conception of the good, and his recognition of the common good as contributing to the agent’s own self-realization.

\textit{Moral personality} involves agency and requires capacities for practical deliberation, which require self-consciousness. Non-responsible agents, such as brutes and small children, act on their strongest desires or, if they deliberate, 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 \textit{power} and \textit{authority} of their desires, deliberate about the appropriateness of their desires, and regulate their actions in accord with these deliberations (§§92, 96, 103, 107, 220). Here, Green shows the influence of Butler’s conception of human nature as involving the capacity to act on superior principles (\textit{Sermons} Preface 13-24; II 14)

and Kant’s conception of rational nature as the capacity to resist determination by empirical motives and to set ends.\textsuperscript{15} This requires one to be able to distinguish oneself from particular desires and passions and to frame the question about what it would be best for one on the whole to do (§§85–6).

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 (§§91–2, 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 \textit{will}, and is in itself moral action ... [§146].

Much as Kant thinks that rational nature provides both the ground and content of the moral law (\textit{G} 427–9), Green thinks that moral personality as rational nature is not only a condition of agency but also the natural object of the will. Green criticizes various forms of hedonism, denying that agents must aim at their own pleasurable consciousness and recognizing ‘ideal goods’ that involve an agent’s activities and her relations to other members of her community (\textit{PE} §§159–61, 357). He believes that self-realization, rather than pleasure, is the appropriate object of the

will (§176). Moral personality involves a will that is expressive of the self. But if this self is a rational self, capable of acting on superior principles, then an agent’s will should aim at activities that reflect and realize these superior principles. This explains why Green thinks that the good for an agent is a life of activities that involve rational control of thought and action (§§175, 180, 199, 234, 238–9, 247, 283).

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. ... [Self-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 than this end, which is desired because conceived as absolutely desirable. [§193].

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

For Green, self-realization is an egocentric doctrine. But Green insists that proper self-realization should aim at a common good, which includes the good of other rational agents. A self-realizing agent does not act on passing whims or passions but acts for the sake of ends perceived
as valuable and perseveres on their behalf, making short-term investments and sacrifices for the sake of these ends. This is to value goals and projects in which I am involved that have some degree of permanence. Green thinks that the right sort of association with others extends this permanence in a natural way (§199). Indeed, Green regards interpersonal permanence as 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 neutralises the effect which the anticipation of death must otherwise have on the demand for a permanent good [§231].

Green claims that interpersonal permanence is an extension of intrapersonal permanence, implying that the right sort of interpersonal association makes the good of one’s associate part of one’s own. Interpersonal association undermines the popular contrast between self-love and love of others (§232) and gives each associate a reason to pursue a common good (§202). On Green’s view, proper self-realization implies that the good of each includes in part the good of others. 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 weigh their interests with our own and see ourselves as compensated when we make what would otherwise be sacrifices to them for the sake of the common good (§376).

So far, this extension of the agent’s interests outward is limited to family members and those with whom one has
close associations. But Green thinks that agents have egocentric reasons to seek interpersonal permanence with wide scope. He believes that Aristotle recognized the way in which justice is connected with a common good, but he thinks that the Greeks had too narrow a conception of the common good.

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].

Green sees moral progress as consisting in the gradual extension of the scope of the common good, which is only complete 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 an egocentric concern with self-realization can and should support cosmopolitan concern for others may seem closer to the Stoic than the Aristotelian view.16

Green thinks that we each have reason to promote a common good. But he goes further, claiming that the common good involves no conflict between the good of the agent and the good of others.

[T]he only good in the pursuit of which there can be no competition of interests, the only good which is really common to all who may pursue it, is that which consists in the universal will to be good .... The conviction of a community of good for all men can never be really harmonized with our notions of what is good, so long as anything else than self-devotion to

an ideal of mutual service is the end by reference to which those notions are formed [§244].

If the common good was genuinely non-competitive, this would eliminate any dualism between the agent’s own good and the good of others.

At bottom, Green is a monist about practical reason, because his conception of practical reason and the personal good is egocentric. Though the ultimate ground of ethical concern is self-realization, true self-realization involves interpersonal permanence and the pursuit of a genuinely universal conception of the common good in which there can be no competition among interests.

3. Green’s Own Dualism

In the course of defending hedonism, Sidgwick briefly addresses alternative conceptions of the personal good, including ones that understand the personal good to consist in self-realization, perfection, or virtue. Sidgwick nonetheless dismisses such conceptions as too indefinite (ME 91–2). Only hedonism, he thinks, is sufficiently definite to inform a serious method of ethics.

While The Methods discusses Green’s critique of hedonism only in passing and simply dismisses Green’s positive ethical doctrine, Sidgwick offers 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 the metaphysics, epistemology, and ethical theory of the Prolegomena. At one point, Sidgwick argues that Green cannot avoid his own dualism of practical reason. Despite limitations in Sidgwick’s engagement with perfectionism, this criticism of Green deserves to be taken seriously.

Sidgwick detects an ambiguity in Green’s conception of perfection between perfection simpliciter—the exercise of the full range of an individual’s rational capacities—and moral perfection—the exercise of specifically moral capaci-
ties connected with the common good (Lectures 47, 61, 71). Sidgwick thinks that Green’s waffling between perfection and moral perfection explains Green’s vacillation about whether the virtuous person is really self-sacrificing (Lectures 65–8). If the agent’s own good involves only moral perfection, then it’s hard to see how morality could demand genuine self-sacrifice, as it seems to. However, if the agent’s good consists in perfection generally, and not just moral perfection, then there is an element of the agent’s good that morality might sacrifice. Sidgwick clearly thinks that the most plausible form of perfectionism must include non-moral elements and that morality can demand sacrifice. For this reason, Sidgwick thinks that despite all of Green’s talk about a common, non-competitive good, Green cannot avoid recognizing his own dualism of practical reason between perfection of the agent and perfection of others (Lectures 57–8, 65, 69, 78, 106).

This seems right. A completely non-competitive conception of the common good is hard to sustain. 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 it. 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 vindicates Sidgwick’s claim that perfection and moral perfection are distinct. 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.

As long as the dualism of practical reason does not result in inconsistency or incoherence, it need not be a fatal flaw. But the question remains 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 for Sidgwick between the agent’s own pleasure and aggregate pleasure. The gap can be narrowed by appeal to strategic considerations. But there is no intrinsic connection between the two ends and no reason the two demands cannot regularly conflict. 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 requires that one respect the rational agency of others and never treat other persons as mere means (PE §§214–17). 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 stark as the dualism that Sidgwick recognizes.

4. Bradley on Self-Realization and My Station and its Duties

Like Green, Bradley accepts a form of compatibilism about determinism and responsibility, rejects psychological egoism and hedonism, and defends an ethics of self-realization that he thinks eliminates or reduces the conflict between the individual’s own good and the good of others. It is often said that Green and Bradley mix their Kant and Hegel in different ratios, with Green being more Kantian (and Aristotelian) than Hegelian and Bradley being more Hegelian than Kantian (Lectures 3). This contrast is on display in Bradley’s account of the role of a social or common good in self-realization in Ethical Studies. There, Bradley claims that the end of ethical life is self-realization (ES 125, 224–5) and criticizes both hedonistic and Kantian conceptions of the end (essays III–IV). In particular, Bradley echoes Hegelian concerns that Kant’s categorical imperative is formal and empty.

We might not think that the categorical imperative is empty. Kant believes that the ground of duty also provides it with content. Moral requirements, Kant thinks, must depend upon essential, rather than contingent and variable, features of agents, which explains why moral requirements must express categorical, rather than hypothetical, imperatives (G 4: 416, 425). If so, moral requirements must be universal, expressing our nature as rational agents. This yields the Universality Formula of the Categorical Imperative: Act only maxims that you can will to be a universal law of nature (4: 421). The Universality For-

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Kant believes that the only thing one could value independently of one’s contingent circumstances and sentiments is rational nature. Rational nature is the capacity to set ends and act for the sake of ends (G 4: 428, 430–1). A rational agent will value activities and lives that express rational nature. Moreover, if I choose rational agency solely insofar as I am a rational being, then it seems I choose to develop rational agency as such, and not the rational agency of this or that particular rational being (G 4: 427). If so, then Universality directs me to be concerned about other rational agents, as rational agents, for their own sakes. This leads to the Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative: Treat humanity, whether in your own person or that of any rational agent, always as an end in itself and never merely as a means (4: 429). This is how Kant gets from ground to content and from Universality to Humanity. But even if the categorical imperative is not empty, the guidance it provides might still be incomplete if there are many different ways to treat others as ends.

In the essay ‘My Station and its Duties’ Bradley argues that our social world supplies moral content that the categorical imperative does not. He begins by criticizing individualism as a metaphysical and moral thesis, claiming 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 (ES 163–74).

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 [ES 166].
Because each is essentially part of a community (or communities), her self-realization requires embracing her ‘station and its duties’ (ES 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 [ES 174].

In this way, Bradley claims, socially embedded self-realization solves the problem of emptiness in Kantian ethics (ES 174–6).

Bradley suggests 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 [ES 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 (ES 184).

5. Bradley’s Own Dualism

Sidgwick had even less patience with Bradley than with Green, so there is no sustained engagement with Bradley
of the sort we find with Green in Sidgwick’s *Lectures*.\footnote{Sidgwick reviewed *Ethical Studies*—H. Sidgwick, ‘Bradley’s *Ethical Studies*’ *Mind* 4 (1876): pp. 545–49. He describes Bradley’s aim as ‘not merely directly dogmatic, but even vehemently propagandist,’ observes that ‘just at the nodes of his argument, he lapses provokingly into mere debating-club rhetoric,’ and concludes that ‘really penetrating criticism, especially in ethics, requires a patient effort of sympathy which Mr. Bradley never learned to make, and a tranquility of temper which he seems incapable of maintaining’ (545). One can sympathize with Sidgwick’s assessment while recognizing value in Bradley’s discussion.}

Nonetheless, Sidgwick’s claim that the ethics of self-realization cannot avoid its own dualism applies to Bradley too. While my station and its duties might promise to avoid the dualism of self and others, there are serious limitations in my station and its duties, which Bradley himself recognizes. This recognition paves the way for a more satisfactory ethical theory, but at the cost of reintroducing a dualism of self and others.

My station and its duties implausibly identifies the interests of groups and their members. One might well agree that individuals are raised and develop within groups, that their natures are profoundly affected by group membership, and that they tend to prosper in groups. But this is compatible with recognizing that social groups are composed of individuals, that the nature of the groups can depend on the nature and contributions of individual members, and that groups can harm the interests of their individual members. This requires seeing individual interests as potentially independent of group interests.

My station and its duties also has conservative implications. It claims that existing social relations—my place in a social network—determines not only to whom I have duties but also the content of these duties. But what if my social group is hierarchical and discriminatory or my role in my family or political community is that of a subordinate with responsibilities to others and no rights or privileges? My station and its duties instructs me to conform to...
existing social roles. 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 extends beyond me. 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 provides one basis for criticizing existing forms of social organization and interpersonal relations.

This conservatism fits with Bradley’s historicism, according to which it is philosophy’s job to understand the world and its social condition, not to change or reform it (ES 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 the mores of a given historical period and society (ES 189-90). If so, he abandons the standard of practical reason that Kant and Green think allow us to measure the adequacy of existing institutions and relationships and call for progressive reforms.

Bradley is aware of these limitations in my station and its duties, which he notices at the end of that essay (ES 202–6). In particular, he mentions five concerns about my station and its duties: (i) my community and socially defined role might be objectionable; (ii) in the best community, the interests of the individual and the interests of the whole are generally but imperfectly coincident; (iii) even a good community cannot prevent bad fortune from befalling individuals; (iv) individuals should try to transcend the limitations of their parochial social worlds in the direction of a cosmopolitan morality; and (v) members may have to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their communities, whether parochial or cosmopolitan (ES 203–5).
One might think that these observations require abandoning my station and its duties. But this is not the conclusion that Bradley draws. His verdict is that my station and its duties is limited, incomplete, and one-sided (ES 202, 214). In particular, the next essay, ‘Ideal Morality,’ treats my station and its duties as a proper part of morality. ‘Morality is co-extensive with self-realization, which is one with the ideal; and the content of this self is furnished (1) by the objective world of my station and its duties, (2) by the ideal of the social, and (3) of non-social perfection [ES 224-25; cf. 219].’ This more comprehensive conception of morality has two main parts—(1) social perfection and (2) non-social perfection—and the social part itself has two parts—(1a) my station and its duties and (1b) ideal social perfection (ES 219, 224-25). Presumably, my station and its duties is as set out in the previous essay, warts and all. Bradley does not say much new about ideal social perfection, though presumably it involves transcending the limitations in my station and its duties and progress toward a more cosmopolitan morality, as he suggests at the end of the previous essay. 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 (ES 222–3).

Important aspects of this tripartite conception of morality remain unclear. First, it’s not clear how my station and its duties and ideal social morality are supposed to relate to each other, especially where they disagree. One might have expected ideal social morality to supersede my station and its duties. Why should the latter have any authority when it conflicts with the former? Perhaps the authority of my station and its duties is conditioned by ideal social morality. Second, Bradley’s focus on the arts

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and sciences seems like an overly intellectualist conception of the personal, non-social good. But perhaps these individual goods are meant to be illustrative, rather than exhaustive.

However these issues are best resolved, the important point, for present purposes, is that Bradley recognizes the possibility of conflicts between the social and individual elements of self-realization. Because morality must be understood in terms of self-realization and the self has both social and non-social aspects, Bradley sees such conflicts as conflicts of duties, rather than conflicts between morality and some other normative dimension (ES 225). For instance, this is how he understands a case such as Gaugin, who has to choose between the demands of his art and the demands of ordinary morality (ES 226). Bradley supposes that such conflicts will be limited (ES 227), though the grounds for this optimism are unclear. Such conflicts show us that Sidgwick’s concern that Green must recognize his own kind of dualism between self and others applies equally to Bradley.

6. Conclusion

Sidgwick reluctantly embraced a dualism of practical reason between egocentric and impartial hedonism. By contrast, the British idealists criticized hedonism and embraced a perfectionist ethical theory of self-realization that promises to overcome the dualism between self and others. At the foundational level, self-realization is an egocentric ethical theory. But for both Green and Bradley agents can only fully perfect their nature in a community that pursues a common good on which the self-realization of each depends. In this way, idealist perfectionism may resolve or at least reduce Sidgwick’s dualism. However, Sidgwick is right to think that the idealists must face their own dualism between the agent’s own perfection and the perfection of others. Even if the perfection of each does
depend on the perfection of others, there is no conception of the common good that is coherent and attractive that will preclude conflicts between the agent’s own good and the good of others.

That doesn’t mean that the idealists simply reproduce Sidgwick’s dualism. Perfectionist and hedonistic dualisms are different. The hedonist sees no inherent or intrinsic connection between the good of different people, which produces a gap between self and others that can be bridged only by instrumental means that establish the strategic advantages of other-regarding concern. By contrast, the perfectionist insists that the right forms of interpersonal association extend an agent’s interests and contribute constitutively to her self-realization. This may not eliminate potential conflict between the perfection of the agent and others, but it constrains its extent. For these reasons, idealist dualisms may be less stark than Sidgwick’s own.