

PHILOSOPHERS AS EDUCATIONAL REFORMERS

The influence of idealism
on British educational thought
and practice

**Peter Gordon and
John White**



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General editor's note

There is a growing interest in philosophy of education amongst students of philosophy as well as amongst those who are more specifically and practically concerned with educational problems. Philosophers, of course, from the time of Plato onwards, have taken an interest in education and have dealt with education in the context of wider concerns about knowledge and the good life. But it is only quite recently in this country that philosophy of education has come to be conceived of as a specific branch of philosophy like the philosophy of science or political philosophy.

To call philosophy of education a specific branch of philosophy is not, however, to suggest that it is a distinct branch in the sense that it could exist apart from established branches of philosophy such as epistemology, ethics, and philosophy of mind. It would be more appropriate to conceive of it as drawing on established branches of philosophy and bringing them together in ways which are relevant to educational issues. In this respect the analogy with political philosophy would be a good one. Thus use can often be made of work that already exists in philosophy. In tackling, for instance, issues such as the rights of parents and children, punishment in schools, and the authority of the teacher, it is possible to draw on and develop work already done by philosophers on 'rights', 'punishment', and 'authority'. In other cases, however, no systematic work exists in the relevant branches of philosophy—e.g. on concepts such as 'education', 'teaching', 'learning', 'indoctrination'. So philosophers of education have had to break new ground—in these cases in the philosophy of mind. Work on educational issues can also bring to life and throw new light on long-standing problems in philosophy. Concentration, for instance, on the particular predicament of children can throw new light on problems of punishment and responsibility. G.E. Moore's old worries about what sorts of things are good in themselves can be brought to life by urgent questions about the justification of the curriculum in schools.

There is a danger in philosophy of education, as in any other applied field, of polarization to one of two extremes. The work could be practically relevant but philosophically feeble; or it could be philosophically sophisticated but remote from practical problems. The aim of the International Library of the Philosophy of Education is to build up a body of fundamental work in this area which is both practically relevant and philosophically competent. For unless it achieves both types of objective it will fail to satisfy those for whom it is intended and fall short of the conception of philosophy of education which the International Library is meant to embody.

Philosophers as Educational Reformers is an unusual book among the other volumes of the International Library in that it is an interdisciplinary study, drawing both on the philosophy of education and on the history of education. Its topic is the influence of the British Idealist philosophers of the late nineteenth century on the leading educational reformers of that time and later. It assesses how far the ideas and achievements of these philosophical reformers are still important for us today when we consider fundamental questions about the structure and objectives of our educational system. Part 1 examines those ideas of the Idealists, especially of T.H. Green, which had most bearing on these reforms. Part

2 concentrates on the innovations in the organization and content of education in England and Wales brought about by the administrators and educationalists educated in philosophical idealism. It is not widely known that virtually all the leading figures in educational reform between 1870 and the 1920s belonged to this school of thought: examples are T.H.Green, Arthur Acland, Robert Morant, Michael Sadler, R.B.Haldane, E.G.A.Holmes and R.H.Tawney. These men all helped in different ways, to pioneer a coherent national system of secondary and elementary education, of civic universities and adult education, as well as contributing to the theory of education. After the First World War, enthusiasm for organic reform of this type tended to wane.

Part 3 examines what relevance the philosophical and practical ideas of this interconnected group of reformers have to education today. There are many signs that current educational thought and practice are turning back towards ideas with which Idealists were sympathetic. The belief that educational institutions should be largely autonomous in their curricular arrangements is being increasingly challenged—a challenge which echoes the demand of many of the Idealists that the educational system should be planned as an organic whole. As for the aims of education, there is, similarly, a growing realization that pupil-centred aims need to be supplemented by aims of a community-oriented kind. Light may be shed on this by the thesis of many of the Idealists that a fundamental aim of education is morality or citizenship.

Preface

Prominent among the builders of a national system of education in Britain after 1870 were a group of men who were either influenced by British idealist philosophers or idealist philosophers in their own right. They included T.H.Green, Arthur Acland, R.B.Haldane, Henry Jones, Michael Sadler, Robert Morant—and in a later generation R.H.Tawney, Fred Clarke and A.D.Lindsay. Together, and with the co-operation of others of similar persuasion, they played an indispensable part in laying the foundations of our present system. Much of the impetus towards liberalizing the elementary schools in the 1890s came from them; they were conspicuous in the campaign for state secondary education which culminated in the 1902 Act and in pressing for ‘secondary education for all’ after the First World War; without them the many universities founded in the first years of this century would not have come into existence, or, at least, not so speedily; they were pioneers of adult education; they helped to shape the 1918 Education Act.

Of course this group, comprising university teachers, statesmen, civil servants and school inspectors, were not responsible for *all* the educational advances in this half-century. Sidney Webb was not a philosophical idealist; neither, though he *was* a philosopher and had crossed swords with the idealists in his writings, was Arthur Balfour. But the idealists’ influence was considerable. They had a collective genius for creative administration, throwing themselves with extraordinary energy into the task of building new structures within which their educational ideals could be expressed. These ideals arose directly out of their shared philosophy. It was a philosophy which had given them not only an academic discipline but also a life’s work, sending them into the world as missionaries of the spirit.

It may seem strange to some that a philosophy like Hegelian idealism, with its preoccupation with the Absolute, or Eternal Spirit, could come to be connected with the utterly practical, very detailed work of educational administration. But it was not merely connected: it was, in fact, a prime mover. To show how this came to be so is one of the chief aims of this book, especially of Parts 1 and 2. Part 1 is philosophical. It describes in a non-technical way the leading features of nineteenth-century idealism, concentrating mainly on its social and political doctrines, but showing at the same time how these were connected with its metaphysical tenets about the nature of reality, and, above all, how very *obvious* it was to one brought up in this system of ideas that a life devoted to the education of the nation was unsurpassable in its worth. Part 2 is historical. It traces the achievements of these philosophical reformers over the half century from 1870 onwards. It reveals the common threads running through the work of men who, though sometimes separated from each other temporally by one or two generations, or spatially, with Glasgow and Oxford as the twin poles of the movement, were yet interconnected by a set of shared beliefs.

But telling what happened and why is not the only purpose of this book. Philosophical idealism gradually faded away as a movement of thought after the First World War. Its social doctrines—its elevation of the state and its insistence that individuals have their being only as parts of society—became increasingly repellent as the totalitarian dictatorships grew in power. With its decline, its role as the spiritual generator of educational ideas

and institutions vanished to nothing. In 1978, the year in which we write, nothing is left, and scarcely anything remembered, of its creative power in this area. But is this power dead beyond recall? Has idealism anything still to teach us? How far are we right to label its social philosophy 'totalitarian' and so dismiss it? Has this association with totalitarianism blinded us to any substantial qualities it may possess, qualities which may be of service to us in our present anxieties about the lack of direction so evident in our educational system? Part 3 will seek to answer these questions.

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part 1

**Philosophical idealism
and education**

Introduction

British philosophical idealism of the late nineteenth century was founded on the philosophy of Hegel and drew its inspiration also from the thought of Kant and Fichte, and, more anciently, from Plato and Aristotle, all four of which writers had contributed much to Hegel's thought. Between Hegel and the British idealist whose work will figure prominently in this volume, T.H.Green, there are, of course, considerable differences, both in conclusions and in arguments. But they both hold certain beliefs in common. For both of them reality is not to be identified with the physical world or even with a dualist combination of a physical with a mental world: reality is essentially mental or spiritual. What we call the realms of matter and mind—the everyday world of physical objects on the one hand and the everyday world of our thoughts and feelings on the other—are not the ultimate, irreducible constituents of reality. To understand the physical world, we have to look behind it to the foundation on which it rests, that in virtue of which it is what it is. This foundation is thought, not the thought of individual human beings, but an eternal consciousness (or God, or Absolute, or Spirit), existing outside time and space. Man, as well as the world he lives in, is also linked to the eternal. *His* link is more intimate. For man, unique among animals, is capable of reason. *Qua* thinker he becomes a part of or a reproduction of the eternal thought which underlines all things. But man is essentially a social creature. His being is inseparable from that of the state, the political community within which he lives and which includes smaller-scale social groups, such as the family, to which he belongs also. Man is, therefore, connected to reality as a whole not as an independent individual, but as a participant in a shared social and political life, that is, as a citizen of a state. His education, which is the means whereby he becomes a citizen, is thus one of the state's foremost concerns. For at least the spiritual and political leaders of the state—and, as we shall see, in Green's case, for others too—it is at the same time an intellectual education, developing their powers of thought so that they come to partake of eternal thought: in this way the state will be able to realize its proper function, of mediating between the human and the divine.

This conception of the links between nature, man, the state, and God will have to be filled out, with reference to the British idealists in particular, in later sections. But even this sparse account of the connexions is enough to show us how very different from the prevailing metaphysical and social ideas of mid-nineteenth-century Britain the new idealism was. The dominant thought of the time, deriving from the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, was empiricist, individualistic, utilitarian. While the idealist saw reality as an organic, interconnected whole, no part of which was independent of the rest, the empiricist saw it as an aggregation of atomic entities, the physical atoms of Newton and Locke and/or the sensations, or ideas which were the atoms of the mind. Each atom could be understood, and could only be understood, in isolation from the rest. Science, physical or mental, was to begin from these irreducibly simple entities and show how they are associated together to form more complex phenomena. Man was one example of such complexity. While the

idealists saw him as essentially a part of a community, the empiricists held him to be essentially an independent, a-social individual, complex in relation to the physical and mental atoms of which he was constituted and in terms of which he was to be understood, but atomic in relation to the other individuals with whom he was associated in a society. On this view the state was not a community of citizens sharing a common good, but a kind of machinery of government instituted to preserve the liberty of the individual. The ethical principle of utilitarianism—that man should aim at bringing about his own and others' happiness—was not derived from reflection on man's social and spiritual nature, but from his innate tendency, in common with other animals, to seek pleasure and shun pain. In educating children, consequently, one's master-aim was the promotion of the general happiness. There was no theoretical reason why the state should do anything to promote this education.

Nothing could be further from this prevailing orthodoxy of the mid-nineteenth century than the idealism which was to challenge it and for a time upstage it between 1870 and 1920. But idealism did not burst upon the old order quite unheralded with the publication of the first British neo-Hegelian philosophy around 1870. The previous half century had already witnessed a growing dissatisfaction, both among literary men and among theologians, with the old Enlightenment order. Carlyle's was the most powerful voice, declaiming in tones which tend to jar on our modern ears, but which deeply affected his contemporaries, against the absence of spiritual values in the new industrial society. Though too unsystematic a thinker to be called a philosopher, Carlyle's leading ideas were philosophical none the less, being inspired directly by German idealism, especially that of Fichte. This metaphysics—Kant's and Schelling's, perhaps, more than Fichte's—was also the source of Coleridge's religious and political thought. It is via Coleridge that Wordsworth came to incorporate in his poems the idealist conception of the spirituality of nature and hence its educative influence. Coleridge's *Church and State* (1830) took over from the idealists the thesis that the state is a spiritual entity, mediating between man and God. Just as Fichte argued for a class of scholars to devote themselves to raising the spiritual level of the state, not least by their educative influence on the rest of the population, so Coleridge, for similar reasons, advocated a 'Clerisy', that is, a large body of clergymen, scholars and teachers who were to form part of a 'National Church', engaging in scholarship, advanced teaching and more general parochial work of an educative kind, thus leaving no corner of the country 'without a resident guide, guardian and instructor' (Willey, 1949, p. 46, quoting from Coleridge, *op. cit.*). State funds were to be provided to support the work of this National Church.

Coleridge's belief that the Anglican church, though imperfect, could, through its network of parochial influences, as well as through its dominance in educational, especially university circles, provide a foundation for a Clerisy, was taken up by two leading religious thinkers of the early nineteenth century, Thomas Arnold and F.D. Maurice. Arnold is known to us today as the prig lampooned by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians*. But Strachey's perception was cruel and one-sided, doing less than justice to Arnold's creative role in nineteenth-century social reform. Like Coleridge before him and like the Rugbyian R.H. Tawney in our own times, he deplored the separation of secular affairs from spiritual, opposing the divorce which evangelicals and puritans made between them and advocating a 'Broad Church', that is a liberal Anglicanism which could embrace other forms of Protestantism within it. Church and state were an indissoluble unity. Like Coleridge, and

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again like Tawney, Arnold wanted part of the national wealth ‘saved out of the scramble of individual selfishness and set apart for ever for public purposes’ (Willey, p. 57, quoting from Arnold’s *Principles of Church Reform*). In Tawney’s age such funds would be used for what would then be considered the purely secular activities of a welfare state. To many of us today Arnold’s view that more public money should be spent on the Establishment, in the shape of the Anglican church, may seem reactionary. But his end—the spiritual enlightenment of the nation—was the same as Tawney’s. Like Coleridge, he saw the educational possibilities of having a Christian scholar in every parish. In his work as headmaster of Rugby, imbuing his pupils with the gospel of hard work, not for purely intellectual but for the higher moral and spiritual ends to which these were subordinate, he helped to give the idea of ‘Clerisy’ a practical embodiment.

F.D. Maurice was another disciple of Coleridge, important as the co-founder, with Kingsley, of ‘Christian Socialism’ in 1848. Maurice shared many of Arnold’s ideas: latitudinarianism, a belief in the spirituality of the state as expressed through a national church, a passion for education. His ‘socialism’, inspired by the revolutionary fervour of 1848, led him to advocate co-operative rather than private ownership of capital and to work with co-operative associations and trades unions. It also led to his founding of a working men’s college in London in 1854.

Carlyle, Thomas Arnold and Maurice were still influential figures, either in their own person or via their disciples, in the intellectual world of the 1870s with which our story begins. This is perhaps especially so for Oxford. Carlyle’s most famous follower was John Ruskin, who was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford (1870–9) and who united Carlyle’s denunciations of *laissez-faire* and Fichtean belief in a new class of spiritual leaders with a passion for the history of art. Matthew Arnold, the son of Thomas, had been appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1857, a post which he held concurrently with the school inspectorship which remained his main career. Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* appeared in 1869. The influence of his father, and through him of Coleridge and the Germans, is evident in his criticism of the narrow ‘Hebraism’ of the dissenters, or Philistines, and in his reliance on the state to educate men of ‘culture’, that is ‘Hellenists’ committed to the values of spirituality and rationality, whether expressed in literary, religious or political activity. We shall see later and in more detail how Arnold’s general social theory led him to press for a national system of secondary education, on Continental lines, to raise the ‘intelligence’, as he put it, of the largely dissenting middle classes. For the moment it is enough to note that there was nothing of exclusive élitism in this call for middle-class education. Arnold, like Coleridge and Thomas Arnold, wanted educated values to permeate the whole nation. ‘The men of culture’, he claimed, ‘are the true apostles of equality.’ By its attachment to critical reason, its opposition to stock notions and narrow prejudices, culture ‘seeks to do away with classes’ altogether (Arnold, 1869, p. 44).

In his attachment to the state as a spiritual organism, Arnold, according to his biographer, Lionel Trilling, generally passed for a disciple of Hegel ‘probably without ever having read him’ (Trilling, 1939, p. 90 fn.). The genealogy of his ideas which we have sketched in part (the Greeks and Wordsworth were among other major influences) may help to explain why this was so. German idealism came to England first not as a worked-out philosophical system but embedded in the literary, religious and socio-political works of writers like those whom we have mentioned. In the 1870s and later it became systematized. The ease

with which this occurred, and the rapidity with which its ideas, in their systematized form, were able to permeate the intellectual world, were due not a little to the already widespread influence of idealist ways of thinking which we owe to these men.

It was at Balliol College, Oxford, in the 1860s and 1870s that this systematization took place. A leading figure here was T.H.Green (1836–82), who was a Fellow of Balliol from 1860 until his death. It was he, pre-eminently, who wove together the various idealist strands of thought of an unsystematic nature and reconnected them with the Greek and German philosophy which inspired them. But the creation of a British school of idealism was not all due to Green. More must be said about the role which Balliol College had in this process, and more particularly, about the influence of Green's tutor, Benjamin Jowett.

Jowett (1817–93) is important in several ways. First, it was he who introduced Hegel's philosophical system into England. In 1844, some ten years before Green went up to Oxford, Jowett, then a young tutor at Balliol, visited Germany to make a study of current philosophical writings; he quickly became absorbed in Hegel, whose influence in his own country was then beginning to decline. According to his official biographers, Jowett remained for several years after this an ardent, though an independent, student of Hegel. It added a new dimension to his thinking, which was manifested through his teaching and informal associations with students, rather than in his writings. Jowett had no interest in constructing philosophical systems; and when Green came to develop his own system out of Hegel and other idealist influences Jowett was less than lukewarm. For all his later distrust of Hegelian systems, however, he acknowledged as late as the 1880s that he had received a greater stimulus from Hegel than from anyone else.¹

Jowett's interest in Hegel was only one aspect of his idealist cast of mind, which permits us to classify him with Coleridge, Carlyle, Maurice and the two Arnolds as one of the pre-systematic progenitors of British idealism. Plato was an abiding influence. Jowett's translations of the dialogues, especially of the *Republic*, are now classics. He saw his Balliol undergraduates rather as Plato saw his Guardians, urging them to work hard not only in the pursuit of academic excellence alone, but also in order to devote themselves, having left Oxford, to public service of one sort or another. How far he was influenced here by Hegel in particular is unclear. Certainly Hegel's insistence in his *Philosophy of Right* on a rigorously educated 'universal class' of civil servants and teachers who were to maintain the spiritual unity of the state against individualistic pressures from below has affinities with both Jowett's thought and practice. But then, as we have seen, this kind of Platonic solution to the problem of social disintegration was a commonplace among the other idealist-inclined thinkers we have mentioned, from Fichte, through Coleridge and Carlyle, to both Thomas and Matthew Arnold.

Between Jowett and the Arnolds there were also more particular connexions. It was under Jowett's regime at Balliol, first as tutor, then, after 1870, as Master, that the famous link between the college and Rugby School became firmly welded. Jowett's gospel of hard work and public service was little different from Thomas Arnold's. Another link with Matthew Arnold is that he was an undergraduate at Balliol in the early years of Jowett's fellowship.

Jowett's Platonic conception of the links between the university and public life made him an enthusiastic supporter of the campaign for university reform. He helped to turn Oxford away from medievalism and bring it into closer touch with the leading social, intel-

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lectual and political movements of the day. One of his ‘pet crotchets’, which, as we shall see, was shared by T.H.Green, was to raise the value of scholarships, so as to ‘provide the means for many more persons of the middling class to find their way through the University into professions’ (Faber, 1957, p. 197).

T.H.Green’s idealism owed not a little to the work of his teacher and colleague Jowett and the other pre-systematic idealists we have been describing. In broad outline Hegelian, with a strong Kantian emphasis, it also, especially in its ethical and political doctrines, brought to bear these other, native, lines of thought, fusing them with German-inspired philosophy in a new synthesis.

Green, the son of an evangelical clergyman, was a pupil of Rugby and Balliol. Melvin Richter mentions the ‘faith he constructed, like so many others in his age, out of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dr Arnold, Carlyle, F.D.Maurice and Kingsley’ (1964, p. 47). Of these, Maurice’s influence on him is of particular interest, since one of Maurice’s best-known disciples, D.J. Vaughan (1825–1905), vicar of St Martin’s, Leicester, and the founder of what became the Vaughan Working Men’s College in the same city, was Green’s uncle. Green never lost hold of his uncle’s Christian Socialist principles. He used to visit him regularly throughout his life (op. cit., p. 42).

Through his critiques of empiricism in his posthumous *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883), in which he outlined his positive metaphysical views and the ethics he built on them, and his *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* (1895), Green built up a wide-ranging and eclectic idealist philosophy, Hegelian in its broadest outlines, as we have said, but argued through without the head-breaking abstractions of Hegelian logic. It rapidly became enormously influential, both in the development of British philosophy and, more generally, as an inspiration for social reformers.

Speaking of the new idealist philosophy as a whole, Anthony Quinton stated in a recent lecture: ‘In less than ten years (from 1865) a series of works came out, bearing a strong Hegelian imprint, from those who were to be the leaders and inspirers of a whole generation of British philosophers. For the next thirty years absolute idealism maintained an unchallenged primacy, both in volume of publications and in its hold over the loyalties of university students’ (1971, p. 14). Among Green’s disciples and fellow idealists in the 1870s were A.C.Bradley at Balliol, his brother F.H.Bradley at Merton, Bernard Bosanquet at University College and William Wallace at Merton. The best known of these in philosophical circles today is F.H.Bradley (1846–1924), whose *Appearance and Reality* (1893) reargued Hegelian metaphysics on a new logical foundation. Bradley led a retired academic life in Merton College, Oxford, and lacked the concern for public affairs typical of the idealists. His *Ethical Studies* (1876), however, reinforced the Greek-Hegelian insistence that an individual is essentially a member of a society and stressed, in a somewhat un-Hegelian way, as we shall see, that it is that society which lays down one’s ethical code for one in the shape of ‘my station and its duties’.²

Green’s influence was not restricted to professional philosophers. Collingwood recorded in his *Autobiography*: ‘The school of Green sent out into public life a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that philosophy, and in particular the philosophy they had learnt at Oxford, was an important thing, and that their vocation was to put it into practice.... Through this effect on the minds of its pupils, the philosophy of Green’s school might be found, from about 1880 to about 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every part of

the national life' (1944 edn., p. 17). Green's philosophy, as will become more evident later, achieved this remarkable effect because it met so exactly the spiritual needs of young men brought up in some orthodox Christian faith who, like Green himself in his youth, could no longer accept without qualification both that faith and also the religious vocation which, for university students, so often went with it. Green taught his readers that the saintly ideal of a parish priesthood was not the only, and perhaps not always the most effective, way of helping to realize God's purposes. Not only his readers: his hearers, too. As the first layman to fill the office of tutor at Balliol (1860), Green continued the clerical tradition, later emulated by his friend Edward Caird, by delivering sermons to the undergraduates. Published posthumously, two of them, 'The Witness of God' and 'Faith', subtitled 'Two Lay Sermons', contained passages which, ascribed by Mrs Humphrey Ward in her novel *Robert Elsmere* to the 'Professor Grey' whom she modelled on Green, inspired Elsmere to seek for 'great ideas' and 'great causes'. Towards the end of his second sermon, delivered in 1878, Green told his audience:

Those of us to whom University life is merely an avenue to the great world, would do well betimes to seek opportunities of co-operation with those simple Christians whose creed, though we may not be able exactly to adopt it, is to them the natural expression of a spirit which at the bottom of our heart we recognize as higher than our own. In the everyday life of Christian citizenship, in its struggle against ignorance and vice, such opportunities are readily forthcoming (pp. 102–3).

The 'struggle against ignorance', we should note, is uppermost in Green's mind. We shall see later, and in more detail, the tangible results of this exhortation: in the educational work of his friend and colleague Arthur Acland, for instance, and that of Acland's follower, Michael Sadler. Robert Morant, Britain's most famous educational civil servant, was inspired by Green's lay sermons as an undergraduate at New College; and Edmond Holmes, the author of that bible of early progressivism *What Is and What Might Be*, also fell under his spell at St John's. The story of these men's achievements must wait until Part 2 of this book, since in this part we are more concerned with presenting the philosophy of Green and other idealists than with the details of the reform movement which they initiated.

But the philosophy and the educational history cannot be kept tidily in different boxes. If Green were the only source of inspiration, this might be possible: one could first give an account of Green's ideas and then describe his own and his followers' achievements. But Green, though pre-eminent, was not alone.

In his early days as an undergraduate at Balliol, Green belonged to a small radical and intellectually very powerful essay and discussion club called the Old Mortality Society. Apart from John Nichol, its chairman, Algernon Swinburne, A.V. Dicey, and James Bryce (later to lend his name to the Bryce Commission on Secondary Education in 1895), its membership included T.H. Green (who 'preached Hegel with the accent of a Puritan' (Knight, 1896, p. 159)) and Edward Caird. Caird (1835–1908) was a Scot from Glasgow University, a lifelong admirer of Carlyle, who studied philosophy at Balliol from 1860 until 1866 and, like Green, was one of the earliest of the British disciples of Hegel and a radical in politics. His biographer describes Green and Caird as 'Knights of the Spirit', riding into battle with the same weapons (Jones and Muirhead, 1921, pp. 32–3). Caird returned

8 *Philosophers as educational reformers*

to Glasgow from Balliol in 1866, as Professor of Philosophy, coming back to the college in 1893 as its Master, following Jowett's death. Caird is important in this study in several ways. He attracted about himself in Glasgow much the same kind of socially-committed disciples as Green did in Oxford. Some of these were later to become, in their turn, not merely professors of idealist philosophy but, like J.S.Mackenzie, John MacCunn, Henry Jones and J.H.Muirhead, professors of idealist philosophy of a peculiarly practical turn of mind, many of whom became prominent in educational reform as well as in other fields. The educational work of Henry Jones and John MacCunn, in particular, the first mainly in the practical field and the second in educational theory, will receive our detailed attention in Part 2. There we shall see also how Caird himself was involved in practical educational reform, not least as regards the higher education of women. When he returned to Balliol in 1893, he had far from lost his inspirational powers. He is a link, indeed, between an earlier generation of idealist reformers and a later. R.H.Tawney fell under his influence while an undergraduate at Balliol, so did William Temple and William Beveridge. Philosophically he was much more avowedly Hegelian than Green. Perhaps for this reason his strength lay in exposition rather than, as with Green, in the forging of a semi-independent system.

Graduates of Oxford and of Glasgow constitute all but one of the main educational reformers we shall be discussing in detail in Part 2. The exception is R.B.Haldane (1856–1927). A leading figure in Liberal politics from the 1890s to the First World War, he is perhaps best known to us today for his army reforms before that war. But his dominant and persisting passion was for education, his influence, especially in the area of post-school education, being as we shall see enormous. Haldane was an idealist philosopher in his own right. His *The Pathway to Reality* (1902–3, 1903–4) exhibits the same explicit debt to Hegel as does Edward Caird's philosophy. This and others of his writings are, like Caird's, mostly now of historical interest only. But in his heyday Haldane was a leading member of the group of young idealist philosophers influenced by T.H.Green. With Caird, Henry Jones and others he contributed to the *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* (1883) dedicated to Green and edited by Seth and Haldane. Unlike virtually all the other disciples of Green and Caird who appear in this book, however, Haldane was not a student of either of them in the institutional sense. He was a graduate of Edinburgh, having first been drawn towards idealism by his reading of Fichte and Hegel, during a term spent at Göttingen in 1874 under the philosopher R.H.Lotze (Haldane, 1929, pp. 6–19).³

There is one other idealist philosopher, of greater eminence than Haldane and whose impact on educational reform was even more powerful, who like Haldane, was deeply affected by Green's philosophy without having been one of his students. His philosophical and educational achievements will, however, gain him little more than a paragraph or two in Part 2. This is because he was an American and his educational work was within the American, not the British system. We are referring to John Dewey (1859–1952). Some may find it strange to find this torch-bearer of progressivism placed in a common bracket with all these Hegelians. But a Hegelian Dewey most certainly was in his early days; and it was the shattering effect upon him of reading Green that turned him into one.

T.H.Green's central place in this network of philosophical influences on education should now be fairly plain and will become even plainer as we go on. Partly for this reason, and partly because of the scope, accessibility and interconnectedness of his ideas, the ensuing philosophical sketch of idealist metaphysics, ethics, political and educational thought

will draw heavily on his works, especially on the *Prolegomena to Ethics* and the *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*. But, as we have seen, other philosophers, Kant, Fichte and Hegel in particular, were influential in their own right on the educational reformers, not only via whatever mediate influence they had on Green. Their contribution will be shown in what follows in two ways: by indicating, where appropriate, Green's dependence on them: and by sketching out those others of their educationally-relevant ideas which were important in their own right. In Chapter 2 we will begin with a sketch of idealist views about the ultimate nature of reality, proceeding to ethics in Chapter 3 and political philosophy in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will conclude Part 1 with a discussion of idealist educational theory.

Nature, man and God

Reality for the idealist is an organic whole. It is not basically a mass of discrete, unconnected atoms as empiricists believe. Neither is it divided, as many of the latter also believe, into two sharply distinguished realms of being, the material and the mental. Reality is of one kind only—spiritual. The world of nature and the world of our mental life are interconnected embodiments of this spiritual reality. This is not to say that this reality constitutes a single substance, within which all the distinguishing features of natural phenomena and human consciousness are engulfed. Hegelian idealism is no featureless monism. Reality—the Absolute or Eternal Spirit—lives in and through the variegated concrete phenomena which constitute it. For the whole to flourish, the parts, too, must flourish, in all their manifold variety.

To understand this metaphysics we have to go back briefly to Kant's revolutionary critique of eighteenth-century empiricism. David Hume had shown that experience can teach us less about the physical world and about our minds than earlier empiricists like Locke and Berkeley believed. Experience alone cannot inform us of the existence of material substances, only of certain perceptual impressions: in more modern terminology, in looking at an apple, for instance, we can have experience only of certain red, shiny and round sense-data, not of an apple-substance. We cannot experience, either, a substantial self, or mind: all we can know of by introspection is feelings, ideas, images, which succeed each other in time. Causal relations, whether between items in the physical world or between mind and matter, are just as unknowable as material or mental substances. Our common—and scientific—view of reality as a network of phenomena in causal interaction comes, Hume claimed, not from experience alone, as empiricism strictly demanded, but from psychological habits we have acquired of imputing a *necessary* connexion between spatially contiguous events which can be known by experience merely to have regularly succeeded each other in time. If we leave common sense for philosophy, we end up in scepticism over whether anything can exist except the disconnected sense-data and data of introspection which we experience.

Kant's philosophical revolution consisted in examining the empiricists' central concept, that of experience, and showing that it was far from the simple idea which they had assumed it was. For experience to be possible, Kant argued in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, it had to be the experience of a unitary self, operating within a spatio-temporal world of physical substances in causal interaction with each other. The argument for this remarkable conclusion—the deduction of a world of selves and objects from the mere fact that experience exists—is long and intricate. It does not concern us here. What *is* important for our purposes, however, is that this world which Kant so deduced was only the world as experienced by creatures with our (human) kind of sensibility and powers of understanding—a world, that is, of 'phenomena', not of 'noumena'. The noumenal world is a world of 'things-in-themselves', real objects (including selves) lying behind the 'phenomena' of which they are the causes, but objects inaccessible to our understanding.

There is, therefore, in Kant's philosophy a fundamental dualism, a gulf between the world as it appears to us and the world as it really is. *Theoretical* understanding can provide no knowledge of the latter. Our only insight into it, according to Kant, can come from reflection on the presuppositions of our *moral* experience. As moral beings we have free will. We cannot, therefore, belong to the phenomenal world, since that world is governed only by causal relations between phenomena and such a total determinism leaves no room for free action. As moral selves we must belong, then, to the noumenal world. But morality would not exist—we would not have room for talk of moral 'duties' and 'obligations'—unless there were also a non-moral part of our nature which required to be kept under control for the sake of moral ends. We have such a nature: we desire happiness in different forms and seek to avoid pain. But this part of us does not belong to the noumenal, but to the phenomenal world. The fundamental dualism divides our self in two as well. It sets up an unbridgeable gulf between our real or moral self and the world of nature.

Kant is an important influence on the British idealist reformers whom we are studying, in three ways: via his disciple Fichte (1762–1814); via Hegel; and in his own right.

One of the central difficulties in Kant's metaphysics is his postulation of a realm of noumena, or things-in-themselves lying behind and causally responsible for the phenomena of nature. The difficulty is this. If all one's knowledge of nature is restricted to phenomena, then how can one know that there are noumena lying behind them? Fichte sweeps away the difficulty by refusing to postulate the existence of these noumena. Nature comes to be confined to phenomena alone. In so confining it, Fichte transforms the Kantian system into idealism. The duality between the world of consciousness and the physical world disappears. There is now nothing but consciousness. But *which* consciousness? The existence of the phenomenal natural world still poses a problem. How and why has that world come about?

Before answering that question, let us turn back from Fichte's account of nature to his account of man. Here, far from rejecting Kant's perception of man as a moral being *par excellence*, Fichte sharpened and enlarged it. Where Kant's main preoccupation was to reconcile, if possible, the claims of physical science on the one hand and morality on the other, Fichte, brought up as a theological student, had little interest in science: ethico-religious questions about the destiny of man were all-important to him. Not only are individual men, according to Fichte, to be seen under moral categories; so, too, is reality as a whole. Nothing exists which is not related to a single underlying moral purpose. This is as true of nature as it is of man. Man, clearly, has not created nature, even in its phenomenal form. Nature owes its being to what Fichte calls the Ego, or the Absolute Ego. It is this absolute that has brought the natural world into existence via its productive imagination. Nature is thus the creation of an ultimate spiritual reality. As to why this Ego has taken the trouble of creating nature, the answer is clear. The underlying purpose of all things is ethical. The only intrinsic good, not only of individual men but of the universe as a whole, is the free exercise of the good will, the autonomous acceptance of a self-imposed moral law. But morality, as Kant himself pointed out, implies a conflict between duty and contrary inclinations. These inclinations derive from the fact that we are embodied, that is, a part of the order of nature. The cosmic significance of nature, in Fichte's eyes, is that it has been created for a moral purpose, to allow the Absolute Ego and the individual egos which are its vehicles a field in which their moral strivings can take place.