

The liberal Hegelianism of Edward Caird: Or, how to transcend the social economics of Kant and the romantics

Colin Tyler, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Hull

Purpose

The paper establishes that Edward Caird developed a distinctive form of liberal Hegelianism out of his critical responses to Kant, the romantic tradition of Rousseau, Goethe and Wordsworth and indeed Hegel himself.

Design/methodology/approach

The paper presents a philosophical reconstruction of Caird's social economics that is based on a close reading of a very wide range of Caird's writings including his recently published lectures on social ethics and political economy.

Findings

Caird's theory of historical development underpinned his writings on social economics. One of his greatest debts in this regard was to his interpretation of the romantics, which introduced a rich conception of higher human capacities into his critical analysis of capitalism. When combined with his critique of Kantian formalism, this led Caird towards Hegel. Yet, Caird's concerns regarding corporatism's stultifying tendencies led him to develop a dynamic form of liberal Hegelianism, which placed far greater trust than had Hegel in the ability of free conscientious citizens to restructure and enrich established social categories (classes, professions, gender roles and so on) and the system of nations which those categories helped to constitute.

Practical implications

If Caird's liberal Hegelianism were to be adopted today, we could live in much freer, fairer and enriching communities than we do at present.

Originality/value

Edward Caird has been wrongly neglected in intellectual histories of Anglo-American political theory, and while his writings on Kant's critical philosophy have received some scholarly attention, his critique of romanticism has never received the attention it deserves. This also draws on manuscripts that have been published only within the past five years, having been edited for the first time by the author of this paper.

Keywords:

Social economics, Social problems, Socialism

1 Introduction

Economical science is of equal extent with moral science – it is in fact its complement and can only partially be separated from it. And as man is a progressive being – so all the sciences that analyze his life must be progressive – must be constantly accumulating new facts and evolving new principles (Caird, 1887-1888, p. 161).

The British idealist philosopher Edward Caird (1835-1908) lectured on political economy for many of the 27 years (1866-1893) that he held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow (MacKenzie, 1909, p. 511n). He also included several lectures on the economic system in the course on “social ethics” that he gave as part of his lectures on moral philosophy during this time. Even though what survives of these manuscripts has appeared only recently (Caird, 1887-1893, 1887-1888), during his lifetime Caird did publish a number of addresses on political economy and several lay sermons in cognate areas (1866b, 1888, 1897, 1907). A recurring theme of these pieces was the “social problem”: the grinding undeserved poverty evident in Victorian Britain, the inequality of real opportunities for self-improvement through access to the higher reaches of one's culture, the weakening of organic communal bonds, the spread of *laissez faire* individualism, selfishness and materialism among some and the embrace of centralised socialist collectivism by others and not least the retreat into religious dogma, atheism or despair in response to the growing “crisis of faith” (Caird, 1866b, 1897, 1907). Caird saw the primary task of his writings on political economy as being to understand and address this amalgam of issues.

Of course, he was very aware that others had made significant contributions in this area already. Foremost among these was Thomas Carlyle, who, Caird wrote, had done so much “to make us see through the external puppet show of human life, to the internecine struggle of good and evil which it half reveals and half conceals” (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 259). He endorsed Carlyle's claim that the state should be an ethical and political educator of the people rather than merely a night watchman (1892, Vol. 1, pp. 265-6). Yet, his great admiration for Carlyle was more than offset by some very deep concerns. He thought Carlyle failed to appreciate the true nature and value of community, with Carlyle ultimately being inclined to see himself as the fount of all wisdom (1892, Vol. 1, pp. 264-5). Moreover, he regarded Carlyle's support for slavery as his “greatest aberration” and described his blindness to the real importance of the American Civil War as an “astonishing blunder” (1892, Vol. 1, pp. 263-4). In opposition to Carlyle, even as an undergraduate, Caird was a radical in politics and a fervent supporter of the North in the American Civil War (holding a particularly high opinion of Abraham Lincoln), as well as being a fervent supporter of Garibaldi's Italian uprising of 1859. He loathed Louis Napoleon and Lord Palmerston, and admired the radical politician John Bright. His radicalism was evident also in his resistance to signing the 39 articles and later in life from his work for female education, political reform and decentralisation, as well as in his agitation against British concentration camps in the Transvaal (Tyler, 2006, ch. 3). If Carlyle could not solve the social problem as Caird conceived it, then Caird would have to develop his own position.

What method should one use to discern and analyse this conception? Caird (1893, p. 61) himself held that in order to understand the nature of an object, event or stage of consciousness or even the process of development itself, one should not seek its definition: instead, one should seek to understand its historical evolution, “viewed as a process of

transition from the lowest to the highest form of it". Caird himself applied this method to many aspects of human life, including morality, social organisation, religion and art. It applied also to social economics. None of these spheres of life existed in isolation from the rest however, and ultimately the development of one rested on the development of all others (Mander, 2000). In relation to the development of social economics, Caird was emphatic that one must pay particular attention to the associated developments in ideas regarding the human essence, ultimate spiritual needs and the forms of interactions between individuals. As he observed in the only lecture known to have survived from his political economy courses:

It is scarcely possible [...] to consider the economy of man's life without reference [to] the moral and intellectual characteristics of the particular stage of civilization which his ever changing spirit has attained – as on the other hand it is scarcely possible rightly to estimate the civilization of a nation, the social and political relations of its members to each other and to other nations – the degree of its intellectual culture – or its prevailing standard of morals, without reference to the character of the economical organization which is the necessary concomitant of all this (Caird, 1887-1888, p. 154).

With this thought in mind, this paper examines Caird's critical analysis of the historical roots of the modern conceptions of the "natural" individual and authentic society in the romantic tradition, as set out at various points in his corpus and not least in his essays on Rousseau, Wordsworth and Goethe. It will be shown that Caird saw romanticism as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it brought out the inherently spiritual nature and value of individual life, made explicit the individual's inherent need for personal authenticity and exposed the deficiencies of a materialistic and rationalistic life. On the other hand, it could easily collapse into sentimental narcissism. The paper turns next to what Caird saw as the corrective to romanticism: Kantianism. Finally, it considers Caird's own liberal Hegelianism as an advance on both of these one-sided positions.

2 Caird's analysis of romanticism

Caird praised Rousseau for being one of the first philosophers to identify with and champion the cause of the poor. Rousseau recognised the inherent value of their ways of life, and saw that they deserved "respect and reverence" and not mere "tolerance" (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 631). With the spread of this conception of the poor "was a new note added to the moral harmonies of life, a new interpretation of the Christian law of brotherhood" (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 631). Yet, Caird held that although Rousseau's attacks on artifice had paved the way for a more accurate vision of human capacities than had prevailed to that point, Rousseau's philosophy had suffered from much vagueness and ambiguity. Caird argued that these defects, which sprang from Rousseau's narcissistic overemotionalism, were particularly evident in his conceptions of the "natural man" and the just society. The faults of the latter arose in large part from the deeply contentious conceptions which informed the former, not least of which was Rousseau's effective if unintended commitment to some form of atomistic individualism. Caird made clear in his own political economy lectures that he saw the latter as an integral part of eighteenth-century commercial society:

It was by no mere chance that Rousseau and Adam Smith came together, for that same strong sense of individual right [which] led the former to explain the state as a social contract, was only possible at a time when free contract was the principle of the economical organization of

society – as on the other hand it is presupposed in that organization (Caird, 1887-1888, p. 155).

Although he believed atomism to be integral to the economy of Rousseau's day, Caird criticised Rousseau for failing to recognise that the abstract individual was, in fact, merely an empty abstraction. To separate man from the influence of society would be to hinder, if not halt, his moral education and would make him unable to lead a life that was spiritually fulfilling. The resulting lack of personal discipline ensured that Rousseauian “freedom” could easily become “an infinite caprice” and its associated natural right “the right of selfwill and passion” (Caird, 1865, p. 17). For Caird (1892, Vol. 1, p. 634), the:

[...] untameable savage, just so far as he is untameable, is incapable of civilisation, and even slavery has sometimes been an instrument in the development of man's higher nature, by breaking down the arbitrariness of the undisciplined will.

This was the true meaning of the Christian notion that one must “die to live” (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 634, 1883, pp. 210-18). Moral education required the individual to submit to external authority as a prelude to the self-discipline which was a necessary component of true morality. The one-sidedness of the conception of the natural man pushed Rousseau towards its opposite. Consequently, in *The Social Contract* he subordinated the individual's subjective freedom to the will of the group (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 356-7). Rousseau's religious thought was similarly misguided. For Rousseau, the essence of religion could be found only by abstracting from all non-universal qualities. However, such a process of abstraction could provide at best a purely subjective basis for any belief in the objective existence of God. Religious faith, like political authority, became merely an expression of personal whim.

Following Hegel, Caird held that the correct method of critical self-reflection was to seek the unity underlying and making sense of the differences between the different observable conceptions of God and the human spirit. There had to be a free recognition of the rationality and truth within political and religious institutions, and not a mere retreat into the empty abstractions of (mythical) “pure” subjective beliefs and individualism. By failing to appreciate this fact, Rousseau reduced the “authentic” man to little more than either an animal or a slave. Hence, Caird concluded that Rousseau's reaction against external authority was merely a “logical” stage in the development of a properly free Hegelianism (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 356-8, 1883, pp. 20-4).

It is revealing to compare this attack on Rousseau with Caird's 1880 essay on William Wordsworth. There, Caird argued that, at his best, Wordsworth was a poet of the very highest rank and of the highest service to humanity. Wordsworth recognised that the proper task of poetry was to educate: to teach the great depths of human life and nature. In this way, poetry became the:

[...] counterpart and coadjutor of philosophy, in so far as it is the business of philosophy, by a last synthesis, to bring the manifold truths of science into unity with each other, and with the mind of man (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 207).

Wordsworth's depth of vision was unique in this regard as were his insights into the essence of human life and our relationships to nature. The eventual shift of his poetry away from the supreme value of freedom and towards a deeper conservatism marked the decline of his poetic powers and inspiration at the end of his life. However, it was more than this. The shift

reflected also Wordsworth's attempts to reconcile his belief in the essential worth of humanity with a recognition of the brutality of the terror which had followed the French Revolution. Wordsworth was pushed to seek the principles embodied in these two apparently conflicting elements. Indeed, only Goethe surpassed Wordsworth in this task.

Caird identified three areas in which Wordsworth's thought coincided with that of Rousseau. First, both agreed that the human soul found its deepest affinities with the wildness of nature, and its opposite in the orderliness of the garden. Second, both conceived of the "return to Nature" as a return to "the pastoral and agricultural life". Third, both saw the life of honest simplicity as being infinitely preferable to the life of luxury. It was in this way that the peasant life awakened the human capacities which the decadent life inhibited. Yet, Caird saw Wordsworth's pity for the rich as far preferable to Rousseau's bitterness towards them. Wordsworth understood the truth of the return to nature in far greater depth than did Rousseau, "as was to be expected" (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 219). Indeed, Caird even went so far as to claim that "Wordsworth is Rousseau moralised, Christianised, and, as it were, transfigured by the light of imagination". (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 215, 1907, pp. 166-74) It was Wordsworth then, rather than Rousseau, who offered a deeper and far more consistent vision of the human essence than the everyday vision (Caird, 1892, Vol. 1, p. 205).

Caird extended this examination of romanticism in his 1886 article "Goethe and philosophy". Goethe, Caird observed, read Herder, Leibniz, Schiller, Kant (especially *The Critique of Judgement*) and Schelling, and was repelled by the "one-sidedness of Fichte". Yet, his acute awareness of philosophy's tendency to blunt a poet's powers of emotional insight prevented him from ever giving himself over to the philosophical spirit in his reading of philosophical works. Above all else, Goethe reacted against what he saw as the ever more pervasive tendency to mechanise human life. Indeed, for a time this even led Goethe to embrace Rousseau's vague, shallow and sentimentalised conception of nature (Caird, 1886, pp. 796-7). Eventually however, Goethe overcame this limited view and began to recognise nature as a living and developing power:

[...] it was now the *natura naturans* of Spinoza – *i.e.* as Goethe conceived it, a plastic organizing force which works secretly in the outward and especially in the organic world, and which in human life reveals itself most fully as the ideal principle of art (Caird, 1886, p. 800, 1907, pp. 41-3, 84-5).

On this richer view, true freedom came from acting within the limits set by that force (Caird, 1886, p. 798). Consequently, Goethe saw his own artistic development as a growth both in nature and in his own freedom. In recognising the spiritual value of such a process, he came to recognise the necessity of evil in the divine, for without evil, good lost its meaning. Goethe's own interest in the natural sciences, and in particular the evolution of nature, enhanced this belief in the aesthetic development of human life (Caird, 1885, pp. 159-61). It was Goethe's attempt to reconcile these latter two types of evolution which marked him out as a truly great intellectual figure for Caird.

For all their differences, romantics such as Rousseau, Wordsworth and Goethe captured a crucial facet of the human essence: the ineffable capacities of the human spirit and the associated need for a free life that mirrored and respected those capacities. Only when human life answered the calls of its deepest nature could the individual live a life of freedom and spiritual satisfaction. The search for a free, self-determined consciousness led the romantics towards a situation in which "the multiplicity of forms, the endless series of appearances, will

begin to take an ideal meaning” wherein “the perishing of one form [of Humanity's “Being”] and the coming of another is ever more fully revealing itself” (Caird, 1883, p. 114).

This transformation could not be achieved by the romantics themselves however. Even though they all exalted communal life in certain regards, there remained a fundamental deficiency at the heart of the romantic vision: its inability to specify how the individual was to achieve this form of community (Caird, 1885, pp. 41-3, 57-60, 220-1). How was one to reconcile the individual's need for a spiritually enriching life with the needs of other individuals to satisfy their own particular personal needs to do the same? How was one to structure a community of free romantic beings, especially when a free spiritual life required one to enjoy equal and secure access to scarce material resources? Caird found part of the answer to these questions in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

3 Caird's Hegelian transcendence of Kant's theory of property

In his *Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant*, Caird (1877, p. 668), argued that Kant sought “to correct and transform” the “one-sided Individualism which prevailed during the second period of the history of Modern Philosophy” in the writings of Locke, Hume and, with some qualifications, Leibniz “by the aid of ideas ultimately derived from the equally one-sided Universalism” typified by Spinoza. In other words, Kant attempted to overcome the distinction between “self and not-self” by establishing that each particular mind “contains the unity to which [...] [its perceptions of the world and the world in itself] are referred” (Caird, 1877, p. 669). Caird developed this position further in his *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, arguing that, for Kant, practical consciousness treated the noumena-phenomena distinction as void, in the sense that such a consciousness conceived the moral law as if it were a law of nature, at the same time as eschewing a final decision on the objective validity of such a judgement. From this, Caird concluded that “in so far as we live morally, we live as inhabitants of the ideal world we think, and treat it as the only real world” (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, p. 588).

These commitments illuminated Kant's theory of rights. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argued that possessing a private property right gave the individual legitimate control over an object, in the sense that it meant one was able morally to determine how the object should be used (Kant, 1991a, pp. 1, 11; Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 325-8). He argued that as every individual required resources in order to live, use of many things had to be private: for example, one person could not eat for another. Moreover, in willing his own private ownership of an object, rationally (and so morally) the individual was required to will that everyone else could own such things privately also (Kant, 1991a, p. iv). Contracts and gifts were binding for similar reasons (Kant, 1991a, p. 7). Importantly, all such requirements were categorical rather than hypothetical: they were demands of pure reason, not of culture (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 315-20). Similarly, given no one could have a duty that they had not in some sense freely willed, Kant concluded that it was an a priori truth that private property rights could be based only on social compacts made in accordance with the categorical imperative (Kant, 1991a, pp. 12, 15; Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 320-4). An object became mine absolutely only when all those persons who originally possessed the object in common agreed that rightfully and permanently I could possess it privately.

Importantly for Kant, it was an a priori truth also that rights could exist properly only under a political organisation. In a state of nature, private rights existed only provisionally, subject to

“verification” by a contract between the individuals who originally possessed the object in common (Kant, 1991a, p. 15; Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 324-5). Even though the individual might have acquired a plot of land by taking possession of it without reference to any established practices of a community, it was only when he fulfilled rational, socially recognised conditions that he owned the land properly (Kant, 1991a, p. 14; Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 328-9). That fulfillment was achieved most effectively through the creation and implementation of a commonly recognised law which set out the conditions sufficient to establish any person's claim to particular private property rights. In this way, such rights could be acquired by anyone on the same basis through the uniform application of rules. Hence, only by creating a civil organisation did the individual retain his outer freedom and respect the like freedom of everyone else, because only thus could the independent wills of both the “acquired possessor” and the original possessors of the object be respected (Mulholland, 1990, p. 238). Only when individuals freely united their wills in this way could property be freely (and therefore conclusively) acquired (Kant, 1991a, p. 15).

This created the problem of how to deal with those who refused to consent to the contract. Kant argued that claiming the right to private ownership rationally required one to recognise the same right for everyone else as well. To do otherwise would have violated the categorical imperative (Kant, 1991a, p. 8). Consequently, the individual could force non-contractors to enter into a civil relation with him without violating their freedom (Kant, 1991a, p. 8). In other words, by “forcing” one's fellows to recognise the system of property rights in this way and making one's fellows enter a political community, the individual made them follow their own rational wills: he forced them to be free (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 332-3, 1866b, pp. 20-2).

Caird was very dissatisfied with Kant's theory. He objected that Kant had failed to establish that the justifications of social institutions and conceptions such as the state and the right to private property could “spring from pure reason” (Kant, 1964, p. 98; Caird, 1883, pp. 20-1, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 330-4, 338-42, 350-56). As he did in response to the romantics, Caird argued that the individual could have no determinate knowledge, beliefs or even personality without society: “I am a mere abstract possibility, till my life is reflected back to me from others” (Caird, 1866b, p. 22). The implication was that Kant's claim that reason validated private property needed to be reformulated as the claim that reason, as it had come to express itself in social institutions, norms and practices, validated the right to private property. The property example was a particular instance of a more general point. Certainly, Kant was correct to say that honouring the “demand for freedom, the rights of man, or whatever else it might call itself” was pivotal to a free life (Caird, 1866b, p. 16). Yet, Caird held that Kant had misunderstood the true importance of this “sense of independent personality, this consciousness of an inviolable self”; for Caird “they arise from a more or less distinct consciousness of man's higher destiny”. The individual became conscious of the “divinity that doth hedge a man” only through participation in an enriching community (Caird, 1866b, p. 16), and the community was enriching to the extent that it enabled individuals to realise their higher, romantic capacities.

Other considerations arose in relation to the public acceptance of any specific property system. Kant and Caird agreed that a legitimate and operable system of property rights must be based on some form of common agreement. Thus, Kant claimed that legitimate property relations existed only “through the union of the choice of all who can come into practical relations with one another” (Kant, 1991a, p. 14). However, for Kant, such a “union of choice” arose from ensuring the rational coherence of one's claims, and was, in a sense, timeless.

Caird followed Hegel (1991, §62) in arguing that the nature and authority of any “recognised power” were dependent upon historical changes (1889, Vol. 2, pp. 354-8). They developed in accordance with the development of wider social realities, and so represented the system of appropriation which accorded with the existing stage of human development. The recognition of a system of rights of property appropriation was, therefore, a consequence of the past specification of the higher human capacities in the minds and practices of individuals. Such systems rested, as all rights had to for Caird, on a recognition of a determinate common good which the system upheld and made attainable. As this recognised common good changed through history, the system of property rights on which society based its acts of appropriation also changed.

Caird (1889, Vol. 2, p. 315) traced Kant's problems to the “abstract way in which [...] [he conceived his] principles”. Kant had established the structuring function of reason as an ethically legitimating principle of individual action. Yet, for Caird this was only one side of the story, the other being the incorporation of the higher aesthetic capacities that the romantics had exalted to the exclusion of the individual's rationality. Kant moved some way towards the complete position in the third Critique when he argued that it was only through the appreciation of beauty that both sense and understanding were excited to harmonious action and joy. Yet, his analysis was incomplete. Caird criticised the second part of Kant's third Critique for similarly restricting the teleological conception of nature to human subjectivity, rather than recognising the similarly teleological status of romantic capacities (Caird, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 315-16, 507-9). The one-sidedness of Kant's metaphysics had profound implications for his practical philosophy. For example, Caird held that Kant's dualistic theory lacked the resources necessary to justify the conception of human history as a process of moral development (Kant, 1991b). Moreover, Caird argued that Kant's religious writings lacked the resources to justify his claim that common institutions such a Church or a Kingdom of Ends were needed for (noumenal) good to triumph over (phenomenal) evil.

The root of Kant's problems was that not just any such common basis would do. For example, in his 1866 article “The Roman element in civilisation” Caird argued that the Roman Empire had unified various previously distinct cultural groups and partially standardised their respective moral and legal codes. The imposition of the Roman legal system throughout the empire had encouraged the development of the idea of fundamental human equality. Significantly, “the steady application of the same general principles of law to men of all nations could not but tend to suggest at least the idea of universal morality” (Caird, 1866a, p. 265). Even allowing for this beneficial rationalising tendency however, the advantages of the developed formal structure of Roman law were not brought to fruition by a similarly developed spiritual content: “Rome was a form without spirit, into which any spirit might be poured” (Caird, 1866a, p. 267). Imperial rule was based upon force to a far greater degree than it was based upon the creation of the conditions necessary for the existence of a free morality. In fact, Rome was saved from being “the greatest curse that ever befell mankind” only by the advent of Christianity and the latter's diffusion throughout the Roman elite (Caird, 1866a, p. 267). The subsequent Christianisation of the imperial powers ensured that the spread of the essential message of Christian love throughout the world was far more rapid than could have been expected otherwise. Even so, the formality of Roman rule still tended to inhibit the vitality of its citizens' spiritual lives through its atomisation of the citizen body. Ultimately, Caird concluded that the intuitive sense of inherent spiritual commonality that formed a necessary aspect of a true moral community was lacking in the Roman Empire.

In this sense, Kant marked a transition between two epochs. Hence, in *The Moral Aspect of the Economical Problem*, Caird tied this development to Fichte's theory of historical development:

The period of disintegration has always been a period of individualism, in which society has been resolved into its atoms, and the struggle for existence between them has become fierce and fatal; while the period of organisation has bound men to their fellows in such solidarity that co-operation has taken the place of competition, and combined effort for social good has been substituted for the selfish struggle in which every one strives to draw the whole gains to himself (Caird, 1888, p. 9).

For Caird (1888, pp. 13-14), the individualist phase was articulated in various ways in the writings of “Locke and Leibnitz, Hume and Wolff, Rousseau and Diderot”, whereas “Schelling and Hegel, St Simon and Comte, Coleridge and Carlyle” represented the “assertion of order and social unity”.

It has been shown in this section that Caird believed Kantian principles promoted human development to the extent that they structured the expression of what Caird (1883, pp. 7, 14-17) called in a slightly different context the otherwise “formless emotional tendency” of romanticism. In this way, common normative structures helped to transcend the “Rousseauist disease of self-consciousness” (1883, p. 7, 1893, Vol. 2, pp. 305-6), which following Hegel, Caird (1885, pp. 58, 214, 1907, pp. 12-13) associated with narcissistic sentimentalism that had led to the terror, the “letters of blood on the page of recent history” (Caird, 1885, p. 4).

4 Caird's liberal Hegelian social economics

Caird built his position on his conviction that the reconciliation of the instinctive and reflective apprehensions of the individual's highest human needs could be achieved only once one had adopted an Hegelian evolutionary perspective on human spiritual development (Caird, 1904, pp. 1-30, 1889, Vol. 2, pp. 354-77). Making a link of this type between culture and self-consciousness meant that the development of each mode of consciousness (romantic and Kantian) was necessarily built upon the society's previous spiritual development. Initially, societies embodied a simple and immediate awareness of a nascent and figuratively expressed spirituality in the world. Gradually, thought's self-criticism of these earlier conceptions issued in a more complex, nuanced, harmonised and ultimately satisfying articulation of the essential spiritual truths which lay within even the most primitive forms of life. A necessary facet of such spiritual evolution was the simultaneous and interconnected development of the abstract conception of the highest human capacities on the one hand, and their determinate public articulation in the full range of collective institutions, customs, norms and practices on the other. In this way, the individual's daily life tended to increase in spiritual depth and meaning. The poorly articulated, almost subconsciously held, facets of the divine (or absolute) equated, for Caird, to faith, while the consciously articulated facets equated to reason. Caird saw this evolutionary perspective, then, as offering the key to one of the most fundamental and historically intractable social problems: the development of formal structures could be enriching only to the extent that there was an allied development of social consciousness. To complete this solution Caird turned to Hegel once more.

For Hegel, humanity's tendency to become increasingly rational over time, and especially over generations, worked through the wills of individuals and the collective lives of peoples

(Hegel, 1991, §§ 341-60; Tyler, 2006, ch. 1). The continual interaction of such wills and lives formed the basis of the state, and was manifested in social customs, practices and laws. For Hegel, the sphere of the will as such (“abstract right”) concerned a key aspect of what it was to be human, and was, in one sense, timeless: it was the essence of being human that one had the capacity to will even if one lacked the opportunity to do so. This enabled the world to become more rational, thereby enabling individuals to develop into truly actual beings whose existence coincided increasingly with their highest essence: “The commandment of right is therefore: *be a person, and respect others as persons*” (Hegel, 1991, §36).

A system of rights and duties was truly valid to the extent that it fostered and protected the development and exercise of freedom for all. Moreover, it was coming to be appreciated more widely and deeply that “The person must give himself an external *sphere of freedom* in order to have being as Idea” (Hegel, 1991, §41). Similarly, it was becoming clear that individuals needed to be secure in attaining the resources required to implement longer term plans (Waldron, 1988, pp. 373-4). Both Hegel and Caird concluded that the growing rationality of the modern world was evidenced therefore in the spread of private property as the dominant form of property relation, for this was the arrangement whereby the individual tended to be best able to express his personality by “placing his will into any thing” and so making it his own (Hegel, 1991, §44). Private property represented the highest expression of rational property rights and as such should be inviolable as a system: “Ownership is [...] essentially *free and complete* ownership” (Hegel, 1991, §62).

Hegel detailed three methods of acquiring private ownership of an object (Hegel, 1991, §54). The first was by physically grasping it: however, “this mode in general is subjective, temporary, and extremely limited in scope” (Hegel, 1991, §55). Second, one could own a thing by marking it as one's own (Hegel, 1991, §58). For example, I write my name in my copy of Tressell's *Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. Again, this was a “very indeterminate” method of connecting one's will with an external thing (Hegel, 1991, §58). In line with what has been noted above, Hegel's reservations regarding both of these approaches reflected the significance that he accorded to the expressive and transformative capacities of the will. A far more satisfactory way of acquiring an object was by “giving it form” (Hegel, 1991, §54). When one formed an object, one made the object impossible to understand properly without reference to one's will. For example, by carving a piece of wood into a statue, the sculptor made the resultant new form of the wood impossible to understand without referring to the nature of the tree and his actions as a sculptor. The essence of the object was transformed from a purely natural object into an expression of human thought “in” a natural material. Intention (i.e. will) and in a sense accident (i.e. nature) became inseparable: “it combines the subjective and objective” (Hegel, 1991, §56R). This meant that, like marking an object but unlike mere physical possession, the will of the individual was connected to the object irrespective of the temporal and spatial relationships between the will and the wood.

The agent's concrete embodiment of his personality in the world represented the giving of form to his potentials, and it was by and while exercising such capacities that the individual became truly human. In other words, content had to be given to the abstract capacity of the will if the individual was to be truly free. Hegel argued that “as a person, I [...] possess *my life and body*, like other things [*Sachen*], only *in so far as I so will it*” (Hegel, 1991, §47). Without the externalisation of the human will in particular cases then, there could be no true ownership, as “a thing” only truly became the agent's property to the extent that it was the external embodiment of his will.

In Kantian terms, all this meant that owning an object was based on the agent's exercise of his "outer freedom in accordance with universal laws" (Kant, 1991a, p. 2). Indeed, more generally Hegel's political economy accorded with Kant's claim that private property ownership constituted an extension of the individual's will into the world. However, as has been established, Kant held systems of rights and duties to be justified by considerations of the individual's rational nature, not by their consequences. Consequently, that private ownership could develop human freedom was irrelevant to the moral imperative to embody it in a system of rights. The important point for Kant was that the categorical imperative required the individual to adhere always to a universal law: "A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes [...]: it is good through its willing alone – that is, good in itself" (Kant, 1964, p. 62). For Kant, an action was morally permissible to the extent that it accorded with the one timeless, self-assumed and truly rational law: the categorical imperative. For Hegel, however, the categorical imperative was not enough to generate a determinate conception of freedom. What man rationally willed was his own development as a person, and being a person was conditioned by the norms and practices of one's society. Crucially, it was these that gave substance to the higher spiritual capacities that were so important to the romantics. This was significant because it meant that the collection of relatively determinate categories that the individual inherited from his society constituted the interpretative framework within which he could develop a number of crucial ideas. Core among these ideas were a sense of the higher demands of his nature, a coherent sense of his own identity, and his own sense of the nature of the world around him and his possibilities for future action. In other words, these categories shaped the environment within which he could plan and execute actions that were both spiritually enriched and enriching. Not only did the categories of property help to form this environment, but so did the possible modes of economic activity.

Hegel (1991, §§249-56) sought to stabilise these modes through a system of guilds, "estates" or "corporations". He gave these corporations very great powers:

[...] the corporation has the right, under the supervision of the public authority [*Macht*], to look after its own interests within its enclosed sphere, to admit members in accordance with their objective qualification of skill and rectitude and in numbers determined by the universal context, to protect its members against particular contingencies, and to educate others so as to make them eligible for membership (1991, §252).

While Caird (1877-1893, pp. 64-78) felt significant sympathy for a quasi-guild system, Hegel's corporatist twist worried him. His concerns stemmed from the link he saw between the modes of labour and the construction of one's identity: by fixing these categories in this way, Hegel risked restricting personal experimentation unduly and thereby impeding healthy social evolution and the development of freedom in the world (Caird, 1888, pp. 13-14). Caird believed this situation obtained in his day, reportedly stating in the late 1880s that: "Class distinctions have become something purely artificial and must be broken down" (Jones and Muirhead, 1921, p. 149). This informed his great and sustained efforts to secure various types of social reform including those aimed at giving women the right to take degrees at Scottish universities (Jones and Muirhead, 1921, pp. 93-125, 150-2; Tyler, 2006, ch. 3). Around the same time, he made clear that "Union is what we need; but there is no union worth speaking of where there is no independent human life" (Caird, 1888, p. 15). In one of his last publications he advocated:

[...] [a] double ideal of unity, brotherhood, passionate enthusiasm of humanity and readiness to give up everything for the weal of the community on the one hand, and of manly independence, free acceptance of responsibility, and willingness to undertake all the cares and difficulties of an individual life upon the other hand (Caird, 1907, p. 5).

It was on this basis that Caird (1897, pp. 8-12) sought to steer a middle path between the “anarchism” of the “Laissez faire” individualism of the likes of Herbert Spencer “the assertion of the unlimited freedom of the individual to compete or co-operate with his fellow as he pleases” (Caird, 1897, p. 12) and the “social despotism” of centralized socialists such as Charles Fourier and Robert Owen. The latter he identified with the view that:

[...] the only safety for society must lie in establishing a fixed order, in which all private initiative was suppressed; and that the individual must be reduced into an instrument of the community which should compel him to work according to his capacity, and reward him according to his wants” (1897, p. 9).

Caird (1897, pp. 19-20) believed by the late 1890s that these two extremes found fewer adherents, and that the middle ground was becoming more heavily populated. Increasingly, it was being recognised that:

[...] it is impossible for a society to be strong, if its members are weak, or for the members to be strong, except through the same means which secure the greatest material and moral unity of the society.

In short that “a truly organic society cannot be made except out of independent, self-respecting self-governing individuals” (Caird, 1897, pp. 20-1). Caird's ideal was, then, a society of free conscientious individuals seeking to do the best for themselves and their fellow citizens as beings with higher capacities: a society in which every person freely chose to do that which was truly good for their society. Active conscientious participation within one's society was spiritually enriching to the extent that the society was an “ethical ideal” (Caird, 1907, pp. 97-122; Bosanquet, 1923, ch. 11). This required that the society had developed the means to “overcome all the immediate impediments to intercourse, and [...] [was] able in the most important things to feel with each other and understand each other's feelings”: in this way, the society became a community or “nation” based on the “free relation[s]” of its individual members (Caird, 1907, p. 100).

Such a nation would be an “organic” whole, formed through “much effort and suffering” over a number of generations (Caird, 1907, p. 101). Its key internal contours would ossify if fixed by the state and protected from such further struggles. Through struggle against evil and repression as well as against the material hardships of the world, “a people gradually grows conscious of itself, of its independent life, and of the line of thought and action which is peculiarly its own” Caird, 1907, p. 101). Finally, the nation required its own guiding “mission” to give it a point of coherence (Caird, 1907, p. 102). Caird characterised this “principle of combination” as:

[...] some common direction of activity, some common objects of pursuit, which may often be sought almost unconsciously, but of which it grows more and more definitely conscious as it goes on.

At the same time as the modern world had experienced the rise of modern independent Christian nations, however, it had witnessed also the development of various national missions aimed increasingly at serving the good of all humanity in various ways that, while different from each other, were at least potentially mutually reinforcing (Caird, 1907, pp. 109-10).

Caird's analysis of the modern world presupposed the idealist conception of "unity in difference": the plethora of national missions was bound together by shared conceptions of the higher human capacities. Each nation contributed through its own distinctive mission to the increasingly shared more general mission of fostering the gradual realisation of the higher human capacities. A unity in difference was found within every healthy nation. One should seek to give to the nation's internal cultural contours a shared authoritative public articulation in order to facilitate the planned free rational citizenship of its individual members. Yet, throughout one had to be careful not to stifle the organic life and development of the nation and community of nations by fixing too rigidly the "hallowed form and ritual" required to stabilise those contours. These contours lost their constructive power to the extent that they were treated as a special sphere of life, to be enjoyed more fully by some people than by others:

[...] the moment we begin to make these things ends in themselves or to separate them as a higher class of duties from the work of our profession and the ordinary obligations of our domestic, social and political life, we are on the way to desecrate our natural existence by dividing the spiritual from it, to lose the value of that *power of idealising* which is the salt of our life, sanctifying it and devoting it to higher issues than life itself (Caird, 1907, pp. 111-12).

Respecting the organic bonds of an enriching community infused with common virtues and a common sense of identity tended to foster the "associated action of free citizens" which would defeat the "mechanical drill of despotism" (Caird, 1907, p. 113). Allowing the free expression of the diverse drives that infused lives lived within a community of free citizens was the policy most likely to draw the best from the combinations of determinate higher human capacities that were articulated in one-sided and frequently merely general and hence vague terms by the romantics on one side and by Kant on the other.

Caird's argument presupposed the theory of personality that grew out of Hegel's analysis of "abstract right". Free self-expression by conscientious agents was one of the main ways in which Caird believed that, in Hegel's words, one should "be a person, and respect others as persons" (Hegel, 1991, §36). The rights of citizenship helped to sustain various contexts in which individuals could pursue the spiritually enriching lives that were founded upon free conscientious citizenship. These included the right to private property and the more general right to be protected from debilitating circumstances and forces that the individual could not overcome unaided, such as the child's lack of education and the harshest vicissitudes of the unfettered market. The next question was how to reconcile the opportunities for self-directed conscientious action with the development and protection of conscientious agency in the face of these hostile circumstances and other agents. Caird was clear that was a practical issue rather than a philosophical one.

5 Conclusion

It has been shown in this paper that Caird believed a good society combined the best elements of the two dominant movements in Western philosophy: romanticism and Kantianism. Yet, for all of his appreciation of the respective roles of these philosophies in the development of a free and just society, he insisted also that social change should be undertaken only gradually once a full investigation into the empirical facts of the case had been undertaken (Caird, 1888, pp. 7, 17-18). Caird believed that open and frank discussion tended to widen and deepen one's appreciation of other viewpoints and opinions (Caird, 1897; Trott, 2000). Looking at his own society, he claimed that just as there was often extreme dogmatism in religion, there was also often extreme dogmatism in the debates between socialists and *laissez faire* individualists. Even though the latter conflict was becoming more balanced, both sides were merely "hedging" their theories rather than fundamentally shifting their positions to take account of the full value of the opposed side. It was this circumspect attitude that informed Caird's own attitudes both to the respect for spiritual instinct found in romanticism and the need for rational thought that infused Kantianism. Caird held that this attitude was embodied most effectively in the modern world in his liberal form of Hegelianism.

References

1. Bosanquet, B. (1923), *Philosophical Theory of the State*, 4th ed., Macmillan, London.
2. Caird, E. (1865), "Plato and other companions of socrates", *North British Review*, Vol. 43, pp. 351-84.
3. Caird, E. (1866a), "Ethical Philosophy", An Introductory Lecture Delivered in the Common Hall of Glasgow College, November 6, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
4. Caird, E. (1866b), "The Roman element in civilisation", *North British Review*, Vol. 44, pp. 249-71.
5. Caird, E. (1877), *A Critical Account of the Philosophy of Kant with an Historical Introduction*, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
6. Caird, E. (1877-1893), "Lectures on moral philosophy; social ethics", in Tyler, C. (Ed.), *Unpublished Manuscripts in British Idealism: Political Philosophy, Theology and Social Thought*, Vol. 2, Imprint Academic, Exeter, pp. 40-152.
7. Caird, E. (1883), *Hegel*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh.
8. Caird, E. (1885), *Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte*, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
9. Caird, E. (1886), "Goethe and philosophy", *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 50, pp. 788-808.
10. Caird, E. (1887-1888), "Lecture on political economy", in Tyler, C. (Ed.), *Unpublished Manuscripts in British Idealism: Political Philosophy, Theology and Social Thought*, 2 volumes, 2008, Vol. 2, Imprint Academic, Exeter, pp. 153-63.
11. Caird, E. (1888), *Moral Aspect of the Economical Problem. Presidential Address to the Ethical Society. January 10, 1887*, Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, London.
12. Caird, E. (1889), *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, Vol. 2, James MacLehose, Glasgow.

13. Caird, E. (1892), *Essays on Literature and Philosophy*, Vol. 2, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
14. Caird, E. (1893), *Evolution of Religion. The Gifford Lectures Delivered before the University of St Andrews in Sessions 1890-1891 and 1891-1892*, Vol. 2, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
15. Caird, E. (1897), *Present State of the Controversy between Individualism and Socialism. Being the Inaugural Address to the Civic Society of Glasgow*, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
16. Caird, E. (1904), *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers. The Gifford Lectures Delivered before the University of Glasgow in Sessions 1900-1901 and 1901-1902*, Vol. 2, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
17. Caird, E. (1907), *Lay Sermons and Addresses. Delivered in the Hall of Balliol College, Oxford*, James MacLehose, Glasgow.
18. Hegel, G.W.F. (1991) in Wood, A.W. (Ed.), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (translated by Nisbet, H.B.).
19. Jones, H. and Muirhead, J.H. (1921), *Life and Philosophy of Edward Caird*, MacLehose, Jackson, Glasgow.
20. Kant, I. (1964), *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, NY (translated by Paton, H.J.).
21. Kant, I. (1991a), “*Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose*”, in Reiss, H. (Ed.), *Political Writings*, 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge pp. 41-53 (translated by Nisbet, H.B.).
22. Kant, I. (1991b), *Metaphysic of Morals*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (translated by Gregor, M.).

23. MacKenzie, J.S. (1909), "*Edward Caird as a philosophical teacher*", *Mind*, Vol. 18 No. 72, pp. 509-37.
24. Mander, W.J. (2000), "*Caird's developmental absolutism*", in Mander, W.J. (Ed.), *Anglo-American Idealism, 1865-1927*, Greenwood, Westport, CT, pp. 51-63.
25. Mulholland, L.A. (1990), *Kant's System of Rights*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY.
26. Trott, E. (2000), "*Caird, Watson, and the reconciliation of opposites*", in Mander, W.J. (Ed.), *Anglo-American Idealism, 1865-1927*, Greenwood, Westport, CT, pp. 81-92.
27. Tyler, C. (2006), *Idealist Political Philosophy: Pluralism and Conflict in the Absolute Idealist Tradition*, Thoemmes Continuum, London.
28. Waldron, J. (1988), *Right to Private Property*, Clarendon, Oxford.