FROM HEGEL TO PSYCHOANALYSIS: RICHARD WOLLHEIM ON BRADLEY

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Richard Wollheim was born in 1923 and his first academic post, in London, was as a political philosopher. He had an unusual bi-partite, quasi-elitist interpretation of J. S. Mill which distinguished strongly between the common and the higher pleasures, and between those who were capable of them, and not, making him an astute commentator on liberalism for a different age. He is however best-known today for a radical turn to psychoanalysis, out of which emerged a unique philosophy of art. There is evidently a link between the earlier and later thinker in terms of that 'higher pleasure'. Who could read Freud and not see that he was trying to liberate those whose love of life was blocked. But an even more fascinating link between the two Wollheims is established in his very first book, on the British Idealist F. H. Bradley. Like psychoanalysis Bradley's unusual work was influenced by German Idealism and thus characteristically concerned itself with the development of the personality: with its potential richness and wholeness. In Wollheim's end, a life cured and enriched by the encounter with high art, I will suggest, lay his beginning as an enthusiast for Bradley. I retell some of that maverick life here, entwined with the arcane choice of his first book.[1]

The British Idealist Francis Herbert ('F. H.') Bradley was born in 1846 and died in 1924, and Wollheim's commentary on him, through the 1950s and 1960s, came at a time when British Idealism was much disparaged. For historians of philosophy it is part of the story of the long post-war revolt against logical positivism.

When he resurrected this Victorian Hegelian Wollheim knew what he was aiming at. A. J. Ayer had taken a sentence at random from Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* (1893) as, in his view, a prime example of philosophical absurdity on the part of a typical Idealist metaphysician. [2] But not everyone agreed, or found the attack even above board. Wollheim's contemporary Alasdair MacIntyre, astonished by the self-congratulation of Ayer and his sympathisers, remarked that they taught undergraduates to refute Bradley without bothering to read him. It was a 'disreputable' state of affairs (MacIntyre 1959). A philosophy student at Balliol, Ved Mehta, meanwhile remembered being told as an undergraduate in 1961-62 that 'Bradley was out, and thus metaphysics' (Mehta 1965: 68). And that was that.

Ayer in fact was to be commended for admitting to Mehta and his peers that there were, in fact, people interested in Bradley and/or metaphysics, 'people like Hare, Foot and Anscombe'. But then they were 'marginally on the soft or idealist wing [of contemporary philosophy]'. Part of our aim here will be to locate Wollheim on that 'soft or idealist wing'.

[1] Isaiah Berlin, a friend of nearly half a century, was to my knowledge the first to call Wollheim a maverick. See Isaiah Berlin Virtual Library (IBVL) *GC No. 20* /20).

[2] Ayer (*Language, Truth and Logic* 36. London: Victor Gollancz, 1936). A quiet, perhaps not ultimately successful movement to reinstate Bradley came with Donald MacKinnon's teaching in Oxford, which influenced Iris Murdoch. In pursuit of a new moral psychology Elizabeth Anscombe quoted Bradley in *Intention* (Basil Blackwell, 1957), 11: 'Moralism is bad for thinking.'

Bradley was a useful counterweight 'in a positivistic age like the present,' Wollheim declared (Bradley 1959: 18). It remains ironic that it was probably Ayer, who encountered Wollheim as a brilliant Oxford undergraduate and instantly offered him a job, who first brought Bradley to his attention (Ayer 1984).

In what was a brief heyday for philosophy in the highbrow post-war British media, Wollheim first gave a wireless talk 'F. H. Bradley' on the BBC Third Programme in December 1953. It immediately showed him at ease with an extra-mural audience. He could philosophise with a broad brush and his interests were equally large. When in 1982 he left mainstream academic philosophy for psychoanalysis and the philosophy of art, both these areas of interest had already been suggested to him by Bradley.

The wireless talk was reproduced as an essay, 'F. H. Bradley', in 1956, in a volume entitled *The Revolution in Philosophy,* edited and introduced by Gilbert Ryle. There Wollheim's contribution surprised Ayer (1984), as it did Bernard Williams (1958), for the revolution in question harked back to Oxford pre-war and, passionately anti-metaphysical, it seemingly had nothing to do with Bradley. But Wollheim, with Ryle's support, hailed Bradley as the great precursor of the linguistic approach: a philosopher who dealt in the function of propositions and judgements, and not in ideas and concepts (Wollheim 1956). A diplomatic master-stroke, it was possibly a disguised parricide, observed MacIntyre (1959). On the other hand, as was often said of Ayer, who remained in charge of philosophy at University College until 1959, and whom Wollheim eventually succeeded in 1963, that he was generous-minded, and did not require colleagues to become disciples. When Wollheim's lengthy monograph *Bradley* appeared in 1959, as part of Pelican Books's new history of philosophy, it was Ayer who was head of the series (Ayer 1984).

As set out in *Appearance and Reality* (1893) Bradley had an attitude to logic potentially baffling to positivists (Sprigge 1995). The problem was if x = y how exactly are these entities related? How are any two disparate things related? There must be something in x that is also in y, and vice versa, to link them. But were one to identify those factors the relation would no longer be between x and y but between x^{1} and y^{1}. Something would have been added to the original entities. Being in relation to each other would necessitate a new description. Because of the infinite regression this entailed Bradley concluded that reality, or the totality of relations between things, could never be grasped. All we have are appearances – even time and causation are appearances – which we interpret. Wollheim commented that for Bradley no descriptions were unique, for the only way to secure uniqueness would be specify the relation of the object to the whole of reality, something beyond the reach of language (Wollheim 1954).

A few years later, again in the highbrow press rather than in an academic context, Wollheim explained Bradley's position succinctly:

> As a philosopher Bradley at once belonged to and also rejected the tendencies of his day. For while he was unable to accept the old dualism between mind and nature, he found equally untenable any of the new distinctions that were being drawn within mental philosophy. All of them, according to him, committed the cardinal sin of analysis, which is to treat what can be distinguished as though it were different.
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> Wollheim 1964: 401

Now it was this attitude in Wollheim himself that marked out his own position in the philosophy of mind, in his sense of what made a person. It also distinguished his philosophy of art, which

focused on how we view a work of art. In both cases wholenesses, not differences, mattered. Bradley is often seen as a rare British Continental philosopher and one can trace this Continental attitude in Wollheim too, from a defence of Historicism in 1954 to a rich theory of personal identity in 1980. They rarely mentioned Hegel by name but Hegelian ideas stamped their work. When he contested Karl Popper's attempted demolition of Historicism, Wollheim disliked Popper's desire 'to impugn any attempt to talk about an entity "as a whole"' (Wollheim 1954: 84). Popper saw as misleading the pursuit of wholeness in a thing to 'make it appear as an organised structure rather than as a "mere heap"' (Popper 1957)[3] But for Wollheim the very point was that art, personality and the operations of the mind, which he cared about most, *were* organised structures and not just casual collections of impressions. In his 1980 paper 'On Persons and Their Lives', where his focus on a different method in philosophy, opposed to logical analysis, issued in a fully-fledged theory of personality, he wrote of his interest 'in the degree to which people can give their lives a pattern, an overallness…' and that 'somewhere at the core of personal identity…is a rather abstract property called mental connectedness' (Wollheim 1980: 299, 303)

What Wollheim's interest in Bradley makes clear is that he held a coherence theory of truth, in contrast to the correspondence theories of Locke and Hume and generally dominant among British empiricists. A coherence theory of truth was relational. It was concerned with meaning arising from the relatedness of things, and it was contiguous with imagination, understood as the capacity to see or create connections. Unlike the correspondence theory of truth which matched fixed linguistic terms to perceived static entities, a coherence theory of truth was a matter of juggling our interlocking interpretations of things in pursuit of an 'overallness', or the kind of unity some people feel underlies a work of art, underlies personal identity and underlies our experience of the world.

The question was what unified our experience. It asked how can we speak of universals when what we perceive are particulars. Bradley constructed his case for a kind of intrinsic or internal coherence in direct contrast with the British empiricists' insistence on mere resemblance, and to do this he turned to Hegel. Wollheim noted that it was Hegel's notion of 'the concrete universal' that mattered. It was this notion that allowed Bradley to keep in mind that 'whole of reality' which logical analysis dismissed. In Wollheim's words Bradley could thereby assert that

> …the relation of the parts of a universal to the whole is something more than that the parts conjunctively make up the whole; or to put it the other way round, the universal is not just the sum of its instances. A favoured way of expressing this feature of universals is to say that they are 'systems', as opposed to mere collections, thereby signifying that the elements of which they are constituted are peculiarly connected or are intimately bound up one with another.
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> Wollheim 1959:38

This aspect of Hegelian logic had a defining impact on Bradley's moral thought, and, through Bradley, the same could be said of Wollheim. Bradley's Hegelian-inspired feeling for how the part fitted in the whole laid the foundations for Wollheim's intense study of *Art and Its Objects* (1980 [1969]) and 'The Good Self and the Bad Self' (1976 [1975]) as they might be reconciled in the integrated personality.

[3] Popper 'The Poverty of Historicism' (1944), which first appeared as a series of three articles in the journal *Economica,* was his target. Popper published a revised edition in 1957 as a book.

On the matter of reconciling opposites and of finding unity in diversity Wollheim wrote that Bradley did not think Hegel's dialectic method could accomplish the task; but that his rejection of it was far from straightforward (Wollheim 1959). Bradley himself wrote:

> I think him a great philosopher; but I never could have called myself an Hegelian, partly because I can not say that I have mastered his system, and partly because I could not accept what seems his main principle, or at least part of that principle. I have no wish to conceal how much I owe to his writings, but I will leave that to those who can judge better than myself, to fix the limits within which I have followed him.
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> Wollheim 1959: 19

Wollheim arrived at the view which would have maximum impact on his own philosophical development when he stated that Bradley's *Ethical Studies* (1873) 'is, as many have seen, the most Hegelian of all his writings…and in its method, which is in essentials dialectical.'

> Setting out from widely accepted views of morality, Bradley…finds himself adopting more and more esoteric positions, each of which has something to be said for it but is also found to be ultimately unacceptable and has to be taken up into some higher synthesis compounded of it and the objections to it.
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> Wollheim 1959: 233

That was the foundation of Bradley's ethics of self-realisation and Wollheim would later develop for his own purposes.

Let us say then a little more about Hegel himself. He was a philosopher of history, but within that all-enveloping description his great innovation was the dialectical method that, besides laying down a claim to what logic was, offered a way of accounting for historical change, or progress. In parallel with these changes, which amounted to the development of national states, the dialectic also yielded an account of the development of modern individuals, whose experience of belonging to their communities and societies was characteristically fragmented, given the way the Western world was taking shape after the French Revolution. I think in fact that Hegel impacted on Bradley in two ways. One was to help him gauge his own position in the history of philosophy (much as Wollheim would then do for Bradley himself). The other was to make Bradley's lasting contribution to philosophy an ethics of self-realization. Picture first Bradley's position in 1873. He was interested in determining a moral philosophy that could take account of, but go beyond, the two great opposing pillars of the discourse, Mill's Utilitarianism and Kant's ethics of duty, as British philosophy recognised them. 'Take account of but go beyond', my expression, to my mind roughly describes the dialectical method, for *Aufhebung* as Hegel called it was a way of harmonizing opposites without annihilating the different elements that made for the original clash of views.[4] In seeking what it was to be moral the Hegelian method showed Bradley how he might harness divergent energies productively, with some further, superior and unified goal, such as a new moral philosophy entirely, in sight. The first three chapters of *Ethical Studies* set out the task of the Hegel-influenced moral philosopher, namely to set off limited views of morality one against

[4] Hegel said in an early work anticipating *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807, English 1910), that the division of one thing into two was the source of the need for philosophy. '*Entzweiung ist der Quell des Bedürfnisses der Philosophie*.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 'Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie' (1801) In *Jenaer Schriften*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1972) 13. My translation. In Bradley's reading it was also the source of the need for philosophical progress.

the other, with a view to transcending their differences. As moral positions the truculent, pleasure-seeking individualism of 'Why Should I Be Moral?' versus 'Duty for Duty's Sake' (the demure, conservative acceptance of 'My Station and its Duties') both had some truth in them. But in unresolved contest with each other they were not enough.

It was because of the way that Hegel understood philosophy dealing with splits in the individual psyche, and tensions in society, and conflicts within itself, that Hegelian philosophy acquired a kind of duty to society, or a sociological role, as well as offering a sharp critique of modern individuality. It had these three functions in one. Confronted with the evidence of the divided mind and the divided psyche that philosophy needed to understand as of the early nineteenth century, Marx would take forward Hegelian psychology as a matter of social alienation under certain economic conditions; Freud would understand personal conflict as sexually grounded isolation, or frustration, under a restrictive social regime. As for their contemporary Bradley though, he was most interested in the relevance of Hegel's moral psychology in a world that was losing its theological reference points. Moral philosophy needed to understand that even without God and His instructions human individuals were still motivated to realise their lives in meaningful ways. Forty years ago the moral philosopher Richard Norman linked Hegel, Bradley and Freud in a distinct tradition of ethics as self-realisation (Norman 1983).[5] To that list we can now add Wollheim, who learnt from all three of them.

To continue with our very general account of Hegel, reflection, or self-consciousness, raises questions that sever us from our surroundings.[6] For Hegel, who was responding to increasing individuality and diversity in society, the increase in individual reflectiveness made it difficult to hold our multiple worlds together. Members of a complex society pursue separate projects, endangering the coherence of the whole, meanwhile their own reflective isolation troubled them. The coherence of society for Hegel depended on individuals becoming ever more *conscious* of their own difference, and – here was his optimistic view – being able to overcome it. In becoming most fully themselves individuals would also find their way back to society that grew spiritually ever richer as it expanded to accommodate difference. As we have already noted, Hegel's 'phenomenology of spirit' – an intertwining of epistemology, philosophy of mind, and history – underlay Marxist sociology and Freudian psychoanalysis. But what we want to notice here is how a distinct strain in moral philosophy developed on the edge of those disciplines. In the case of Marx the concern was the self-realisation of a whole repressed social class, the proletariat. But in its more familiar individualistic form self-realisation was about how individuals could realise their diverse needs and still be moral. If the sense of being out of place in society could be overcome, then morality might name the effort involved in that overcoming. Morality might in the end name the will to belong. This indeed, I am suggesting, is how Wollheim read Hegel through Bradley. He then moved on to Freud, and then from Freud to the post-Freudian Melanie Klein, with her particular interest in the inner harmony of the individual. This autobiographical tale he interwove into his *F. H. Bradley* towards the end of the last chapter.

[5] Chapter 8 and culminating on p.168

[6] Bradley chose as his epigraph to *Ethical Studies* the otherwise unsourced quote from Hegel: *Die Philosophie soll nicht erst die substantielle Wahrheit geben*, *noch hat die Menschheit erst auf die Philosophie zu warten gehabt*, *um das Bewusstseyn der Wahrheit zu empfangen*. (It's not the task of philosophy to deliver the substantive truth, and nor has humanity, in its desire to be conscious of truth, been waiting for philosophy to deliver it.) I take this to echo Hegel's famous statement that philosophy only begins to makes sense of the world when it is already in the past – but that nothing stops us as reflective beings seeking truth in the present.

Bradley had been a rare Continental philosopher in Britain, and Wollheim surely envisaged himself as heading along a comparable path. For Wollheim philosophy shared borderline territories with poetry and art, rather than effectively excluding them. Nor did it shun imagery and metaphor, and assertions of value, as Ayer's verification principle demanded. Bradley/Wollheim also had a view of language far removed from the world of Ordinary Language philosophy. For Bradley, whose interest in symbolism Wollheim shared, words were 'not arrows we, the marksmen, aim at targets; but as missiles…[they] take themselves there, or fall wide of the mark' (Wollheim 1956: 18). Wollheim meant that the connection between words and truth was not just a matter of correctly lining them up with their objects, according to socially agreed criteria. In many meaningful areas of life whether words reached their target was actually uncertain from the point of view of the speaker. That was because the all-connected reality they aimed at lay outside the human grasp. In search of ultimate coherence – and the Freudian Wollheim would say in search of our true selves -- we have to resort to symbolism and guesswork. If for Bradley this was a metaphysical conclusion, in Wollheim's case it seems to have been a pre-emptive confession that, without metaphysics as an option, he would need poetry and painting to make his personal world cohere at all. Wollheim wanted a philosophy of mind, and an ethics, that would be kinder to individual complexity. The bird is brown, indeed, as he told wireless listeners in December 1953. But to separate the bird from the brownness would do violence to reality. The poet Rilke said the same (Wollheim 1956). For details of the bird we might substitute perceived details of the man—that he is cruel, unjust, quick-tempered, say – but those descriptions do not tell us who or what he is, for he is many things held together in a complex whole. The positivist approach to truth destroyed our sense of coherence. It denied us our psychological well-being. In those guises philosophy was of no moral or poetic use. By contrast, if we find ourselves in search of a countervailing well-being we must realise that also in philosophy 'to consider anything we must consider everything' (Wollheim 1956: 20).

This view would carry over into Wollheim's understanding of both the human psyche and the the work of art, and already in *F. H. Bradley* he began to allude to works of art simply in the way he talked about reality. 'The positioning of the chair changes it because it is in a different relation to other things' (Wollheim 1959: 22). Bradley himself said of his view of the world as a necessary system that it might be compared to 'one ideal of the aesthetic critic' (Wollheim 1959: 23). Wollheim drew out the parallel: 'In looking at a picture, we may concentrate on a hand or a fold of the drapery, but as long as we know that this is only a detail, we see it as different from what it would be if we took it for the whole'(Wollheim 1959: 24) Bradley's philosophy overall was 'a theory of thought and symbolism'.[7] A few pages into the text the reader would meet the idea that 'the mind [also]has a creative role [besides being the repository for sense impressions]' (Wollheim 1959: 22).

For Bradley a true moral philosophy would refine and combine Utilitarianism, with its focus on pleasure, and Kantian deontology, focused on duty. An ideal morality would include our hedonism and our concern for society, and transcend them in an ethic of self-realisation. Of concern would be the self in which good and bad selves intertwine. For we are made up of many urges and the aim above all is to grasp how they can coincide in one person. Our urges, including our sexual urges, are inter-related. They do not have a single and specific character. This makes it difficult to apply moral labels such as selfishness. For it does not always reflect something essentially bad about us; nor selflessness something good. For example what is

[7] The characteristic blue and white Pelican cover of the first edition of *F.H. Bradley* explained that it would be about these things. The publicity text was quite possibly written by Wollheim himself.

unreflective in us cannot be concerned with self. 'Selfishness for instance excludes passion, and so all evil that is done out of strong or violent feeling is necessarily excluded from it. Selfishness is not coextensive with the bad, but merely a form of it; and so the bad self cannot be identified with the selfish self' (Wollheim 1956: 256). These tangled thoughts, partly aimed at disabling the commonplace censures of the British society of the day, would one day help Wollheim to write his 1975 'The Good Self and the Bad Self.' They reflected on Wollheim's part, if not Bradley's, a Rousseauan desire for original innocence, and an appeal not to be morally wholly condemned for occasionally errant deeds.

Bradley helped Wollheim formulate his eventual psychoanalytical idea of morality because he was interested in 'the genesis of morality out of the crude material of the natural disposition' (Wollheim 1956: 256). To think of morality's origins was to realise that the balance of right and wrong was different in different people:

> …to the modern philosophical reader…immersed in, or even committed to, the analytical thought of our day, such a proposal is bound to seem obscurantist…and yet is it really so clear that we all do mean essentially the same by talking of right and wrong? Is it not possible that the significance of morality varies, sometimes only faintly, sometimes fairly decisively, from person to person?
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> Wollheim 1956: 256-7

Ethics is partly about society's 'common sense' (as Hume observed). But to make its inquiries more comprehensive it would do well also to consider the nature of art, 'which, roughly speaking, consists, on the one hand, of a number of different objects, and on the other hand, of a number of different attitudes or "sets", either in the makers of these objects or in the audience to which they are directed' (Wollheim 1956: 257). 'Somewhere in the middle, between the two spheres of science and art, morality is to be located.'

Wollheim summed up, on Bradley and on his own behalf: 'A full understanding of the subject is unlikely to be achieved if we do not see the moral life as an integrated phenomenon including practice, belief and sentiment…if we do not trace the development of morality out of its instinctual core' (Wollheim 1956: 258).

Bradley talked about 'the affirmation of the self' starting in childhood. Through the stages of its development the child moved from things to persons. British psychology normally used 'the mechanism of sympathy' as a *deus ex machina* explanation of how the child made this turn to other human beings. But Bradley did better when he talked of our 'interest' awakening – in the sense of something being at stake for us. We realise that in this relationship there is a pleasure or a harmony we don't want to lose.

> It is then largely in Interest that the origin of the good self is to be found. Gradually the scope of those things in which the good self takes an interest increases so as to embrace not merely loved persons and the familiar environment, but fresh objects, new ends, ideal causes and pursuits. But as the will for good in this way grows, it is a characteristic, indeed a defining feature of its progress that the activities and objects in which it realizes itself are harmonious. With increase in awareness, it comes to recognise as things in which can it can affirm itself whatever is continuous with that in which it already finds affirmation; so that the adequate mark of goodness is its character as an expanding system.
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> Wollheim 1956: 260-61

The good self is invested in our true being, whereas the bad self is disharmonious and lacking n awareness. We need to become self-conscious about how our deepest impulses work themselves out. 'To be moral we must not merely know good and evil, not merely will good and evil, but we must will the good knowingly, for its goodness, or will evil knowingly, because it is evil'(Wollheim 1956: 262). Here Wollheim checks himself for a moment. 'It cannot be denied that much of this account of morality and moral development is obscure and far-fetched' (Wollheim 1956: 265) But what he admires about Bradley is the view that 'morality in its origins is the quest for harmony' (Wollheim 1956: 266).

It is at this point that Wollheim is reminded of the work of Melanie Klein. We have been reading an account of Bradley's thought. But now we are also reading about Wollheim's own moral struggle, under Kleinian guidance. (He entered Kleinian analysis with Leslie Sohn at the time he was writing *Bradley*.) What Bradley was already teaching the people of Victorian England, he suggests, was 'not to suppress some part of their nature which could have been harmoniously combined with the rest.' 'Are we to say that this is *not* morality?' [my emphasis – LC] (Wollheim 1956: 266).

Morality for Bradley – and it seems for Wollheim -- is about managing our contradictions as human beings. It is about mastering our intensity and finding satisfaction through a sense of 'significant form'. We feel that *the manner* [my emphasis – LC] of how our interests proceed (Wollheim 1956: 282) is the right one, as our interests spread wider and wider. We glimpse the Absolute.

> Reality, we are told, has been 'disjoined', 'mutilated', 'scarred', by the impact of Thought or Ideality…metaphysics must find a solution in which the destruction is made good, the scars heal over, and the various divorced elements are reconciled and reunited in a 'harmonious' and 'integrated' whole.
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> Wollheim 1956: 284

The unnamed allusion to Roger Fry's idea of significant form reflected a a very strong Bloomsbury strain in Wollheim's ethics. Like Mill and like G.E. Moore Wollheim was seeking to justify the higher pleasures. Bradley's system of the gradual spiralling intensification of our interests – probably a Hegelian and certainly ultimately an image from Hegel's mentor Goethe - was an attractive way to picture the idea of how we become most fully ourselves and connected to our worlds.

As the autobiographical elements seeped through his interpretation of Bradley's metaphysics, Wollheim made clear how much he needed Kleinian analysis and the company of works of art to make good the destruction which he, Richard Wollheim, could not help inflicting on the world and on himself. He concluded by comparing Bradley with another Continental philosopher, Henri Bergson. Bergson was the philosopher of 'the fresh vital flow of Time in which we immerse ourselves…the continuum of experience …which concepts and abstractions mutilate' (Wollheim 1956: 284). Bergson revitalised Time, undoing the work of an abstraction otherwise 'naturally associated with the forces of aggression'. He went on: '[Time's] traditional emblems are devouring implements like the scythe and the scissors whose ravages and inroads are among the most potent symbols of destruction in the human imagination' (Wollheim 1956: 285). Those of us who think the culmination of Wollheim's work in philosophy, and also his departure from the discipline, came with *The Thread of Life* (1984 [1982]) will see another path for his professional future laid out here. Time cuts the thread –

and the meaning – but the ethics of self-realisation Wollheim learnt from Hegel and Bradley and the philosophy of art he developed for himself resists that severance.

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