

Faculty of Social Sciences
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**ESSAYS ON
F.H. BRADLEY'S ETHICAL IDEALISM**

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an analytic and systematic philosophical study of ethical idealism of the type developed by F.H. Bradley. The research fills the interpretative gap resulting from the fact that the book has mostly been discussed either from the standpoint of political and social philosophy, or the history of philosophy. Psychological interpretations may be insightful, but are lacking in analytic approach. No major in-depth analytical interpretation of Bradley's ethics has been undertaken from the standpoint of moral philosophy. The uniqueness of this study lies in its exclusive focus on the key concepts of Bradley's moral psychology, normative ethics, and meta-ethics. It reconstructs, analyses, and interprets his ethics on the basis of *Ethical Studies (ES)* (and minor works in moral psychology) and offers a new analytic reading of the book. This amounts to a re-evaluation and reconsideration of the standard interpretation of Bradley's ethical views, and their significance for ethics. The dissertation moves Bradley's under-researched work into the context of present-day ethical debates, and, by doing so, recovers its significance as a ground-breaking early analytic text with implications for moral psychology, ontology, epistemology, and normative ethics.

Adopting an analytic approach to *ES*, this study moves away from the usual focus on the traditional methods of the history of philosophy. The dissertation instead focuses on the elucidation of the key questions of *ES*, the explication of its main ideas, and the connection between them, as well as connecting these ideas to ethical problems, rather than on tracing the development of ideas and concepts, describing tendencies, and putting ideas in historical perspective, or connecting Bradley's views to particular schools of philosophy or individual thinkers. As a result, the research breaks away from the traditional interpretation of Bradley's ethics and rejects its common assumptions. Bradley's views are identified not merely as an idealistic ethics, i.e. one of the varied moral views held by metaphysical idealists, but rather as a version of ethical idealism that claims that the goal of a moral life must be understood as the realisation of the moral ideal for its own sake.

The dissertation consists of five peer-reviewed articles that form a coherent narrative. It begins by challenging the assumption that, for Bradley, social requirements equal moral obligations, and undermining the long-standing belief about the central role of "my station and its duties". Next, the dissertation turns to the key concept of *ES*, i.e. the moral self, which is explained in terms of personal projects. This concept is further connected to Bradley's account of desire, and it is suggested that grand desires, i.e. desires directed towards an ideal of one's personality, are important for the understanding of Bradley's idea of self-realisation and the moral life. Lastly, it reconstructs Bradley's views on moral motivation and the nature of moral beliefs.

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Working on Bradley was my blessing and my curse. A curse because I spent the last fifteen years reading and re-reading the same book, at times getting desperate over understanding Bradley's enigmatic ways, blaming him for burning his letters to E.R. in which he explained his ideas, and picking up heavily outdated Victorian English. To make things worse, I started reading his *Ethical Studies* based on some not-so-well-informed advice that it would help me approach Hegel, but ever since have been under Bradley's spell. Despite all that, working on Bradley was ultimately a blessing, because I uncovered some of the forgotten secrets of idealism, achieved my goal of making sense out of *Ethical Studies*, translated and published a book, and conversed and argued with some of the best scholars.

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications:

- I Babushkina, D. (2019) “Bradley’s ‘My Station and Its Duties’ and Its Moral (In)Significance”, *Zeitschrift für Ethik und Moralphilosophie*, 2, pp. 195–211. Open access: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-019-00049-0>
- II Babushkina, D. (2016) “F.H. Bradley’s Conception of the Moral Self: A New Reading”, in *British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*. W. J. Mander and S. Panagakou (eds), Oxford: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 67–87.
- III Babushkina, D. (2014) “F.H. Bradley, Desire, and the Self”, *Homo Oeconomicus*, 31(4), pp. 513–530.
- IV Babushkina, D. (2018) “Grand Desires and F.H. Bradley’s Views on Moral Life”, *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 24(1), pp. 41–69.
- V Babushkina, D. (2018) “On Moral Beliefs, Emotions, and Motivational Wholes: F. H. Bradley’s Account of Moral Motivation”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 35(2), pp. 179–197.

The publications are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

ABBREVIATIONS

etc.	et cetera
i.e.	id est
e.g.	exempli gratia
ES	<i>Ethical Studies</i>
AR	<i>Appearance and Reality</i>
MSID	My station and its duties

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INTRODUCTION

1. A New Reading of Bradley's *Ethical Studies*

This dissertation reconstructs and interprets F.H. Bradley's moral views as presented in *Ethical Studies* (hereafter—*ES*) (1876/1962). *ES* is Bradley's main work on moral philosophy and also his first major book.¹ It precedes his metaphysical work *Appearance and Reality* (hereafter—*AR*) (1959/1987) by almost twenty years. Despite being, as B. Bosanquet termed it, an “epoch making book” (Bosanquet, 1957, p. 159) that quickly gained popularity among the majority of British moral philosophers, *ES* remains a poorly researched work. This is paradoxical, because it was the first in-depth representation of idealistic ethics in the Anglo-American world (Mander, 2010, Schneewind, 1977). Many philosophers, such as J. Dewey (1891), J.H. Muirhead (1892), J.S. Mackenzie (1901), and J. Seth (1894), drew from *ES* to develop their idealistic theories, and reactions to it lead to the development of analytic moral philosophy by Bradley's former disciples G.E. Moore and B. Russell. Despite its merits, there is no systematic and analytic study of *ES*, which is a considerable gap in the history of ethics and the philosophy of mind. The complexity of its topics, its radically new approach to ethical questions, as well as its notoriously difficult style,² may explain why until now there has been no serious attempt to analyse it in depth. Moreover, its language is challenging because the vocabulary of moral psychology had not yet solidified at the time of its writing. I do not imply that nothing is being written on *ES* (for a detailed review, refer to Section V); the interest in Bradley's ethics has been constantly rising over the past thirty years. The philosophical literature is full of references to and short passages and chapters on *ES*, most of which are quite repetitive, and lack any in-depth considerations. One reason for this shortcoming is an interpretation gap, due to the fact that the book fell out of fashion. As a result, much of what has recently been written on Bradley's ethics can be traced back to the earlier commentators. No substantial revision has been made since that time. Most of the ideas Bradley expressed in his *ES*, however, were well ahead of his time, and were not properly acknowledged or developed by the earlier commentators. *ES* remains largely disconnected from the present-day discussions on moral philosophy. Thus, there is a need for a new, up-to-date

¹ Bradley's first published work was a pamphlet, *The Presuppositions of Critical History*, in 1874, reprinted in Bradley's *Collected Essays* (1935/1969).

² Mander, for instance, makes this comment on Bradley's style: “One of the most distinctive things about the book was *style*, which is bold, lovely, and picturesque. It still makes a great read. But while that may commend it to us, *as literature*, it must be confessed that, *as philosophy*, and especially to modern reading tastes, it can make its import hard to follow. Bradley's ideas and terminology are often alien and unfamiliar, his arguments are often compressed, while his aims—even at times his conclusions—are often implicit. Moreover the book is highly polemical and, while this makes for writing that is smart and full of memorable turns of phrase it makes at the same time for writing which is often far from lucid; too frequently he descends into ridicule of opponents when what is really wanted is argument or explanation.” (Mander, 2011, p. 182)

re-interpretation of the book which will do justice to the complexity and current importance of its topics and arguments.

In addition, *ES* remain known and discussed mostly from the standpoint of the history of philosophy (e.g., by J.H. Muirhead, R. Wollheim, W. Mander, C. Keene), political and social philosophy, or philosophy of law (e.g., by P. Nicholson, J. Connelly, D. Boucher, A. Vincent, W. Sweet). For that reason, most popular interpretations of *ES* are either preoccupied with topics and problems secondary or only marginal to ethics, or discuss the development and reception of ideas rather than analyse them. The message of the book is often distorted and misunderstood. Apart from D. MacNiven's classic *Bradley's Moral Psychology* (1987), no major systematic interpretation of Bradley's moral philosophy as a whole has been undertaken, let alone by a specialist in moral philosophy. In this light, the ambition of this dissertation is to fill in the existing interpretation gap and to contribute to a *revaluation and reconsideration* of the standard interpretation of Bradley's ethical views, his role and significance for ethics, and connection to present-day ethical discussions. The general *research objective* is to identify the core of ethical idealism in the way Bradley has presented it in his *ES*. For this reason, the research is only concerned with the *ethical views* of Bradley as they are formulated in *ES*, and uses other sources only so long as they help to clarify the meaning of *ES*. The dissertation focuses on the following *three major topics*, which bear the most relevance to present-day philosophical ethics:

- *The account of moral selfhood and the morally good life.* Bradley's approach to the moral self is especially relevant to the research on morality and partiality by S. Wolf (1992); the moral significance of personal projects, e.g., by B. Williams (1973) and M. Betzler (2013); the connection between plans and personality by M.E. Bratman (1987, 2000), morality and ideals by P.F. Strawson (1961), C.A.J. Coady (2008), and S. Scheffler (1979); as well as personal integrity by Ch. Calhoun (1995) and W.J. von Eschenbach (2012).
- *The concept of moral obligation in relation to social duties.* Bradley is relevant to the research on duties to oneself by M.G. Singer (1963), A. Hills (2003), and T. Oakley (2017) because he defines moral duties as duties to oneself. Criticism of the Hegelian idea of "my station and its duties" at the end of Essay V of *ES* is directly relevant to the research on positional duties by A. Simmons (1981).
- *The question of moral motivation.* Bradley's views are especially relevant to the discussion on internalism and the motivational power of ideals by D. Velleman (2002), and the role of beliefs and emotive states. Interesting parallels can be drawn between Bradley's account and A. Hills' (2015) research on "uliefs", as well as T. Gendler's (2008a, 2008b) and U. Kriegel's (2012) research on "aliefs". *ES* raises the

question of the moral relevance of desire, and is especially relevant to the narrative account of desire by T. Airaksinen (2016).

The examination of these topics has been pursued through five research articles, which examine the following *research questions*:

- Does Bradley's ethical idealism reduce the moral to the social sphere? Does it commit a naturalistic fallacy? (Article I and, to some extent, Article II)
- Does Bradley's ethical idealism see the performance of the duties pertaining to one's station as *morally* obligatory? (Article I)
- What is the moral significance of self-realisation? (Articles II–IV)
- What does it mean to be a morally good person according to Bradley's ethical idealism? (Articles I–V)
- How can the moral relevance of desire in Bradley's ethical idealism be accounted for? (mainly Articles III–IV, also Articles II and V)
- How does Bradley explain moral motivation? Is he an internalist or externalist? (Article V)
- Are emotions morally relevant according to Bradley's ethical idealism? (Article V)

In order to answer these questions, Bradley's moral views as expressed in *ES* and auxiliary writings have to be reconstructed, analysed, and interpreted. Thus, the first goal of this dissertation project is the *reconstruction* of Bradley's accounts of concepts that are crucial for the understanding of his moral philosophy. These concepts include: moral self, moral obligation, desire, moral judgment, and moral motivation. No single, unified exposition of any of these terms as used by Bradley can be found. Instead one can find disconnected discussions and scattered remarks in different texts. This fact dictates the necessity to re-create and piece together Bradley's account of each concept.

The next goal is to *analyse* those ethical terms that are key to the understanding of *ES*. The analysis includes several steps. Firstly, I determine concepts and ideas that are essential to understanding the analysed ethical concepts; that is to say, that help to elicit the intended meaning. For example, the concept of the moral self is analysed into the concept of personal projects; moral obligation is essentially connected to the idea of being required by the norms governing pre-institutional relationships; desire is reduced to the identification with an object; moral motivation is connected to the idea of the motivational whole, and moral judgements are analysed through complex states involving cognitive and non-cognitive elements. Next, each of the abovementioned ethical concepts is differentiated from similar ones. It is shown, for example, that the concept of the moral self cannot be reduced to psychological facts about a person (such as character, or a set of habits). Moral obligation is distinguished from social requirement. The concept of desire is contrasted with the concepts of conation, wish, and need. It is shown that Bradley sees moral beliefs as distinct from

desire and non-moral beliefs. Finally, the role of these key concepts in the context of *ES* is examined, and their connection to other relevant ethical concepts and claims is established. In this manner, the different core aspects of Bradley's moral philosophy are connected (for a comprehensive synthesis of the dissertation articles, refer to Section VI).

The third dissertation goal is to *interpret* Bradley's moral philosophy. The problem with many secondary sources on *ES* is that they merely retell the book, offering no explanation or insight into the meaning of the specific claims and concepts. Given the obscurity of Bradley's text, a mere description of the content of the book that does not offer more than a re-statement or repetition of the original has little added value, and is bound to create further confusion and controversy. For this reason, the present dissertation aims at interpretation, that is to say, at the construction of understanding rather than at a description of Bradley's views.³ The idea is to flesh out the core topics of *ES*, reveal the implicit meaning of obscure concepts, and connect these new ideas with theories which are already known to Bradley's reader in order to provide context by drawing a bigger picture of Bradley's moral philosophy, and to illustrate the ideas that are being explained through examples. The intention is to make Bradley's ideas understandable and his *ES* more readable, so that contemporary ethics can learn from it and debate its meaning. In this dissertation, the interpretation is seen as involving two major tasks: a) to explicate the intended meaning, implicit ideas, and obscure elements of the text; b) to explain or give meaning to Bradley's ideas and terms which are vague or seem to be obscure. The challenge often is to overcome Bradley's terminology when it proves to be enigmatic. For example, it is nearly impossible to make sense out of the concept of desire if one relies only on the explicit definition given in *ES*. I suggest the interpretation of Bradley's idea of desire as the identification of the agent with the object as a narrative account of desire, according to which it is a story about the attractive properties of the desired object. Another example is Bradley's concept of the moral self. It lacks a definition altogether. Analysing the use of the term *self* in different contexts, I have suggested the interpretation of the moral self in two senses. The first is *my* moral self, which is best understood as the personal project of reaching for the moral ideal. The second is the moral self, which stands for the moral principle of universalizability. But perhaps the most confusing of all is the phrase "my station and its duties", which, when looked upon with caution, stands for a number of different claims throughout the book. I suggest that the most significant of these claims are (depending on the context) G.W.F. Hegel's theory of *Sittlichkeit*, and the claim that social requirements are morally obligatory only when they are justified by the norms of pre-institutionalised relationships.

³ On the difference between description and explanation see, e.g., J.F. Hanna (1969).

The uniqueness of this study consists in its exclusive focus on the key concepts of Bradley's moral psychology, normative ethics, and meta-ethics, in its systematic approach to the reconstruction of the main idea of *ES*, and in its drawing of connections to topics from present-day moral philosophy. This helps to achieve a new, analytic interpretation of *ES*. The dissertation moves this under-researched work into the context of contemporary ethics (instead of reading it as a dialectical work of continental philosophy—see more in Section IV.5) and, by doing so, recovers its significance as a ground-breaking early analytic text with implications for moral psychology, ontology, epistemology, and normative ethics. It breaks away from the traditional reading of *ES* from the standpoint of political and social philosophy, and connects Bradley to topics relevant to present-day philosophical ethics. It challenges the long-standing idea of identifying Bradley's ethics with a supplemented version of the theory of my station and duties, and argues that Bradley saw the goal of moral life in the realisation of one's moral ideal.

Three major considerations limit the scope of the dissertation. Firstly, the dissertation reconstructs what is sometimes referred to as the “positive theory” (after Wollheim, 1962, xiv) of *ES*. This expression is used to refer to Bradley's own moral theory, as opposed to the theories that he criticises. Bradley's famous and well-researched criticism of rival theories receives lesser attention in this thesis. Secondly, the current dissertation study is concerned with moral phenomena as distinct from other types of phenomena, such as social, political, and religious. This, in turn, delineates the extent to which the text of *ES* is analysed. Bradley's ethical views are taken in their own right, apart from his political and religious views. The object of study is further limited by the fact that ethics is considered as a type of philosophical inquiry distinct from metaphysics, political and social philosophy, philosophical anthropology, or history of philosophy and philosophy of religion. As a result, Bradley's moral philosophy is analysed with no connection to his views on these subjects. There are several reasons for this choice (see more in Sections IV.1–4.), but the primary reason for not considering his metaphysics is, in brief, Bradley's own intention to bracket out metaphysics in *ES*. We can justifiably conclude that, according to *ES*, the discussion of the ontological status of moral facts does not affect moral practice.

2. How to interpret *Ethical Studies*

First and foremost, this dissertation adopts an *analytic approach* to the text of *ES*, *taking the focus away from the traditional methods of the history of philosophy*, which cannot provide relevant or adequate answers to the research questions put forth in Section I. The implication of adopting an analytic approach is that the dissertation focuses on the elucidation of the key questions of *ES*, the explication of its main ideas and the connection between them, as well as connecting these ideas to ethical problems, rather than tracing

the development of ideas and concepts, describing tendencies and putting ideas in historical perspective, or connecting Bradley's views to schools of philosophy or individual thinkers.⁴

Secondly, the dissertation is a *systematic analysis* of *ES*, and offers a detailed discussion of the key topics necessary for the explanation of the main idea of the book. This implies that the research is necessarily selective: not all topics touched upon in *ES* are covered in this dissertation. The analytic method employed in this dissertation involves:

- Explaining and interpreting the key ideas and concepts as well as the structure of the main arguments of *ES*, rather than describing and retelling the content of the book;
- Showing the internal connections between the main ideas, concepts, and arguments of *ES*;
- Explicating the meaning of the key concepts used by Bradley in *ES*. This task involves, when possible, referring to the relevant concepts from Bradley's minor works on ethics and psychology;
- Interpreting (or "translating") Bradley's outdated and confusing ethical terminology into up-to-date, more understandable philosophical language;
- Clarifying the structure of individual essays and reconstructing the flow of arguments. An important part of this work is the proper attribution of the various parts of the arguments to Bradley or to the theories he criticises, fleshing out Bradley's "dialogue" with other moral philosophers;
- Understanding the connection between the book's essays and their role in the overall argument for the book.

⁴ Aaron Garrett suggested that my approach comes close to what is often called *rational reconstruction* in the history of philosophy, "but in a way that does not seem anachronistic" (on rational reconstruction, see e.g., Rorty 1984, Beany 2013). It was not my intention to use this as a framework for my PhD project. I do find myself sharing some of the general assumptions and intentions underlying it, provided that what is understood by rational reconstruction is an analytic method of working with the text that is characterized by a combination of: (a) a conviction that theories, accounts, and arguments do not stop contributing to the solution of a philosophical problem just because the philosopher who developed them is dead; (b) a belief that the dead philosopher—just like a living one—could have had some great ideas, while—just like a living one—could also have got some things wrong, e.g. due to his/her cultural context or scientific paradigm; and (c) an intention to incorporate these theories, accounts, and arguments into the present-day discussion of the same or related problems. Even so, I did not see my dissertation as a history of philosophy study, but as a study in philosophical ethics. The intention of this study was to develop a certain approach to the interpretation of morality, and to analyse certain moral concepts by building on the foundation of research work done before mine (this is not to say that the dissertation does not contribute to the history of ethics, but this is to highlight the research focus and priorities). Whether this is to be viewed as adopting a new standpoint, or using a combination of deferent approaches, is not the key matter.

Thirdly, the work on *ES* started with the *deconstruction* of the text. Deconstruction was required after breaking away from the traditional approach to *ES*, according to which the book has to be read in the order in which it was written. This conventional approach has been necessitated by the belief that the book was written using the Hegelian dialectical method, and therefore various parts of the text can only be properly understood in their context, that is, as a part of a specific phase of the development of the argument. As I will show later in this Introduction, this assumption is ungrounded (see Section IV.5.), and there is a need to break away from the traditional reading of the book. Reading the book as if it were based on Hegelian dialectic predisposes the reader for misinterpretation. Deconstruction means not reading *ES* throughout, but through the prism of specific problems. This is not a completely new approach. For instance, MacNiven (1987) at least partially deconstructs the book and reconstructs it around topics he thinks important, when discussing the contents of Essay I (on free will) in relation to Bradley's rejection of utilitarianism (Essay III), and when discussing virtue in connection with self-sacrifice. In doing so, MacNiven also does not analyse the book in the sequence in which it was written.

Next, Bradley's ethical views were *reconstructed*. The first step was to identify the central ethical problem that *ES* is dedicated to—What sort of persons are we to become?—and find those parts of the book in which Bradley offers the solution to this central problem. The second step was to identify the supporting concepts and ideas which Bradley uses in order to explain his solution, as they appear throughout the book. The reconstruction of *ES* in the abovementioned manner has yielded the following structure. The reading is best started with Essay II “Why Should I be Moral?”, which introduces the central ethical problem (What sort of persons are we to become?) and the key ethical concept of the book (the moral self). Next comes Essay VI “Ideal Morality”, wherein Bradley offers his own response to this question (we ought to become ideal selves). After that comes Essay I “The Vulgar Notion of Responsibility”, which explains why the concept of the moral self is the cornerstone of ethics, and Essay VII “Selfishness and Self-sacrifice”, which explains the details of Bradley's account of the moral self. Only after that come the critical Essays III–V, in which Bradley criticises other accounts of the moral self. “Concluding Remarks” are best read in the end, as they mark the limits of ethics and demarcate morality from religion. It has to be highlighted that the proposed method is by no means the only one possible. I, however, believe that a reading of *ES* in the suggested sequence allows for a clearer vision of the book's goals and arguments. This method has been tested in a course on Bradley's ethical idealism taught by the author of this thesis at the University of Iceland in 2016 and, according to the received feedback, it proved to be useful for the students' understanding of Bradley's idealism and their ability to connect *ES* to various up-to-date ethical discussions.

Some may object to the idea of breaking the original flow of the book. For example, Nicholson (1990) and Mander (2011) write that the essays must be read in the same order that they were written. There is a problem with saying “must be read” in this case. Surely, it is not meant that no one can or is allowed to read the book in any other order under no circumstances. More likely, this imperative is directed at a researcher or a reader who aims at grasping Bradley’s original vision. This vision is derived from Bradley’s own words from the introduction to the first edition of *ES*, that the Essays “are so far connected that, for the most part, they must be read in the order in which they stand” (Bradley 1962, viii). Note, however, two things. First, Bradley says: “for the most part”, not the whole book. Second, he makes this remark in the connection to his criticism of leading ethical theories. So, this “most part” refers to Essays III–V (“Pleasure for Pleasure Sake”, “Duty for Duty’s Sake”, “My Station and Its Duties”), to which I do not object. Bradley does not say that the book’s order is required for the correct interpretation of his own ethical theory. The full quote: “These Essays are a critical discussion of some leading questions in Ethics, and are so far connected that, for the most part, they must be read in the order in which they stand” (Bradley 1962, viii).

But even if Bradley had said that the entire book should be read in a certain order, the question is how we should treat this request. How far should a researcher follow the wishes of the author of the texts she is studying? The answer comes down to the methodological difference between various fields of scientific inquiry, in this case between ethics and the history of philosophy. A historian of philosophy, for whom it is important to document the ideas in their context, is more predisposed to treat such a request as a requirement. It reveals Bradley’s own vision and the plan for the construction of the meaning of the text. In ethics, where it is important to flesh out accounts of certain moral concepts alongside the arguments for moral claims, this request sounds rather like an advice, which comes from a certain motivation and context and which one should follow if doing otherwise would result in a significant loss of meaning. The choice of the reading approach is conditioned (not exclusively, but first and foremost) by the considerations of the research goals and questions. The author’s vision of the plan of the book is important, but there are other considerations when it comes to the reconstruction of ideas. One reason is that the author’s plan might not have been the best for the exposition of a certain topic. The view that one should unconditionally follow Bradley’s request just because Bradley was the author of *ES* is a type of an argument from authority, and there is hardly space for such argumentation in the contemporary scientific discourse. If the insistence on following the book’s flow comes from the fear of losing some elements of the text which are important to determining its meaning, *ES* is not a case in which this would happen. It is my claim that whether we accept the requirement to read the book in the order it is written or not is irrelevant to its conclusions on ethical matters. There are independent arguments that support them. Breaking away

from its original structure, however, helps to elicit the dense net of topics that is otherwise overshadowed by misplaced connotations of Hegelian dialectics. Therefore, I believe the objection that one must not read *ES* in a different order than it is written does not stand in the context of ethics. As far as Bradley's *ES* is concerned, it is time to break away from the interpretive curse and its pitfalls for the history of philosophy, and to analyse the book conceptually. Note that I am talking about the reconstruction of the main idea for research purposes. I do not claim that one cannot or is not allowed to read the book in any other order than I have suggested. After the book has been reconstructed around the core topic of moral personhood, the alternative flow of the argument from the first essays to the last becomes apparent: highlighting selfhood as the main moral concern (Essay I); demonstrating that self-realisation is the only moral goal (Essay II); criticising existing accounts of moral selfhood, i.e. the moral goal to be realised (Essays III–V); claiming that one is to realise one's ideal self (Essay VI); explaining the psychology of moral self-realisation (VII). When understood in this way, there is not a problem with reading the book in the order it is written.

Lastly, the dissertation employed the *hermeneutical circle* method (Gadamer, 1979): the understanding of the individual parts of the book, as well as of certain concepts and ideas, contributes to the grasp of the general goal of the book and the direction of its core argument, which in turn reshapes the understanding of the various parts of the book and specific ideas and concepts. Thus, the reconstruction of Bradley's moral theory in *ES* requires a repetitive explanatory movement from the book's individual parts to its overall message and back.

3. Notes on Terminology

3.1. Idealist ethics, idealistic ethics, or ethical idealism?

It is common to classify Bradley's moral philosophy under *idealism*. This is, however, rather ambiguous. The term idealism is widely used and has multiple meanings in different contexts. There is no unity among idealist theories, no single idealist doctrine. Mander even defines idealism as a Wittgensteinian resemblance concept: "What we find ... are many different points of identity held common by many different sets of thinkers, which taken all together create a knotwork of linkages overlapping and crisscrossing with each other, a complex system of similarities in virtue of which a particular set of beliefs stands out as densely interconnected, but only sparsely united with others outside the fold" (Mander, 2016, p. 4). Thus, when describing Bradley's ethics as idealism, the question rises: idealism, in what sense?

Idealism is mostly understood as a metaphysical doctrine. It is further commonly reduced to either one of the two following claims: *the ontological claim* that reality is mind-dependent, or *the epistemological claim* that our knowledge of the world is determined by the structure of the mind itself. *Idealist ethics* (Mander, 2016) is then understood as a set of views commonly shared by philosophers who consider themselves metaphysical idealists, i.e. ethical views common to most idealists. Despite the fact that Bradley certainly is a metaphysical idealist⁵ (it is less certain, however, which of the two claims he accepts), to say that he develops idealist ethics amounts to next to nothing. And no wonder: since the definition focuses on the unity of *metaphysical* views, it guarantees no unity on *ethical* views. There have been many attempts to categorise Bradley's work. Bradley is often classified as a Platonic, a Hegelian, or a Kantian. But, then again, he is also close to Hume in some respects. Whatever the truth may be, all of these classifications attempt to find allies for Bradley's metaphysical views, but not his ethics, which is the matter in question. Bradley is certainly not a eudaemonist. It is at least doubtful that Bradley sympathises with Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. He also heavily criticised the formalism of the categorical imperative. So, where are Bradley's ethical allies among idealists?

It is natural to consider Bradley's ethics in the context of Anglo-American philosophy.⁶ Bradley's ethics is commonly considered together with the ethical views of such thinkers as T.H. Green, E. Caird, J.M.E. McTaggart, R.G. Collingwood, Bosanquet, Mackenzie. Then again, what unites all these thinkers? What makes them idealists? If it is their metaphysical views, then some, such as A.C. Ewing, argue that as far as idealist thinkers are concerned, "their idealism was simply irrelevant to their ethical contentions" (Mander, 2016, 15). Mander (2016) offers reasons contrary to this claim, pointing to a number of themes common to the ethics of many idealists worldwide (such as the fact-value unity; the role of ideals in ethics; the moral self; self-realisation; focus of social aspects of morality; holism; rejection of hedonism). It is not my task in this dissertation to establish whether there is such a core to idealist ethics in general, or specifically to the Anglo-American tradition, nor to identify a claim or set of claims that any number of idealists would support. I will limit myself to saying that whatever the agreement on ethical issues among idealists may be, and even if we accept the similarities of themes (at least among Anglo-American thinkers), once we assume a more analytic approach to *ES*, Bradley appears to differ in many of his conclusions.

⁵ Because *ES* does not discuss ontological or epistemological questions (see Section IV of this Introduction), the metaphysical idealism falls outside the scope of this thesis and therefore is not discussed in detail.

⁶ For a recent review of idealism and its historical development outside Britain see, e.g., W. Sweet (2010).

If we are to categorise Bradley's ethics, then I suggest that we look again at the very term idealism. It is predominantly understood as a derivative of "idea" (*idea-lism*) as "a commitment to the primacy of ideas in any understanding of the universe" (Mander, 2016, p. 6). Idea is a fundamental term in ontology, epistemology, and psychology, and there can hardly be only one definition of it. Ideas may, for example, refer to:

- the platonic sense of perfect types (archetypes); the true nature of any entity, accessible only by the intellect;
- conceptual or abstract general rules of thought (Neo-Platonism, Augustin);
- mental representations (R. Descartes, G.W. Leibniz);
- special metaphysical entities; the furniture of the world (G. Berkeley);
- that which gives meaning to words (L. Wittgenstein, R. Rorty, J. Derrida);
- products of reason alone, i.e. conceptions that transcend the possibility of experience (I. Kant);
- the active drivers of any change in the world or thought (A. Schopenhauer, Hegel).

But despite these differences in definitions, "idea" is always understood as an element in cognition; hence the metaphysical connotations of "idealism". It is often forgotten that idealism may also come from "ideal" (*ideal-ism*). "Ideal" is a normative term that is used to refer to a standard, a state of perfection, something desirable. And it is idealism in this latter sense that Bradley's moral philosophy belongs to. A commonly used term is *idealistic ethics*. Frequently, the term refers to a theory that defines good (or right) in terms of an ideal principle, concept, or a state of affairs. Bradley's ethics is idealistic in this sense. However, when idealistic ethics is defined as such it is insufficient to distinguish Bradley's moral theory from any other moral theory that defines its core concepts with reference to an ideal principle; for example, Kantianism (universal good will) or utilitarianism (ideal state of affairs when a maximum utility of all is achieved). Another meaning of idealistic is associated with the idea that in one's life one ought to pursue grand goals that are impossible (unconditionally unrealisable) or impractical. In this sense, being idealistic has a certain negative overtone, implying that the person is detached from reality and lives in an imaginary world. Bradley's moral theory does not require one to be idealistic in this sense. Even though he says that we can never fully realise the moral ideal, it is still realisable to some extent (can be approximated) and is fully realisable counterfactually, i.e. under the right conditions. So, we can dismiss this meaning as well.

The term that is better suited to describe Bradley's moral theory is that of *ethical idealism*. However, we ought to distinguish it from a kind of *instrumental ethical idealism* proposed by N. Rescher (1987), with its central thesis being that ideals, despite being unrealistic and unachievable, have the instrumental value of motivating agents to strive for unachievable goals and

thus produce better outcomes than they otherwise would. Since Bradley sees the moral ideal as a goal in itself, he can hardly be seen as embracing Rescher's position. Bradley develops a version of *non-instrumental ethical idealism* that claims that the goal of a moral life is the realisation of the moral ideal for its own sake. Bradley's moral philosophy is an ethical idealism in this sense.

3.2. The fundamental question of ethics

Bradley is not so much interested in the problem of the right action; he is mostly preoccupied with the question of the morally good personality.⁷ *ES* is answering the question *What sort of person am I to become?* The stage is set already in the first essay, "The Vulgar Notion of Responsibility...", when Bradley reaches the conclusion that the problem of the freedom of will can only be solved when the moral self is properly accounted for. He offers the Kantian solution of defining freedom as autonomy or self-determination. The second essay, "Why Should I be Moral?", fleshes out the problem of moral personhood and states that the rest of the book will be dedicated to answering the question: As what am I to realise myself? What sort of self am I to realise as a moral being? Bradley's answer to this question is finalised in Essay VI, "Ideal Morality", according to which we are to realise an Ideal self which is identified with the Moral Ideal. This somewhat enigmatic reply is best interpreted as a claim that our moral selves are comprised of commitments that we have in virtue of the relationships we have with others. What we ought to be is predefined by these commitments and the norms that govern them.

Does the focus on the question of moral personhood make Bradley a virtue ethicist? This is not an easy question. Bradley was well familiar with Aristotle's ethics,⁸ and one can find mentions of virtue in *ES*. However, virtue never became a central topic in the book. Neither did Bradley elaborate on the nature of virtue, or mention which character traits count as virtues. As a result, I find it hard to place Bradley's ethics within the virtue tradition.

3.3. Ideals: an account and the normative role

In *ES* Bradley does not provide an account or definition of the ideal. As a result, it is difficult to say with certainty what his view on the nature of the moral ideal is. One can, however, try to reconstruct some elements of Bradley's view in

⁷ Compare this distinction to L.L. Fuller's (1964) distinction between the morality of duty (social morality) and the morality of aspiration (requirements that go beyond social morality and reflect the needs and desire of a person).

⁸ Bradley thoroughly studied Plato and Aristotle as a student at the University of Oxford (e.g. "Undergraduate Essays [1865-9]" in Bradley (1999)).

general terms. Ideal can be used as a metaphysical concept or a normative one. When defining Bradley's moral philosophy as ethical idealism, I rely on the normative meaning of ideal and not the metaphysical one. This does not mean that I deny that some of the metaphysical meanings are relevant to Bradley's understanding of ideal, but that the normative meaning captures most directly his core message that a moral life consists in living up to one's ideal personhood.

Concerning the *normative aspect*, for Bradley, the moral ideal, i.e. the ideal we are to realise in our lives, is a standard of perfection. In the same sense, we say that classical Greek sculpture is the ideal of beauty; it sets the standard for us to follow. There are other normative meanings of the word ideal which should not be applied to Bradley's moral ideal. For example, he does not use it in the sense of the best option, i.e. the most preferable of the available alternatives (as in "it would be ideal if you picked me up from home"). Neither does Bradley imply that the moral ideal is a perfect representative of its kind, i.e. an existing thing that possesses excellent properties (e.g. in this sense, a summer cottage in the middle of the forest close to a lake is the ideal vacation place).

It is important to note that as far as *ES* is concerned, Bradley accepts the top-down idealisation strategy. The difference between what I call bottom-up strategies and top-down strategies is the direction of idealisation, i.e. the difference in the direction of fit of the ideal and real. In the *bottom-up idealisation strategy*, the standard of perfection is to correspond to reality. An ideal of X is abstracted from real instances of X. If the nature of X changes, the ideal has to change as well. In the *top-down idealisation strategy*, what is real has to correspond to a standard of perfection. An ideal is a rational construct which precedes reality. Reality is required to change if the ideal changes. The distinction between these two strategies is important in Essays V and VI of *ES*, and is discussed in detail in the first dissertation article.

As far as *the metaphysical aspects of the ideal* are concerned, on the basis of *ES* alone it is safe to say that Bradley's moral ideal must be a concrete-universal. This means that the moral ideal is not an abstract idea or a mere product of imagination or reason, but a special type of unity or homogeneity of concrete elements of one's life (such as, for instance, actions, desires, beliefs, aspirations, goals, and minor ideals). As a concrete-universal, the moral ideal is the multiplicity of all these particular elements, which can all be said to be instances or realisations of the same unity. It cannot, therefore, be understood or described apart from these instances, which also make up its content. By identifying herself with the moral ideal, the moral agent achieves the unity of her personality. Two things follow from this. On the one hand, the moral ideal as a kind of high and general goal, which, as K. Brownlee (2010*) puts it, are conceptions of perfection or excellence that shape the way we think and behave. The moral ideal is the ultimate guide of our lives. A useful means of distinguishing ideals from goals can be found in Coady, who suggests that

ideals are like goals because they “orient our strivings, desires, and practical reasoning” (Coady, 2008, p. 51), but are different from them because they

- (a) are “more comprehensive and general”,
- (b) must be esteemed, i.e. assigned a high rank by the person herself,
- (c) have higher persuasive power than goals, and
- (d) are unrealisable.

It is unclear whether Bradley would agree with this distinction, but his conception of the moral ideal seems to embrace all the elements of Coady’s list. On the other hand, for Bradley the moral ideal always takes the shape of a specific image of an idealised person, a unity of a number of perfect characteristics. And as such, Bradley’s understanding of the idea comes close to that of Velleman’s, who defines it as “the image of another person, or a currently untrue image of oneself, that one can get carried away with enacting” (Velleman, 2002, p. 100).

It is not easy to answer with certainty how Bradley would deal with the question about the reality of the ideal, due to the fact that Bradley refuses to discuss any metaphysical questions in *ES*.⁹ It is possible, however, to draw conclusions about the realisability of the moral ideal. Generally, when saying that “X is ideal”, one may mean that:

- 1) X is a reproducible model. High fashion pieces are of this sort. They are being replicated or imitated.
- 2) X is impossible; even if the conditions were right, X could not be realised.
- 3) X is counterfactually realistic; X is too demanding for realisation under present conditions, but X could be realised if the conditions were right (the ideal of global responsibility is one such ideal). If the counterfactual conditions take place, X can either be fully realised or at least realised to some extent.

I would argue against understanding Bradley’s moral ideal as a reproducible model. The universal side of the moral ideal is void of content; it only exists as *my* moral ideal or the ideal of my personhood, and is therefore built from the particular elements of one’s life. Bradley is not suggesting that there is one desirable way of living that everyone should replicate. Neither does he suggest that there are personhood types that we all should imitate. Again, Bradley never says that the moral ideal cannot be realised under any circumstances. On the contrary, according to *ES*, the ideal can never be fully realised due to

⁹ Since the development of Bradley’s thought from the earlier period to *AR* is outside the scope of this thesis, I will not comment on the ontological status of ideals in the context of Bradley’s later metaphysical views. As far as *ES* is concerned, ideals are thoughts or mental constructs that must be taken as real if morality is to exist.

the imperfections of human nature. Therefore, one could say that this ideal is unrealistic, or too demanding to be realised.

Philosophers are divided on the question of the moral role of ideals. The fact is that, as Coady puts it, “[i]deals have had something of a bad press amongst intellectuals in the last third of the twentieth century”, and many consider them “dangerous and delusional” (Coady, 2008, p. 50). Others, such as Coady himself, see them as morally significant. Those who feel positive about moral ideals still see their role as subordinate to moral rules or principles (e.g., Strawson, 1961; Gert, 1998; R.M. Hare as R.N. Berki (1974) interprets him; Rescher, 1987). Rescher sees moral ideals as useful tools for the achievement of higher goals; Gert contrasts moral rules, which prohibit actions that inflict harm or increase its likelihood, with moral ideals, which he sees as positive motivational factors that “encourage one to do those kind of actions that lessen the amount of harm suffered” (Gert 1998, 91); D. Emmet (1994) assigns them a regulative role in guiding our practical reason; Brownlee claims that “we can have a reason to realise and try to realise genuinely valuable ideals *for their own sake* and not simply for the sake of achieving mundane, realisable goals” (2010, p. 434). It is clear that Bradley, although aware of the danger of some ideals being evil, is confident about the central role of the moral ideal and believes it must be pursued for its own sake. Moreover, for him, social morality is to be criticised from the ideal point of view. It is also clear that, according to *ES*, one has a moral obligation to pursue the moral ideal. In this, Bradley seems to agree with philosophers such as Kant, R. Brandt (1963), M. Slote (1983; 1992), and E. Pybus (1982). As F. Mellema (2010) observes, philosophers are divided on this question as well. Some believe it is supererogatory (e.g. Frankena, 1963; Beauchamp, 1995), and some, like R. Audi (2005), claim it depends on circumstances.

3.4. Self-realisation, self-fulfilment, and self-actualisation

For Bradley, the morally good life is achieved via *self-realisation*. The term is ambiguous, and this can easily result in misunderstanding. Self-realisation in *ES* is essentially the pursuit of one’s aspirations and grand desires. It is also sometimes used in the sense of the fulfilment of one’s capacities and talents. This is a different meaning, since one may have aspirations and desires which do not necessarily correspond to one’s talents. There is not sufficient evidence in *ES* to determine whether Bradley relates self-realisation to talents. According to Bradley, one’s striving for a certain ideal image is not done for any further goal: one is not striving in order to become someone, one is becoming someone while striving for an ideal. Herein might lie another difference with the pursuit of talents, which is often seen as a means to becoming an accomplished professional in some area. Self-realisation is also

different from self-actualisation. Self-actualisation is a deterministic notion, which suggests that the characteristics of the self to be actualised are present in the self from the start as potentialities (compare to Hegel's concept of development, where what will be is already contained in the present state as a potential). In self-realisation, the self is not predefined. It is not a Hegelian seed that is already potentially a tree. One's self is being created throughout one's life, as one progresses towards the fulfilment of one's aspirations. Self-realisation is characterised by freedom of choice or self-determination. Bradley's meaning of self-realisation is, in fact, close to what A. Gewirth (1998, pp. 6-8) describes as self-fulfilment, which

leaves more room for creativity [...]: in fulfilling oneself one creates oneself in that one creates both one's powers (by giving them determinate form) and one's developed states or activities. This development is shaped by one's aspirations, which help to mould one's implicit powers as well as the ends towards which they are directed (Gewirth, 1998, p. 7).

3.5. Perfectionism

Bradley's ethics is a perfectionist ethics.¹⁰ We should dismiss at once any attempt to understand this in a vulgar sense as a requirement to pursue excellence in every detail, no matter the cost and realisability. T. Hurka's narrow sense of perfectionism comes close to what Bradley has in mind when claiming that true Morality (for the capital letter cf. *ES*, 191) is connected to our understanding of "the truth of human nature" (Bradley, 1962, p. 247). Compared to *perfectionism in the broader sense*, which values "some development of capacities" and "some achievement of excellence" (Hurka, 1993, p. 4), *perfectionism in the narrow sense* sees perfection as excellence defined by human nature and human good as being essentially related to human nature. Bradley's remark that all moral duties are duties to oneself (Bradley, 1962, p. 219) is aligned with Hurka's claim that perfectionism as such rejects the morality that centres on acts that affect others:

On the view now dominant among philosophers, morality concerns only acts that affect other people. It tells us not to frustrate others' desires or interfere with their freedom but says nothing about what we or they should choose for ourselves. Perfectionism strongly rejects this view. It has an ideal for each human—that she develops her nature—and it may criticise her for failing to achieve it (Hurka, 1993, p. 5).

As a result, "its acceptance of *self-regarding* duties is a great strength in perfectionism" (Hurka, 1993, p. 5). This conclusion fits well with the general idea of *ES*, and helps us to understand that, for Bradley, morality is above all

¹⁰ Bradley (1999) also talks about perfection in "On Morality", pp. 258-274.

a personal project in which we owe our duties not to others but to ourselves (i.e. we are the subjects and objects of our duties), and others are beneficiaries; that is to say, they benefit from our fulfilment of our duties (for more on duties to oneself, see Hills, 2003).

4. Assessing the Assumptions of Previous Research

A notable feature of past research on Bradley's moral philosophy is the perpetuation of problematic and, in many cases, ungrounded assumptions, which have misrepresented or distorted Bradley's views, preventing them from being incorporated in a systematic and fruitful way into contemporary research on philosophical ethics and moral psychology. This dissertation questions and revises the common assumptions in the interpretation of *ES*, the most important of which I will review now.

4.1. Bradley's "general philosophy" assumption

There is a tendency to treat *ES* as a part of Bradley's "general philosophy" or "overall view", presumably including his *AR* and *Principles of Logic (PL)*. This assumption is problematic because *ES* was published seven years prior to *PL* and seventeen years prior to *AR*. *ES* can be said to belong to an earlier period of Bradley's philosophy, when his metaphysical views had not yet formed.

4.2. Connection to metaphysics and the Absolute assumption

Another common belief is that *ES* must be understood in connection with Bradley's metaphysics and the concept of the Absolute. This belief is problematic for a number of reasons. To begin with, one needs to clarify the reason for this assumed necessity. If the argument underlying this assumption is that *ES* and *AR* form a sort of system of Bradley's philosophy, where parts explain each other, I have already shown that this does not stand. If a further argument is needed, it would make more sense to research the connection between Bradley's views on ethics and his views on metaphysics, by focusing on the section of *AR* that contains a part on morality and the moral good. One could also look into the development of Bradley's ethical views from his earlier years to his later work (both questions are, however, different research questions than the ones posed in the present dissertation). Placing *ES* in the context of *AR* is methodologically questionable, given that there is no direct connection between the two works.

If, on the other hand, what is meant is that one must also present Bradley's supporting ontological arguments when reconstructing his views on ethical issues, there is another problem. First, as F.S.J. Coplestone says, "Bradley's *Ethical Studies* is not a metaphysical work" (Copleston, 1966, p. 190). There is no ontological argument to be found in *ES*. Bradley famously writes in *ES*:

How can it be proved that self-realization is the end? There is only one way to do that. This is to know what we mean, when we say 'self', and 'real', and realize', and 'end' ; and to know that is to have something like a system of metaphysic, and to say it would be to exhibit that system. Instead of remarking, then, that we lack space to develop our views, let us frankly confess that, properly speaking, we have no such views to develop, and therefore we can not *prove* our thesis. All that we can do is partially to explain it, and try to render it plausible. It is a formula, which our succeeding Essays will in some way fill up, and which here we shall attempt to recommend to the reader beforehand (Bradley, 1962, p. 65).

There are different ways that this paragraph can be interpreted. I understand it as introducing a distinction between "proving" a claim, a type of the argumentation more suitable for theoretical matters, and "rendering it plausible", a type of argumentation more suitable for practical matters. What he is saying is in effect that as long as one requires "a proof" for an ethical claim (such as that self-realisation is the goal of one's moral life), due to its abstract nature, the proof has to come in the form of a metaphysical argument which, in turn, requires a *developed systematic view on the nature of reality*. However, Bradley maintains that he cannot offer that sort of argument. For the reader who is not thoroughly familiar with Bradley's ethics, it may appear puzzling that he goes on developing his views after confessing his inability to prove his main claim. It is especially puzzling because, at least as far as the specific claim "that self-realization is the end" is concerned, there are at least two arguments in the same essay: the argument for morality being the goal in itself, and the argument from the structure of the will. The reason for this is that, from Bradley's point of view, he did not need to give *a proof* in the sense that would be expected from him. That is to say, he does not think that ethical claims need proof from within a metaphysical system. Instead, Bradley offers another sort of argument. What sort of argument that might be is a matter for discussion. One possibility is that this argument works by demonstration; it explains the claim and makes it appealing. In a sense, the entire book is an argument; once you have made your journey as a reader, the truth must become obvious to you. This distinction between different types of argumentation is in line with the distinction Bradley makes between discursive (i.e., non-moral) and non-discursive (moral) beliefs. Another possibility is that Bradley rejects traditional metaphysical argumentation and tries to develop his own method, which turns out to be much closer to what we would today call analytic. The argument is developed through essays III–VI. It consists of a revision of a

number of rival theories of the moral self, the argumentation of which he finds problematic in some way. When these theories are found to be unsatisfactory, Bradley's own theory is substantiated. Most likely, however, both interpretations are correct to some extent. Bradley was experimenting with philosophical methodology, and his argumentation style incorporates different elements. However one looks at it, Bradley apparently believes that he can discuss ethical topics without a metaphysical argument, and sets out to develop his stance on moral questions without placing them in the context of a metaphysical system. I do not see how one could select this approach without also believing that ethics is a field of philosophical inquiry in its own right, and that the consideration of moral issues does not *necessarily* require a metaphysical inquiry.

There is yet another potential objection to my approach. One could say that metaphysics is relevant in another sense, that the consideration of meta-ethical questions about the nature of moral properties is an essential part of reconstructing one's moral philosophy. Whether or not this is so, is a matter of debate. However, Bradley does not discuss meta-ethical questions in *ES*, at least not in the way we understand meta-ethics. This does not, however, mean that it is impossible to *reconstruct* his views on moral ontology, language, epistemology, and psychology. It is possible, and it has been to some extent done in this dissertation (for example, concerning such questions as the nature of moral motivation and judgements). But this is not an easy task, since one has to work with bits and pieces of often apparently contradictory sources full of non-standardised terminology, often without any definitions. The most difficult second-order moral question in Bradley's case is that of moral ontology. A proper investigation of this topic would require explaining the apparent contradiction between *AR*, where moral properties are considered appearances, and *ES*, where they are treated as if they were real. But this is the topic of another research project, which does not fit in the scope of the present dissertation. In my interpretation of *ES* I remain faithful to Bradley's decision to bracket the ontological question, which I understand as a suggestion that whatever the ontological status of moral properties may be, for morality to exist, we must think about moral properties as if they were real properties of actions and persons. In short, I believe that Bradley's ethical view in *ES* can be and should be discussed independently of his *AR*.

Finally, concerning Bradley's concept of Absolute, one must be very careful when discussing it in the context of *ES*, as there is not sufficient evidence in the book to conclude that it is relevant to ethical questions. Bradley only mentions the term Absolute in passing; he mentions the concept of God,¹¹ e.g., in "Concluding Remarks", but this part of the text discusses religion and not ethics *per se*. Bradley says, for example: "Of course if religion, and more

¹¹ For Bradley, the concept of God is different from the concept of Absolute (cf, e.g., Vincent, 2000, p. 104).

particularly Christianity be brought in, the answer must be different. The ideal here is a universal, because it is God's will, and because it therefore is the will of an organic unity, present though unseen, which is the one life of its many members, which is real in them, and in which they are real ; and in which through faith for them, and for God we do not know how, the bad self is unreal. *But all this lies beyond morality : my mere moral consciousness knows nothing whatever about it* [the cursive is mine—*D.B.*]” (Bradley, 1962, p. 231). And again, I do not claim that the concepts of Absolute and God are not important for Bradley's metaphysics or his views on religion. I only say that they are not relevant to purely ethical matters.

4.3. Religious ethics assumption

This thesis breaks away from the belief that in *ES* moral questions cannot be considered apart from religious questions. Bradley finishes his *ES* with a brief consideration of religious consciousness, saying that “[m]orality issues in religion” (Bradley, 1962, p. 314). This may point to the conclusion that Bradley, in some sense, identifies moral and religious spheres. There are, however, reasons to believe that this is a problematic conclusion. Bradley only discusses religion in the chapter called “Concluding Remarks”, placing it outside the main body of the book. This shows that the discussion of religion lies beyond the discussion of morality as such: “And here we should close these Essays, since here we go beyond morality” (Bradley, 1962, p. 313). There is no sound justification for equating moral with religious spheres in *ES*.

4.4. Social morality assumption

Many secondary sources start with the assumption that Bradley's moral philosophy in *ES* cannot be understood apart from questions of social and political philosophy. This assumption springs from the conviction that Bradley's ethical theory is an updated version of Hegel's social morality, and from the persisting belief that Bradley identifies the moral self with one's station, and moral obligation with social requirements. This approach overlooks Bradley's argument against the bottom-up identification of the real and the ideal, and is criticised in Article I. It is taken for granted in this dissertation that Bradley separated the moral from the political and social spheres (see also T. Irwin, who claims that “[i]n contrast to Hegel, Green and Bradley treat ethics in its own right, not as a part of political theory or cultural history” (Irwin, 2009, p. 536)).

4.5. Hegelian dialectic assumption: why the dialectical interpretation of *Ethical Studies* does not work

This thesis challenges the common belief that Bradley uses Hegelian dialectic as the main argumentative method in *ES*. This assumption most likely originates from Wollheim's introduction to the second edition of the book, and has persisted ever since. Wollheim himself does not prove his claim, and as a result it is difficult to know with certainty what he had in mind. I argue that the claim that Bradley uses Hegelian dialectic in *ES* does not stand serious scrutiny. I rather see his method as proto-analytic.

In his introduction to the 1962 reprint of the second edition of *ES*, Wollheim defines Bradley's method as dialectical—this opinion has become widespread among scholars of British Idealism. Wollheim writes:

It is extremely important that the principle upon which the various essays have been put together should be properly appreciated. For *Ethical Studies* is essentially *dialectical* in its structure. Hegelian in many of its ideas, it is to an even greater extent Hegelian in its method, in the way in which it works its way forwards through different and conflicting theories (Wollheim, 1962, pp. xiv–xv; see also Wollheim, 1969, p. 229).

There is a good reason behind this interpretation of Bradley's method—the desire to clear Bradley from the accusation of traditionalism and show that *ES* must be read further than up to Essay V, “My Station and Its Duties” (hereafter—MSID). However, after H. Sidgwick's review (1876) and Ross' edition of *ES*, which omitted Essays I, VI, and VII (Bradley, 1951), the identification of Bradley's ethics with the theory of My Station and Its Duties became a commonplace. The good that Wollheim's claim does is that it motivates the reader not to stop at Essay V, and to expect that there is more to Bradley's ethics than MSID. The downside of this claim, however, is that it is too far-fetched. The bad that it does is that it blinds the reader to the main topics of *ES*, its key message, and keeps her confused as to the relation of its various arguments as well as to the role of the final chapter, “Ideal Morality”. As a result, the reader tends to overemphasise the role of social morality in Bradley's ethics and misattribute some of his central arguments.

There is however an ambiguity in the claim that *ES* is dialectical in structure. There is no single definition of dialectic method (see more Blackburn, 1994). “Dialectic” may be used in a wide and a specific sense. *In a wide sense*, as defined by S. Blackburn, it refers to the “process of reasoning to obtain truth and knowledge on any topic” (Blackburn, 1994, p. 104). “Dialectic” comes from the Ancient Greek expression *διαλεκτική τέχνη* which means “the art of conversation”. *In a specific sense*, it refers to a particular type of reasoning. There are, for example:

- *Zeno of Elea's dialectic*, which amounts to refuting the opponent's hypotheses by drawing unacceptable consequences from these hypotheses;
- *Sophists' dialectic*, which is used to manipulate the truth and win an argument;
- *Socratic dialectic*, or the art of searching for truth, involving cross-examination that refutes the opponent's hypothesis by leading him to face its contradictory consequences when answering a series of questions;
- *Aristotelian dialectic*, which is opposed to the method of demonstration. While demonstration moves from premises that are true in themselves to conclusions that necessarily follow from them, dialectic reasoning is based on premises that are accepted either by everyone, or the majority, or by philosophers, and proceeds to conclusions deductively (cf. e.g. Hamlyn, 1990);
- *Kantian dialectic*, which is concerned with exposing the illusion of transcendental judgements, that is to say, judgements about things beyond experience;
- *Hegelian dialectic*, or universal law of reasoning and nature, consisting of a way of overcoming contradictions between a thesis (concept or phenomenon) and opposite (sometimes referred to as anti-thesis) by the means of synthesis (higher unity) that better approximates truth. The synthesised view, in turn, is taken as a thesis, considered in opposition to the contradictory view, and the reasoning is moved to the higher level by reaching the truth of both in a new synthesis.

The saying that *ES* is dialectical in structure could imply any of these meanings. Often, however, this claim translates to one of the following:

- *A general claim* that Bradley's method of reasoning in *ES* is dialectical, that is to say that Bradley uses some type of dialectic method to support his core claims. Nicholson hints at this conclusion: "Bradley's dialectic is in fact simpler than Hegel's though plainly derived from it" (Nicholson, 1990, p. 9). In contrast, E. Caird believes that Bradley's dialectic is rather of a Socratic nature.
- *A specific claim* that Bradley utilises Hegelian-style dialectics. For example, D. Brink claims that Bradley's ethics is "dialectical in the specifically Hegelian sense of being organized around an intellectual progress through thesis-antithesis-synthesis" (Brink, 2007, p. 111). A similar view is expressed by interpreters such as Wollheim (1962, 1969), Nicholson (1990), and Mander (2011).

I see no problem in claiming that Bradley's method is dialectical in the general sense. As most philosophers would do, Bradley builds his argument via examining existing theories and refuting claims he finds wrong: he is "conversing" with his opponents. It is problematic, however, to say that Bradley uses the specific method of argumentation developed by Hegel. There

are at least two reasons to deny this. First, Bradley has never called his method Hegelian dialectic, nor has he described the method of *ES* in a way that may lead a reader to interpret it as such. Moreover, there is a good reason why he did not. In his *AR*, Bradley openly denounces any conscious connection to Hegel:

I fear that, to avoid ... misunderstandings, I must say something as to what is called "Hegelianism." For Hegel himself, assuredly I think him a great philosopher; but I never could have called myself as Hegelian, partly because I cannot say that I have mastered his main principle, or at least a part of that principle. I have no wish to conceal how much I owe to his writings; but I will leave it to those who can judge better than myself, to the limits within which I have followed him (Bradley, 1883/1950, p. x).¹²

Second, the claim that the structure of *ES* is dialectical in the Hegelian sense does not stand scrutiny. Bradley's arguments are expressed in seven essays and, arguably, in the "Concluding Remarks", which together comprise the *ES*. When the succession of the essays is analysed, it does not support the Hegelian-style dialectic interpretation.

Note, for example, how Wollheim specifies his claim and describes the mechanism involved in the dialectical method of *ES*:

It is Bradley's technique to start with one particular view of morality, to examine its merits and its defects, and this leads him on to another view of morality which, while retaining as far as possible the merits of the original view, will be free of its defects : this view in turn shows itself not to be without error, and so the process of correction and refinement goes on indefinitely. That this is the principle upon which *Ethical Studies* is written has sometimes been overlooked by critics... (Wollheim, 1962, p. xv).

But, described as such, this is not Hegelian dialectic at all. The nature of Hegelian dialectic is a matter for separate research. I cannot be expected to carry out this research here, as this is not a dissertation on Hegel. What matters for the present goal is that as a method of reasoning, his dialectic is essentially based on the internal transformation (sometimes called progress or development) of a concept according to a certain principle. This principle, from

¹² There is yet another parameter to consider, from the point of view of the history of philosophy: if one calls Bradley's dialectic Hegelian, one also needs to explain what Hegelianism and dialectics meant for Victorian thinkers. There is a significant discrepancy between our understanding of these terms and that of Bradley's contemporaries. Restricted by the topic of my thesis, I cannot go into any detail on this question here. However, it is worth noting that Hegel was introduced to British readers shortly prior to the writing of *ES*, and it is at least questionable how well Hegel's method was interpreted at the time. The most influential study of Hegel at that point was J.H. Stirling's enormous "The Secret of Hegel" (1865), which was reprinted several times but, as is commonly known, never actually revealed Hegel's secret.

a formal point of view, is essentially—what I will call here—a succession of triads. There are many ways to interpret these triads and the essence of their succession. Sometimes it is described using Hegel’s own words, as in the movement of the spirit from the state in-itself (naïve unity) to for-itself (alienation or reflection) and finally in-and-for-itself (re-unification with itself in achieved knowledge of itself). In other contexts, the triad succession is described as consisting of an assertion (commonly called thesis), its negation (or antithesis), and the overcoming of the tension between the two in a new assertion (synthesis). This succession of triads is ever-present in all his major works, including the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977) and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991). It is especially clearly presented in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline* (2010). The classic example of his method is the first movement of the spirit in the Science of Logic: it starts with the most elementary concept of being, proceeds to its negation, non-being, and overcomes their contradiction in the higher level concept that contains the truth of being and non-being, namely the concept of becoming. The process continues in steps of triads till the end of the book, when the state of Absolute Spirit is achieved. There are researchers who find the interpretation of Hegel’s dialectic in terms of thesis-antithesis-synthesis somewhat simplistic. The motivation behind this is the desire to focus on that aspect of the method that examines a view, reveals its contradiction, examines this opposite view, and resolves the contradiction in a new view that comes closer to the truth. I do not think that the properly understood thesis-antithesis-synthesis paradigm omits any of the implications of the latter interpretation. Thus, in the end, it is just a matter of choice which terminology to use. What matters is that the dialectical movement is constituted by a certain structured progression of thought, and that it happens in threefold steps.

If Bradley’s method in *ES* were dialectic of the Hegelian style, we would expect him to adopt the essential elements of Hegel’s method, and that is the succession of the triads. More specifically, in the first essay we would expect Bradley to describe a certain claim or point of view which could be seen as analogous to Hegel’s thesis. Then, in the second essay we would expect him to negate this claim or point of view, analogous to Hegel’s antithesis. Further, we would expect the third essay to overcome the tension between the first two essays and come to a claim or point of view that plays the role of the synthesis. Next, this last claim would be taken as a new thesis in Essay IV, negated in Essay V, and developed into a new synthesis in Essay VI. And, finally, to be analysed as a thesis in Essay VII and negated in “Concluding Remarks”. To complete the dialectic movement, I am afraid, Bradley must have written one more Essay.

What instead happens throughout the book is the following. In the first essay, “The Vulgar Notion of Responsibility in Connection with the Theories of Free-will and Necessity”, Bradley introduces the concept of the moral self and discusses its connection with the freedom of will. Bradley’s goal is to show that

the concept of the self, without which one cannot make sense of morality and moral life, presupposes the concept of freedom of will as autonomy or self-determination. Those theories that claim the will is free in the sense that it is not determined by anything, and those that deny freedom of will, result in denying the moral self. The second essay, “Why Should I be Moral?”, states that the most important ethical question is about the kind of self that one should realise in her moral life—this, says Bradley, “is the question which to the end of this volume we shall find ourselves engaged on” (Bradley, 1962, p. 69). This is so, the essay argues, because there is no exterior motive to being moral; the moral end is the end itself. Here, Bradley introduces the concept of self-realisation, and briefly and preliminary sketches his account of the moral self. The third essay, “Pleasure of Pleasure’s Sake”, discusses and rejects the hedonistic view of the moral self which is reduced to a sequence of pleasurable feelings. The fourth essay, “Duty for Duty’s Sake”, discusses and rejects the Kantian-style interpretation of the moral self, which is reduced to a formal principle of non-contradiction. The fifth essay, “My Station and Its Duties”, discusses and rejects the Hegelian-style view of the moral self, reduced to one’s social roles. In the sixth essay, “Ideal Morality”, Bradley introduces his own view of the moral self, which he calls the ideal self, and discusses the realisation of the self, which is identified with the moral ideal and the approximate nature of this realisation. The final essay looks more closely at the idea of the moral self and the mechanism that drives moral self-realisation, desire, motives, and good and bad selves; it shows that the process of moral self-realisation has both egoistic (because it is always something that I do to myself) and self-sacrificial (because in order to realise myself as a unified whole, I need to give up certain aspects of myself) elements.

There is no dialectic development from the first to the last chapter. There is an introduction of the topic of the moral self (Essay I), its preliminary analyses (Essay II), a review and criticism of the existing views on the moral self (Essays III–V), the formulation of a new theory of the moral self (Essay VI), and a consideration of the remaining questions concerning the moral self (Essay VII). “Concluding Remarks” do just that—conclude the discussion of the moral self by defining the limits of ethics in the proper sense and distinguishing it from religious studies.

Thus, Hegelian dialectic cannot be found in the structure of the book as a whole. So, where is it? Does it start after Bradley has introduced the concept of self-realisation and turned to criticising the rival theories? If so, then it begins in Essay III, “Pleasure for Pleasure’s Sake”, but then where does it end? Does it end in Essay V, “My Station and Its Duties”, which in such a reading synthesises the hedonistic and Kantian-style accounts of the moral self? Or does it end in Essay VI, “Ideal Morality”? In the last case, “Ideal Morality” is a synthesis of which theories? The dialectic flow apparently breaks in this chapter. Rather than developing the concept of the moral self, Bradley, as it is

sometimes argued, just “adds” some elements to it. Does this mean that Bradley only uses Hegelian dialectic for three chapters? Why does he break the dialectic when introducing his “Ideal Morality”?

The proponents of the Hegelian reading also often refer to “Concluding Remarks”, which seemingly points to a progression of ethics to religion akin to the Hegelian move in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is true that Bradley draws a line between ethics and religion in “Concluding Remarks”. It is not true, however, that there is a dialectic development involved. Unless the proponents of the Hegelian reading can provide a satisfactory response to these questions, or explain which concept is being developed from the first till the last chapter by the means of the Hegelian triad method, I think we are justified in ruling out the idea that Bradley’s *ES* is Hegelian in its dialectic method.

Given the above considerations, I do not find convincing the interpretation of Bradley’s method as that of Hegel. The Hegelian elements in the structure of the arguments are few and shallow in application, without an insight into the dialectic method as Hegel used it; these are in the best case “quasi-dialectic” or “Hegelian-style” elements.¹³ And even so, I am not convinced that an interpretation of *ES* gains anything from such labelling. If Bradley’s method in *ES* is dialectic in any sense, then, as Caird said, it is Socratic, as he makes the reader aware of the implicit assumptions the theories he discusses are based upon (Caird, 2004, p. 18). I would rather be inclined, however, to call Bradley’s method proto-analytic or precursory to what later would become the analytic method of writing philosophical texts. The main message of the book, as well as the connection between its various arguments, become much clearer if we regard it as such. I am not alone in this belief. For example, Copleston was astonished by the apparently analytic features in Bradley’s arguments: “[O]n reading the first essay one may receive an impression that the writer’s line of thought has more affinity with the modern analytic movement than with what would naturally be expected from a metaphysical idealist” (Copleston, 1966, p. 190). For obvious reasons, I cannot to any significant degree explore this claim, for it would require a comparative research on the methodologies of metaphysical idealism and analytic philosophy. I will only briefly note that philosophers such as Kant and Hegel aim at the construction of a system of knowledge using such abstract methods of reasoning as transcendental inquiry. For this approach, it is essential to first lay down logical principles on the basis of which the explanation of any phenomena (including the moral) as well as the being itself is constructed. Bradley’s approach in *ES* and his psychological articles is very different. He focuses on the meaning of moral

¹³ Note that this comment concerns only the method of *ES*. I do not discuss here the extent of Hegel’s influence on Bradley’s ethics. Bradley flirts with Hegel’s style and borrows some of Hegel’s concepts, such as that of the concrete universal whole and the idea of the true infinite. But the extent of this influence is a matter for separate research and falls outside the scope of this thesis.

concepts as they appear to the moral agents, on the moral language and intuitions. It is not a fully fleshed philosophy of the moral language, but it is the beginning of it. He analyses desire, conation, wish, needs, and will, and explores emotions, moral motivation, beliefs, and the moral self. This is not yet a fully fleshed moral psychology, but it is the beginning of it. Bradley raises questions about the moral role of personal projects and aspirations, about moral identity, moral responsibility, the moral importance of self-realisation, and perfection. He struggles to find new terminology and ways to explain these concepts and ideas, while separating moral obligation from the social requirements of “my station”, when defining desire as an identification with an object and the action as an utterance of the will. These are often clumsy and obscure words, but here lies the beginning of the analytic method.

5. Previous Research on Bradley’s Moral Philosophy

5.1. Bradley’s own works

ES is Bradley’s main work on ethics. It covers a wide range of topics relevant to moral philosophy, such as freedom of will, the justification of morality, duties and obligation, and moral ideals, but its main focus is on questions of moral psychology, such as those of moral motivation and the moral self. In addition to developing his own moral theory, Bradley offers criticism of the major moral theories of his time: consequentialism, hedonism, Kantianism, and Hegelianism. *ES* is the main source on Bradley’s ethics, and is thus the key source for this thesis. There are two editions of *ES*. Bradley did not live long enough to see the second edition published. He was, however, preparing book revisions. The text has never been re-written, but his comments are incorporated as notes in the second edition, which was published after his death. This dissertation uses the second edition, which is most commonly referred to by specialists on the topic.

Bradley’s positions on a number of questions in moral philosophy, as well as his terminology and arguments, were still developing when he wrote *ES*. For this reason, it helps to supplement the analysis of *ES* with a series of psychological articles published by Bradley in *Mind*, and with his previously unpublished minor writings on ethics and psychology. As D. Crossley (1989, p. 59) notes, a better understanding of *ES* can be obtained through Bradley’s later psychological articles, which develop ideas that were only briefly introduced in the book. Most interesting for ethicists is the reprint of Bradley’s articles titled *Collected Essays* (1935/1969), which includes the following works analysed in this thesis: “On Pleasure, Desire, and Volition”, alongside the series of publications “The Definition of Will (I–III)”, where Bradley explains will as an identification with an idea that tends to realise

itself, talks about motivation, discusses the concept of desire and its relation to conation, wish, and needs, pleasure, and pain; “Some Remarks of Conation”, which helps clarify the distinction between desire and conation; “Can a Man Sin against Knowledge”, discussing moral motivation; “On the Treatment of Sexual Detail in Literature”, which aids in the understanding of Bradley’s account of desire; and “On Mental Conflict and Imputation”, which discusses desires that represent the main interests of one’s life, conflicting desires, and personal identity. The volume also includes articles discussing sympathy and interest, acting from malevolent motives, self-sacrifice, punishment, psychological phenomenalism, and hedonism. Another collection of Bradley’s articles is *Essays on Truth and Reality* (1914), which, even though not directly relevant to the discussion of ethical questions, is nonetheless useful, inter alia, because of the following papers: “Faith”, which sketches Bradley’s account of faith as a form of belief; “On Truth and Practice”, which gives insights into the difference between practical and theoretical reasoning; and “On our Knowledge of Immediate Experience”, “A Discussion of some Problems in Connection with Mr. Russell’s Doctrine”, and “On Memory and Judgement”, that help to reconstruct Bradley’s views on emotions.

The *Collected Works of F.H. Bradley* (1999) is invaluable, because it includes previously unpublished works by Bradley, such as the draft of *ES* and his notes on various topics in moral philosophy and psychology. For the research on moral questions, the following are especially insightful: “Notes towards *Ethical Studies* [c. 1874–1875]” (Vol. I), “On Morality [1877 or 1878]” (Vol. I); “MS BK Z: Chiefly on Psychological Topics [c. 1893–1902]” (Vol. II); “MS BK W: The Final Commonplace Book [1915–1924]” (Vol. III)”, as well as the list of cited works (Vol. III). Lastly, *AR* contains section “XXV. Goodness”, which discusses questions of morality. This, of course, is useful for those researchers who wish to examine the ethics of later Bradley in the context of his metaphysical views. *AR* also includes Bradley’s metaphysical account of the self, which is useful if one aims to make a comparison between his metaphysical and moral accounts of the self.

5.2. Secondary sources

Despite the vast literature on Bradley’s metaphysics and logic, there are remarkably few contemporary sources on Bradley’s ethics. One possible reason for this is, of course, that idealist ethics and ethical idealism have long been out of fashion. Another reason is that Bradley’s ethics is often either reduced to, or seen as inseparable from, his political and social philosophy. The latter approach inhibits the analysis of uniquely moral problems, concepts, and arguments. Since this thesis approached the interpretation of

ES through the prism of certain topics, in what follows I will review the secondary sources that are useful for research specifically on: the moral self, desire, moral motivation, moral judgments, feeling and emotions, my station and its duties, and moral obligation. For those interested in secondary literature on other topics in Bradley's philosophy, it is recommended to start with R. Ingardia (1991),¹⁴ which contains a comprehensive bibliography on Bradley, including his moral philosophy.¹⁵

The moral self

Commentators (e.g., Bell, 1984; Wright, 1984, Brink, 2007; Milne, 1962; Hudson, 1980; Lewis, 1969; Copleston, 1966; Sorley, 1920; MacIntyre, 1998; O'Connor, 1964; Muirhead, 1932; Sidgwick, 1954) rarely see a need to conceptualise the moral self. The importance of the concept of the moral self is often downplayed or ignored. This presents a serious problem for the interpretation of *ES* because, as is demonstrated in the second dissertation article, the entire book is centred around the topic of the moral self and self-realisation (for similar interpretations see, e.g., Irwin, 2009; Keene, 1970).

Another common problem is that commentators (e.g., Sprigge, 1984; Vander Veer, 1970; Stanley, 1996; Wollheim, 1969; Wilson, 1999; Keene, 1970; Nicholson, 1990; Lewis, 1969) fail to sufficiently distinguish between the metaphysical account of the self that Bradley develops in his *AR* and his moral account of the self, which is found in *ES*. Bradley treats the concept of the self differently in *ES* than in *AR*. The two accounts are independent, and one cannot be used as a substitute for the other. My interpretation of the moral self in *ES* stays faithful to Bradley's decision to bracket out the metaphysical question, which I generally understand as a suggestion that whatever the ontological status of moral properties may be, for morality to exist, we must think as if the moral properties were real properties of actions and persons. An attempt to apply Bradley's metaphysical concept of the self to his *ES* immediately runs into a problem. From the metaphysical standpoint, the self

¹⁴ One should be cautious about misprints in the book.

¹⁵ In the Nordic region, in contrast to German Idealism (esp. Hegel), which enjoyed academic interest, British Idealism was not so popular. There has not been much research done on Bradley's ethics in the Nordic region. There exists a somewhat vague book by the Swedish scholar of religious studies T. Segerstedt (1934), who attempts to look into Bradley's concept of value, valuation, judgement of value, and the question of the identity of value and reality. In Finland, the research on British Idealism was done by Airaksinen (1975a), who has written on Bradley's metaphysics (Airaksinen, 1975b), dialectics (Airaksinen, 1978), and some aspects of his ethics (Airaksinen, 1976, 1977). A. Siitonen (1989) discusses the existence of unknowables in Bradley's philosophy. Before these works, the theories of British Idealists were only studied sporadically and in a very general manner (e.g. J.E. Salomaa, 1929). They were not accessible to the international philosophical community due to the language barrier.

is an appearance (which does not imply that it does not exist). Despite that, in *ES* the self is treated *as if* it was real. The overall message of the book is that, even though the self is just a mental construct, without it, ethics and moral life is impossible. Therefore, for the treatment of moral questions, we have to think as if the self was real. The next task is to try to reconstruct Bradley's account of the moral self (more specifically, the morally relevant features of the self), which is distinct from the metaphysical account of the self.

When committing the mistake of applying Bradley's metaphysical account of the self to *ES*, commentaries (e.g., Keene, 1970; MacNiven, 1987; Sprigge, 1993; Wilson, 1999; Mander, 2016) tend to overlook the moral psychology context to which this discussion belongs. In order to address this issue, this dissertation's strategy is to recreate Bradley's account of the moral self, based on *ES* and the relevant moral discussions in moral psychology.

Another common misinterpretation of the moral self in *ES* is to reduce it to a set of natural properties (such as a character or social roles) or states (e.g. a set of perceptions) (e.g., Nicholson, 1990; Mander, 2016; Stanley, 1996; Wilson, 1999). This would imply that Bradley commits the naturalistic fallacy, which is not the case.

Among the most interesting up-to-date interpretations of Bradley's *metaphysical views on the self*, one could refer to the following sources. In his dissertation, D.R. De Witt (1984) argues that the fact that Bradley classifies the self as an appearance is not a good reason for discrediting his metaphysical account of the self. The reason is that, despite the widespread misunderstanding, to be an appearance, for Bradley, does not mean "to be unreal, an illusion, and unimportant" (De Witt, 1984, p. 30). G. Vander Veer (1970) offers a critical exposition of Bradley's metaphysics of the self. D. Pugmire (1996) shows that neither is memory seen by Bradley as providing the unity of the self, nor does feeling have the power to justify the reality of the self.

In the context of his metaphysical discussion of the relationship between an individual and the state, Stanley (1996) touches upon the idea of the individual and its relation to the concept of the self in *ES*:

In spite of these concerns we find in *ES* a compelling account of the individual as a fiction—the unreal side of a self which finds its moral realization in its station in the life of a real community, and its religious fulfilment in losing that bad individuality and finding oneness with God (Stanley, 1966, p. 55).

Having mentioned the term moral self, however, Stanley does not offer any deeper analysis. P. Basile (2003) traces Bradley's metaphysical account of the self back to D. Hume, and makes analogies to W. James. Basile, however, does not discuss how the Humean concept of "the self which [is] based upon

the recognition that what is basic is the flux of experienced contents” (Basile, 2003, p. 96) relates to *ES*, where Bradley clearly rejects this account of the self. F. Wilson (1999) picks up this topic, relating Bradley to “the empirical discussion of the developmental psychology of the self” (Wilson, 1999, p. 6) by J. Baldwin, W. Wundt, and J.F. Herbart. Wilson traces Bradley’s view of the self in *ES* to Hume and Hobbes. However, he acknowledges the paradox of attributing the Humean “bundle view” to Bradley, since Bradley clearly disagrees with it in *ES*. Wilson explains the paradox away by clarifying that the difference between Bradley and Hume is that, while for Hume the self is a mere heap of perceptions, for Bradley, as well as for Herbart, it is a structured whole, where entities stand in relation to each other: “For Herbart the ties are mechanical; for Bradley there is no such restriction on the ties that bind, on the relations that structure. For Bradley, the relations are as they are presented” (Wilson, 1999, p. 16). Wilson is right that the self in *ES* is a relational unity, but his solution to the paradox appears to be unsatisfactory. To reduce Bradley’s argument against the bundle theory merely to a disagreement about the nature of the relations of perceptions, is to fail to take Bradley’s argument seriously enough. Wilson’s interpretation fails to acknowledge that Bradley’s criticism is targeted at the naturalistic account of the self for morality, i.e. against the reduction of the moral self to a set of psychological states.

Wollheim (1969) is one of the few to point out the apparent disagreement between *AR* and *ES* on the topic of the self. Having summed up Bradley’s discussion of the self in *AR*, Wollheim notes that one could object to it by saying that there is at least one context in Bradley’s philosophy where we have to admit the existence of the self, and this is morality. Its existence is a necessary presupposition of moral experience. This comment is especially important because it hints at the apparent difference in the use of the concept of the self in Bradley’s metaphysical and ethical works. Wollheim, however, concludes that Bradley’s reply to this objection is not to say that the morally relevant concept of the self is different from an ontological one, but to claim that, since the metaphysical account of the self involves a contradiction, this explains why morality also remains a contradiction.

C.A.M. Keene’s (1970) dissertation “F.H. Bradley’s Theory of the Self” is a systematic study of the concept of the self in Bradley’s philosophy. It is important because it shows the significance of the topic and its relevance to all aspects of Bradley’s philosophy. Keen writes: “That the topic of the self occupies a central position in Bradley’s philosophy is attested not only by its multi-dimensional development but by its presence throughout all his major publications as well” (Keene, 1970, p. 89). Acknowledging that Bradley’s view on the self is by no means systematic, Keen nonetheless outlines a unified theory of the self, which consists of five ways in which Bradley attempts to conceptualise the self: metaphysics, social philosophy, moral philosophy,

philosophy of religion, and psychology. Keene acknowledges that “[t]he central position of the self in *Ethical Studies* is readily secured, since the work is chiefly concerned with discovering the nature of the self to be realized in morality” (Keene, 1970, p. 89). However, the distinction between the metaphysical and moral selves remains analytically insufficient, resulting in, on one hand, a confusion as to the nature of the moral self in *ES* and its reducibility to social roles and our relations to others, as well as our psychological states, such as desires, interests, and pleasure or pain; and, on the other hand, a blurred distinction between the moral self, the ideal self, the true self, and the good will. However, the strong side of Keene’s interpretation is the accent on the importance of development and teleology for the discussion of moral selfhood in *ES*.

MacNiven (1987) places Bradley’s concepts of selfhood and personality in the context of moral psychology. Rather than offering a definition or an account of the moral self in *ES*, MacNiven attempts to reconstruct various aspects of selfhood which are relevant to morality. Special attention is paid to the idea of the teleological development of the self and its implications for one’s moral life (divided into stages: egoistical hedonism, institutionalism, personalism, and metaphysical mysticism). Despite his use of confusing terminology at times, MacNiven discusses morally relevant aspects of selfhood in connection with such concepts as desire, moral agency, virtue, and value. MacNiven’s somewhat vague argument that Bradley does not commit the naturalistic fallacy has important implications for the study of moral selfhood in *ES*, on which the current dissertation builds—the interpretation of the moral self in *ES* is in non-naturalistic terms. MacNiven shows that Bradley does not derive his claim that self-realisation is the moral goal from psychological or scientific premises, by comparing Bradley’s defence of the principle of self-realisation to Mill’s defence of the principle of utility and the discussion of Bradley’s views on logic and deductive and inductive reasoning. Even though MacNiven is right to argue that Bradley is not committing the naturalistic fallacy, his justification is based on a less important consideration, and his argument is somewhat confusing and appears to miss the point. A better strategy to show that Bradley is not committing a naturalistic fallacy is based on the popular opinion that Bradley identifies moral obligation with social duties. The argument in Bradley’s defence would then (1) cite parts of *ES* that show Bradley’s acceptance of Hume’s law (no ought from is), and (2) would demonstrate that Bradley rejects the identification of the social with moral, while defending the identification of the moral with ideal (the strategy employed by the author of this dissertation in the first dissertation article). That Bradley is not deriving the claim that self-realisation is the moral end from scientific or psychological principles is self-evident, since Bradley claims in Essay II that moral self-realisation is the end in itself. MacNiven’s book would benefit from a detailed analysis of the relationship between psychology and ethics in *ES*, which remains somewhat sketchy.

Nicholson (1990) agrees that *ES* focuses on the concept of the self and self-realisation. In the context of the discussion of the morally relevant concept of the self in *ES*, it is worth mentioning Nicholson's interpretation of Bradley's claim that to be moral one has to become a true infinite whole by entering a true infinite whole. Arguing against M. Warnock's (1971) claim that Bradley here simply denies personal individuality, Nicholson suggests that Bradley instead revises the idea of individuality as exclusiveness, separateness from others: "His argument seems anti-individualistic only if the individual, the self, is conceived atomistically as being self-contained and complete in himself and thus capable of being an infinite whole in isolation from other selves" (Nicholson, 1990, p. 14). According to Nicholson, Bradley's alternative is the social account of the self, where self is what it is only in relation to others. I believe that Nicholson's interpretation of Bradley's claim insufficiently distinguishes between the natural and moral selves. Bradley is talking about the moral self. Here Bradley outlines, in a general manner, his account of the moral self, or the self we ought to realise. When he says that our moral self is a true infinite whole, he does not deny that the physical and psychological aspects of our personalities can differ. Instead he, ultimately, rephrases the Kantian universalizability thesis: my moral self is identical to the self of any other person in the way moral requirements apply to it. To join the true-infinite whole is thus to identify oneself with this universalizable moral self, to accept and truly believe in the universalizability of moral norms and requirements.

T.L.S. Sprigge (1993) thoroughly reviews the idea of the self in the various works of Bradley. Without going so far as to distinguish between the moral concept of the self and the metaphysical one, Sprigge notes the striking difference in the way Bradley conceptualises the self in *AR* and in *ES*: "Bradley's later denial of the self must have seemed particularly strange to readers of *Appearance and Reality* (1893) who recalled the highly positive and interesting account of what it is in *Ethical Studies* (1876) and how self-realization is there made the basis of ethics" (Sprigge, 1993, p. 512). Discussing *ES*, Sprigge talks about Bradley's concept of personality as a concrete-universal, and the way it is being constantly constructed in the process of self-realisation: "For Bradley the basis of ethics lies in self-realization because each of us is a concrete-universal which acts in the way which will best preserve itself and thereby move towards an ever more comprehensive and harmonious version of that it is so far" (Sprigge, 1993, p. 518). Importantly, Sprigge (1988) hints at the idea of a specific type of teleological development that the concept of the moral self in *ES* presupposes:

In his *Ethical Studies* Bradley takes his departure from the presumed fact that every individual is struggling for some kind of self realization, and that this is the basic driving force of the attempt to live a morally good life. Such a life is not a means to self realization, but one main form of self-realization. By self realization Bradley seems to mean the giving some sort of overall coherent pattern or

structure to your life in which you can find satisfaction, and such that all the details of your life are enjoyed as particular elements in that total pattern. One could perhaps say that it is life in the light of an accurate self image with which one can be satisfied (Sprigge, 1988, p. 117).

Standing on similar ground, Article II develops an account of the moral self in terms of a project.

Mander (e.g., 2016) emphasises that Bradley's moral theory centres on the concept of selfhood, and sees the aim of the moral life in the full realisation of the potential of the self, i.e. self-realisation. A collection of articles edited by Mander and S. Panagakou (2016) overview various idealistic theories of selfhood and moral agency in relation to such concepts as responsibility and normativity. As the editors rightfully note "[t]he entire argument of *Ethical Studies* ... may be interpreted as an attempt to articulate and defend a sense of 'the moral self'" (2016, 7), which underlines our understanding of moral responsibility. This dissertation's Article II is published in the aforementioned collection, and distinguishes between the natural self and moral self in *ES*. Mander stresses the importance of the concept of the moral self in his "Idealist Ethics" (Mander, 2016, pp. 116–120), and in his paper "Idealism and the True Self" (in Mander and Panagakou (2016)) outlines the general theory of the self in British Idealism and conceptualises the idea of the moral self with reference to the concept of *the true and ideal selves*. Distinguishing between the moral self, true self, and ideal self is an interesting conceptual problem (because Bradley himself was not clear with his terminology, the terms are often confused or used interchangeably in the secondary sources). Mander points out that, for idealists like Caird, the true self is explained as "a richer and higher level of selfhood" (Mander and Panagakou, 2016, p. 289). Our true selves are "who, at heart, we really are" (Mander 2016, p. 158), close to M. Heidegger's idea of authentic life. The true self is reduced to a set of characteristics: (1) the person's role in society and her relation to other people, (2) rationality, (3) a unity with the divine. This being so for many British Idealists, I however find it doubtful that Bradley would pursue this sort of reduction. The ideal selfhood, on the other hand, is interpreted as being "wider than the strictly *moral self*" (Mander, 2016, p. 176) and as representing an image of a perfect individual. Only by reference to my ideal self am I able to know what my actual duty is. Article II of this dissertation analyses and elaborates on the difference between the true and ideal selves.

Desire

Despite its crucial role for the understanding of Bradley's ethics, there is hardly any contemporary commentary on or analysis of his concept of desire—a

lacuna that the present dissertation fills in Articles III–V. The general approach to the treatment of desire in this thesis is in the spirit of the following approaches. Crossley (1989) acknowledges the role of desire in the process of self-realisation while discussing the role of feeling in Bradley’s ethics. Focusing mostly on Green, Mander (2016, pp. 48–53) outlines a general idealist view of desire. This view blurs the distinction between desire and belief as psychological states, claiming that there is a cognitive element in desire, and a conative element in belief.

Mander (2016; 2011, p. 185) also acknowledges the central role of desire that Bradley attributes to a person’s moral life. We agree in the interpretation of Bradley’s claim that the only thing that a person may want is one’s self: it means that rather than desiring X, the person desires to be as someone with the attribute of having X (cf. this dissertation’s Article III). In this sense, desires drive moral self-realisation. Mander further suggests that moral self-realisation is achieved not via a chain of disconnected desires but through a systematic unity of desires:

One way to appreciate that it is not merely trivial to place all our desires under the single heading of self-realization is to note that this introduces a real and observable unity among them. [...] They will—to a large degree—cohere and harmonize with one another precisely because they are all referred back to a common self with a certain character (Mander, 2016, p. 157).

Dissertation Article IV develops a similar idea of a train of desires, and the idea of grand desire. Mander calls this the “ideal desire-set” (Mander, 2016, p. 66), or an ideal desire which, for him, encompasses the idea of desirability. The desires that are less than ideal do not necessarily have good as their object, and therefore may lead to bad moral choices. According to Mander, for Bradley as an idealist ethicist, such desires must be caused by our true self (rational, social, and divine). Brink (2007) notes that Bradley defines desire in *ES* in terms of direction of fit, where what is has to be changed in order to fit an idea. According to MacNiven (1987), the concept of desire is both important for Bradley’s ethics and complex. He distinguishes it from pleasure and pain, and interprets Bradley’s tension-based explanation of desires as introducing its dispositional nature. However, despite an attempt to connect desire and will, MacNiven fails to show that, for Bradley, will equals a realised desire.

Although pointing to the right direction, the existing commentary on the role of desire in Bradley’s ethics remains rather patchy. What is lacking is a detailed and in-depth analysis that will reconstruct Bradley’s account of desire (Article III–IV), distinguish it from related concepts such as conation, wish, and need (Article III), and determine its role in Bradley’s view on the moral life of an individual (Article I, III, V). This dissertation takes the topic further, and

suggests distinguishing a special type of desire, grand desire, which plays the key role in guiding the entire moral life of the individual (Article IV).

Moral motivation, feelings, and emotions

If literature on desire in Bradley's philosophy is sparse, there is hardly anything written on his account of moral motivation. The reason for this might be the fact that Bradley has not dealt with the topic in any extensive manner. It is possible, however, to find fragmentary commentary on relevant topics, such as moral beliefs and judgements. Bradley's views on moral emotions are hardly discussed in the secondary literature. One can, however, find useful discussion of the concept of feeling in Bradley's philosophy, albeit little has been written specifically on feeling in *ES*. Mander (2017) discusses the role of emotion in Bradley's argumentation for his metaethical and ethical principles. James Bradley (1984, 1985; 1996) focuses on the metaphysical account of feeling and distinguishes it from pleasure, pain, and emotion. Pugmire (1996) talks about the relation between feeling and the self. Ferreira (1999) distinguishes between the notions of feeling and immediate experience. K.H. Sievers (2002) and Crossley (2003) discuss some of the essential characteristics of feeling in detail. Basile (2004) offers an epistemological interpretation of feeling as the transcendental foundation of knowledge. The most interesting for the goals of the present thesis are the works by MacNiven (1984) and—even more so—by Crossley (1989), who focus on *ES* and the role of feeling and felt harmony/contradiction in a person's moral life and Bradley's moral psychology. According to Crossley, feeling is a criterion of right action and self-realisation; it is essential for Bradley's views on moral development, moral knowledge, and moral judgement, and he observes that the latter is based on ideas that are felt (Crossley, 1989, p. 50). This thesis picks up Crossley's work and deepens the interpretation of Bradley's views on moral judgement and its role in moral motivation.

Moral judgements

It is well acknowledged in the secondary literature that Bradley defines moral judgements as non-discursive—K. Nielsen (1977) examines the implications of this distinction in more detail—but there is hardly any attempt to reconstruct and analyse Bradley's account in any significant detail. Some ideas can, however, be useful in inspiring a promising approach to the interpretation of moral judgement in Bradley. For example, Sprigge relates moral judgements to self-realisation (Sprigge, 1993, p. 517). Crossley suggests a way in which moral judgements can be true or false: moral judgements involve felt ideas (for

more on felt moral judgement, Kendal 1982), which, when in harmony/discord with other ideas, serve as a basis for moral judgements yielding the truth (Crossley, 1989, p. 50). In MacNiven, one can find the indication that moral judgements differ at the various stages of moral development (MacNiven, 1987, pp. 163, 170). K.E. Aspevig (1982) describes moral judgements as perceptions, and emphasises their role in advancing self-realisation (Aspevig, 1982, pp. 135–136). T. Segerstedt (1934) discusses Bradley's views on the judgement of value, although quite vaguely.

The research on moral judgement in Bradley's ethics, however, should start with an analysis of its elements: Does it consist of a belief only, or involve an emotive element as well? What does Bradley say on the nature of moral belief and emotions? Does moral judgment motivate by itself, or does Bradley believe that to be motivated to act in accordance with one's moral judgment one also needs a desire? These questions are addressed in Article V.

The moral significance of My Station and Its Duties

Despite the fact that “my station and its duties” (MSID) is one of the most commented upon topics in Bradley's moral philosophy, it is hard to find an in-depth analysis that would adequately examine its role in ethics. An extended literature review on this topic can be found in Article I. Here, I will only briefly review the main approaches.

1) *A vulgar reductionist approach*, that identifies the theory that Bradley calls ‘my station and its duties’ in Essay V with his own moral theory (e.g., Rashdall, 1907; Sabine, 1915; Santayana, 1933; Stebbing, 1948; Krook, 1959; Hudson, 1980; MacIntyre, 1998), which is further connected to conservatism (more on this Nicholson, 1984, pp. 129–130, n.1) and communitarianism (cf. Simmons, 2001, pp. 80–81, n. 38). According to this view, there is nothing more to Bradley's ethics than the duties of one's station. This view is nowadays widely rejected, and Bradley's non-conservatism is well examined in Nicholson (1990, pp. 39–49) (see also Sprigge, 1988).

2) *A supplementing approach* (e.g., Wollheim, 1969; Warnock, 1971; Candlish, 1978; Bell, 1984; Sprigge, 1988; Nicholson, 1990; Brink, 2007; Mander, 2011), which, albeit with variations, can be summarised in the following way: at the core of Bradley's moral philosophy is the thesis that persons, due to their social nature, can achieve moral self-realisation only as a part of a social whole, and that our duties come from the station we occupy. Recognising obvious ethical problems with this thesis, Bradley supplements or amends it in Essay VI by the introduction of non-social ideals, the realisation of which also has moral significance. As I argue, this interpretation of MSID is problematic at least, in

that it is not specified what sort of amendments are undertaken to render “my station and its duties” plausible as a *moral* theory. The supplementing view either underestimates the significance of Bradley’s criticism of the theory, or assumes that Bradley did not take his own criticism too seriously. This approach fails to sufficiently differentiate MSID theory’s normative thesis, which Bradley rejects, and the revised MSID thesis, which he accepts. The moral significance of the ideal point of view is downplayed, and the fact that the first component of the moral ideal is a normative concept (referring to norms of interpersonal relationships), and not a descriptive concept (referring to positional duties), is overlooked.

3) A *downplaying approach*, which tends to differentiate the theory that Bradley calls “my station and its duties” from his own ethical views described under the title “ideal morality” (e.g., MacNiven, 1996; James Bradley, 1996; Ildigwe, 2004), and considers the latter as a theory in its own right. The essential difference between the two theories is that, in ideal morality, moral agency is no longer identified with one’s social self or one’s station, and social commands are not identical with moral requirements. As the existing literature still lacks an analytic *interpretation* and thorough, detailed, *explanation* of “my station and its duties”, i.e. an analysis of the term that spells out its specific theses and claims, explains connections between them, and specifies Bradley’s position towards them, this doctoral thesis fills in this lacuna in Article I.

Moral obligation

Little has been said on the nature of obligation in Bradley’s ethics. Stern’s (2013, p. 300) idea that Bradley, along with Hegel, subscribes to a social command account of obligation does not stand scrutiny and, as Mander (2016, p. 164) notes, is refuted by the text of *ES*. Mander suggests that, for Bradley, moral obligation follows from a person’s social identity rather than from “social pressure”. Obligation is the coercion of our true self (or social self) over our various desires: “What is normative about my social identity is that it is my true and complete identity, which gives it authority over any apparent or partial identity. And thus our social part or station does not simply specify for us our duties, it also explains their obligatoriness” (Mander, 2016, p. 165). Arguing that Bradley does not reduce social to moral, this doctoral dissertation cannot accept Mander’s interpretation of the moral obligation in *ES*. Another account is offered, according to which moral obligation is explained through the identification of the self with the moral ideal, rather than the social self.

6. Dissertation Contents

The present dissertation consists of five articles:

Article I: Babushkina, D. (2019) “Bradley’s ‘My Station and Its Duties’ and Its Moral (In)Significance”, *Zeitschrift für Ethik und Moralphilosophie*, 2, pp. 195–211. Open access: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-019-00049-0>

Article II: Babushkina, D. (2016) “F.H. Bradley’s Conception of the Moral Self: A New Reading”, in *British Idealism and the Concept of the Self*. W. J. Mander and S. Panagakou (eds), Oxford: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 67–87.

Article III: Babushkina, D. (2014) “F.H. Bradley, Desire, and the Self”, *Homo Oeconomicus*, 31(4), pp. 513–530.

Article IV: Babushkina, D. (2018) “Grand Desires and F.H. Bradley’s Views on Moral Life”, *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies*, 24(1), pp. 41–69.

Article V: Babushkina, D. (2018) “On Moral Beliefs, Emotions, and Motivational Wholes: F. H. Bradley’s Account of Moral Motivation”, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 35(2), pp. 179–197.

I begin (Article I) by analysing the complex phrase “my station and its duties” into a number of theses and subordinate claims, and challenge the common assumption that, for Bradley, social requirements equal moral obligations. Having undermined the long-standing belief in the literature about the central role of “my station and its duties”, I turn to the key concept of ES, namely the moral self, which I explain in terms of personal projects (Article II). The concept is further analysed in Articles III and IV. Article III focuses on the concept of the moral self in relation to Bradley’s account of desire. Article IV suggests that grand desires, i.e. desires directed at an ideal of one’s personality, are important for the understanding of Bradley’s idea of self-realisation and moral life. The final article reconstructs Bradley’s views on moral motivation and the nature of moral beliefs.

More specifically, the goal of the first article, “Bradley’s ‘My Station and Its Duties’ and its moral (in)significance”, is to settle the question about the role of the idea of “my station and its duties” in Bradley’s ethics. Building upon the insights of such interpreters as MacNiven, James Bradley, and Ilodigwe, I argue for the need to downplay the significance of “my station and its duties” in *ES*, the focal point of which is ideal morality. I argue, however, that in order to answer this question, one must start with a thorough analysis of the phrase “my station and its duties” and the contexts in which it appears in *ES*, because it refers to a number of different theses, each of which plays a different role in *ES*. I show that interpretations of *ES* that treat “my station and its duties” as a single (and often vaguely defined) thesis are problematic and fail to make

sense of Bradley's idea of ideal morality. I argue that, depending on the context, the phrase "my station and its duties" may refer to: 1) the Hegelian ethics of *Sittlichkeit*, i.e. a theory that Bradley rejects, 2) a revised thesis that he accepts, and 3) positional duties. Moreover, the same phrase may refer to one of the following theses: 1) a descriptive thesis that it is a matter of fact, and supported by cultural and historical observations, that society has authority over an individual, determining what she is and, through laws and custom, dictating what she ought to do; 2) a normative thesis according to which existing social institutions, such as law and custom, generate moral requirements—what one ought to do is fully determined by the requirements of one's society; 3) an ideal thesis, according to which morality consists of the realisation of the self, identified with the moral ideal. Each of these theses is further analysed into a number of claims, some of which Bradley accepts, some rejects. For example, it is shown that, depending on the context, the ideal thesis may refer to a claim that Bradley rejects, namely to the bottom-up idealisation claim, according to which what ought to be is reduced to the existing social phenomena, or to the claim which Bradley accepts, namely to the top-down idealisation claim, according to which reality has to be changed in order to meet a standard. Because Bradley finds Hegel's bottom-up idealisation strategy unsatisfactory, I argue that we have reason to believe that he does not reduce the moral sphere to the social, and does not identify moral obligation with social requirement. I further argue that Bradley identifies the moral point of view with an ideal point of view. The fact that Bradley includes "my station and its duties" in his moral ideal must be understood as amounting to a claim that a positional duty is morally obligatory only when it is justified by the norms governing pre-institutionalised relationships.

After shifting the focus of the book away from "my station and its duties" and showing the subordinate role of the social point of view to the moral point of view, I proceed to reconstruct Bradley's views on moral self-realisation. In the second article, "Bradley's Conception of the Moral Self: A New Reading", I suggest that the central concept of *ES* is that of *the moral self*. Its key role is evident from the fact that the entire book's structure evolves around it. The book also employs a rich vocabulary, distinguishing between various aspects of the moral self. In the paper, I argue against a naturalistic interpretation of the concept of the moral self in *ES* and show that, despite Bradley's confusing way of writing, it cannot be seen as reducible to psychological facts about a moral agent, such as a set of beliefs, desires, or habits. I further distinguish between *the moral self* or the principle of universalizability and *my moral self*, which I argue is best understood in terms of personal projects, or life-long conscious pursuits of major goals that give our life meaning and organise it (distinct from a life plan). I analyse these pursuits into a horizontal project or the pursuit of one's true self, and a vertical project or the conceptualisation of one's ultimate

moral end in terms of the ideal self.¹⁶ These two processes are interrelated and inform each other. I explain the true self as a coherent unity of agent's reasonable commitments that are subject to rational re-evaluation, and argue against identifying the true self as a model or image of a perfect human being, or with loyalty to one goal. The category of the ideal self collects together a set of commitments that are worth having: 1) commitments grounded in our relations with other people, 2) commitments to ways of treating others by virtue of their being humans, 3) commitments to truth and beauty. A person's moral self is a mega-project that consists in acting upon our reasonable commitments (horizontal project) and understanding what commitments are reasonable to have in the view of the ideal self (vertical project).

The third article, "F.H. Bradley, Desire, and the Self", opens up the discussion about the role of desire in Bradley's view of one's moral life and moral self-realisation. The goal of the paper is to reconstruct and interpret Bradley's account of desire, based on his *ES* and minor psychological papers. I argue that Bradley develops a unique and up-to-date account of desire, which is best interpreted in terms of a narrative. As such, desires are essentially realisers of personal projects and are linked to ideals, which explains their central role in moral self-realisation. I begin by showing that, despite his tension-centred explanation of desire (according to which, desire is essentially a tension between the pleasant feeling of being affirmed in the idea of possession of a certain property and a presently experienced painful state), Bradley rejects the dispositional account of desire. Disposition to action or "trying to get", "the experienced striving of myself" is identified with conation, which Bradley distinguishes from desire per se. To desire an object does not necessarily involve trying to bring it about yourself. I further show that Bradley's distinction between conation and desire is not reducible to the distinction between the disposition to act and a wish. Bradley has a well-developed account of wish, which he clearly distinguishes from desire proper. Wish is essentially a counterfactual desire: it is a desire I would have if the world would have been otherwise. The object of a wish is a possible world in which the conditions for the satisfaction of the desire are such that they cannot be met in the real world. On the contrary, in desire proper the object is a possible world in which the desire can be satisfied. I argue that the way to understand the concept of desire in Bradley is to interpret two of his claims: first, that the only object of desire is the self, and second, that desire is an identification of the self with an object. I suggest that the former implies that all desires are in some sense motivated or otherwise connected to our aspiration and personal concerns, in other words, personal projects. This claim should not be confused with psychological egoism. What Bradley means is that any desire, be it self- or other-regarding, can be accounted for by the means of a narrative that connects the object of desire and the future state of the self. Our desires tell a story about

¹⁶ The true self is a realized ideal self.

or represent ourselves. The object of our desire bears connection to ourselves in such a way that it qualifies what we are; it informs about the qualities that we care to have. The desired properties of an object are ascribed to it because they are important to our own life projects. I connect Bradley's definition of desire as an identification of the self with the object to his statement that realised desire is an "utterance" of the self", or that the self feels "asserted" in the object of desire. I interpret these statements as a claim that desire consists in a story about the attractive properties of an object. To identify is to accept that the object is valuable for myself. The identification can be dispositional (appearing in the presence of an object) or more permanent (present regardless the presence of an object), which explains the difference between appetites and standing desires (interest and lust). I interpret Bradley's "the whole of ends" as the idea that a life of a person can retrospectively be said to consist of a grand project that unifies a person's particular desires and ends and realises a certain idealised image of herself: the object of her grand desire. At the end, I address a challenge that Bradley faces. His view of desire incorporates elements of the account of desire as lack; something that is being missed. The latter account can be said to confuse desires and needs. I show that Bradley does not commit the fallacy, since in his description the lack refers to incompleteness (of the self-image in the absence of the desire property of the object) and not to the lack as deficiency, which is essential to the concept of need.

In the fourth article, "Grand Desires and Moral Life: An Interpretation of F.H. Bradley", I look more closely at the idea of a grand desire. I introduce this concept as a helpful tool for the interpretation of Bradley's view on moral life. Even though Bradley does not use the concept explicitly, I argue it is latent in his works and is key for the understanding of the process by which a person is able to realise the moral ideal in her concrete actions. I defend my interpretation against an objection that there is no need in the postulation of grand desire, and we can explain Bradley's view of moral life with reference to one supreme desire for the moral ideal itself. The core of my argument is that such a supreme desire is either of questionable moral worth, because it becomes a pursuit of the unity of one's personality with no respect to its content, or it eventually collapses into a desire to become an ideal person, which I call a grand desire. I explain grand desires as a special kind of morally significant and self-contained desire—the object of which represents idealised qualities essential to our personalities—that play an essential role in organising our lives. They are desires to be a certain person, to such an extent that a change in one's grand desires entails a change of personality¹⁷. Grand desires are ambitious narratives, which are centred on the agent herself and create the best possible world in which the agent is attributed a valuable characteristic in its perfect form. They are like epic narratives where heroes are exceptionally

¹⁷ One can see similarities with Williams' accounts of integrity (identity-conferring commitments) and categorical desires (i.e. the desires that give meaning to a person's life and that are not conditional on hers being alive). See more, Williams (1973, 1976, 1981).

courageous or strong. I further claim that grand desires tend to realise themselves, that is to say, they tend to make the actual state of affairs correspond to our idealised view of ourselves by influencing the agent's psychological states (such as other desires, beliefs, emotions, etc.) and actions. Grand desires are narratives to live through, and they imply a transition from perceiving oneself as an idealised hero to actually living the narrative. This transition happens, I suggest, through identification, which in this case implies recognising as her own those physiological states which, she believes, are appropriate for the idealised person represented by the narrative of her grand desire. She starts considering them as defining what she is. Grand desires are morally significant because they tie moral ideals to our understanding of ourselves, and serve the realisation of these ideals. Being moral is, in the context of *ES*, a person's all-encompassing, ultimate project, which is carried out through a chain of smaller, conditional sub-projects. Grand desires are also morally significant because they organise one's life into a concrete-universal whole. Such a whole is itself a totality of the particulars that instantiate, manifest, or represent it. In a grand desire, when my object is an ideal, I automatically desire the particulars that instantiate the ideal, and, as a result, I desire to be its instance. I agree that, for Bradley, a person can have several grand desires at the same time without posing a danger to her integrity, as long as these grand desires can be made a part of a coherent narrative. In the end, I discuss the problematic aspects of grand desires. They are difficult to satisfy, because their objects are so obscure that it is impossible to specify the conditions under which the ideal can be seen as sufficiently coinciding with reality. We can only approximate our ideals.

The final article, "On Moral Beliefs, Emotions, and Motivational Wholes: Sketching F. H. Bradley's Account of Moral Motivation", reconstructs Bradley's views on moral motivation, mainly based on his article "Can a Man Sin against Knowledge?". I rely on an analysis of the structure of the main arguments of Bradley's article. I make two main claims: (a) according to Bradley, moral beliefs produce motivation by themselves, without an assistance of desire, and (b) are non-overridable motivational factors. My argument for (a) is based on the reconstruction of Bradley's account of the nature of moral beliefs, which, in addition to a cognitive element, contain an emotive element. This emotive element—essentially reduced to the feelings of pain or pleasure—predisposes the agent to abstain from an action that she believes to be wrong, or act in the way she believes to be right. Bradley's views on moral beliefs must be considered in the light of his definition of an idea (the essential element in every belief), which Bradley defines as "a representative sign". I explain that, according to Bradley, the feeling of pain is a necessary structural element of the sign "morally wrong", by the means of which the meaning of moral wrongness is produced. It is a mental counterpart of the actual property of wrongness. This idea underlines Bradley's distinction between moral and non-moral (discursive) beliefs. If the idea "X is wrong" does

not produce a negative emotional response in the agent, then she entertains a discursive belief that X is wrong. In this type of belief, the wrongness is represented by another mental event such as an image. It does not predispose to an action; it merely represents a fact. In my argument for (b), I first explain what, in the context of “Can a Man Sin against Knowledge?”, it means for a moral belief to motivate. I analyse the idea of the “motivational whole”, which refers to the idea that agents experience the simultaneous influence of multiple factors, all of which have a role in determining the outcome of the will. For Bradley, the question is whether, given all other motivational factors, the emotional component of the moral belief is able to win, and thus predispose the agent to act accordingly to this belief. Then, I refer to Bradley’s explanation of the cases where belief that an action is wrong fails to defeat competing motivational factors. In such cases, the agent cannot be said to have a proper moral belief. Instead, she has a belief in which the wrongness of an action, although called moral, is in fact treated as non-moral wrongness. For Bradley, when an agent perceives the action in its moral property, she cannot fail to be motivated, on the whole, by her belief.

7. Afterword

Having set the goal of reinterpreting the ethical views of Bradley in his *ES*, this dissertation project considers its main objectives achieved. To sum up briefly, it has been established that Bradley’s moral idealism is centred on the concept of the moral ideal and the claim that the goal of one’s moral life is reaching towards one’s ideal personality. The idea of moral self-realisation suggests the essential role that our desires, aspirations, and commitments play in our moral life. Desires move the realisation of our moral projects. The emotive element is seen as a constitutive part of moral beliefs, which, for that reason, are seen as internally motivating. Commitments constitute our moral selves. A person is then morally good when she is acting upon her commitments and in accordance with the norm that govern the pre-institutionalised relationships underlying those commitments. It was argued that Bradley does not reduce the moral to the social sphere, and makes a distinction between moral obligations and social requirements such as the duties pertaining to one’s social roles. Moreover, Bradley places moral considerations over social, seeing the former as a reason to criticise the latter.

Given the richness of *ES* and the complexity of its topics, it is impossible to explore in detail all of the relevant questions in one dissertation. This dissertation focuses on the key topics essential for the understanding of the book in the context of moral philosophy and moral psychology, and thus lays down the foundation and creates a framework for further interpretation of Bradley’s ethics. The dissertation mainly focuses on the account of moral

selfhood and the morally good life; Bradley's account of moral obligation and the role of positional duties in one's moral life; and the question of moral motivation and the moral relevance of desire. The work done in the dissertation is significant in at least two respects. First, it shows the contemporary relevance of Bradley's ethical idealism and reveals its relevance to modern discussions in normative ethics and metaethics, especially in connection with such topics as moral personhood, the role of personal projects in one's life, the concept of desire and need, and moral motivation. Second, given the fact that *ES* is under-researched and greatly misunderstood, the dissertation provides the necessary groundwork and starting point for further analysis of Bradley's ethics, without which there is no sense to even start evaluating Bradley's contribution to the ethics of British Idealism and the history of ethics in general.

From the perspective of the interpretation of *ES* offered in this dissertation, the most prominent topics for further research are the following. In the field of normative ethics, Bradley's views on the moral good, as well as his claim that all moral duties are duties to oneself. In virtue ethics, Bradley's account of virtue, moral character, and habit. In metaethics: Bradley's view on the nature of moral properties; Bradley's views on the nature of moral judgements; Bradley's version of moral intuitionism; Bradley's compatibilist view; and Bradley's account of reasons for actions. Lastly, in the field of history of philosophy, the development of Bradley's moral philosophy from *ES* to *AR*.

8. References

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