John Grote and Modern Cambridge Philosophy

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On the 21 August 1866 a scholarly, unassuming philosopher died at his home in Trumpington Vicarage, Cambridge. Only a few people, then as now, recognized his importance to philosophy and to Cambridge thought. Henry Sidgwick's mother reported the news to her son who replied, 'It startled me very much, I shall miss him at Cambridge exceedingly'.[1] Another Trinity fellow, Fenton J. Hort, who enjoyed Grote's company and was to have an illustrious Cambridge career, reported accurately, that it was a 'far more serious public loss than is suspected outside a small circle of friends'.[2]

Later John Venn, the logician, wrote from Caius to Grote's colleague and literary executor Joseph Bickersteth Mayor of St. John's, 'I shall take the first opportunity of going over to Trumpington and bring back a book with me as a memorial of Professor Grote, and of some of the happiest hours I have spent in Cambridge'[3]. Referring to the philosophical group they all knew as the 'Grote Club', which met weekly at Trumpington after dinner, he wrote 'My book (*The Logic of Chance*) is, to me, full of memories of our meetings at Trumpington. A good deal of the substance of it was read there, and our discussions afterwards were of the utmost use in suggesting ideas and working them out. The last time I saw Professor Grote ... was to talk with him about one of the chapters which he had looked over when in type, and the last letter I had from him was on the same subject; full of sympathy and encouragement, as everything was that came from him'.

Reports in the Wren Library of the meetings, were used by the editors of Sidgwick's *Letter*s to describe and evaluate the significance of the 'Club' and its successor 'Society' run by Frederick D. Maurice after 1866. The 'Grote Club', produced discussions of the highest order according to John Rickards Mozely, with Grote's role described as being the 'moderator' and 'midwife', and Sidgwick

[1] A. & E. Sidgwick, *Henry Sidgwick: A Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1906), 130.

[2] A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of F. J. A. Hort* (London: Macmillan, 1896), Vol II, 74.

[3] J. Venn, *Letter to J. B. Mayor*, *Mayor Papers*, 4 November (1866), B16/135.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819198000084 Published online by Cambridge University Press

being as ever 'irrepressible'. Other manuscript notes of meetings after 1866 were penned by the young Alfred Marshall then getting his apprenticeship in moral sciences alongside another metaphysician, William Kingdom Clifford.[4] In founding, hosting, chairing and setting a conversational style for specialist philosophical meetings at Cambridge, which was a model for the later Moral Sciences Club, John Grote had made his first major contribution to Cambridge philosophy.

But the greatest personal and philosophic influence upon Grote, Robert Leslie Ellis (1817–1859), Liebniz to his friends, the philosopher, the mathematician, co-founder with Venn of modern probability theory, jurist, and editor of *Bacon's Works*, could not attend the Grote Club meetings though living next door at Ansty Hall. The debt of intellectual friendship and inspirational conversation is repeated by Grote (Grotius to his friends) in several places. 'My companionship with him (Ellis) I think was intellectually the most valuable portion of my life, for one reason, namely I learnt from *it*..., a belief in thought: a feeling that things were worth thinking about, that thought was worth the effort, that half-thought or loose thought was something to be despised, that the getting to the bottom of anything was what would repay the trouble of it'.[5]

The friends provided Cambridge with two of its most brilliant and original minds. A long debilitating illness that prevented Ellis's attendance at the Club provided the time for the discussions and letters that moulded Grote's unique style and form of philosophy. They learnt from conversation, because, ' if we want something to think about, let us think about words. Our stock of language is a great book in our minds always ready for us to read... We have all this in our mouths without giving it a thought, while we are murmuring that our minds are empty and stagnant, because what we want of other people's thought is perhaps denied us'.[6]

The creation and development of a Cambridge spirit and style of

[4] J. R. Mozely, Letter to J. B. Mayor, Trinity College Cambridge, Add MS.c.104 66[1]; *Clifton Memoirs* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1927), 88; A. Marshall, Common Place Book, Trinity College Add MS.c.104 (65); J. M. Keynes, *Essays in Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 158–160; L. Stephen, 'Henry Sidgwick', *Mind* **37** (January 1901), 5–6. L. Stephen, Letter to Venn on Grote Club, John Venn Papers, Caius College. C12/13.

[5] J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, *Part I*, (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1865), xxxv; also 'Robert Leslie Ellis', *The Athanaeum*, 1870, 205–206; Memoir of Robert Leslie Ellis', *Contemporary Review*, **20**, (1872), 56–71; C. A. Bristed, *Five Years in an English University* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1852), 82, 167–168; Hort, *Life*, **I**, 309.

[6] J. Grote, 'Thought versus Learning', *Good Words* **12**, 822–823.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819198000084 Published online by Cambridge University Press

doing philosophy I count as Grote's second major contribution to modern Cambridge philosophy. Grote's interests, reading and training reflect the conventions of his day, but in his approach, his style, his methods, his understanding of problems and ways of solving them, the general thrust of his thought, and on some special points of detail, his thought is indicative of that tradition of philosophy which is often held to be characteristic of Cambridge philosophy in the early decades of the twentieth century. No evidence is available to support a claim that Grote exerted a pronounced direct influence upon Russell, McTaggart, Moore and Wittgenstein; though Grote's books remained on the Moral Science Tripos reading lists until late in the nineteenth century, and McTaggart, Broad, Ward and later Michael Oakeshott owned heavily annotated copies. But we can claim that through the channels of conversation, friendship, socialization, discussion groups, and the linking figures in Cambridge of John Venn, Henry Sidgwick, James Ward, William Ritchie Sorley, John Ellis McTaggart and Robin John Grote Mayor, a fellow Apostle and the son of Joseph Mayor and Jessie Grote, a line of continuity was established, which can best be explained by what Oakeshott calls a 'tradition'.[7]

John Passmore hinted at this connection in a footnote, 'Grote's philosophy is in manner an early, perhaps the first, example of that Cambridge spirit—he was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Cambridge—which was to reach its culmination in the work of G. E. Moore. His conversational, informal, italicized style, his acute, particularized, but not scholarly criticisms, his preference for "the language of ordinary men" as distinct from "the language of philosophers", are all prophetic of Moore. And certain special points of doctrine—for example, his distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and "knowledge about"—were to be prominent in later Cambridge thinking. Grote is in many ways an impressive philosopher, but his impressiveness is of the sort at which summary can do no more than hint'.[8]

Grote was born in Beckenham, Kent in 1813. His father, grandfather and uncles, all bankers in Amsterdam, Bremen and Threadneedle and Leadenhall St. London, were all multilingual. His mother was a devout but narrow evangelical. The family had eleven children of whom Grote was the eighth son. All the sons joined one of either the military forces, the Colonial Civil Service in India or like the eldest brother George, joined the family bank. Only John and his younger brother Frank joined the University of

[7] R. J. G. Mayor, *Reason and Common Sense* (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul, 1951), viii–ix, 449–461.

[8] J. Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1968), 54.

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Cambridge at Trinity in 1830 and 1833 respectively. John never lived in the shadow of his eldest brother, George Grote (1794–1871), the famous historian and philosopher of Greece, Radical MP, a founder of the University of London and the British Museum, Philosophical Radical and friend of Bentham, James and John Mill. The brothers inhabited two different worlds, the two most powerful and opposed philosophical camps in Britain before 1870. Their careers and thought encapsulate the philosophical battle between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* schools that Mill considered to dominate the thought of the century.

John Grote took high honours in Mathematics and in Classics in 1835, and then resided in College gaining a fellowship in 1837, reading widely and travelling extensively in Europe particularly to Germany in 1835 and 1838. Under parental pressure he was ordained deacon in 1842, a priest in 1844, and after various temporary curacies gaining the prized living at Trumpington. But long periods of ill health, the result of childhood chest illnesses which lead to bronchiectasis, hampered his academic and pastoral life, and dogged his most intellectually productive period from 1862 to his death in 1866.

Grote was the natural and chosen inheritor of the Cambridge, and especially the Trinity, tradition of philosophy after William Whewell (1794–1866). His Tripos reading had taken him through the classics—he enjoyed Aristotle and Cicero especially. Grote's Trinity colleagues, however, always respected the breadth and depth of his metaphysical interests. In 1835 Grote's list of philosophical reading was a neat balance between the forces of the day: Victor Cousin and Rousseau for the French; Kant, Tennemann's *History* and Madame de Stael's *De L'Allemagne* for the Germans; Locke, Whatley's *Logic*, Blackstone and Whewell for England; Hume and Thomas Brown for Scotland.[9] In 1839 his mother wrote in a fit of evangelical desperation, 'I can imagine you, receiving my letter, reading it with a scornful smile and saying-Umph—what is all this to me—it is neither Metaphysical-Philosophical-German- or any other modern style'.[10]

So Grote provided Cambridge with another vital element, professional knowledge of continental as well as British philosophy. If one follows the conventional accounts of English philosophical developments in the Victorian period Grote would have been a maverick, his reading being so eclectic, philosophical and German.

[9] J. Grote, Journal of John Grote, 1833–1839, Trinity College, Mayor Papers C12/57.

[10] S. M. Grote, Letter to John Grote, Trinity College, Mayor Papers, C12/15.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819198000084 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But it is the histories that are wrong. Cambridge had by 1855, when Grote succeeded Whewell as the Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy, two generations of trained philosophers most of whom had been exposed, if not converted, to French Eclecticism and German philology, history, biblical criticism and idealism. The book stock at Trinity and St John's included, the brilliant *Julius Hare Collection* of original German sources, the personal libraries of W. Whewell, W. H. Thompson, Edmund Lushington, J. W. Blakesley, Ellis, Grote, the Mayor brothers John E. B. and Joseph B. and Isaac Todhunter, provided the base. The 'Apostles', 'Eranaus' and 'Grote Club' were the spur.

We now have enough primary source data and revisionist interpretations, to undermine the damning picture of Cambridge philosophy painted by J. S. Mill in the 1840s and 60s.[11] This negative picture had been reinforced later, with a few refinements, by a group of opinion leaders in Cambridge all opposed to these new idealistic, romantic, German and French influences. All were disciples of Mill, and included Henry Sidgwick, Leslie Stephen and Henry Fawcett.[12] Their picture of a reactionary University, dominated narrowly by the classics and mathematics, philosophically immature, with no school, direction or purpose, except the intuitionism and rationalism of Whewell and Sedgwick, is both a historical travesty and an obstacle to the recovery of the depth, variety, strength, novelty and the sheer excitement of Cambridge philosophy and the significance of John Grote before Sidgwick.

John Grote detested polemical rivalries like those between Whewell and Sedgewick for Cambridge with Bentham and Mill for

[11] J. S. Mill, 'Professor Sedgwick's Discourse on the Studies of the University of Cambridge', *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I, (London: Longman's, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 95–159; C. Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 38–40. For revisions see R. O. Preyer, 'The Romantic Tide Reaches Trinity: Notes on the Transmission and Diffusion of New Approaches to Traditional Studies in Cambridge, 1820–1840', in *Victorian Science and Victorian Values: Literary Perspectives*, J. Paradis and T. Postlewait (eds), (New York: Academy of Sciences, 1981), 39–68; H. W. Becher, 'Voluntary Science in Nineteenth Century Cambridge University to the 1850's', *British Journal for the History of Science*, **19**, 1, (March 1986), 57–88; M. Fisch & S. Schaffer, *William Whewell: A Composite Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); R. Paulin, 'Julius Hare's German Library in Trinity College Library, Cambridge', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, IX, 2, (1987), 174–193.

[12] H. Sidgwick, 'Philosophy in Cambridge', *Mind*, **1**, 2. (1876), 235–246; L. Stephen, *Sketches from Cambridge, by a Don* (Oxford University Press, 1932/1865).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819198000084 Published online by Cambridge University Press

London and both with Hamilton for Edinburgh, and what he termed the 'odium ethicum', that surrounded the rivalries between the Cambridge intuitionists and idealists, the Philosophical Radicals and the Scottish common sense movement. His carefully worded article attacking the style of the *Saturday Review* journal, run by old Cambridge friends such as Henry Maine and James Fitzjames Stephen, plus his brilliant unpacking of the confusions, dogmatics and nonsenses underlying the *Essays and Reviews* controversy, reveal a desire to write constructively.[13] To help promote constructive debate he unravelled confusion, tried to find the truth and value in every position, and then tried eclectic harmonization and reconstruction. In practice, Grote trained Sidgwick in impartiality, fair-mindedness, and the rigorous enquiring style that is generally held to be the most characteristic and praiseworthy feature of *The Methods of Ethics* of 1874, and of George Moore's *Principia Ethica* of 1903. He also helped reform Trinity College, the Knightbridge Chair of Moral Philosophy and the Moral Science Tripos significantly, before Sidgwick.[14]

A general distrust of publishing was also characteristic of many Cambridge minds and it was shared by Grote, reading and writing could get in the way of talking and thinking. However, a disorganized approach to publishing ensured Grote's influence on succeeding generations was to be more indirect than direct. Grote had overcome a tendency to indolence by 1862, and had written at least six books and enough manuscript material for three or four others, by his death in 1866. But he had published only the *Exploratio Philosophica* (1865) and several essays.[15] The key reasons were that

[13] J. Grote, 'A Few Words of Criticism a propos of the Saturday Review of April 20, 1861, Upon Dr. Whewell's Platonic Dialogues for English Readers', (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1861), 1–56, Trinity College, Mayor Papers, C12/60; 'An Examination of some portions of Dr. Lushington's judgment in the cases of the Bishop of Salisbury v Williams, and Fendall v Wilson (re. *Essays and Reviews*), (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co. 1862), 1–101, Mayor Papers, C12/62.

[14] H. Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1874); G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge University Press, 1903); J. Grote, 'Terms of reference of Professor of Moral Philosophy', Cam.a.500.5.167.; 'A Few Words on Statute XVIII' 7 May 1859, (Cambridge University Press), Trinity College, Adv.c.16.57[29]; Remarks on the Proposals of the Syndicate in reference to the Moral Science Tripos', 22 February 1860, Trinity College, 98.c.85.24[17]; 'Draft Scheme of Examination for the Moral Science Tripos', 1860; T.C. LL. 696.c.117[27].

[15] J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica. Rough Notes on Modern Intellectual Science*, Part I, (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co.), (Republished in 1900 with Part II by Cambridge University Press).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819198000084 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he didn't wish to be misunderstood, nor to start a new outbreak of internecine warfare and to avoid misunderstanding he wished his whole corpus to be published in the correct order and at about the same time. Books therefore were written, then left in manuscript form. Once, in 1863, when one was being set by Deighton and Bell the printers, his conscience plagued him so much that he ordered it to be broken up. This was the *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, eventually published in 1870, four years before Sidgwick's *Methods*.[16] Sidgwick however had access to the entire Grote mss between 1866–1874 as he helped his friends Mayor and Hort to edit both the *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy* and *Exploratio Philosophica Part* II. Mayor's role in constructing the Grote we know is itself a sad story of delay and indecision as well as one of commitment and duty. Of primary consequence was the contravention of Grote's wish to see his work on language published first, and the last act of 1916, the destruction of nearly all the primary source mss of the philosophical writings.

The contents of Grote's philosophy mark another important contribution to Cambridge philosophy. They can be summarized under five headings: intentions; character; epistemology; language; and ethics. Grote stated his intentions as 'clearing my own thoughts and those of others'.[17] He writes, 'The progress of philosophy is a thinking, and a re-thinking, and a re-thinking still more clearly and better'.[18] His second stated intention was to expose error and confusion in the language and thinking of others and then 'to put together, in an uncontroversial form, what seemed to me the truth, in opposition to what I thought error'.[19] Mixing the languages of science and philosophy, as did positivists for instance, was the error that annoyed him most, for it tends 'not only to *be* bad philosophy, but so far as they are attended to, to *make* bad physics'.[20]

Finally, Grote aimed to prevent a slide into cynicism and scepticism being generated by the move towards positivism and relativism in so many fields of study, 'For the best thing that I can hope, and the thing which I most wish, for anything which I may say, is that

[16] J. Grote, *An Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1870); *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part II, (Cambridge University Press, 1900). On the Grote Sidgwick relationship see, J. Grote and H. Sidgwick, 'A Discussion between Professor Henry Sidgwick and the Late Professor John Grote on the Utilitarian Basis of Plato's Republic', *The Classical Review*, **3**, (1889), 97–102.

[17] E.P. Part I, xxiii.

[18] Ibid. 130.

[19] Ibid., viii.

[20] Ibid., xxvii.

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it may be improved upon: the present generation seem to have more than one bright field of speculation open before them and what I *want* more than anything is to prevent their enterprise being dampened by their being told, whether on the ground of notionalism or positivism, that to know God, to form a notion of an ideal of what should be done or what they and the human race should aim at—that this and much more like it is visionary and beyond the reach of human faculties'.[21]

There are three key characteristics of Grote's written corpus: eclecticism; preference for ordinary language usages; and a conversational style. By eclecticism I mean the sifting of truths from various apparently conflicting systems and uniting them in a synchronic harmony. This eclecticism is a later feature of the work of Sidgwick and Moore as well as Grote. Grote writes, 'My idea of moral philosophy is much more as a thing which we all think and talk about, but often exceedingly foolishly and badly, so that what we want is good sense, discrimination, and wideness of view. … It is right manner of thought that we want about it, more than systematic knowledge'.[22] Sidgwick later succumbs to his mentor's approach, 'I wonder whether I shall remain a boy all my life in this respect. I do not say this paradoxically, but having John Grote in my mind who certainly retained, with the freshness, the indecisiveness of youth till the day of his death. I wonder whether we are coming to an age of general indecisiveness; ... In the present age an educated man must either be prophet or persistent sceptic—there seems no media via. I have sold myself to metaphysics for a time and a half a time, I do not as yet regret the bargain. Take notice that I have finally parted from Mill and Comte—not without fears and wailings and cutting of the hair. I am at present an eclectic. I believe in the possibility of pursuing conflicting methods of mental philosophy side by side'.[23]

A claim for a shared preference for ordinary language usage is at the heart of John Passmore's claim for a Grote and Moore connection. It is not strong but the relation is recognizable, Grote writes, 'Suppose we call "ordinary thinking" that which is represented by common language. This, in the main, I believe in, and think it is right. It represents what may be described as the way we learn, or come to knowledge: ... I am sorry to say, I have always had the feeling, that the language of ordinary intellectual communication among men is better than the language of philosophers. And the thought therefore cannot be very bad'.[24]

[21] Ibid., xxxii.
[22] E. U.P., 7.
[23] A. & E. Sidgwick, *Henry Sidgwick: A Memoir*, 157–158.
[24] E.P.I. 73.

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The practice of doing and valuing conversation in philosophy is especially associated with Wittgenstein. However the idea that philosophy is not only best conducted as a conversation but 'is' one, is credited by Richard Rorty to Michael Oakeshott in Oakeshott's famous essay on aesthetics.[25] But Grote exhibited this priority, 'Philosophy has been from the first ... discussion, argument—even when *delivered* in a gnomic and authoritative, or in a poetic form, it must rest, in the mind of the philosopher, upon this imagined—and it never can be otherwise'.[26] So, 'the test of what he says being not only words, but *something*, is first his inward sight: but this is something for himself alone, and even he cannot entirely trust it: we cannot allow that an idea is, by mere virtue of its clearness, certain and true. Hence mind must be brought into contact with mind—no man can know even his own mind without this. And thus the conversational and discussional form of much early philosophy is not an artistic accident of it, but belongs to its being...'.[27]

Unlike the entire British tradition of the philosophy of mind before, Grote prioritizes language and conversation over sight and perception, the tongue over the eye. 'For it must be always remembered that language is talk; that literature is a growth or development of outward talk, just as thought, on the other hand is inward talk; that the real language of mankind, or of a nation, the stock upon which these two glorious prerogatives of man must be grafted, is the habitual talk or communication between man and man, which is always going on about us. The daughters on the two sides may wonderfully help and improve their mother, but they cannot live without her; she is the essential and universal character of man, they, compared with her, are results and accidents; man, logically speaking, is social before he is individually reasonable; his communication with others (speaking generally, and of the race) is a precondition of the development of his own intelligence'.[28]

The *Exploratio Philosophica* is a conversation with Hamilton, Whewell, Ferrier, Kant and Mill over the question of how knowing and knowledge are possible. Readers may have resisted a prolonged engagement because it is a historically ladened text, which requires prior knowledge of context and their writings, for its significance to be gauged. Grote rejects as abstractions, the *a priori* and *a posteriori* positions and both the foundationalism of the philosophers of mind who start with subjective experience and the physio-phenomenalists

[25] M. Oakeshott, 'The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind', *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1962), 197–247.
[26] E.P.I. xxi–xxii.
[27] Ibid., xxii
[28] 'Thought *versus* Learning', 820.

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and materialists who start with matter. Knowledge rests, as it originates, in the unity of items held to be binaries in most systems; of subject and object, thought and things, sense and judgment, experience and reason, knowing and being; in the immediate experience of being. Grote refuses to follow Kant and empiricists into scepticism about knowledge of external objects and materialists into scepticism about conceptions and thinking. He refuses to doubt that we know objects and things as they are in the world and refuses to doubt the fundamental power of the mind to construct reality.

Several 'realist' philosophers later, such as Dawes Hicks, W. Sellars, John Laird and Charles Dunbar Broad, saw in Grote the first insistence by a modern philosopher of the claim that objects exist independently of being perceived, often quoting a sentiment of Grote's close to the beliefs of George E. Moore: 'In my view, a thing is what it looks, and looks what it is: we see it as it is, and it is as we see it'.[29] This generation of realists meant by the immediate or given, the direct acquaintance with reality, undiscriminated and unrefined by thinking and judgment judgment. But Bernard Bosanquet, Thomas Forsyth, James Seth, Charles Whitmore and G. W. Cunningham, of the same generation, saw this argument in Grote, as the first and best statement of idealism in British philosophy. In fact there was evidence for both interpretations, depending upon ones reading of the text.[30]

[29] E.P.II, 176; G. D. Hicks, *Critical Realism: Studies in the Philosophy of Mind and Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1938), 124; R. W. Sellars, *Critical Realism* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 257–259; J. Laird, *A Study in Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 1920), 15.

[30] E.P.II, 148, 291–313; B. Bosanquet, 'Review of *Exploratio Philosophica*, Pt. II, *Archiv for Systematische Philosophie*, VIII, (1902), 128–130; G. W. Cunningham, *The Idealist Argument in Recent British and American Philosophy* (New York: The Century Co., 1933); T. M. Forsyth, *English Philosophy*, (London: A. C. Black, 1910); J. R. Gibbins, 'Liberalism, Nationalism and the English Idealists', *History of European Ideas*, 15, 4–6, (1992), 494–497; L. J. Macdonald, *John Grote: A Critical Estimate of his Writings* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966); J. Seth, *English Philosophers and Schools of Philosophy* (London: J. M. Dent, 1912); J. A. R. Pucelle, *L'Idealisme en Angleterre: De Coleridge & Bradley* (Neuchatel, 1955); A. Quinton, 'Absolute Idealism', *Thought and Thinkers* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 200; 'John Grote', *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, P. Edwards (ed.), (New York. 1967), I, 389; F. Restaino, 'Antiutilitarismo, Antipositivismo and Idealismo in John Grote', *Giornale Critico dela Filosofia Italiana*, II, (1982), 34–65. J. A. Smith, 'Philosophy as the development of the Notion and reality of Self-Consciousness', Contemporary British Philosophy, J. H. Muirhead (ed.), London, 1925), Seies II, 229; C. E. Whitmore, 'The Significance of John Grote', *Philosophical Review*, 36, (1927), 307–337.

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G. Watts Cunningham in 1933 sees this as the first statement of this early Hegelian in British philosophy well before that of any Oxford idealist. Indeed in one reading these two volumes of the *Exploratio* expound a unique form of Cambridge idealism, very unlike that of Oxford, and which finds echoes in the works of many latter Cambridge idealists, many of whom have been scratched out of Cambridge memory, including James Ward, William R. Sorley, George F. Stout, John S. Mackenzie and Michael Oakeshott especially. Like Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Mind* Grote starts his analysis of knowledge with consciousness of being, the undifferentiated in the immediate consciousness and explores the effects of new experience and reflection, 'that this first and original consciousness (to keep that word still for a moment) is *double*: that is, that we no more, and no sooner, feel ourselves to exist than we feel something to exist besides ourselves'.[31] But the 'important fact is that even our rudimentary consciousness, so far as it is intellectual, i.e. a seed of intellectual development, is a distinguishing ourselves from something'.[32] Subject and object, thought and thing are differentiated from within the immediate or 'given' in being and consciousness of being.

That Grote is no subjective or transcendental idealist, is evident in his critique of Kant. 'Kant does not seem to give a clear account of what he means by 'experience'. But on the whole, when we speak of '*das mannigfaltige*', the manifold of experience and intuition, which the conceptive understanding binds up into unity, it appears to me that what he ought to say is '*das verworrene*', '*das unbestimmte*' (the confused, the undistinguished) which then is digested, not by a special faculty adding to it ideas or applying to it categories, but by attention and notice intensifying and bringing out what is in the immediateness and intuition already'.[33]

What is immensely invigorating is Grote's notion of how knowledge develops, a point not lost on later readers. Knowledge is a growth from indistinction to distinction, as it is in a puzzle finding solution, a hazy landscape coming clear, but a process that takes effort at thinking as well as more perception. Thinking is a process of scrutiny, intensifying one's gaze, puzzling, imagining, discussing and judging which leads, by often faulty steps, towards clarity and the truth. Moral thinking and reasoning are no different in this regard except the object is the right and the good. Indeed in Chapter V of *A Treatise on the Moral Ideals*, written in 1864 but published in 1876, Grote makes the analogy between moral and

[31] E.P. I, 22.

[32] E.P. I, 23; E.P. II, 145–151, 175–176; J. Grote, *A Treatise on the Moral Ideals* (Cambridge University Press, 1876), 372.

[33] E.P. II, 157–158.

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intellectual knowledge explicit. In the *Exploratio* he reverses the argument to show how intellectual thought echoes moral thinking.[34] This problem of the process by which knowledge develops within the relationship of the immediate to the mediate, acquaintance of with judgment about, implicit and explicit was explored by Russell later in his *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and *Mysticism and Logic* (1953). Russell found assistance in his claim that there were two separate processes leading to types of knowledge, acquaintance (description) and judgment. Grote we know from William James was the source for this distinction but not the binary that Russell propounded.[35] Nor does Grote concur with the sceptical conclusions of Francis H. Bradley who followed Kant in concurring that we cannot know things as real as we cannot retrace our steps from judgmental thinking to the real as known in the immediate.[36] For Grote the binaries involved here are posited, used, but then denied absolute validity and deconstructed.

David Watson quotes Grote's argument that judgment exposes the truth implicit in the immediate common sense view of the world. The 'advance of knowledge is essentially a process of distinction, not aggregation. Each new particular of knowledge is not an addition to, but a newly observed part of a previously conceived whole'.[37] This process has two facets but of one thing, 'The advance of thought, in my view, is the simultaneous development of the distinct conception of ourselves, or our personality, and the distinct conception of objects of thought as independent of us: and each conception brings out the other'.[38]

In epistemology we must not, logically cannot, start with the presuming of the external world as with Hume and Mill, nor with the rational self as with Descartes and Whewell. The world and the rational knowing subject are mutually dependant, experience and judgment, 'are not two parts of knowledge, but two incomplete views: in judgment, for *it* to be knowledge, there must be something to judge or be judged; in experience for *it* to be knowledge, there must be *notice* of will'.[39] The separation of contingent and necessary

[34] *Treatise*, 54–67; E.P.II, 190.

[35] B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 25–32; B. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (London: Pelican, 1953); W. James, *The Principles of Psychology* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 221.

[36] F. H. Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1914), 159–191; Grote, E.P.II, 154.

[37] D. Watson, *Writing a Literary Thesis* (London: Longmans, 1970), v; Grote, E.P.II, 299.

[38] E.P.II, 147.

[39] E.P.I, 30.

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truths is similarly a false dichotomy, 'that knowledge which we arrive at chiefly by the way of thought and reason has to us more of the character which we call necessity: that which is more of experience, acquaintance, testimony, is contingential: but we cannot draw a line: we cannot say, one portion of knowledge is and must be known to us in the one way, another part in the other ...'.[40] The difference is in the manner of arriving at truth, or finding out, not in truth itself.

So in opposition to Russell and Bradley a complete account looks like this: 'The description of knowledge as a course of experience and the description of it as a course of analytical and self correcting judgments ... are both what I call *abstractions*: that is, the historical advance of knowledge is the continued exercise of the mind in judgment in conjunction with the continued communication, by the senses, with phenomenal fact: ... it advances by the continual exercise of the will and judgment ... in conjunction with consciousness which we describe as such experience'.[41] Hume and Mill had treated all knowledge as if it was of things, Whewell and intuitionists as if it was only about them. Grote coins the terms the knowledge of acquaintance and description to catch these approaches which language naturally reveals'.[42] But, in contra-distinction to Russell, he writes: 'In reality acquaintance with, intuition or apprehension or comprehension of, *it*, and judging correctly and exhaustively this, that, and the other thing, about *it*, are two ways of expressing the same thing, and *either* of them are definitions of knowledge: the difficulties as to relativeness seem to me to arise simply from a confusion between the two'.[43]

To try to derive one kind of knowledge from the other, as do Hume and Mill on one side and Kant and Hamilton on the other, leads us to the nonsenses of the unknowable and the relativity of knowledge, "the confusion which I have above alluded to as to 'things in themselves' arises from this, that after, with the meaning of knowledge which I am *now* supposing, we have knowledge (if it is so) *about* the thing all that there is to be known, we still, mistakenly, think there is something wanting unless we know, with the first sort of knowledge or that of acquaintance, the thing which all the other knowledge is about. But *that* thing, supposing we use such language about it, was itself no *object* of knowledge, and never entered in thought as such. The *thing* in *this* view of knowledge, 'is all that can be known about it', and when we have come to this, we

[40] Ibid., 75.
[41] Ibid., 30; E.U.P., 269.
[42] E.P. I, 60.
[43] Ibid., 66; *Treatise*, 383.

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have come to an end, not only of our knowledge, but of all possible knowledge, in this direction". Put simply 'For a complete *judgment* of the universe we have one initiatory *substantive*, and all our proceeding is by adjectives or predicates of it'.[44]

This brief account can only give a flavour of the power and originality of Grote's epistemology and metaphysics, but we can now enter Grote's seminal philosophy of language via reference to the analogy he uses to illuminate the ontology that underpins his metaphysics. 'Order or knowableness in the universe is then implied by us, or we may say, understood, so far as anything is understood, in the first act of knowledge. And the key to open this order, the clue to follow it by, the alphabet to read it by, is the recognition, continually corrected, of *ourselves* in it ... As one word of a language implies the whole system of it, so does one particular of knowledge involve thought of the, as yet unparticularized universe'.[45]

Working from within very different problems and literature than those encountered by a later Trinity Fellow Ludwig Wittgenstein, Grote came to strikingly similar conclusions on how we may find and what determines the meaning of words. But as with his epistemology it was historically located and should be read in it appropriate historical context, a very specific debate within mid-Victorian philology.

The debate is described by John Burrow in his essay, 'The Use of Philology in Victorian England'.[46] Is the capacity for language innate or learnt? Is each language a historical and cultural fact or a gift of God? How is language related to reality? Does a word mean what it originally meant when coined, its subsequent etymology or what experts say e.g. a lawyer? From his engagements with German Philologists, Horne Tooke and two Trinity colleagues John Donaldson and Frederick Farrar, Grote had by 1866 reached some remarkable conclusions.[47] Philologists were divided on how to reach the meaning of words, between structuralists, for whom the structure of languages was determinant, and the historicists who stressed the history of language. Invoking the argument but transcending the dispute, Grote claims that words mean what they are used to mean in the context of the everyday language of ordinary users. Over a hypothesized dispute over the meaning of a term Grote

[44] E.P. I, 62; II, 25.

[45] E.P. II, 292.

[46] J. W. Burrow, 'The Uses of Philology in Victorian England', *Ideas and Institutions of Victoria Britain*, Robert Robson (ed.), (London: G. Bell and Co.,1967).

[47] J. Grote, 'On Glossology', *Journal of Philology*, **4**, (1872a), 55–66; 'On Glossology', *Journal of Philology*, **4**, (1872b), 157–181; 'On Glossology', *Journal of Philology*, **5**, (1874), 153–182.

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writes, 'the real meaning of the word is this commonly understood significance cleared as much as possible, and weeded of individualities: the man who used the words did not *neglect* the historical meaning of them, but never in the least intended to convey it... For historical and poetical interest, we may dig and re-dig into them with endless profit: but as to living meaning it is not their structure which we are concerned with but their use'.[48]

Philosophy is not to reform language or purge it of anomaly, 'We do not so much need to mend language as to learn from it, and this latter is one of the best roads open to philosophy now. Philosophers having exhausted their lungs for many generations in denouncing the hindrance which actual language has been to them in their researches, through its incompleteness and its mistakes, will probably now, in the revolution of human affairs, go upon the other tack, and accept the noematism of language as giving then so far, as it goes, a photograph of reality and existence...'.[49]

How then can we find the meaning of words? We look at ' what we ourselves mean, or wish to express by the words; and next, what the person whom we address will understand by them; not what one person and another in the course of the world's history may have meant by them'.[50] Words, 'mean not what is told by anything upon *themselves*, but what the giver and the taker agree they shall represent or be worth: these things may or may not be the same'. In short with words and statements 'as to living meaning, it is not their structure which we are concerned with, but their use'.[51] So everyday usage is the first key to the meaning of words, followed by a study of what the speaker intends and what the hearer understands as the meaning of the seeker. All this Grote puts into what he calls the cardinal axiom of unambiguity in language, that, 'words mean what they are simply used for, not what there may be in them of fossilized meaning, or what these elements or components may mean'.[52]

Grote utilizes these insights to support his epistemology and to help clarify issues in his moral writings. He notes that the knowing mind exists in the middle of a multitude of 'knowing ones' or 'fellow-knowers'. We share thoughts and knowledge, judgments, purposes and meanings not because we have been 'taught by others' or socialized, but because 'our intelligence is in its constitution social, and our mind is the mind of a social being'.[53] The social constitu-

[48] Ibid., 1874, 164.
[49] Ibid, 1872, 169–170.
[50] Ibid., 1874, 155.
[51] Ibid., 165.
[52] Ibid., 174.
[53] E.P.I. 154.

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tion is the shared language of knowers. 'We think of necessity socially: more socially perhaps in some solitude than in some society: we think with the minds of others as well as our own: thought is internal conversation and discussion'. But how and why? For as phenomenalists we can never enter into the minds of others or think as they do. The reason is language. 'Language, which is social, goes to the bottom of our mind: not but that we might, and perhaps do, abundantly imagine without language, but that we should not, without it, come to anything like the results to which we do come, and that in respect of some of the earliest and simplest things'.[54] To him thinking not only happens in language but is language—it is unspoken language... Thinking is just speaking in the mind.[55]

Like Wittgenstein and Winch later, Grote does notice some basic logical postulates of all language which give us some purchase on the problem of meaning.[56] Firstly, all language is social, it is between speakers and hearers, a community of language users in communication with one another producing a community of thought.[57] Secondly, all languages are organizations, that is with many elements ordered together in a system, so that when one word is used it implies that all other elements exist and that understanding the meaning of one word implies understanding the meaning of many others.[58] Thirdly, all the users within a language must share as well as some common 'phonems' and 'noems' some common assumptions, certainties and beliefs about the world,[59] and, fourthly some common purposes or intentions in the use of words and phrases. Grote is certain that a language, a common set of words, of sounds and meanings, implies a shared world of 'things' as well as 'thoughts', and a tacit agreement of purpose or 'intention' in the use of words.[60] Language then is not an accident of the world as it must appear to nominalists and empiricists, but one of its fundamental parts. It carries its dynamic and reveals its dynamic meaning. In its essence language is 'communication from mind to mind', and if each word and phrase reveals the intentions and purposes of the

[54] Ibid.

[55] 'On Glossology', 1872, 820–823.

[56] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Cambridge University Press, 1954); P. Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

[57] E.P. I, 154; 'Thought *versus* Learning', 820; 'On Glossology', 1874, 173; *Treatise*, 253).

[58] *Treatise*, 225.

[59] 'On Glossology', 1872 64–65; 1874, 163,165.

[60] 'On Glossology' 1874, 155, 163, 165,170; *Treatise*, 219–220; E.P. II, 214–215.

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users, then language can be seen as both the creating of common purpose and the common stock of purpose already achieved.[61] We return then to the idea of language as the centre and basis of meaning, a social world.

When Grote is remembered it is usually for his writings on ethics, especially the critique of Mill. The approach, style and content are again reminiscent of Sidgwick and Moore. Grote lacked their style, rigor and self assurance, the scaffolding to his arguments were never removed, but the approach and general conclusions are not dissimilar. In characteristic vein Grote sought to fashion a reconciliation between opposing ethical positions using careful distinction, boundary commissioning, eclectic synchrony and transcendence.

At the cutting edge of his ethical theory is a rejection of the utilitarian claim that we are passive beings pushed around by the forces of pleasure and pain. We rather are both active and judging beings. The *Treatise* is an attempt to transcend the utilitarian, intuitionist and common sense dichotomies with an account that gives due place both to the desire for happiness and for the want of justice, the right, the good, the virtuous, and other ideal states of affairs. Grote avoids the language of motive, intention and desire in favour of 'Want' in a manner reminiscent of one work of Elizabeth Anscombe. 'Activity, like sensibility, has its root in immediateness: that is, in order to understand activity, we must begin with the supposition of a *state of things*, which (though that is not a matter of our knowledge, more than implicitly, or involvedly) contains a reason for the activity (when it comes to be recognized by us) being what it is and no other. The common parent of both sensibility and of activity may be said to be *want—want* as a fact, which must carefully be distinguished from want as a feeling'.[62] Connecting back to his ontology and epistemology he adds: 'Want in what I have called immediateness, exists as a fact, and when this immediateness passes into reflection, this *fact* of want passes into *felt* want or uneasiness, and *concurrently* with this (*not* as a result of it) the fact of want impels action'. We now have a theory of practice for, 'What I call 'immediateness' is the presentiment to us of a *state of things*, in which things *are* as they are, but in which, beyond this things are *not* as they *ought* to be—by which *ought* I do not mean any reference to morals (though this principle is very important in its application to them), but I mean simply that the state of things is to be looked at, not merely as it is in itself at the moment, but as it contains or implies what is coming or should come next'.[63] Hence 'the change in

[61] 'On Glossology', 1874, 172.
[62] E.P. II, 190.
[63] Ibid., 153.

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a universe thus made up is a continuous course of want, (as I have described the fact of want) and the supply of it'.[64] Want is a link across all aspects of life: 'Besides the immediate and palpable wants of man, there is what may be described as a vast mass of want in respect of man's mind, imagination and feelings, and there is also the great want of moral elevation and improvement. These wants are all the more real for the ideal element they involve; for their being rather want in the sense of *absence* of what should be, rather than want in the sense of *desiredness*'.[65]

Dissatisfaction with the immediate world brings human beings to reflect on desired action, to judge, imagine better situations, set ideals, rules and principles to govern them. As conflicts arise on and about these we need processes to solve them. Grote provides a battery of methods of which, patient analysis of language, eclecticism and jural ethics, the analogy of legal and moral thinking, are discussed here. The moral value of an action derives not from consequences alone but from three sources, all of which must be accommodated in a moral theory. Beneficial consequences are stressed by utilitarians like Mill, moral motive by Kant, and the third is the selfless conformity to rules of right and duty stressed by Hegel. None is prior, superior to or reducible to another, and all must be incorporated. Next, there are a plurality of moral ideals, none of which should defer to happiness. Rights are not discussed, though right is. A wide range of ideals are discussed and patiently analysed, but duty is stressed in contradistinction to rights and happiness.

Here Grote capitalizes on the relational social theory he had advanced in his youthful historical works and which he shared with other Cambridge luminaries—Henry Maine and Frederick D. Maurice, and the credit for which went to F. H. Bradley for *Ethical Studies* in 1876, six years after the publication of Grote's statement in the *Examination* of 1870.[66] Moral obligations are located by scrutiny of the concrete context, not by appeal to abstract principles. Moral rules, principles and beliefs are grounded in the form of life and the institutions and practices of society, including law and custom—a latter theme in Wittgenstein's philosophy. 'In reality man is born into a complicated scene, and before he is conscious or a free agent, he is hampered round with all sorts of circumstances, which, in a different point of view, make a large portion of his powers not his own, but variously *due*'.[67] So, 'it is not the feeling which

[64] Ibid., 191.
[65] *Treatise*, 327.
[66] F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies* (London: Henry S. King, 1876).
[67] E.U.P. 145; *Treatise*, 82–102.

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binds or obliges us, but it is the state of facts of which we are thus made aware through the feeling'.

But it is for his brilliant attack on Mill's recently published essays published as *Utilitarianism* that Grote is most famed. Jerome Schneewind has written, 'John Grote's *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1870, is a tough-minded and difficult criticism, well worth the study', and later that 'John Grote's *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1870, (is) probably the most meticulous philosophical scrutiny'. The Philosophical Radical, Alexander Bain, considered several of Grotes 'strictures' on Mill to be 'unanswerable', and his book 'by far the best hostile criticism of *Utilitarianism*'.[68] Generations of Cambridge tutors and students were blooded on Grote's *Examination* and we find arguments of the same style and content as those of Sidgwick in his *Methods* 1874 and G. E. Moore in the *Principia* of 1903 and the *Ethics* of 1912. Sidgwick's three reviews of Grote on ethics are also indicative of a mutual understanding.[69]

Grote's general claim is that Mill has gone so far outside what is conventionally called utilitarianism in his efforts to save his movement's coherence, that it is no longer identifiable—in brief, Mill is heterodox .[70] In what follows the reader will find identified the now accepted list of alleged fallacies, confutations and confusions and errors in Mill's famous book, including: the naturalistic fallacy; the fallacious reduction of good and right to happiness; the incoherent distinction between qualities and quantities of pleasure; the fallacy of composition; the conflation of the visible with the desirable in the failed proof; the confusion of happiness with pleasure; the impossibility of even an individual grading and calculating pleasures as our own preferences are in constant flux; and the impossibility of a science of ethics and politics. It is true that Grote had learnt from Whewell, had been and had himself benefited from discussion with the youthful Sidgwick, and that on some key points Mayor should take the credit for originality, but Grote's achievement and originality still remain impressive.

[68] J. B. Schneenwind, *Mill's Ethical Writings* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1965), 348; *Mill: Collected Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1969), xiv; A. Bain, 'John Stuart Mill (IV), *Mind*, (1880), 92; *J. S. Mill: A Criticism and Personal Recollection* (London, 1882), 115.

[69] H. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1874); Review of Grote's, *Examination*, *Cambridge University Reporter*, 8th February (1871a), 182–183; Review of Grote's, *Examination*, *Academy*, 1st April (1871b), 197–198; Review of Grote's, *Treatise*, *Mind*, **2**, (1877), 239–244.

[70] A. Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 83–87.

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We are now in a position to evaluate the claim by Passmore that John Grote has some affinity with later Cambridge Philosophy. The answer must be positive. Passmore's inspired hypothesis is born out by a close reading of Grote and his successors. Nor are he and I alone in this as Sidgwick's most recent and thorough biographer, Jerome B. Schneewind, has identified similarities and a coherent line of development from Whewell through Grote to Sidgwick, and Michael Oakeshott in private correspondence has described his exciting encounter with Grote during his second year at Cambridge.[71]

Two other Cambridge philosophers of the period had an intimate acquaintance with Grote's metaphysics, which can be proved, John McTaggart Ellis and Charles D. Broad. John McTaggart (1866–1925), a member of the illustrious Ellis family, had, like Broad, a copy of the *Exploratio* in the private library he left to Trinity College. Tradition has it that he was the only major idealist at Cambridge during the period of its ascendancy but we already have evidence to contradict this. He was, however, the most thorough, the most rigorous and definitely the most Hegelian of all the Cambridge idealists. McTaggart's view of his own position reveals a symmetry with Grote on some issues—both could be called in some general senses, 'idealists', 'personalists' and 'realists'. More significantly both were thorough metaphysicians and products of the Trinity College philosophical milieu. Idealism, a rigorous application of Hegelian dialectics and cosmology typify McTaggart's synthesis, but like the output of the whole Cambridge line his work had a real stamp of originality, of having been thought out from first principles and having been developed and refined over a life time. Like John Grote, McTaggart saw two sources of mind in the world, one the self and the other society, but unlike Grote, he saw no place for a divine mind. McTaggart's 'absolute' is the plurality of minds that make up society; the group is a substance with its own character and qualities. Knowledge and reality are both spiritual, and it is the mind of the self and society which go to make up reality.[72]

[71] J. B. Schneenwind, *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1977), 121; 'Sidgwick and the Cambridge Moralists', *Essays on Henry Sidgwick*, B. Schultz (ed.), (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 93–122; J. Gibbins and B. Schultz, 'John Grote', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, E. Craig (ed.), (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

[72] Passmore, ibid., 75–81; J. M. McTaggart, 'An Ontological Idealism', *Contemporary British Philosophy*, J. H. Muirhead (ed.), (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1924), Series I, 251–269.

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While remaining very much independent of all schools of thought Charles Dunbar Broad (1887–1971) was clearly associated with McTaggart, editing some of his work and writing the most complete account of his system of idealism. There is a heavily annotated edition of John Grote's *Exploratio* in his private library, stored at Trinity College, and Broad refers to Grote on several occasions in his various works.[73] Broad's own philosophical position is eclectic, taking the best from both the realist and idealist traditions and adding some of the common sense rigour he picked up from his colleague George Moore. One last idealist of the early period is J. S. McKenzie of Trinity College and later Professor at University College, Cardiff who produced numerous texts of an idealist character but little originality in the early decades of this century. A reference to Grote's use of the two kinds of knowledge distinction appears in *Elements of Constructive Philosophy*.[74] Little need be said but to suggest in summary that alongside Coleridge, Hare, Whewell, John Grote and Maurice we now have a much longer idealist line at Cambridge, which includes James Ward, William Sorley, G. F. Stout, John Ellis McTaggart and J. S. Mackenzie at least, and perhaps Broad too. Idealism did not die at Trinity or Cambridge with Grote in 1866, but lived on for a long period thereafter.

Also at Cambridge are two other figures of major stature whom I consider to be connected with John Grote: Bertrand Russell and George Edward Moore. Both were products of the Cambridge moral science tripos, and both would have been exposed to Grote's *Examination*. We know that Russell used the distinction between knowledge of acquaintance and judgment in his best seller, *The Problems of Philosophy*, and we know that one of George Moore's closest friends at Cambridge was Joseph B. Mayor's son, Robert John Grote Mayor.[75] We must remember that in his early days Russell (1872–1970) was convinced by the idealism of contemporary Cambridge and was always alive to the difficulties inherent in his sophisticated and modified form of phenomenalism. In style, in care for language, and in rigour of argument he resembles Grote

[73] C. D. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930), 12; *Ethics and the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 54; 'The Local Historical Background of Contemporary Cambridge Philosophy', *British Philosophy in Mid–Century* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), 14.

[74] J. S. MacKenzie, *Elements of a Constructive Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917), 130.

[75] Russell, *Problems*, 25–32; *Mysticism*, 197–218; P. Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); N. Griffin, *Russell's Idealist Apprenticeship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

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and the later lineage, and in reacting to idealism, to the coherence theory of truth, and to the social and even state-orientated moral and political philosophy of the idealist he is unwittingly conversing with Grote and confirming the importance of idealism to him and the Cambridge of his day. While it is completely beyond the scope of this article to say any more on the subject, interested readers could well now re-acquaint themselves with the whole of the *Problems of Philosophy*, and especially the Chapters 4, 5, 11 and 12 as well as Chapter 10 of *Mysticism and Logic*.

The case of George E. Moore (1873–1958) is far more complicated. A product of the same Cambridge milieu, it would be easy to rush to judge Moore as a direct receptor of the Grote-Sidgwick inheritance. As Passmore notes, the key link lies in the 'spirit' of Moore and Cambridge's philosophy, the rigorous analysis, the great care for use of language, the faith in common sense and the dislike of joining or creating schools of thought. At the general analytical level three elements in Moore's thought meet those that John Grote bequeathed: firstly, the preference for ordinary language in philosophy, secondly, a desire to synthesize utilitarianism and intuitionism in ethics, and the wish to preserve the best in the common sense realist tradition in epistemology while rejecting empiricism. In a more negative vein Moore was, like Russell, reacting to idealism and metaphysics in general, but he remained, like Grote, a devout anti-naturalist. But his assertion that our ordinary knowledge is quite good enough and that the world can be known directly harks back to Grote. In ethics '*Principia Ethica*' is in many ways a very modern version of the *Examination*, in which the old Grotian distinction between 'is' and 'ought' statements is reaffirmed, and utilitarianism caught in the trap of being either intuitionist or a captive of the naturalistic fallacy.[76] In *Ethics* Moore is more conciliatory towards utilitarianism, rather like Sidgwick before, doing as much as he can to defend it by adding as little from intuitionism as was needed. Put alongside the idea that if we clarify our questions and our language many problems will just go away we have some remarkable affiliations with Moore and Sidgwick and Grote.[77]

Two other Cambridge philosophers will be taken as later inheritors of the Cambridge tradition and of some aspects of Grote's work, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) and Michael Oakeshott (1901–1991). The former was another in a long line of brilliant Trinity College philosophers and along with Russell, Moore and McTaggart the fourth leg of the table on which most contemporary British philosophers feast. There is no evidence that Wittgenstein, who came

[76] E.U.P. 58–78; Moore, *Principia*, 73–80, 126–129.
[77] Quinton, ibid., 82–105.

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to Cambridge in 1912, ever read Grote, though it is possible that he did. But on several points the Cambridge line links them.

First, there is Passmore's 'Cambridge Spirit'. Secondly, there are the similarities in theory of language, and in particular the argument that 'words mean what they are used to mean and are understood to mean by users in everyday language', which links Grote's 'On Glossology' and Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Thirdly, there is the link provided by the argument that there is a latent idealism in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which if true links him to the Cambridge idealists from Coleridge to McTaggart and Sorley. Finally, there is the crucial argument of Wittgenstein that as language is social, so is meaning and with it thought and reality. On all points the similarities may be pure coincidence, or could be based on conflating uses of such key words as 'use' and 'idealism'.[78]

Michael Oakeshott studied and taught at Cambridge with short interruptions from 1923 until his appointment to the Chair of Political Science at the L.S.E. in 1951. Like R. G. Collingwood at Oxford, Oakeshott's studies and mind turned to the relationship between philosophy and history and then on to the relationship between philosophy and all other 'modes of experience', including science, poetry, religion and practice. In his first major publication *Experience and Its Modes* Oakeshott sketched out the precondition of each of these attempts to comprehend or encounter experience and to map out a role for philosophy in relationship to them.[79] But it is to Chapter II on *Experience and Its Modes* that any researcher interested in the continuity of the Cambridge line should go. We can explore some of the similarities between Grote and Oakeshott on the unity of immediate experience, the effect of reflection and judgment on the concrete whole of experience, and the interdependence of subject and object in experience and thought. Now we can note that Oakeshott argues that in 'experience a given world of ideas is transformed into a world which is more of a world, the criteria of achievement everywhere being one of coherence'.[80] Like Grote, he

[78] B. Williams, 'Wittgenstein and Idealism', in *Understanding Wittgenstein*, G. Vesey (ed.), Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series: 7, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1974); N. Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein and Idealism', *Idealism Past and Present*, G. Vesey (ed.), Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series: 13, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 249–267; E. Gellner, 'The New Idealism—Causes and Meaning in the Social Sciences', *Positivism and Sociology*, A. Giddens (ed.), (London: Heinemann, 1974).

[79] M. Oakeshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, (Cambridge University Press, 1933).

[80] Ibid., 41.

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considers that the growth of knowledge is one of 'distinction' within the 'concrete whole of experience', each judgment is 'a newly observed part of, a previously conceived whole'; brought about by the mind's demand for coherence.[81] Oakeshott discusses the impossibility of rigorously separating knowledge of acquaintance and judgment, as Grote formerly argued, and he rejects the notion of an unknowable reality.[82] In the end Oakeshott, like Grote, binds knowledge and reality together in experience, for reality is only experience and nothing but experience made coherent.[83] Facts are products not postulates of this process and carved out of experience, by a process of discrimination. Again, there is a scale of knowledge with degrees of truth and reality.[84]

What is real to both men is the complete and coherent whole of experience, any shortfall from which they call an abstraction. History, science, poetry, religion and practice are all abstractions to Oakeshott, all try to grasp the totality of reality but from presuppositions or postulates that will never allow that to be possible. Each 'mode of experience' or 'language' of analysis is a distinct manner of thought, with a language, logic, and purpose of its own. Each is as Grote believed, 'sui generis'. Like Grote, one of the biggest sources of error in reasoning is the confusion of the languages, logics and purposes of two or more manners of thought which should be kept distinct, or the taking of one as sovereign and the reduction of its fellows to the role of slaves. To Oakeshott and Grote this is precisely what was happening in modern thought; the languages of history, philosophy and science were becoming hopelessly muddled, and both practice and science were making a take-over bid for the whole terrain of explanation.[85] Grote and Oakeshott shared a rejection of 'rationalism' or 'abridgement'; a basic idealism; the common Cambridge concern for clarity and rigour of argument; and the common respect for custom and tradition.

Michael Oakeshott read and was impressed by the thought of John Grote. He is the modern thinker whom we must thank for maintaining, wittingly or unwittingly, that tradition of thought, which has made the retrieval of John Grote's thought possible. In letters of 1970 Oakeshott recounted buying the *Exploratio* in a sec-

[81] E.P. I, 299.
[82] Oakeshott, *Experience*, 48–54.
[83] Ibid., 54–61.
[84] Ibid., 61–67.
[85] M.Oakeshott, *Rationalism*, 1–36; 80–167; 197–247; 301–333; *On History and Other Essays* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 45–96; J. Grote, 'Old Studies and New', *Cambridge Essay*s, II, (London: John W. Parker & Son., 1856), 74–114.

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ond-hand bookshop in Cambridge in the 1920's and being impressed by that author as 'a vastly interesting and remarkably independent thinker'. It is observed that, 'Grote stands out as one of the most careful critics of utilitarianism, and there is so much in the *Moral Ideals* which is profound and original'. But on the whole, Oakeshott considered that it was the *Exploratio* and its example of how to think, which is of most benefit to later philosophers.[86]

But we must conclude with the debt we owe to Joseph Mayor for his achievements in making Grote's work available to us; it should be acknowledged that the thirty four year struggle took its toll and almost definitely handicapped a brilliant career. Twice the young Mayor sought a Cambridge Chair that would have ensured the survival of the Grotian style of philosophy. On the first occasion in 1863 the small coterie of Cambridge positivists and utilitarians, including Sidgwick and led by Leslie Stephen, engineered the election of one of their number, Henry Fawcett. On the second Mayor withdrew from the competition for the Knightbridge Chair on Grote's death when their mutually admired idealist colleague, F. D. Maurice announced his candidature. But Kings College, London were the beneficiaries when Mayor joined his friend J. R. Seeley as a Professor. Indeed by 1878 London University had two Professors of Philosophy, both of whom could claim to be Grote Professors. The holder of the George 'Grote Chair' and Mayor the new Professor of Moral Philosophy. We should then add both Grote and Mayor to the list of philosophers mentioned by Passmore as significant to modern Cambridge.[87]

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[86] M. Oakeshott, Mss Letters, John Gibbins, University of Teesside (1970a, 1970b, 1985, 1988).

[87] The research for this article was supported generously by the British Academy and the University of Teesside, and assisted by Teresa Lady Rothschild (née Mayor), the owner of the *Mayor Papers* and Trinity College, Cambridge where they are now deposited. A full length exposition of the work will be published as *John Grote Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Ideas* by Edinburgh University Press (forthcoming).

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