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**Book Section:**

Stern, R.A. (2013) ‘*“My station and its duties”*: Social role accounts of obligation in Green and Bradley. In: Ameriks, K., (ed.) *The Impact of Idealism: Volume 1, Philosophy and Natural Sciences*. Cambridge University Press , 299 - 322. ISBN 9781107039827

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## **‘MY STATION AND ITS DUTIES’: SOCIAL ROLE ACCOUNTS OF OBLIGATION IN GREEN AND BRADLEY**

**Robert Stern**

Different elements in the reception history of German Idealism have had different impacts – such as the Young Hegelians on the philosophy of religion, Neo-Kantianism on the philosophy of science, Kojève on accounts of recognition, Croce on theories of art, and so on. When it comes to the British Idealists, arguably the most obvious candidate for such impact is in the idea of ‘my station and its duties’; for while the British Idealists engaged with many aspects of the thought of both Kant and Hegel (and to a lesser degree also of Fichte and Schelling), it seems that it is their notion of ‘my station and its duties’ that has the greatest resonance today, while their accounts of the Absolute, of relations, of the concrete universal, and other aspects of their idealist metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of mind have been largely forgotten.<sup>i</sup>

In this paper, I want to look again at this idea of ‘my station and its duties’, particularly as it figures in the work of T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley, who pioneered its significance.<sup>ii</sup> For, while it is widely used as a slogan to represent both their ethical and political philosophy and that of idealism more generally, and while it is of continuing influence within certain strands of contemporary ethical and political thinking as an alternative to other approaches,<sup>iii</sup> it is rarely given any detailed treatment in historical terms.<sup>iv</sup> In particular, I would like to ask precisely what theory of duty or obligation this position is meant to embody: that is, how an appeal to this notion is meant to answer a fundamental question in ethical theory, namely how moral obligation is to be accounted for and best understood. It is most usually assumed, I think, that in tying obligations to social roles, the British Idealists were offering what I will call an identificatory account of obligation: that is, acting in a certain way has an obligatory force because it relates to a role which constitutes your identity. I will contrast this sort of theory with two other accounts, which I will call hybrid accounts and social command accounts – and suggest that in fact Green held the former and Bradley the latter; and I will also argue that this puts Green’s account of obligation close to Kant’s, while Bradley may be seen to be following Hegel (who therefore, like Bradley, should also not be seen as offering an identificatory account,

which is often mistakenly what happens when his position comes to be viewed in Bradleyan terms).

As British Idealism is not a terribly well-known development in the history of idealistic thinking, I will begin by saying a little about this distinctive period in British philosophy, and particularly about Bradley and Green. I will then outline the problem of obligation that I think underlies their doctrine of ‘my station and its duties’, and how their approaches fits into the taxonomy of different theories, where I will defend the reading outlined above against the identificatory account.

### **1. Green, Bradley, and British Idealism**

After an initial wave of early pioneers (such as Coleridge and J. F. Ferrier), Green forms part of a first generation of thinkers influenced by German idealism in Britain, alongside others such as J. H. Stirling and the Caird brothers, while Bradley forms part of a slightly later wave, including also J. M. E. McTaggart, Andrew Seth (aka Pringle-Pattison) and Bernard Bosanquet, while later generations include R. G. Collingwood and G. R. G. Mure. In a movement that stretched from the 1860s through to the 1930s or 40s, Green and especially Bradley were significant figures at what is probably its high watermark, which is from roughly the 1880s to the 1920s.

Green however was somewhat older than Bradley, being born 10 years earlier in 1836; but he died young at 46, while Bradley lived until his late 70s, and so outlived Green by 42 years. Both had highly successful academic careers based in Oxford, with Green also having an impact in politics. Green published little in his life-time, where his main contributions were a study of Aristotle and a powerful critique of Hume;<sup>v</sup> but he had several works published posthumously, including *Prolegomena to Ethics*, ‘Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation’, and ‘Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant’,<sup>vi</sup> while the lectures on which these publications were based also had considerable influence. Bradley published considerably more, including *Ethical Studies*, *Appearance and Reality*, and *Principles of Logic*.<sup>vii</sup> As this suggests, Bradley’s work ranged more widely than Green’s, although the latter’s ethics included a substantial metaphysical background, while Bradley’s *Ethical Studies* was considered a fundamental treatise in idealist ethics, to put alongside Green’s own *Prolegomena*.

Despite being frequently grouped together, and despite sharing many ideas and concerns, there are also significant differences between Green and Bradley. This is sometimes characterized by the suggestion that while Green was fundamentally Kantian, Bradley was more Hegelian.<sup>viii</sup> While there is some truth in this (reflected, as we shall see, in their different accounts of obligation), neither followed their respective predecessors in any very orthodox way, nor conceived themselves as doing so – Green insisting that he was at best offering a ‘friendly amendment’ to Kant’s approach in order to save him from himself,<sup>ix</sup> while Bradley openly criticized Hegel despite nonetheless acknowledging his great significance.<sup>x</sup> And both, of course, came under other important influences, some arguably close to Hegel (such as Aristotle and Spinoza), but others arguably not (such as the British Empiricists). At the same time, as is common, neither liked to feel themselves pigeonholed into a movement or reduced to any form of discipleship – Bradley famously warning in the Preface to the first edition of his *Principles of Logic* that ‘As for the “Hegelian School” which exists in our reviews, I know of no one who has met it anywhere else’.<sup>xi</sup> Certainly, unlike some of the British Idealists (such as McTaggart), Green and Bradley published no scholarly works on the German Idealists, but clearly the latter helped to provide some of the key materials and ideas that they shaped after their own fashion, in response to their own concerns and against the background of their own assumptions – where one common point of focus was on the question of moral obligation.

## **2. Theories of moral obligation**

How moral duty and obligation is to be understood has of course been a matter of long-standing debate within philosophy. In the medieval period, and into much of the early modern period too, there were fundamentally three major options in accounting for moral obligation. According to radically voluntarist divine command accounts, the obligatoriness of morality depends on the authority of some divine sovereign or commander, who has the freedom and power to make any act obligatory by so commanding. On natural law accounts, by contrast, the idea is that morality constitutes a natural law in which God plays a more indirect role, where an act is made right and hence something we are obliged to do because it conforms to the nature of things, where God is the source of that nature as creator, but not the source of obligatoriness as commander; moreover, his role as benevolent creator places constraints on what within this creation can turn out to be right or wrong. And there

were also what have been called intermediate divine command positions, that held that what is right only becomes an actual obligation through God's willing that it be done (hence opposing the natural law tradition, which gave God's will a less direct role), but that rightness itself is prior to and independent of obligatoriness and hence of God's will (hence opposing any radical voluntarism, as what God can command is now constrained by what is right independent of that command).

Theories of obligation as they arise in more modern philosophy may be seen to grow out from, but also to break with, these more classical positions in different ways – where it is then these more modern theories that will concern us in considering Green and Bradley and their accounts of duty.

The first such theory can be found in Kant, and I will call it the hybrid theory because, like the intermediate divine command theory (of which I think it is a descendent), it combines a theory of the right with a separate theory of obligation. (Of course, like everything in Kant's philosophy in general and ethics in particular, what I say here is hardly uncontentious, and I will do little to defend the reading in any detail, though I try to do so elsewhere.<sup>xii</sup> And even if my reading of Kant is deemed unacceptable, at least perhaps it will prove a useful background to my account of Green.) As is well know, Kant raises the question of how to explain the peculiar force that morality has for us, which takes the form of duties and obligations – that is, of commands and imperatives, telling us that there are actions which we must or must not perform. Kant calls this feature of morality 'necessitation' or 'constraint' (Nötigung), and he explains it not by recourse to divine command (in the manner of a voluntarist like Crusius), or to the inherent obligatoriness of the natural order of things (in the manner of a rationalist like Wolff), but in terms of the distinction between the holy will and our own, arguing that it is because we have dispositions to do things other than what is right, that the right for us involves a moral 'must'; but for a holy will, which has no inclination to do anything other than what is right, no such 'must' applies. A typical statement of Kant's view is the following from the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals:

A perfectly good will would, therefore, equally stand under objective laws (of the good), but it could not on this account be represented as necessitated to actions in conformity with law since of itself, by its subjective constitution, it can be determined only through the representation of the good. Hence no

imperatives hold for the divine will and in general for a holy will: the ‘ought’ is out of place here, because volition is of itself necessarily in accord with the law. Therefore imperatives are only formulae expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, for example, of the human will.<sup>1xiii</sup>

Thus, the principles that determine what it is good and bad to do apply to the holy will, where these principles are laws because they hold of all agents universally, and of such agents independently of the contingencies of their desires and goals, and thus necessarily. However, because the holy will is morally perfect, these laws lack any necessitating force for wills of this sort, whereas our lack of moral perfection means that they possess such force for us.

It can therefore be seen how Kant’s distinction between the holy will and ours is designed to resolve the problem of obligation, by appeal to the fact that our will is divided between reason and inclination in a way that the will of the divine being is not. Kant characterizes this division in the terms of his transcendental idealism as mapping onto the distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal realms (or the ‘intelligible world’ and ‘the world of sense’). Kant’s distinction between the holy will and ours therefore forms a crucial part of his answer to the problem of accounting for the moral ‘must’, in a way that explains its possibility (unlike a view that simply treats the ‘must’ as a feature of the world), but without recourse to the problematic notion of a divine legislator as the source of that ‘must’ (thus avoiding any need to adopt a divine command theory).

Notwithstanding the ingenious nature of Kant’s account of moral obligation, it seemed to Kant’s successors, and particularly to Schiller and Hegel, that it involved paying an unacceptable price: namely, that moral duty is seen as a function of our imperfection as moral agents, and our status as creatures who must struggle against

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<sup>1</sup> Ein vollkommen guter Wille würde also eben sowohl unter objectiven Gestzen (des Guten) stehen, aber nicht dadurch als zu gesetzmäßigen Handlungen genötigt vorgestellt werden können, weil er von selbst, nach seiner subjektiven Beschaffenheit, nur durch die Vorstellung des Guten bestimmt werden kann. Daher gelten für den göttlichen und überhaupt für einen heiligen Willen keine Imperativen; das Sollen ist hier am unrechten Orten, weil das Wollen schon von selbst mit dem Gesetz notwendig einstimmig ist. Daher sind Imperativen nur Formeln, das Verhältnis objectiver Gestze des Wollens überhaupt zu der subjectiven Unvollkommenheit des Willens dieses oderjenes vernünftigen Wesens, z. B. des menschlichen Willens, auszudrücken.

ourselves in order to act rightly. It thus appeared that if the Kantian account were correct, the most the dutiful agent could achieve was continence, not virtue – that is, a successful overcoming of her non-moral inclinations, rather than an alignment between those inclinations and what it is right to do, of the sort that Schiller identified with grace. While Schiller himself perhaps held back from breaking entirely with Kant on this issue, he nonetheless raised two fundamental objections that led Hegel to go further: The first is that it incorporates what appears to be a demeaning picture of human nature, as essentially ‘fallen’ and unable to follow what morality asks of us without some sort of resistance; the second is that ultimately, Kant’s dualistic picture did not itself allow for full autonomy, even though the intention of his ethics was to avoid the heteronomy of other moral theories.

I would argue, then, that Hegel came to be dissatisfied with Kant’s hybrid approach, and as a result adopted a different kind of position, which might be called a social command theory. Like Kant’s account, this too may be seen as a descendant of the intermediate divine command view, where what is independently right comes to be made obligatory – but not from the dualism within the human will, but from the authority of society over the individual agent. As Robert Adams has put the basic idea of this theory (which he does not himself endorse): ‘According to social theories of the nature of obligation, having an obligation to do something consists in being required (in a certain way, under certain circumstances or conditions), by another person or a group of persons, to do it’.<sup>xiv</sup>

Having criticized the Kantian theory of duty and obligation in the ‘Morality’ section of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel provides this social command account in the concluding ‘Ethical Life’ section. The latter takes into consideration not only the individual will, but also the *‘laws and institutions which have being in and for themselves’*.<sup>2xv</sup> As a result, the individual can be seen to be part of an ‘ethical substance [die sittliche Substanz]’ that consists of ‘laws and powers [Gesetze und Gewalten]’,<sup>3xvi</sup> where ‘these substantial determinations are duties which are binding on the will of the individual’.<sup>4xvii</sup> Because of the authority of these duties over the

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<sup>2</sup> die an und für sich seienden Gesetze und Einrichtungen (HW VII 294 §144).

<sup>3</sup> HW VII 295 §146.

<sup>4</sup> Als diese substantiellen Bestimmungen sind sie für das Individuum, welches sich von ihnen als das Subjektive und in sich Unbestimmte oder als [das] besonders

lives of individuals, and of the relative unimportance of individuals within the social order, it can appear to them that the moral law has a divine origin, as it did in pre-modern societies. But this is to neglect the social basis of these obligations, and that while the social order is a substance to which individuals relate as ‘accidents’, nonetheless these accidents are required by the substance in order to be actual. Hegel makes clear, therefore, that he sees divine command accounts of obligation as based on a picture of our relation to the world that has been surpassed, where these obligations are now better accounted for as an aspect of our existence within the social environment of ethical life.

As a result of the ‘laws and powers’ of the community, therefore, the individual will find duties that are ‘prescribed, expressly stated, and known to him within his situation’.<sup>5xviii</sup> These ethical laws may then appear to have ‘an absolute authority and power, infinitely more firmly based than the being of nature’.<sup>6xix</sup> At the same time, however, Hegel argues that in so far as they stem from the ethical community, such laws are ‘not something alien to the subject’ but something to which ‘the subject bears spiritual witness...as to its own essence’.<sup>7xx</sup> We should not think, therefore, that just because something is an obligation because it is required by the social group, that the motivating reason the individual has for complying with it comes from these external ends: rather, it can be based on the recognized authority of the ethical community over the individual, where at the same time the individual is part of this group, and so not subordinated to it as by an alien will.

Now, if a social command account of this kind is going to be plausible, it can only treat what is required by society as a necessary condition for creating a moral

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Bestimmte unterscheidet, hiermit im Verhältnisse zu ihnen als zu seinem Substantielle steht, Pflichten, für seinen Willen bindend. (HW VII 296-7 §148).

<sup>5</sup> Was der Mensch tun müsse, welches die Pflichten sind, die er zu erfüllen hat, um tugendhaft zu sein, ist in einem sittlichen Gemesinwesen leicht zu sagen, - es ist nichts anderes von ihm zu tun, als was ihm in seinen Verhältnissen vorgezeichnet, ausgesprochen und bekannt ist. (HW VII 298 §150).

<sup>6</sup> Für das Subjekt haben die sittliche Substanz, ihre Gesetze und Gewalten einerseits als Gegenstand das Verhältnis, daß sie sind, im höchsten Sinne der Selbständigkeit, - eine absolute, unendlich festere Autorität und Macht als das Sein der Natur. (HW VII 294-5 §146).

<sup>7</sup> Andererseits sind die dem Subjekte nicht ein Fremdes, sondern es gibt das Zeugnis des Geistes von ihnen als von seinem eigenen Wesen... (HW VII 295 §147).

obligation; for, if it were to also treat it as a sufficient condition, then the worry would arise that on this account, anything required by society would amount to an obligation. It is therefore important that Hegel considers these requirements as laid down by the rational state, which is seeking to uphold the freedom of its individual citizens: without this constraint, it is clear that it would not have the legitimacy to create genuine duties for people to obey.

We have seen, then, that Hegel's account of duty as this arises for the individual within ethical life can plausibly be considered to be a form of social command account, where what renders something a duty or obligation for an individual is the 'absolute authority and power' of the ethical community. And we have also seen how Hegel came to develop this account, as an alternative to both a divine command theory (which is seen as a kind of primitive forerunner of the social command account), and to Kant's hybrid theory (with its dualistic conception of the will).

It should therefore be clear how the hybrid theory of Kant and the social command theory of Hegel are to be distinguished. But we must now also distinguish both from a third position, which is the identificatory account of obligation. On this account, the obligatoriness of certain actions is to be explained by appeal to what constitutes the identity of the agent, where obligatoriness is said to rest on what, given their sense of their identity, they may or may not do without giving this up. Now, in a way that is ironic given her close association with Kant, the person who has most developed this sort of account of obligation within contemporary ethics is Christine Korsgaard. This is reflected in her conception of practical identity, which is 'a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking'.<sup>xxi</sup> Some of these identities can be, and for most will be, tied in with an individual's social roles, whilst others (such as 'being a human being') may not:

Practical identity is a complex matter and for the average person there will be a jumble of such conceptions. You are a human being, a woman or a man, an adherent of a certain religion, a member of an ethnic group, a member of a certain profession, someone's lover or friend, and so on. And all of these identities give rise to reasons and obligations. Your reasons express your

identity, your nature; your obligations spring from what that identity forbids.<sup>xxii</sup>

Korsgaard's claim, then, is that '[a]n obligation always takes the form of a reaction against a threat of a loss of identity',<sup>xxiii</sup> in a way that is signaled in such 'astonishing but familiar' remarks such as 'I couldn't live with myself if I did that'.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Now, if one starts with an identificatory account of obligation, and also takes on board the idea that our identity can be grounded in such things as our social roles, then it may seem natural to assume that any focus on the latter will lead one on to the former: and many social role theorists do indeed take this route. Thus, while Korsgaard herself takes it that our identity as humans is more fundamental than any mere social role, nonetheless she accepts the latter would give rise to obligations were we to identify with them (as she admits can happen to the Mafioso raised as an example against her by G. A. Cohen).<sup>xxv</sup> A similar outlook can also be found in other social role theorists, such as John Horton, who writes: '[B]oth the family and the political community figure prominently in our sense of who we are; our self-identity and our understanding of our place in the world...It should not be surprising, therefore, that some institutional obligations, through their deep-rooted connections with our sense of who we are and our place in the world, have a particularly fundamental role in our moral being. That these kind of institutional involvement generate moral obligations, and these obligations rather than standing in need of justification may themselves be justificatory, is only to be expected'.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Now, one important source of this sort of identificatory account is taken to be the British Idealists, and particularly Green and Bradley with their talk of social roles. So, for example, in criticizing the identificatory position, A. John Simmons cites the following remarks from Bradley as 'the classic statement of the position': 'We have found ourselves when we have found our station and its duties, our function as an organ in the social organism... If we suppose the world of relations, in which [an Englishman] was born and bred, never to have been, then we suppose the very essence of him not to be; if we take that away, we have taken him away... The state...gives him the life that he does and ought to live'.<sup>xxvii</sup> But I now want to argue that this identificatory account of Green and Bradley is mistaken, and that the former is much more plausibly read as following Kant's hybrid approach, and the latter as following Hegel's social command theory. I will begin by discussing Green.

### 3. Green on duty

In order to understand Green's account of duty, it is necessary to say something first about his general position in ethics.

Green begins with an account of action, where he argues that what guides the will is not some specific want or desire, but a conception of the agent's own greatest good – hence, he claims, the agent in acting aims at 'self-satisfaction'.<sup>xxviii</sup> Thus, taking Esau selling his birthright for a mess of pottage as an example, Green argues that his motive for action was not mere hunger, for otherwise he would have been acting like an unreflective animal; rather, what led him to act was 'the presentation of an idea of himself as enjoying the pleasure of eating the pottage', where 'it is not the hunger as a natural force, but his own conception of himself, as finding for the time his greatest good in the satisfaction of hunger, that determines the act'.<sup>xxix</sup> As a result of this, Green argues, Esau 'recognises himself as the author of the act', and hence praise or blame are appropriate.<sup>xxx</sup> For Green, therefore, when it comes to making a choice, there is no selection between competing desires made by the will; rather, the choice is made in determining which of the desires, if satisfied, would constitute the agent's greatest good, and on the basis of this decision the will then comes to act, with the other desires having been silenced.<sup>xxxi</sup>

As a consequence of this picture, Green resists any strict division between the roles of desire and intellect in action (for example, he rejects the Humean view that reason is the slave of the passions, simply engaged in finding the means for the satisfaction of the latter).<sup>xxxii</sup> For, intellect plays a role in forming the conception of our good within which a desire can then play a part – as when Esau takes it that his desire for food, if satisfied, would realize that good. On the other hand, if an agent did not believe that desire satisfaction of any kind formed part of his good, then that agent would be inert. Green therefore argues that the will is not a faculty somehow separable from desire and intellect, but rather contains aspects of both, where this must be so in an agent that is seeking to bring about its self-satisfaction.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Green recognizes, however, that this picture (which is articulated in Book II of the *Prolegomena*) leaves an important question unanswered when it comes to ethics: namely, what is it that distinguishes a morally good will from a morally bad one? Of course, on some accounts, this difference is marked by a distinction between the good

agent who has no concern for their own well-being, and a bad one who is so concerned: but Green cannot take this option, given his account of action outlined above where such self-concern is present in all agents – so where does the difference lie? Green’s answer is that the difference comes from the different conceptions of self-satisfaction that agents can have, and thus in ‘the character of that in which self-satisfaction is sought, ranging from sensual pleasure to the fulfilment of a vocation conceived as given by God’. He goes on: ‘It is on the specific difference of the objects willed under the general form of self-satisfaction that the [moral] quality of the will must depend. It is here therefore that we must seek for the basis for a distinction between goodness and badness of will’.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Green’s position depends, therefore, on making out some grounds on which to distinguish good and bad conceptions of self-satisfaction that might be held by different agents, where this explains the basis on which we might make a moral distinction between them. In order to pursue this strategy, Green therefore rejects other accounts, such as hedonistic utilitarianism, which holds that all agents have the same conception of self-satisfaction, namely the gaining of pleasure, and which therefore distinguishes good and bad agents extrinsically rather than intrinsically, on the basis only of the consequences of their actions.<sup>xxxv</sup>

For Green, then, the difference between the virtuous and vicious person lies in their different conceptions of where and in what manner they can attain self-satisfaction, and what this consists in – where, like the Greeks, Green is confident that this vicious person is in error about where that self-satisfaction really lies, which is not in the life of the non-moral agent, but in the life of a social being who acts in an ethical manner towards others, where as a result their capacities are properly realized. It is this conception of their good which the virtuous agent holds, as opposed to the conception adopted by the vicious agent, that leads the former into virtue and the latter into vice.<sup>xxxvi</sup> What makes an agent good for Green, therefore, is not how much he actually achieves, but whether he is looking for his self-satisfaction in the right place.

Though, of course, there is much more to be said, and many possible objections to be answered, this completes all that is needed as the background for Green’s account of duty, to which we now turn. This is given primarily at the end of Chapter II and the start of Chapter III of Book III of the Prolegomena.

As we have seen, Green holds that the good agent aims at the realization of his capacities, where he now argues that this ‘will keep before him an object, which he presents to himself as absolutely desirable, but which is other than any particular object of desire’.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In the case of such particular objects, he will take these to have value only in so far as they satisfy some desire of his; but in the case of his self-realization, ‘[i]t 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, either in its pursuit or in its attainment or as its result, he may experience’.<sup>xxxviii</sup> In other words, Green claims that while the agent may see the value of everything else in terms of his wants and their attendant pleasures, he does not see the realization of his capacities in this way, as these constitute the end against which such wants and pleasures are measured, where ‘the desire for the object will be founded in a conception of its desirableness as a fulfilment of the capabilities of which a man is conscious in being conscious of himself’.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Given this picture, then, Green argues that agents can be in the position of seeing their self-realization as of unconditioned value, which is not valuable as a means to the satisfaction of some prior desire, but on the contrary can overrule any desire that does not tend to the attainment of this end:

In such men [as are conscious of the value of self-realization] and at such times as a desire for it does actually arise...it will express itself in their imposition on themselves 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. With the men in whom, and at the times when, there is no such desire, the consciousness of there being something absolutely desirable will still be a qualifying element in life. It will yield a recognition of those unconditional rules of conduct to which, from the prevalence of unconformable passions, it fails to produce actual obedience. It will give meaning to the demand, without which there is no morality and in which all morality is virtually involved, that ‘something be done merely for the sake of its being done,’ because it is a consciousness of the possibility of an action in which no desire shall be gratified but the desire excited by the idea of the act

itself, as of something absolutely desirable in the sense that in it the man does the best that he has in him to do.<sup>x1</sup>

Green thus claims to have found here a version of a Kantian categorical imperative, but one which Kant himself wrongly overlooked:<sup>xii</sup> for, the agent can find in self-realization something that has value irrespective of what his desires or ends happen to be, where in identifying them reason has much more than an instrumental role, as here it determines the content of our desires themselves by establishing the proper object of our self-satisfaction; so in recognizing this value as lying behind the requirements on us of the moral, we will see the latter in the necessary, universal and non-instrumental manner that characterizes morality for Kant, but which (Green thinks) is inadequately captured in Kant's more formalistic approach.<sup>xiii</sup>

However, if this gives Green some way to characterize what the content of morality might be and how it might take on a non-contingent and non-instrumental character, it does not yet quite explain its imperatival force, or the kind of 'necessitation' that Kant also took to be characteristic of morality for us; but when it comes to explaining this, Green adopts precisely the kind of hybrid approach that I have identified previously with Kant himself. For, as Green sees it, while self-realization may constitute the objectively valuable end towards which we would align our desires if fully rational, we are not in fact fully rational in this manner, and therefore are subject to other desires, where the tension that this gives rise to accounts for the felt necessity and imperatival force that morality seems to exert over us:

[S]uch an ideal [of humanity], not yet realized but operating as a motive, already constitutes in man an inchoate form of that life, that perfect development of himself, of which the completion would be the realised ideal of himself. Now in relation to a nature such as ours, having other impulses *than those which draw to the ideal, this ideal becomes, in Kant's language, an imperative, and a categorical imperative. It will command something to be done universally and unconditionally, irrespectively of whether there is in any one, at any time, an inclination to do it.*<sup>xliii</sup>

Green's position would therefore appear to offer a variant on Kant's hybrid model, where what underlies morality is some unconditional value, but where that morality

appears to us in the form of commands in so far as we are subject to desires that lead us to want to act differently, in pursuit of other ends.

Moreover, in Chapter III, Green goes on to explain why he takes the hybrid model to be more fundamental than any divine command or social command account. He begins by underlining that, because self-realization is a social matter, ethics will involve social relations. To the individual, therefore, a life of this sort will ‘express itself in the form of social requirement’, in so far as his ‘better reason’ will be ‘in antagonism to the inclination of the moment’,<sup>xliv</sup> where as a result the individual will feel himself to be under some sort of moral law governing his relations with others. Thus, Green argues, while it may seem natural to associate law with the idea of some sort of authoritative commander (as on the divine command and social command models), this natural picture should be resisted, where the hybrid account reveals why in fact it is unnecessary, as it shows how the imperative of ‘Thou shalt’ and ‘Thou must’ can be explained in a different way.<sup>xlv</sup> Green suggests, therefore, that rather than arising in a legalistic manner, out of the authority over us of some superior commander, the moral ought arises out of a prior awareness of the good, but where that good stands opposed to some of the agent’s desires and inclinations and thus puts constraints on them, in a way that comes to assume the form of an imperative, even though the agent need not yet have any conception of a law or a sovereign lawgiver.

Moreover, Green argues, it is this model that must truly be the fundamental one. For, he holds, any lawgiver account must explain the authority of the lawgiver, which cannot come from fear of their power as such fear does make this authority legitimate in any way; instead, Green claims, it can only arise if we see the lawgiver as following the good – but then the appeal to the lawgiver is made redundant, as on the hybrid model this already has its own imperatival force, as explained above.<sup>xlvi</sup> Rather than being constrained by an external lawgiver, therefore, for Green (as for Kant) moral obligatoriness is to be explained by appeal to the structure of the agent’s own will, as her conception of the good limits her desires, in a way that makes it appropriate to talk of self-legislation.<sup>xlvii</sup>

We have seen, then, that while Green’s position is by no means that of the fully orthodox (or literal) Kantian, insofar as he treats self-satisfaction as a basis for the moral will, nonetheless his account of the moral ‘must’ still takes a Kantian form, in following the hybrid model we found in Kant, rather than any sort of divine command, social command, or identificatory position. Turning now to Bradley, we

will see that he too eschews any identificatory account, but that he also rejects a Kantian one, opting instead for a social command theory which puts him closer to Hegel.

#### 4. Bradley on duty

Whilst the Prolegomena to Ethics and Bradley's Ethical Studies stand as the twin peaks of Idealist ethics in Britain, and while they share important similarities of outlook, the relation between the texts is not straightforward, while they are also significantly different in the approaches they adopt. Ethical Studies appeared nearly a decade before the Prolegomena; but Bradley attended Green's lectures on ethics and related matters in Oxford, as did most of the other British Idealists who were therefore fully versed in the position developed by Green, so that Ethical Studies cannot be said to have had an independent influence on them despite its earlier publication. Moreover, Bradley here acknowledges the significance of Green, particularly when it comes to his treatment of hedonism in Essay III<sup>xlviii</sup> – although Bradley is not mentioned in the Prolegomena.<sup>xlix</sup>

Ethical Studies, unlike the Prolegomena, is a work with a dialectical structure in the Hegelian sense; that is, positions are advanced but then 'aufgehoben' or sublated once their limitations are revealed, so that in this way the search for a more complete and less one-sided position is carried out. The book comprises seven main chapters (or 'Essays' as they are headed). In the first, Bradley defends the idea of moral responsibility against the twin threats of philosophical determinism and indeterminism, while in the second he turns to the question of 'why should I be moral?'. Anticipating Prichard,<sup>1</sup> Bradley suggests that taken as a demand by a sceptic who want to know 'what's in it for me?', the question should be avoided, as the attempt to answer it will only reduce morality to self-interest – while the moral person will feel no need to ask it. On the other hand, Bradley allows that there can be some genuine and legitimate point to the question, which is how far morality coincides with self-realization, and in what form. How best to answer this question then becomes the main focus of the rest of the book.

Bradley begins his inquiry by considering hedonistic utilitarianism as an answer, which is then rejected for reasons we will come back to, where he then considers the opposite view, which is that morality is all about 'duty for duty's sake'. In the fifth chapter, which is the one entitled 'My Station and Its Duties', a position is

adopted that Bradley represents as a kind of ‘sublation’ of hedonistic utilitarianism and ‘duty for duty’s sake’. However, in the next chapter he faces up to certain difficulties with this position, which revolve around the idea that there is more to morality and self-realization than the social world encompasses – such as the obligations of the artist to create works of beauty – which Bradley puts within an ‘ideal morality’. Finally, the last chapter considers ‘Selfishness and Self-Sacrifice’ and how the former relates to the bad self and the latter to the good, while the ‘Concluding Remarks’ consider how far ‘[r]eflection on morality leads beyond it’,<sup>li</sup> and takes us to a religious perspective.

While as this shows, the outlook of ‘my station and its duties’ does not represent Bradley’s final position, it is here that the core of his account of ethical duties lies and it is therefore on this chapter that the identificatory accounts of his position have focused – so this will also form the centrepiece of our discussion, but where, in accordance with the structure of the book, this cannot properly be understood without taking into account the dialectic that has preceded it.<sup>lii</sup>

As part of that dialectic, in the chapter on ‘Duty for Duty’s Sake’, Bradley has already introduced but rejected the Kantian account of duty, emphasizing its inherent dualism in a way that echoes the critique offered by Hegel.<sup>liii</sup> Having presented this hybrid account of duty as an essential part of the outlook he is considering,<sup>liv</sup> Bradley then goes on to explain why ‘[s]tated as we have stated it above, the theory of duty for duty’s sake carries with it little or no plausibility’.<sup>lv</sup> Acknowledging his debt to Hegel, Bradley considers various difficulties with other elements of the theory (particularly its ‘empty formalism’), but also focuses on its dualism, which he thinks creates problems both for the account of action (which, like Green, he takes to involve both the sensuous self as well as the non-sensuous self), but also for the very account it offers of the imperatival nature of morality, which (contra Green) he takes to involve some notion of a commander, where on the hybrid model this idea makes no real sense:

We may remark in passing a contradiction involved in the doctrine of the imperative [that comes from this ‘dualistic moral theory’]. A command is addressed by one will to another, and must be obeyed, if at all, by the second will. But here the will that is commanded is not the will that executes; hence

the imperative is never obeyed; and, as it is not to produce action in that to which it is addressed, it is a mere sham-imperative.<sup>lvi</sup>

There is no explicit mention of Green here, so we therefore cannot say for sure that Bradley took him to be a target; but as we have seen, despite their important differences, when it comes to the imperatival nature of duty Green has a position of a broadly Kantian sort, so one might expect Bradley's critique to apply also to him.

Having seen that Bradley rejects the Kantian hybrid model, the question now is what is he seeking to replace it with in moving to a discussion of 'my station and its duties'? As has been discussed, a standard approach is to take it that Bradley moves instead to an identificatory model; but I now want to suggest that this approach is mistaken, and that underlying this position is a social command account instead.

That this is so can be made plain once one recalls the structure of the dialectic in *Ethical Studies*, and the place of the chapter (or 'essay') on 'My Station and its Duties' within it. Up to this point, Bradley has considered two contrasting approaches, both of which are said to have some merit, but neither of which is wholly satisfactory as things stand. The first is 'pleasure for pleasure's sake', which has the merit of thinking about how morality might relate to the individual's 'self-realization', but does so in way that has a narrow and mistaken view of what this amounts to, namely pleasure. The second is 'duty for duty's sake', which rightly scorns the latter idea as simplistic, and instead conceives of the self to be realized as the pure will, and so conceives of morality in terms that are purely formal. Again, according to Bradley, there is some merit to thinking of morality in terms of duty, but as we have seen for familiar Hegelian reasons (including the dualism we have discussed above), it is deemed unsatisfactory.

What is needed, therefore, is some sort of synthesis or 'Aufhebung' of these views, which Bradley tries to offer in 'My Station in Its Duties': namely, a position that has a conception of duty that overcomes the problems with the Kantian outlook, and which also relates it to a notion of self-realization that is less crude than the one offered by the perspective of 'pleasure for pleasure's sake'. What we require, then, is a view that allows for self-realization on the one hand, and duty on the other, without treating the former as mere pleasure or hedonistic well-being, and the latter as something empty, formal and dualistic – where it is precisely in a view that tries to achieve both, that these respective limitations will be overcome. Bradley's positive

suggestion, therefore, is that if we think of the individual as following duties that relate to a good that is more than his individual good, then at the same time self-realization will be achieved, and these duties will be given a content and context, in a way that will enable a satisfactory ‘middle way’ to be found.

And then, Bradley claims, this is just what one will get within a state, in which the individual is both part of the general good of the community, and also able to find itself fully realized by participating in that community as a result. Thus, Bradley declares, in a passage of considerable rhetorical force, by living within a ‘social organism’ of this sort, where the individual has a ‘station and its duties’ through which they contribute to this goal, and therefore also has contentful and objective requirements laid upon them, by a society in which they also flourishes, then a notable advance towards dialectical stability will have been achieved:

Here, and here first, are the contradictions which have beset us solved – here is a universal which can confront our wandering desires with a fixed and stern imperative, but which yet is no unreal form of the mind, but a living soul that penetrates and stands fast in the detail of actual existence. It is real, and real for me. It is in its affirmation that I affirm myself, for I am but as a ‘heart-beat in its system’. And I am real in it; for when I give myself to it, it gives me the fruition of my own personal activity, the accomplished ideal of my life which is happiness. In the realized idea which, superior to me, and yet here and now in and by me, affirms itself in a continuous process, we have found the end, we have found self-realization, duty, and happiness in one – yes, we have found ourselves, when we have found our station and its duties, our function as an organ in the social organism.<sup>lvii</sup>

My claim is, then, that up to this point, Bradley is offering a social command account, whereby on the one hand the state is such as to ‘confront our wandering desires with a strict and firm imperative’ because of its authority over us, but where on the other hand ‘when I give myself up to it’, the state ‘gives me the fruition of my own personal activity, the accomplished ideal of my life which is happiness’. Bradley makes the nature of his position fully clear when he writes: ‘[The state] speaks the word of command and gives the field of accomplishment, and in the activity of obedience it has and bestows individual life and satisfaction and happiness’.<sup>lviii</sup>

Likewise, I would argue, from what we saw before in the earlier section, Bradley is in effect paraphrasing Hegel here (as he would no doubt happily grant), and Hegel's claim that '[i]n the state everything depends on the unity of universal and particular'.<sup>8lix</sup> It is precisely this, as we have seen, that allows Hegel to also strike the balance that Bradley is after, between duty as imposed by the state on the one hand and the interests of the individual on the other, so that by having the source of those duties in the command of the rational state, the individual has obligations, has their 'particularity' taken into account, and is lifted above the narrow and egoistic concerns of the pre-social individual. By thinking of duty in these terms, as imposed by society on the individual who has a place and role within it, the dialectical harmony that both Hegel and Bradley are looking for can be achieved, but only because obligations are seen to arise from the social community of which they are part, and which has the self-realization or freedom of its citizens (which for Bradley and Hegel are in effect the same thing) at its heart.

However, if this shows him to be a social command theorist, what of the passages in which Bradley seems to make so much of the way in which an individual's identity is bound up with their role, and which have led so many to interpret him as a social role theorist concerning obligation?

When it comes to Bradley, I think the simple answer is as follows: These 'identificatory' passages are there not to support a social role theory, but to answer three very significant objections to any social command theory, namely:

- (a) that the state which Bradley claims has the authority to give individuals their duties does not really exist and is a myth, because it can always be reduced to a mere collection of individuals, with nothing but the authority of individuals over one another
- (b) that self-realization does not require social membership, so that there is no essential connection (as Bradley claims there is) between a morality of social duties and self-realization
- (c) that individuals must always see the authority of the state as taking away their freedom

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<sup>8</sup> Auf die Einheit der Allgemeinheit und Besonderheit im Staate kommt alles an (HW VII 410 §261Z).

All three objections can be urged by the ‘individualist’, who does not think Bradley’s vision of the ‘social organism’ is at all plausible, where it is the position of this individualist that Bradley outlines immediately after the passage that we just cited, with its high-flown talk of the ‘social organism’.<sup>lx</sup> Now, it is also clear that it is in order to refute just this view, that Bradley turns to his claim about the dependence of individuals for their identity on society and their place within it.<sup>lxi</sup> After a long disquisition in support of this view, which hinges on how much an individual’s identity depends on his place within a social framework, Bradley concludes:

In short, man is a social being; he is real only because he is social, and can realize himself only because it is as social that he realized himself. The mere individual is a delusion of theory; and the attempt to realize it in practice is the starvation and mutilation of human nature, with total sterility or the production of monstrosities.<sup>lxii</sup>

Bradley’s response to the reductionist objection that there cannot be any social commands, because ‘in fact’ there is no social organism, is that the reduction cannot work, as without the social organism there is ‘in fact’ no individual. What we see in this talk of identity and one’s place in society, therefore, is not a defense of an identificatory theory of obligation, but a defense of the idea of society that is needed by the kind of social command theory that Bradley has put forward earlier in the chapter. It is also needed to substantiate his crucial link between duty and self-realization, which on the individualist position does not require the person to have any place within a social whole, while it also shows that this social will is not alien to the agent’s own will.

Bradley thus uses his ‘identificatory’ claims as a way of supporting his anti-individualism and his account of the social organism, which he needs in order to defend his social command theory:

- (a) there is such a thing as the state or society, that can issue commands
- (b) the individual can realize themselves by following these social duties
- (c) the individual need not feel ‘alienated’ from these duties as external impositions, in so far as they are essentially bound up with this social whole

It can be argued, then, that Bradley's focus on the social identity of the individual does not show that his account of duty based on roles is intended to be identificatory, but rather forms part of an approach that fits better with a social command model.

This is not quite the end of the story, however; for, as we have noted above, *Ethical Studies* is a dialectically structured work. Thus, while 'My Station and Its Duties' may defend a social command theory of the moral duties that attach to social roles, not an identificatory one, this does not mean that Bradley takes this to be the complete account of duties; on the contrary, he frankly acknowledges its limitations – where he argues, for example, that individuals who have a capacity for art or science may have a duty to take up these activities, but where that duty cannot rightfully be imposed on them by the social will, as it is a private matter that does not relate to the good of others,<sup>lxiii</sup> but forms part of what Bradley calls 'ideal morality'. Within this sphere, Bradley suggests, something more like a hybrid model may be appropriate, where the 'ought' arises out of the sense that we fall short of being fully good selves because of the presence in us of what is bad<sup>lxiv</sup> – a tension that points beyond morality, to religion. It is not necessary for us to follow Bradley's discussion to this level, however, because our concern has been to assess the account of obligation underlying Bradley's conception of 'my station and its duties', and not that of other aspects of his position.

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<sup>i</sup> I have discussed some of these topics in essays in *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>ii</sup> While most closely associated with Bradley, the expression is also used by Green: see *Prolegomena to Ethics*, edited by A. C. Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1883), reprinted in a new edition with introduction by David O. Brink (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), §183, and cf. §313 and §338. Because of the close interconnection between them, it is not clear which author employed the phrase first. Though Hegel does not quite adopt the expression, he comes close to something like it in §150 of the *Philosophy of Right*, in a way that may have impressed Bradley and Green, when he writes that 'In an ethical community...in order to be virtuous [a person] must simply do what is presented, expressly stated, and known to him within

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his situation' (PR, 193) [Was der Mensch tun müsse...um tugendhaft zu sein, ist in einem sittlichen Gemeinwesen leicht zu sagen, - es ist nichts anderes von ihm zu tun, als was ihm in seinen Verhältnissen vorgezeichnet, ausgesprochen und bekannt ist' [HW VII, 298.] The phrase seems to have been familiar enough in the early/mid C19th ranging from the religious ('it will conduce to restore the quiet of the mind, to attend to the humble ordinary duties of our station', John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, new impression (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), sermon 18, volume 1, p. 240) to the popular (Eliza Cheap, *My Station and Its Duties: A Narrative for Girls Going to Service* (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1836)) (with thanks to Bill Mander for these references).

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Richard Norman, *The Moral Philosophers: An Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 145-72; John Horton, *Political Obligation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1992); Michael Hardimon, 'Role Obligations', *Journal of Philosophy*, 91 (1994), 333-63; John Horton, 'In Defence of Associative Political Obligations', Parts One and Two, *Political Studies*, 54 (2006), 427-43 and 55 (2007), 1-19; Stefan Sciaraffa, 'Identification, Meaning, and the Normativity of Social Roles', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 19 (2011), 107-28.

<sup>iv</sup> But cf. Stewart Candlish, 'Bradley on My Station and Its Duties', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 56 (1978), 155-70.

<sup>v</sup> 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', *North British Review*, 45 (1866), 105-44, reprinted in *The Works of T. H. Green*, edited by R. L. Nettleship (London: Longmans Green, 1885-8), III, 49-91; 'General Introduction to Vol 1' and 'Introduction to the Moral Part of the Treatise', in David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans Green, 1874-5), I, 1-299, II, 1-71; reprinted in *The Works of T. H. Green*, I, 1-371.

<sup>vi</sup> *Prolegomena*; 'Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation', edited by R. L. Nettleship in *The Works of T. H. Green* (London: Longmans Green, 1885-8), vol II, 334-553, reprinted in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, edited by Paul Harris and John Morrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 13-193; 'Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant', edited by R. L. Nettleship in *The Works of T. H. Green* (London: Longmans Green, 1885-8), II, 1-157.

<sup>vii</sup> *Ethical Studies*, first edition 1876, second edition 1927, reprinted with an introduction by Richard Wollheim 1962 (Oxford: Oxford University Press); *Appearance and Reality*, first edition 1893, second edition 1897, ninth impression (corrected) 1930 (Oxford: Oxford University Press); *Principles of Logic*, 2 vols, first edition 1883, second edition 1922, corrected 1928 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>viii</sup> Cf. Brink, in the introduction to his edition of the *Prolegomena*, xciv.

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Green, *Lectures on Kant*, §105: 'As it is, though his doctrine [of the a priori in ethics] is essentially true, [Kant's] way of putting it excites the same opposition as his way of putting the corresponding doctrine in regard to the a priori element in knowledge'.

<sup>x</sup> Cf. Bradley, *Principles of Logic*, x: 'I fear that to avoid worse misunderstandings, I must say something as to what is called "Hegelianism." For Hegel himself, assuredly

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I think him a great philosopher; but I never could have called myself an Hegelian, partly because I can not say that I have mastered his system, and partly because I could not accept what seems his main principle, or at least part of that principle. I have no wish to conceal how much I owe to his writings; but I will leave it to those who can judge better than myself, to fix the limits within which I have followed him’.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xii</sup> See Robert Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation: Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>xiii</sup> Kant GS 4:414/GMM, 67.

<sup>xiv</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 242.

<sup>xv</sup> PR, 189.

<sup>xvi</sup> PR, 190.

<sup>xvii</sup> PR, 191.

<sup>xviii</sup> PR, 193.

<sup>xix</sup> PR, 190.

<sup>xx</sup> PR, 191.

<sup>xxi</sup> Christine M. Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101.

<sup>xxii</sup> Korsgaard, *Sources*, 101.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Korsgaard, *Sources*, 102. Cf. also p. 18: ‘[Moral claims on us] must issue in a deep way from our sense of who we are’.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Korsgaard, *Sources*, 101. Cf. also pp. 239-40: ‘You may be tempted to do something but find that it is inconsistent with your identity as a teacher or a mother or a friend, and the thought that it is inconsistent may give rise to a new incentive, an incentive not to do this thing. As Luther’s “here I stand, I cannot do otherwise” reminds us, the human heart, being human, discovers itself not only in spontaneous desire, but in imperatives’.

<sup>xxv</sup> Cf. Korsgaard, *Sources*, 183-4 and 255-8. Cf. also A. John Simmons, *Justification and Legitimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81-2.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Horton, *Political Obligation*, 150 and 157. Cf. also Hardimon, ‘Role Obligations’, 358-63.

<sup>xxvii</sup> *Ethical Studies*, 163, 166, 174. Simmons cites these remarks (from a different edition) in *Justification and Legitimacy* on 80-1, note 38. [Hegel himself has also been interpreted as an identificatory theorist: see e.g. Frederick Neuhausser, \*Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom\* \(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000\), 97-8, where Neuhausser explicitly draws the parallel with Korsgaard. As](#)

briefly outlined above, however, I also think this is a mis-reading of Hegel's position, where I take his account of moral obligation to be that of a social command theorist. For further discussion, see Stern, *Understanding Moral Obligation*, pp. 148-61.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §95: '[W]e say that to every action morally imputable, or of which a man can recognise himself as the author, the motive is always some idea of the man's personal good – and idea absolutely different from animal want, even in cases where it is from the anticipation of the satisfaction of some animal want that the idea of personal good is derived'..

<sup>xxix</sup> Prolegomena §96.

<sup>xxx</sup> Prolegomena §96.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §104 and §§145-6.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §116 and Lectures on Kant §97.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §153.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Prolegomena §154.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Prolegomena §§156-170.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Prolegomena §176.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Prolegomena §193.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Prolegomena §193.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Prolegomena §193.

<sup>xl</sup> Prolegomena §193.

<sup>xli</sup> Cf. Lectures on Kant §§119-124. For further discussion of this important aspect of Green's position, see T. H. Irwin, 'Morality and Personality: Kant and Green', in Allen W. Wood (ed.), *Self and Nature in Kant's Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 31-56, and *The Development of Ethics*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 581-624; and David O. Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good: Themes from the Philosophy of T. H. Green* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 92-106.

<sup>xlii</sup> Like others who try to find in Kant resources for a less formalistic position, Green takes consolation in the Formula of Humanity, which he uses as a 'bridge' to his own position: cf. Lectures on Kant §111.

<sup>xliii</sup> Prolegomena, §196, my emphasis.

<sup>xliv</sup> Prolegomena §202.

<sup>xlv</sup> Prolegomena §202.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §202.

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<sup>xlvi</sup> Cf. Prolegomena §203: ‘It is in this sense that the old language is justified, which speaks of Reason as the parent of Law. Reason is the self-objectifying consciousness. It constitutes, as we have seen, the capability in man of seeking an absolute good and of conceiving this good as common to others with himself: and it is this capability which alone renders him a possible author and a self-submitting subject of law’.

<sup>xlvi</sup> See Ethical Studies 96 note 1 – where Bradley writes that ‘[o]n the whole subject of this Essay let me recommend the student to consult him’ – referring in particular to Green’s Introduction to Hume’s Treatise.

<sup>xl</sup> For some discussion on the relation between Green and Bradley during this period, see Peter P. Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists: Selected Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 50-51.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. A. Prichard, ‘Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?’, *Mind*, 21 (1912), pp. 21-37; reprinted in *Moral Writings*, edited by Jim MacAdam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7-20.

<sup>li</sup> Ethical Studies, 314.

<sup>lii</sup> Bradley emphasizes the importance of the structure of the work, when he writes that ‘These Essays are a critical discussion of some fundamental questions in Ethics, and are so far connected that, for the most part, they must be read in the order in which they stand’ (Ethical Studies, viii).

<sup>liii</sup> Ethical Studies 146-7.

<sup>liv</sup> In a note on ‘duty for duty’s sake’, Bradley emphasizes ‘[a]s I have said before, this is not a statement of Kant’s view’ – but where with characteristic archness, he adds ‘that view is far wider, and at the same time more confused’ (Ethical Studies 148, note 1).

<sup>lv</sup> Ethical Studies 148.

<sup>lvi</sup> Ethical Studies 151 note 1. Cf. also p. 207: ‘Command is the simple proposal of an action (or abstience) to me by another will, as the content of that will’.

<sup>lvii</sup> Ethical Studies 163.

<sup>lviii</sup> Ethical Studies 184-5.

<sup>lix</sup> PR, 285.

<sup>lx</sup> Ethical Studies 163. Bradley does not identify precisely whom he was thinking of as holding this individualist position; but Peter Nicholson plausibly suggests that he ‘perhaps had in mind such writers as Bentham, J. S. Mill, and Herbert Spencer’ (Nicholson, *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, p. 24). For the problem this position raises for the social command theorist, see Susan Wolf, ‘Moral Obligations and Social Commands’, in Samuel Newlands and Larry M. Jorgensen (eds), *Metaphysics and the Good: Themes from the Philosophy of Robert Merrihew Adams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 343-67, p. 345, where she notes that for ‘the question of society’s existence is... a legitimate and serious question... To be sure, we live among other people – in a neighborhood, a state, a world. But is

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any collection of them sufficiently organized and unified to constitute a group that can be seen to issue commands in the requisite sense?’.

<sup>lxi</sup> Ethical Studies 166.

<sup>lxii</sup> Ethical Studies 174.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Ethical Studies 222-4.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Cf. Ethical Studies 232-5 and 293-312. Bradley writes on p. 234: ‘Morality does involve a contradiction; it does tell you to realize that which never can be realized, and which, if realized, does efface itself as such. No one ever was or could be perfectly moral; and if he were, he would be moral no longer. Where there is no imperfection there is no ought, where there is no ought there is no morality, where there is no self-contradiction there is no ought. The ought is a self-contradiction’.

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