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UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY IN

THE PHILOSOPHY OF E. B. BAX AND R. G. COLLINGWOOD

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ways in which E. B. Bax and R. G. Collingwood attempted to avoid relativism and irrationalism without postulating a pure and universal reason. Both philosophers were profound historicists who recognised the fundamentally particular nature of the world. Yet they also attempted to retain a universal aspect to thought - Bax through his distinction between the logical and alogical realms, and Collingwood through his doctrine of re-enactment. The paper analyses both their metaphysical premises and their philosophies of history. Finally an attempt is made to use their arguments as starting points from which to arrive at a historicist resolution of the problems of relativism and irrationalism.

UNIVERSALITY AND PARTICULARITY IN

THE PHILOSOPHY OF E. B. BAX AND R. G. COLLINGWOOD[1]

Philosophers have tried, in growing numbers this century, to combine

universality and particularity and so to reconcile law and chance. They seek to avoid

relativism while giving historicism its due. So to combine universality and

particularity was a common aim among turn-of-the-century British idealists inspired

by the need to unite a transcendent or universal reality with a concrete or particular

historicity in the context of the Victorian crisis of faith (Bevir, 1993b; Richter, 1964).

The emergence of the historicist challenge to Christianity in the nineteenth

century set the scene for much contemporary philosophy. Many British idealists,

more particularly, tried to preserve a place for the absolute in history. Perhaps the

most common way of doing so was to adopt a form of immanentism, Hegelianism, or

evolutionary philosophy according to which spirit or reason gradually unfolds itself in

actual human history. Although a few British idealists, notably F. H. Bradley, were

somewhat hostile to this view of the role of the absolute in history, most adopted

something akin to it. The First World War, however, undermined a faith in rational

progress of the type postulated by these immanentist, Hegelian, and evolutionary

philosophies. Philosophers became more concerned with the role in history of desire,

will, force, violence, and other arational factors. The absolute, the universal, and the

transcendent began to disappear from actual history. History seemed to consist solely

of particulars. For many philosophers, there loomed the vision, for good or ill, of a

rampant historicism - a world devoid of reason (Strauss, 1953).

Ernest Belfort Bax, 1854-1926, and R. G. Collingwood, 1889-1943, provide us

with examples of philosophers who accepted the fundamentally particular or

historicist nature of our being while attempting to retain a universal aspect to thought thereby avoiding relativism and irrationalism.

I

E. B. Bax translated, or wrote introductions to translations, of works by Kant, Schopenhauer, and others (Bax, 1883 & 1891a). Although he grew up in Lemington, Brighton, and Hampstead, he spent much of his early manhood in Stuttgart and Berlin (Bax, 1918; Cowley, 1992). Won over by idealist metaphysics, he became a close friend of Edward von Hartmann (Bax, 1882; Von Hartmann, 1886 & 1901). After he returned to England, Bax had some contacts with the British Idealists and also with other philosophers: he discussed philosophy on long walks with R. B. Haldane, and he wrote an essay on 'The Analysis of Reality' for a multi-volume collection on Contemporary British Philosophy edited by J. H. Muirhead (Bax, 1925). Generally, however, his reputation was much stronger abroad: he exercised a powerful influence on Austro-Marxists, such as Victor Adler, and he also attracted the attention of other professional philosophers, including A. O. Lovejoy (Lovejoy, 1909).[2]

Bax remained peripheral to British idealism for two main reasons. First, his background differed from that of the members of that movement: whereas they came from the upper-middle class, often had family ties with each other, and had been educated at Oxford and/or the Scottish Universities, his family were from the prosperous middle-class - rentiers whose wealth came from a small manufacturing business - and he had studied music abroad before getting work as a journalist.[3] Second, he was a secularist and a Marxist who denounced the attempts of other idealists to defend what he regarded as the Christian and bourgeois pieties of modern society (Bevir, 1993a; Pierson, 1972).

Although Bax welcomed British Idealism as a development of the 'line of thought in German philosophy' that 'took its first origin from Kant', his background and politics ensured that he remained a marginal figure for its development (Bax, 1918: 66). His marginal position is a shame because his thought provides an interesting counterpoint to much of theirs. Crucially Bax's debt to Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann appears in his rejection of the intellectualism that he found in Kant, Hegel, and their British successors (Bax, 1881). He saw the will, desire, and the unconscious, rather than reason, as the key root of reality and so as the key factors in human history.

Bax believed that philosophy should begin with the Kantian unity of apperception - the unity of subject and object that is embodied in 'I think'. Later German idealists, Bax believed, had taken the Kantian metaphysic in two different directions (Bax, 1886). Whereas Hegel had stressed the object, or thought, and thereby fallen for the intellectualist fallacy of reducing reality to reason, Schopenhauer had reasserted the subject, or I, by deriving thought itself from the will. But, Bax continued, although Schopenhauer had avoided Hegel's panlogism, the will can not actually be the basic principle of reality because, as Schopenhauer himself had acknowledged in his ethics, the will negates itself, and a basic principle can not thus destroy itself. Schopenhauer's concept of the will has to be replaced, therefore, by an alogical principle resembling Von Hartmann's alternative concept of the unconscious. Nonetheless, Bax did not side wholly with Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann against Hegel. On the contrary, he argued that Hegel's dialectic caught the dynamic nature of reality, whereas Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann's more static analyses of reality led them to pessimism; they ignored 'the possibility', asserted by the dialectic, 'of a

fundamental change in the constitution of society, and therefore of human life generally' (Bax, 1886: 357).

These reflections on German idealism defined the general orientation of Bax's metaphysics. He started with Kant's unity of apperception, and went on first to show that reality rested on an alogical moment, and then to provide a dialectical analysis of the way in which this reality developed. In studying Bax's philosophy, we would do well to remember that we are merely elucidating his ideas, not trying to make them more coherent or plausible than they were. His concepts were often very abstract and sometimes far from clear, but they remain of historical and philosophical interest as illustrative of a possible development within idealism.

Bax argued that reality consists of a basic or primary unity of subject and object (Bax, 1892, 1907, & 1920). Because no reality could be unknown, the object must be consciousness, and because reality must be a single whole, this consciousness must be consciousness-in-general, understood as the universal consciousness presupposed by every particular consciousness. Moreover, just as each particular consciousness has an individual or particular-I as its subject, so consciousness-in-general clearly must have a universal-I as its subject. Bax analysed reality, therefore, as composed of a primary unity between the object or consciousness-in-general and the subject or universal-I. All experience, however, entails the negation of this primary unity. Experience divides reality into a subject, or Ego, and an object, or Feltness, where because the Ego sees itself as separate from the external world, it also distinguishes itself from other Egos. Thus, according to Bax, the primary negation postulates the particular-I as independent not only of consciousness-in-general but also of the universal-I. Yet this primary negation is itself negated by thought, where thought thus stands as the third term, or synthesis, of a basic or primary dialectical

movement. Here, Bax continued, our intuition suggests that the individual is absolute and independent, but thought reveals this intuition to be an illusion. Thought reveals to us the fact that the subject and object are united in a single whole, and it thereby also reconciles the particular-I with the universal-I. Thought reaffirms the unity of subject and object against the primary negation found in experience.

Reality consists, therefore, of a dialectical movement from the unity of apperception, through the primary negation of experience, to the synthesis of thought. As Bax explained: 'the essence of every real-qua-real consists in these three elements or momenta, a thatness or matter (='I'), a whatness or form (=negation of 'I' or feltness), and the limitation of each by each, whence results the relation or logical category, which, so to say, suffuses with its light the alogical process behind it' (Bax, 1891b: 182). Crucially, Bax's arguments thus present both the primary unity and the primary negation as prior to thought. This, of course, is why he described the primary unity and the primary negation as the realm of the alogical. Because the alogical is prior to thought or philosophy, our philosophical categories can not capture it. Thought constantly tries to grasp the alogical realm composed of consciousness-in-general, the universal-I, and the interaction of the two, but the alogical nature of this realm - its resemblance to Schopenhauer's 'will' or Von Hartmann's 'unconscious' - means that thought can never succeed in encompassing it. Indeed, it is the constant attempt by thought to reduce the alogical to the logical that produces the dialectical movement of consciousness-in-general, that is, of reality itself. As Bax explained: 'we find, throughout the whole range of Reality, that activity of the Subject, which we call Thought, universalising, defining and reducing to its special forms or categories the a-logical element of feeling' (Bax, 1892: 155).

The place of the dialectic and the alogical in Bax's metaphysics sets the scene for his philosophy of history. Consider first his view of the dialectical nature of history. Because Bax looked upon the dialectic as a necessary truth about reality, his philosophy of history bears a close resemblance to that of Hegel, although, like the Young Hegelians, he refused to consider the contemporary world as a rational one. Here Bax's metaphysics shows that reality embodies a consciousness-in-general, universal-I, and thought, that progress dialectically. History, therefore, exhibits the dialectical movement of thought. It consists of the resolution of contradictions in consciousness-in-general. As Bax explained, the result of his analysis of reality is 'contradiction and its resolution - which is nothing more than the continuous positing of the alogical and its continuous reduction to reason' (Bax, 1892: 155). Bax's analysis of the dialectical movement of history drew, of course, on his metaphysical views of the primary unity, negation, and synthesis. The primary negation divorces the subject or particular-I from the object including all other egos: it divides the individual from both nature and society. Thus, Bax said that two main oppositions governed the dialectical movement of history, namely, 'the opposition or antagonism between Nature and Mind, and the opposition or antagonism between the Individual and the Society' (Bax, 1887: 7). Initially these two antagonisms remained latent in ethical consciousness. Social life reflected an unconscious solidarity with land being held in common and with individuals equating their interests with those of the tribe. Similarly, humans saw themselves as living in harmony with a nature that they worshipped, though they did so only in so far as it affected their particular tribe. Now, however, these antagonisms have come to the fore in liberal individualism. Individuals regard society as a restriction from which they have to break free by asserting their particular rights. Similarly, humans have separated themselves from a

nature that is now defined as a body of inert matter created for their use by a transcendent God. Eventually, however, there will arise a socialist consciousness that will reunite both the individual with society and mind with nature.

Consider now Bax's view of the place of the alogical in history. The foregoing presentation of Bax's philosophy of history took into account only the movement of thought, but his metaphysics imply that behind thought there lurks an alogical realm. According to Bax, the movement of thought is susceptible to logical explanation: we can explain it by subsuming events under categories that define a general law covering them. Logical explanation, however, works by abstraction, so it is valid only outside of the particular world which is governed by the alogical. Thus, although history must conform to the dialectical movement of thought, it has to do so only in a logical or timeless sense. As Bax explained: 'the Category must be realized; the logical course of human development must obtain; but the individual working in his own element, so to say, the form of all quantitative Particularity - Time, to wit - can indefinitely delay or accelerate its realisation' (Bax, 1892: 161). The actual course of history depends, therefore, almost entirely on alogical factors. Here Bax contrasted the logical component of history conceived as law with its alogical one conceived as chance or 'the ceaseless change of events in time' (Bax, 1892: 157). Hegel's intellectualist fallacy, Bax complained, had led to a mistaken determinism, for in ignoring the place of the alogical Hegel had failed to see that the actual course of history in time is a matter of chance rather than law.

II

The concept of the alogical allowed Bax, in his own view, to combine law and chance, universality and particularity, in his philosophy of history. As was suggested

earlier, such a combination was sought by many turn-of-the-century philosophers, many of whom more or less explicitly attempted to preserve some notion of the absolute within the context of historical criticism of the Bible. Certainly Bax, having rejected the evangelicalism of his childhood, argued that modern religion should turn from God to Man; it should focus on the universal or infinite in human life (Bax, 1879).[4] Bax's concept of the alogical - his debt to Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann - meant, however, that he rejected the intellectualism - the belief in universal reason as an absolute - he saw as characteristic of many of his contemporaries. Indeed, although he was really a pre-War philosopher, he grappled with the disappearance of the absolute in a way more common among later philosophers for whom World War One had highlighted the role of the will and force at the expense of reason. He tried to retain a sense of the universal in history whilst seeing actual history as chance, that is, as a series of particulars governed by alogical forces such as the will. It is this that makes a comparison between him and Collingwood so intriguing.

Collingwood, of course, is a much better known philosopher than Bax, a philosopher, indeed, whose work has been the subject of a number of debates and very good commentaries. In what follows, therefore, we will consider only the broad outline of Collingwood's philosophy - absolute presuppositions and re-enactment - and we will do so in relation to Bax's views on the universal and the particular. Collingwood is sometimes associated with a contextualist relativism - a profound historicism that stresses the particular and leaves no room in history for the universal (Toulmin, 1972). Certainly he argued, at least later in his life, that any statement should be understood as an answer to a question raised in a particular context composed in part of a historically specific set of absolute presuppositions (Collingwood, 1940 & 1978).[5] History might appear, therefore, to be for Collingwood

a series of particular ideas and epochs uninformed by any concept of the universal: there is neither real transcendence nor real historical continuity but only ideas raised against the questions and presuppositions of specific historical epochs.

However, Collingwood did not quite see history purely in terms of the particular. To see this we need only to consider his notion of re-enactment.[6] Collingwood argued that historians know past thoughts when they re-enact those thoughts, that is, when they have the same thoughts but in the present. Thus, the process of re-enactment requires one mind to become directly aware of another one that existed in the past; it requires thought to persist through time and across contexts; it requires thought to have a somewhat transcendent quality. So, Collingwood postulates a metaphysical link with past thought. In his early writings, he related this metaphysical link to an immediate mystical insight into the unity of the whole. He said that 'the necessity of the mystical experience lies in the principle that we discover new truths by an act of the mind which reaches out beyond the given, grasps new thought as it were in the dark, and only after that consolidates its new conquest' (Bates, 1996: 36). Although he dropped the reference to mystical experience in The Idea of History, he still argued that historians can have thoughts identical to those of their subjects because, although 'acts of thought happen at definite times', 'thought itself is not involved in the flow of immediate consciousness', but rather 'stands outside time' (Collingwood, 1946: 287). Thought has the peculiar property of not only 'occurring here and now in this context', but of being able 'to sustain itself through a change in context and revive in a different one' (Collingwood, 1946: 297).

According to Collingwood, therefore, thought alone has some sort of existence outside of time in that it 'is not merely immediate' (Collingwood, 1946: 306). Indeed, it is this transcendent quality of thought that makes re-enactment possible. Thought is

not wholly particular: rather, it can reappear, whilst retaining its identity, in different historical contexts, and this means that historians can re-enact it as it was in the past. Things other than thought, Collingwood continues, are wholly immediate, and this means that they can not be re-enacted so they are not amenable to historical study. Because things other than thought exist entirely in their particular contexts, historians, who, of course, are situated in different contexts, can not grasp them. As Collingwood explained: 'of everything other than thought, there can be no history' (Collingwood, 1946: 304).

Both Bax and Collingwood tried, therefore, to retain a place for thought conceived as the basis of a kind of universality existing outside of a time composed of particulars. Both of them saw actual history as profoundly particular - alogical or contextual - in a way which distinguishes their philosophies from those forms of idealism that emphasise the rationality and continuity of actual history. Equally, however, both of them gave a privileged position to thought conceived as somehow able to transcend the alogical or contextual world of actual history; both of them analysed thought as a kind of universal lurking beyond or behind the particular. The problem they faced, therefore, was how to insert a universal element into a history identified so heavily with the particular. Certainly it is hard to see how actual thoughts can embody a universal element if all actual history, including all actual thoughts, consists of a set of alogical, context-dependent particulars. Where is the universal aspect of thought located? How does a particular thought that exists in a particular historical context relate to the universal, context-independent nature of thought as such?

According to Bax, the alogical realm of the particular is related to the logical realm of thought by means of the dialectic. The dialectical construction of reality is

such that the particularity of feltness, or experience, is made meaningful by timeless categories, or abstract thought. We bring order to the alogical realm by reducing it to universal categories in which we can see a logical, but timeless, movement towards a given end. Collingwood, in contrast, rejected the idea of a metaphysical movement or order that we could trace in abstraction outside the particular realm of actual history. He argued instead that the universal aspect of thought is available to us only as it appears within the context-dependent realm of the particular. The particular is related to the universal by virtue of its reappearance through re-enactment. We come across the atemporal universal aspect of a particular temporal thought whenever it appears again in a present, and so different, context. Thus, whereas Bax saw the universal aspect of thought in terms of a dialectical movement, Collingwood identified it instead with the idea of reappearance.

This first difference between Bax and Collingwood led them, moreover, to adopt very different views of the relationship existing between the train of particular thoughts within history. According to Bax, the universalising quality of thought appears as movement, not as reappearance. The logical realm is one in which the dialectic takes us from category to category in an inherently progressive manner. An unconscious social solidarity, for instance, gives way to a contrary individualism, before one returns to the superior solidarity of socialism. Collingwood, in contrast, saw the universalising quality of thought in terms of reappearance, rather than movement. Thought transcends any given particular context because it can reappear in a different historical context - it genuinely recurs as identical to itself.

The emphases Bax and Collingwood placed respectively on movement and reappearance led them also to rather different views of the place of progress within a history of thought. Bax regarded thought as inherently progressive: the logical realm

was one in which thought moved forward in a progressive dialectic. Collingwood, in contrast, argued that progress can occur only when change goes along with repetition. He said that progress happens only if there is 'the retention in the mind, at one phase, of what was achieved in the preceding phase', that is, only if 'the two phases are related not merely by way of succession, but by way of continuity, and continuity of a peculiar kind' (Collingwood, 1946: 333). If there was no continuity - no repetition - then the two contexts would differ from each other, so we be unable to make a meaningful comparison of the sort that we would have to if we were to say that there had been genuine progress.

<p style="text-align:center">III</p>

The foregoing exploration of the philosophies of Bax and Collingwood clearly touches on important contemporary debates. Indeed, one possible way of reading the post-modern challenge to modern philosophy is as an elucidation of the dilemmas that face idealists such as Bax and Collingwood once they reject intellectualism - the dilemmas that idealists face in the wake of the crisis of faith that for some of them entailed the 'death of God'. Post-modernism poses the question of what we are left with once, like Nietzsche, we reject the very idea of a pure or universal reason. Post-modernists are rightly suspicious not only of given empirical truths but also of a pure and universal, whether this pure and universal reason is understood in terms of truths given to mind, as it is in Kant and Husserl, or in terms of the workings of something like reason or spirit in history, as, at least on some readings, it is in Hegel. Like Bax and Collingwood, post-modernists reject traditional, metaphysical concepts of universality. Post-modernists characteristically insist on the particularity, even the inherent instability, of all meanings, ideas, acts of thought, and so on. All thought, all

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history, the post-modernists say, is inherently particular, even, some of them continue, defined by alogical factors such as will or desire (Derrida, 1979; Foucault, 1980; and Lyotard, 1984). Yet post-modernism is often said by its critics to lead inexorably to a sterile enslavement to relativism and to irrationalism (Bloom, 1987; Habermas, 1987).

The obvious question to ask, therefore, is: do Collingwood and Bax suggest ways of avoiding relativism and irrationalism that do not commit us to the idea of a pure and universal reason?[7] Do they help us to come to terms with the death of God? The answer, in both cases, seems to me to be at best a very heavily-qualified yes. The idea of trying to base universal features of thought in particular instances of thought seems to me to be fruitful, but the attempt to give a largely transcendent reading of these universal features of thought seems to me to be mistaken.

Consider first the way in which Collingwood's idea of re-enactment might help us to overcome relativism. One problem posed by the relativist is how we can understand thought that exists in a context other than our own. This problem becomes especially pressing once we see the thought of different epochs not as grounded on shared categories nor as related by any real historical continuity but rather as based on a series of very different sets of presuppositions. Collingwood's suggestion is that thought has the peculiar property of being able to reappear, retaining its identity, in radically different contexts. If this is so, then we can understand thought that exists in a context other than our own so at least part of the problem posed by the relativist disappears. Yet there remains something unsatisfactory about Collingwood's account of how thought can operate like this. In his early work, he appeals to mystical insight or to an absolute mind, but these are things that post-modernists generally reject along with their suspicion of a pure and universal reason (Bates, 1996). In The Idea of History, Collingwood does not really try to explain how thought can operate like this;

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he relies instead on noting difficulties in criticisms of his view that it does do so. Moreover, in his later work, accounts of the universal aspect of thought are so slight that many commentators have seen him as having fallen prey to the very relativism that we want to avoid. It seems, therefore, that the only way in which Collingwood could make sense of the universal aspect of thought was by postulating some sort of transcendence - absolute mind or a world we apprehend through mystical or intuitive insight.

Perhaps, however, we might shift the focus from the reappearance of thought in a different context to the recreation of thought through a different language.[8] We might say that the creative nature of our linguistic faculty is such that we can negotiate the boundaries between two languages so as to enable ourselves to convey thoughts originally expressed in one through the other. If we do say this, then we explain the universal aspect of thought by reference to the creative nature of our linguistic faculty. But, a critic might ask, how can we be certain that any particular thought we express in our language is identical to the one we are translating. This question seems to me to be misguided. It assumes that we have objective knowledge only when we are certain our impression or repetition of an idea or other object is identical to that object, and yet one of the basic points of post-modernism is that we can not have access to objects against which to check the accuracy of our impressions of them (Rorty, 1979). All we need to do, therefore, is to say that our linguistic faculty makes it possible for us to try to comprehend others, and that we judge rival accounts of the beliefs of these others using the same epistemic criteria we use to judge rival scientific theories. We can, in other words, remove the issue of the identity of a thought and its re-enactment simply by rejecting the view that to have objective knowledge of X is to have an image of X that we are certain is identical to X. If I am right about this, then

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we might rebut relativism by saying, with Collingwood, that thought, or a linguistic faculty, enables us to comprehend the ideas, or sentences, of others. Crucially, however, we might do so by focusing not on the transcendent nature of thought but rather on the creative capacity of particular individuals.

Consider next the way in which Bax's analysis of a logical realm might help us to overcome irrationalism. One problem posed by the irrationalist is whether or not we can ever regard the development of belief over time as rational. This problem becomes especially pressing once we see the thought of different epochs as concerned with very different questions and so the movement from any one epoch to another as inspired by alogical forces such as will and desire. Bax's suggestion is that we detach a realm of thought governed by reason from the alogical realm of will and desire. If we can do so, then we can examine the rationality of developments in the logical realm so at least part of the problem posed by the irrationalist vanishes. Yet there remains something unsatisfactory about Bax's account of the relationship of this detached logical realm to the alogical one. On the one hand, he seems tempted to argue that the logical directs the alogical with the latter ultimately having to conform to the law-like power of the former. This argument, however, surely would take him too close to Hegel's panlogism, with reason ultimately directing will and desire. On the other hand, therefore, he seems tempted to argue that the logical stands outside of the alogical as a sort of Platonic world we can discover through philosophy. This argument, however, turns the logical realm into a purely transcendental one, and leaves unresolved the problem of how in our particular context we can have access to it. It seems, therefore, that, like Collingwood, Bax can make sense of the universal aspect of thought only by postulating transcendence - an absolute mind guiding history or a world of ideas.

Perhaps, however, we might shift the focus from the idea of logical and alogical realms to the different languages we use to discuss respectively thoughts produced by reason and a will produced by desires. We might say that the former language provides us with the resources to explore the rationality of a change of beliefs: it enables us to ask questions such as whether people who changed their beliefs in a particular way had a good reason for doing so, and which of two sets of beliefs better met epistemic criteria they had in common. If we do say this, then we explain the universal aspect of thought by reference to our ability both to explain it and to assess it in terms of its rationality. But, a critic might ask, how can we know when to explain thought in terms of reason rather than desire: how can we know when a set of beliefs was a product of logical, not alogical, factors? This question too seems to me to be misguided in so far as it suggests that we must know the facts before we then decide which language to use to discuss them, and yet one of the basic points of post-modernism is that we do not have access to such uninterpreted facts. All we need to do, therefore, is to say that our language makes it possible for us to explain beliefs in terms of either reason or desire, and that we judge different accounts of a given set of beliefs using the same criteria by which we judge rival scientific theories. We can, in other words, answer the question of when the logical appears within the alogical world by saying it does so whenever evoking it enables us to provide a more satisfactory account of the world than we otherwise could have done. If I am right about this, then we might rebut irrationalism by saying, with Bax, that thought, or our language, enables us to explain and consider ideas, or beliefs, in terms of their rationality. Crucially, however, we might do so by focusing not on the transcendent nature of the logical but rather on the particular accounts we give of the world.

Bax and Collingwood provide examples of idealists attempting to come to terms with the philosophical issues raised for many by the Victorian crisis of faith and World War One. Both of them tried to keep hold of universality - commensurability and objectivity - in the face of doubts about both the existence of a metaphysical realm and the power of human reason - in the face of a voracious particularism. Yet they do so in ways that still entail some sort of appeal to a transcendental realm. In contrast, I have suggested that to come to terms with the post-modern condition we have to locate intimations of the universal solely in the capacities of particular human beings set in their particular contexts.

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[2] Lovejoy seems to me to have got Bax about right. On the one hand, he finds in Bax's philosophy an interesting 'transitional doctrine' in which Hegelian ideas are turned against themselves in a way that results in ideas with an 'odd resemblance to realism, pluralism, voluntarism, and even pragmatism'. On the other hand, however, he rightly criticises Bax both for a lack of clarity and for equivocation, particularly in his attempts (or rather lack of attempts) to analyse the nature and role of the alogical.

[3] Annan (1955) discusses the family ties that linked so many Victorian intellectuals.

[4] It is significant that Collingwood too wrote early philosophical works in which he sought to redefine religious faith against the background of historicism (Collingwood, 1968).

[5] There has been much discussion of Collingwood's idea of absolute presuppositions (Flanigan, 1987; Hogan, 1987; Martin, 1989; Requate, 1997; Saari, 1991; Somerville, 1989; and Trainor, 1984).

[6] Some scholars have seen Collingwood's notion of re-enactment as no more than a solution to the epistemological problem posed by his historicism - the problem of how we can know the past at all (Van der Dussen, 1993). But this ignores the clear, metaphysical connotations of the notion of re-enactment (Bates, 1996). There have been many other discussions of Collingwood's idea of re-enactment (Dray, 1995; Martin, 1977; Nielsen, 1981; Saari, 1984 & 1989; Van der Dussen, 1995; and Weinryb, 1989).

[7] Elsewhere I have tried to suggest ways of avoiding relativism and irrationalism whilst rejecting the idea of the given (Bevir, 1994b).

[8] Such a shift of focus actually enables us to defend the idea of perennial problems in the history of philosophy (Bevir, 1994a). Collingwood and his followers, in contrast, have been at best ambivalent about such an idea (Bertoldi, 1985; Harris, 1951).