A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY OF R. G. COLLINGWOOD

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PREFACE

The term "philosophy of history" as it is used in this thesis is synonymous with "theory of historical knowledge." The philosophy of history so conceived has as its object the analysis of problems peculiar to human history. In the broader sense in which Collingwood sometimes uses the term "historical knowledge" all knowledge is historical knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the past, whether the distant past or the specious present. In this sense, the philosophy of history has as its object the analysis of problems which are basic to the attainment of any knowledge whatever.

Collingwood's writings on philosophy of history are, for the most part, located in The Idea of History, a posthumous volume edited by Collingwood's friend, T. M. Knox. Section five of that book, "Epilegomena," is a collection of essays in which Collingwood advances a positive philosophy of history. Since the essays were written at different times and represent different stages in the development of Collingwood's thought, the task of giving a well-rounded picture of Collingwood's position is a difficult one.

I am well aware of the dangers involved in attempting to present and criticize a philosophy of history which is in such a rough-hewn state and which, therefore, is particularly amenable to distortion and misrepresentation. It is, perhaps, needless to say that if criticism in the light of such distortion has been done here, it is due not to the malice but to the ignorance of the writer. I have set forth Collingwood's philosophy of history and criticized it "as well as," in Collingwood's own words, "my ignorance and my indolence have allowed me."

I wish especially to thank Dr. M. E. Schlaretzki not only for helpful criticisms he has offered in the course of this study but for suggesting that I might be interested in Collingwood. To Dr. Millard Scherich I wish to extend my thanks for having made the study possible. I wish to thank, also, my wife for the kind help she has given me, and the college librarians for the courtesy and assistance they extended to me.

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CHAPTER I

COLLINGWOOD'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The preliminary exposition of Collingwood's philosophy of history given in this chapter will attempt to give a fairly general and condensed but, it is hoped, adequate bird's-eye view of Collingwood's philosophical position with regard to the nature, function, and method of history, and his treatment of the problem of historical knowledge. Questions will be raised concerning key ideas where those ideas are obscure or entail problems. Fuller development of the ideas themselves and of the problems which they involve will be the major task of the later chapters.

The Nature of History

History, according to Collingwood, is the true science of mind.[1] Psychology, when it attempts to be a science of mind, so far as mind means rational activity, thought, oversteps its proper bounds, which is confined to feeling and emotion, and becomes a mere pseudo-science. The proof that psychology is not the true science of mind is found in the paucity of our knowledge about human nature after three hundred years of attempting to ferret out its mysteries by the methods of the natural sciences. For the psychologists to attempt to excuse this lack on the grounds that psychology is still in its infancy is for them to delude themselves as to

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[1]Robin G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford, 1946), p. 220; An Autobiography (Oxford, 1939), p. 116. Subsequent references to The Idea of History (abbreviated I. H.) will appear parenthetically in the text.

psychology's proper sphere. The simple truth is that psychologists have discovered many things worth knowing, even invaluable things, about sub-rational, emotional, or mechanical activities, but that rational human behavior, including the entire self-critical function of thought, that is, thought as it seeks to know and know truly and know that it knows truly, is outside their province.[2]

That history, on the contrary, is the true science of mind follows from the fact that "all history is the history of thought" (I. H., 215), and, that man can only attain knowledge of what mind can do, i.e.,what mind is, by attaining knowledge of what mind has done (I. H., 218). Thus "historical inquiry reveals to the historian the powers of his own mind" (I. H., 218). Historical knowledge is the only knowledge we have of mind, whether the thought was mine and occurred five minutes ago, or the thought was Solon's and occurred 2700 years ago (I. H., 219).

All history is the history of thought because only human actions interest the historian; events are important only to the extent that they display human purposes, human reactions to a determinate situation, the hurdling of obstacles, etc.; and human actions interest the historian only to the extent that they are determined by thought: man's animal nature, his vegetative and reproductive activities, are not the concern of the historian except insofar as man has devised schemes, economic and social, by which these needs can be met; and these schemes are not products of his animal but of his rational nature (I. H., 216).

The reason the historian confines himself to human actions derives from the teleological character of history. The difference between the

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[2]R. G. Collingwood, An Essay on Metaphysics (Oxford, 1940), chs. 9, 10, 11; The Idea of History, pp. 205-208.

archaeologist and the palaeontologist is fundamental. The one explains his artifacts in terms of human purpose. The other traces the development of life through geological ages by the use of his fossils. The historian penetrates an event, gets into the "inside" of the event, i.e., that part of event in which thought operated. The natural scientist describes the "outside" of events only, i.e., the movements of bodies in space and time (I. H., 212-213). Thus history is not simply the description of sequences or processes of events, but is the description of processes of thought. A process of thought is a logical process in which past thought changes into present thought, but still lives in present thought; it is a logical, not a psychological process.

If history is not the description of sequences of events then it is certainly not the task of the historian to find patterns of causal relations between those events. Collingwood holds that:

> The historian need not and cannot (without ceasing to be an historian) emulate the scientist in searching for the causes or laws of events . . . the object to be discovered is not the mere event, but the thought expressed in it. To discover that thought is already to understand it . . . . When he [the historian] knows what happened, he already knows why it happened.(I. H., 214)

The only sense in which the word "cause" is used correctly in historical writing is that sense in which it is equivalent to "affording a motive." Thus to say that A "caused" B to change his course of action is equivalent to saying that A "afforded" (gave) B a motive for changing his course of action.[3] When we ask for a causal explanation in history, as in "Why did Brutus stab Caesar?" we mean "What did Brutus think which made him decide to stab Caesar" (I. H., 214)? The historian, then, cannot predict future, from past, events. Neither is his task predictive as to the future

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[3]Collingwood, An Essay on Metaphysics, p. 290.

development of thought. "The historian has no gift of prophecy, and knows it . . ." (I. H., 220).

History, then, is a science only in the sense of being an organized body of knowledge having a methodology of its own, not in the sense of being a predictive enterprise, although it may admittedly detect uniformities within a given historical period. "Types of behavior do, no doubt, recur, so long as minds of the same kind are placed in the same kind of situations" (I. H., 223). But situations are constantly changing because social orders are subject to inevitable changes. Therefore no "laws" formulated by generalizing from these recurrences will hold good for any other period than that from which its facts are drawn (I. H., 223).

The historian himself, as well as his subject matter, is definitely located in space and time, and he must expect to transcend neither. This holds for philosophies and philosophers as well as for historians.

> The historian (and for that matter the philosopher) is not God, looking at the world from above and outside. He is a man, and a man of his own time and place. He looks at the past from the point of view of the present: he looks at other countries and civilizations from the point of view of his own. This point of view is valid only for him and for people situated like him, but for him it <u>is</u> valid. He must stand firm in it, because it is the only one accessible to him, and unless he <u>has</u> a point of view he can see nothing at all. (I. H., 108)

This view of the nature and function of history, as is immediately apparent, is neither the common-sense view, nor, for that matter, a conventional view, of the function of history. Historical knowledge is not usually placed in a position of such eminence in the body of human knowledge. If the historian may really reveal to us the nature of human nature, the philosopher's "know thyself" is an exhortation finding its realization in history.

Some questions which will be raised concerning this view are: Must history be restricted to reflective thought? Should it not also be

concerned with the background of thought: feeling and emotion? What does it mean to say that mind is what it does? What good is a science of mind that cannot predict behavior? Are the only causal influences in history teleological? Does the historian's having a point of view open the door to historical skepticism, the theory that about the past we can know nothing?

The Method of History

The idea of history.--Since history is the history of thought, the methodology of history in attaining knowledge of past thought will, if it is to attain real knowledge and not merely opinion, need indubitable criteria for the determination of what this past thought was. Otherwise the historian is not autonomous and is not engaged in discovering real knowledge. To solidly base history as a science it is necessary to realize that the historian is "throughout the course of his work. . . selecting, constructing and criticizing" and to see that this makes possible a "Copernican revolution in the theory of history"(I. H., 236). The historian's thought possesses its own criterion.

> So far from relying on an authority other than himself to whose statements his thought must conform, the historian is his own authority and his thought autonomous, self-authorizing, possessed of a criterion to which his so-called authorities must conform and by reference to which they are criticized (I. H., 236).

The historian's autonomy is exemplified in selection, because he selects what he considers important and omits what he considers unimportant; even when he thinks he is reproducing only what he finds, he is leaving out, interpolating, selecting, simplifying; in historical construction he does this because he proceeds inferentially from statements which are given to statements which are not given but implied and so bridges gaps and "constructs" his narrative; in historical criticism he does this because here he "puts his authorities in the witness-box" and perhaps convicts them

of concealing the truth or extracts from them withheld information. In the latter two cases the historian's so-called authorities are not his authorities at all but are only evidence. He is his own authority (I. H., 236-237).

Thus history is an autonomous discipline. What it assuredly is not is statements of the type "A said this," "B said this," for this is nothing but hearsay, "scissors-and-paste" history, which is not history but pseudo-history (I. H., 257). History is more like science than it is like "scissors-and-paste" history, because in science and history knowledge is inferential and reasoned, while in "scissors-and-paste" history it is not. History differs from science, however, in being knowledge of the particular and concrete, whereas science is knowledge of the universal and abstract. And the objects of historical thought, as distinct from scientific thought, are "events which have finished happening, and conditions no longer in existence" (I. H., 233-234). History is concerned with concrete particulars definitely fixed spatially and temporally.

Any criterion of historical truth which does not allow the historian autonomy must be rejected. On these grounds the criterion which rejects what is impossible considering the restrictions on human activities, the criterion of the possible, which was held, for example, by David Hume and F. H. Bradley, must be rejected. According to this criterion, if the historian is confronted with a statement of how things happened, and if they do ordinarily happen that way, he accepts the statement; otherwise he rejects it. He is still left in a position of relying upon authority. If what the authority relates is possible, the historian must accept his testimony (I. H., 239).

But the historian is his own authority and his criterion is contained within his own mind. His criterion is supplied by the a priori imagination. The criterion supplied by it is the idea of an imaginary (because not

immediately preceptible, not because unreal) picture of the past. The part played in historical construction by a priori imagination is best displayed in interpolation. Nothing is interpolated but what is demanded by the evidence, therefore what is interpolated is necessary, i.e., a priori. Secondly what is interpolated is not seen but imagined, thus if we see a traveller walking along a road at point a and then later see him at point b, we must imagine that he travelled from point a to point b, although we did not observe his doing so. This activity gives to the historical narrative its continuity (I. H., 240-241).

Beside its historical function, the a priori imagination has two other functions: these are the free imagination of the artist, in which characters, acts and incidents develop by a necessity internal to themselves, and perceptual imagination, by which we imagine what we do not see, the inside of an egg, the underside of a table, the back of the moon. Historical and perceptual, as distinct from the artistic, imagination are necessary. In perceptual imagination "we cannot but imagine what cannot but be there" (I. H., 242).

Not only does the historical imagination perform the work of historical construction and interpolation, but it performs the work of historical criticism as well (I. H., 244). The historical narrative is not tied down to the statements of authorities, with construction being carried on between these statements because the statements of so-called authorities are not swallowed whole; they are themselves subjected to critical scrutiny:

> I began by considering a theory according to which all truth, so far as any truth is accessible to the hisorian, is provided for him ready made in the ready-made statements of his authorities. I then saw that much of what he takes for true is not given in this way but constructed by his a priori imagination; but I still fancied that the imagination worked inferentially from fixed points given in the same sense. I am now driven to confess that there are for historical thought no fixed points thus given: in other words, that in history, just as there are properly speaking no authorities, so there are properly speaking no data. (I. H., 243)

> All that the historian means, when he describes certain historical facts as his data, is that for the purposes of a particular piece of work there are certain historical problems relevant to that work which for the present he proposes to treat as settled; though, if they are settled, it is only because historical thinking has settled them in the past, and they remain settled only until he or some one else decided to reopen them. (I. H., 244)

If the alleged facts do not fit into a coherent and continuous picture of the past, if they do not "make sense" of the past, they must be rejected:

> It is thus the historian's picture of the past, the product of his own a priori imagination, that has to justify the sources used in its construction. These sources are sources, that is to say, credence is given to them, only because they are in this way justified. (I. H., 245)

Whatever the historian puts into this picture, he puts there because his imagination demands that it be put there.

Thus, the historical a priori imagination governs the course of the historian's work, the production of a coherent and continuous picture of the past. And thus, the idea of a coherent and continuous picture of the past governs the production of a picture which is continuous and coherent. The idea of an imaginary picture of the past is the idea of history itself. It is this idea which serves as the criterion of historical truth (I. H., 248-249).

The idea of history, which is the product of the historical imagination, is innate or a priori and is a part of every man's mind. It is by measuring up his picture of the past to his idea of what a picture of the past ought to be that the historian decides upon the adequacy of his own picture, and he knows that in no detail is it entirely adequate. "Every new generation must rewrite history in its own way" (I. H., 248). But however fragmentary his work may be the historian is certain in his knowledge that the idea which governed its production is "clear, rational and universal. It is the idea of the historical imagination as a self-dependent, self-determining, and self-justifying form of thought" (I. H., 249).

The preceding exposition of Collingwood's position should make clear that for Collingwood the idea of history is the court of last resort in judging the truth of a historical picture of the past. Its judgment is final. Several questions will be considered concerning this criterion. Can it distinguish historical truth from historical fiction, from art? Is the idea of history an "innate" idea? Are the terms "coherent," "continuous," "making sense" too vague to be trustworthy criteria of historical truth? Is historical truth gained by these criteria public or private truth? Is the idea of history as a criterion a satisfactory answer to historical skepticism?

Evidence.--The resemblance between the historian and the novelist is great. In both the history and the novel the incidents and situations must form an integral part of the whole picture, and the development must not be accidental but necessary. Both are concerned with the analysis of characters and the exhibition of motives. Both are partly narration and partly description. "Nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary" (I. H., 245-246).

But the difference is fundamental. The historian's task is to construct a picture of "things as they really were and of events as they really happened" (I. H., 246): his picture must be temporally and spatially located; the novelist's need not be. And, again, "all history must be consistent with itself" (I. H., 246). Imaginary worlds cannot conflict. But, most important, the historian must rely upon evidence. His picture "stands in a peculiar relation to something called evidence" (I. H., 246).

Anything immediately perceptible to the historian may serve as evidence. But it is not evidence without the right kind of historical knowledge. "Historical knowledge can only grow out of historical knowledge" (I. H., 247).

However this may be, the historian is dependent upon evidence for the truth of his narrative, whether the evidence is testimony, relics or inscriptions. For all that the historian may assert is "what the evidence before him obliges him to assert" (I. H., 204).

To extract historical knowledge from these perceptible data the historian must use a method of inference which more resembles the methods of criminal detection than those of Aristotelean logic. The theory of inference which identifies validity with form is not one which can be used in history. In fact the notion that the validity of inference can be determined solely by attention to form is pernicious in any field and is a delusion (I. H., 253).

The historical method of inference consists in "putting history to the question" (I. H., 269). Just as in criminal detection the detective is armed with a question to which all other questions will be subordinate ("Who killed John Doe?"), so the historian reads his sources with the question he desires answered already formulated. What distinguishes his questions from those of the "scissor's-and-paste" historian's is that his question if not "Is this statement true or false?" but "What does this statement mean?" "What light is thrown on the subject in which I am interested by the fact that this person made this statement, meaning by it what did he mean" (I. H., 275)? Like the detective he does not ask the question of witnesses but of himself, and just as the detective formulates questions as he goes which bear a logical relation to the question he expects ultimately to answer, so the scientific historian "puts passages to the torture" as he goes, but remembers always his leading question. The important thing about this logic of question and answer is that a question is asked at every step in the argument or investigation, and that every succeeding question is a new question bearing a logical relation to

the one preceding it. "It is not enough to cover the ground by having a catalogue of all the questions that have to be asked, and asking every one of them sooner or later: they must be asked in the right order" (I. H., 273). Beside being in the right order, the questions must be "sensible" questions, that is, there must be some prospect of answering them:

> To ask questions which you see no prospect of answering is the fundamental sin in science. . . . Question and evidence, in history, are correlative. Anything is evidence which enables you to answer your question--the question you are asking now. A sensible question. . . is a question you have or are going to have evidence for answering" (I. H., 281).

The detective, like the historian, uses the question and answer method. He makes data evidence just as the historian does: by the question. But his answer to the question he must answer is only probable; that of the historian is certain.

The questions that will be asked concerning Collingwood's theory of evidence are: In what way does historical method differ from ordinary inductive method? What, if anything, is presupposed by the question and answer method? Are the conclusions of the historian more certain than those of a criminal investigator? Is Collingwood's theory of evidence consistent with his theory of interior verification, his doctrine that the historian supplies his own criterion of historical truth in his idea of the past?

Re-enactment.--The method by which the historian knows the "inside" of past actions after he has, by the logic of question and answer, and by critical historical methods, reached an understanding of what those actions were, is to re-enact the thought underlying those actions in his own mind (I. H., 270). He re-enacts the past in his own mind and thus and only thus has historical knowledge of it. This does not mean merely that his thought has the same object or content as that of the historical personage he is attempting to understand, or, if it is the writing of a philosopher, that

he understands the meaning of the words and sentences he finds there; but that he revives the very same acts of thought which were once the acts of thought of the person he is studying; he gets into the "inside" of the action he is studying and performs the very same acts of thought which were performed by the agents in that action. We reach our knowledge of what these men thought by interpreting the evidence which we have; and, in re-enacting or re-creating their thought in the light of this evidence, "we can know, so far as there is any knowledge, that the thoughts we create were theirs" (I. H., 296). The mere fact that we have someone's record of his thoughts does not necessarily mean that we can understand them, and even though we are able to read and understand the language in which they were written. We must have a background of experience similar to that of the writer or we cannot hope to understand his thought (I. H., 300). We must have a ready sympathy with his ways of thinking.

There can be no history of anything other than thought, because there can be historical knowledge of only what the historian can re-enact in his own mind, and the object of historical knowledge is not thought content (things thought about) but "the act of thinking itself" (I. H., 305). It follows that "historical thinking is always reflection" (I. H., 307), because reflection is thought about thought, thought of the second-degree, and this is precisely what history is. Not only so, but the object of historical thought is reflective thought. Only acts which were preformed in the consciousness that they were being performed, acts performed "on purpose," can be objects of historical knowledge (I. H., 308-309).

The questions that will be asked concerning Collingwood's theory of re-enactment are: Just what is re-enactment of a past thought? How does the historian know he is re-enacting a thought? Does the theory of re-enactment involve a theory of immediate inference, of historical intuition?

Can there be re-enactment without absolutely certain historical knowledge? Is our knowledge of a particular person's thought or behavior dependent upon general knowledge? Must we be sympathetic toward a particular way of thinking to re-enact the thought of people who think in that way? What is the distinction between an act of thought and the content of a thought?

CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND THOUGHT

History as the History of Thought

Collingwood's philosophy of history is an idealist philosophy. He holds that past thought is the proper study of the historian. The only causal factors in history are thoughts. Actions and events are of interest to the historian only because they are expressive of, or are reacted to by, thoughts. The only thoughts which can become the subject matter of history are reflective thoughts, thoughts performed self-consciously and "on purpose"; the only actions which are expressive of such thoughts are reflective actions. Thus the historical narrative will be a coherent and continuous narrative of past thought; it will construct a thought picture of the past.

Three general criticisms may be made of this conception of the subject matter of history: non-mental causal forces may not be used in historical explanation; non-reflective mental forces, emotions and feelings, may not be used in historical explanation; and actions which are not successful cannot be historically explained. The first two of these criticisms are valid only if historical matters cannot be explained without recourse to non-reflective and non-purposive causal influences. The third was recognized and accepted by Collingwood as a consequence of his theory. The first section of this chapter will attempt to show that non-reflective and extra-mental forces should be taken into account in the historical narrative.

But, first, the characteristics of a thought picture of the past may be illustrated by the reconstruction of the strategy of a football captain

in making a play. The football captain will have had a purpose which, if successful, will have exerted a causal influence upon the purposes and actions of every member of the team. Not only will every action grow out of the action which preceded it, but these will grow out of the envisaged ultimate purpose. The hard facts of the situation are the hard facts as the captain sees them. He believes the opponent team's line to be stronger than his own, therefore he decides to pass to gain his purpose, which is to score and win. If he is successful in carrying out his purpose, we can reconstruct his strategy from its accomplishment to its beginning. We can see not only what his purpose was, but his implementation of that purpose, as well as the reason he implemented it in the way he did. We can see that with his view of the situation (the strength of the opponent team's line, and so forth) he could do nothing else.

One question which can be asked concerning such a thought picture is "Can everything which is relevant to this picture of the past be included without referring to extra-mental causal forces?" According to Collingwood, nature cannot affect spirit. What can affect spirit is the conception of nature which we hold. Thus geography or climate does not exert a causal influence upon our behavior. The fact that people live on an island does not in itself affect their history, but their conception of their position, whether they conceive the sea as a barrier, an avenue to trade, a means of securing food, does affect it. But, to return to our play, suppose the football captain is subject, in damp weather, to a slight asthmatic condition, not enough to prevent his playing but enough to impair his efficiency. Suppose that as a result of this condition he has a bad day (such as we all sometimes have) and loses the game, although the experts had predicted that he would win easily. Are we also to suppose that the damp weather affected his "history," or may we assume that it was his conception of the

damp weather that affected it? Clearly the former. But if nature impinges upon the working of spirit in this instance why may it not do so in others?

It seems to do so often enough. If a person is very hungry, his ability to concentrate upon other subjects is affected. If he has a headache or sore back, his spirit is affected. His actions and thoughts are not just what they would be if he were able to give them his undivided attention.

If nature really does affect spirit, as it seems to, an explanation of human actions which ignores this aspect of human behavior will be a partial explanation. Nothing that had a part in determining the course those actions took can be deliberately ignored. If part of the situation in which the action occurred was something other than thought, then that must be taken into account in describing the situation.

In addition to extra-mental causal forces, a good case can be made for including non-reflective mental forces, emotions and feelings, in historical explanation if for no other reason than their interest.

Restricting the historian's subject matter to reflective thought leaves out altogether this aspect of thought. The feelings and emotions in which thought almost always operates, and which, perhaps, give it part of its force, and which certainly give it much of its interest, must be entirely omitted from the historical narrative. History, under these restrictions, would lose much of its human quality; one of the most interesting aspects of any historical period is its emotional tone. A history of the Enlightenment, for example, which omitted this emotional background would not be half so interesting and, perhaps, not half so enlightening. Ideas couched in emotive language are not completely taken into account and, consequently, not completely understood, unless their emotional tone is considered. Actions which, if interpreted as coldly reflective, would

be inhumanly cruel are often rendered more rational, or at least more human, by explanation which does take into account the emotional or psychological context out of which they arose. This is simply to say that cold rationality may seem profoundly irrational.

There is some question whether we can construct a historical narrative of an institution, say the church or the family, without reference to explanation in terms of feeling and emotion. We can speak, of course, of the purpose of the family as being the propagation of the race, as if it were deliberately planned for a utilitarian purpose. The same result could have been taken care of in numerous other ways. What there is of value in the family is not explained when the emotional and psychological needs met by that institution are left out of the account. A history of the church which omitted an explanation of its ritual, the confessional, holy days would be a partial history of church. One which explained them without reference to the satisfactions they provide for psychological and unconscious needs would still be only a partial history.

One other limitation of Collingwood's theory that all history is the history of thought is that unsuccessful actions cannot become the subject matter of historical narratives. There can be no history of lost battles, unsuccessful enterprises; there can only be histories of victorious enterprises. Since this is so, one great field of subject matter is forever closed to the historian. He may speculate in idle moments about the thoughts of the loser, but historical knowledge of those thoughts he can never have. Collingwood pointed out this consequence of his theory in his Autobiography; and T. M. Knox, in the preface to The Idea of History (pp. xi-xii), pointed out a further consequence of what Collingwood said there, which is that to find out what a philosopher thought is, at the same time, to find out that it is true. As a consequence, "all philosophical writings are either true or unintelligible."

If other types of historical explanation than thought are used, unsuccessful actions can be explained. Historians do explain unsuccessful actions. If Collingwood is right, they could not do so if all history is restricted to thought.

If only reflective thought and action may be the subject matter of history, then much that is at present considered grist for the historian's mill must be expelled from the province of history. Works such as Toynbee's A Study of History and Spengler's Decline of the West are, according to this criterion, largely non-historical works, although they deal with historical matters in the ordinary sense of past events. Any history which explains human actions in causal terms other than the teleological causality of human purpose must be excluded from the field of history.

The conclusion to which this discussion points is that history should not be limited to explanation of past actions and events in terms of thought alone. Any explanation of human actions must take into account human thoughts and purposes, but external or internal forces which affect those purposes must also be taken into account. These forces include both natural forces and feelings. A philosophy of history which restricts historical explanation to the province of reflective thought is not an entirely adequate philosophy.

History as the Science of Mind

According to Collingwood history is the true science of mind. The reason he holds this position is his belief that:

> The body of human thought or mental activity is a corporate possession, and almost all the operations which our minds perform are operations which we learned to perform from others who have performed them already. Since mind is what it does, and human nature, if it is a name for anything real, is only a name for human activities, this acquisition of ability to perform determinate operations is the acquisition of a determinate human nature.

> Thus the historical process is a process in which man creates for himself this or that kind of human nature by re-creating in his own thought the past to which he is heir. (I. H., 226)

One sense, then, in which history is the science of human nature or mind is that in history we can discover what mind has done and from that learn what mind is capable of doing. Mind is what it does, therefore in learning what it does we learn what it is. Not only do we discover what mind is but we acquire mind (human nature) in the process of discovering it. Our human nature is not restricted to what it itself has experienced immediately, but it may re-create the past and expand its possible limits to include the total experience of the race, insofar as that is contained in present historical knowledge.

There are some problems in this conception of history which may conveniently be dealt with here. One of these is to determine what Collingwood means when he says that "mind is what it does." This is part of Collingwood's general view that structure cannot be differentiated from function. If being and doing were differentiated, it may be noted, history would be the knowledge of doing while psychology would be the science which discovers the structure of the mind. But the two, according to Collingwood, cannot be separated. This view is related to Collingwood's position, following Kant, that "the mind's knowledge of itself is its knowledge of everything else: in knowing itself it knows its world, and in knowing its world it knows itself."[1] In knowing the way in which the mind functions, the way it knows its world, we know the structure of the mind. In knowing what mind does we know what mind is. Thus if we know the world of history we know the world of mind.

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[1]Collingwood, Speculum Mentis (Oxford, 1924), p. 299.

One question remains: Does the statement "the mind is what it does" imply a behavioristic theory of mind? Collingwood's answer would be, emphatically, no. When Collingwood states that the mind is what it does, he does not mean that the mind is what the body does. What the mind does is to think and to direct action; this action is not to be equated with what the mind does. The mind is the thought which was the inside of the action. The movements of bodies in space is the outside of the action, and with the outside of the action the historian is concerned only so far as it reveals the inside. Behaviorism rejects all such dualisms.

But how, the behaviorist may ask, can we know the inside of an action, which is unobservable and therefore unknowable? Collingwood's answer to this objection is contained in his theory of re-enactment. This theory forms a major part of his theory of history and therefore a discussion of its applications will be fully treated in a later chapter. It may be mentioned, however, that this theory is not a completely satisfactory answer to the objection.

But, to return to the discussion, Collingwood holds that we do know the inside of past actions, we do know past thought, and he therefore holds that history is the true science of mind. To know past thought is to think it, to re-create it in the present. To know what mind has done is to know what mind is, because for mind to know what mind has done in the past presupposes mind's doing it in the present.

Given Collingwood's premises it would seem that there is no denying his conclusion. If history is the field of endeavor which discovers past thought, and if in discovering past thought we create it in the present, and if mind is what it does (i.e. thinks), then history is the true science of mind. It is the science which discovers what mind thinks and is. It is not predictive but descriptive. Mind is not a static entity but a

dynamic process. The essence of a process is change, it is forever becoming. To describe the mind of today is not to predict the mind of tomorrow.

We may agree with Collingwood that history is, in his sense, the science of mind without limiting the sphere of history to reflective thought alone. It may well be that history describes the mind, but it does other things as well. There is no need to limit its subject matter so drastically. Collingwood's objection to this view would be that we can only have historical knowledge of what we can re-enact in our own minds and that only thought can be so re-enacted, but, as has been mentioned, his theory of re-enactment is itself subject to serious limitations. On the other hand if we can have no knowledge of historical thought, history cannot be the science of mind, even on Collingwood's own showing.

But what are we to make of Collingwood's statement in Speculum Mentis that "the world of fact which is explicitly studied in history is . . . implicitly nothing but the knowing mind as such"? Can history be the science of the knowing mind even if its object is not thought? Does the mind describe itself in describing any object whatever? This seems to be the conclusion at which Collingwood arrived in Speculum Mentis (1924) but when later Collingwood wrote The Idea of History (1936) he no longer spoke of history as being a world of fact but referred to it as a world of thought. It seems clear that the change was a necessary one from the point of view of calling history the science of mind: If the mind describes itself in describing any object, then every science is a science of mind. It would seem, in conclusion, that history's being the science of mind presupposes that history be able to know past thought. How it is able to obtain such knowledge is a methodological problem which will be taken up when Collingwood's theory of re-enactment is considered. History as the science of

mind does not imply that history must be restricted entirely to the area of reflective thought. And, in view of the limitations imposed upon history by this restriction it would seem that we may justifiably reject it.

Freedom

Before passing on to Collingwood's general philosophical position concerning the status of history we may profitably consider one other doctrine of his which is very closely related to history's being the history of thought. This is his view of freedom. This view has been implicitly treated in the first section of this chapter and need not detain us long here. The view is, briefly, that the mind creates the situation in which it finds itself. Nothing exerts compulsion upon the mind except itself, because nature cannot exert compulsion upon mind. The criticisms offered concerning this position need not be repeated.

One interesting aspect of this conception of human freedom may be mentioned, however. The historian in discovering the freedom of the people whose thought he studies, when he is able to see that their limitations were limitations which their own reason imposed upon them and not determinate factors in the environment which coerced them, that their conception of the sea as a barrier, and not the sea, was the cause of their provinciality; when the historian discovers the freedom which they enjoyed, he discovers his own freedom. He is free to write history in complete autonomy. He has liberated himself from the yoke of the natural sciences which conceive the present to have been the result of determinate past events. The mind is free of natural science and its determinism and may create its own situation, its own history, its own human nature, its own past. This is not a flight from reality because what is real <u>is</u> the mind.

The attractions of this view are obvious.[2] No less obvious are their implications for a theory of history which claims to give a picture of "things as they really were and of events as they really happened" (I. H., 246). If the world of human affairs is created by the mind, and if the world of history is the world of human affairs, then the historical event is created. But Collingwood also maintains that history must be objective. Therefore the event is not created. Collingwood can counter that the event is, in some sense, created in being discovered to have occurred. If this is what he means, it may be granted; but how this distinguishes history from any other science is not clear. If history is a science of discovery, the historian may be autonomous in the sense that his methods of discovery are tested methods which can be depended upon to produce knowledge; but if the inductive methods of natural science are necessary to discovery, the historian is not free to ignore them. History need not fall, methodologically, outside the province of natural science in order for it to be granted autonomy. The historian may be master in his own house without being master of entire field of human knowledge. If there are good things in other sciences which he can use, he can use them without sacrificing his independence. If, as Collingwood says, all knowledge is historical knowledge and if historical knowledge must be justified before any other form of knowledge can be, it follows that a general theory of knowledge <u>is</u> a theory of historical knowledge. If there are good things

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[2]That there is a great deal of truth in the statement that the mind creates its own situation may be illustrated by the story of a man who was going to settle in a village in which he had not lived. Upon asking what type of people the villagers were, he was asked what type of people his neighbors had been in his old village. He replied that they had been envious, spiteful, un-neighborly. His informant then told him that he would find the people of this village to be just like those of the old one. Undoubtedly they were.

in general theory of knowledge which can be applied to specific problems which arise in history as a special science, they can be used by the philosopher of history without loss of autonomy.

The conclusions which have evolved out of this discussion of three of Collingwood's key ideas are slightly unfavorable to his position. It has been granted that history may be, if it can discover past thought, the science of mind in Collingwood's sense. Restricting history to that field alone has been seen to be a cramping restriction and one which is not necessary. It has been decided that the historian is just as free and autonomous as any other scientist, but not more so. He does not make himself more independent by renouncing the tested methods of gaining knowledge used in the natural sciences. The methods of the sciences which may be so applicable are part of the fund of general knowledge acquired by the race, and no one makes himself more autonomous by discarding any genuine knowledge.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF HISTORY

The primary task which Collingwood set himself in his philosophy of history was that of establishing history as an autonomous pursuit of knowledge: he wished to show that history is not dependent upon the methods of natural science but has a methodology of its own. The historian is to be free to pursue his own ends in his own way, with the assurance that the conclusions to which his method leads him are true conclusions and are as important to the satisfactory conduct of human affairs as are the conclusions of natural science. History is not to be subsumed under natural science nor is the problem of historical knowledge solved by a theory of knowledge which accounts for knowledge in the world of natural science. The problem of establishing history as an autonomous science independent of natural science is the problem of discovering a theory of historical knowledge which will account for and solve the notorious difficulties involved in demonstrating that our historical knowledge is really knowledge and not merely opinion based on faith in the testimony of contemporary observers. Thus, if historical knowledge is to be firmly based, faith in testimony and so forth must be supplanted by some more satisfactory means of attaining historical knowledge. Not only so, but those means must be shown to be solidly based, either because they are capable of verification or because they are based, in some other sense, upon the realities of experience. Collingwood chose the latter method, because historical events cannot be

reproduced for verification. The realities of experience upon which Collingwood based his theory of historical knowledge were the innate or a priori historical imagination, which supplies us with the idea of history; and the ability of the historian to revive an act of thought which he is studying. The latter is his doctrine of re-enactment.

The "Copernican" Revolution in Theory of History

The problem which Collingwood attempted to solve with his doctrine of the a priori imagination was the problem of historical skepticism: The doctrine that about the past we can have not knowledge but opinion only: and this because of the untrustworthiness of testimony, which according to the skeptic, is our only important link with past human actions. The purpose of the doctrine of the a priori imagination was to work a Kantian revolution in the theory of history, to set history on its feet as a bona fide branch of human knowledge.

To work this revolution the doctrine shifts the point of reference from the historian's authority to the historian, just as the Kantian "Copernican revolution" shifted the point of reference from nature to the mind of the observer. Just as the mind becomes a law-giver to nature, the historian's mind becomes the criterion for the validity of its authorities. No longer is the historian subject to his authorities in the sense of swallowing whole what they have to tell him; they are subject to him, because their statements must meet the test of the a priori imagination (I. H., 245).

The historical (a priori) imagination is thus claimed to be an integral part of the human mind so far as it is distinctively human. It governs the way the mind looks at the past, and the historian's picture of the past must conform, insofar as it is adequate, to his idea of what an imaginary picture

of the past ought to be (I. H., 249). This idea of the past is the idea of the past as a continuous and coherent world of thought. It is the idea of history itself. And that idea is, using Kant's terminology, a priori; using Descartes', innate (I. H., 248).

The term "picture of the past" is ambiguous and may mean a picture which corresponds to the past as it really was, but this possibility is rejected by Collingwood because of the impossibility of comparing the picture with its original (I. H., 288); the other possibility is that it is used metaphorically to mean an account of the past which falls into place like the parts of a picture, an account which is coherent and continuous and "makes sense (I. H., 245); this is the sense in which Collingwood uses the term. It must be continuous in the sense that every act must lead into the next and grow out of the last; it must be coherent in the sense that the total picture must hang together and make sense, and every character, situation, and action must have been so bound together that what happened was all that could have happened. A minor difficulty concerning the possibility of having a "picture" of human thought in the past, which is the sole concern of history, is thus resolved.

The historian does not compare his picture of the past with the past as it really was but with his idea of what a picture of the past ought to be, and this idea is a part of the furniture of his mind and serves as his criterion of historical truth. He is thus in a position to reject statements or discard (or, at least, to "reinterpret") evidence which does not fit into a coherent and continuous picture which makes sense (I. H., 244-245-248).

Collingwood has thus established the autonomy of the historian. The historian is not a mere "scissors-and-paste" copyist who accepts the

picture of the past found in his authorities, however incoherent it may be. He constructs his picture according to an indubitable principle: it must "make sense."

But has Collingwood solved the problem which he started out to solve, the problem of historical skepticism? Whether or not he has hinges, perhaps, in part, upon the fidelity of the analogy between his "Copernican revolution" in the theory of historical knowledge and Kant's in his general theory of knowledge. The Kantian hypothesis consists in maintaining that the structure of the mind governs the way we experience reality. Therefore it is a priori certain that an object of perception will be in space and time and will be subject to "causal" sequence. The theory does not maintain that we know reality, merely that what we can know of it must conform to the structure of the mind. The way in which reality is apprehended by the human mind is thus the same for all human beings, because the manner of apprehending reality depends upon the structure of the human mind as such.

It is by no means certain that the historical imagination is a structural part of the human mind. If we can find mature persons who do not view the past as continuous, coherent and "making sense," what are we to say concerning the adequacy of the theory? That there are such persons Collingwood would have been the first to admit while he was combatting "irrationalist" tendencies in contemporary thought. Any theory which describes history as "a juxtaposition of things standing to one another in merely external relations" (I. H., 299) would deny Collingwood's thesis that every mind has an idea of the past as coherent and continuous. Certainly we do not find anyone who denies that he views objects in space and time or that events occur in sequences which seem causal. To maintain that if people have not come to view the past in the way Collingwood postulates,

they have not attained mental maturity, as Collingwood sometimes seems to argue, is to beg the question.

Points of View

The theory is far from a completely satisfactory answer to skepticism even if it is accepted. The vagueness of the terms "coherent," "continuous," "making sense" renders them almost useless, except as hortatory symbols. What is coherent sense at one point in history may well be incoherent nonsense at another. What "makes sense" to a Marxist may be nonsense to a Thomist.

Collingwood recognized this limitation of his theory and accepted it as preferable to the limitations of scissors-and-paste history (I. H., 229, 248). It at least allows the historian autonomy in working out his own destiny.[1] But for historical skepticism we are unable to substitute anything more satisfactory than historical relativism, the well known "frame of reference" theory of historical knowledge. According to this theory every historical writer has a "frame of reference" and his work can only be judged in relation to the "frame of reference." This "frame of reference" consists of the writer's own emotional and intellectual background, his nationality, the cultural milieu, the prevailing "climate of opinion," etc. All these factors mold the writer's point of view, and his point of view permeates his entire work. The "frame of reference" may be the result of a combination of independent factors, as those mentioned above, or

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[1]However, Collingwood did not feel that autonomy was sufficient. "It is not enough that historical science should be autonomous or creative, it must also be cogent or objective; it must impress itself as inevitable on anyone who is able and willing to consider the grounds upon which it is based, and to think for himself what the conclusions are to which they point. (I. H., 265)

those factors may be conditioned by some one antecedent factor, as, e.g., in the Marxist theory of ideology, economic forces.

There is some question, however, as to whether Collingwood is free to hold this theory in any form in view of his other commitments. If the subject matter of history is purposive action and thought, and if the history of history or historians is also history, is it legitimate to explain a historian's, or, for that matter, anyone else's, thought in terms of non-mental antecedent factors or conditioning influences of a causal nature? The answer is no?[2]

When a historian asks "Why did this historian write from the particular point of view from which he wrote?" he means "What did this historian think, which made him decide to write from the particular point of view from which he wrote?" Thus the point of view chosen by anyone is the product of reflection and not a chance configuration of unconscious geographical or temporal prejudices. It follows that the phrase "unconscious bias" would be a contradiction in terms, when applied to any historian. For the bias to be historically knowable, it must have been consciously held. For reflective acts, whether physical acts or acts of thought, acts which were done "on purpose," "are the only subject-matter of history" (I. H., 309).

But can this aspect of Collingwood's theory be harmonized with his view that the people in a given period or culture think what they have been taught to think (I. H., 317)? Reflection, according to Collingwood,

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[2]When the historian uses the word "cause," he uses it in a special sense. "When an historian asks 'Why did Brutus stab Caesar?' he means 'What did Brutus think, which made him decide to stab Caesar?' The cause of the event, for him, means the thought in the mind of the person by whose agency the event come about: and this is not something other than the event, it is the inside of the event itself." (I. H., 214-215)

is thought about thought. Only reflective thought can become the subject matter of history. Thinking what we have been taught to think is unreflective thought, thought not thought about but accepted. Such thought cannot be historical subject matter. Therefore either historical knowledge is impossible or people need not always believe what they have been taught to think. They can reflect upon the Weltanschauung of their culture and criticize it. They can reflect upon their own criticism and criticize that. Therefore the historian need not evaluate other countries from the point of view of the accepted values in his own country. He need not, in judging other civilizations or periods, judge them from the point of view of his own period. He may just as easily judge his own period unfavorably in comparison to an earlier, as the early protestants did.

Some further consequences of Collingwood's excursion into the "frame of reference" theory may be pointed out. Our "picture" of the world (point of view) is the picture it is because that is the way we have been taught to think. And our point of view is valid only for us and for people situated like us, but for us it is valid (I. H., 108). Therefore the way we have been taught to think is the way we ought to think, because we have to think in some way, and there is no alternative way for people in our situation to think. In other words, the way we have been taught to think is valid for us. It follows that the way other people have been taught to think is valid for them. There can be no disputing about validity, then; it is as private a matter as taste.

Collingwood's position, on this analysis, shades into the historical skepticism which he was attempting to avoid, because if the historian can only think in the way he has been taught to think, what assurance has he that the way he has been taught to think is such as to give him any knowledge

about the past, much less certain knowledge! How does he know that he is not reading thoughts, which were totally foreign to the minds of the actors, into past actions? Manifestly, he must know that the way he thinks is valid, and valid not only for him but publicly and universally valid, or he can have no assurance whatever that he has attained to anything higher than historical opinion. Historical relativism is thus only one step removed from historical skepticism and logically entails it.

Thus Collingwood is not free to hold the "frame of reference" theory of history. If the historian has a point of view, and he must have one, it must be one which he has chosen freely and not one forced upon him by his environment. If he cannot choose his point of view critically, i.e., reflectively, "on purpose," his thought cannot become historical subject matter. The same is true of any person. History as the history of reflective thought is not possible on a "frame of reference" theory. It is possible only if the point of view may be arrived at independently.

Collingwood is not altogether consistent in his position concerning the validity of points of view. He sometimes seems to hold that there is an objectively valid point of view from which historical evidence must be evaluated. This view is implicit in his statement (I. H., 265) that for historical conclusions to be objective they must impress themselves on anyone who considered the grounds on which they are based as inevitable. Perhaps the point of view he presupposes here is a scientific point of view, an impartial, disinterested point of view; because a person who held the point of view that providence had played an important part in history would not be likely to accept conclusions reached through the application of deterministic principles.

Collingwood's claims for the historical imagination as the sole criterion of historical truth have been seen to be somewhat exaggerated;

because not everyone views the past as a continuous and coherent process, and those who do are not agreed as to what constitutes coherence; and because by its criterion every historical work that is "coherent" and "continuous" and "makes sense" is true. Histories written from any point of view are "true" for the people who hold that point of view.

Truth and Fiction

Collingwood recognizes this limitation of his theory and attempts, with indifferent success, to harmonize his doctrine that the historical imagination is the sole criterion of historical truth with the position that the truth of a historical narrative depends upon evidence. If the historical imagination is the criterion by which we judge whether to accept or reject evidence, as he explicitly states on page 245 of The Idea of History,[3] is it possible that he can, consistently, maintain, as he does maintain on page 246, that the only way we can judge the truth of a historical narrative is by considering its relation to the evidence.[4] The truth of the narrative depends upon the evidence, which depends upon the historical imagination. Therefore the only way we can judge the

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[3] "Suetonius tells me that Nero at one time intended to evacuate Britain. I reject his statement, not because any better authority flatly contradicts it, for of course none does; but because my reconstruction of Nero's policy based on Tacitus will not allow me to think that Suetonius is right. And if I am told that this is merely to say I prefer Tacitus to Suetonius, I confess that I do: but I do so just because I find myself able to incorporate what Tacitus tells me into a coherent and continuous picture of my own, and cannot do this for Suetonius."(I. H. 245)

[4] "The historian's picture stands in a peculiar relation to something called evidence. The only way in which the historian or any one else can judge, even tentatively, of its truth is by considering this relation; and, in practice, what we mean by asking whether an historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence: for a truth unable to be so justified is to the historian a thing of no interest." And "genuine history has no room for the merely probable or the merely possible; all it permits the historian to assert is what the evidence before him obliges him to assert." (I. H., 204)

truth of the narrative is to consider its relation to the historical imagination to see whether it is continuous and coherent and makes sense.

Certainly it is not enough to establish history as an autonomous form of knowledge or as a form of knowledge at all to maintain that the aesthetic qualities of the historical picture guarantees its truth. It is only by an exaggeration that we can say that in history we have indubitable or necessary knowledge (I. N., 262), and at the same time say the reason we reject Suetonius' account of Nero's policy as false and accept Tacitus' account as historical truth, is that we prefer the coherent picture into which Tacitus' account fits to the not so coherent one which would incorporate Suetonius' account. The only way in which we could be sure that Tacitus' account is true would be to have a priori knowledge that the more coherent a picture is the more true it is. In this case we could not know that Suetonius' account is false, only that it is less true than Tacitus'. The reason is that the picture into which Suetonius' account fits is coherent, but it is less coherent than that into which Tacitus' fits. It is not enough that a coherent picture be true, because then we must accept both Tacitus' and Suetonius' account, for they will both fit into a coherent picture. The more coherent picture must be more true, or we have no basis for choosing between them. But if we have such a priori knowledge, we must accept the fact that the novelist's account of the past, the historical novel, will be the truest historical account because the novelist is nowhere tied down by evidence; he can construct a picture of the past which is truly ideal, the past as it ought to be, coherent, continuous, making sense, aesthetically satisfying.[5]

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[5]Cf. A. D. Woozley, Theory of Knowledge (St. Albans, England: 1949), pp. 160ff.

Apology

But, we can offer in defense of Collingwood's criterion, the criterion provides a reasonable explanation concerning the reasons historians disagree. Men of good intelligence differ as to what is or is not proved by a given collection of data. If there was universal agreement as to what constitutes evidence for what, this would not be the case. Men of good intelligence, among them Mark Twain, have decided, from the available data, that Shakespeare could not have written the plays attributed to him; men of equally good intelligence considering the same data, in, perhaps, a different light, have arrived at the opposite opinion. The former have not been able to form a coherent picture of the past that includes Shakespeare having written the Shakespearean plays; the latter are unable to form a coherent picture of the past without his inclusion as the author of those plays.

Thus if Collingwood has done nothing else, he has described the state of affairs that exists in the world of historical writing. He has given a plausible explanation for the existence of differences of opinion. But the business of a criterion is to settle differences, not to explain them. A criterion which does not do this is no criterion. A theory concerning the idea of the past as a criterion might be offered as the reason for differences of opinion. But the criterion as a criterion would not be so offered. That Collingwood's criterion establishes history as an autonomous science is open to dispute. So long as there are antithetical histories concerning the same subject, so long as intelligent historians reach opposite conclusions concerning the same matter, so long as they construct contrary pictures of the past, so long will there be skepticism concerning the validity of historical knowledge. Only if some one way of interpreting the evidence is, if not valid, at least more nearly valid, can we affirm that one history is more nearly a true picture of the past than another.

And this entails that one point of view, one idea of what constitutes coherence, continuousness, making sense, be more nearly valid than others.

As a matter of fact, historians generally, including Collingwood, do criticize other historians as if some one method of looking at the past, some one method of interpreting the evidence, was more nearly valid than other methods. They speak of one historian as being biased toward this or that interpretation of history, toward, perhaps, a Whiggish, or a Marxist interpretation of the past; they speak of a historian being thrown off historical balance by being biased for or against a great-man or determinist theory of history. And, to use another example, all of us, as participants in, and interested observers of contemporary history, believe that some newspapers, which are, after all, narratives of contemporary history, at least in part, are better than others in reporting contemporary events. The reports written by staff correspondents of newspapers with different points of view, say the Chicago Tribune, the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the Associated Press, and the Daily Worker, even though they are written on the same event, will differ very considerably.

But the fact that the people who hold the basic presuppositions of the Chicago Tribune or the Post Dispatch would, respectively, hold that their historical interpretation is the correct one, and that their picture of past events is more "objective" than that of the other paper, is not grounds for believing that either is right. This holds for professional historians as well.[6] To find whether any way of picturing the past is a better way

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[6]Even if historians were unanimous this alone would not be grounds for believing that they were right. Authors are unanimous, according to Collingwood, not because they are right but "because of the depth of their ignorance . . . . It is only when they know nothing, or next to nothing, that they begin to agree. Ancient history is easy not because its facts are certain but because we are at the mercy of Herodotus or some other writer . . . . Speculum Mentis, p. 236.

than others would necessitate evaluating points of view. And this would probably involve establishing a particular metaphysics and a particular theory of value. But differences here are, seemingly, irresolvable. Are we to suppose, then, that basic differences are due, at least in part, to psychological make-up? At any rate, there seems to be little likelihood that there will be universal agreement among historians as to what is and is not a true historical picture of the past so long as differences exist among them as to what constitutes a picture of the past which is coherent, continuous, and makes sense. Nor does it seem likely that different points of view will be assimilated into one point of view which will be universally regarded as valid.

It would seem, then, that if Collingwood is right in holding that a historian's idea of what a picture of the past ought to be determines what he will consider a particular datum to be evidence for, and he does seem to be right, a mild historical skepticism concerning any particular historical work is in order; not skepticism in the sense that history is denied to contain any truth, but in the sense that the student does not swallow whole what he finds in any particular historian's work. He accepts no historian's work as the ultimate word on any subject. He is a historian himself and has his own idea of what a picture of the past ought to be; he has his own point of view, his own idea of what "makes sense" of the past. He is free to consider the evidence and the various opinions and come to his own conclusion on the subject. In being skeptical, he, in some measure, compensates for any disadvantage there may be in having various historical opinions; what he gains in the increase of his critical powers, in the satisfaction there is to be had in independent work and judgment, may more than compensate for any psychological disadvantage

there is in not having historical truth ready-made for him. Thus a theoretical obstacle to knowledge presents a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

This is, admittedly, a weak defense of Collingwood's theory and is more an apology than a defense; but it seems to be the best that can be offered. Probably other criteria of historical truth can and will be offered which are more satisfactory. The historian's present knowledge of history was offered as a criterion by Collingwood in Speculum Mentis (p. 214) and later rejected because of its circularity. Its similarity to the idea of history as a criterion is obvious, because the historian's idea of history will be a function of his historical knowledge also. The way Collingwood sought to avoid this circularity was to call the idea of history 'innate'; but the variety of ideas of history belies this; or, if it is innate, it is too vague an idea to be a good criterion.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Collingwood is careful to distinguish the business of the historian from that of the novelist, and his grounds for doing so are that the historian's picture purports to be true. The historian is dependent upon the evidence; it is not enough that his picture be coherent; it must be justified by the evidence. Although we have seen some difficulties in this view, it remains to consider Collingwood's theory of evidence more closely.

But before considering Collingwood's position concerning evidence in detail, it may be well to mention two other restrictions upon the historian in his attempt to construct a picture "of things as they really were and of events as they really happened" (I. H. 246), from which the novelist is free. These are that the historian's picture must be localized in space and time and that "all history must be consistent with itself" (I. H.,246). The first poses no problem, but the second is not altogether clear. "History" must mean "historical narrative of what happened" rather than "what really happened," because events cannot be either consistent or inconsistent, either with themselves or with anything else. But "history" in the next sentence seems to mean "what **really** happened," for Collingwood speaks of there being "only one historical world." But if it means "historical narrative," it must mean that every historical narrative must be consistent with every other historical narrative, for if it means only that every historical narrative must be consistent with itself,

history is no different from the novel; every novel must be consistent with itself, or it will not be coherent, it will not "make sense." But historical narratives are just as apt to be inconsistent as not. Tacitus' picture of Nero's policy is inconsistent with that of Suetonius. Actually, historical narratives cannot even be independent because "there is only one historical world, and everything in it must stand in some relation to everything else." But we do not find that historical narratives are consistent; therefore unless the statement is analytic, i.e., unless what it states is that every historical narrative which is true is consistent with every other historical narrative which is true, it must mean that they ought to be consistent; it does not tell us, then, wherein history and art differ but wherein they ought to differ, because art is not subject to logical norms.

Evidence and the Idea of the Past

According to Collingwood evidence is simply any immediately observable or perceptible fact which can be used as evidence. Anything in the perceptible world can become evidence for the historian, this potsherd, this trench, this wall, this manuscript, this statement, if it will answer the question the historian is asking: How did these people obtain their livelihood? What type of warfare was used when this battle was fought? Was this a warlike or an agricultural people? Without the question the evidence is dumb, and without historical knowledge there is no question (I. H., 247). Thus, without knowledge and without the question there is no evidence; there is only brute fact.

This is not the view of historical evidence which holds that the evidence is "objective," which holds that the same historical datum will mean the same thing to all men. Historical data are objective, but their

implications are not so obvious that there is unanimous agreement concerning their status as evidence. Data is evidence only because it is interpreted. Question and evidence are mutually interdependent. The datum is evidence because it answers the question. Without the datum the question would not be asked; without the question the datum would not be evidence. There is no question of a datum being evidence for any particular hypothesis, it may be evidence for hundreds. It is evidence for any hypothesis that will explain it. The amount of knowledge brought to bear upon the datum will determine what it is evidence for. The wind whistling through the mountains will be evidence for one man, at one time, that there are devils in the mountains; for another man, at another time, that the topography of the mountain is of a certain character. What "makes sense" to one man is nonsense to the other. This example is not so good as it might be, because there is no difference of opinion as to who is right. But there have been in the recent past, differences of opinion among literary historians as to what Shakespeare's will is evidence for. One side is certain it is evidence that he could not have written the plays, that no genius capable of writing them could have been so crude, spiteful, and miserly as the will displays him to be; the other side is equally certain that the will can be explained in a satisfactory manner without recourse to impeachment proceedings; the customs were different then than now; artistic temperaments are notoriously erratic, etc. The datum (Shakespeare's will) is evidence for two incompatible positions. Here it is especially evident that the question presupposes historical knowledge: Knowledge about the ways in which human beings act, knowledge about the authenticity of documents, etc.

Collingwood would, presumably, deny that our knowledge of Shakespeare's behavior depends upon our general knowledge concerning the way in which artists ordinarily behave; but his theory of how we explain human actions,

his theory of re-enactment, is not, as we shall see, a wholly justified account of our knowledge of those actions. In addition it is not entirely consistent with his theory of question and answer. The question presupposes knowledge; therefore, a question concerning Shakespeare's thought and behavior presupposes knowledge about the thought and behavior of human beings in general and of artists in particular, and our knowledge of artists will be knowledge of artists in general.

The point which it is important to note with regard to our illustration is that different answers are given to the same question, using the same datum. Not only are the answers different, but they are incompatible. How can this be? Is not evidence "objective?" Can we not show once for all, to everyone's satisfaction, that one or the other answer is the only one possible for intelligent men? Or may intelligent men continue to differ on this matter as they do on others? "But suppose the evidence preponderates on one side or the other." "How can it do that in historical matters of this sort? The point at issue is what the data are evidence for." "But the data which are used as evidence are much more elaborate than you have indicated." "True, but suppose they are amenable to the same treatment, as they often are in matters of controversy." "Then we should suspend judgment." "Historians do not do so, or there would be no difference of opinion." "Then they choose the position on which the evidence seems to them to preponderate." "But this is to say that they have interpreted the evidence to preponderate on one side or the other."

If this imaginary dialogue has served its purpose, it has shown that Collingwood's theory of evidence is perfectly consistent with his theory of the historical imagination. Evidence is only evidence when it answers the historian's question, and the answer the evidence gives will depend upon how it is interpreted, which is to say that what the evidence proves

depends upon what "makes sense" to the historian, what he can incorporate into his coherent and continuous picture of the past. The question presupposes historical knowledge, and "historical knowledge can only grow out of historical knowledge" (I. H., 247).

This means simply that the past is ordered, by the mind, into a coherent and continuous system, and that we always start from where we are when we gain knowledge. Our historical knowledge may be scanty, as that of a two-year-old, or it may be tremendous, as that of a Toynbee; but, wherever we are in the scale, our historical knowledge will grow out of the historical knowledge we possess. Whether the idea of the past is "innate" or empirically arrived at through the persistence of memory may, however, be a matter of dispute; but, in any case, it is fundamental idea which is common to mankind. All of us have an idea of the past. Most of us, perhaps, have an idea of the past in Collingwood's sense: an idea of the past as coherent and continuous and making sense.

Such an attempted analysis as has here been given of the problem of evidence in historical matters tends to obscure the fact that at any given point in the historical process historians are pretty generally agreed as to what is evidence for what. This is to say that at any given point in history the historical knowledge available is generally available, and that the accepted methods of interpreting evidence are generally accepted by historians. At a different point in the historical process other methods of interpreting the evidence will be widely accepted. The data available for evidence may be the same in both cases; what will have changed is the method of interpretation.

The similarity between the inductive methods of the natural sciences in explaining data and the method of history is fairly close. However, one fundamental difference is that history is concerned with events which

are no longer observable and which are not capable of reproduction for verification of historical conclusions. We can revise our histories to account for any newly discovered material on their subject matter, but advance in historical knowledge, according to Collingwood, does not come about so much in discovering new material as it does in discovering how to use the material we have. The whole perceptible world is evidence for the historian if he has the know-how to make it evidence. This know-how can only come from historical knowledge, and historical knowledge is the content which receives its form from the idea of history itself. The historical imagination supplies the form to historical knowledge, and the form and amount of knowledge we possess determines what we can or can not use as evidence. Thus Collingwood's theory of evidence is not only consistent with, but is entailed by, his theory of the historical imagination.

Perhaps his somewhat excessive claims for the validity of historical inference from the evidence, claiming that historical inference from evidence is not a matter of probability only but of necessity, that a good historical inference bears more resemblance to a demonstration in mathematics than to inductive conclusions of the type reached in criminal investigations or criminal trials, is the result of a too great dependence upon the historical imagination as the criterion of historical truth. The difficulties involved in using the idea of history as a criterion, as it has been noted, are many. Not the least of these is that it entails historical relativism. Collingwood cannot mean, then, that he can prove to a historian who disagrees with his views that he (the historian) is wrong. The historian has a different point of view, a different idea of what makes the past coherent and continuous and renders it intelligible. The historian must accept Collingwood's premises; what is evidence for Collingwood must be evidence for the historian; the historian must enter

sympathetically into Collingwood's view; he must temporarily adopt Collingwood's idea of what makes history make sense. Then and only then can the argument be a proof. For without this sympathetic approach the evidence is not even evidence for Collingwood's conclusion. To the historian the data might ordinarily be thought to be evidence for a contrary conclusion, as, in the case of Shakespeare's will, literary historians drew contrary conclusions from the same data.

With this view of a historical proof it may well be that the proof is a demonstration. But it would seem that it is a proof, not that the state of affairs the historian describes actually existed, but that he cannot help but believe, given his idea of history, that it existed. Given his idea of history he has demonstrated, for himself and people like him, from the evidence, that a certain state of affairs must have existed. For people different from him a different state of affairs existed. If we accept their postulates we have to accept their conclusion, but if we don't accept their postulates we can construct a different picture which is coherent for us. The analogy between historical proof and geometric proof is striking. We can accept Euclid's postulates and construct a coherent geometrical system, or we can alter one of the postulates and construct a different geometrical system which is equally coherent. In neither case are the postulates self-evident. Certain postulates may be thought self-evident until a certain point in the historical process is reached; then an enterprising mind denies it. The difference between historical and geometric proof is that the latter is the working out of relations on purely formal grounds, the former cannot use formal relations as the basis of proof. Its method of inference is, in this respect, more like the methods of inductive inference.

This explication of Collingwood's claims for the necessity of historical inference has not attempted to show that a historical inference is never necessary, that it is, on the other hand, merely probable; but has attempted to show only that even if it is necessary it is a private necessity or at most semi-public. Without initial agreement, among the historians involved, as to what "makes sense" the logical efficacy of the argument is lost. In addition to this it might be noted that what we have proved in any given case is relative to our social context. When new methods of interpreting evidence arise our present methods will be, to some extent, outmoded. With our methods of interpreting evidence we can "prove" that a certain state of affairs existed. With new methods of interpreting evidence it will be "proved" that a slightly, or greatly, different state of affairs existed.

Perhaps this is carrying the relativity of historical knowledge too far, but Collingwood implies that such a state of affairs does exist (I. H., 108); and if it does, it would seem that this is the only way we can account for the necessity of historical inference, when, and if, such an inference is necessary. It would also seem that a necessary historical inference would, of necessity, be a hypothetical inference. It would be an inference of this type: if the historian's imagination is of this or this kind, and if the fund of historical knowledge is at this or this level, then this or this inference follows necessarily from the data. It follows that any certainty we have concerning historical matters is a hypothetical certainty. Hypothetical certainty of this type is not a more certain type of knowledge than probable certainty, for the adequacy of the antecedent is only a probable adequacy; the amount of historical knowledge we have may or may not

be adequate to a determination of what actually happened. If this is true, then the historian's certainty is not greater than that of the criminal detective. Both proceed on the basis of probability.

Question and Answer

The questioning technique which Collingwood proposes as the method of making data evidence is an extension of critical historical methods to make it possible to dispense with authorities in history. Statements made by previous historians are not accepted at face value but are made to give up their hidden implications by the questioning method. The scientific historian does not read previous historians so much to find out what they said as to find the answer to his question. He "reads them with a question in his mind, having taken the initiative by deciding for himself what he wants to find out from them" (I. H., 269). He wants to know what the statement means, which is to say he wants to know why the statement was made; not only what the person who made it meant by it, but what he believed which caused him to make it.

The example which Collingwood gives of the questioning technique is that of a detective who is investigating a murder. The methods which the detective uses are the ordinary inductive methods of empirical science and need not be gone into. However, Collingwood's claim that these methods, when used in history, may produce certainty as to historical matters may justify including here a similar example of questioning, from a different place, concerning a historical matter. The example is this:

> A commander's dispatches may claim a victory; the historian, reading them in critical spirit, will ask: 'If it was a victory, why was it not followed up in this or that way?' And may thus convict the writer of concealing the truth. Or, by using the same method, he may convict of ignorance a less critical predecessor who has accepted the version of the battle given him by the same dispatches. (I. H., 237)

By what process of inference can we maintain that this historian's conclusion is certain? The fact that the alleged victory was not followed up in this or that way may just as well be explained by numerous other hypotheses, and to say that any one of these is certain is probably more revealing of the conviction of the historian than of the necessity of his argument. There is only one circumstance in which his conclusion could be certain, and that is on the false assumption that victories are always followed up in this or that way. Collingwood himself would certainly not accept that assumption. As we shall see, in his theory of re-enactment Collingwood holds that general statements about victories are not sufficient to guarantee the certainty of historical conclusions; that certainty is granted through the act of re-enactment itself.

Collingwood maintains that the questions asked must not only be the right questions but must also be asked in the right order. The reason for this becomes obvious when we consider that the question presupposes knowledge. The last question asked will presuppose the knowledge or, perhaps, supposition of the answer just preceding it. We ask a question, answer it, then ask another question, one which "arises" out of the last answer and presupposes it either as fact or supposition. Thus we proceed with our question and answer logic until we reach an answer which answers our leading or ultimate question. The argument or investigation thus forms a chain of inference. The answers must be in every case the right ones, because the questions following them depend upon them for their validity as pertinent questions. If the knowledge presupposed by the question is a supposition, then the ultimate answer which is reached by supposing it must be verified by checking it against some state of affairs which will be the case if the supposition is true. Thus by supposing that the rector murdered John Doe we can construct, by question and answer, an imaginary picture, a

hypothesis, as to how he could, under the circumstances, have done so. Then this picture must be verified by checking to find whether its consequences, a coat with paint on it, paper ashes from burnt blackmail letters, etc., can be discovered; thus convincing us that the final answer, the rector murdered John Doe, is true.

The scientific historian will be an investigator into implications and presuppositions. By asking the right questions the historian will find out what the person who made a statement the historian is studying believed which caused him to make the statement. If he has to trace presuppositions clear back to their ultimate presuppositions, he will be, in this sense, a metaphysician and an investigator into metaphysics. But, does this approach to history have any presuppositions of its own? We can't ask sensible or intelligent questions, the only kind worth asking, unless we have some knowledge to begin with. But if we have knowledge, where did it come from? What are the presuppositions involved in supposing that we have knowledge? Having knowledge at all presupposes that it was gained in some way. It could not, however, have been by the questioning method, because that presupposes knowledge. The only remaining alternatives are: (1) it was born with us; (2) it was later acquired. While Collingwood speaks of the idea of history as being an "innate" idea, he does not mean that the idea has any content at birth. Only historical thinking can give the idea content and only beings with a past can think historically. Therefore, the knowledge we start with is given to us in childhood. We take it on faith. But if we can criticize and reject all or part of this knowledge later, we can correct the childish mistakes we have made in assuming opinion to be knowledge. But only a part of this knowledge can be subjected to scrutiny at a particular time. This part will be corrected in terms of its appropriateness in the rest of the system. Thus we scrutinize parts of our

knowledge in terms of the rest of it. We can still ask "Where did this residual knowledge come from?" ad infinitum. If it is answered that this knowledge was previously subjected to critical scrutiny we can ask "In terms of what?" Collingwood holds that we must have some knowledge which is unquestioned in terms of the rest of the system. The propositions which make up this unquestioned knowledge are our absolute presuppositions. This unquestioned knowledge is our metaphysics. Thus the historian's question will be based on the knowledge which is based on his absolute presuppositions. And thus we return to the conclusion that history, which depends, perhaps, on absolute presuppositions no more valid than those of the natural scientist, does not arrive at more certain conclusions than does natural science. We can, of course, still hold that, with the presuppositions held, certainty can be reached for those presuppositions. But as these presuppositions are gradually revised or added to, historical truth will change. Different complexes of presuppositions, held by different historians in the same temporal context, will render historical certainty a semi-public certainty.

The presupposition of a historical method which uses questions in searching out implications and presuppositions of earlier writers is thus seen to be knowledge, for without knowledge questions which can be answered cannot be asked, and the presupposition of knowledge is knowledge, a body of unquestioned presuppositions, a metaphysics. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the theory of presuppositions presupposes presuppositions of its own. If it is objected, in view of this conclusion, that we have exchanged one authority for another in adopting the method of questioning, that we have exchanged the authority of previous historical writers for the authority of our own presuppositions, Collingwood can answer that we have exchanged two authorities for one and shuffled off

half our burden. We operated under the authority of our presuppositions when we used authorities, and one of them was that the nearest we can get to historical truth is to accept what has been given to us, in the form of historical statements, as true unless those statements flagrantly violate our canons of possibility or consistency.

Conclusion

That Collingwood's critical historical method of questioning is vastly superior to the method of "scissors-and-paste" historians, who clip out a statement here and a statement there and paste them together, and upon whom, it may be added parenthetically, Collingwood heaps opprobrium continually, cannot be seriously doubted. The historian is his own man; his methods are the tested methods of scientific questioning which have borne such good fruit in the natural sciences. That such methods will bear ripe fruit in history should at least be a working hypothesis worth investigating. Having "put nature to the question" and found it fructifying let us now "put history to the question." And it is not necessary to maintain that historical certainty is greater than inductive certainty (or probability) to maintain that history is an autonomous science with a body of subject-matter and knowledge of its own. Collingwood himself does not always talk as if historical certainty were possible: "The historian himself, however long and faithfully he works, can never say that his work, even in crudest outline or in this or that smallest detail, is done once for all" (I. H., 248-249).

If the historian's method of making data evidence is not different from the inductive methods of ordinary scientific investigation there need be no separate theory of historical evidence. Data, in inductive methods, are evidence for a particular hypothesis because they are explained

by the hypothesis. The hypothesis that today is a holiday explains why the stores are closed, explains why there is so much traffic on the highways, and so forth. The shops being closed, and so forth, is evidence for the hypothesis when the question arises as to why they are closed. Without the question, no hypothesis arises and no data are evidence. Shakespeare's will, together with the other known facts of his life, are data. These data can become evidence for various hypotheses as to the type of person he was, whether he wrote the plays and so forth. The data are objectively observable and must be accounted for whether or not they are accepted as evidence for anything. Accounting for them may, perhaps, consist in showing that they are not authentic. The historian must accept the data as given, but he need not accept them as evidence. A hallucination may be explained as evidence of divine visitation or as evidence of over-eating; in any case it is accepted, by the subject at least, as given. A hypothesis is a good one when it has been checked against its implications, when alternative hypotheses have been checked and discarded for cogent reasons. It may still be a weak hypothesis, but it is the best one available. A hypothesis may be very strong, but is never a demonstration. That a hypothesis would be stronger in historical matters than elsewhere seems very likely.

The conclusion to which this consideration of Collingwood's theory of evidence has pointed is that the criterion of historical truth is the same as the criterion of truth in any other area. The hypothesis or conclusion which we decide upon as the correct one to explain a given collection of data is decided upon because it is the only one which will satisfactorily account for all the data, or because alternative hypotheses which would account for the data are unacceptable for other reasons; as, for example, that the alternative hypotheses do not fit in with our other knowledge about the world. Coherence is certainly one of these criteria.

The idea of history, which is really the idea of coherence, will be one, but not the only one, of the criteria of truth. The historical narrative must be coherent not only internally but with the rest of our knowledge, and this must, in some sense, be coherent with fact. Or, to use the terminology of an opposing theory of truth, it must correspond with fact. In either case the statement of fact must assert the same relations between the same objects as were observed in perception. The important point is that truth cannot be determined by a test of internal coherence alone.

It is conceivable that with such a theory of truth as this many historical hypotheses would be tentative only, that they would need to be revised or discarded as our knowledge increased; but this is the common lot of hypotheses, even those called "laws." The disagreements among historians and scientists from time to time as to which is the best hypothesis to explain a given collection of data are evidence for believing that in many matters the hypothesis should be a tetative one. The reason there is more unanimity among scientists than among historians is, perhaps, best explained by the hypothesis that the presuppositions of scientists as scientists are more nearly the same than are the presuppositions of historians as historians. When scientists are unanimous we accept their conclusions as strong hypotheses, because as practical men we share their presuppositions; when they disagree we suspend judgment. When historians are unanimous we accept their conclusions as strong hypotheses; when they disagree we seek historians with world views such as we believe to be substantially correct and accept their conclusions as strong or weak hypotheses, depending upon the strength of our conviction and the cogency of the argument. In any case the hypothesis is tentative unless the world view is dogmatic, in which case the hypothesis may be considered certain truth by its holder.

The ultimate test of world views is their accordance with fact. Holders of a world view describe the world as being a certain type of place and give reasons for holding that it is that type of place. A world view is itself a hypothesis. Various world views explain the same world. Since we must have a world view, we must attempt to select one which best accords with the facts.

It would seem that the criterion of historical truth is, in the last resort, correspondence or accordance with fact, because the body of knowledge, the world view, within which historical conclusions will be located and in which they will form a coherent part of the whole is itself a hypothesis or a body of hypotheses dependent upon perceptible fact for its verification.

CHAPTER V

RE-ENACTMENT

Exposition of Collingwood's View

One of Collingwood's most obscure theories is his theory that the historian re-enacts past thought in his own mind. The theory is of central importance to his theory of history, for he holds that the historian must re-enact the past in his own mind in order to know it, that is, to understand it. Without re-enactment there can be no historical knowledge. Collingwood gives, in his autobiography, a summary of this theory which is worth quoting at length. But first it may be well to note that "all history is the history of thought" and that, therefore, the problem of historical knowledge is how we can know the history of thought.

> On what conditions was it possible to know the history of a thought? First the thought must be expressed: either in what we call language, or in one of the many other forms of expressive activity. Historical painters seem to regard an outstretched arm and a pointing hand as the characteristic gesture expressing the thought of a commanding officer. Running away expresses the thought that all hope of victory is gone. Secondly, the historian must be able to think over again for himself the thought whose expression he is trying to interpret. . . . The important point here is that the historian of a certain thought must think for himself that very same thought, not another like it.[1]

Therefore "historical knowledge is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying."[2] The re-enactment of a thought is, however, a re-enactment of the same thought with a difference:

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[1]Collingwood, An Autobiography, p. 111.

[2]Ibid., p. 112.

The difference is one of context. To Nelson, that thought was a present thought; to me, it is a past thought living in the present but . . . incapsulated, not free. What is an incapsulated thought? It is a thought which, though perfectly alive, forms no part of the question-answer complex which constitutes what people call the 'real' life, the superficial or obvious present, of the mind in question. . . . No question that arises in this primary series, the series constituting my 'real' life, ever requires the answer 'in honor I won them, in honor I will die with them.' But a question arising in the primary series may act as a switch into another dimension. I plunge beneath the surface of my mind, and there live a life in which I not merely think about Nelson but am Nelson, and thus in thinking about Nelson think about myself. But this secondary life is prevented from overflowing into my primary life by being what I call incapsulated, that is, existing in a context of primary or surface knowledge which keeps it in its place and prevents it from thus overflowing. . . .

So I reached my third proposition: 'Historical knowledge is the re-enactment of a past thought incapsulated in a context of present thoughts which, by contradicting it, confine it to a plane different from theirs. . . .'

If what the historian knows is past thoughts, and if he knows them by re-thinking them himself, it follows that the knowledge he achieves by historical inquiry is not knowledge of his situation as opposed to knowledge of himself, it is a knowledge of his situation which is at the same time knowledge of himself. In re-thinking what somebody else thought, he thinks it himself. In knowing that somebody else thought it, he knows that he himself is able to think it. And finding out what he is able to do is finding out what kind of a man he is. If he is able to understand, by re-thinking them, the thoughts of a great many different kinds of people, it follows that he must be a great many kinds of a man. He must be, in fact, a microcosm of all the history he can know. Thus his own self-knowledge is at the same time his knowledge of the world of human affairs.[3]

It is probable that a great many historians would not deny Collingwood's thesis that any attempt to know why Nelson acted as he did, if the attempt were not a sympathetic attempt, would be a failure. Professor Butterfield states that the historian's "greatest limitation would be a defect of imaginative sympathy."[4] George Sarton is quoted in History and Its Neighbors as saying that "the historian needs the poetic insight that enables us to understand and to delineate a character or an event remote from the ideas of our own time. . . . To understand the past we must look

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[3]Ibid., pp. 113 ff.

[4]H. Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (New York, 1951), p. 95.

at it, if our temperament enables us to do so, always through the eyes of contemporaries."[5] This list could very well be extended, but an extensive catalog would be superfluous.

Where Collingwood would differ from many historians would be in the matter of how this sympathetic understanding is achieved. Collingwood holds that a science of human nature which attempts to establish "permanent and unchanging laws of human nature" is impossible (I. H., 224). The ways in which admirals or generals behave in a particular social order cannot become the basis of generalizations which will explain their behavior in a different social order. The reason for this is that, "in order that behavior-patterns may be constant, there must be in existence a social order which recurrently produces situations of a certain kind" (I. H., 223). Therefore, our understanding of Nelson's behavior is not dependent upon our knowledge of the behavior of admirals in general. This is because the behavior of admirals in the twentieth century will not serve as the basis for generalizations which will explain the behavior of admirals in the nineteenth century, and, by the same token, the behavior of admirals before the nineteenth century will not serve to explain Nelson's behavior.

The reason we can understand Nelson's thought is that those ways of thinking are still ways in which people think today. "The historical process is itself a process of thought" (I. H., 226). And it is a characteristic of a process that:

> The past which an historian studies is not a dead past but a past which in some sense is still living in the present. . . . History is concerned not with 'events' but 'processes' . . . . 'Processes' are things which do not begin and end but turn into one another; and . . . if a process P_1 turns into a process P_2, there is no dividing line at which P_1 stops and P_2

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[5] E. M. Hulme, History and Its Neighbors (New York, 1942), p. 15.

begins; P_1 never stops, it goes on in the changed form P_2, and P_2 never begins, it has previously been going on in the earlier form P_1. . . . If P_1 has left traces of itself in P_2 so that an historian living in P_2 can discover by the interpretation of evidence that what is now P_2 was once P_1, it follows that the 'traces' of P_1 in the present are not, so to speak, the corpse of a dead P_1 but rather the real P_1 itself, living and active though incapsulated within the other form of itself P_2.[6]

Past thought is incapsulated within present thought. Past thought can be revived and re-enacted, because it still lives within the present.

It does not follow that any historian can revive the thought of <u>any</u> period or <u>any</u> person. The historian who reconstructs the history of a period must have gained the experience from our culture of having thought in the ways that people in that period thought. He must bring an experience to the reconstruction of the thought of that period, which can make that thought "organic" to it. He must have that thought "incapsulated" within his own.

In order for the historian to write the history of a period he must have sympathy for the period. Unless he can re-enact the thought of a period he will have "philological" instead of "historical" knowledge of the period. But, Collingwood states:

this does not mean that his mind must be of a certain kind, possessed of an historical temperament; nor that he must be trained in special rules of historical technique. It means that he must be the right man to study that object. What he is studying is a certain thought: to study it involves re-enacting it in himself; and in order that it may take its place in the immediacy of his own thought, his thought must be, as it were, pre-adapted to become its host. . . .

If the historian . . . tries to master the history of a thought into which he cannot personally enter, instead of writing its history he will merely repeat the statements that record the external facts of its development. . . . Such repetitions . . . are dry bones, which may some day become history, when someone is able to clothe them with the flesh and blood of a thought which is both his own and theirs. (I. H., 304-305)

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[6]Collingwood, <u>An Autobiography</u>, pp. 97-98.

No matter how well a historian is able to find evidence, he cannot revive the thought to which the evidence points unless he can personally enter into those thoughts. Two things are necessary, then, for writing the history of anything, there must be "evidence of how such thinking has been done," and the historian must be "able to interpret it, that is, . . . be able to re-enact in his own mind the thought he is studying, envisaging the problem from which it started and reconstructing the steps by which its solution was attempted" (I. H., 313).

To summarize the preceding exposition, Collingwood holds: (1) that a thought can be revived, not only the content of the thought but the act; (2) that the historian must be a particular type of person, able to think in particular ways, to write the history of a thought; (3) that the immediate context of the thought, its emotional and sensational context, is not revived, but that its mediate context, the background of thought and reflection which entered into the formation of the thought, is; (4) that generalizations about human nature do not enable us to discover what a particular person thought in a certain situation;[7] (5) that "understanding" the words of a historical document is not re-enactment.[8] In addition, it should be noted that, according to Collingwood, we can know not only that we are thinking a thought but that the thought we are thinking was Euclid's or Caesar's, etc.; we can re-enact Caesar's thought and know that we are re-enacting it.

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[7]It should be noted, however, that Collingwood does maintain that the historian can only re-enact Plato's or Caesar's thought when he "brings to bear on the problem all the powers of his own mind and all his knowledge of philosophy and politics." (I. H., 215)

[8]But Collingwood sometimes writes as if it is. "The historian of philosophy, reading Plato, is trying to know what Plato thought when he expressed himself in certain words. The only way in which he can do this is by thinking it for himself. This, in fact, is what we mean when we speak of 'understanding' the words." (I. H., 215)

Interpretation and Criticism

Act of thought and content of thought.--We may well inquire now just what it means to say that an act of thought may be revived. And it is well to find out, first, just what is meant by the term "act of thought." Suppose that historian x is thinking "the angles are equal." Is his act of thought "the angles are equal"? "The angles are equal" would seem rather to be the content of his act of thought. His act of thought, then, is an act of thinking whose content is "the angles are equal." Suppose, also historian y is examining historian x's statement "the angles are equal." In order for y to understand x's thought he must think what x thought; he must understand what x means; he must think what x thought when he recorded the statement. The evidence that x thought "the angles are equal" is his statement "the angles are equal." Thus if y is to get to x's act of thought he must infer it from the recorded statement. His inference is: here is a statement expressing a thought; any thought must have once been thought by someone; it must have once been an act of thought, which resulted in this statement's being recorded. Therefore x's act of thought was . . .

From the evidence, which is the statement, we infer the act of thought which resulted in the statement. If we understand the thought the inference is immediate, we not only know what the words mean, we revive the act of thought itself. Collingwood's argument that this is possible is, briefly, that an act of thought "may endure through a lapse of time," thus, we may think "the angles are equal" for twenty seconds and the same act of thought endures through the twenty seconds; the same act of thought "may revive after a time when it has been in abeyance," so we can think "the angles are equal" five seconds, think about something else a few seconds, then return to the same act of thought. As to the objection that the difference between

the historian and his subject is grounds for maintaining that the acts are different, Collingwood says, "there is no tenable theory of personal identity that would justify such a doctrine" (I. H., 287).

Notwithstanding Collingwood's statement to the contrary, it would seem that the above objection is a valid one.[9] Ordinary usage would not be that one person's act may become another person's act. The act, when repeated by another person, is a different act. X's act of thought, "the angles are equal," is one act, and y's act of thought, "the angles are equal," is a different act. The identity of the two thoughts is not the identity of an act of thought but the identity of a statement. Both understand that x is maintaining a certain state of affairs to be the case. When we speak of y "understanding" x we mean that y knows what x means. We do not mean that y performs the same act of thought. He must be able to think in that way, or he could not "understand" x, but to be able to think in that way does not necessarily involve performing the same act of thought. Being able to think in that way may simply involve the ability to grasp the relations between concepts which is involved in the statement "the angles are equal." The concept "angle" and the relation "equal" must be familiar to him and they may form part of the content of his general knowledge; they are public concepts. But the act of maintaining a relation between these concepts is a private act not open to inspection. The resulting statement, if recorded, the "what" of the act, is open to inspection, if the writer has used symbols as they are commonly used, if he was not lying, etc.; and from the statement the act can be inferred, subject to the same conditions; but to speak of reviving the act is certainly to speak metaphorically. The act of understanding the statement may be figuratively spoken of as re-enacting the

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[9]Cf. W. H. Walsh, An Introduction to Philosophy of History (St. Albans, England, 1951), pp. 92-93.

thought of the writer, as performing the identical act of thought the writer performed, but to so speak of it is to promote misunderstanding. No satisfactory explanation of how one person can so completely penetrate the insular barrier between his mind and the minds of other human beings has yet been devised. If a satisfactory explanation ever was devised, it would follow, as Collingwood points out, that we could have certain knowledge concerning their thought. If our knowledge of other minds were immediate instead of inferential, our private mental world would be a public world, one in which no thought might not be known and re-enacted.

But, an objection to this treatment of re-enactment may run, the theory is descriptive of what does happen when we "understand" someone. When we "understand" a problem which is solved by someone, we have to solve the problem for ourselves; we have to re-create the steps involved in the solution of the problem, and this is doing just what Euclid, or whoever it was, did when he solved the problem. It may be admitted that understanding is an active and not a passive process, and that we must think the same thing as Euclid when we understand him; i.e., that the content of our thought, the objects and relations about which we think, are the same without admitting that in thinking of those things about which Euclid thought we revive Euclid's act of thought. If the theory of re-enactment restricted itself to the former assertion, it would not be quarreled with, but then it would not be a theory of re-enactment.

Let us investigate, however, just what it means to say that I think the same thing Euclid thought. Unless Euclid expresses his thought in symbols which are generally agreed upon, and which are used according to agreed upon conventions his thought cannot be discovered. If he had used symbols in arbitrary ways which he had not bothered to describe, we could

never even approach his thought. Following Euclid's solution means simply to manipulate the same symbols (having the same referent if we understand him) in the same ways and solving the problem with him. We thus reach a community of understanding; we follow the same process of thinking.

All this can easily be granted without sacrificing the position that the acts of thought are not the same. Even though the objects and relations about which my mind thinks may be identical with those about which Euclid thinks, this is not grounds for maintaining that the acts are identical, that I must revive Euclid's act of thinking about those objects in order to think about them myself. The content of our thought may be identical in that we make the same inferences from the same premises. The acts are different in that Euclid and I are different.

Whatever plausibility there is to the theory that an act of thought can be revived is found in an illustration such as this one, in which thought is expressed in symbols which are conventionally interpreted, both by writer and reader, to refer to certain objects and relations. When we get into the area of human actions the theory loses the greater part of this plausibility. Human actions are not symbols which can be interpreted with the same readiness as verbal symbols. Actions are not so uniformly to be interpreted that their thought significance can be certainly discovered. Any action can be explained by an infinite number of hypotheses. To speak of reviving the same act of thought as the actor can only mean that one hypothesis has been decided upon as the correct one. It cannot mean that we know, and know we know, what his act of thought certainly was; but of this more later.

The upshot of this discussion seems, so far, to be that while there is some essential truth in the theory of re-enactment, that when we understand

a process of thought we really must actively engage in the same process of thought, the theory extends a good description of understanding into an occult relation between one mind and another when it holds that a mind can revive the act of thinking itself of another mind. Some further implications of the theory may now be considered.

Historical intuition.--Collingwood's theory of re-enactment entails a theory of immediate inference. If we can re-enact the thought of another person with the knowledge that we are re-enacting it, the corollary is that we can have immediate knowledge of his mind, not just inferential knowledge. It follows that we can pass immediately from the evidence, whether the evidence is statements made by the person or actions performed, to the acts of thought which lay behind the statements or actions, without reference to any general statements about how people behave in certain situations, and so forth. To bring in general statements would be to make the discovery of the thought inferential and therefore the conclusion that the thought was a certain thought would be only probable. The reason for this is that general statements would be only statistical statements concerning the ways people usually think, so the conclusion that a particular person thought that way would be merely probable.

There can be no re-enactment on a probability basis. Re-enactment is only re-enactment when it is consciously done[10] and to re-enact means to act again what has been acted. To re-enact Euclid's thought means to perform the same act of thought Euclid performed in the full knowledge that

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[10]"The fact that someone performs an act of thought which another has performed before him does not make him an historian. It cannot, in such a case, be said that he is an historian without knowing it: unless he knows that he is thinking historically he is not thinking historically." (I. H., 289)

we are doing so. We must know that Euclid's act of thought was <u>this</u> and that my act of thought is also <u>this</u> (I. H., 288). This involves more than probable knowledge that we are interpreting a statement alleged to have been written by Euclid correctly. We must <u>know</u> that we are interpreting the statement correctly and <u>know</u> that Euclid wrote it; otherwise we are not re-enacting anything that Euclid thought. Historical knowledge must be certain, not merely probable, and it can only be certain on the theory that we pass directly from the evidence to the act of thought without intermediate steps. By being the right man for the job, by having a background of experience which will provide ground in which the thought can revive and be re-enacted, the historian is able to, as it were, intuit directly the act of thought and revive it. Thus, the historian becomes Nelson or Julius Caesar, or whoever it may be, as the thoughts of those persons are revived in his consciousness.

The limitations of a theory which holds that we are able to know what Julius Caesar thought when, for example, he refused the crown, without reference to general statements concerning the behavior or generals and demagogues in democracies are obvious. The limitations are even more obvious if we use an example in an area for which we have little or no general knowledge, for example, the behavior of an African priestess. It is extremely unlikely that we would be able to discover what thought lay behind an action such a person performed unless we had some knowledge concerning the types of actions he usually performed and what those actions usually signified. Collingwood's answer to this criticism would be that what we lack is a background of experience which can make those thoughts organic to it, that general statements would not reveal to us the thought of a particular African priestess. A question we can ask in return is whether this background of experience does not contain general statements which

really form the basis for our reconstruction of a person's thought. If not, what does it contain which makes that thought meaningful? If hidden general statements really form the basis for our reconstruction, then historical certainty is unattainable and re-enactment falls along with certainty. If some "occult" factor such as mental affinity makes the thought meaningful, it seems reasonable to believe that that could exist between a historian and some person remote from him geographically, educationally or temporally, in which case he might be able to write the history of an African priestess' thought from the evidence at his disposal concerning her actions though he knew nothing of African priestesses generally, which is absurd.[11]

It would seem, then, that our historical knowledge is inferential and not immediate, in which case, historical knowledge is probable, not certain, and re-enactment is a superfluous doctrine. Though Collingwood's theory of re-enactment avoids the problems involved in a representative theory of historical knowledge, what Collingwood calls the "copy" theory of knowledge, it is itself subject to limitations which are just as serious as those found in the "copy" theory. That we might be able to pass, by an immediate act of knowledge, from Caesar's actions to his acts of thought, would certainly avoid any problems involved in attempting to "compare" our thought, that is, the content of our thought, with Caesar's; such a thing simply cannot be done for historical matters. But to overcome this deficiency by a deus ex machina is a questionable alternative, and is, in fact, to substitute one deficiency for another.

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[11] See W. H. Walsh, An Introduction to Philosophy of History, pp. 57-58. Walsh is one of the people who have taken Collingwood seriously, but he is unable to accept Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment.

One reply which might be made for Collingwood to these criticisms is that he obviously holds that historical truth is "what the evidence obliges us to believe."

> The historian's problem is a present problem, not a future one; it is to interpret the material now available, not to anticipate future discoveries. To quote Oakeshott again, the word 'truth' has no meaning for the historian unless it means 'what the evidence obliges us to believe.'

Thus, if by interpreting the evidence before us we are obliged to think that Caesar's act of thought was <u>this</u>, then it is true that Caesar's act of thought was <u>t is</u>. That this view of historical knowledge is incompatible with the theory of re-enactment is obvious when we consider that, according to the theory of re-enactment, we are reviving Caesar's thought; that we know it for Caesar's thought. According to this theory Caesar's act of thought is Caesar's act of thought, and the only way it can be understood is to be re-enacted. But, if this is so, we must re-enact what Caesar "really" thought in order to be re-enacting it at all. What Caesar "really" thought, then, is not what the evidence obliges us to believe, but what Caesar actually did think. If "what the evidence obliges us to believe" that Caesar thought does not enable us to revive Caesar's acts of thought as they were actually performed, if it is misleading and ambiguous and obliges us to revive an act of thought of Caesar's which he never performed, then "truth" is not simply "what the evidence obliges us to believe." The difference between truth that is "what the evidence obliges us to believe" and truth that is gained by re-enactment is the difference between probable and certain truth, and Collingwood is not content to say that in history we can have only probable knowledge. Historical knowledge can be certain.

Collingwood's argument that we must accept the doctrine of re-enactment on pain of solipsism breaks down, because to deny that we have immediate

and certain knowledge of other minds is not to assert that we have no knowledge of other minds. It is merely to assert that our knowledge here, as elsewhere, is inferential and probable. That we do have such knowledge is not open to doubt, except theoretically, but that we can demonstrate conclusively that we do have such knowledge is open to doubt.

Imaginative sympathy.--Collingwood takes the position, as a corollary of his theory of re-enactment, that a historian must be the right man for the job if he is to write the history of a thought or period; he must be sympathetic toward the thought of the period, and he must be able to think in the ways in which people in the period thought, otherwise he cannot re-enact their thought and, consequently, his history will be worthless. If he is not sympathetic toward the thought of the period, he cannot understand it.

There are difficulties in this view, which appear when we scrutinize the vague term "sympathetic" more closely. How sympathetic should the historian be toward the thought of the period? An ambiguity is also apparent. The term may mean simply "able to think in the way the people of the period thought," or it may mean "having consideration or fellow feeling for the ways of thinking of the period." Collingwood seems to hold that the latter is a necessary condition of the former, and this is the vague sense of the term, because "having fellow feeling for" admits of a wide range or variation. The historian could not, in this view, be impartial toward the ways of thinking of the period. He must needs be biased in favor of those ways of thinking, in the sense, at least, that he feels a ready sympathy for those ways of thinking. It would seem that we shall need to draw the line fairly near the impartial or noncommittal point on the line between antagonism for those ways of thinking and

advocation of them, but to the right of center, away from antagonism. To go to the extreme of advocacy would be as bad as the extreme of antagonism. Collingwood surely would not maintain that a Whig historian would be the best historian of Whig history. If the idea of sympathy were pushed to the extreme, it would seem that he would be the most likely man for the job. He already thinks like a Whig historian and he is certainly sympathetic toward the ways of thinking on which Whig history is based. We can be morally certain, however, that a Whig historian's history of Whig history would not be an ideal history of that interpretation of history.

Suppose that the Whig interpretation of history would be opposed (as it is) to an interpretation of history based on imaginative sympathy. Suppose that it is an erroneous interpretation of history. Is the interpretation of history based on imaginative sympathy to condemn it as erroneous, as the practice of Whig historians is to condemn "reactionary" and erroneous elements existing in the periods they treat, or is the imaginative sympathy theory to treat Whig history with imaginative sympathy? Should Lincoln Steffens, in The Shame of Cities, have treated city machine politics with imaginative sympathy? In short, how far should we go in treating thought with imaginative sympathy? Are errors and intellectual and moral vices also to be treated with imaginative sympathy? It would seem not, unless so treating them will more effectually eliminate them than condemning them. It should be noted that Collingwood does not extend imaginative sympathy to "realists," Fascists, or scissors-and-paste historians. Professor Butterfield does not extend imaginative sympathy to Whig historians. The conclusion would seem to be that sympathy for a position may not be the best qualification for understanding that position. We may be able to understand why Fascists are Fascists, we may be able to write a history of

Fascism, without feeling any sympathy for that way of thinking. He may, in fact, think that way of thinking to be pernicious and still write an intellectually respectable history of Fascism, one which would be acceptable both to Collingwood and to Professor Butterfield. And if it can be done for Fascism or Whig history, it can be done for other things as well; the principle is the same.

A minor criticism which may also be made concerning Collingwood's theory of sympathetic understanding is that it is inconsistent with his theory of presuppositions, the theory that the historian looks at the past from the point of view of the present (I. H., 108). The theory of sympathetic understanding presupposes that the historian can look at the past from the point of view of the past.

Conclusion.--This discussion of Collingwood's theory of re-enactment has pointed to a number of conclusions. It has been shown that there are important ambiguities in the idea of an act of thought. Performing the same act of thought as Euclid, say making an inference, may mean envisaging the same relations between the same concepts, thinking about the same thing, or it may mean reviving the determinate act in which Euclid made the inference. Collingwood, seeing the value of the former idea, allowed himself to be drawn into the latter, because it permits a theory of historical knowledge which, if valid, can confute historical skepticism. But the theory of immediate inference or intuition which this view of historical knowledge entails is untenable on empirical grounds. We cannot proceed directly from the minor premise to the conclusion, because the major premise is always implicitly present, as we saw in the case of the African priestess. The inference which must be drawn from this fact is that Collingwood has not solved the problem of historical knowledge with his

theory of re-enactment. Inferences drawn from uncertain major premises are never certain, as Collingwood well knew.

The theory of sympathetic understanding which Collingwood advanced to explain the fact that some historians are not able to perform the intuitive act of understanding for certain ideas or particular historical periods, the theory that the historian's mind must be "prepared" before it can revive any given thought has been shown to be seriously at odds with Collingwood's own practice. While this is nothing more than an argumentum ad hominem, the point which has been made concerning the degree of sympathy to be extended is sufficient grounds for denying that sympathy is a necessary condition of understanding. If "sympathy" is defined carefully enough, this criticism can be avoided, but when this is done the theory will amount to no more than saying that we must make an effort to understand what people thought before we can understand what they thought, which is certainly true but not particularly informative.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This essay on Collingwood's philosophy of history is not expected to be a definitive placing of Collingwood as a philosopher of history. Collingwood is too many kinds of man to be definitively placed by an amateur in philosophy with no philosophy of history of his own. The most that such a student of philosophy can do is to criticize a philosophy internally. He can offer his judgement as to whether the philosophy has solved the problems it set out of solve. He is not in a position to offer more satisfactory solutions of his own.

The preceding pages, which are as rigorously critical (not, it is hoped, in the bad sense) as the writer is able to make them, are no indication of the degree of sympathy which the writer feels both for Collingwood and his philosophy of history. Where problems have been found they have been dealt with honestly but not, on the whole, unsympathetically.

Collingwood's philosophy of history has been found to contain several central ideas upon which that philosophy depends: history is the history of thought; the historian's criterion is found within his own thought, his criterion is the idea of history; the evidence upon which the truth of the historical picture of past thought depends is passed upon by this idea; the way past thought is known is by its re-enactment in the present, by its revival in present thought. The historical picture is the product of, and a picture of, reflective thought.

Certain problems were found to be involved in limiting history to the field of reflective thought. Historical explanation which uses the word "cause" only in the sense of "affording a motive" is forced to explain human actions as if nothing external to those actions affected them. And this does not seem to be a true picture of human affairs. Human beings appear to be buffeted about by various forces upon many occasions.

The idea of history as the criterion of historical truth was criticized as being too vague a criterion and as being the hypostatization of a coherence criterion of truth into an "innate" idea. Coherence cannot be the only criterion of truth unless it is used to include coherence with perceptible fact (and it is not usually so used), as well as coherence between a body of statements.

A theory of historical knowledge which uses coherence as the test by which the evidence is judged and accepted or rejected cannot distinguish history from the historical novel. The novelist is also free to accept or reject evidence in terms of his criterion of coherence. If this criticism is rejected because the novelist either does not use evidence or asserts more than the evidence obliges him to assert the criterion is still open to the objection that what the evidence obliges any particular historian to assert is what for him constitutes coherence. Since what constitutes coherence for a particular historian can be as different from what constitutes coherence for another as night is from day, the criterion leads to historical subjectivism. All histories which are coherent to their authors—and what one is not—are true.

Thus the idea of history, or the idea of coherence, is itself capable of further analysis. Unless some one idea of history is the correct one, the criterion is of no use as a criterion. What this correct idea of

history is Collingwood does not say. We must conclude that he has not supplied us with a workable criterion of historical truth.

Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment was found to depend upon a form of immediate inference or intuition for its validity and had to be rejected. All the evidence we have points to the conclusion that we know what someone else is thinking only by a process of inference which depends in part upon generalizations concerning how people think in situations of a certain type. Conclusions derived in this way are hypothetical and probable, not concrete and certain.

Although Collingwood's claims for all his key ideas have been seen to be exaggerated, there is much in them which is deserving of serious consideration. There certainly is an "inside" to human actions and the historian who explains those actions must attempt to determine of what that inside consisted; he must attempt to find out what the thought was which directed those actions. Coherence is certainly one of the criteria of truth. The amount and kind of knowledge the historian has, and therefore what he is able to "make sense" of historically, what he is able to form a coherent picture of, will certainly determine what he is able to use as evidence. If he had no knowledge, he could use nothing as evidence.

That Collingwood's theory will not answer once and for all the objection of skeptic that "nobody ever learns anything from history except that nobody ever learns anything from history" is perhaps not such a deficiency as may be imagined, when it is considered that skepticism may exist with regard to any knowledge whatever. The skeptic, as the dogmatist which he is, is unwilling to be convinced. He has the answer to any epistemological problem that may arise. The only answer to his answer is that it is self-refuting. He claims to have what he also claims it is impossible to have.

It is only when Collingwood is judged as a historian and a philosopher who set himself the primary task of making history the queen of the sciences, that his proper stature emerges. History as Collingwood would write it or have it written is immeasurably superior to the history of "scissors-and-paste" historians or positivists bent on "proving" something about the future. History as an end in itself, as something valuable for its own sake, because in history we find self-knowledge, is a nobler conception of history than is history as a simple record of past events. The noblest type of history would be history of philosophy or philosophical ideas. Here we have reflective thought at its most reflective. History which does not condemn earlier ages as "dark" ages but tries to understand them in terms of their own values is better history than history which passes over whole ages as worthless. Historians who reflect upon the problems of historical knowledge and try to solve them, as Collingwood did, are better historians, even if they fail, than historians who have never considered those problems.

It is not surprising that Collingwood failed to establish history as an exact science. Few philosophers believe that perfectly certain knowledge is attainable in any fields other than those which consist of the working out of formal relations. Even though Collingwood failed, he accomplished much that was valuable.

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