

The Logical Foundations  
of Bradley's Metaphysics

*Judgment, Inference, and Truth*

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## Faith, Idealism, and Logic

Lord Macaulay, man of letters, member of Parliament, the only historian ever raised to the peerage on the strength of his work, recorded in his diary in 1852 his first and only attempt to read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

I received today a translation of Kant. . . . I tried to read it, but found it utterly unintelligible, just as if it had been written in Sanscrit. Not one word of it gave me anything like an idea except a Latin quotation from Persius. It seems to me that it ought to be possible to explain a true theory of metaphysics in words that I can understand. I can understand Locke, and Berkeley, and Hume, and Reid, and Stewart. I can understand Cicero's *Academics*, and most of Plato; and it seems odd that in a book on the elements of metaphysics . . . I should not be able to comprehend a word. (Blanshard 1954, 1, quoting Trevelyan 1923, 515)

Despite this reaction from one of Britain's leading intellectuals, in twenty-five years the philosophy of Kant and, more amazing still, Hegel had progressed from being unintelligible to providing much of the metaphysical backbone of the dominant philosophy. It supplanted both empiricism and the Scottish philosophy of common sense, while claiming possession of articulate bands of followers at Glasgow and Oxford. This change in the philosophical climate was certainly not the result of the attractive style in which German philosophy was written. It was not the result of the fact that in the 1840s many Balliol men began to converse and correspond (among themselves, of course) in German, although this speeded the process (Faber 1957, 179). Despite the common concerns of British romantic poets and German philosophers, it was not the activities of poets that domesticated the alien philosophy, although some of them, particularly Wordsworth and Coleridge, provided essential aid (A. C. Bradley

1969). More than anything else it was a result of the fact that German philosophy provided a contribution to the leading intellectual concern of thinking inhabitants of Britain: evangelical Christianity. In this chapter I explain how Idealism provided a defense of the faith and how the need for such a defense was the force behind the rise of British Idealism. To do this I will begin by briefly describing the Victorian crisis of faith. I will then explain the stages by which German idealism, particularly in its Hegelian form, developed in Britain as a response to it: how the elements for this defense were introduced by James Hutchinson Stirling, elaborated by William Wallace and Edward and John Caird, and systematized by T. H. Green. I will conclude by explaining how internal problems in the Hegelian defense of religion engendered the need for an idealistic examination of the principles of logic, a need that F. H. Bradley attempted to satisfy.

## I

Nineteenth-century Britain was the scene of an evangelical revival. It began much earlier, in 1739, with the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield, and by the mid-Victorian years it had affected the whole of Victorian society. Its physical presence in the form of sermons and religious pamphlets, the most common Victorian publications, was enormous. By the time of his death in 1892, the most popular Victorian preacher, Charles Spurgeon, had sold 50,000,000 copies of his sermons. A young Victorian from a good family might hear as many as 1,000 sermons before reaching majority (Young 1960, 14). Those less exposed to sermons would still encounter Christianity as a central concern in almost every serious piece of Victorian literary culture. Its effects extended from the printed word to language itself. Biblical categories were commonly used to categorize people; prostitutes, for example, were Magdalenes. It was politically important as well. Evangelical propaganda led to the suppression of duels and blood sports, evangelical drives to protect children in factories enjoyed some success, evangelicals played an important role in prison reform, and in their most impressive accomplishment by 1807 they had succeeded in abolishing the slave trade (Halévy 1961, 453–7). They played a dominant role in education: 55 percent of children between 5 and 15 were enrolled in church-run Sunday schools. Every major figure in British political life from 1830 to 1870 with the exception of Palmerston was touched by evangelicalism (Ensor 1936, 137). It has even been claimed that evangelicalism was responsible for the stability

of the institutions of British society in a revolutionary century (Halévy 1961, 387). As R. C. K. Ensor has said, "No one will ever understand Victorian England who does not appreciate that among highly civilized, in contradistinction to more primitive, countries, it was one of the most religious that the world has ever known" (Ensor 1936, 137).<sup>1</sup> The intellectual, moral, and political cultures of Victorian Britain were based on evangelical Christian foundations.

Yet its success created problems. There were two essential elements in evangelicalism. First, evangelicalism was marked by its concern with individuals, not only in this life but in the next. Earthly life was important only as a preparation for eternity, when individuals would be judged for their actions during their earthly lives and punished or rewarded accordingly. Even more important was a second belief which grounded the first, that the Bible was literally true. This included belief in a transcendent God who created the world in time (Webb 1933, 9). Yet despite the centrality of these beliefs in Victorian life, by the mid-Victorian years the second belief was being seriously challenged by the natural sciences and by scholarly studies of Scripture.

The challenge came initially from geology and then from biology. As geology established itself as a science in the early nineteenth century, it became apparent that geological processes operated on a larger time scale than allowed for by the number of generations, as recorded in Scripture, since the creation. The age and variety of fossils presented additional problems. If God had created the animals for Adam and his children to have dominion over and preserved them with the aid of Noah, why were there fossils of extinct species? The active involvement of gentleman scientists, including a large number of clergy, in geology exacerbated the conflict. Numerous attempts were made in early Victorian Britain to reconcile the Biblical account of creation and Noah's flood with the presence of fossils, but none of these attempts met general acceptance.<sup>2</sup> As Ruskin remarked, "If only the geologists would let me alone, I could do quite well, but those dreadful hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses" (Himmelfarb 1968, 239). The conflict became more extreme when Charles Darwin proposed his theory of evolution. This theory not only eliminated the need for divine creation, but it also suggested that the moral of the Garden of Eden story, that human beings have *fallen*, is incorrect. From an evolutionary perspective, human beings have *risen* from lower animals (Webb 1933, 76-7).

Likewise, the scholarly study of Scripture challenged the evangelical belief in the literal truth of the Bible. This attack, too, was a result of the

success of the natural sciences. Because of the outstanding achievements of natural philosophy, efforts were made to define scientific method and apply it to the moral sciences as well. The most familiar of these attempts is embodied in John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (Webb 1933, 63–4). Yet as textual principles were applied to Scripture it became apparent that the Biblical narratives could not be construed to be the divinely dictated stories that evangelicals claimed they were. Thoughtful Victorians were thus caught in a conflict between their religious beliefs and their intellectual commitments. They were unwilling to abandon evangelical Christianity, but the intellectual basis for it was rapidly eroding.

Victorian literature provides a record of this conflict, not only between different individuals but even within the same individual. A well-known statement of it was given by the extremely popular poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*. Published in 1850, before the publication of *The Origin of Species*, the poem testifies to the tension already present before the Darwinian controversy. The occasion for the poem was the death of the poet's friend Arthur Hallam. Taken as a whole the poem provides a record of Tennyson's attempt to reconcile himself with Hallam's death. Because part of Tennyson's difficulty in reaching such a reconciliation lay in his skepticism about immortality, the religious doubt most strongly expressed in the poem is doubt about personal immortality. Yet Tennyson's doubt is not confined to immortality. The climax of despair in the poem occurs in Sections 55 and 56 when Tennyson extends this doubt to all spiritual values. Here he represents nature as caring nothing for either individuals or whole species and so crying out against human moral and religious values and burying them along with humanity. In his words

... And he, shall he,  
 Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,  
     Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
     Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,  
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,  
  
 Who trusted God was love indeed  
     And love Creation's final law –  
     Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed –  
  
 Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,  
     Who battled for the True, the Just,  
     Be blown about the desert dust,  
 Or seal'd within the iron hills? (1906, sec. 56)

Tennyson's question is whether a loving God controls the world or whether the world is subject to random violence that will eventually wipe out the only being who ever believed in a loving God. The implication of such an event would be that human values are merely human and not built into the structure of the world by an omnipotent but loving Creator.

As the poem continues, Tennyson gradually becomes reconciled to the death of his friend and, as a consequence, is able to resolve his doubts.<sup>3</sup> He does not, however, find this resolution easily. Part of the power of *In Memoriam* is that it so successfully blends Tennyson's honest doubt with his deep desire for belief. The belief he finally is able to salvage is a tenuous thing – belief without proof, much evidence, or even strong conviction supporting it. It is the personal answer of a poet, but it did not prove to be an intellectually satisfying answer for many thinking Victorians.

Other Victorian writers, like Matthew Arnold and A. H. Clough, were conscious of the same conflict, but unable to reach even this tentative solution. This lack of a firm resolution of the conflict in literature was admitted by the writers and stressed by the philosophers. Many thinking Victorians did not find a personal solution like Tennyson's intellectually comforting. They could admit that there is much good philosophy in poems like *In Memoriam* while recognizing that the personal view expressed by the poet is not a reasoned solution to the problem. Someone who held it as a poetic truth might still believe it to be false from a scientific standpoint. Many regarded this as an undesirable state of affairs and looked to philosophy to reconcile these beliefs in a rational way (e.g., Green 1906, 1–4).

Yet the two dominant philosophies of mid-Victorian Britain seemed unable to do this. At the end of his life John Stuart Mill did bring the resources of the empiricist tradition to bear on religious problems, but in a way that disconcerted rather than consoled. Mill's reluctant admission that supernatural religion had some utility and that there is some evidence for the existence of a limited, finite God failed to ease the distress of his more religious contemporaries (1969, 419–20, 482). Furthermore, in his last major work, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, Mill succeeded for all practical purposes in destroying the reputation of the last original member of the Scottish school of common sense. Taking its origin from Thomas Reid, this school claimed to defend common sense and religion against Hume's skepticism. It was the other considerable philosophy in mid-Victorian Britain. By attacking Hamilton so effectively, Mill showed that the Scottish school was unable to reconcile religious belief with scientific theory.

The inability of these philosophies to deal with the Victorian problem was not just the result of the fact that their arguments were unacceptable. Even more telling was the fact that neither school seemed to be able to address the issues effectively. Mill had nothing substantial but doubts to add to the views of William Paley, views that Darwin undermined, while the Scottish defense of religion seemed to reduce itself to nothing more than simple agnosticism. As a contemporary writer put matters, with

... the recent crowding in of new scientific conceptions. ... Neither system seems to present its leading principle bent as one would like to see it into the curves and junctures of the most anxious thought of our time. (Masson 1877, 137; quoted in James Bradley 1979, 16)

The stage was thus set for the arrival of a new form of philosophy. Mid-Victorian culture faced a serious question which its members were able to formulate effectively but unable to answer in a principled, rational way. A new philosophy seemed necessary to provide the answer.

## II

The stirrings of a new philosophy had been felt for some time. In separate ways Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle voiced important themes found in German idealism. Neither, however, developed them in the systematic way that some thinking Britons felt was needed to deal with the current crisis. At the same time, two British philosophers, John Grote and J. F. Ferrier, began to develop their own versions of idealism. Unfortunately, John Grote, who had the disadvantage of being eclipsed by his older utilitarian brother George, died before he was able to effectively systematize his views, and Ferrier's works, although systematic, never captured public attention. The first idealistic work to do so was James Hutchinson Stirling's dark, uneven Carlylean tome, *The Secret of Hegel*.<sup>4</sup> This book introduced German philosophy as the answer to the British crisis of faith and contained, in a very rough form, the strategy for defending the faith that subsequent British idealists would develop.

While visiting Germany in 1857, Stirling, a Glasgow physician, saw the name "Hegel" and "was very peculiarly impressed by it" (1898, xviii). After learning that Hegel was by repute the deepest and the darkest philosopher, the one who had reconciled philosophy to Christianity, Stirling set out to master his system. The result, published eight years later, was a two-volume, 1,000-page opus of irregular contents. After opening with a preface defending the value of German philosophy, it continues with a

series of long notes, originally not intended for publication, that chronicle Stirling's thoughts as he began to understand Hegel. This section, amounting to almost one-third of the book, is aptly titled "The Struggle to Hegel." It includes discussions of Kant, Coleridge, Fichte, Schelling, and Plato, along with explanations of some parts of Hegel. This is followed by a translation of the first section of *The Science of Logic*, "Quality," to which is appended a commentary. The next section is a partial translation interspersed with commentary of the second section of *The Science of Logic*, "Quantity." The volume is rounded out by a discussion of some of Hegel's commentators and an application of Hegel's views to what Stirling saw as the problems of his day.<sup>5</sup>

*The Secret of Hegel* was by no means a bestseller, but for such a weighty book it sold remarkably well. There were many favorable reviews, and Stirling received letters filled with praise from writers as diverse as J. E. Erdmann, Thomas Carlyle, T. H. Green, and Ralph Waldo Emerson (Muirhead 1931, 170–1). More than anyone else, Stirling introduced Hegel to a British audience and made his views intellectually respectable, even if not fully understood. He also provided an important service by finding English equivalents for some of Hegel's German terminology. Most important of all, he succeeded in showing in a preliminary way how Hegel could soothe mid-Victorian anxieties (James Bradley 1979, 17–20).

Four elements in Stirling's approach to Hegel were particularly important for the early British idealists. First, Stirling situated Hegel's thought in the series of systems of philosophy that, in Stirling's view, constitute the history of philosophy. Unlike many philosophers in this century who have seen the history of philosophy as a series of attempts, often misguided, to solve the perennial problems of philosophy, Stirling saw it as an ordered sequence of philosophical systems. This order exhibited the progress of reason, because each new system added essential elements for the rational understanding of reality.<sup>6</sup> This sequence reached its climax in Hegel, who showed that reality was completely a manifestation of reason. Stirling thought Hegel was the greatest thinker of the modern world and closed modern thought just as Aristotle closed ancient thought (1898, 78). He thus approached Hegel as a systematic philosopher whose thought should be evaluated by comparing it with other systems of thought.

Second, Stirling approached Hegel through Kant. This allowed Stirling to attribute Kant's project of reconciling science and religion to Hegel. Like a good Scottish nationalist, Stirling claimed that just as Hume inspired Kant, so Kant inspired Hegel (1898, 185). But while Hume awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers and so changed the direction of

philosophy, Hegel merely completed what Kant had initiated. As Stirling put it, the secret of Kant is the secret of Hegel (1898, 98). Kant's secret, his Copernican revolution, consisted in his claim that the familiar objects of the everyday world are partially constituted by the experiencing subject. In Stirling's view, this meant that sensations, contributed by a source external to finite minds, the thing-in-itself, are converted into objects by a priori subjective machinery in finite minds. This machinery includes the forms of space and time and the categories that are functions of the transcendental unity of apperception. Because these categories are functions that enable finite minds to form judgments, they are rational, logical categories. Consequently, the world as finite minds know it, the world constructed by subjectivity from sensation, is shot through with rationality. This is made possible by the fact that it is a purely phenomenal world. It depends for its existence on the rational activity of a subject working with materials contributed by the unknown thing-in-itself (1898, 156–8).

As Stirling saw it, Kant succeeded in showing that the phenomenal world is rational, but he failed to show that this is the only world there is – he failed to eliminate the thing-in-itself. By failing to include the thing-in-itself, Kant's Copernican revolution was incomplete. Stirling thought that it was completed by Hegel, who eliminated the thing-in-itself and thus showed that reality was completely in accordance with reason. Instead of being the product of sensations from an unknown source, Hegel showed, objects were categories materialized and externalized by the divine mind in which finite human minds participate (1898, 84–5).

The third element in Stirling's approach that was appropriated by the early British idealists was Stirling's belief that the work in which Hegel succeeded in eliminating the thing-in-itself was not the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but *The Science of Logic*. It did this, Stirling thought, by providing a proper deduction of the categories. Rather than merely following Kant's lead and organizing the categories by means of an external principle, which in Kant's case was supposedly a list of the kinds of judgments recognized by formal logicians, Hegel showed that the categories defined the interconnected, unfolding nature of thought and reality (1898, 335–8). Hegel's *Logics* thus became the vehicle by means of which Hegel entered Britain.

The last and most important element in Stirling's approach to Hegel was his use of Hegel as a Christian apologist. Stirling differed from later idealists, however, by remaining relatively orthodox. In the "Preliminary Notice" to *The Secret of Hegel* he announced that "Kant and Hegel . . . have

no object but to restore Faith – Faith in God – Faith in the immortality of the Soul and the Freedom of the Will – nay, Faith in Christianity as the Revealed Religion – and that, too, in perfect harmony with the Right of Private Judgment, and the Rights, or Lights, or Might of Intelligence in general” (1898, xxii). Stirling thought Hegel’s *Logic* shows – this is the secret of Hegel – that the world is a materialization of rational thought. But, as Stirling reminds his readers, this is not the thought of a finite spirit but of “God as he is in his ‘eternal essence before the creation of the world and any finite spirit’” (1898, 85).<sup>7</sup> In proving that the world is an externalization of thought, Hegel is thus proving, at least in Stirling’s view, the existence of God. Because reality is God’s thought, no scientific investigation, if properly conducted, can cast doubt on God’s existence.

Even though the strategy behind Stirling’s use of Hegel is clear, more is required to show that Hegel’s argument vindicates Christianity. At the very least, some account is needed of why the thought with which Hegel is concerned is the thought of God. Surprisingly, Stirling provided no such account. In fact, *The Secret of Hegel* lacks any detailed discussion of Hegel’s philosophy of religion. Instead, Stirling identifies Hegel with Christianity in two other ways. First, he quotes a large number of passages from Hegel that testify to Hegel’s sympathy with revealed Christian doctrines and to the “depth and fervency” of his religious feelings. Second, he makes a large number of extravagant, unsupported claims about the religious implications of Hegel’s views. It comes as no surprise that Stirling thinks that Hegel has shown Christianity to be the one and only revealed religion. It is more surprising to find him saying that with Kant’s help Hegel vindicated the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God. And it is quite astonishing that he took Hegel’s claim that Spirit is embodied in finite particulars to show that the soul is necessarily immortal and that for Hegel God is a personal God (Stirling 1898, 717–21). Stirling did not defend these claims. He only assured his readers that Hegel had shown them to be true.

This allowed Stirling to use Hegel uncritically to combat the two main scholarly disciplines that were undermining the faith of his contemporaries. He was more successful in defusing the force of the scholarly study of Scripture. He criticized it for grubbing in historical fact and, following Hegel, argued that the essence of Christianity is not to be found in its external, historical details but in its spiritual core. Like other matters of fact, historical facts are, he said, contingent and not essential to the faith. It is the spiritual core of the faith that matters, not its accidental, historical manifestations (1898, 728–9).

He was less successful in dealing with the other major challenge to Christianity – Darwinism. Because Darwin and Hegel are both concerned with development, Stirling might have attempted to show that they are compatible. Instead, he took the unpromising line that Darwinism committed philosophical mistakes. The major “mistake” identified in *The Secret of Hegel* concerns the transformation of species. Stirling followed a passage in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* (Hegel 1970, 20, sec. 249) by claiming that nature is organized into a system of grades or species. These grades or species can be generated from each other, Hegel claimed, only as logical categories. As really existing, species comprise individuals. Only individuals occupy space and time, which, according to Hegel, is (necessarily!) the realm of contingency. To attempt to identify logical changes in the contingent realm is a mistake. Consequently, Stirling’s criticism of Darwinism is that it confuses a logical transformation with an empirical one (1898, 735–47).<sup>8</sup>

As a footnote to the discussion of Stirling, it is worth noting that even though *The Secret of Hegel* was primarily concerned with religious questions, it did have a social dimension. Stirling was sharply critical of contemporary uses of political economy in British politics. In his view, political economy represented the principle of Enlightenment, self will. It failed to see that reason was not confined to the individual, but that there was a universal reason active in the formation of social institutions. This was the realm of the ethical, and in his view it was essential that it be cultivated in Britain. Following the individual self-interest embodied in political economy would lead only to “a wilderness of self-will and animal rapine” (1898, 716). Stirling had no positive social program to suggest, but his mention of the need for one in this context foretold what was to come from later idealists (1898, 695–719).

Even though Stirling convincingly introduced Hegel to a British audience as a defender of the faith, he failed to give this defense in *The Secret of Hegel*. Moreover, none of his many subsequent works had anything remotely approaching the importance or influence of *The Secret of Hegel*. Although he was widely regarded as one of the pioneers who introduced Hegel into Britain, he did not write the kind of systematic defense of the faith for which many of the educated were looking. Moreover, he never obtained a chair in philosophy and so was not in a position to continue the propagation of idealism by introducing students to Hegel’s work. What he did accomplish, however, should not be underestimated or dismissed with a joke about the title of his main work. He pioneered the first serious British approach to Hegel. By treating Hegel as a systematic

philosopher whose *Science of Logic* completed Kant's system, Stirling introduced the British idealist defense of religion. By arguing that reality is God's thought, he showed how scientific findings could be harmonized with religion.

### III

From the point of view of the British intellectual establishment, Stirling was an outsider. His Hegelian defense of religion was promising, but it did not by itself introduce large numbers of people to Hegel's thought. Others were responsible for the domestication of Hegel. From their academic positions they drew from Hegel the weapons with which they defended Christianity against Darwinism and higher criticism. The academic who inspired this use of Hegel in Britain was Benjamin Jowett, who is remembered today as a liberal theologian, a translator of Plato, and the greatest nineteenth-century master of Balliol College, Oxford. His interest in Hegel marked the beginning of a second stage in the rise of British Idealism.

Jowett's first contact with Hegel came in 1844, when he spent part of his summer vacation in Germany. One of the books he carried with him during the trip was Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Jowett apparently studied Kant during much of the trip and, discovering that Hegel was someone to be taken seriously, met the foremost Hegelian of his day, J. E. Erdmann, then at work on his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, and obtained his advice on the proper manner of studying Hegel. Jowett studied Hegel seriously over the next few years and even prepared a translation of most of the *Logic* from the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In subsequent years Jowett's interests shifted from Hegel to Plato, and his translation was never published, but in later years he insisted that he gained more from Hegel than from any other philosopher. Furthermore, his interest in Plato was related to his idealistic leanings, and he mentions Hegel in some of his introductions to the individual dialogues – for example, the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* (1871a ix; 1871b 239, 445). The most important point, however, was that he encouraged his ablest students to study Hegel. He introduced both Edward Caird and T. H. Green to Hegel, and he was the inspiration for William Wallace's translation of Hegel's *Logic* from *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. It was from Jowett's college, Balliol, that Hegel began radiating into British intellectual life.<sup>9</sup>

The main difference between Stirling's Carlylean Hegel and the figure who began to make a mark at Balliol College was that Stirling's Hegel was

a defender of the faith against modern life, while the Balliol Hegel was a reinterpreter of the faith in conformity to modern life (Bradley 1979, 12–15). This is most clearly illustrated by the fact that Balliol Hegelians seldom used Hegel to defend particular doctrines without reinterpreting them. For example, unlike Stirling, no one from Balliol used Hegel to defend personal immortality, or, more important, to attack Darwin. This difference first became apparent in the work of William Wallace, who like Bradley was a fellow of Merton College.

Wallace's most important contribution to British Idealism was his translation of Hegel's *Logic* from *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. This made available in abbreviated form what most British idealists followed Stirling in regarding as Hegel's major work. The impact of this translation was increased by the fact that Wallace prefaced it with a number of short essays that approached Hegel from a variety of perspectives (1874; 1968). Although Wallace presented a much more balanced approach to Hegel than Stirling – he denied, for example, that there was any secret to Hegel except perseverance – he accepted Stirling's general approach. He, too, regarded Hegel as a systematic philosopher whose *Science of Logic* showed reality to be divine thought and thus completed Kant's project of reconciling science and religion. This approach allowed Wallace to follow Stirling in claiming that the core of Christianity is not historical and that it has nothing to fear from higher criticism (1874, xxvi; 1968, 23–4).

Where Wallace differed from Stirling significantly was in his attitude toward evolution. On this topic he extended Stirling's defense of Christianity by rejecting the inerrancy of Scripture. This enabled Wallace to accept the theory of evolution. Replying to Stirling's criticism of Darwin, Wallace acknowledged the distinction Hegel drew between the development of logical concepts and the evolution of new species. Unlike Stirling, however, Wallace rejected much of Hegel's philosophy of nature, the part of Hegel's system that conflicted with Darwin (Wallace, 1892, xi–xii). Rather than using Hegel's views to criticize Darwin as Stirling had, he emphasized the parallels between Hegel's dialectic and Darwin's account of evolution. Hegel's dialectic, Wallace said, "is the natural selection, caused by the struggle for existence" (Wallace 1874, clxxx).<sup>10</sup> Wallace illustrated this by applying Darwin's use of the similarity between the artificial and natural breeding of animals to the history of philosophy (Darwin 1993, chap. 1). Just as we can learn something about natural selection through artificial breeding, breeding that is under conscious human control, so we can learn something about the natural relationships

between concepts by studying their relations under conscious control – that is, in the history of philosophy. Just as the history of philosophy is a struggle for survival between systems, so is the conceptual development recorded in Hegel's logic (1874 cix–cx; 1968, 62, 114–22). Rather than oppose Darwin, Wallace accepted the theory of evolution and argued that it was the counterpart of the development of the ego that Hegel found in the history of philosophy. Hegel, Wallace thought, described in his *Logic* the pure forms involved in both spheres. By this means Wallace incorporated the theory of evolution into his Hegelian defense of Christianity (1874, lx–lxi). Dismissing Hegel's philosophy of nature allowed him to show how Hegel's account of the identity of thought and reality was consistent with Darwin's theory of evolution. Wallace was thus able to use Hegel to meet both of the major challenges facing mid-Victorian Christianity.

Wallace's contribution to British idealism was thus to translate the shorter version of what the British idealists regarded as Hegel's main work and to show how this work would enable thoughtful Victorians to accept the results of science and higher criticism, while retaining a liberal Christian faith. But he did not himself formulate a detailed general defense of Christianity, even though he showed that the materials for such a defense were present in Hegel. That task was reserved for two Scottish philosophers, the brothers John and Edward Caird.<sup>11</sup> John was fifteen years older than Edward, but his philosophical development was slower. John had little formal training in philosophy. From 1845 until 1862 he served as a minister in a number of Presbyterian parishes. During these years he developed an interest in theology, and in order to follow this interest he learned German. In 1862, after much hesitation, he became the successful candidate for the chair in theology at the University of Glasgow. In 1873 he became principal of the University of Glasgow. His interest in German philosophy seems to have matured following the arrival of his brother Edward in Glasgow. After studying at both Glasgow and Oxford, Edward became a fellow of Merton before returning to Glasgow in 1866 as Professor of Moral Philosophy. During the next twenty-eight years, until Edward succeeded Jowett as master of Balliol, the brothers Caird were very close, having almost daily contact while the university was in session. Their discussions were frequently about philosophy (Edward Caird 1904b, lxiv–lxvii). Although not entirely in agreement (Edward Caird 1904b, lxxvi), they remained among the most Hegelian of the British idealists, and they followed Wallace's lead in using Hegel's *Logic* to insulate Christianity against both Darwinism and higher criticism.

While the Cairds agreed in their Hegelian outlook and while their arguments for it overlapped, they tended to defend Christianity in rather different ways. Edward's main task was to work out a detailed interpretation of Kant's system that was supposed to show why it needed to be completed by Hegel. This he did in his two large books on Kant: *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant* (1877) and *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (1889).<sup>12</sup> He also wrote works on the development of religion generally that exhibited his Hegelian point of view (1893; 1904a).<sup>13</sup> John, as befitted a theologian, focused less on the history of philosophy or of religion and more on the actual content of Christianity. His main philosophical works, *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity* (1904) and *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (1910), are on the nature of the Christian religion.

What the Cairds saw as the goal of this kind of defense is perhaps best summarized by Edward Caird. In his essay "The Problem of Philosophy at the Present Time," he writes:

The need for philosophy arises out of the broken harmony of a spiritual life, in which the different elements or factors seem to be set in irreconcilable opposition to each other; in which, for example, the religious consciousness, the consciousness of the infinite, is at war with the secular consciousness, the consciousness of the finite; or again, the consciousness of the self, with the consciousness of the external world. It is easy to see this, if we reflect on the nature of the controversies which most trouble us at present. (1892, 191–2)

What these controversies were was not secret, but even so Caird goes on to say that it is the task of philosophy to reconcile thoughts about the world, the self, and God. Philosophy thus has the special function of unifying oppositions through a higher synthesis; it finds a way to reconcile opposing views by showing that both depend in crucial ways on common ground.

Although it is impossible to do justice to the wealth of detail in the Cairds' elaboration of this argument, its bare bones are perhaps best illustrated by a very informal argument of John Caird's in his *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. Caird begins by claiming that materialism is self-refuting. The reason is that materialism is an attempt to explain the properties of mind as properties of matter. But to do this, the materialist must begin with a set of data that are nonmental. Following Kant, Caird claims that this is impossible. To conceive of data requires the categories of self-consciousness. Even supposing that bare sensations are given, they do not become data without the unifying action of mind by means of logical categories. Because these data presuppose the existence of mind,

it follows that materialism presupposes the existence of mind and hence is self-contradictory. Caird formulates the result of this argument by saying that *the unity of thought and being* is a principle that it is impossible to doubt. But because this thought cannot be finite human thought, it must be divine thought. Consequently, all knowledge presupposes the existence of God, and any attempt to explain away His existence will be self-contradictory (John Caird 1910, 94–8, 147–9). In particular, Darwinism and higher criticism presuppose the existence of God, so their findings can never conflict with religious faith when it is properly understood. Caird thus claimed to use logic to do what Hegel, he thought, had so effectively done: overcome opposing views by including them in a higher unity.

#### IV

Stirling, Wallace, and the Cairds in their different ways used commentary on Hegel and vastly simplified versions of Hegel's arguments in defense of Christianity. They explained why they thought Hegel's *Logic* showed that reality was identical to God's thought and thus completed Kant's defense of Christianity. Like Wallace, however, the Cairds were dissatisfied with a portion of Hegel's system: his philosophy of nature (Caird 1907, 195–202). In keeping with their regard for the importance of philosophical systems, they needed to incorporate their defense of Christianity into such a system – a system that would not only defend Christianity but that would also provide a defense of morality. But, again like Wallace, they were not systematic philosophers. They did not create a philosophical system to complete their defense of the faith.

The first systematic philosopher among the British idealists, the person who made British idealism into a force in British philosophy and even in British life, was the Oxford philosopher T. H. Green, arguably the most important philosopher to teach at Oxford since John Wyclif (Quinton 2000, 21). After initial success as a Balliol scholar under Jowett, Green became a Balliol fellow, a tutor, a lecturer, and, finally, late in a short career that ended with his death by blood poisoning shortly before his forty-sixth birthday, Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy. Green's achievement was to construct a philosophical system around a Hegelian defense of Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

Like Stirling, Wallace, and the Cairds, Green approached his task historically. He thought philosophy articulated humanity's progressive understanding of the rationality of the world (1885, 1–3; 1888b, 93). But

philosophy in Britain was stagnant. Green thought that the last stage in the development of British philosophy, empiricism, had become *the* popular philosophy and that in a simplistic form it had been codified as British common sense. This happened, Green thought, in spite of the fact that the last great British philosopher, David Hume, had shown that empiricism failed on its own terms. It claimed to give an explanation of the origin of human knowledge, but, as Hume showed, on empiricist principles knowledge is impossible. This failure, especially apparent in the face of higher criticism and evolutionary theory, was in Green's opinion responsible for much of the religious anxiety of his age (1888b, 92–7). Green's plan for removing this anxiety was to replace the popular philosophy – empiricism – with idealism. This was the task Green set for himself in his first substantial work, his destructive 371-page introduction to his edition of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. His thesis was that with Hume empiricism was “played out” and that the cure for the present anxiety was to be found in rethinking the nature of human knowledge and action with the help of Kant and Hegel (1885, 371).

Green saw empiricism as an attempt to explain the origin of ideas and the connections between them that constitute knowledge. Its distinguishing feature for Green is its claim that there are no innate ideas – apart from experience, the mind is empty. The ideas that fill the mind are fainter replicas of what is passively received in sensation or, at least for Hume, fainter replicas of impressions like hope or fear that result from reflecting on ideas received in sensation. Green's fundamental objection to empiricism is that if the mind received all of its contents from sensation, then it would not be aware of relations between ideas. Because knowledge is composed of judgments that require relations between ideas, a mind that received all of its contents from sensation would lack knowledge. Green thinks that empiricists have covered this lacuna in their theory only by conflating judgments and sensations (1885, 19). His critical writings on empiricism are mostly an attempt to show that a mind whose contents were derived from sensory impressions would not be able to relate those contents. Specifically, it would lack the “formal conceptions” like substance and causation that are essential for knowledge (Green 1885, 27). To show this he argues that these relations are neither impressions nor ideas, nor, despite Hume's strenuous attempt in the case of causation to show otherwise, are they habits. From this Green concludes that empiricism, particularly in the form in which it inhabits the popular consciousness, is bankrupt and should be replaced with a very different philosophy.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the fact that Green's arguments are frequently original, his replacement for empiricism is largely derived from Kant and Hegel. In fact, the core of his alternative to empiricism is found in three main things he acknowledged borrowing from Hegel:

That there is one spiritual self-conscious being, of which all that is real is the activity or expression; that we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world; that this participation is the source of morality and religion; this we take to be the vital truth which Hegel had to teach. (1888c, 146)

In other words, Green thought, first, that Hegel had shown reality to be the manifestation of a nonmaterial self-consciousness. Green called this a nonnatural or spiritual principle. Second, he thought this self-conscious spiritual principle was realized in human agents and that, third, it provided a rational foundation for religion and morality. Like his predecessors, Green thought these truths were found in Hegel's *Logic* and that they could be appropriated only by approaching them through Kant's philosophy.

This approach is apparent in the opening book of *Prolegomena to Ethics*, where Green gives the most elaborate version of his argument for the existence of an all-encompassing spiritual principle. Specifically, he tries to show that such a principle is necessary for both knowledge and nature. Green begins his argument by defending Kant's claim that knowledge requires the synthetic activity of the knower. Green calls this synthetic activity a spiritual principle because he thinks it cannot be explained naturalistically. Knowledge, Green says, is always a knowledge of objects that are distinguished from and related to experiences of them. But such objects, he continues, are at least in part constituted by their qualities, and these are at least in part constituted by relations. Following Locke, Green asserts that relations are the work of the mind; only thought makes relations possible. Consequently, objects of knowledge are at least partially constituted or synthesized by a self-conscious mind, one able to distinguish objects from its experiences of them. Thus knowledge, as Green likes to put it, requires a spiritual principle (1906, 16–22).

On Green's interpretation, Kant was content to stop at this point. He claimed that knowable objects are the joint product of sensations contributed by things-in-themselves and the transcendental faculties that structure them. Green is not content to stop here. He argues that if anything at all can be known about the thing-in-itself, if it can even be an