ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITIONS AND HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

R.G. COLLINGWOOD'S DOCIRINE OF ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITIONS AND ITS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1986) (Philosophy) McMASTER UNIVERSITY Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: R.G. Collingwood's Doctrine of Absolute Presuppositions and Its Bearing on the Problem of Historical Understanding.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: xix, 411

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to demonstrate that there is a new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935 and that this new turn is the result of Collingwood working out his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts are examined in order to assist us in justifying this claim. A clarification of the theory of absolute presuppositions follows our attempt to situate this theory in Collingwood's intellectual development. After arguing that absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities, we suggest that Collingwood is a foundationalist in a unique sense and that he can solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms. Although we argue against the view that there are radical discontinuities in his thought, we contend that Collingwood's principles of metaphysics, uncovered in the early 1930's, throw new light on his analysis of history in The Idea Of History. We argue that absolute presuppositions underlie all attempts at a theory of historical explanation. We attempt to show that absolute presuppositions logically regulate the historical imagination and that the historical imagination has changed over time as the result of absolute presuppositions changing. We argue that there is a logico-regulative relationship of absolute presuppositions to historical evidence over time. We also argue that it is necessary to account for Collingwood's acceptance of the incommensurate thesis in 1925 and his

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rejection of this thesis in 1936 for question-and-answer complexes. We claim that it was Collingwood's newly uncovered principles of metaphysics in the early 1930's that account for his about-face on the subject of rethinking question-and-answer complexes. Collingwood still accepted the incommensurate thesis for contexts of immediacy, and so his new position was not a radical change, but his principles of metaphysics did provide a ground or basis for the possibility of re-thinking an identical questionand-answer complex.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Albert Shalom, Jay Newman and Jim Noxon for analyses, discussions, comments and questions which forced me to continually reconstruct my own understanding of Collingwood. This thesis would be far more flawed than it is without their criticism and suggestions. For reading and comment on parts of the manuscript at one stage or another, I want to thank Sam Ajzenstat, John Bruce, John King, Ben Meyer, Alex Michalos, P.H. Nowell-Smith, Douglas Odegard, David Pfohl and Tom Willey. I have benefitted from their criticisms. Some will wish I had benefitted more. But I thank them all.

I want also to thank Jim Noxon for his keen sense of justice.

I am further aware of indebtedness extending back over many years to instructors at Humber College, The University of Guelph and McMaster University.

I offer an affectionate thank-you to Connie, my wife, for her patience and support and to Nicole, my daughter, for just being there.

I also offer a warm thank-you to my parents. They have provided a foundation of support I could rely on at all times.

I want to thank Debbie Chappel for her skill and patience as a typist.

I regret that acknowledgments will fail to do justice to the many persons who have given specific help in my years of work on this thesis.

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A scientific society will turn on the idea of 'mastering' people (by money or war or the like) or alternatively 'serving' them (philanthropy). A historical society will turn on the idea of 'understanding' them. (R.G. Collingwood, "Historiography", unpublished manuscript, 1938-39, p. 21.)

A commentator who does not want to make his author talk good sense has no business to be a commentator. (R.G. Collingwood, <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 160.)

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[T]he question whether a man's views are true or false does not arise until we have found out what they are. (R.G. Collingwood, <u>An Essay on Phil-</u> osophical Method, p. 217.)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations of Collingwood's works will be used:

RP	Religion and Philosophy (1916)
CPH	"Croce's Philosophy of History" (1921)
RuPh	"Ruskin's Philosophy" (1922)
HSc	"Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge" (1922)
CNI	"Can the New Idealism Dispense with Mysticism" (1923)
SM	Speculum Mentis (1924)
NAPH	"The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" (1925)
SHC	"Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927)
RFCI	"Reason is Faith Cultivating Itself" (1927)
FR	"Faith and Reason" (1928)
PhH	"The Philosophy of History" (1930)
EPhM	An Essay on Philosophical Method (1933)
IN	The Idea of Nature (written 1932-1934; published 1945)
IH	The Idea of History (written 1935-1940; published 1946)
RB	Roman Britain and the English Settlements (1937)
PA	The Principles of Art (1938)
А	An Autobiography (1939)
EM	An Essay on Metaphysics (1940)
NL	The New Leviathan (1942)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that there is an important relationship between Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions and his theory of historical understanding. One major reason that this relationship has been overlooked by Collingwood's critics is that it is believed by most commentators that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions was not expounded by Collingwood until 1940 in An Essay on Metaphysics. That is, it is generally believed that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions was a late development in his thinking and that this theory grew out of his study of history in 1935-1936. However, there is evidence which we think will conclusively show that Collingwood was working on his doctrine of absolute presuppositions before he started writing the 1935-1936 papers on history. Moreover, since we find some of these 1935-1936 papers on history in The Idea of History, this evidence throws new light on that work and warrants a re-interpretation of it. Our claim will be that there is a new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935 and that this new turn is the result of Collingwood working out his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's.

It appears that we now have conclusive evidence to show that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions earlier than the late 1930's. This evidence suggests that we must now reject the

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view that the theory of absolute presuppositions was a late development in Collingwood's thinking and that this theory grew out of his study of history in 1935-1936. Let us call this standard interpretation the late development thesis. It turns out that Collingwood was working on the theory of absolute presuppositions before he started writing the 1935-1936 papers on history. This new evidence prepares the way for this thesis for it seems clear that Collingwood wrote the 1935-1936 papers on history with the doctrine of absolute presuppositions in the 'back of his mind'. And this brings us to the main contention of this thesis. We will attempt to show that there is a logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the theory of historical understanding.

Now the new evidence that we are referring to, is the two groups of manuscripts that have recently been deposited into the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The first group of manuscripts was deposited into the Bodleian Library in March, 1978. Exactly two years later in March, 1980, the second group of manuscripts was added.¹ Not only do these manuscripts throw new light on <u>The Idea of History</u>, but they throw new light on all of Collingwood's writings.² One thing that these manuscripts conclusively show is that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions earlier than the late 1930's. One other writer who has studied Collingwood's

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^{1.} See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science: The Philosophy of R.G.</u> <u>Collingwood</u>, (The Hague: <u>Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 1981</u>), p. 127.

^{2.} This new evidence also warrants a new interpretation of a number of Collingwood's works. For example, a new interpretation of <u>The Principles of Art</u> (1938) is now warranted. This study would show the important relationship between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the aesthetic imagination.

unpublished manuscripts at Oxford is W.J. Van Der Dussen and it is his claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions can be traced back to 1934. In <u>History As A Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, which was published in 1981, Van Der Dussen states:

> It is worth mentioning that the lectures of 1934 are also of great interest with regard to the development of Collingwood's views on metaphysics. In his <u>Autobiography</u> and <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u> Collingwood developed the theory that metaphysics is a purely historical science, laying down the absolute presuppositions of a certain age, group of persons or even individual (he concentrated in fact on the first). In his <u>Autobiography</u> it was implied that he had already supported this view for a long time.... Though we will not go deeper into Collingwood's conception of metaphysics, I think some observations may be made with regard to the lectures of 1934. It is obvious that the view Collingwood develops in his second lecture corresponds to his later theory of metaphysics as the science of absolute presuppositions.³

We will have more to say concerning these lectures of 1934 in Chapter I. But these lectures of 1934 would seem to support the claim that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions before he wrote the 1935-1936 papers on history. The standard interpretation, then, that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions developed out of his study of history in 1935-1936 appears to be mistaken. A close study of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts shows that Collingwood was working on his doctrine of absolute presuppositions at least as early as 1934 and this evidence justifies a re-interpretation of The Idea of History.

The purpose of this thesis is not to systematically study Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts. This task has already been done by W.J. Van Der Dussen. We will only use the unpublished manuscripts

^{3.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 193-195.

when they help us clarify the exact logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. The unpublished manuscripts, then, will only be used for the following purposes: (1) to aid us in giving an accurate account of Collingwood's intellectual development, (2) to help us clarify the concept of an absolute presupposition and trace the development of this concept in Collingwood's writings, (3) to assist us in understanding Collingwood's attempt at solving the problem of historical understanding which includes topics such as historical explanation, the historical imagination, historical evidence and historical re-enactment.

We must also emphasize the fact that this is not a 'position' thesis. By this is meant that the purpose of the thesis is not to offer and then justify a philosophical position. In the case of this particular thesis, Collingwood's own philosophical position will not be argued for. The problem of evaluating Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions or his theory of historical understanding, then, will be beyond the scope of this project. Rather, this thesis is an 'interpretation' thesis. The purpose of the thesis is to offer and justify a particular interpretation of one aspect of Collingwood's work. And we must insist on the fact that this thesis only concerns itself with one aspect of Collingwood's thought. We are not offering <u>the</u> interpretation of Collingwood, but a <u>contribution</u> to the interpretation of Collingwood. The aim of the thesis is to point out one important aspect of Collingwood's work that has been overlooked by past commentators. This is not to say that we will not point out what we consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of past

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commentaries. But our examination of Collingwood's critics will be limited to the subject of the thesis.

In this thesis we will interpret <u>The Idea of History</u> in terms of the theoretical framework of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. And we are claiming that this approach is justified because the major claims of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> had already been worked out by Collingwood before the writing of <u>The Idea of History</u>. In 1932 Collingwood had claimed that there is an important relationship between metaphysics and history.⁴ And at least by 1934, Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions. It is our claim that Collingwood's work on metaphysics, and especially the theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's, 'coloured' his work on history in the mid-1930's. Since we now have evidence to support the claim that the major concepts of <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u> were worked out by Collingwood in the early 1930's, we do not think that we have a problem of chronology when we interpret <u>The Idea of</u> <u>History</u> in terms of the theoretical framework of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.

Our claim in this thesis is much stronger than the claim that in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> there is an important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. This claim can be justified by appealing to many passages in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. For example, Collingwood says that eighteenthcentury historians absolutely presupposed that 'nature is the cause of historical events' (EM, 98). And our claim is much stronger than the

^{4.} See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 158.

claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is found in embryonic form in <u>The Idea of History</u>. Only a person who held the late development thesis would make this suggestion. Our claim in this thesis is much stronger than the embryonic thesis because we are saying that in <u>The</u> <u>Idea of History</u> there is, in fact, an important logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding.⁵

There are many reasons that help us explain the fact that the interpretation of Collingwood given in this thesis has not been given before. We have already mentioned that Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts have only recently become available. Another reason is that commentators on Collingwood's philosophy of history have tended to neglect his other writings. We will see that the views of W.H. Walsh, William Dray and Rex Martin are due to this. An examination of the claims made by Walsh, Dray and Martin will be given in chapters IV-VII. There are two other major reasons for the logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding not having been noticed before. The first reason is that the the late development thesis has been accepted by almost every commentator

^{5.} We first made this claim prior to consulting the unpublished manuscripts at Oxford. At this time our thesis was highly speculative and controversial. But now with the availability of the unpublished manuscripts, we think that there is strong evidence to support our project. We have Van Der Dussen to thank for pointing out the importance of the unpublished manuscripts and for convincing us that a journey to Oxford to consult the manuscripts was essential. When we mentioned our thesis to Van Der Dussen at a philosophy of history conference in Ottawa, Canada (April, 1980), he remarked that we could find evidence to support this project in Oxford.

on Collingwood's writings. As mentioned, the late development thesis is the claim that the theory of absolute presuppositions grew out of an intensive study of history in 1935-1936. This standard interpretation in Collingwoodian scholarship is accepted by Alan Donagan, Albert Shalom, W.M. Johnston, Louis Mink and Michael Krausz, among others. Up until the present time only two major commentators have rejected the late development thesis. The first critic to reject this thesis was Lionel Rubinoff. Rubinoff argues that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions goes back to Collingwood's World War I period. We will take issue with Rubinoff's claim in Chapter I. We will attempt to show that Rubinoff's account of the development of Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions is not discriminating enough. The only other major commentator to reject the late development thesis is W.J. Van Der Dussen. Van Der Dussen traces the theory of absolute presuppositions back to 1934. This claim is the result of his study of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts. Van Der Dussen's major work on Collingwood is largely a study of Collingwood's philosophy of history. As we see it, the major weakness of Van Der Dussen's volume is that he does not see the important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. Let us now turn to the other major reason that helps us explain why the important logical connection between Collingwood's work on metaphysics in the early 1930's and his work on history in the mid-1930's has been overlooked. Some commentators have quite consciously held an alternative interpretative framework. Lionel Rubinoff and Louis Mink would fall into this camp. Although Rubinoff rejects the late development

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thesis, he interprets <u>The Idea Of History</u> in terms of the conceptual framework of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. This has led Rubinoff to offer a Hegelian reading of <u>The Idea of History</u>. In Mink's case, he interprets <u>The Idea</u> of <u>History</u> in terms of the relevant ideas of <u>The Principles of Art</u> and <u>The New Leviathan</u>. Instead of interpreting <u>The Idea Of History</u> in terms of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, as Rubinoff does, or in terms of <u>The Principles of Art</u> and <u>The New Leviathan</u>, as Mink does, our aim in this thesis will be to interpret <u>The Idea of History</u> in terms of the theoretical framework of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. This will allow us to uncover the important component of Collingwood's thought that Rubinoff and Mink have not seen. And this component is the logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and history. But we must add that we are not saying that we entirely disagree with Rubinoff and Mink. In fact, as we will see, many of their claims are quite compatible with this thesis.

In the first section of Chapter I we will sketch Collingwood's intellectual development from the publication of <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> in 1916 to the publication of <u>The New Leviathan</u> in 1942. In the second section of Chapter I we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the issue of Collingwood's intellectual development from 1916 to 1943.

In the first section of Chapter II we will examine Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions as we find it presented in <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>. In this chapter it will be our job to make this notion of an absolute presupposition as clear as possible. Our main claim will be that absolute presuppositions are to be seen as logico-regulative

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entities. In the second section of this chapter we will discuss what other commentators have said about the question of what Collingwood means by an absolute presupposition.

In the first section of Chapter III we will continue with our study of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We will see that Collingwood holds a foundationalist theory of knowledge. But Collingwood's foundationalism is different from the traditional foundationalist position in two important ways. Collingwood claims that the foundation of a conceptual system lacks empirical truth-value and that the foundation itself can 'shift and change'. This brings us to the problem of conceptual change. In the second section of Chapter III, we will once again point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the questions of foundationalism and conceptual change in an attempt to make what we consider to be Collingwood's position clearer.

In the first section of Chapter IV we will turn to Collingwood's 1935-1936 papers on history which are found in <u>The Idea of History</u>. The paper we will examine in this chapter is "Human Nature and Human History". In this paper Collingwood rejects the positivistic attempt at a "science of human nature". This chapter is an attempt to show that there is an important relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical explanation. In the second section of this chapter we will attempt to show that no commentator has yet seen that there is an important logical relationship between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical explanation.

In the first section of Chapter V we will turn to Collingwood's

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"The Historical Imagination". In this paper Collingwood examines Bradley's The Presuppositions Of Critical History. It is our claim that it was probably Collingwood's work on absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's that led him to re-examine Bradley's work on the relationship of presuppositions to history. Collingwood agrees with Bradley that there is an important relationship between presuppositions and history, but claims that Bradley makes too many concessions to positivism. In this chapter we will attempt to demonstrate how presuppositions 'shape' the historical imagination. Since it would appear that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the historical imagination, and since Collingwood tells us in An Essay on Metaphysics that absolute presuppositions have changed throughout history, we will argue that the historical imagination is changing. In the second section of Chapter V we will claim that no commentator has yet seen the important relationship between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the historical imagination.

In the first section of Chapter VI we will examine Collingwood's "Historical Evidence". We will point out the important relationship between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence. It turns out, we will argue, that an historian's absolute presuppositions will 'shape' what he considers to be historical evidence. This claim would seem to be logically related to Collingwood's rejection of ready-made evidence. In the second section of this chapter we will point out the major reasons that explain why Collingwood's commentators have overlooked this important component in his thought. In the first section of Chapter VII we will examine Collingwood's "History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience". In this chapter we will point out the important relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. In the second section of this chapter we will discuss what other commentators have had to say about the notion of "re-thinking" or "re-enactment". Now, some commentators, including Rubinoff, Mink, and M.H. Nielsen, have suggested a possible relationship between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and re-thinking thoughts. But this suggestion has not yet been worked out in any detail by any commentator.

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND

In the first section of this chapter we will sketch Collingwood's intellectual development from the publication of <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> in 1916 to the publication of <u>The New Leviathan</u> in 1942. As we see it, this background material is a necessary preliminary study for anyone wishing to understand the logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. In the second section of this chapter we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the issue of Collingwood's intellectual development. We will see that Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts have forced us to see his intellectual development in a new light.

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Collingwood's first book was <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>, (Oxford, 1916). One main purpose of <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> is to attack the notion of a psychology of religion. Collingwood attempts to establish the characteristics of religion which make it unamenable to the analysis of psychology. In this way he thinks that he can save the "philosophic" element of religion from the inroads of empirical psychology. Now, in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> Collingwood is not saying that the psychologist

cannot study the mind at all. Rather he is saying that psychology cannot study mind in its entirety. Later in <u>An Autobiography</u> (1939) and <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> (1940) Collingwood restricts the role of the psychologist to the realm of feelings and claims that the psychologist cannot give us a "science of thought". But this is not the view that he expresses in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. In this 1916 publication he admits that there is a psychology of knowing. However, he wants to distinguish between a psychology of knowing and a logic of knowing. The psychology of knowing "...differs from logic or the philosophical theory of knowledge in that it treats a judgment--the act of knowing something--as an event in the mind, a historical fact. It does not go on to determine the relation of this mental event to the 'something' known, the reality beyond the act which the mind, in that act, apprehends" (RP, 40).

One guiding principle of Collingwood's idea of historical knowledge is the principle of sympathetic understanding. We find this principle in as early a work as <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. He says in connection with the heresies of early Christianity that one should enter "...with some degree of sympathy into the problems which men wished to solve, and... comprehend the motives which led them to offer their various answers" (RP, 42). This passage, along with other passages in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> and later in the unpublished "Truth and Contradiction", would seem to support the claim that the "logic of question and answer" was first worked out during his World War I period. Collingwood tells us in <u>Religion and</u> <u>Philosophy</u> that Christianity is an answer to a philosophical problem (RP, xiii). In fact, he says that every religion is an answer to a question. Also in this 1916 work Collingwood says that philosophical assumptions

underlie questions (RP, 194). So, Collingwood is saying in <u>Religion</u> <u>and Philosophy</u> that answers are in response to questions and that questions arise from assumptions. It appears that Collingwood is correct to claim in his <u>An Autobiography</u> that the logic of question and answer goes back to his World War I period.¹

It is also interesting to note that we find an anticipation of Collingwood's "inside-outside" metaphor in Religion and Philosophy. This inside-outside metaphor is found in The Idea of History and is presented in connection with the re-enactment doctrine. In Religion and Philosophy he tells us that history must be studied from within. This is another guiding principle or regulative principle in the theory of historical understanding. "...[T]he true task of historical theology", he says, "is to find out not only what was said, but what was meant...Then we should be in a position to understand from within the new doctrines of Jesus, and really to place ourselves at the fountain-head of the faith. To speak of studying the mind of Jesus from within may seem presumptuous; but no other method is of the slightest value" (RP, 43). It would appear that the guiding principle mentioned above (i.e. the principle that history must be studied from within) is a transhistorical principle for Collingwood and that this principle, along with other principles to be mentioned in Chapter IV, allow for the possibility of historical knowledge.

In <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> Collingwood also aims to demonstrate that history and philosophy are interdependent. History cannot be done without philosophy, and philosophy cannot be done without history. It

^{1.} On the subject of the logic of question and answer in the 1916 publication see also <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> pages 62, 63, 123 and 124.

is clear, then, that there is an important overlap between philosophy and history.² Although philosophy deals with the abstract and history with the concrete, neither abstract nor concrete is intelligible apart from the other. History gives us facts and this is why philosophy needs history, and philosophy gives us understanding and this is why history needs philosophy. "In the first place it appears that history cannot exist without philosophy", Collingwood says:

> There is no such thing as an entirely non-philosophical history. History cannot proceed without philosophical presuppositions of a highly complex character. It deals with evidence, and therefore makes epistemological assumptions as to the value of evidence; it describes the actions of historical characters in terms whose meaning is fixed by ethical thought; it has continually to determine what events are possible and what are not possible, and this can only be done in virtue of some general metaphysical conclusions...It is equally certain that philosophy is impossible without history; for any theory must be a theory of facts, and if there were no facts there would be no occasion for theory (RP, 46-47).

In addition to the fact that there is an important overlap between philosophy and history in this passage, it is also important to point out at this time that Collingwood is claiming in this 1916 publication that history cannot proceed without philosophical presuppositions. Now, although in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> Collingwood says that history cannot proceed without philosophical presuppositions, these philosophical presuppositions are not the "absolute presuppositions" of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Even though it is clear that Collingwood had an interest in the subject of presuppositions in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>, nowhere in this

^{2.} This "overlapping" theme that exists in this 1916 work can be seen in all of Collingwood's writings. The overlapping theme does not begin with <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u>.

1916 work does he talk about absolute presuppositions. We do not find any of Collingwood's major claims about absolute presuppositions in 1916. Although Collingwood does speak about absolute starting-points (RP, 63) and absolute principles (RP, 200) in Religion and Philosophy, he does not make any of the major claims about these starting-points or principles that he makes about absolute presuppositions in An Essay on Metaphysics. At the very most all we could claim at this point is that there is an anticipation of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions in 1916. Collingwood does say that all questions rest on presuppositions (RP, 194, 204). And he does claim that we can uncover the presuppositions of other thinkers (RP, 69, 164, 194). In addition, he does claim that we can evaluate presuppositions in a critical manner (RP, 69, 109, 196, 210).³ But it is clear that the claims made about these philosophical presuppositions, absolute starting-points or absolute principles are not identical with the claims made about absolute presuppositions in An Essay on Metaphysics.

Collingwood claims in an Autobiography (1939) to have developed

^{3.} Other similarities between <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> are as follows: (1) foundationalist account of knowledge is expounded (RP, 49, 59), (2) there can be metaphysical errors (RP, xvi), (3) a man may be unconscious of having a philosophy (RP, xiii, xvii), (4) there is an important distinction between the psychology of "truth" and truth itself (RP, 20, 39, 41), (5) proof is not for the natural scientist (RP, 61), (6) impossible to deny one principle except by asserting another principle (RP, 65), (7) mathematics rests on unproved assumptions (RP, 67), (8) it is impossible to be prejudice-free (RP, 68, 69, 115), (9) the criticism of assumptions comes after the work with them (RP, 69), (10) assumptions are not conclusions (RP, 115), (12) the 'Absolute' is a bare abstraction (RP, 115-116), (13) all questions are interrelated (RP, 124), (14) problem of proof dealt with (RP, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 119).

the basis of a "logic of question and answer" in an unpublished book called "Truth and Contradiction" (A, 42).⁴ In "Truth and Contradiction" we find Collingwood emphasizing the importance of the context for understanding the meaning of a statement. This is one major component of the logic of question and answer. He writes:

> If this point requires further development and illustration, let us take any perfectly simple judgment, as that William the Conqueror won the battle of Hastings. Here we have a fragment of European history detached absolutely from its context; and yet surely, a critic may reply, it is still absolutely true. Yes, doubtless it is still true, but only because it has refused to be severed entirely from its context. To separate it successfully, we must forget all we know of William and of the battle of Hastings; we must force out of our mind everything about William except that he won the battle of Hastings, and everything about the battle of Hastings except that it was won by William. And so treated, it is surely clear that all meaning and therefore all truth has been removed from the judgment.⁵

Here we find Collingwood rejecting the claim of the realists that we can divorce a simple judgment from its context. Collingwood rejects the realist

^{4. &}quot;Truth and Contradiction" was written in 1917, but Collingwood could not find a publisher for it (A, 42-43). In the <u>Autobiography</u> he says that he destroyed this manuscript of 1917, but this claim appears to be mistaken. What apparently is Chapter II of "Truth and Contradiction" has fortunately survived. On this point we agree with Van Der Dussen. See Van Der Dussen History As A Science, p. 445. This unpublished manuscript can be found at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. We will see in a moment that one is indeed justified in asserting that the subject of "Truth and Contradiction" was in fact the logic of question and answer. But before turning to that subject the following remark made by Collingwood in the <u>Autobiography</u> should be kept in mind as we pro-ceed in this thesis: "I did not really feel any great desire to expound the philosophical ideas I have been setting forth in these chapters (i.e. in the Autobiography, Chapters 5-7), whether to my colleagues or to the public. As I have said, I tried to expound them; but when "Truth and Contradiction" was rejected by a publisher and my attack on 'realist' principles ignored by my colleagues, I felt justified in turning to the far more congenial task of applying them and thus testing them empirically" (A, 74).

^{5. &}quot;Truth and Contradiction", p. 11.

principle that you can study the meaning and truth of a judgment in isolation from its context.

In "Truth and Contradiction", as in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>, we find Collingwood's "colour" metaphor. In "Truth and Contradiction" he tells us that presuppositions "colour every detail and aspect" of a theory. And in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> he says that "[t]he belief that Christ really lived, whether it is true or false, colours the whole consciousness of the believer" (RP, 54). And in "Truth and Contradiction" Collingwood says that presuppositions have truth-value. This is the other parallel with <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> because in the 1916 publication he also said that presuppositions have truth-value (RP, 51). In "Truth and Contradiction" he states:

> A single alteration of detail in a system of thought must be attended by a readjustment, indeed a regeneration, of every part of the system. It is a mistake to say that the two theories held by A and B were forced into contradiction only by the presence of a single false presupposition, which removed, they fell at once into harmony. The falsity of the one presupposition coloured every detail and aspect of each theory; and the work accomplished in the debate was not the mere excision of an offending member but the re-orientation by each disputant of his whole outlook.⁶

In "Truth and Contradiction", then, we find Collingwood continuing his work on the subject of presuppositions. And it is important to note here that Collingwood is dealing with the subject of presuppositions on the same page that he is dealing with the subject of historical judgments. It is clear, then, that in this unpublished manuscript of 1917 he is saying

^{6. &}quot;Truth and Contradiction", p. 11. Note also that there is in this passage an anticipation of Collingwood's doctrine of "stresses and strains" in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.

that there is an important relationship between presuppositions and historical judgments.

Although in "Truth and Contradiction" there is an anticipation of Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions, we cannot claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions goes back to this 1917 manuscript. The main reason that we cannot trace the doctrine of absolute presuppositions back to "Truth and Contradiction" is that Collingwood says that presuppositions do have truth-value, which is to say that presuppositions can be true or false. It is clear, then, that the presuppositions that Collingwood talks about in "Truth and Contradiction" and Religion and Philosophy are not the absolute presuppositions of An Essay on Metaphysics. In An Essay on Metaphysics he tells us that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value and by this claim he means that absolute presuppositions cannot be empirically true or empirically false. It is extremely unfortunate that we do not have the complete text of "Truth and Contradiction". But given the evidence that we do have (i.e. Chapter II of "Truth and Contradiction"), we must conclude that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not contained in this manuscript.

Let us now turn to an unpublished manuscript entitled "A Footnote to Future History" which was written by Collingwood in 1919. In this manuscript we again find the doctrine of foundationalism that we have already seen in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. In 1919 Collingwood is now saying that the foundation underlying a piece of thinking is "logical".⁷ Later, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> we will see that Collingwood says that

^{7. &}quot;A Footnote to Future History", p. 2.

the foundation underlying a piece of thinking is "logical".⁸ But the difference with the later, 1940, text is that Collingwood does not here assert that the logical foundation is made up of absolute presuppositions. Nor does he hold in 1919, as he does in 1940, that logical foundations give rise to questions though they are not, themselves, answers to questions. Nor does he explicitly state in 1919, as he does in 1940, that metaphysics is the uncovering of such "logical foundations" in each and every instance of thinking.

Let us now examine a paper entitled "Ruskin's Philosophy", an address which Collingwood delivered to the Ruskin Centenary Conference at Coniston on August 8th, 1919. The paper was published in 1922. In this paper he sets up ideal types of two trends in eighteenth and nineteenth century thought. He labels these two ideal types Logicism and Historicism. Ruskin is regarded by Collingwood as being pre-eminently of the historicist frame of mind. And thinkers with a "historical habit of mind" strive to reconstruct the past through "imaginative appreciation". Collingwood contrasts this habit of the mind with "logicism". To the latter "habit of the mind" he ascribes the tendency to search for general laws and to subsume facts under them. The result of logicism is a "contempt for facts", "a habitual intolerance" and "a tendency toward monotony and rigidity in all kinds of mental work" (RuPh, 13). Although Collingwood clearly defends the historicist frame of mind against the logicist frame of mind,

^{8.} There is also an indication in the 1919 manuscript that a logical foundation does not change very rapidly. This parallels the position of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. In the 1919 manuscript Collingwood says that medieval culture follows from the logical foundation of Platonism.

he adds an important qualification: "In calling these two types of thought the logical and the historical respectively I do not mean to imply that the first has no dealings with history nor the second with logic (RuPh, 16).

In "Ruskin's Philosophy", he tells us that there is a "ring of principles" which run through a man's life-work. This ring of principles provides whatever "constant purpose" and "consistent point of view" a man may display.⁹ But most thinkers do not even know what their own fundamental principles or deepest convictions are. We have already seen this view presented in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. In "Ruskin's Philosophy", he states:

> It may seem strange that our deepest and most important convictions should habitually go unexpressed. But this is still stranger, that we are often quite mistaken as to what these convictions are. If you ask a man to state his fundamental beliefs, and then carefully watch his actions and sayings, you will generally find that these are based on a set of beliefs quite different from the ones which he has stated. So the

^{9.} We also find here an anticipation of the doctrine of "stresses and strains" that is expounded in An Essay on Metaphysics. He states: "This ring of thought--this nucleus of the individual mind--is what I mean by a man's philosophy. Everyone has it, whether he is a philosopher or not: and a man is a great or a little, a valuable man or a worthless, largely according as this ring is strong or weak in structure, good or bad in material. The acts and decisions which shape a man's life are suspended from this ring of principles; and if the ring is weak a heavy load will snap it; the man's character, as we say, fails to stand the strain and we brand him henceforward as untrustworthy. Or again, if the principles of which the ring is composed are unsound and untrue, then the judgments and actions which issue from them are wrong and mistaken,..." (RuPh, 10). There are two more things to note in this passage. First, these principles underlie not only judgments, but actions. Here we have a parallel with An Essay on Metaphysics. Secondly, these principles can be true or false, that is, they have truth-value. And it is for this major reason that the ring of principles cannot be equivalent to the constellation of absolute presuppositions.

attempt to discover a man's philosophy often reveals facts very startling to the man himself--facts which he will regard less as truisms than as paradoxes (RuPh, 11).

Collingwood goes on to say that he sees the philosopher as a kind of detective who reads between the lines in order to uncover presuppositions or principles. This may remind the reader of <u>The Idea of History</u> where Collingwood points out the similarities between the work of an historian and that of a police detective. For Collingwood, the philosopher has the job of detecting fundamental presuppositions or principles. He must 'dig' until he arrives at the most fundamental level of thought. Oftentimes he will have to look beneath a false consciousness. Philosophy, then, can be seen as the enterprise of demystification.¹⁰ "Now it is this attempt to discover what people's philosophy is", he says in "Ruskin's Philosophy",

that marks the philosopher. Much as everybody has a brain, but only the anatomist sets himself to discover what it looks like and how it works, so everybody has a philosophy, but only the philosopher makes it his business to probe into the mind and lay bare that recess in which the ultimate beliefs lie hidden (RuPh, 11).11

It is clear that in "Ruskin's Philosophy" Collingwood still had not developed his theory of absolute presuppositions. But it is important not to overlook the parallels between "Ruskin's Philosophy" and <u>An Essay</u> on Metaphysics. In "Ruskin's Philosophy", as in An Essay on Metaphysics,

We may want to add Collingwood to Paul Ricoeur's list of the masters of suspicion. For Ricoeur, there are three masters of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. Although these three thinkers are seemingly mutually exclusive, they all agree on the importance of demystification. See Paul Ricoeur, <u>Freud and Philosophy</u>, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 32.

^{11.} Collingwood goes on to say that Ruskin was not aware of his basic convictions and so we could say that Collingwood is attempting to uncover Ruskin's basic convictions in this paper.

Collingwood wants to avoid the extremes of historicism and logicism. And there are some similarities between the "ring of principles" in "Ruskin's Philosophy" and the "constellation of absolute presuppositions" in <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Collingwood's point in this 1922 publication, as in his 1940 publication, is that it is a mistake to claim that there is only <u>one</u> basic principle or conviction which underlies a man's life-work. Rather, it is a "ring" or "constellation" of basic principles or convictions which are the basis of a man's life-work. He also assumed, in 1922 as in 1940, not only that men do possess such underlying "principles", but that they are frequently not aware of them or are mistaken about them.

It is clear that Collingwood wants to avoid historicism in its extreme form since in "Croce's Philosophy of History" (1921) he rejects Croce's desertion of philosophy for history.¹² Collingwood argues that philosophy and history are distinct disciplines, even though there is an interrelation and dependence of each on the other. His main criticism of Croce, therefore, is that Croce regarded philosophy as a mere subordinate part of history.

It would be incorrect to say that in "Croce's Philosophy of History" Collingwood is criticizing Croce for doing exactly what Collingwood himself had done in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. Collingwood does not subordinate philosophy to history in this 1916 publication. If

^{12. &}quot;Croce's Philosophy of History" is a critical review of Croce's <u>Teoria e Storia della Storiografia</u> (1917). Croce's book appeared first in a German edition, <u>Zur Theorie und Geschichte der</u> <u>Historiographie</u> (Tübingen, 1915). "Croce's Philosophy of History" is the first in a series of articles on history published between 1921 and 1930.

anything, it would be more accurate to say that in "Croce's Philosophy of History" Collingwood is criticizing Gentile's identification of history and philosophy that Collingwood himself had argued for in <u>Religion</u> <u>and Philosophy</u>. But this is only correct in a sense because in the 1916 publication Collingwood distinguished analytically between philosophy and history saying that philosophy gives us understanding while history gives us facts.

The chronology of Collingwood's attitude to logicism and historicism is the following. In <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (1916), we could say that Collingwood concentrated an attack on logicism in its extreme form. In "Ruskin's Philosophy", written in 1919, Collingwood wanted to avoid the Scylla of logicism and the Charybdis of historicism. And in "Croce's Philosophy of History" (1921), Collingwood concentrated an attack on historicism in its extreme form. So from <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> to "Croce's Philosophy of History", we have Collingwood moving from an attack on logicism in its extreme form to an attack on historicism in its extreme form. The avoidance of the extremes of logicism and historicisn was a position that Collingwood never relinquished.

In this paper Collingwood also objects to what Croce himself calls "naturalism" or "transcendence". Naturalism or transcendence asserts a false separation between "idea and fact". And yet only on the assumption of the "dualism of idea and fact" can it be maintained "that philosophy is immanent in history while history is transcendent with reference to philosophy". The transcendent attitude, which Collingwood rejects, is defined as "asserting the existence of a criterion outside the historian's mind by which the points of view which arise within that mind are justified and condemned".¹³ We will find this attitude rejected again in <u>Speculum</u> Mentis and An Essay on Metaphysics.

In "Croce's Philosophy of History" we again find Collingwood claiming that we cannot avoid holding presuppositions. We have already seen that this view is expressed in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> and "Ruskin's Philosophy". A presupposition-less philosophy is really a mistaken ideal. Actually, he says, it is impossible.¹⁴ Collingwood adds that "the historian can never be impartial; he can only struggle to overcome one prejudice after another, and trust to his successors to carry on the work".¹⁵ An historian can never be impartial because it is a "law of our nature" that we must bring presuppositions or fundamental convictions to our study of history. And Collingwood is not saying that the historian is a slave to an historical tradition. It is possible for an historian to evaluate prejudices and presuppositions critically. So Collingwood is not abandoning the search for truth. Truth seen as a regulative idea is quite consistent with the claim that we must all hold prejudices and presuppositions.¹⁶

- 13. R.G. Collingwood, "Croce's Philosophy of History" in R.G. Collingwood: Essays in the Philosophy of History (Austin, 1965) ed., W. Debbins, p. 16.
- 14. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 12.
- 15. Ibid., p. 15.
- 16. In "Croce's Philosophy of History", we do not find the following claims: (1) presuppositions lack truth-value, (2) presuppositions are not answers to questions, (3) presuppositions logically give rise to questions, (4) presuppositions are nonverifiable, (5) presuppositions are meaningful in a metaphysical sense and not an empirical sense, (6) presuppositions are to be uncovered by the metaphysician. Since we do not find these claims in "Croce's Philosophy of History", we cannot conclude that by 1921 Collingwood had developed his theory of absolute presuppositions.

In 1922 Collingwood wrote an article entitled "Are History and Science different Kinds of Knowledge?" He argues that the distinction between history and science is illusory because "[w]hen both are regarded as actual inquiries, the difference of method and of logic wholly disappears" (HSc, 33). This paper is an argument against the view that history is non-scientific because the historian concerns himself with knowledge of the particular fact, whereas the natural scientist concerns himself with knowledge of the universal. In an argument that is reminiscent of the argument in Religion and Philosophy (RP, 99) and "Croce's Philosophy of History", Collingwood says that the bare fact and the pure universal are false abstractions. "[T]he sense-datum (pure particular) and concept (pure universal) are false abstractions when taken separately which yet, as elements in the one concrete object of knowledge, the individual interpreted fact, are capable of being analytically distinguished" (HSc, 29). Collingwood is well aware of the fact that he is presenting a position contrary to the traditional view which began with Aristotle. This is the view that science is directed toward the universal and history towards the particular. The practicing scientist is concerned with the exemplification of the universal in the fact, not the pure universal, while the historian would not recognize a fact as a fact if he did not use generalizations. This contrast, then, between generalization and particularization as a basis for distinguishing between science and history is incorrect. Collingwood's argument that bare fact and pure universal are false abstractions appears to be a restatement of the Kantian position that concepts without content are empty and that percepts without concepts are blind. Collingwood states:

The object which the scientist cognises is not 'a universal', but always particular fact, a fact which but for the existence of his generalising activity would be blank meaningless sensedata. His activity as a scientist may be described alternatively as the 'understanding' of sense-data by concepts, or the 'realising' of concepts in sensation, 'intuiting' his thoughts or 'thinking out' his intuitions (HSc, 28).

In this paper, then, we find Collingwood attacking another form of dualism. But this time it is the dualism between science and history that he rejects.

It is not necessary to say much more about "Are History and Science different Kinds of Knowledge?" because Collingwood later admitted that he exaggerated the identity between history and science. In this publication of 1922 he had said that "the analysis of science in epistemological terms is thus identical with the analysis of history and the distinction between them as separate kinds of knowledge is an illusion". But on 21 September 1922 he sent de Ruggiero a copy of the paper admitting that he had exaggerated the identity between history and science. Collingwood had read the paper at a Congress at Manchester in the summer of 1922 and he tells de Ruggiero that "the rules of the game called a 'symposium'...oblige the disputant to take up an exaggerated position and defend his thesis".¹⁷ Collingwood continues: "Of course I should really distinguish history and science by a distinction between the categories under which the historian and the scientist think the object: the logical formula of the

^{17. (}i) See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 43. (ii) W.H. Walsh in a conversation (April, 1979) remarked that he (Walsh) had the impression that when Collingwood lectured he (Collingwood) was 'holding things back'. That is, Collingwood was not laying all of his cards on the table. This predisposition can be seen in the Manchester symposium. And it could be argued that this predisposition is especially evident after "Truth and Contradiction" was rejected by a publisher.
thinking (sense, category, individualisation of the object) being identical in each case".¹⁸ Now, Collingwood's unexaggerated position is found in a paper entitled "Science and History" (1923).¹⁹ He still agrees with the 1922 publication that "[g]eneralizations are ways of grouping facts, and facts aren't facts at all until they are grouped."²⁰ And he says that historians and scientists are "really doing the same thing" by trying to understand the facts.²¹ So there are still similarities or an overlap between history and science. But the historian differs from the scientist in realizing what he is doing. Here, we have an anticipation of <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u> where Collingwood claims that history is more "reflective" than natural science. Apparently Collingwood is talking about the modern "scientific" historian and not the common-sense historian here, for otherwise, his claim would be, according to his own terms, inconsistent.

In Collingwood's early writings, the attack on many dualisms was one of his major purposes. In <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>, he attacked the dualism of history and philosophy. In "Ruskin's Philosophy" he attacked the dualism of logicism and historicism. Here in "Are History and Science different Kinds of Knowledge?" (1922) and "Science and History" (1923),

18. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 43.

- 20. Ibid., p. 55.
- 21. Ibid., p. 58.

^{19.} R.G. Collingwood, "History and Science", <u>The Vasculum</u> 9 (1923), pp. 52-59.

Collingwood attacks the dualism of natural science and history.²² But by rejecting the dualism of natural science and history, we are not to assume that natural science is identical to history, although this was Collingwood's exaggerated position at the symposium at Manchester in 1922. So Collingwood wants to avoid the extreme of total identification and the extreme of rigid dualism. It would appear that in 1919 and in the early 1920's Collingwood came to recognize that in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (1916) he was coming too close to the extreme of total identification when he attacked the extreme of rigid dualism. In 1919 and in the early 1920's, Collingwood set out to steer a middle course between the Scylla of total identification and the Charybdis of rigid dualism. Collingwood was to continue this course in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, although there is an overlap between art, religion, science, history and philosophy, these "forms of experience" are not identical.

Let us turn now to <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. In the preface to <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u> Collingwood says that what is needed at the present time (i.e. 1924) "...is a critical review of the chief forms of experience, a new Treatise of Human Nature philosophically conceived" (SM, 9). Collingwood's interest in the problem of human nature, then, does not begin in 1936 with the publication of "Human Nature and Human History". He tells us in his

^{22.} Later in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood was to reaffirm this claim. In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> he says that both the natural scientist and the historian hold absolute presuppositions and use the logic of question and answer. According to Collingwood, the differences between natural science and history are exaggerated. This is not to say that there are no differences between natural science and history. We will also see this view expressed in The Idea of History.

preface to <u>Speculum Mentis</u> that he has not relinquished the "...belief in the possibility of a philosophical system,... (SM, 9). <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>, he adds, is "a crude sketch of such a system" (SM, 9). He tells us that he recognizes two important truths about philosophical systems. First, "no system can ever be final" (SM, 9). And secondly, "a coherent system is so difficult a thing to achieve that any one who claims to have achieved it is probably deceiving himself or others" (SM, 9). But still he says that we cannot give up the search for a philosophical system. The search for a philosophical system is an ideal that we should be striving towards. Collingwood adds that he "regards the deliberate renunciation of this ideal as the degradation of philosophy to a game, one of the most tedious and stupid of games" (SM, 10). It is clear, then, that Collingwood sees the notion of a philosophical system as an important regulative idea for the true philosopher.

In <u>Speculum Mentis</u> we turn to the theme of self-knowledge (SM, 245, 279). But Collingwood is quick to add that philosophy is not reduced to autobiography (SM, 298). Collingwood constructs <u>Speculum Mentis</u> around what he calls five "forms of experience" (SM, 42). The forms of experience, in order of significance, are called Art, Religion, Science, History, and Philosophy. The forms of experience are arranged in an order of cognitive adequacy; each member of the series except the last is seen to develop naturally into its successor, and to that extent to be taken up into and superseded by the latter. Although he does present us with five forms of experience, the actual number of forms does not matter because as Collingwood tells us there could be more or less. In the series beginning with art and progressing through religion, science, and history, each stage in the series

has proved to be the explicit formulation of something implicit in the earlier stage.²³ Each form of experience is an achievement but at the same time an error regarded from the higher standpoint of the next stage.²⁴ Philosophy is the standpoint at which thought has reached the stage of explicit self-consciousness. <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, then, is a phenomenology of "types of experience", and each type of experience, with the exception of philosophy, tends to break down from the internal tensions generated by its own activity and turn into the next type. In this respect the book bears a strong resemblance to Hegel's <u>Phenomenology of Mind</u>.²⁵ And by the title <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, Collingwood wishes to indicate that he is offering a survey or "mirror" of the mind.

Each of these forms of experience interact and overlap with the rest. In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, Collingwood tells us that from the highest standpoint philosophy recognizes that there are "no autonomous and

^{23.} In 1924 Collingwood now looks at his own <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (1916) from the higher standpoint of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. Collingwood still accepts the basic position of <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> but now wants to make an important qualification (SM, 108). He now says in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> that what is implicit in religion is made explicit in philosophy. So Collingwood now wishes to avoid the identity of religion and philosophy that we find in his 1916 publication. This fact gives more weight to our claim that in the early 1920's Collingwood attempted to move away from the extreme of total identification.

^{24.} In Collingwood's writings before <u>Speculum Mentis</u> there is no mention of one form of experience as being higher than another form of experience. Before <u>Speculum Mentis</u> all forms of experience were seen to be on a par. So in 1924 a new Hegelian theme emerges. All forms of experience are seen as not only overlapping but as being on a dialectical scale.

^{25.} There is also some resemblance to some of Hegel's various books on logic which end with the triad, 'art, religion and philosophy'.

mutually exclusive forms of experience" (SM, 306).²⁶ Art, religion, science, and history each claim to be autonomous and self-contained, but from the highest standpoint this can be seen to be mistaken. The adherent of each form of experience is mistaken to claim that his approach to experience exhausts all the possibilities of experience. And it is the philosophical standpoint which allows us to overcome the self-centredness of each of the first four types of experience. In Speculum Mentis, Collingwood continues with his overlapping or "rapprochement" theme. In "Croce's Philosophy of History" Collingwood had said that history and philosophy overlap. In "Science and History" he had said that science and history overlap. But now in Speculum Mentis he is claiming that all forms of experience overlap. And he is quick to add that one should not confuse the notion of overlapping with the notion of identity. In Speculum Mentis, Collingwood rejects the claim that the forms of experience are identical.²⁷ So from 1916 to 1924 we have a move in Collingwood's thought from a stress on the theme of identity to a stress on the theme of overlapping.

In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, we once again come across the logic of question and answer. We have already seen the logic of and question and answer in the unpublished manuscript entitled "Truth and Contradiction" and in

27. By 'identity' he means that methods and objects are the same.

^{26.} The standpoint of philosophy is not to be seen as the highest standpoint in the sense that philosophy is secure from error. See <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, p. 295. See also <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, p. 9. Rather, he is saying that philosophy is higher than the other forms of experience and that the analysis of philosophy is as far as the philosophical consciousness has reached.

parts of <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. In his 1924 publication Collingwood tells us that the question and answer process goes on between these five overlapping forms of experience. Concerning each form of experience, "...one implies what the other expresses, one questions where the other answers, one overlooks what the other recognizes; and...the more primitive is absorbed without residue in the more advanced" (SM, 200). In <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>, we find a dialectical theory of inquiry (SM, 289). And the logic of question and answer runs through all of the stages in the process of inquiry or of active thought in general. We should also note that the "stress" or "strain" theme that we find in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> (SM, 289) will be taken up again in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.

"Questioning", Collingwood tells us in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, "is the cutting-edge of knowledge". All knowledge forms the answer to a question. In a section entitled "Knowledge as Question and Answer", he states:

> People who are acquainted with knowledge at first hand have always known that assertions are only answers to questions. So Plato described true knowledge as 'dialectic', the interplay of question and answer in the soul's dialogue with itself; so Bacon pointed out once for all that the scientist's real work was to interrogate nature, to put her, if need be, to the torture as a reluctant witness; so Kant mildly remarked that the test of an intelligent man was to know what questions to ask;... (SM, 77-78).

The emphasis on knowledge as an activity of asking and answering rather than as a body of judgments or propositions was a view which Collingwood never relinquished. Already in "Truth and Contradiction" we have seen Collingwood's rejection of the claim that one can separate a judgment or proposition from its context. In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, he tells us that we must never forget the context of "discovery and exploration" (SM, 77). Collingwood is attacking one more identity at this point, and that is the identity of knowing and asserting. Knowledge, then, must be seen in the context of a process of thinking. And knowledge is to be interpreted through assertions or judgments, but is not to be identified with assertions or judgments. Collingwood is also reacting against Cook Wilson's doctrine that "knowing makes no difference to what is known" which assumes a dualism. He 'regarded Cook Wilson's view as meaningless because all knowledge depends on the knower asking a question concerning the thing he wishes to know. Collingwood agrees with Aristotle that knowing and known are correlatives, but disagrees with Aristotle's claim that what is known is prior to knowledge. For Collingwood, then, there is an important overlap between knowing and known. But it must be added, however, that it would be misleading to claim that Collingwood is offering the logic of question and answer as a substitute for the realist's "propositional logic". Rather, the logic of question <u>and</u> answer is intended to supplement the logic of propositions.²⁸

Although we find the logic of question and answer in <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>, we do not find the doctrine of absolute presuppositions which is an integral part of the logic of question and answer in <u>An Essay on Meta-</u> <u>physics</u>. Now there are many discussions about presuppositions, principles and prejudices in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>²⁹, but nowhere in this 1924 publication

Collingwood would have approved of the movement today in logic towards context logic. In fact, Collingwood may be partly responsible for this movement. See, for example, N.D. Belnap and T.B. Steel, <u>The Logic of</u> Questions And Answers, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

^{29.} In <u>Speculum Mentis</u> the philosopher must make explicit the presuppositions that were once implicit. The philosopher must uncover the presuppositions of art, religion, science, and history. And the philosopher must uncover the presuppositions of philosophy because philosophy has the unique task of reflecting upon itself. See <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, pp. 85, 247, 295.

do we find the major claims that are made in reference to absolute presuppositions. In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, we do not find Collingwood claiming that (1) some presuppositions are nonverifiable, (2) some presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions, (3) some presuppositions are meaningful in a metaphysical sense and not an empirical sense, (4) some presuppositions are to be uncovered by the metaphysician and (5) some presuppositions lack truth-value (i.e. some presuppositions cannot be seen as being empirically true or empirically false). In fact, Collingwood explicitly tells us in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> that presuppositions do have truth-value (SM, 202), a claim that is denied in reference to absolute presuppositions in <u>An Essay</u> on Metaphysics.

Although the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not contained in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, it is important to note some of the similarities between this 1924 publication and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. In <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u> we do find Collingwood arguing for, as he does in <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, a foundationalist theory of knowledge by which we mean that all knowledge rests on a foundation of presuppositions, principles and prejudices (SM, 177, 231, 276, 286).³⁰ In <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, the terms 'presupposition', 'principle' and 'prejudice' are all used interchangeably.

^{30.} In addition to <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, Collingwood talked about prejudices in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (RP, 68). These discussions about the notion of prejudices may remind the reader of Gadamer's notion of a "prejudice". See Hans-Georg Gadamer, <u>Truth and Method</u>. In a conversation with Gadamer (October, 1981) it was suggested that there are two affinities between Collingwood's thought and his own. First, there is Hegelianism in both Collingwood and himself. And secondly, there is a criticism of objectivism in both Collingwood and himself. Gadamer also added that he was not familiar with the theory of presuppositions and so it would appear that there is no direct influence on his theory of prejudices from Collingwood's theory of presuppositions.

Collingwood also used these terms interchangeably in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>. Another similarity between <u>Speculum Mentis</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> is that in both works the foundation of a theoretical system is made up of "logical" presuppositions (SM, 262). In his 1924 publication, then, these presuppositions are seen as logical entities. Collingwood adds, and this is another similarity between the two works, that it is not only possible but important to evaluate critically these logical presuppositions that make up the foundation of a theoretical or conceptual system (SM, 39, 132, 258, 276, 286, 288).³¹

In "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" (1925), the concept of history that Collingwood presents is still closely linked to the conclusions of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. History continues to be regarded as a form of experience and again the philosopher's job is to situate history. Philosophy of history is described as a "critical discussion of this attitude, its presuppositions and its implications: an attempt to discover its place in human experience as a whole, its relation to other forms of experience, its origin and validity" (NAPH, 44). So Collingwood is following the claims that he made in "Science and History" and <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. This job of transcending the historical standpoint can only be done by the philosopher. But at this point it is important to avoid a possible misunderstanding. Although the philosopher transcends the historical standpoint,

^{31.} Other similarities between <u>Speculum Mentis</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> are as follows: (1) rejection of the separation of metaphysics and logic (SM, 271-274), (2) questions arise from information (SM, 79, 91), (3) cannot surrender all dogma (SM, 247), (4) some dogmas are 'a priori' (SM, 75), (5) presuppositions colour or condition entire conceptual system (SM, 27, 309), and (6) psychology ignores truth (SM, 275).

the philosopher still has a "point of view" himself. Following <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>, the claim in this 1925 publication is that the philosopher's transcendence does not come from a final standpoint. Instead, the philosopher only transcends the historian's standpoint from a higher standpoint.

While the historian thinks "from his point of view", the philosopher transcends this standpoint and thinks about the historian's point of view. And while the historian thinks about his object, the philosopher thinks about the historian's thought about his object. So history is a lower standpoint "because in its concentration upon its object it suppresses the question of its relation to that object" (NAPH, 56). Historical thinking, then, is a lower standpoint because the historian never sees himself. The historian only concentrates on his object and never sees the relation of himself to his object.

The philosopher of history must not take a dogmatic attitude, but following Kant, a "critical attitude, which undertakes the task of inquiring not only into the results of a certain type of thought but into the nature and value, the presuppositions and implications, of that type of thought itself" (NAPH, 45). It would be correct to say that one of the presuppositions of the historical standpoint is that the historian must necessarily perform his activity from a particular point of view or perspective. That each historian engages in his questioning activity from a point of view is a claim that Collingwood will again make in <u>The Idea of</u> <u>History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. But, although in "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" Collingwood tells us that presuppositions make up part of the historian's point of view, there is no suggestion that these presuppositions are the absolute presuppositions of <u>An Essay</u> on Metaphysics.

The philosophy of history is a reflection on the historian's effort to attain truth (NAPH, 44). It is clear that truth is an important regulative idea for the historian, as it is for the philosopher. But the historian is only concerned about the truth of historical objects. This is not meant to be a criticism of the historian's work. Collingwood does not want the historian to spend all of his time working on the relation between himself and his object because this is the job of the philosopher. The historian's job is to concentrate on historical objects. If the historian spent all of his time uncovering the assumptions of history he would never get around to doing history. And although the good historian will reflect, from time to time, on what he is doing, it would be more accurate to say that while he is performing this reflective work he is a philosopher of history. The philosopher of history, then, has the job of putting the historian's work into a broader context, a context which transcends the historian's limited context.³²

Collingwood tells us that the philosophy of history is not the formulation or discovery of historical laws or general laws which govern

^{32.} In this 1925 publication Collingwood tells us that the philosopher of history also studies the psychological aspect of the actual procedure of history. In 1925, then, Collingwood is stating again the view in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> which is that there is a psychology of knowing. Later in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> he was to reject this view. In 1940 he came to the conclusion that there is only a logic of knowing. In 1940 he tells us that psychology, properly understood, only studies feeling.

the course of history. Nor is it the attempt to discover in history the working out of a plot, in which the facts are connected by a plan or certain fundamental forces. Rather, the philosopher of history is only concerned with the historian's "questioning" activity "up to the present moment" (NAPH, 44). The philosopher of history does not have the job of "predicting the future", a claim that we will find again in <u>The Idea of</u> <u>History</u>. Collingwood the <u>historian</u> is sympathetic towards the idea that history expresses a certain plan or plot, but he refuses to call it a philosophy of history. The plan or plot of history is nothing other than history itself up to the present moment. The plan of history is not a pre-existing plan, and as a result, there is no philosophy of history in the sense of uncovering a pre-existing plan.³³

In 1927 Collingwood published "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles", a review of Spengler's <u>The Decline of the West</u> (1926). In this review, Collingwood criticizes Spengler for his failure to see that there are no "ready-made facts". The historian's job is to discover facts, not to presuppose them as Spengler does. Spengler does not work at history, but simply talks about it, "...on the assumption that someone else has already done the work--the work, that is, of finding out what the facts are, the historian's work" (SHC, 67). And his so-called history "consists of ready-made facts which he has found in books; and what he wants to do is to arrange these in patterns" (SHC, 67). As we have seen,

^{33.} See "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History", pp. 36, 38-40 and "A Philosophy of Progress", p. 112.

Collingwood criticizes this notion of a philosophy of history in "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History".

Collingwood also criticizes Spengler for attempting to foretell the future and therefore Collingwood is attacking Spengler in terms of one of the major conclusions of "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History". Any historian who thinks that he can forecast the future only proves that he does not have a true "historical sense". Now, science, unlike history, can forecast the future. Collingwood states:

> Science determines the future, foretells an eclipse or the like, just because the object of science is Nature and 'Nature has no history'. The laws of Nature are timeless truths. For history, time is the great reality; and the future is the infinite well-spring of those events which, when they happen, become present, and whose traces left upon the present enable us to reconstruct them when they are past. We cannot know the future, just because the future has not happened and therefore cannot leave its traces in the present (SHC, 68).

In this 1927 publication, Collingwood is following "Science and History" in saying that there are important differences between science and history. For Collingwood, the "inner logic" of history is not identical to the inner logic of natural science. By its very nature, the historian's activity ends with the present. The historian, and therefore the philosopher of history, cannot reflect on future facts. And the reason behind the claim that one cannot foretell the future in history is that foretelling the future presupposes that all the facts are in.³⁴ Spengler thinks that the historian can make predictions just as the natural scientist makes predictions. His cyclical view of history is really based on this collapse

^{34.} Collingwood is basically saying in this 1927 publication that Spengler's philosophy of history is too speculative and not analytical enough.

of history and natural science. So in Spengler's case, the presupposition that 'history is cyclical' is really tied up with a natural science model of historical understanding.³⁵

Collingwood also criticizes Spengler for regarding cultures as "static". For Collingwood, cultures are "dynamic" because history is a "process", a "development", with its own "inner logic". "And this conception of 'turning into'", Collingwood tells us, "the conception of becoming, is (as Spengler himself industriously asserts, and industriously forgets) the fundamental idea of all history" (SHC, 74). It would seem to be correct to say that 'becoming' is a presupposition of the historical standpoint. And Collingwood's view on cultures would seem to be another application of the doctrine of overlapping. Since Spengler sees cultures in an atomistic manner, he fails to see this overlap. And it may be due to this overlapping that certain ideas "live on" in other cultures. Collingwood says, and he repeats this exact claim in The Idea of History, that "Euclidean geometry lives on within modern geometry and Herodotean history within the mind of the modern historian" (SHC, 71). Collingwood, then, is saying that Spengler contradicts himself when he presupposes that becoming is the fundamental idea of history, and then goes on to claim that cultures are atomistic and static. For Collingwood, only the overlapping notion of cultures is consistent with the presupposition of becoming.

^{35.} Just because one holds the presupposition that history is cyclical it does not necessarily follow that one is committed to a natural science model of historical understanding. Plato held the presupposition that history is cyclical and yet he was not a positivist or naturalist.

Collingwood, then, wants to stress the continuity of history rather than Spengler's claim that civilizations, conceived in an atomistic manner, rise and fall.

Also in "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles", Collingwood raises the problem of re-thinking thoughts. He states:

> [I]f the fundamental idea of one culture differs from that of another, how can the one understand the other? Spengler unhesitatingly answers, it cannot. We do not understand the classical world; what we see in it is our own image in an opaque mirror. Very well, but how does he know this to be merely our image? How does he know that we are not understanding the past as it really was? There is no answer, and can be no answer; for the fact is, unless we understand the ancients well enough to know that we do not understand them completely, we can never have reason to suspect that our errors about them are erroneous (SHC, 70-71).³⁶

If another culture holds a different fundamental idea, how can we re-think their thought? Spengler's answer is that we cannot understand another culture because we come to that culture with a different point of view or perspective. What we see in the other culture is "our own image". Spengler has presupposed that another culture must think in terms of a fundamental idea. Spengler fails to see that this presupposition is really inconsistent with his claim that we cannot understand another culture. Spengler also fails to see that before we can say that our errors about another culture are erroneous, we must presuppose at least <u>partial</u> understanding because we must understand another culture "well enough to know that we

^{36.} When Collingwood criticizes Spengler's metaphor of the mirror in this passage, is he implicitly criticizing his own mirror metaphor in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> as the title of his book suggests? See Chapter VII of this thesis.

do not understand them completely". Collingwood adds that Spengler is denying the possibility of history itself (SHC, 71). If we cannot uncover the fundamental idea of other cultures, we cannot re-think for ourselves their thoughts. And if we cannot re-think their thoughts, historical knowledge, according to Collingwood, is impossible.³⁷ Now, Collingwood does accept at least four of Spengler's implicit or explicit presuppositions. He agrees with Spengler that (1) all cultures hold a fundamental idea, (2) this fundamental idea frames the lives of all the members sharing a culture, (3) we can uncover the fundamental idea of another culture.³⁹ Where

- 38. This presupposition is actually an implicit presupposition that Spengler holds and this raises, according to Collingwood, an inconsistency in Spengler's thought. Presuppositions (1), (2) and (4) are explicit presuppositions that Spengler holds.
- 39. In 1927 Collingwood has abandoned a point that he made in "Ruskin's Philosophy" and that is that there is always more than one fundamental idea that underlies a particular way of thinking. In "Ruskin's Philosophy" Collingwood talked about a "ring of principles" and rejected the idea of one fundamental idea underlying a way of thinking. Later in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood moves back closer to the position he took in "Ruskin's Philosophy". But instead of talking about a ring of principles, he argues that there is a constellation of absolute presuppositions underlying a way of thinking. And this constellation of absolute presuppositions underlying a way of this philosophy". We should also point out, although we are sure it is obvious by now, that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not contained in this 1927 publication.

^{37.} Collingwood, of course, is assuming a particular model of historical understanding here. And the model he is assuming is the rational or purposive model of historical understanding. Later in this thesis we will call this model the Cause I model of historical understanding because this is really more consistent with Collingwood's own terminology. If Collingwood's Cause I model of historical understanding is not the correct model, then his claim that historical knowledge is impossible (if re-thinking is not available to us) does not follow.

Collingwood disagrees with Spengler is in saying that if one holds these presuppositions, one must, if one wishes to be consistent, claim that at least partial understanding of another culture is possible. As far as Collingwood is concerned, Spengler is guilty of an inconsistency when he makes these presuppositions and then goes on to claim that understanding other cultures is impossible.

In an essay entitled "Reason Is Faith Cultivating Itself" (1927), we find Collingwood again dealing with the problem of foundations. Collingwood tells us that we are in possession of "certainties" that cannot be proved. These certainties are the "presupposition of all proof whatever" (RFCI, 114). We cannot prove these certainties because we need certainties before we can even talk of proof. Reason presupposes certainties or starting-points that are accepted on "faith". Since faith is the ground and source of reason, all proof presupposes faith at the most fundamental level. And one cannot, Collingwood says, "produce faith by arguing" because "[f]aith is presupposed in the argument itself' (RFCI, 118). For Collingwood, it is faith and not reason that is the ground or foundation for our thinking.⁴⁰

Collingwood is moving closer to the position of <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u> when he says in 1927 that certainties are accepted on faith. In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood did say that absolute presuppositions

^{40.} In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood reaffirms the point that he makes here in 1927 and that is that Aristotle is correct to claim that we cannot prove our starting-points in any strong sense (RFCI, 108). And in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> he reaffirms the point that he made in 1927 which is that Aristotle was mistaken to think that one could prove your starting-points in a "special" sense (RFCI, 108).

are accepted on faith. So "Reason Is Faith Cultivating Itself" and <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> are in basic agreement on the point that all proof rests on faith. But nowhere in "Reason Is Faith Cultivating Itself" does Collingwood say, as he does in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, that these certainties lack truth-value. So, we must conclude that there is an important difference between the position of 1927 and the position of <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>. The fully worked out doctrine of absolute presuppositions, then, is not contained in this 1927 publication. It would appear that we cannot read "absolute presuppositions" for "certainties" in this 1927 paper. Nor would it appear that we can read "absolute presuppositions" for "faith" in this 1927 paper.⁴¹

In "Faith and Reason", which was published in 1928, Collingwood continues to work on the problem of foundations. He states:

We thus possess certain pieces of knowledge about the world which we did not acquire, and cannot criticize, by scientific methods. The knowledge in question is our knowledge of the world, not in its details, but as a whole. And not only is it not acquired by scientific thought, but it is the very foundation of such thought; for only in so far as we know, for instance, that there are laws of nature, can we reasonably devise methods for discovering them.

Kant thought that our certainty of God, freedom, and immortality belonged to this kind of knowledge:...(FR, 139).

The passage quoted above is remarkably similar to his view expressed in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> (1940) which is that the concepts 'God exists', 'man is free' and 'there is one set of laws running throughout nature'

^{41.} In 1927 Collingwood does not talk about why or how certainties change, whereas in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> he does. It would be correct to say that the position in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> on this point is more consistent with Collingwood's process view of history. It would appear as though there is still a trace of atomism in 1927 and also in 1928 as we will see shortly.

are all absolute presuppositions. In fact, in "Faith and Reason", Collingwood comes very close to saying that the assumption that 'the universe as a whole is rational' is an absolute presupposition for he does talk about the "absolute confidence in the 'uniformity of nature'" (FR, 141).

In "Faith and Reason", Collingwood is again saying that a thinker may not be aware of his most fundamental assumptions or presuppositions (FR, 141). And it is important to note that Collingwood is not saying that once we become aware of our presuppositions, they cease to be accepted on faith. Even if we make these presuppositions which were once implicit or "unconscious" (FR, 141), explicit or "conscious", they are still embraced by an act of faith. On this point, "Faith and Reason" is in essential agreement with An Essay on Metaphysics. Although Collingwood comes close to saying in 1928 that 'the universe as a whole is rational' is an absolute presupposition, it would be a mistake to claim that the position in 1928 is identical to the position in An Essay on Metaphysics. This is the case because, among other things, he does not say in 1928 that 'the universe as a whole is rational' lacks truth-value. So we must conclude that the fully worked out doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not found in this 1928 paper. The most we can conclude on this subject is that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is still in embryonic form in 1928.

In 1930, Collingwood published "The Philosophy of History". In this paper, we find Collingwood claiming that we always interpret historical documents in terms of principles. He calls this a "fundamental conception" and says that Vico is responsible for this advance in

historical methodology (PhH, 128). It is clear in this paper that Collingwood respects Vico's analytical work as a philosopher of history. Collingwood thinks that the philosophy of history should be analytic and not speculative. This explains why Collingwood is concerned with analytical problems like historical methodology, historical explanation, historical evidence, and historical re-enactment.⁴²

Collingwood comes very close to saying in "The Philosophy of History" that questions "arise" only because we hold presuppositions, which will be Collingwood's claim in An Essay on Metaphysics. He writes,

> It is only when he has a problem in his mind that he can begin to search for data bearing on it.

The beginning of historical research is therefore not the collection or contemplation of crude facts as yet uninterpreted, but the asking of a question which sets one off looking for facts which may help one to answer it. All historical research is focussed in this way upon some particular question or problem which defines its subject. And the question must be asked with some reasonable expectation of being able to answer it, and to answer it by genuinely historical thinking; otherwise it leads nowhere, it is at best idle 'wondering,' not the focus of a piece of historical work. We express this by saying that a question does or does not 'arise.' To say that a question arises, is to say that it has a logical connection with our previous thoughts, that we have a reason for asking it and are not moved by mere capricious curiosity (PhH, 137).

In the above passage we find Collingwood once again emphasizing the historian's questioning activity. It is also important to see in the above text that he regards the connection between a question and previous thoughts as a "logical connection".⁴³ An adequate study of historical

^{42.} We will attempt to follow this analytic approach in this thesis and especially Chapters IV-VII.

^{43.} The similarity between this claim in his paper on history in 1930 and his claims in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> about logical connections gives weight to our thesis that there is an important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding.

methodology, then, must begin with the logic of question and answer clearly in mind.

An Essay on Philosophical Method (1933) is an attempt to overhaul or reform the notion of philosophical method. We will see this reform theme again in An Essay on Metaphysics when Collingwood turns to the attempt to "reform" metaphysics. When Collingwood says that we must reform the notion of philosophical method he is not saying that we cannot learn from past philosophers. In this 1933 publication he does tell us that past philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Descartes and Kant have made contributions to the notion of philosophical method. This parallels An Essay on Metaphysics where Collingwood says that past metaphysicians have made important contributions to the subject of metaphysics. Collingwood is insistent on the point that his reform is not meant to be the final analysis. This work is a contribution by its author toward a wider synthesis. As the title of An Essay on Philosophical Method suggests, it is an essay, an attempt. And perhaps Collingwood has moved away from the title of his earlier work Speculum Mentis because this title suggests an encyclopedic comprehensiveness.⁴⁴ The attempt theme continues in An Essay on Metaphysics as the title of that work suggests.

Collingwood sees <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> as an attempt at a contribution towards the search for the answer to the question of

^{44.} In no work, not even <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, does Collingwood set out to set up a complete philosophical system. Although the idea of a system is an important regulative idea for him, as we saw in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, Collingwood sees his work more as an attempt at a contribution to knowledge. And as he points out in 1933, the regulative idea of a system is not incompatible with the notion that knowledge grows and expands (EPhM, 177).

what philosophy is. Collingwood rejects the view that we only have to define the proper object of philosophical thought and then deduce from this definition of the object the proper methods that philosophy should follow. This approach of defining the object first has the weakness of already knowing what the object of philosophical thought is. In other words, this approach of defining the object first already assumes that philosophical thought has "already reached its goal" (EPhM, 2). For Collingwood, if we attempt to define at the beginning we fall into a vicious circle. The job of the philosopher, then, is to "search" for definitions, not to start with definitions. On this point Collingwood is following Socrates and Kant. Collingwood adds that though he believes that certain ways of philosophizing are more fruitful than others, he knows of "no philosophy that is not a voyage of exploration whose end, the adequate knowledge of its proper object, remains as yet unreached" (EPhM, 3).

<u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> attempts to make explicit the principles of thinking which the experience of philosophical thinking exemplifies. This attempt to reflect on the experience of philosophical thinking Collingwood calls "a rational theory of philosophy" (EPhM, 224). And this rational theory of philosophy is a part of philosophical thinking. "Philosophy", Collingwood says, "has this peculiarity, that reflection upon it is part of itself" (EPhM, 1). In other words, the theory of philosophy is an essential part of philosophy (EPhM, 175). <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Philosophical Method</u> is only partly a reflection on the experience of philosophical thinking which <u>Speculum Mentis</u> exemplified. A rational theory of philosophy would also include a reflection on the experience

of philosophical thinking about faith and reason and which "Reason Is Faith Cultivating Itself" and "Faith and Reason" exemplified. And it would include a reflection on the experience of philosophical thinking about historical methodology in the essays on history that we have examined.

Collingwood does say that it is the philosopher's job to uncover assumptions or "presuppositions". He says that "whereas other sciences can neglect their own logical presuppositions, philosophy cannot" (EPhM, 155). But although Collingwood does say that these presuppositions are "logical", we cannot equate the presuppositions mentioned here with the absolute presuppositions of An Essay on Metaphysics. Collingwood still holds the view in 1933 that presuppositions have truth-value (EPhM, 150, 153). This claim will be denied in reference to absolute presuppositions in An Essay on Metaphysics. And Collingwood still holds the view in 1933 that presuppositions are verifiable (EPhM, 163). This claim will also be denied in reference to absolute presuppositions in An Essay on Metaphysics. Nor is it suggested in An Essay on Philosophical Method, as it will be in An Essay on Metaphysics, that these logical presuppositions are not answers to questions or that these logical presuppositions have a metaphysical meaning rather than an empirical meaning. It should also be pointed out that in 1933 Collingwood does not say, as he does in An Essay on Metaphysics, that it is the metaphysician's special task to uncover these most basic or fundamental presuppositions. We must conclude, then, that the logical presuppositions of 1933 are not identical to the absolute presuppositions of An Essay on Metaphysics. And therefore the complete theory of absolute presuppositions was not developed by 1933.

However, we must not overlook an important advance made by Collingwood in his theory of presuppositions in <u>An Essay on Philosophical</u> <u>Method</u>. In this 1933 text Collingwood does distinguish between "primary or fundamental presuppositions and secondary or derivative presuppositions" (EPhM, 153). So in 1933, he makes a distinction between different kinds of presuppositions. Some presuppositions are more fundamental than others. On this particular point there is a parallel with <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. In this latter work Collingwood distinguished between absolute presuppositions, which are primary or fundamental assumptions, and relative presuppositions, which are secondary or derivative assumptions. But in his 1933 publication he does not go on to say, as he does in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, that primary or fundamental assumptions lack truth-value and that secondary or derivative assumptions are empirical assumptions and can be true or false.⁴⁵

^{45.} (i) It is also interesting to note that Collingwood makes a reference to L.S. Stebbing's work in his 1933 publication. Collingwood says that Stebbing is breaking new ground on the subject of presuppositions (EPhM, 145). For one thing, Stebbing claims that the philosopher must uncover his own presuppositions. Stebbing also tells us in 'The Method of Analysis in Metaphysics' (Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1932-3, pp. 65-94) that "the analytic method has been much used by well-known philosophers in this country for over twenty years, but that none of them has 'seen fit to raise' the questions upon what presuppositions it rests and whether they can be justified (p. 75)" (EPhM, 145). (ii) Other parallels between An Essay on Philosophical Method and An Essay on Metaphysics are as follows: (1) knowledge is not perception (EPhM, 11), (2) philosophy knows no axioms (EPhM, 22), (3) foundationalist theory of knowledge (EPhM, 25, 126, 180), (4) colour metaphor (EPhM, 35, 124), (5) can evaluate presuppositions (EPhM, 69, 176), (6) logical structure of empirical science (EPhM, 120), (7) all judgments in philosophy should be cautious and tentative (EPhM, 122), (8) metaphysics is one of the philosophical sciences and does not have a unique logical structure (EPhM, 127), (9) every philosophical science partakes of metaphysics (EPhM, 127), (10) principles justified (continued on p. 41)

In 1933 we find Collingwood reflecting on A.J. Ayer's views on metaphysics. This discussion of Ayer's views is found at the back of an unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals". It is at this point in Collingwood's philosophical career that his conception of metaphysics appears in a new light. Collingwood will now claim, as he does in <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>, that although metaphysical concepts cannot be verified, they are still meaningful because they make up the foundation of a conceptual system. But these metaphysical concepts are meaningful in a metaphysical sense and not an empirical sense. In his unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" (1933) he states:

> A.J. Ayer's <u>Critique of Theology</u>...is based on the assumption that the idea of God is the idea of a finite being distinct from other finite beings, whose existence if it were known would be known empirically but which happens to be of such a kind that it cannot be thus known. Now there might be such a being concealed about the universe, but as we cannot ('ex hypothesi') verify the statement that there is, or that there isn't, these statements on the principles of Logical Positivism are meaningless. Though literally meaningless they may however have a metaphysical meaning,...⁴⁰

Collingwood agrees with Ayer that we cannot use empirical methods to determine whether God exists or not. This is the case because God's

46. R.G. Collingwood, "Morals" (unpublished manuscript), 1933, pp. 6, 7.

^{45. (}ii) continued. by results and we must check conclusion derived from original assumptions (EPhM, 149), (11) conclusions not logicaly independent of starting-points (EPhM, 153), (12) Socratic principle that philosophical reasoning leads to no conclusions which we did not in some sense know already is the only solution to the infinite regress problem (EPhM, 161), (13) can only prove in weak sense and not strong sense or Aristotle's special sense (EPhM, 161), (14) philosophy not deductive; there must be cross reference to experience (EPhM, 164), (15) every problem is connected with every other problem (EPhM, 177), (16) subjective elements (EPhM, 183), (17) we all inherit a tradition of thought (EPhM, 192), (18) truth is a regulative idea (EPhM, 195, 215), (19) strain among principles (EPhM, 197).

existence cannot be verified. And Collingwood accepts Ayer's analysis up to this point. But where Ayer goes wrong, according to Collingwood, is when Ayer restricts "meaning" to empirical statements. By restricting meaning to empirical statements, Ayer ends up concluding that statements like 'there is a God' or 'there isn't a God' are meaningless. In response to Ayer, Collingwood says that "statements" that cannot be verified may have a metaphysical meaning. So Collingwood makes a distinction between empirical meaning and metaphysical meaning. Collingwood does not want to conclude, as Ayer must on his own principles, that the question of whether or not God exists is a meaningless question. It is clear that Collingwood sees Ayer as being guilty of an extreme empiricism or positivism.

In an unpublished manuscript entitled "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" (1934), we again find Collingwood's foundationalism. He tells us that "[m]etaphysics is the keep or central stronghold of the castle of philosophy,..."⁴⁷ We also find Collingwood discussing the presuppositions of natural science in this manuscript. But it must be noted, that in this unpublished manuscript of 1934, Collingwood still holds the view that the presuppositions which the metaphysician uncovers have truth-value.⁴⁸

^{47.} R.G. Collingwood, "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" (unpublished manuscript), 1934, p. 2.

^{48.} In "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" Collingwood states: "These two principles [nature works according to fixed and definite laws and things in nature are really measurable] are the assumptions on which 17th century science rested, and if that science was to be regarded as real knowledge of the real world these two assumptions must be true. But obviously physical science could not prove their truth; it could only begin to use its own methods when they had been assumed. Their truth was a matter for investigation by metaphysics. Consequently seventeenth-century metaphysics, from Descartes to Locke, took this as one of its main tasks, to prove the truth of these two assumptions." pp. 17-18.

Again in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter" (1934), we find Collingwood discussing the presuppositions of physical science. He states:

> Here we are concerned not with arithmetic itself, but only with its metaphysical groundwork. It belongs not to arithmetic but to metaphysics to show why the numerical series exists, and also to show why it forms a foundation or presupposition of all empirical existence, so that mathematics is the basis of all natural science. There is, however, one further characteristic of the numerical series, not so much revealed as presupposed by mathematics, which must be investigated here. This is its possession of a determinate structure, without which arithmetic would have nothing to investigate.⁴⁹

And later in the same manuscript he says:

The notion that, if the analysis of the physical world is pushed home to the furthest possible point, matter will reveal itself as composed of indivisible and equal particles, is one which cannot be adequately explained as a simple product of scientific inquiry. From the fifth century before Christ down to the present day, it has rather been a conviction underlying such inquiry; and however physicists have differed concerning the size, shape, character and behaviour of these ultimate particles, they have substantially agreed the physical world must be composed of them. Consequently, the notion must be regarded as belonging to the presuppositions of physical science, and its origin must be sought not in physical methods but in metaphysical.⁵⁰

As in "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" (1934), we find Collingwood's foundationalism in "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter" (1934).

From 1932 to 1934 Collingwood worked on the presuppositions of natural science and cosmological speculation. This work forms the substance of The Idea of Nature. In The Idea of Nature Collingwood uncovers

^{49.} R.G. Collingwood, "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter" (unpublished manuscript), 1934, p. 5.

^{50. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 22. Collingwood adds in this manuscript that presuppositions are starting-points and not the results of scientific inquiry p. 24.

the presuppositions underlying man's different conceptions of nature. This work is a history of the "idea" of nature. Collingwood is not saying that nature itself is historical. Rather, he is saying that man's conception of nature has a history. So he is not rejecting the claim that "nature has no history" that he expressed in "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927). We will again find the claim that nature has no history expressed in <u>The Idea of History</u>. Collingwood concludes <u>The Idea of Nature</u> by saying that all that has been said in this work "is a mere interim report on the history of the idea of nature down to the present time" (IN, 175). He quotes with approval Hegel's famous saying at the end of his treatise on the philosophy of history: "That is as far as consciousness has reached" (IN, 174). Collingwood continues: "Similarly, I must say now, 'That is as far as science has reached'....If I knew what further progress would be made in the future, I should already have made that progress" (IN, 175).

Also in <u>The Idea of Nature</u>, Collingwood talks about absolute presuppositions. This is the first reference that we find in all of Collingwood's writings to the notion of an absolute presupposition. He states:

'That what is common to all 'natural' things is their being made of a single 'substance' or material'. This was the special or peculiar presupposition of Ionian physics; and the school of Miletus may be regarded as a group of thinkers who made it their special business to take this as their 'working hypothesis' and see what could be made of it: asking in particular the question: 'That being so, what can we say about this single substance?' They did not consciously treat it as a 'working hypothesis': it cannot be doubted that they accepted it as an absolute and unquestioned presupposition of all their thinking; but the historian of thought, looking back on their achievement, cannot fail to see that what they really did was to test this idea of a single universal substance and to find it wanting (IN, 30).

By the term 'absolute' in reference to presuppositions Collingwood does

not mean 'unconditional', 'complete in itself', 'finished', 'perfect', 'considered without reference to other things', or 'existing independent of any other cause'.⁵¹ Rather, for him, an absolute presupposition is a "working hypothesis" that logically operates at the beginning of an inquiry. And an absolute presupposition logically operates as a given. It is for this reason that absolute presuppositions are regarded as not being open to question. Now, this is not to say that a thinker in the future may not question this so-called given. So a presupposition that is regarded as absolute and not open to question at one time may later be relinquished. For Collingwood, not only may scientists be unaware that absolute and unquestioned presuppositions are working hypotheses, they may be unaware that they are testing working hypotheses. The testing of absolute and unquestioned presuppositions, then, to quote Hegel, may go on "behind the back of consciousness". And it is by reflection or analysis that the historian of thought can make explicit these absolute and unquestioned presuppositions and make explicit the testing of these working hypotheses. The Idea of Nature is really a history of how absolute and unquestioned presuppositions have been 'taken up' and later relinquished. As far as Collingwood is concerned, this process will probably continue, but he refrains from making any predictions. This is the reason for Collingwood citing Hegel's remark that "this is as far as consciousness has reached" at the end of The Idea of Nature.

In The Idea of Nature Collingwood distinguishes between the work

^{51.} These are all possible definitions of the term 'absolute'. But we think that it is clear that Collingwood does not have these possible definitions in mind when he speaks of absolute presuppositions.

of science and the philosophical reflection on it. The latter, he says, gives us more than just historical knowledge. Philosophical reflection is necessary to the progress and future of science. He says:

> In fact, the detailed work seldom goes on for any length of time without reflection intervening. And this reflection reacts upon the detailed work; for when people become conscious of the principles upon which they have been thinking or acting they become conscious of something which in these thoughts and actions they have been trying, though unconsciously, to do: namely to work out in detail the logical implications of those principles (IN, 2).

Following his claim in "Ruskin's Philosophy", he says that "the reflection on principles, whether those of natural science or of any other department of thought or action, is commonly called philosophy" (IN, 2). Collingwood, then, is distinguishing between natural science and the philosophy of natural science. This distinction parallels the distinction between history and the philosophy of history.

In 1935 a correspondence between Collingwood and Gilbert Ryle developed in connection with Ryle's article in <u>Mind</u> (44, 1935) entitled "Mr. Collingwood and the Ontological Argument". It is clear in this unpublished correspondence that Collingwood sees his disagreement with Ryle as a disagreement resulting from both philosophers holding different "fundamental contentions". Collingwood states:

> Without proceeding to the question whether you or I am right on this logical and metaphysical point, important though it is, I feel bound to point out that your method in criticizing me has consistently been (a) to assume the truth of the view I am attacking (b) to assume (flatteringly, no doubt) that because it is true I share it with you, and then (c) to show, that my attack on it is not only unsuccessful, but, since I assume it, nonsensical. This fundamental 'petitio principii' is probably the reason why my study of your criticisms has not convinced me that I am mistaken in my fundamental contentions; because they seem never

to touch these contentions.⁵²

We also find in this unpublished correspondence Collingwood's claim, which he systematically developed in An Essay on Metaphysics, that metaphysical concepts are of a different logical form than empirical propositions. And it is on this point that Ryle disagrees with Collingwood. Ryle replies to Collingwood saying: "So 'God exists' or 'mind exists' or 'matter exists' are on their usage, matters of fact--important ones, very likely, but not different in logical form from 'a red-haired cardinal exists'." And in a footnote Ryle adds: "As this is crucial, I'll ask you to show me what is the difference of logical form between say, 'Mind exists' or 'Matter exists' and 'Ether exists' or 'Subconscious motives occur'? I see 'Mind exists' seems to me to = 'Some things have minds' or 'some none. things sometimes think, feel, will...' It is a pretty general matterof-fact proposition, in no logical respect different from 'spiral nebulae exist'."⁵³ Collingwood's response to Ryle comes very close to his response to A.J. Ayer in his unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" (1933). Collingwood rejects Ryle's claim that metaphysical concepts are no

^{52.} R.G. Collingwood, "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" (unpublished correspondence), 1935, p. 25. Collingwood is not saying that criticism is never justified. In fact, Collingwood has already pointed out the importance of criticism for all the sciences. But when we criticize we should attempt to avoid the following pitfalls: (1) our criticism of another thinker should not be based on a misunderstanding of the other thinker's position, (2) our criticism of another thinker should not given other fundamental contentions or presuppositions. It is clear that Collingwood sees Ryle as falling into these pitfalls with his criticisms.

Gilbert Ryle, "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" (unpublished correspondence), 1935, p. 3.

different in logical form than empirical propositions. For Collingwood, Ryle is mistaken to claim that, for example, the metaphysical concept 'God exists' is no different in logical form than the empirical proposition that "a red-haired cardinal exists". According to Collingwood, metaphysical concepts cannot be reduced to empirical propositions. Ryle reduces metaphysical concepts to empirical propositions when he says, for example, that there is no difference in logical form between 'God exists' and "a red-haired cardinal exists". It is at this point that Collingwood's and Ryle's fundamental contentions clash. For Ryle, all empirical propositions have truth-value, that is, all empirical propositions are either true or false. So for Ryle, 'God exists' is an empirical proposition and it is either empirically true or empirically false. Collingwood's response to Ryle is that 'God exists' is not an empirical proposition and that therefore it cannot be empirically true or false.

In the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" we find the last essential component of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Collingwood is making one important claim in the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" (1935) that he did not make in his analysis of Ayer's work in 1933. And this is the claim that metaphysical concepts like 'God exists', 'mind exists', and 'matter exists' lack empirical truth-value. Since this claim is an important component of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions, we must conclude that the <u>complete</u> theory of absolute presuppositions was not developed until 1935. And we can also conclude that the response to Ayer and Ryle was an important step towards developing the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. It is one of the claims of this thesis that the response to Ayer in 1933 and to Ryle in 1935 was at the back of Collingwood's mind when he resumed the study of

history in 1935.

We think that we have strong evidence to support the claim that Collingwood formulated his doctrine of absolute presuppositions prior to the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history. We have attempted to show that Collingwood started working on the theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. And we have attempted to show that the complete theory of absolute presuppositions was worked out by Collingwood in 1935. Let us retrace our steps for a moment in order to give added weight to these claims. From 1932 to 1934 Collingwood was working on what later was called The Idea of Nature. In The Idea of Nature Collingwood speaks of absolute presuppositions. Collingwood claimed that absolute presuppositions are logical entities that regulate our inquiry from the beginning. For this reason we will call these absolute presuppositions logico-regulative entities.⁵⁴ And in The Idea of Nature we have seen that absolute presuppositions that were once 'taken up' may later be relinquished. We have also seen in the unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" (1933) that some concepts may have a metaphysical meaning although they do not have an empirical meaning. In 1933 Collingwood is saying that some concepts are not empirical answers to empirical questions. In "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" (1934) and in "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter" (1934), which are both unpublished manuscripts, Collingwood said that it is the metaphysician's job to uncover the fundamental presuppositions or absolute presuppositions that make up the foundation of a

^{54.} In Chapter II we will have more to say about our claim that absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities.

piece of thinking. And in 1935 Collingwood says that metaphysical concepts (i.e. absolute presuppositions) lack empirical truth-value. In 1935 Collingwood has made all of the major claims that he makes in regards to his notion of an absolute presupposition in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.

In 1935 the work on the philosophy of history was resumed. Collingwood lectured on this subject in 1935 and 1936, and it is these lectures which constitute the main part of The Idea of History. We will turn to The Idea of History in chapters IV-VII. It will be our claim that Collingwood's work on the philosophy of history took a new direction as result of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history. It must be recalled that from 1932 to 1934 Collingwood did not lecture on the philosophy of history, and in addition to writing An Essay on Philosophical Method, he worked mainly on cosmology and metaphysics. In 1935, then, when he resumed his work on the philosophy of history, he had just completed an intensive study of cosmology and metaphysics. And it is the contention of this thesis that this intensive work on cosmology and metaphysics coloured the study of history in 1935 and 1936 in a new way, and that there is an important logical relationship between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding.

In 1938 Collingwood published <u>The Principles of Art</u>. In this work he attempts to bring the situation of art and of aesthetic theory up to date. Collingwood reminds us that he wrote an <u>Outline of a Philosophy</u> <u>of Art</u> in 1924, but he now thinks that in 1938 the situation of art and of aesthetic theory has changed. Once again in 1938, Collingwood is offering us a "philosophy" of art, just as he did in 1924. Collingwood

tells us that reflection on art is not just an intellectual exercise. Philosophy of art, when it is done correctly, tells us something important about "the place of art in life as a whole, the practice of life..." (PA, vii). So Collingwood is continuing his reflective work, but this time he is reflecting on art. And since we cannot reflect on the future, his analysis stops with the "here and now". He states: "For I do not think of aesthetic theory as an attempt to investigate and expound eternal verities concerning the nature of an eternal object called Art, but as an attempt to reach, by thinking, the solution of certain problems arising out of the situation in which artists find themselves here and now" (PA,vi).

In 1939 Collingwood published An Autobiography. And in 1940 he published An Essay on Metaphysics. We will turn to an examination of this work in the next chapter. In The New Leviathan, published in 1942, he attempts to uncover the principles of society and culture. Collingwood had already touched on this subject in parts of An Essay on Metaphysics. In The New Leviathan Collingwood continues his reflective work by bringing the science of man, society, and politics up to date. Even though he sees Thomas Hobbes's Leviathan "as the greatest store of political wisdom" (NL, iv), Collingwood still thinks that there is a need to bring Hobbes's analysis up to date "in the light of the advances made since it was written, in history, psychology, and anthropology" (NL, iv). Collingwood divides The New Leviathan into four parts, with the headings 'Man', 'Society', 'Civilization', and 'Barbarism'. This parallels the order of Hobbes's Leviathan. Collingwood tells us that it is only now (i.e. 1942) that men are beginning to recognize Hobbes's work "at its true worth" (NL, iv). It must be remembered that Collingwood wrote part of The New

Leviathan during the bombardment of London. And he tells us that the "wars of the present century have taught some of us that there was more in Hobbes than we supposed" (NL, iv). It would be correct to say that Collingwood attempted to learn from the great thinkers in the past for his entire life. Collingwood died in 1943.

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter I. In this second section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the issue of Collingwood's intellectual development from 1916 to 1943. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

In this second section we will make five major claims that either arise directly or indirectly out of the first section of Chapter I. The five major claims of this chapter are as follows: (1) Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts throw new light on Collingwood's intellectual development, (2) the late development thesis appears to be mistaken, (3) the late development thesis must be distinguished from the continuity thesis, (4) the late development thesis must be distinguished from the radical conversion hypothesis and (5) a re-interpretation of <u>The Idea of</u> History is now warranted.

Let us now attempt to justify our first major claim of this chapter: Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts throw new light on Collingwood's intellectual development from 1916 to 1943. This claim is not new with this thesis. W.J. Van Der Dussen has made this claim
in History As A Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood (1981). We agree with Van Der Dussen that the unpublished manuscripts throw new light on many aspects of Collingwood's thinking that either remained obscure or were unknown.⁵⁵ And we agree with Van Der Dussen that it now appears that Collingwood's own account of his intellectual development given in An Autobiography (1939) is more accurate than has been suggested by Collingwood's commentators. T.M. Knox, Alan Donagan and Louis Mink all disbelieve the description Collingwood gives of his own intellectual development. Donagan, following Knox, says that Collingwood's own narrative of his intellectual development is "beyond a doubt untrue".⁵⁶ As already mentioned, Mink follows Knox and Donagan on this point. We agree with Van Der Dussen against Knox, Donagan and Mink that Collingwood's account of his own intellectual development is closer to the truth.⁵⁷ Let us give one example arising out of the first section of this chapter. In An Autobiography (1939) Collingwood says that he had held the theory of absolute presuppositions for some time. Knox says that this claim is "hardly credible".⁵⁸ Knox argues that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions could not have been developed before the late 1930's. So Knox rejects Collingwood's own account on this point. Donagan and Mink also

^{55.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science: The Philosophy of R.G.</u> <u>Collingwood</u>, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 1981) p. 6.

^{56.} Alan Donagan, <u>The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, (Oxford, 1962), p. 1. See also T.M. Knox, "Editor's Preface", in <u>The Idea</u> of History, p. x.

^{57.} It must be pointed out that Knox was not in possession of all of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts.

^{58.} T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. x.

reject Collingwood's account on this point and agree with Knox that the late development thesis is correct. But the unpublished manuscripts appear to show that Knox, Donagan and Mink are mistaken on this point. We have attempted to demonstrate in the first section of this chapter that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. And so when Collingwood says in <u>An Autobiography</u> (1939) that he had held the theory of absolute presuppositions for some time, it would appear that he is referring to his work on absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's.

In the first section of this chapter we attempted to trace Collingwood's concern with the subject of presuppositions from 1916 until the end of his life. Since Collingwood dealt with this problem for his entire life, it is clear that he thought that it was a major problem. We attempted to show that Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts throw new light on his concern with this problem. First of all we examined the unpublished manuscript entitled "Truth and Contradiction" (1917). Although Collingwood does talk about presuppositions in this manuscript, we argued that these "presuppositions" were not equivalent to the absolute presuppositions that Collingwood speaks about in the early 1930's and in <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u>. And it is on this particular point that we wish to disagree with Lionel Rubinoff. Rubinoff claims that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions goes back to Collingwood's World War I period.⁵⁹ But the new evidence that we have at Oxford (i.e. unpublished manuscripts)

^{59.} Lionel Rubinoff, <u>Collingwood and the Reform of Metaphysics: A Study</u> in the Philosophy of Mind, (Toronto, 1970), pp. 15, 223, 224.

would seem to indicate that Rubinoff is mistaken. In the first section of this chapter we also examined the unpublished manuscript entitled "A Footnote to Future History" (1919). And although we found Collingwood's foundationalist account of knowledge, we did not find Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions.⁶⁰ We also examined the unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" (1933). In this manuscript Collingwood discusses the positivism of A.J. Ayer.⁶¹ It is interesting to note that Van Der Dussen makes no reference to this manuscript in reference to Collingwood's development of his theory of absolute presuppositions. Now before the unpublished manuscripts became available, there was universal agreement that Collingwood studied Ayer after he wrote the 1935-1936 papers on history and that his study of Aver coloured his theory of absolute presuppositions in An Essay on Metaphysics (1940). And our claim is that the unpublished manuscripts clearly demonstrate that Collingwood was aware of Ayer's views before the late 1930's. This is one more piece of evidence that supports the claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions was developed prior to the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history. And so it would appear that Collingwood's study of Aver not only influenced

^{60.} It would appear that C.J.N. Wallace is mistaken when she says that the theory of absolute presuppositions originated "soon after" 1919 and not in "Truth and Contradiction" (1917). See C.J.N. Wallace, "Metaphor And Anthropomorphism In Collingwood's Theory of Absolute Presuppositions", Ph.D. thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1977, p. 45. It should also be noted that Wallace was not in possession of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts that have recently become available.

^{61.} We should point out that Ayer left Oxford in 1932 in order to study logical positivism at the University of Vienna and then returned to Oxford in 1933 as a lecturer in philosophy. It seems likely that it was someone other than Ayer, perhaps even Knox, who gave Collingwood a copy of Ayer's <u>Critique of Theology</u>.

the writing of An Essay on Metaphysics but also The Idea of History. Let us turn now to two other unpublished manuscripts that we examined in our first section. In 1934 Collingwood wrote "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" and "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter". These manuscripts seem to indicate that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. It should be noted that Van Der Dussen only considers "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" as a relevant document as regards to the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions.⁶² He does not attribute importance to "Pure Existence-Space and Time-Matter" for this problem. And we have also seen that Van Der Dussen does not attribute importance to the manuscript entitled "Morals" for tracing the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions. And it should also be pointed out that Van Der Dussen does not attribute importance to the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" for tracing this development. But we do agree with Van Der Dussen that "The Nature of Metaphysical Study" throws new light on the development of this theory. And so we agree with Van Der Dussen that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in 1934. But as we will see in a moment, Van Der Dussen's analysis is not discriminating enough. At this point we must make mention of the fact that we examined the unpublished "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" (1935) in the first section of this chapter. We must point out that this manuscript was available at Oxford before the recent unpublished manuscripts became available in 1978.⁶³

^{62.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 195.

^{63.} The "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" was deposited into the Bodleian Library in 1964.

a number of commentators have read this correspondence including Rubinoff and Shalom. One major claim in this correspondence was that, for Collingwood, metaphysical concepts lack empirical truth-value. We have argued earlier that this claim is an important component in the theory of absolute presuppositions.

Let us now attempt to justify our earlier claims that Rubinoff's and Van Der Dussen's account of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions is not discriminating enough. In Rubinoff's case, he traces the doctrine of absolute presuppositions back to 1917. Although Collingwood does talk about presuppositions in his World War I period, these "presuppositions" are not to be equated with absolute presuppositions. To mention just one thing, the presuppositions of the World War I period have truth-value. Nowhere in Collingwood's World War I writings does he make the following claims which are all an integral part of the theory of absolute presuppositions: (1) absolute presuppositions lack empirical truthvalue, (2) absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable, (3) absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions, (4) absolute presuppositions logically give rise to questions and (5) absolute presuppositions have a metaphysical meaning, but lack an empirical meaning. As we attempted to demonstrate in the first section of this chapter, Collingwood did not make these <u>five</u> major claims before the early 1930's.⁶⁴ Now if our analysis is correct, then we must conclude that Rubinoff's

^{64.} Given that our analysis is correct, the following possible interpretation is mistaken: Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions was already there in 1917 and he later modified the theory with respect to the question of truth-value.

account of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions is not discriminating enough and that he is wrong to trace this theory back to 1917. It is also the case that Van Der Dussen's analysis of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions is not discriminating enough. There is no attempt on Van Der Dussen's part to compare what Collingwood says about absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's to what Collingwood says about presuppositions in his earlier writings. He offers no reason for showing why Rubinoff's claim in regard to the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions appears to be mistaken. So although Van Der Dussen traces the theory back to 1934, he offers no justification for the claim that this theory is not found prior to this period in Collingwood's intellectual career.

Let us turn now to our second major claim of Chapter I. Our second major claim is that the late development thesis is mistaken. It is usually argued by Collingwood's commentators that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions was a late development in his thinking and that this theory grew out of his study of history in 1935-1936. We have called this standard interpretation the late development thesis. This standard interpretation in Collingwoodian scholarship is accepted by T.M. Knox, Alan Donagan, Albert Shalom, Louis Mink, Michael Krausz, Nathan Rotenstreich, Stephen Toulmin and Peter Skagestad.⁶⁵

^{65. (}i) See T.M. Knox, <u>The Idea of History</u>, p. x. A. Donagan, <u>The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, (Oxford, 1962), pp. 10, 11, 14, 15, 62, 210, 211. Albert Shalom, <u>R.G. Collingwood</u>: Philosophe et Historien (Paris, 1967), pp. 421, 422, 432. Louis Mink, <u>Mind</u>, <u>History</u>, <u>And Dialectic</u>, (Bloomington, 1969), pp. 6, 105, 106, 118, 140. Michael Krausz, "The Logic Of Absolute Presuppositions" in <u>Critical Essays on the Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, ed. M. Krausz, (Oxford, 1972), pp. (continued on p. 59)

The first commentator to argue for the late development thesis was T.M. Knox, and Alan Donagan followed Knox's lead. Donagan says that it was during or soon after the composition of <u>The Principles of Art</u> (1938) that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions.⁶⁶ Donagan tells us that Collingwood did not develop his theory of absolute presuppositions until the late 1930's and that this theory was not worked out until after Collingwood had read A.J. Ayer's <u>Language</u>, <u>Truth and Logic</u> (1936).⁶⁷ But as we have seen earlier Collingwood came across Ayer's <u>Critique of Theology</u> in 1933. Donagan also tells us that Collingwood did not claim that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value until 1939.⁶⁸ But if our analysis is correct Collingwood made this claim in 1935. And moreover in 1935 when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he is referring to empirical truth-value.⁶⁹ So it appears that Donagan is mistaken to claim that Collingwood did not hold this view

- 66. A. Donagan, The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood, p. 11.
- 67. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 14-15. It is also interesting to note that Rubinoff claims that Collingwood did not come across Ayer's work until the late 1930's. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 20, 33, 241.

69. See also Chapter II.

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^{65. (}i) continued. 222-223. Nathan Rotenstreich, "Metaphysics And Historicism" in <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed. M. Krausz, (Oxford, 1972), pp. 179-187. Stephen Toulmin, <u>Human Understanding</u>, Vol. 1 (Oxford, 1972), pp. 70-84. Peter Skagestad, <u>Making Sense of History: The Philosophies of Popper and Collingwood</u>, (Oslo, 1975), p. 71. (ii) It is also important to point out that the late development thesis is not necessarily an 'a priori' interpretative framework. The late development thesis may simply be a conclusion that a commentator arrives at. For example, in Shalom's case, the late development thesis is a conclusion of his analysis and not an 'a priori' interpretative framework.

^{68.} A. Donagan, The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood, pp. 10, 62.

until 1939 and Donagan is not aware of the point that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he is referring to empirical truth-value. Donagan adds that it is not unreasonable to infer that Collingwood tacitly revised his position in "The Historical Imagination" (1935) in the light of his theory of absolute presuppositions.⁷⁰ We see Donagan's acceptance of the late development thesis in this claim. It therefore appears that Donagan is mistaken in claiming that he revised his position in "The Historical Imagination" (1935) in the light of his theory of absolute presuppositions.⁷¹ And if Donagan is mistaken, an alternative interpretation of "The Historical Imagination" is now warranted.

Louis Mink also accepts the late development thesis. So Mink is

^{70.} Ibid., p. 211.

^{71.} When Collingwood says in <u>An Autobiography</u> that he had held the doctrine of absolute presuppositions for some time (A, chs. 5-7), Donagan takes Collingwood to be referring to his World War I period. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, pp. 262-263. Rubinoff agrees with Donagan on this point. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 15, 223-224. Where Donagan and Rubinoff differ, however, is that Donagan rejects Collingwood's claim and Rubinoff accepts it. So Donagan rejects Collingwood's supposed claim that the theory of absolute presuppositions goes back to his World War I period and Rubinoff accepts Collingwood's supposed claim. Now our claim in this thesis is that Collingwood was referring to the early 1930's when he claimed that he had held this theory for some time. And therefore we disagree with Donagan and Rubinoff as to what Collingwood meant by this claim and we disagree with Donagan and Rubinoff as to when Collingwood developed this theory. We must also add, however, that we do agree with Rubinoff that the "logic of question and answer" goes back to Collingwood's World War I period. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, pp. 15, 223. Van Der Dussen also traces the "logic of question and answer" back to Collingwood's World War I period. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 22. In this thesis we have examined "Truth and Contradiction" (1917) and we have argued that the logic of question and answer is contained in this manuscript. If our analysis is correct, our interpretation of "Truth and Contradiction" gives added weight to the interpretations offered by Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen.

following the lead of Knox and Donagan. Mink says that the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed in the late 1930's and that this theory "was the ultimate result of his thinking about thought."⁷² Mink's claim is that the theory of absolute presuppositions was not developed until An Autobiography and An Essay on Metaphysics.⁷³ Mink says that "the theory of presuppositions... is not even mentioned before the Autobiography in 1939."⁷⁴ Mink adds that the philosopher who most influenced Collingwood's later philosophy was Whitehead. Mink says that Collingwood's claim in the late 1930's that scientific thought reflects the logical efficacy of absolute presuppositions which have a finite historical career, comes close to Whitehead's position that modern science rests on metaphysical concepts.⁷⁵ But it is odd that Mink would make this claim and still argue for the late development thesis. It is odd because there is a discussion of Whitehead's position in Collingwood's The Idea of Nature which was written between 1932 and 1934. This discussion of Whitehead, it seems to us, gives added weight to our claim that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. Mink's point about the influence of Whitehead on Collingwood actually counts against Mink's own late development thesis.⁷⁶

72. Louis Mink, Mind, History, and Dialectic, p. 106.

74. Ibid., p. 140.

75. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 6.

76. Whitehead's <u>Science and the Modern World</u> was published in 1925 and Whitehead's <u>Process and Reality</u> was published in 1929.

^{73. &}lt;u>Ibid.</u>, p. 118.

According to Mink, the theory of absolute presuppositions "throws retrospective light" on many of Collingwood's earlier writings including An Essay on Philosophical Method and The Idea of History.⁷⁷ In fact, Mink tells us that the "a priori imagination" in The Idea of History is an early formulation of the theory of absolute presuppositions and that the "a priori imagination" comes close to being "identical" to this theory.⁷⁸ Now our disagreement with Mink is that since the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed prior to the writing of The Idea of History, the "a priori imagination" in The Idea of History cannot be an early formulation of that theory. If our analysis is correct, Collingwood must mean something else by the "a priori' imagination" in The Idea of History. If the preceding points are true, it would follow that Mink's interpretation of the 'a priori' imagination is mistaken. And this misinterpretation on Mink's part gives added weight to our earlier claim that a re-interpretation of "The Historical Imagination" (1935) is now warranted. It will be our claim that Mink is wrong in claiming that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions "throws retrospective light" on The Idea of History. And the interpretation that we wish to defend is that the theory of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on The Idea of History.⁷⁹

- 78. Ibid., p. 151.
- 79. It is interesting to note that some writers hold the late development thesis and yet claim that the theory of absolute presuppositions can be found in embryonic form in some of Collingwood's earlier writings. W.H. Walsh and E.E. Harris are two examples of commentators who would fall into this camp. See W.H. Walsh, "Collingwood And Metaphysical Neutralism" in <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed., M. Krausz, p. 143 and E.E. Harris, "Collingwood's Treatment Of the Ontological Argument And The Categorical Universal" in <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed., M. Krausz, p. 133.

^{77.} Louis Mink, Mind, History, and Dialectic, p. 140.

The claim that Collingwood's theory of history took a new direction in and after 1935 is an original claim in Collingwoodian scholarship. Although two major commentators, namely Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen, reject the late development thesis, they do not argue that Collingwood's theory of history takes a new direction in and after 1935. Rubinoff does not see this new direction in Collingwood's theory of history because he traces the doctrine of absolute presuppositions back to "Truth and Contradiction". And Van Der Dussen does not see that Collingwood's theory of history in and after 1935 takes a new direction because he does not recognize the implications of Collingwood's work on metaphysics and cosmology in the early 1930's. So Van Der Dussen traces the doctrine of absolute presuppositions back to 1934 but does not see the importance of this fact for understanding the 1935-1936 papers on history. And it may be the case that Van Der Dussen senses this weakness in his analysis because he does say in a footnote that there may be a relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and history.⁸⁰

Let us turn now to our third major claim in this chapter: the late development thesis must be distinguished from the continuity thesis. Now there are three commentators who subscribe to the continuity thesis, namely Rubinoff, Mink and Van Der Dussen.⁸¹ Rubinoff says that there is a strong continuity between Collingwood's early and later writings.⁸²

^{80.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As a Science</u>, p. 375. But Van Der Dussen fails to point out that the unpublished manuscripts of the early 1930's should be consulted in this connection. He only mentions the 1937-8 "Metaphysics" paper (unpublished).

^{81.} In a conversation (April, 1980) Van Der Dussen agreed with the claim that the continuity thesis is correct.

^{82.} L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. v.

Mink says that Collingwood's books must be interpreted in the light of the continuity in his thought.⁸³ Let us call this interpretation in Collingwoodian scholarship the continuity thesis. Rubinoff, Mink and Van Der Dussen, then, all hold the view that there is a strong continuity in Collingwood's early and later writings. Now the first section of this chapter has been an attempt to give added weight to the continuity thesis. We have pointed out many continuities between Collingwood's early and later writings. And we have referred to a number of unpublished manuscripts which lend support to the continuity thesis. In particular, we have stressed the continuity in Collingwood's writings in regard to the subject of presuppositions. It is clear that Collingwood had an interest in the subject of presuppositions as early as 1916 in Religion And Philosophy and that his interest in this subject was carried on throughout his entire life. The interest in this subject of presuppositions is probably explained by Collingwood's claim that the philosopher's job is to try and "reach something deeper down and more fundamental". Our examination of a number of unpublished manuscripts confirms the continuity of his interest in presuppositions. The first section of this chapter can be partly seen as an attempt to bring the continuity thesis up to date. But it is important to emphasize the fact that we are not claiming that what Collingwood said about presuppositions in his World War I period is identical to what he says about presuppositions in his later writings. As we have seen, Collingwood did not start working on his theory of absolute presuppositions until the early 1930's. And the

^{83.} L. Mink, Mind, History, and Dialectic, p. 3.

theory of absolute presuppositions was definitely a new 'turn' in his thought. Even though there is a new turn in his thought in the early 1930's, we still wish to argue that there is a continuity in Collingwood's thought in regards to the subject of presuppositions. So what we are attempting to do is to avoid the extremes of identity and radical breaks. Rubinoff is guilty of the extreme of identity when he says that the theory of absolute presuppositions goes back to Collingwood's World War I period. If our analysis is correct, there is no identity concerning the subject of presuppositions between the early and later writings. And we are trying to avoid the extreme of radical breaks. Knox and Donagan are two commentators who argue that what Collingwood says about presuppositions in his later writings is a radical departure from anything he says in his early writings.

It is important to distinguish between the late development thesis and the continuity thesis. It is possible to accept both the late development thesis and the continuity thesis. Louis Mink is the only commentator who falls into this camp. Mink argues that there is a strong continuity in Collingwood's writings but that Collingwood did not develop his theory of absolute presuppositions until 1939. If our analysis in this chapter is correct, Mink is right to claim that the continuity thesis is correct. Jut is wrong in claiming that the late development thesis is correct. It is also possible to reject the late development thesis and to accept the continuity thesis. Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen fall into this camp. We believe that Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen are right to reject the claim that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions was a late development in his thinking. And we

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believe that Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen are right to claim that there is a strong continuity between Collingwood's early and later writings. But although we believe that Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen are in the right camp concerning these issues, we still have a number of disagreements with Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen. We disagree with Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen on the issue of when Collingwood developed his complete theory of absolute presuppositions. So we do not always agree with Rubinoff's and Van Der Dussen's reasons for rejecting the late development thesis. And we do not always agree with their reasons for accepting the continuity thesis. Rubinoff and Van Der Dussen do not always present us with the exact nature of this continuity in Collingwood's thought. Even though one may agree with the continuity thesis, how one works out this continuity is another matter.⁸⁴

Let us now turn to our fourth major claim in this chapter: the late development thesis must be distinguished from the radical conversion hypothesis. Lionel Rubinoff was the first commentator to speak of the "radical conversion hypothesis". Rubinoff's book entitled <u>Collingwood</u> <u>and the Reform of Metaphysics</u> (1970) is really an attempt to show that the radical conversion hypothesis is mistaken.⁸⁵ Rubinoff tells us that the radical conversion hypothesis was first defended by T.M. Knox. The

^{84.} It is also possible to accept the late development thesis and to reject the continuity thesis. Knox and Donagan fall into this camp. And it would also be possible to reject both the late development thesis and the continuity thesis, but no commentator as of yet falls into this camp.

^{85.} Our thesis can be partly seen as an attempt to bring Rubinoff's criticism of the radical conversion hypothesis up to date.

radical conversion hypothesis is the thesis that sometime between 1936 and 1939 Collingwood underwent a radical conversion from "idealism" to "historicism". According to the radical conversion hypothesis, somewhere between 1936 and 1939 Collingwood came to see philosophy as being liquidated by being absorbed into history. The result, according to Knox and other defenders of the radical conversion hypothesis, is a thoroughgoing scepticism.⁸⁶

We agree with Rubinoff that Knox was the first commentator to accept the radical conversion hypothesis. Knox does say that Collingwood came to hold an historicist position, not unlike Croce's, in the late 1930's.⁸⁷ Knox adds that philosophical scepticism in one form or another was the price that Collingwood paid for the endeavour to compress philosophy into history.⁸⁸Knox concludes that he himself is compelled to believe that Collingwood's philosophical standpoint radically changed in the late 1930's, even though no such change is recorded in Collingwood's <u>Autobiography</u>, and even though others maintain that, while his views developed, the development was gradual and always along the same track.⁸⁹ According to Knox, Collingwood's radical break in the late 1930's was largely dependent on

- 86. L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. v.
- 87. T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. viii.
- 88. <u>Ibid</u>., p. xi.
- 89. <u>Ibid</u>., p. xi.

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Collingwood's adoption of the theory of absolute presuppositions.⁹⁰ We have attempted to show in this chapter that Collingwood was working on his doctrine of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. So if there is a conversion to historicism, as Knox claims, and if this conversion is connected to the doctrine of absolute presuppositions, then this conversion should be evident in the early 1930's. But Knox does not trace this conversion back to the early 1930's. In fact, Knox says that Collingwood distinguished between philosophy and history in 1933.⁹¹ If Collingwood was developing his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's, as we claim, and still distinguished between philosophy and

91. T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. x.

^{90.} At this point it is interesting to mention a conversation (October, 1980) that we had with Z.A. Pelczynski (Oxford University). Pelczynski knew Knox personally and was aware of Knox's relationship with Collingwood. Knox was initially interested in Collingwood's work because Collingwood concerned himself with metaphysical questions. Knox was disturbed with the attitude to metaphysics at Oxford and thought that Collingwood was the only philosopher at Oxford who could reply to this attitude to metaphysics. And the attitude to metaphysics that Knox is referring to is, of course, the attitude to metaphysics of the logical positivists. Knox, then, thought that Collingwood was the only philosopher at Oxford during the 1930's who could adequately respond to the attack on metaphysics made by the logical positivists. But, when Collingwood published An Essay on Metaphysics, Knox was disappointed with Collingwood's response to logical positivism. In An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood had argued that metaphysics is an historical science and as we have seen, Knox interprets Collingwood to mean that he (i.e. Collingwood) is attempting to defend an historicist position. Pelczynski agreed with us that this is why Knox said that Collingwood's philosophy declined in the late 1930's. The present thesis is an attempt to show that Collingwood did not adopt an historicist position in the late 1930's. We agree with Rubinoff that the radical conversion hypothesis is mistaken and this thesis is an attempt to give added weight to Rubinoff's claim. In the next two chapters, we will attempt to show that Knox's interpretation of An Essay on Metaphysics is mistaken in regard to Collingwood's supposed conversion to historicism. If our analysis is correct, this thesis has far-reaching implications: it would appear that Knox edited Collingwood's manuscripts in terms of his own interpretation of Collingwood.

history in 1933, as Knox says, it would be odd indeed to claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions contributed to Collingwood's subordination of philosophy to history. It would appear, then, that there is no necessary connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the subordination of philosophy to history as Knox claims. If our analysis is correct, Knox has mistakenly collapsed the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis.⁹² Our claim in this thesis will be, and we will attempt to defend this claim more fully in the next two chapters, that Collingwood never subordinated philosophy to history. It will be recalled that in the first section of this chapter, we examined Collingwood's "Croce's Philosophy of History" and saw that Collingwood rejected Croce's subordination of philosophy to history. And we have attempted to show here that Knox's reasons for saying that Collingwood subordinated philosophy to history in the late 1930's do not stand up to criticism. If Knox is right that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions led to the subordination of philosophy to history, then Collingwood's supposed subordination of philosophy to history should be evident in the early 1930's because, as we have argued, this is the period in which Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions. But as we have seen, Knox did not find Collingwood's supposed historicist position

^{92.} It is extremely odd that Knox would hold both the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis and then claim that "Faith and Reason" (1928) is one germ of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> and that "Faith and Reason" forms a valuable commentary on <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>. This claim actually gives added weight to the continuity thesis, which Knox rejects, and counts against Knox's late development thesis and radical conversion hypothesis. See T.M. Knox, <u>The Idea of History</u>, p. xvi.

in the early 1930's. Here, then, we have more evidence from Collingwood's published and unpublished work that counts against the radical conversion hypothesis. This evidence, then, lends support to the claim that Colling-wood did not subordinate philosophy to history in the late 1930's.⁹³

We have already seen that Rubinoff claims that Knox holds the radical conversion hypothesis. And we have agreed with this claim. According to Rubinoff, Donagan also holds the radical conversion hypothesis. And on this point we also agree with Rubinoff. Donagan says that Collingwood's conversion to historicism occurred during or soon after the composition of <u>The Principles of Art</u> (1938).⁹⁴ And Donagan agrees with Knox that there is a connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and this conversion.⁹⁵ Here we see that Donagan collapses the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis, just as Knox had done earlier. Where Donagan disagrees with Knox on this issue is when Knox claims that Collingwood held an historicist position from the late 1930's until the end of his life. Although Donagan accepts the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis, Donagan claims that in The New Leviathan (1942) Collingwood relinquished his

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^{93.} Except for the reference to "Faith and Reason", Knox is largely unaware of the strong continuity in Collingwood's thought in regard to the subject of presuppositions.

^{94.} A. Donagan, <u>The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, pp. 10-11.95. Ibid., p. 11.

historicist position.⁹⁶ Rubinoff tells us that in addition to Knox and Donagan, F.H. Heinemann, D. Emmit, C.K. Grant, H.B. Acton, A. Boyce Gibson and John Passmore accept the radical conversion hypothesis.⁹⁷

96. (i) We will claim in the next two chapters that Donagan's claim that Collingwood is not defending an historicist position in <u>The</u> <u>New Leviathan</u> (1942) should have convinced Donagan that his historicist interpretation of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> (1940) is mistaken. It would have been odd for Collingwood to change his views radically in 1940 and then to change them again radically in 1942. It appears that Donagan has failed to take the continuity thesis seriously enough. Although Donagan was not in possession of the unpublished manuscripts, Collingwood's published writings should have convinced Donagan that there is a strong continuity in Collingwood's work. This failure to see the continuity in Collingwood's thought is probably the result of the fact that Donagan is almost totally preoccupied with Collingwood's later thought, as the title of Donagan's book suggests.

(ii) In a conversation (March, 1978), Rubinoff claimed that Donagan has admitted to him that there is more continuity in Collingwood's thought than he earlier thought.

97. (i) L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 21-22, 213. (ii) Except for one commentator, we agree with Rubinoff's list of commentators who accept the radical conversion hypothesis. We would want to argue that Rubinoff is mistaken to claim that A. Shalom holds the radical conversion hypothesis. For Shalom, there are two 'turns' in Collingwood's thought, but no radical conversion at any time. According to Shalom, from <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (1916) to <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u> (1924) "mind" is fundamental in Collingwood's thought. In 1925 Shalom says that we have the first 'turn' in Collingwood's thought. From 1925 to 1936 Shalom says that "history" is fundamental in Collingwood's thought. And in 1937 Shalom says that we have the second 'turn' in Collingwood's thought. From 1937 until the end of Collingwood's life, "absolute presuppositions" are fundamental. Now although there are two 'turns' in Collingwood's thought, according to Shalom, there is no radical conversion either in 1925 or in 1937. Rather, according to Shalom, Collingwood's development is the logical working out of an idealistic point of view. For Shalom, Collingwood was working within an idealistic framework for his entire life. The two 'turns' in Collingwood's thought, then, are 'turns' within an idealistic framework which Collingwood never relinquished. It is for this reason that we would want to argue against Rubinoff's assertion that Shalom holds the radical conversion hypothesis. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 377. And Rubinoff also misses the two 'turns' in Shalom's interpretation. Now we would want to argue that Shalom's interpretation actually comes closer to (continued on p. 72)

And we would want to argue that since Rubinoff's book was published in 1970, three other commentators have defended the radical conversion hypothesis. These three commentators are Nathan Rotenstreich, Michael Krausz and Stephen Toulmin.⁹⁸

It is important to distinguish between the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis. It is possible to accept both of these theses, or to reject both of them, or to accept only one of them. So first of all, it is possible to accept both the late development

98. See Nathan Rotenstreich, "Metaphysics and Historicism" in <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed., M. Krausz, pp. 197, 200. See M. Krausz, "The Logic of Absolute Presuppositions", in <u>Critical Essays</u>, pp. 222-240. See S. Toulmin, <u>Human Understanding</u>, p. 53.

^{97. (}ii) continued. the continuity thesis. For Shalom, there is a strong continuity in Collingwood's thought in the sense that Collingwood never relinquished his original idealistic stance. The major reason that Shalom sees the continuity in Collingwood's thought is that his major work on Collingwood takes a chronological approach. This chronological approach is one of the strengths of Shalom's interpretation. We have attempted to stress this chronological approach to Collingwood in this chapter. That a chronological approach is not used by a commentator like Donagan may partly explain the fact that he does not see the continuity in Collingwood's thought. Later in the thesis we will attempt to show that Collingwood is indeed an idealist, as Shalom suggests, but not in the sense that Shalom claims. By the term 'idealism', Shalom appears to mean that mind pervades the whole of nature. Shalom's definition of idealism in reference to Collingwood appears to be inconsistent with Collingwood's claim that "man has one foot in history and one foot in nature". And also it would seem to be the case that this claim that "man has one foot in history and one foot in nature" made by Collingwood in 1936, is really inconsistent with Shalom's claim that in 1936 "history" is fundamental for Collingwood. Collingwood does not reduce everything to history in 1936. Also it appears to be the case that Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts show that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. If our analysis is correct, then Shalom is mistaken to claim that absolute presuppositions did not become fundamental for Collingwood until 1937. Here we see Shalom's acceptance of the late development thesis at work. Given the new evidence at Oxford (i.e. unpublished manuscripts) it would appear that Shalom is now forced to claim that absolute presuppositions became fundamental for Collingwood in the early 1930's.

thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis. That is, it is possible to claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions was a late development in Collingwood's thinking and that a radical conversion to historicism took place in Collingwood's thought in the late 1930's. T.M. Knox, Alan Donagan, F.H. Heinemann, C.K. Grant, H.B. Acton, Michael Krausz and Stephen Toulmin fall into this camp.⁹⁹ It is also possible to accept one of these theses while denying the other. It is possible to reject the late development thesis and to accept the radical conversion hypothesis.¹⁰⁰ And it is possible to accept the late development thesis and to reject the radical conversion hypothesis. Louis Mink and Albert

99. (i) All of these commentators argue that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions contributed to this radical conversion to historicism. It is for this reason that we would want to claim that all of these commentators collapse the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis. (ii) Nathan Rotenstreich does not fall into this camp. Although he does accept the radical conversion hypothesis, Rotenstreich argues that Collingwood's conversion to historicism took place in the early 1930's. Rotenstreich refers to The Idea of Nature as to when the conversion took place. It is clear that Rotenstreich does not see a necessary connection between the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis. According to Rotenstreich, Collingwood developed the theory of absolute presuppositions in the late 1930's, but converted to historicism in the early 1930's. See N. Rotenstreich, "Metaphysics and Historicism", in Critical Essays, ed., M. Krausz, p. 200.

100. Van Der Dussen comes very close to falling into this camp. He claims that there is an implied relativism in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 120. But this claim is really inconsistent with Van Der Dussen's own professed defence of the continuity thesis. And it is also inconsistent with Van Der Dussen's claim earlier in his book that Collingwood was well aware of the dangers of an extreme form of historicism. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 4-5. So Van Der Dussen rejects the late development thesis as we have seen before, but comes very close to accepting the radical conversion hypothesis.

Shalom fall into this camp. Both Mink and Shalom think that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions was a late development in Collingwood's thinking. And both Mink and Shalom reject the view that there are any radical conversions in Collingwood's thought. Rather Mink and Shalom argue that there is a continuity in Collingwood's thought. But this is not to say that Mink and Shalom do not have any disagreements. For example, Mink thinks that Collingwood is attempting to present us with a position which is neither realist nor idealist. And Shalom thinks that Collingwood's entire philosophical work is coloured by an idealistic stance. It is also possible to reject both the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis. Lionel Rubinoff falls into this camp. And following Rubinoff, we would want to reject both of these theses. In this chapter we have attempted to show that the late development thesis is mistaken. And in this chapter we have suggested some reasons for saying that the radical conversion hypothesis is mistaken. Later in our next two chapters we will present other reasons in order to defend our claim that the radical conversion hypothesis is wrong. Now although we fall into the same camp as Rubinoff on this issue, we still have some disagreements with Rubinoff. We have already pointed out that we disagree with Rubinoff's account of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions.

Let us turn now to the fifth major claim of Chapter I. This is the claim that a re-interpretation of <u>The Idea of History</u> is warranted. It will not be necessary to say a great deal about this claim at this point because Chapters IV-VII are really an attempt to systematically defend this claim. At this point we will simply point out how The Idea of History has been interpreted in the past and contrast these past interpretations with our approach to this work. Generally speaking there are two basic approaches to The Idea of History in the literature. One approach is that some commentators think that The Idea of History stands on its own and does not need to be interpreted in terms of Collingwood's other writings. Leon Goldstein and W.H. Dray are two examples of commentators who fall into this camp. With Goldstein and Dray, there are very few references to Collingwood's other writings when they are attempting to interpret The Idea of History. Although many of Goldstein's and Dray's claims are quite compatible with this thesis, we wish to argue that Goldstein and Dray overlook two important points. First, Goldstein and Dray do not see the logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. And secondly, because they do not concern themselves with Collingwood's philosophical development, they do not recognize that Collingwood's theory of history takes a new 'turn' in 1935. The other general approach to The Idea of History is that some commentators attempt to interpret this work in terms of one or a number of Collingwood's other writings. Mink and Rubinoff are two examples of commentators who fall into this camp. For Mink, The Idea of History is to be interpreted in terms of the relevant ideas of The Principles of Art and The New Leviathan. 101 Since the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is only mentioned in the unpublished manuscripts, The Idea of Nature, An Autobiography, and An Essay on Metaphysics, Mink overlooks the important relationship between

101. L. Mink, Mind, History, And Dialectic, pp. 79-118.

the theory of absolute presuppositions and history because he approaches The Idea of History in terms of the interpretative framework of The Principles of Art and The New Leviathan.¹⁰² Mink does say that the theory of absolute presuppositions throws retrospective light on The Idea of History, but as we have seen, this claim assumes the truth of the late development thesis. For Mink, the theory of absolute presuppositions is not formulated explicitly until An Essay on Metaphysics (1940) and not even mentioned before 1939 in An Autobiography. In the first section of this thesis we attempted to show that Mink's claim is mistaken. We would want to argue that Mink's acceptance of the late development thesis prevents him from seeing the new 'turn' in Collingwood's theory of history in 1935. As mentioned, Rubinoff also falls into the camp of interpreting The Idea of History in terms of one or a number of Collingwood's other writings. In Rubinoff's case, the clue to interpreting Collingwood's writings, including The Idea of History, is in Speculum Mentis.¹⁰³ Rubinoff thinks that <u>The Idea of History</u> is the working out of a system developed in Speculum Mentis.¹⁰⁴ Earlier we argued that

102. It seems to be the case that Mink has a problem of chronology with his approach to <u>The Idea of History</u>. We have attempted to avoid the problem of chronology with our approach to this work. Since we have argued that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions prior to the writing of the 1935-36 papers on history, we do not think that we have a problem of chronology.

^{103.} L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. v, 23.

^{104.} In the first section of this chapter we argued that at no time did Collingwood set out to construct a philosophical system. Although the idea of a system is an important regulative idea for Collingwood, he saw his own work as a contribution towards a system. It should also be mentioned that Collingwood never said that <u>Speculum Mentis</u> was the starting-point for future work. In fact, it was only in reference to <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> that he ever spoke about a starting-point for future work. In a letter to de Ruggiero he mentions <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> "as a programme for future work rather than a conclusion or final theoretical position". (letter of February 7, 1934 (unpublished).)

<u>Speculum Mentis</u> bears a strong resemblance to Hegel's <u>Phenomenology of</u> <u>the Spirit</u>. And so it would be correct to claim that Rubinoff is offering a Hegelian reading of <u>The Idea of History</u>. This Hegelian reading of <u>The Idea of History</u> prevents Rubinoff from seeing the important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and history. Since the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not found before or even in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, given that our analysis is correct, Rubinoff misses the new 'turn' in Collingwood's theory of history in 1935 by interpreting <u>The Idea of History</u> in terms of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. This is not to say that we disagree with Rubinoff's, or even Mink's, entire interpretation of <u>The Idea of History</u>. Many of their claims are quite compatible with this thesis. But the interpretations offered by Rubinoff and Mink remind us of Collingwood's dictum that "what you are not looking for you will not see".

Even though W.J. Van Der Dussen has consulted the unpublished manuscripts that have been available at Oxford since 1978, he also misses the important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and history. Van Der Dussen says that the basic principles of Collingwood's ideas on history had been developed by 1930.¹⁰⁵ We disagree with Van Der

^{105.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 41. It is also interesting to point out that Van Der Dussen appears to be mistaken to point out that there is a clear dividing line in Collingwood's thought in 1925. Van Der Dussen argues that in 1925 Collingwood moved from a realist theory of history to an idealist theory of history. See Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 34, 35, 273. First of all, that Collingwood is offering a realist theory of history in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> (1924), as Van Der Dussen claims, is a staggering claim. On this issue we would claim that Shalom and Rubinoff are correct to claim that Collingwood is offering an idealist theory of history in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. But as mentioned, (continued on p. 78)

Dussen on this point. Our claim is that in 1935 and 1936 Collingwood's ideas on history developed in a significantly new direction as the result of his work on absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. And this claim is not meant to deny the strong continuity in Collingwood's writings. Van Der Dussen does trace the doctrine of absolute presuppositions back to 1934, but he doesn't see the implications of this claim. For one thing, Van Der Dussen fails to point out that we must reject the standard interpretation that the theory of absolute presuppositions grew out of an intensive study of history in 1935 and 1936. And for another thing, Van Der Dussen fails to recognize that when Collingwood resumed his study of history in 1935, he had the theory of absolute presuppositions clearly in mind.¹⁰⁶

^{105.} continued. our definition of idealism is not the same as Shalom's or Rubinoff's. This issue will be dealt with more fully later in the thesis. So we disagree with Van Der Dussen that Collingwood is offering a realist theory of history in <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. Van Der Dussen's claim is also inconsistent with his own professed continuity thesis. So it is odd that Van Der Dussen would accept the continuity thesis and then claim that there is a clear dividing line in 1925.

^{106.} We would want to argue that Van Der Dussen has not always followed his own advice when he says that one must put The Idea of History into a broader context. See Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 7. We agree with Van Der Dussen that we must put The Idea of History into a broader context, but we would want to claim that this broader context would include the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Van Der Dussen tends to ignore metaphysical issues arising out of Collingwood's theory of history. This is indeed odd after Van Der Dussen stresses the connection between metaphysics and history. See History As A Science, p. 65. In this thesis, we have attempted to stress the connection between metaphysics and history. On this particular point we are more in sympathy with A. Shalom's major work on Collingwood. Shalom does discuss the metaphysical problems arising out of Collingwood's theory of history. But although we agree with Shalom on this issue, we do not always agree with Shalom on the exact working out of this connection between metaphysics and history. It is also interesting to note that Shalom's (continued on p. 79)

We wish to conclude this chapter by saying that The Idea of History cannot be fully understood independently of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. This is an original claim in Collingwoodian scholarship. If our claim is correct, the critics of Collingwood's The Idea of History must go back and re-examine this work. As Collingwood put it himself in An Essay on Philosophical Method: "The question whether a man's views are true or false does not arise until we have found out what they are" (EPM, 217). It is the claim of this thesis that the question of whether Collingwood's theory of history is true or false cannot be adequately dealt with until the important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and history is examined. Now whether Collingwood's theory of history is true or false is a question that will not be dealt with in this thesis. Our modest claim will be, and it is our hope that this will not be taken as a weakness in the thesis, that the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and history is a major part of Collingwood's thought in The Idea of History and that this aspect of Collingwood's thought must be understood before Collingwood's theory of history can be examined critically to determine its truth or falsity.

In Chapter II we will study Collingwood's systematic formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions as it is found in <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>. It is very important for our thesis to be very clear

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^{106.} continued. concern with metaphysical problems may explain Van Der Dussen's comment that Shalom tends to ignore Collingwood's work on history. See <u>History As a Science</u>, p. 375. In this thesis we have attempted to avoid the extremes of an emphasis on metaphysics and a neglect of history, as Van Der Dussen seems to imply that Shalom is guilty of, and an emphasis on history and a neglect of metaphysics which we would claim that Van Der Dussen is guilty of.

about this notion of an absolute presupposition before we turn to the problem of historical understanding. So this preliminary work is necessary before we turn later in the thesis to our re-interpretation of <u>The</u> <u>Idea of History</u>.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTRINE OF ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITIONS

In the first section of this chapter we will examine Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions as we find it presented in <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u> (1940). One major claim in this section will be that absolute presuppositions are to be seen as logico-regulative entities. / Another major claim will be that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he means that absolute presuppositions / lack <u>empirical</u> truth-value. In the second section of this chapter we will examine what other commentators have said about the question of what Collingwood means by an absolute presupposition.

Ι

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> (1940), Collingwood says that there is an urgent need to get as clear as possible about the principles of metaphysics. This may immediately remind the reader of Collingwood's attempt in <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> (1933) to get as clear as possible about the principles of philosophical method. Just as in <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Philosophical Method</u> where Collingwood says that the philosophers of the day are unclear as to the principles of philosophical method, so in <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> he is saying that the philosophers of the day are unclear as to the principles of metaphysics. And just as in his 1933

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publication where Collingwood says that the principles of philosophical method have been corrupted by positivistic and psychologistic thinking, so in his 1940 publication he says that the principles of metaphysics have been corrupted by positivistic and psychologistic thinking. It is clear that Collingwood wants to "save" metaphysics in 1940, just as he attempted to save the principles of philosophical method in 1933. And it is now clear, as a result of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts becoming available in 1978, that in An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood is continuing his 'debate' with A.J. Aver that started in 1933 in the unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals". In Ayer's manuscript entitled Critique of Theology, which Collingwood refers to in "Morals", Ayer had claimed that metaphysical propositions are meaningless. But now in 1940 Collingwood thinks that there is an urgent need to publicly respond to Ayer because of the influence of Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic (1936) on the philosophical world. Collingwood sees Ayer's book as a sign of crisis. And not only is Collingwood continuing his debate with Ayer in 1940, he is also continuing his debate with Gilbert Ryle. Collingwood also sees Ryle's thought as being corrupted by positivistic thinking. In the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" Ryle had claimed that there is no difference between empirical propositions and metaphysical propositions. And in 1935 Collingwood thought that Ryle was unclear about the principles of metaphysics, just as in 1933 he thought that Ayer was unclear about the principles of metaphysics.

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood begins by saying that "[t]his is not so much a book of metaphysics as a book about metaphysics" (preface). Now this claim only becomes clear later in An Essay on <u>Metaphysics</u> after Collingwood has attempted to "reform" metaphysics, but a reader of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts may have a glimpse of what he is saying. In this 1940 publication, Collingwood sets himself the task of uncovering the nature of metaphysics itself, and he will attempt this task with the conscious aim of avoiding positivistic and psychologistic thinking. Only secondarily is <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> a book of metaphysics.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I Collingwood will attempt to explain what metaphysics is. He is not so much concerned with expounding his own metaphysical ideas or criticizing the metaphysical ideas of other people, although these projects are legitimate and important projects, as with uncovering the nature of metaphysics itself. In Part II Collingwood will argue that certain conceptions of metaphysics are false. Although the whole of An Essay on Metaphysics can be seen as an attempt to save metaphysics, Part II is an attempt to save metaphysics from an attack on two fronts, namely positivism and psychologism. And Collingwood is well aware of the fact that his claims in Part II will only be legitimate if his analysis in Part I is correct. In Part III he will attempt to demonstrate how metaphysics is to be pursued. The last section is an attempt to show the reader what metaphysicians should be doing or are doing. Here we find a constant theme reaffirmed in Collingwood's writings. And that is that once principles are set down, there is always the task of testing these principles. It is for this reason that Part III can be seen as an attempt to test the principles of metaphysics that Collingwood offered to us earlier in this work. Collingwood's use of the term 'principles' is important. He is going to lay down the principles

of metaphysics in this work just as he laid down the principles of philosophical method in <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> (1933) and the principles of art in <u>The Principles of Art</u> (1938). Later he was to lay down the principles of politics in <u>The New Leviathan</u> (1942). His projected book, which was to be called <u>The Principles of History</u>, was never completed.¹

In this chapter we will be mainly concerned with Parts I and II of An Essay on Metaphysics, and in Chapter III our concern will be Part III. He begins by saying that "[i]n writing about metaphysics it is only decent and it is certainly wise, to begin with Aristotle" (EM, 3). After defining the term 'science' as "a body of systematic or orderly thinking about a determinate subject-matter" (EM, 4) he states: "Aristotle calls the science of metaphysics by no less than three different names" (EM, 5). Collingwood tells us that Aristotle sometimes calls metaphysics "...First Science,...being his regular name for science as I have just defined the word" (EM, 5). He continues: "The word 'first' refers to logical priority. First Science is the science whose subject-matter is logically prior to that of every other, the science which is logically presupposed by all other sciences, although in the order of study it comes last" (EM, 5). Metaphysics can be approached only when all the other sciences have been mastered to some degree at least. Aristotle also calls metaphysics "Wisdom,...with the implication that this is the thing for which... science, is the search; this again implying that in addition to their

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^{1.} In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood is continuing his work as a philosopher. For Collingwood, the philosopher's job is to "reach something deeper down and more fundamental". In 1940 Collingwood is 'digging' deeper to uncover the principles of metaphysics.

immediate function of studying each its own peculiar subject-matter the sciences have a further function as leading to a goal outside themselves, namely the discovery of what they logically presuppose" (EM, 5-6). The third name for metaphysics is Theology. Theology, for Aristotle, is the "science which expounds the nature of God" (EM, 6). These three "names" for metaphysics are not to be confused with Aristotle's two "definitions" of metaphysics. Aristotle's "two" definitions of metaphysics are (1) "metaphysics is the science of pure being" and (2) "metaphysics is the science".

After giving us Aristotle's two definitions of metaphysics, Collingwood tells us that he regards Aristotle's first definition of metaphysics as a mistaken conception of metaphysics. Collingwood tells us that there can be no science of pure being. A science of pure being is an impossibility, he claims, since it would have no determinate subjectmatter. One can arrive at pure being only when "abstraction" is pushed to "the limiting case", but at this point one could have nothing (i.e. no thing) left to study in a scientific way. He states:

> To push abstraction to the limiting case is to take out everything; and when everything is taken out there is nothing for science to investigate. You may call this nothing by whatever name you like--pure being, or God, or anything else--but it remains nothing and contains no peculiarities for science to examine (EM, 14).²

Collingwood is well aware of the fact that he is not making a new discovery when he says that there can be no science of pure being. Berkeley implied that there was no science of pure being when he attacked the

^{2.} Collingwood himself does not equate God with "pure being". For Collingwood, "God" is a metaphysical concept (i.e. absolute presupposition) which some thinkers either consciously or unconsciously hold.

notion of "abstract general ideas", which by the way, Hume endorsed (EM, 15). Collingwood also reminds us of Kant's dictum that "being is not a predicate" and Hegel's contention that "pure being is the same as nothing", in support of this view (EM, 15).³

The claim that metaphysics is not the science of pure being is not a new claim on Collingwood's part with the appearance of <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>. Collingwood made this claim as early as 1916 in <u>Religion and</u> <u>Philosophy</u>, where he states: "The formless and empty Absolute of this abstract metaphysics perished long ago in the fire of Hegel's sarcasm; and it is curious to find the very same pseudo-Absolute, the "night in which all cows are black," still regarded as being for good or evil the essence of philosophical thought" (RP, 116).⁴ So although Collingwood discusses Aristotle's two definitions of metaphysics in <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, we must point out that Collingwood rejected Aristotle's first definition of metaphysics (i.e. the science of pure being) as early as 1916. But it does not follow from this fact that Collingwood accepted Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics (i.e. the science

^{3.} It is interesting to note that although Hegel regards pure being as a nothing, Hegel still starts his inquiry in the Logic with pure being. For Hegel, before we move to the idea of something, we must start with the idea of nothing. So Hegel starts his inquiry with pure being and therefore we could say that Hegel starts his inquiry with Aristotle's first definition of metaphysics. Since Collingwood rejects Aristotle's first definition of metaphysics, he begins his inquiry with Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics which, according to Collingwood, is the science which studies presuppositions.

^{4.} Collingwood adds in 1916 that "[p]hilosophy, as well as science, is concerned with detail" (RP, 20).

which studies presuppositions) in 1916.⁵

The proposition that metaphysics is the science of pure being is for Collingwood a false proposition. He says that Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics is the only acceptable one.⁶ The proper study for a metaphysician is the uncovering of presuppositions underlying a body of systematic or orderly thinking about a determinate subject-matter. The proposition that metaphysics is the science which deals with the presuppositions underlying ordinary science is for Collingwood a true proposition. It is important here to point out that propositions about what metaphysics is can be true or false. And we will see later that propositions about the presuppositions underlying ordinary science, or what Collingwood calls absolute presuppositions, can be true or false. For

^{5.} From 1916 until the early 1930's, it would be correct to say that, for Collingwood, metaphysics was the study of the theory of concrete being or concrete reality. Metaphysics was not the study of "being as it is in itself untainted by thought". See <u>Speculum Mentis</u> pp. 273-4. It would be correct to say that in the early 1930's the metaphysician's job is defined more precisely by Collingwood. From the early 1930's until the end of his life, Collingwood sees the metaphysician's job as uncovering the absolute presuppositions which "taint" or colour the study of concrete being or concrete reality.

^{6.} Collingwood's agreement with Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics is not an unqualified agreement. According to Collingwood, Aristotle lacked an historical consciousness and as a result did not see that the presuppositions underlying ordinary science have changed throughout history. So it would be a mistake to claim that Collingwood's account of metaphysics is equivalent to Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics. Rather, Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics, as interpreted by Collingwood, is a startingpoint for him. And <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> can be seen as a reflection on Aristotle's second definition of metaphysics. This interpretation is actually more consistent with Collingwood's claim that it is only decent and it is certainly wise to "begin" with Aristotle.

example, it would be true to claim that Kant absolutely presupposed that 'every event has a cause', even though the concept 'every event has a cause' itself lacks truth-value. So although we will see later that absolute presuppositions themselves lack truth-value, propositions about the absolute presuppositions underlying ordinary science and propositions about what metaphysics is, can be true or false.

Although Collingwood agrees with Aristotle that metaphysics is "logically" the "First Science", we can now see that this agreement is a qualified agreement. We have seen that Collingwood rejects Aristotle's claim that metaphysics is the science of pure being. And so, when Collingwood agrees with Aristotle that metaphysics is First Science, he is saying that only metaphysics as the study of presuppositions is First Science. Collingwood's discussion of "logical priority" in relation to Aristotle must be kept in mind when we turn to his doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Following Aristotle, Collingwood says that metaphysics is the science which is logically presupposed by all other sciences.

Collingwood regards the science of pure being as pseudo-science.7

^{7.} Whether or not Collingwood is right to regard the science of pure being as pseudo-science is a question that will not be dealt with in this thesis. This is not to deny the importance of this question. Our thesis does not 'hinge' on the matter of whether or not Collingwood is right to regard the science of pure being as pseudo-science. The job of evaluating Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions has been done by many commentators. A. Donagan, A. Shalom, M. Krausz and S. Toulmin are just some commentators who have evaluated critically Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions. In fact, Michael Krausz has written an entire Ph.D. thesis evaluating the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Krausz is particularly concerned with the question of what the doctrine of absolute presuppositions itself presupposes. See Michael Krausz, "A Critique of R.G. Collingwood's Theory of Absolute Presuppositions", University of Toronto, 1969. Although we have some major disagreements with Krausz, we do not wish to cover Krausz's 'ground' again. Rather, we are attempting to break new ground in this thesis.
Collingwood proposes to call this science of pure being, when he wants "a one-word name for it, ontology". "Ontology" is Collingwood's name "for a mistake which people have made, Aristotle first and foremost, about metaphysics" (EM, 17). Collingwood qualifies this claim by saying: "I do not forget that books have been written under the title of ontology, and have contained a great deal that is true and valuable" (EM, 17). But what these books with "ontological" titles have really contained is metaphysics in the proper sense of the term which is the science which deals with the presuppositions underlying ordinary science. "[T]heir Ontological title", Collingwood says, "either implies a sense of the word ontology different from that which I have defined or else it represents not their contents but a mistake about their contents" (EM, 17). These books with ontological titles did not really deal with pure being. Rather, they dealt with metaphysics in the proper sense of the term as Collingwood understands it. So when Collingwood rejects ontology, he is only dismissing the ontology of pure abstract being. It would be correct to say that Collingwood does not eliminate the possibility of an ontology of concrete being.⁸

Collingwood says that "[w]henever anybody states a thought in words, there are a great many more thoughts in his mind than are expressed in his statement. Among these there are some which stand in a peculiar relation to the thought he has stated: they are not merely its context,

^{8.} On this last point we agree with Rubinoff. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform</u> of <u>Metaphysics</u>, p. 387. On the issue of where we differ from Rubinoff in regards to how this interpretative point is worked out, see footnote #5 in this chapter.

they are its presuppositions" (EM, 21). At this point we may be immediately reminded of "The Philosophy of History" (1930) where he claims that there is a logical connection between a question and previous thoughts. And in this 1930 publication he says that it was these previous thoughts that caused the question to arise. But it is important to see that the point in the 1930 paper is not identical with the point in An Essay on Metaphysics. In 1930 Collingwood does not talk about a logical relation between thoughts and presuppositions. So here it would be correct to say that Collingwood is revising his 1930 position in terms of his theory of presuppositions which was first worked out from 1933 to 1935. This "peculiar relation" that he speaks about in An Essay on Metaphysics turns out to be a logical relation. After telling us that presuppositions are logically related to thoughts, he adds that presuppositions are logically prior to thoughts. By the term 'priority' here, Collingwood does not mean what he calls "temporal priority". So at this point it is important to distinguish between logical priority and temporal priority. Presuppositions are logically prior to thoughts, and for Collingwood, this is necessarily the case. Presuppositions may be temporally prior to thoughts but this is not necessarily the case. In fact, it is seldom the case for most thinkers because they are not aware of their presuppositions.

After telling us that we can uncover presuppositions by "analysis" (EM, 22, 43), Collingwood says that questions are logically prior to answers and that presuppositions are logically prior to questions. He now gives us a list of "propositions" which he says the scientific thinker already knows" (EM, 23). "Proposition I" is as follows: "Every statement

that anybody ever makes is made in answer to a question" (EM, 23). In a note, he adds: "A question is logically prior to its answer. When thinking is scientifically ordered, this logical priority is accompanied by a temporal priority: one formulates the question first, and only when it is formulated begins trying to answer it" (EM, 24). Questions are temporally prior to answers when one is thinking scientifically. But he qualifies this point by saying:

> This is a special kind of temporal priority, in which the event or activity that is prior does not stop when that which is posterior begins. The act of asking the question begins and takes a definite shape as the asking of a determinate question before the act of answering it begins; but it continues for the whole duration of this latter. Unless the person who answered a question were still going on asking it while he formulated the answer, he would have 'lost interest in the subject', and the 'answer' would not have been an answer at all. It would have been a meaningless form of words. By being answered a question does not cease to be a question. It only ceases to be an unanswered question (EM, 24-25).

When Collingwood says that a "question does not cease to be a question" when it is answered, he is attempting to avoid what he considers to be the mistake of propositional logic. It will be recalled that with the realist's propositional logic, propositions were divorced from the questioning process. As we have seen, Collingwood attacked propositional logic as early as 1917 in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Truth and Contradiction". And it probably wouldn't be too misleading to claim that <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> is "Truth and Contradiction" revised in the light of the theory of presuppositions. Collingwood is trying to counter the possible objection that although it may well be true that in a process of scientific inquiry statements are made in answer to a question, they nevertheless, as contributions to knowledge, are detachable from

their context. For Collingwood, a knowledge claim does not cease to be an answer to a question after the knowledge claim is asserted. That is, the knowledge claim cannot be divorced from the questioning process after it is asserted. Also for Collingwood, scientific discoveries do not logically precede questions. It is sometimes suggested that some scientific discoveries turn out to be answers to questions which had not yet been asked when they were discovered. If a scientist claimed to discover something before he had asked a question, Collingwood would simply say that this scientist was not aware of the context that was being assumed in his thinking.

For Collingwood, every statement is an answer to a question in which the question is logically prior to that statement. Such a statement is either "true or false" and may be called a proposition. Shortly we will see that Collingwood is talking about empirical truth and empirical falsity here. But a reader of the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence" (1935) will be fairly certain at this point that Collingwood is talking about empirical truth and empirical falsity. He adds in An Essay on Metaphysics that the stating of such a proposition may "be called propounding it". He goes on to say that "[e]very question involves a presupposition" (EM, 23). He regards this proposition as true and calls it "Proposition II". Do questions involve one presupposition or more than one presupposition? Collingwood answers that "ordinarily a question involves large numbers" of presuppositions. But he tells us that it is important to distinguish between a "direct" presupposition and "indirect" presuppositions. Each question only has "one" direct presupposition but the question is logically related to "other" indirect presuppositions

(EM, 25). According to Collingwood, a question itself "arises" from an immediate presupposition which is logically prior to it. And since this immediate presupposition rests on other presuppositions which are logically even more fundamental, the original question indirectly presupposes these as well.

Collingwood turns to a discussion of "logical efficacy". He defines logical efficacy as follows: "The fact that something causes a certain question to arise I call the 'logical efficacy' of that thing" (EM, 27). When Collingwood says that something "causes" a certain question to arise, he means that something logically causes a certain question to arise. Let us call this sense of the term 'cause', logical causality. This logical causality is not to be confused with senses I, II and III of the term 'causality' that we find in Part III of <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u>.⁹ The definition of logical efficacy prepares the way for "Proposition III" which reads as follows: "The logical efficacy of a supposition does not depend upon the truth of what is supposed, or even on its being thought true, but only on its being supposed" (EM, 28).

^{9.} We would want to conjecture that the reason Collingwood does not add logical causality to his list of different senses of the term 'cause' in Part III of this 1940 publication, is that logical causality is not an absolute presupposition. In Part III of <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood gives us three senses of the term 'cause'. Collingwood calls each sense of the term cause absolute presuppositions. Sense I, Sense II and Sense III of the term 'cause' are all historically de-limited concepts. In contrast, what we have called logical causality is a principle of metaphysics and this principle is not historically de-limited. In other words, logical causality is a transhistorical principle. This appears to be the reason that Collingwood does not add logical causality to his list of the different senses of the term 'cause' at the end of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We will have more to say about transhistorical principles in Chapter IV.

Suppositions can logically give rise to arguments even though "we know" that these suppositions are "false", or "believe" these suppositions to be false, or "have neither knowledge nor belief as to whether" these suppositions "are true or false". And an argument that arises from suppositions can be "valid" even though the suppositions are known to be false or believed to be false or neither known nor believed to be false. It is important to point out here that Collingwood is not denying the traditional distinction in logic between truth and validity. It would not follow from the fact that an argument is valid, that the conclusion is true. Or to use language that is more precise in reference to Collingwood's intentions, it does not follow from the fact that a question-and-answer complex is valid, that the question-and-answer complex is true. Once again we have evidence to support the claim that Collingwood is not offering a substitute for propositional logic. Rather, Collingwood's logic of question and answer supplements propositional logic.

Collingwood makes a distinction between "relative presuppositions" and "absolute presuppositions". "A presupposition is either relative or absolute" (EM, 29), he says. Collingwood regards this proposition as true, and calls it "Proposition IV". It must be emphasized that all capital 'P' Propositions, for Collingwood, are true propositions and that these capital 'P' Propositions refer to all conceptual systems. It is for this reason that we can call all capital 'P' Propositions transhistorical propositions. Proposition IV, then, like Propositions I, II, and III along with other capital 'P' Propositions to be mentioned later, refers to all conceptual systems.¹⁰ All conceptual systems contain absolute presuppositions and relative presuppositions. Collingwood adds: "[T]he word 'presupposition' refers not to the act of presupposing but to that which is presupposed" (EM, 29). So here it would be correct to say that by the word 'presupposition', Collingwood is referring to the presupposition as a logical object and not to the "act" of presupposing.¹¹

Before defining an absolute presupposition, Collingwood defines a relative presupposition. "By a relative presupposition", he says, "I mean one which stands relatively to one question as its presupposition and relatively to another question as its answer" (EM, 29). Relative presuppositions are logically more fundamental than the questions and answers that the relative presuppositions give rise to, and yet not as fundamental in a logical manner to other presuppositions, including absolute presuppositions. Although absolute presuppositions are logically more fundamental than relative presuppositions, in the order of learning relative presuppositions precede absolute presuppositions. In other words, we become aware of relative presuppositions before we become

^{10.} This is not to say that transhistorical propositions are not context-laden. In Chapter VII we will see that Collingwood will argue for a transhistorical context which these transhistorical propositions are a part of. It would appear that the priority of 'propositional logic' is not being re-asserted with the notion of a transhistorical proposition.

^{11.} For Collingwood, then, absolute presuppositions and relative presuppositions are logical objects. This distinction between the act and object must be kept in mind when we turn to the problem of re-thinking thoughts in Chapter VII. We will see that we must uncover the absolute presuppositions (i.e. logical objects) and the relative presuppositions (i.e. logical objects) of a thought (i.e. in the sense of being an answer to a question in a questionand-answer complex) in order to re-think the thought.

aware of absolute presuppositions. This is probably why Collingwood discusses relative presuppositions before he discusses absolute presuppositions. It would be correct to say that relative presuppositions have logical relations 'downwards' to questions and the foundation of a conceptual system and 'upwards' to answers to questions. We will have more to say about Collingwood's foundationalism in the next chapter.

By calling some presuppositions "relative", Collingwood does not mean that the truth of these relative presuppositions is relative. Collingwood is not expounding the doctrine of epistemological relativism (i.e. a presupposition 'x' is true if a person or group of persons believes that the presupposition 'x' is true) when he calls some presuppositions relative. What Collingwood is concerned about here is the logical <u>relations</u> between presuppositions, questions and answers. And by saying that answers to questions are logically related to presuppositions, he is saying that we cannot separate an answer from its context. So Collingwood in this section is continuing his attack on propositional logic.

Relative presuppositions are "questionable" even if one fails to see that they are questionable. By "questionable" presuppositions, he is talking about those presuppositions that are capable of being empirically "verified". "To question a presupposition", he says, "is to demand that it should be 'verified'; that is, to demand that a question should be asked to which the affirmative answer would be that presupposition itself, now in the form of a proposition....Hence to speak of verifying a presupposition involves supposing that it is a relative presupposition" (EM, 30). Relative presuppositions are empirical answers to empirical questions.

And since relative presuppositions are empirical propositions, we can ask whether relative presuppositions are true or false. But when Collingwood says that relative presuppositions are true or false he means that relative presuppositions are empirically true or false. This is the reason for Collingwood talking about empirical verification at this point. So presuppositions that can be empirically verified have empirical truth-value. Collingwood made this point as early as 1935 in the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence".

Absolute presuppositions are not capable of being empirically verified and therefore absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions. It is for this reason that Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truth-value. It will be recalled that this was also a point that Collingwood was making against Ryle in 1935. Ryle claimed that 'God exists' was an empirical proposition, no different in logical form from other empirical propositions. Collingwood responded that 'God exists' was not an empirical proposition and that therefore it made no sense to ask whether this concept was empirically true or empirically false. According to Collingwood, Ryle did not recognize the distinction between those presuppositions which can be empirically verified and those presuppositions which cannot be empirically verified. To use Collingwood's terminology, we could say that, for Ryle, there are only relative presuppositions. And here, we would have an instance of Ryle's positivism at work. Only a positivist would claim that there are only relative presuppositions, that is, presuppositions with empirical

truth-value.12

Collingwood tells us that one example of an absolute presupposition is the concept 'every event has a cause'. He says that today pathologists hold this absolute presupposition. And Collingwood suggests what will probably happen if one questions this absolute presupposition that the pathologist holds: "If you are importunate enough to ask 'But how do you know that everything that happens has a cause?' he will probably blow up right in your face, because you have put your finger on one of his absolute presuppositions, and people are apt to be ticklish in their absolute presuppositions. But if he keeps his temper and gives you a civil and candid answer, it will be to the following effect. 'That is a thing we take for granted in my job. We don't question it. We don't try to verify it. It isn't a thing anybody has discovered, like microbes or the circulation of the blood. It is a thing we just take for granted'" (EM, 31). Collingwood adds: "He is telling you that it is an absolute presupposition of the science he pursues; and I have made him a pathologist because this absolute presupposition about all events

^{12.} Collingwood is not ruling out the possibility of another sense of the term 'truth'. This sense of the term 'truth' would not be empirical truth. We may want to call it metaphysical truth. The term 'metaphysical' in reference to another sense of the term 'truth' would be consistent with Collingwood's terminology in "Morals" (1933) when he discusses Ayer's work. In response to Ayer, Collingwood said that some concepts which cannot be verified may have a metaphysical meaning. And so in reference to truth, we may want to distinguish between empirical truth and metaphysical truth. Collingwood would not want to limit himself to only speaking of empirical truth because this would be a positivistic mistake. And it would be similar to the positivistic mistake of only using the term 'cause' in Sense III. We will have more to say about this positivistic mistake in regards to causality in the next two chapters.

having causes, which a hundred years ago was made in every branch of natural science, has now ceased to be made in some branches, but medicine is one of those in which it is still made" (EM, 31-32). Absolute presuppositions are basic or fundamental assumptions made by scientists. These basic or fundamental assumptions are taken "for granted" or in other words not questioned. But absolute presuppositions can be relinquished. So an absolute presupposition is a basic or fundamental assumption that is taken for granted or unquestioned by a scientist at a certain time in history. It should be noted here that Collingwood has not relinquished the position that he set forth in The Idea of Nature. It is also important to point out at this stage that not all disciplines share the same absolute presuppositions at the same point in history. Whereas the pathologist today still holds the absolute presupposition that 'all events have causes', the modern physicist no longer takes this absolute presupposition for granted. Some disciplines, then, may 'lead the way' when it comes to what absolute presuppositions are to be taken for granted. And it would be correct to add that some disciplines change their absolute presuppositions more slowly than others.

Although an absolute presupposition may be unquestioned at a certain time, this is not to say that the absolute presupposition will remain unquestioned. For example, modern physicists reject the absolute presupposition that 'all events have causes' because they regard the term 'causality' as an outdated, anthropomorphic conception. This claim is not inconsistent with Collingwood's claim that an absolute presupposition is not an answer to a question (EM, 31). What Collingwood is saying is that if an absolute presuppositions is unconsciously held

as a given by a certain thinker or group of thinkers, then this absolute presupposition for <u>this</u> thinker or group of thinkers is not an answer to a question. Other thinkers may later reject the claim that this absolute presupposition is a given. And at this point this socalled given is no longer a foundational concept for these other thinkers. Therefore, according to Collingwood, for these other thinkers this socalled given is logically transformed into an answer to a question and rejected. This is not to say that these other thinkers do not have foundational concepts of their own. But these foundational concepts would be logically more fundamental than the claim that was once regarded as a given. And for <u>these</u> other thinkers, their foundational concepts, if unconsciously held, would not be answers to questions.

In two important senses, absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions. First, absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions because we need foundational concepts before we can ask a question. For Collingwood, questions do not arise out of nowhere. As he puts it, an absolute presupposition "is one which stands, relatively to all questions to which it is related, as a presupposition, never as an answer" (EM, 31). So his first argument to support the claim that an absolute presupposition is not an answer to a question is a logical point. Let us call this argument the logical argument. Secondly, absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions because absolute presuppositions are not verifiable. So in another important sense the above quotation must be understood in the light of Collingwood's verification argument. As we see it, the logical argument and the verification argument are inter-related.

For Collingwood, a presupposition does not have to be verifiable to have logical efficacy (EM, 32). And so absolute presuppositions along with relative presuppositions have logical efficacy (i.e. logically give rise to questions).¹³ For example, the absolute presupposition 'God exists' would still give rise to questions and answers for the person who held this absolute presupposition. So although we cannot verify the foundational concept 'God exists', this concept can still logically give rise to questions and answers.¹⁴

Collingwood does say that the question of whether or not God exists is an open philosophical question. At this point it will be our claim that the remarks on verification cannot be separated from Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions are referential. Absolute presuppositions are "beliefs about the world's general nature" (A, 66). Or as he puts it in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, absolute presuppositions are "general convictions as to the nature of the world" (EM, 198). All absolute presuppositions are "beliefs" <u>about</u> something. In other words, they are referential. Absolute presuppositions have an object or referent, namely the general nature of the world.¹⁵ And for Collingwood, the

^{13.} This supports our view that the logical argument and the verification argument are inter-related. Absolute presuppositions are both non-verifiable and logically efficacious.

^{14.} A presupposition doesn't have to have empirical truth-value to be logically efficacious.

^{15.} C.J.N. Wallace claims that absolute presuppositions are about "pure being". See C.J.N. Wallace, "Metaphor and Anthropomorphism In Collingwood's Theory Of Absolute Presuppositions", pp. 115-116. Although it would be correct to say that absolute presuppositions are about something, they are not about "pure being". As we see it, Wallace's claim is the result of a misinterpretation of Part I of An Essay on Metaphysics.

object or referent of an absolute presupposition cannot be verified. Since this is the case, it is an open philosophical question whether or not a belief or "conviction" about the "general nature" of the "world" is metaphysically true. Collingwood is only ruling out the fact that these beliefs or convictions have empirical truth-value. So for him, the referential argument concerning the status of absolute presuppositions cannot be divorced from the verification argument. Collingwood made this point as early as 1933, the year we have claimed that he started working out his theory of absolute presuppositions.¹⁶ In "Morals" he says that it is an open philosophical question whether or not 'God exists'. He says that "there might be such a being concealed about the universe".¹⁷ And Collingwood's point is that "we cannot verify the statement that there is" such a being concealed about the universe.¹⁸ But it is either the case that there is a God or there is

17. R.G. Collingwood, "Morals" (unpublished manuscript), 1933, pp. 6-7.

18. Ibid., pp. 6-7.

^{16.} It will be recalled that Van Der Dussen traces the theory of absolute presuppositions back to 1934. Van Der Dussen does not make a reference to the unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" (1933) which we have argued is an important manuscript to consult in order to work out the development of Collingwood's theory of absolute presupposi-tions. It might be objected that "Morals" was written in 1933 and that in 1940 Collingwood rejected the view that the question of whether or not God exists is an open question. But this objection assumes the truth of the late development thesis. If we are right in Chapter I that the late development thesis is mistaken, then this objection misses the mark. And if the late development thesis is mistaken, it is not justifiable to ignore Collingwood's writings before 1938 when we are attempting to understand the notion of an absolute presupposition. In the early 1930's Collingwood obviously thought that there was some way to reconcile his claim that "there may be a God concealed somewhere in the universe" with the theory of absolute presuppositions. In this thesis we are trying to show why this reconciliation is possible.

no such thing as a God.

"Absolute presuppositions are not propositions", Collingwood says. Now this claim that "absolute presuppositions are not propositions", is a proposition. This proposition is regarded by Collingwood as being true and is called "Proposition V". So it is important to recognize that propositions about absolute presuppositions (like Proposition V) can be true or false. When Collingwood says that an absolute presupposition lacks truth-value, he means that the absolute presupposition itself lacks empirical truth-value. For example, the absolute presupposition 'God exists' lacks empirical truth-value. But the claim that in the Middle Ages the absolute presupposition that 'God exists' was generally accepted by most thinkers is a proposition with truth-value. So when Collingwood says that the distinction between empirical truth and empirical falsehood does not apply to absolute presuppositions (EM, 32), he means that absolute presuppositions themselves are not empirically true or empirically false. He does not mean that propositions about absolute presuppositions lack truth-value.

It is not the metaphysician's <u>business</u> to propound absolute presuppositions themselves. Nor is it the scientist's <u>business</u> to propound absolute presuppositions themselves. The metaphysician's job is to propound propositions about absolute presuppositions. "The metaphysician's business", he says, "...is not to propound them (i.e. absolute presuppositions themselves) but to propound the proposition that this or that one of them is presupposed. Hence any question involving the presupposition that an absolute presupposition is a proposition, such as the questions 'Is it true?' 'What evidence is there for it?' 'How can it be demonstrated?' 'What right have we to presuppose it if it can't?', is a nonsense question" (EM, 33).¹⁹ In addition to attacking the positivists in this passage, Collingwood is continuing his debate with Gilbert Ryle.²⁰

Collingwood distinguishes between "low-grade" or unscientific thinking and "high-grade" or scientific thinking. The unscientific thinker, unlike the scientific thinker, is not aware of the truth of the propositions (i.e. Propositions I, II, III, IV and V) that Collingwood has already stated.²¹ Collingwood tells us that "[s]cientific or 'orderly' thinking...is orderly in the sense that it deals with things in their logical order, putting what is presupposed before what presupposes it" (EM, 39). And the scientific thinker will know the importance of arranging questions in their logical order. "The reason why questions have to be arranged", he says, "is because one of them may be contingent upon a certain answer being given to another" (EM, 39). For example, if a scientist comes across new evidence that forces him to answer a question in a new way, this new answer may lead the questioning process in a new direction.

^{19.} Collingwood is only saying that these questions do not apply to an absolute presupposition when that absolute presupposition is mistakenly regarded as a proposition (i.e. empirical claim).

^{20.} Collingwood would not deny that he is accepting the dogma that there are absolute presuppositions. But he would want to claim that with his dogma he can give a better account of knowledge than the positivists can.

^{21.} Low-grade thinkers are unaware of the fact that they are using the logic of question and answer in an implicit manner in all of their thinking. Collingwood also says that low-grade thinking "will never give rise to metaphysics" (EM, 36). By this claim, he means that low-grade thinkers will never uncover the principles of metaphysics. And he adds that realism is one example of a "theory of knowledge which accepts instances of low-grade thought as adequate examples of what thought is" (EM, 36).

The work of disentangling questions and the arranging of these questions in their logical order can either be called "analysis" or "the work of detecting presuppositions" (EM, 39-40). Although he says that the analysis which detects absolute presuppositions is "metaphysical analysis", it would be a mistake to say that the only job a metaphysician has is the job of detecting or uncovering absolute presuppositions. For as Collingwood says, "...all analysis is metaphysical analysis" (EM, 40). The metaphysician, then, studies the logical relations between presuppositions, questions and answers, and, in addition, has the task of distinguishing between relative and absolute presuppositions.

Since all analysis in the above sense is metaphysical analysis and "since analysis is what gives its scientific character to science", Collingwood tells us that "science and metaphysics are inextricably united, and stand or fall together" (EM, 40-41). And by 'science' here, Collingwood means "orderly thinking" and not just natural science. He adds: "The birth of science, in other words the establishment of orderly thinking, is also the birth of metaphysics. As long as either lives the other lives; if either dies the other must die with it" (EM, 41).

What does Collingwood mean when he says that "metaphysics is the science of absolute presuppositions" (EM, 41)? "Metaphysics is the attempt to find out what absolute presuppositions have been made by this or that person or group of persons, on this or that occasion or group of occasions, in the course of this or that piece of thinking. Arising out of this, it will consider (for example) whether absolute presuppositions are made singly or in groups, and if the latter, how the groups are organized; whether different absolute presuppositions are made by different

individuals or races or nations or classes;..." (EM, 47). Collingwood does not think that an individual is 'determined' to accept the same absolute presuppositions as the other members of his race, nation or class. But, for Collingwood, since all thinkers inherit a whole tradition of thought, it will not be surprising if a number of absolute presuppositions are made in groups.

Since Collingwood regards all metaphysical questions as historical questions, he is led to the view that all answers to metaphysical questions are historical propositions (EM, 49). The business of the metaphysician is to expound true metaphysical propositions. The metaphysician is to find out: "...that Newtonian scientists presuppose that some events have causes;...that Kantian scientists presuppose that all events have causes;...that Einsteinian scientists presuppose that no events have causes" (EM, 54-55). The reason that these metaphysical propositions are historical propositions is that we must use the methods of history to uncover these facts.

For Collingwood, the "reform of metaphysics" will not be brought about until the principles and methods which are now common among historians are accepted by metaphysicians. History today is "analysis", and not the repeating of ready-made statements given to us by authorities. With history today, there are no authorities. Rather, what so-called authorities have told us must be treated as evidence. And therefore when Collingwood says that metaphysics is an historical science, he is not saying that it is a scissors-and-paste affair. Metaphysics proceeds, says Collingwood, "according to a method called metaphysical analysis, by which the metaphysician discovers what absolute presuppositions have been made in a certain piece of scientific work by using the records of that work as evidence" (EM, 59). The metaphysician must evaluate critically the work of other metaphysicians along with the work that he does himself. The metaphysician must never assume that the work of the metaphysician is completed. And so the metaphysician must go back and check the metaphysical analyses of other metaphysicians. We should never just assume that, for example, Aristotle or Kant correctly uncovered the absolute presuppositions of the science of their day. It is always possible that the metaphysician failed to uncover one of the absolute presuppositions of the science of the day. Or the metaphysician may fail to correctly trace the process by which absolute presuppositions have changed. Or again, the metaphysician may confuse an absolute presupposition with a relative presupposition.

To avoid a possible misunderstanding, Collingwood tells us that a presupposition-free metaphysical analysis is impossible. All thinkers hold presuppositions and this includes the metaphysician (i.e. the scientist who uncovers absolute presuppositions) himself. And so the science of metaphysics cannot "avoid making presuppositions in the course of its own work;..." (EM, 63). It would be a mistake to think that the metaphysician studies his subject-matter according to what could be called the principle of the 'blank mind'. And it would also be a mistake to think that the metaphysician studies his subject-matter from an Olympian standpoint. Collingwood says: "The attempt at a metaphysics devoid of presuppositions can only result in a metaphysics that is no science, a tangle of confused thoughts whose confusion is taken for a merit. Not only has metaphysics quite definite presuppositions, but every one knows

what some of them are, for as metaphysics is an historical science it shares the presuppositions of all history; and every one, nowadays, has some acquaintance with the principles of historical thought" (EM, 63-64).

When Collingwood says that metaphysics assumes the presuppositions of all history, he does not mean that absolute presuppositions themselves assume all the presuppositions of history. If Collingwood did mean this he would be led into a contradictory position. This would be the case because all the presuppositions of history would be logically more fundamental than absolute presuppositions themselves. In other words, the presuppositions of history would be our foundational concepts and not absolute presuppositions. Rather, what Collingwood is saying is that when the metaphysician is doing his job of uncovering the absolute presuppositions of science, he is assuming all the presuppositions of history. Since historians also hold presuppositions, when the metaphysician uses the methods of history he must also use these presuppositions. And when historians relinquish presuppositions, metaphysicians must learn from historians if they wish to do their job properly. Collingwood has already given us an example of how the presuppositions of history can be relinquished in his discussion of scissors-and-paste history. The historians of today reject the presuppositions of scissorsand-paste history.²² Now the presuppositions of history would include absolute presuppositions. For example, historians in the nineteenth century rejected the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' which was held by eighteenth-century historians.

22. Collingwood makes this same point in The Idea of History.

"Nature", Collingwood says, "seemed to the eighteenth-century historian an absolute presupposition of all historical thinking. The rapid development of historical thought in the nineteenth century dispelled this illusion" (EM, 98). So whenever there are advances in the science of history, the metaphysician must learn from these advances when he turns to his subject-matter. It is clear, then, that Collingwood thinks that there is an important logical connection between metaphysics and history, but this logical connection will only be seen once we are clear about the nature of history and the nature of metaphysics.²³

Given that metaphysics is an historical science, "...the things which it studies, namely absolute presuppositions, are historical facts; and any one who is reasonably well acquainted with historical work knows that there is no such thing as an historical fact which is not at the same time a complex of historical facts. Such a complex of historical facts I call a 'constellation'" (EM, 66). Whenever we think, we think in terms of a whole "constellation" of absolute presuppositions. Collingwood adds that it must be possible to relate the presuppositions in a logical way before the presuppositions can be joined together in a constellation. "This is to say that", he says, "since they are all suppositions, each must be 'consupponible' with all the others; that is, it must be logically possible for a person who supposes any one of them to suppose concurrently all the rest" (EM, 66). Presuppositions are said to be

^{23.} It is very important that there be feed-back between the historian and the metaphysician. The historian can learn from the metaphysician when the metaphysician uncovers an absolute presupposition. And the metaphysician can learn from the historian when the historian makes advances in his methodology.

"consupponible", then, when it is logically possible to presuppose them together, although it is not necessary to suppose any. In addition, he says, individual absolute presuppositions cannot be deduced from the other <u>presuppositions</u> in the constellation.²⁴ "Metaphysics, aware of itself as an historical science, will abandon once for all the hope of being a 'deductive' or quasi-mathematical science" (EM, 67).

In addition to detecting or uncovering different constellations of absolute presuppositions, the metaphysician must also study how one historical "phase" gives way to another. "One phase changes into another", he says, "because the first phase was in unstable equilibrium and had in itself the seeds of change, and indeed of that change. Its fabric was not at rest; it was always under strain" (EM, 74). And this internal "strain" is a characteristic found in any constellation of absolute presuppositions. And by saying that constellations are subject to strains, he means that every constellation is subject to logical incompatibilities.²⁵ Now when these strains or logical incompatibilities are severe, one absolute presupposition comes to replace another. And this is not to say that the modified constellation is perfectly consistent. The modified constellation will also be subject to strains. But the

^{24.} This is not to say that absolute presuppositions in question-andanswer complexes cannot give rise to an absolute presupposition. The strength of this interpretation is that it is consistent with Collingwood's claim that a new absolute presupposition can be adopted. Collingwood is only ruling out the possibility that an absolute presupposition or a constellation of absolute presuppositions could logically give rise to another absolute presupposition.

^{25.} Collingwood is not talking about stresses and strains or logical incompatibilities between propositions, for this would be an error of propositional logic.

stresses and strains will be less severe.²⁶ One other reason for Collingwood rejecting the conception of metaphysics as a deductive science is that "[t]he ambition of 'deductive' metaphysics is to present a constellation of absolute presuppositions as a strainless structure like a body of propositions in mathematics" (EM, 76).

If metaphysics is to be a science it must become "more completely and more consciously what in fact it has always been, an historical science" (EM, 77). He adds: "And the extent to which metaphysics has already been a science in the past is governed by the extent to which it has already been history" (EM, 77). It will be recalled that Collingwood said that people are not always doing what they think they are doing. We can interpret the work of the great metaphysicians as an instance of this principle at work. Even though the great metaphysicians were not fully conscious of this fact, metaphysics has always been an historical science. So when Collingwood talks about the 'reform of metaphysics', it is important to recognize that Collingwood is not rejecting the work of traditional metaphysicians. To the extent that traditional metaphysicians were using the methods of history, to that extent the work of the traditional metaphysicians is to be taken seriously. But this is not to say that when traditional metaphysicians were using the methods of history, we are to

^{26.} Although the metaphysician can study how one constellation came to replace another, no <u>constellation</u> changes all at once. If a constellation did change all at once, there would be a phase before the new constellation was adopted when the principle 'where there is no strain there is no history' (EM, 75) wouldn't apply. So the only view which is consistent with the doctrine of stresses and strains is the claim that when the logical incompatibilities are severe, part of the constellation is replaced.

take their conclusions on authority. Rather, we are to take their conclusions as evidence.

By saying that metaphysics is an historical science, Collingwood is not saying that metaphysics <u>is</u> history, or that metaphysics can be reduced to the historical process. Rather, he means that the metaphysician must use the <u>methods</u> of history. What Collingwood is attempting to do is to offer us a logic of metaphysical analysis. And it is only in this context that we can understand Collingwood's claim that all metaphysical propositions are historical propositions. It should also be added at this point that Collingwood does not regard all propositions as being historical propositions. Mathematical propositions, he tells us, are not historical propositions (EM, 76). Whereas we do not need the methods of history to demonstrate that it is true to claim that 7+5=12, we do need the methods of history to demonstrate that it is true to claim that in the Middle Ages it was absolutely presupposed by most thinkers that God existed.

Let us turn now to Part II of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Here we turn from metaphysics to anti-metaphysics. By "anti-metaphysics" Collingwood means a kind of thought "that regards metaphysics as a delusion and an impediment to the progress of knowledge, and demands its abolition" (EM, 81). By saying that psychologists and positivists are antimetaphysicians, Collingwood means that psychologists and positivists are undermining metaphysics in Collingwood's reformed sense. In addition to failing to see the importance of metaphysics for the advancement of knowledge, psychologists and positivists do not recognize that antimetaphysics is a threat to the survival of civilization. Psychologists and positivists are "irrationalist agents" who availed themselves "of the privileges accorded to science by a rationalist civilization in order to undermine the entire fabric of that civilization" (EM, 137). By modern psychology, Collingwood means that "science" which reduces all thought processes to mind-as-feeling.²⁷ And by positivism, he means the claim that "the only valid method of attaining knowledge is the method used in the natural sciences, and hence that no kind of knowledge is genuine unless it either is natural science or resembles natural science in method" (EM, 143).

The 'saving of civilization' theme does not begin with <u>An Essay</u> on <u>Metaphysics</u> (1940), or even <u>An Autobiography</u> (1939). The saving of civilization theme goes back at least as far as <u>Speculum Mentis</u> (1924) where Collingwood is especially concerned with modern man's "fragmentation". We also find this saving of civilization theme in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Man Goes Mad" (1936) and in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Historiography" (1938-39). In "Historiography" Collingwood says that what is needed today is an historical society and not a society founded upon modern man's conception of natural science. What is needed is an historical society that turns "on the idea of 'understanding'" man. And, for Collingwood, we must move away from a society that is based on modern man's conception of natural science which turns "on the idea of 'mastering' people".²⁸ It would be correct to say that Collingwood

^{27.} This definition of modern psychology will be expanded upon later in this chapter and in Chapter IV.

R.G. Collingwood, "Historiography", unpublished manuscript, 1938-39, pp. 20-21.

expands on one theme of "Historiography" in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We could say that in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood is attacking psychology and positivism for treating human nature as a "thing to be conquered or obeyed". In other words, psychologists and positivists treat human nature as something to be mastered. A legitimate interpretation, then, would be that psychologists and positivists, for Collingwood, are contributing to the collapse of civilization by attempting to master man. For Collingwood, psychologists and positivists are not attempting to understand man. And, according to Collingwood, the only hope for the saving of civilization is if we attempt to understand man and not attempt to master him.

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood outlines the consequences of abandoning the logical principles of scientific thinking in favour of pseudo-scientific principles. Psychologists and positivists adopt pseudoscientific principles which undermine the "important" notions of truth and validity. The psychologist bears greater responsibility for undermining the notion of truth than has the positivist. For the psychologist, "the distinction between truth and falsehood does not exist" (EM, 120). Actually this is not a new criticism of psychology with the appearance of Collingwood's 1940 publication. He made this same attack on psychology in <u>Religion and Philosophy</u> (1916). In this 1916 publication he had said that the psychologist "declines to join in the question whether it (i.e. a statement) is true" (RP, 41). It would be correct to say that, for Collingwood, the psychologist is deluded when he reduces all truth claims to belief claims.

Collingwood alleges that psychologists have tried to substitute

psychology for the traditional science of metaphysics. In addition, the psychologist has attempted to substitute psychology for logic and ethics. Collingwood proceeds to evaluate critically the claim that psychology is the science that teaches us how to think.

"The sixteenth-century proposal for a new science to be called psychology" arose from the recognition "that what we call feeling is not a kind of thinking, not a self-critical activity, and therefore not the possible subject-matter of a criteriological science" (EM, 109). This absolute presupposition replaced the absolute presupposition that "feeling is a cognitive activity" that had been generally taken for granted by Greek and medieval thinkers. According to Collingwood, when the modern psychologist claims that his science is the science of thought, he is really making a claim that is inconsistent with his absolute presupposition that 'feeling is not a self-critical activity'.²⁹ "The business of thinking includes the discovery and correction of its own errors. That is not part of the business of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and experiencing the emotions associated with them" (EM, 110). The psychologist, then, contradicts himself because there is no element of self-criticism in the activity of feeling or sensation.

It is a mistake to substitute a psychological science of thought for a logical science of thought. This leads Collingwood to claim that inasmuch as psychology pretends to investigate thought, psychology is a "pseudo-science". But it must be added that Collingwood does not value

^{29.} Here we see another important role for the metaphysician. The metaphysician has the task of pointing out when thinkers make claims that are inconsistent with their absolute presuppositions.

the achievements of psychology at a low rate. "The study by psychologists of sensation and emotion", he says, "is a most important kind of research and a thing which every friend of science will encourage by every means at his command" (EM, 141-142). It is clear, then, that Collingwood sees psychology as a science. But psychology, for him, is the science which studies mind-as-feeling and not mind-as-thought.³⁰

From the psychological attack upon metaphysics Collingwood turns to the positivistic attack upon metaphysics. And it would be correct to say that Collingwood is trying to clear away another delusion at this point. Positivists claim, either implicitly or explicitly, that there are presupposition-free facts. "This would be a tenable position", Collingwood says, "if the work of observing facts were done by the senses without any assistence from the intellect" (EM, 146). Here Collingwood is following a point already made by Vico which we touched on in Chapter I. And that point is that there is an important overlap between sensation and thought. This leads Collingwood to accuse the positivists of reverting "in a single jump to a long-exploded error of the Middle Ages" (EM, 145). By this claim he means that before the time of Vico, thinkers did not see the overlap of sensation and thought and for this reason these thinkers were not aware that all facts are presupposition-laden.³¹

^{30.} It is clear that Collingwood would reject the distinction often made by epistemologists between the psychology of belief and truth. For Collingwood, the term 'psychology' in regards to this distinction would be a category-mistake. For Collingwood, it would be more accurate to distinguish between the logic of belief and truth.

^{31.} When we say that all facts are presupposition-laden, we mean that facts cannot be divorced from question-and-answer complexes, which include absolute and relative presuppositions.

According to Collingwood, positivists mistakenly collapse absolute presuppositions and empirical propositions. For example, John Stuart Mill made the mistake of thinking that the claim that 'all events happen according to law' was an empirical proposition. When Collingwood says that Mill carried "out a perfectly valid piece of metaphysical analysis" (EM, 150), Collingwood is using the term 'metaphysics' in the reformed sense by which is meant the science which uncovers absolute presuppositions. So Mill was a metaphysician in the Collingwoodian sense, although Mill was not aware of this fact. Mill did uncover a foundational concept of the natural science of his day. But like the true positivist he was, Mill thought that the belief that 'all events happen according to law' was an empirical proposition, a generalization about matters of fact. And this claim was the result of a circular argument. Collingwood states:

> Throughout these numerous first-order inductions we were presupposing that every event happens according to law. Only because of that presupposition did the question arise, What was the law of the particular event we were at that moment investigating? We were therefore already committed to the principle that every event had a law, before we could arrive at a single one of the facts on the strength of which we constructed the second-order induction that led to the 'discovery' of that principle. But if we had not 'discovered' it until the second-order induction was complete we had no right to presuppose it as a foundation to our first-order inductions (EM, 152).

For Collingwood, the claim that 'all events happen according to law' is an absolute presupposition and not an empirical proposition.³²

^{32. (}i) The claim that induction itself rests on a presupposition is not a new claim with the appearance of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. See <u>Speculum Mentis</u>, p. 179. But Collingwood's claim in <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u> is that induction rests on an absolute presupposition. (ii) It should also be noted that Collingwood is continuing his debate with Gilbert Ryle in this section on Mill.

Collingwood continues his attack on positivism with an analysis of A.J. Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic (1936). Collingwood considers the "half-finished analysis" of this work as another sign of crisis. In Language, Truth and Logic, Ayer attempts to eliminate metaphysics by arguing that metaphysical statements are neither tautologies nor empirical hypotheses subject to empirical verification. This leads Ayer to claim that metaphysical statements are meaningless. Collingwood does agree with Ayer that any proposition which cannot be verified by appeal to observed facts is a pseudo-proposition. In addition, he agrees with Aver that traditional metaphysical propositions cannot be verified by appeal to observed facts. But, he does not accept Ayer's claim that traditional metaphysical propositions are nonsense. According to Collingwood, Aver fails to see that a non-verifiable belief can have a metaphysical meaning. It will be recalled that Collingwood made this point against Aver as early as 1933 in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals". But in "Morals" Collingwood was responding to Ayer's Critique of Theology and not to Language, Truth and Logic because this latter work had not been published yet. For Collingwood, Ayer makes the mistake of equating all meaning with verification. In order to show the meaningfulness of metaphysical concepts, Collingwood argues that the affirmations which Ayer took to be non-verifiable propositions were not propositions at all, but absolute presuppositions which are neither empirically true nor empirically false.³³ What Ayer gives us is not an attack on metaphysics

^{33. (}i) Collingwood does not contradict himself when he says that absolute presuppositions are meaningful. For him, meaning is tied up with the logic of question and answer. Since absolute presuppositions are part of the logic of question and answer (i.e. presuppositions (continued on p. 119)

in that Collingwoodian sense, but "an attack on pseudo-metaphysics" (EM, 163).

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter II. In this second section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the issue of what Collingwood means by an absolute presupposition.

II

In this second section we will make three major claims that arise directly out of the first section of Chapter II. Our job is to justify these three major claims. References to other commentators will be made in an attempt to make our interpretation clearer. We will be following Collingwood's dictum that "[i]f you want to be clear as to what you are asserting, be clear as to what you are denying" (EPM, 109). The three major claims of this chapter are as follows: (1) when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he means that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truth-value, (2) absolute presuppositions are to be regarded as logico-regulative entities, and (3) absolute presuppositions underlie all science (i.e. all orderly and systematic thinking) and not just natural science.

^{33.} continued. logically give rise to questions and answers), absolute presuppositions are meaningful also. See Chapter VII. (ii) The claim that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truth-value was not made until 1935 in the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence". Collingwood did not make this particular point in 1933 in "Morals". So Collingwood is adding one point to his analysis of Ayer in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics that he did not make in 1933</u>.

Let us turn to the first major claim of this chapter: that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he means that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truth-value. Now a number of commentators have argued that Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value. T.M. Knox says that "absolute presuppositions are no longer said to be knowledge; as presuppositions they are neither true nor false."³⁴ Following Knox, Alan Donagan says that "no question about the truth or falsity of any absolute presupposition could even arise; for absolute presuppositions, as he took them to be, are neither true nor false."³⁵ Donagan adds that Collingwood's "hypothesis that the affirmations which Ayer took to be unverifiable propositions were not propositions at all, but absolute presuppositions, which are neither true nor false, naturally pointed to the further hypothesis that metaphysics is not a futile inquiry into what absolute presuppositions are true."³⁶ Donagan also tells us that Collingwood contradicts himself when he says that an absolute presupposition can become a proposition (i.e. empirical claim).³⁷ E.E. Harris, Michael Krausz and Nathan Rotenstreich also hold the view that Collingwood is saying that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value. E.E. Harris says that absolute presuppositions are not "propositions, because they cannot be judged true or

- 36. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 15.
- 37. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 76.

^{34.} T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. xvi.

^{35.} Alan Donagan, The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood, p. 10.

false."³⁸ Michael Krausz says that "[a]t the base of the hierarchy of questions and answers are 'absolute presuppositions', presuppositions which answer no question and which Collingwood views as having no truth value."³⁹ Krausz adds that "'[r]elative presuppositions' are presuppositions which answer prior questions" and "Collingwood views relative presuppositions as having truth value."⁴⁰ Nathan Rotenstreich says that "the existence of God is not a proposition but an absolute presupposition" and "[a]s such it can be neither true nor false."⁴¹ Other commentators who hold the view that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false include C.K. Grant, W.H. Walsh, and Peter Skagestad.⁴²

In the first section of this chapter we attempted to argue that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, he means that absolute presuppositions lack <u>empirical</u> truth-value. As far as we know, no commentator has yet made this claim. Given our analysis in the first section of this chapter, it would appear as though no commentator has taken Collingwood's verification argument seriously enough. Collingwood says that not only are absolute presuppositions not answers

- E.E. Harris, <u>Critical Essays On The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, p. 132.
- Michael Krausz, <u>Critical Essays On the Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood</u>, p. 223.
- 40. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 223.
- 41. Nathan Rotenstreich, <u>Critical Essays On The Philosophy of R.G.</u> <u>Collingwood</u>, p. 187.
- 42. See Lionel Rubinoff, <u>Reform Of Metaphysics</u>, p. 22. W.H. Walsh, <u>Critical Essays On The Philosophy Of R.G. Collingwood</u>, p. 146. Peter Skagestad, <u>Making Sense of History</u>, p. 83.

to questions, but he says that absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable. As we have argued in the first section, these two claims are inter-related. As we see it, absolute presuppositions are foundational concepts that are both not answers to questions and non-verifiable. This led us to claim that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions, he is also saying that absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions. So when Collingwood says that an absolute presupposition is neither true nor false, this claim cannot be understood independently of Collingwood's verification argument. Once we take the verification argument seriously, we are led to the view that Collingwood is denying that absolute presuppositions have empirical truthvalue.⁴³ We examined An Essay on Metaphysics in order to support this claim. And we also examined the unpublished "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence". In this unpublished correspondence, Collingwood argues that there is an important logical difference between metaphysical concepts (i.e. absolute presuppositions) and empirical propositions. Collingwood said that some presuppositions are metaphysical concepts and some presuppositions are empirical propositions. Collingwood's argument against Ryle was that metaphysical concepts do not have empirical truth-value and that therefore metaphysical concepts cannot be empirical proposi-So it would appear as though Collingwood is not saying that tions. absolute presuppositions lack truth-value in any sense. He is saying

^{43.} Collingwood is only talking about empirical verification at this point. If one were to argue that you can verify a calculation (for example in mathematics), this claim would arise from using the term 'verification' in another sense.

that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value in an empirical sense. We will see very shortly in what sense it could be said that absolute presuppositions do have truth-value.⁴⁴

As mentioned earlier, Knox said that "absolute presuppositions are no longer said to be knowledge; as presuppositions they are neither true nor false." In response to Knox, we wish to argue that absolute presuppositions are not empirical knowledge claims. And when Knox says that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false, we wish to argue that absolute presuppositions are neither empirically true nor empirically false. Donagan has claimed that, for Collingwood "no absolute presupposition asserts an empirically testable hypothesis."⁴⁵ On this point we agree with Donagan. But, as mentioned earlier, Donagan makes the following claim: Collingwood's "hypothesis that the affirmations which Ayer took to be unverifiable propositions were not propositions at all, but absolute presuppositions, which are neither true nor false,

^{44.} If we are correct, our analysis has far-reaching implications. For example, some commentators have argued that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions lands him into scepticism or relativism. According to Knox's and Donagan's interpretation, Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions lands him into scepticism. According to Krausz's and Toulmin's interpretation, Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions lands him into relativism. It would appear at this point that Collingwood is not necessarily committed to scepticism, as Knox and Donagan suggest, or to relativism, as Krausz and Toulmin suggest.

^{45.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 141. But it will be recalled that Collingwood said in The Idea of Nature that absolute presuppositions are still "working hypotheses". Collingwood's point is that absolute presuppositions are metaphysical, and not empirical, working hypotheses. And these working hypotheses are not always conscious. In fact, for Collingwood, most of the time these metaphysical working hypotheses are unconscious.

naturally pointed to the further hypothesis that metaphysics is not a futile inquiry into what absolute presuppositions are true." But this claim on Donagan's part should have led him to recognize that Colling-wood's claim that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false cannot be separated from his verification argument. It appears as though Donagan has not taken Collingwood's discussion of Ayer's views seriously enough.⁴⁶ Collingwood agrees with Ayer that empirical claims are propositions. But Collingwood disagrees with Ayer that non-verifiable concepts are meaningless. Although non-verifiable concepts (i.e. absolute presuppositions) are neither empirically true nor empirically false, they can still be meaningful. And they are meaningful in a metaphysical sense and not an empirical sense. Absolute presuppositions are still meaningful because they make up the foundation of a conceptual system.⁴⁷

Donagan also says that, for Collingwood, "metaphysics is not a futile inquiry into what absolute presuppositions are true." If our analysis of Collingwood's position is correct, Collingwood is saying that metaphysics is not a futile inquiry into what absolute presuppositions are empirically true. Donagan adds that Collingwood contradicts

^{46.} Here we are only referring to Collingwood's discussion of Ayer in Collingwood's 1940 publication. Donagan did not have access to Collingwood's unpublished manuscript entitled "Morals" where Collingwood also discusses Ayer's position.

^{47.} If our analysis is correct, when Collingwood says that logical efficacy does not depend on an absolute presupposition being true, he is saying that logical efficacy does not depend on an absolute presupposition being empirically true. For Collingwood, nonverifiable concepts can have logical efficacy. For example, the non-verifiable concept 'nature is uniform' can give rise to empirical questions. For one thing, this non-verifiable concept would give rise to empirical questions regarding prediction.
himself when he says that an absolute presupposition can become a proposition.⁴⁸ According to our analysis, a non-verifiable concept can later become an empirical proposition. Let us briefly go over an example from The Idea of Nature.

In The Idea of Nature, Collingwood tells us that Thales claimed that 'all is water' (IN, 31). For Thales, this claim was a metaphysical claim. That is, for Thales, this claim was non-verifiable and as such was an absolute presupposition for him. Today, Thales' claim is no longer regarded as a metaphysical claim. Rather, it is regarded today as an empirical claim. And as an empirical claim it is regarded today as being empirically false.⁴⁹ This example clearly shows that Collingwood thinks that an absolute presupposition can become an empirical proposition (i.e. relative presupposition). That is, an absolute presupposition, although non-verifiable at one time, may later become verifiable at another time. And if the absolute presupposition later became verifiable, it would logically turn into an empirical proposition. For Collingwood, then, a metaphysical concept may later become an empirical claim (i.e. proposition). So it is clear that Collingwood thinks that an absolute presupposition can become a relative presupposition. It appears as though Donagan is mistaken to claim that, for Collingwood,

^{48.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 76.

^{49.} Water has been decomposed and we know that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. And for modern scientists, there are other elements besides hydrogen and oxygen. So for the modern scientist, the claim that 'all is water' is a relative presupposition and no longer an absolute presupposition. In other words, the claim that 'all is water' is an empirical claim that has truth-value. And today this claim is regarded as false because all is not water. It is important to add that we will 'bracket' the question of whether or not this is an acceptable interpretation of Thales' claim.

an absolute presupposition cannot become a relative presupposition.⁵⁰

It will be recalled that Michael Krausz says that absolute presuppositions are at the "base of hierarchy of questions and answers." On

^{50. (}i) The reason for Donagan's mistaken interpretation on this point is that he overlooks the importance of the verification argument. Donagan is pre-occupied with Collingwood's 'logical' argument. That is, he is pre-occupied with Collingwood's claim that an absolute presupposition is not a proposition because it is not an answer to a question. But as we have argued, the logical argument and the verification argument are inter-related. Donagan fails to recognize this connection. Donagan, then, stresses the logical argument and overlooks the verification argument. Once we see that the logical argument and the verification argument are inter-related, we see that Collingwood can consistently argue that an absolute presupposition can become a relative presupposition. It is also interesting to note that Krausz overlooks the verification argument on this same point. When Krausz talks of absolute and relative presuppositions he only discusses the logical argument (i.e. absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions and relative presuppositions are answers to questions). See Michael Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 226. (ii) Donagan says that a presupposition may be absolute for one person and yet relative for someone else. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, pp. 73-74. Donagan's point is that Collingwood cannot consistently argue this way. But Donagan thinks that an absolute presupposition can be converted into a relative presupposition. Now, if our analysis is correct, Collingwood himself can consistently argue this way. So Donagan is not offering a criticism of Collingwood as he thinks. Rather, he is actually stating a position that Collingwood agrees with. See also An Essay on Metaphysics, pp. 97-98. (iii) As Stephen Toulmin put it in a conversation with us (Nov., 1981), Donagan believes that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions really are absolute. Toulmin here seems to be saying that, according to Donagan's interpretation of Collingwood, if a presupposition is absolute, then it must remain absolute. If this is what Toulmin means, then we agree with his understanding of Donagan's interpretation of Collingwood. (iv) Stephen Toulmin says that a relative presupposition could be converted into an absolute presupposition. See S. Toulmin, Critical Essays, p. 207. We agree with Toulmin on this point as long as two requirements are met. First, a relative presuppositions can become an absolute presupposition only if it was once regarded that a claim was empirical and later regarded that the 'same' claim was non-verifiable. Secondly, a relative presupposition could become an absolute presupposition only if a presupposition at one time was not regarded as a foundational concept and was later regarded as a foundational concept. Once again, these two requirements are interrelated.

this point we agree with Krausz. But we prefer the term 'foundation' rather than the term 'base' for the simple reason that Collingwood himself uses the term 'foundation' and not the term 'base'. Krausz also says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value. In response to Krausz we would want to argue that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truth-value. Krausz seems to be preoccupied with Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions. This is the reason for Krausz saying that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value. But Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions cannot be separated from his verification argument. And once we take the verification argument seriously, we realize that absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions. It will also be recalled that Krausz said that relative presuppositions do have truth-value. According to our analysis, Krausz fails to recognize that Collingwood is talking about empirical truth-value in reference to relative presuppositions. For Collingwood, relative presuppositions are propositions. And, according to Collingwood, propositions in this context are empirical claims. So it appears as though Krausz fails to recognize that relative presuppositions are empirical answers to empirical questions and as such have empirical truth-value.

We also have a major disagreement with Nathan Rotenstreich. As mentioned earlier, Rotenstreich says that "the existence of God is not a proposition but an absolute presupposition" and "[a]s such it can be neither true nor false." We agree with Rotenstreich that 'God exists' is not a proposition. But it appears as though Rotenstreich is unaware of the reason that 'God exists' is not a proposition. For Collingwood, 'God exists' is not a proposition because this 'concept' is non-verifiable.⁵¹ This is the reason that it is more correct to call 'God exists' a metaphysical concept. And, if our analysis is correct, when Collingwood says that 'God exists' is neither true nor false, he is saying that 'God exists' is neither empirically true nor empirically false.

At this point, let us retrace our steps. Collingwood has made the following claims: (1) absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false, (2) absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable, (3) absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions, (4) absolute presuppositions are not propositions, and (5) absolute presuppositions are beliefs about the general nature of the world.⁵² We were faced with the problem of deciding whether or not Collingwood could consistently hold all of these claims at once.⁵³ We have argued that Collingwood can consistently hold all of these claims at once. We have argued that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false, he is saying that absolute presuppositions are neither empirically true nor empirically false. This interpretation is consistent with Collingwood's claim that

^{51.} We agree with Louis Mink that absolute presuppositions are concepts and not propositions. See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History, and Dialectic</u>, pp. 265-266. We would simply add to Mink's analysis that absolute presuppositions are metaphysical concepts and not propositions (i.e. empirical claims).

^{52.} This list concerning the status of absolute presuppositions is not meant to be exhaustive. In addition to this chapter, see Chapter III.

^{53.} It could be simply argued that Collingwood is inconsistent, but this is not very interesting. The more interesting question is whether or not these claims can be held in a consistent manner. At this point we are following Collingwood's dictum that "[a] commentator who does not want to make his author talk good sense has no business to be a commentator" (EM, 160).

absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable. We have also argued that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are not answers to questions, he is saying that absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions. This interpretation is also consistent with the claim that absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable. We have suggested that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are not propositions, he is saying that absolute presuppositions are not empirical claims. This interpretation is consistent both with An Essay on Metaphysics and the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence". Also, Collingwood claims that absolute presuppositions are beliefs about the general nature of the world. That is, absolute presuppositions are referential. But, the object or referent of an absolute presupposition is non-verifiable. This view is consistent with the claim that the absolute presupposition 'God exists' is non-verifiable. As such, the issue of whether or not God exists is an open philosophical question. We have argued that Collingwood is ruling out the possibility of 'God exists' being an empirical answer to an empirical question. It was for this reason that we have claimed that 'God exists' lacks empirical truth-value. This interpretation is consistent with Collingwood's discussion of Ayer's views both in "Morals" and in An Essay on Metaphysics. It should also be noted that this interpretation appears to be consistent with Collingwood's attempt to

"save" metaphysics.54

54. (i) We disagree with Knox when he says that Collingwood in An Essay on Metaphysics rejects metaphysical questions. See T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. x. As we see it, Collingwood did not stop asking philosophical questions at the end of his life. It is interesting to note that Donagan says that in The New Leviathan Collingwood attempted to solve the metaphysical problem of the relation between mind and body. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 285. But we disagree with Donagan on three points. First, Donagan calls this metaphysical problem a traditional metaphysical problem. The problem that Collingwood deals with in The New Leviathan is not the identical problem that the Greeks, for example, dealt with. For Collingwood, the questions have changed as absolute presuppositions change because it is absolute presuppositions that give rise to questions. Secondly, Donagan claims that Collingwood radically changes his position between 1940 and 1942. Donagan agrees with Knox that Collingwood rejected metaphysical questions in 1940, but disagrees with Knox that Collingwood never abandoned this view. For Donagan, Collingwood began asking metaphysical questions again in 1942. Donagan's interpretation assumes that the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis are correct. If we are right that the late development thesis and the radical conversion hypothesis are mistaken, then Donagan's interpretation on this point fails. According to our interpretation, philosophical questions were open questions in 1940, as well as in 1942. Thirdly, Donagan calls the mind-body problem a metaphysical problem. We prefer to call this problem a philosophical problem for the simple reason that this is more in line with Collingwoods own terminology. We prefer not to call this problem a metaphysical problem because the metaphysician has other work to do. The metaphysician must uncover absolute presuppositions and trace the development of absolute presuppositions. (ii) It is interesting to note that David Rynin has claimed that "if metaphysics, in its classical form, is to be saved from the logical positivist attack, something like Collingwood's [doctrine of]...absolute presuppositions will have to be taken seriously, if not adopted..." See David Rynin, "Donagan on Collingwood. Abso-lute Presuppositions, Truth, and Metaphysics", in <u>Review of Metaphysics</u>, xviii (December, 1964), p. 301. If Rynin thinks that Collingwood is attempting to save metaphysics in the classical sense of "pure being", then he is mistaken. Collingwood is attempting to save metaphysics in the "reformed" sense. The preliminary work on the part of the metaphysician is necessary before the philosopher can do his work. The philosopher will learn from the metaphysician what is a philosophical question what what is an empirical question. Also, it should be noted that Collingwood is not inconsistent when he claims to be both a "reformer" of metaphysics and a defender of traditional metaphysics. By reforming metaphysics, Collingwood means that he is going to make explicit what was implicit in traditional metaphysics.

We are now ready to respond to a criticism made by Donagan and Mink. Donagan and Mink have suggested that Collingwood contradicts himself when he says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value and that the whole question-and-answer complex is true. Donagan says that Collingwood "...disregarded a plain implication of his earlier doctrine, namely, that if a whole question and answer complex is true in the 'proper' sense, then its presuppositions have as good a claim to be true, in his derivative sense, as the answers it contains."⁵⁵ And Mink says that Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false, because they are not propositions, "contradicts the principle of the Logic of Question and Answer that truth and falsity are properties not of propositions but of question-and-answer complexes."⁵⁶ Donagan and Mink, then, have suggested that Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value is not consistent with his claim in An Autobiography that "a question-and-answer complex as a whole is 'true'". The possible objection, then, is this: if the question-and-answer complex as a whole is true and absolute presuppositions are a part of this complex, how can absolute presuppositions lack truth-value? Let us now attempt to show why this possible objection fails.

In <u>An Autobiography</u> Collingwood struck at one of the roots of "propositional logic" by denying that "truth or falsehood, which are what logic is chiefly concerned with, belongs to propositions as such" (A, 34). Collingwood states:

^{55.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 62.

^{56.} L. Mink, Mind, History, And Dialectic, pp. 143, 264.

It seemed to me that truth, if that meant the kind of thing which I was accustomed to pursue in my ordinary work as a philosopher or historian--truth in the sense in which a philosophical theory or an historical narrative is called true, which seemed to me the proper sense of the word--was something that belonged not to any single proposition, nor even, as the coherence-theorists maintained, to a complex of propositions taken together; but to a complex consisting of questions and answers (A, 37).

According to Collingwood, truth is not the property of propositions but of complexes "consisting of questions and answers". The coherencetheorists claim that a proposition is true if it is consistent with "a complex of propositions". The coherence-theorists, like the realists, have divorced propositions from the questioning process. For Collingwood, it is not propositions, or a consistent complex of propositions, but question-and-answer complexes which alone can properly be called true. He adds:

> What is ordinarily meant when a proposition is called 'true', I thought, was this: (a) the proposition belongs to a questionand-answer complex which as a whole is 'true' in the proper sense of the word; (b) within this complex it is an answer to a certain question; (c) the question is what we ordinarily call a sensible or intelligent question, not a silly one, or in my terminology it 'arises'; (d) the proposition is the 'right' answer to that question (A, 38).

It should be noted at this stage that Collingwood is not saying that a proposition is true if it is the right answer to a question in a questionand-answer complex. This is a mistake that Donagan and E.E. Harris make.⁵⁷ Collingwood wants to get away from the idea that propositions are true. Rather, it is more correct to say that the question-and-answer complex is true if a proposition is the right answer to a question in a question-and-

^{57.} See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 59. E.E. Harris, <u>Critical</u> <u>Essays</u>, p. 132.

answer complex. So when a proposition is the right answer to a question, it is more correct to say that the whole complex is true rather than saying that the proposition is true.

We have already seen that Collingwood does not regard absolute presuppositions as propositions. This was Collingwood's main point when he attacked Ayer, among others, in An Essay on Metaphysics and Ryle in the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence". If our analysis is correct, Donagan is mistaken to claim that absolute presuppositions are propositions.⁵⁸ Donagan's interpretation on this point seems to be a positivistic misinterpretation. Now, Donagan makes two mistakes that Mink does not make. First, he says that absolute presuppositions are propositions.⁵⁹ Since Donagan sees absolute presuppositions as propositions, he thinks that absolute presuppositions can be answers to questions. Secondly, he says that propositions themselves have truth-value. And since Donagan thinks that answers to questions have truth-value, he thinks that absolute presuppositions have truth-value in the sense of being an answer to a question. But Donagan also makes two other mistakes that Mink also makes. First, Donagan and Mink fail to recognize that when Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value, Collingwood is saying that absolute presuppositions lack empirical truthvalue. If our analysis is correct, Collingwood never said that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value in any sense. Secondly, Donagan and Mink fail to recognize that absolute presuppositions themselves cannot be true or

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^{58.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 76.

^{59.} Mink calls absolute presuppositions "concepts". But occasionally he slips and calls them propositions, as Donagan does. For example, Mink talks of "absolute propositions". See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History, and Dialectic</u>, p. 264.

false because absolute presuppositions cannot be divorced from the question-and-answer complex.⁶⁰ To mistakenly claim that absolute presuppositions themselves are true is similar to the mistake of claiming that a proposition itself is true. That is, if you claim that a proposition itself is true, you have divorced the proposition from the question-and-answer complex. And if you claim that an absolute presupposition itself is true, you have divorced the absolute presupposition from the position itself is true, you have divorced the absolute presupposition from the position itself is true, you have divorced the absolute presupposition from the question-and-answer complex.

We would want to argue that Collingwood did not contradict himself, as Donagan and Mink say, when he claimed that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value and that the whole question-and-answer complex is true. For Collingwood, part of the question-and-answer complex is made up of absolute presuppositions. Since absolute presuppositions are foundational concepts, absolute presuppositions make up the foundation of the question-and-answer complex. But absolute presuppositions are also non-verifiable. So the foundational part of the complex is nonverifiable. The other part of the question-and-answer complex is made up of relative presuppositions, questions and answers. Relative presuppositions, questions and answers are logically less fundamental than absolute presuppositions. And relative presuppositions, questions and

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^{60.} L. Rubinoff comes close to saying this when he says that "[t]ruth is a property which belongs only to the whole, but a presupposition is "truthful" to the extent to which it contributes to the integrity of the whole..." But Rubinoff does not tell us if he is referring to absolute presuppositions here. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, p. 235. It is also interesting to note that Rubinoff sometimes slips and calls presuppositions themselves false. See, for example, L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 253.

answers are verifiable. This interpretation appears to be consistent with Collingwood's claim that a whole question-and-answer complex is true if a proposition is the right answer to a question in a questionand-answer complex. Since absolute presuppositions are an integral part of every question-and-answer complex, it is in this sense that the absolute presuppositions in the complex can be said to be true. So instead of saying that an absolute presupposition itself is true, we should say that a whole question-and-answer complex, including absolute presuppositions, is true.⁶¹

Let us turn now to the second major claim of this chapter: that absolute presuppositions are to be regarded as logico-regulative entities. We have already seen that absolute presuppositions are logical entities in the sense that absolute presuppositions are an integral part of the logic of question and answer. And we have seen that absolute presuppositions are foundational concepts that regulate all inquiries. Or as Collingwood puts it in <u>The Idea of Nature</u>, absolute presuppositions are "working hypotheses" that regulate all thinking. Absolute presuppositions as regulative entities allow us to raise questions, but they also place limits on the types of questions that we can ask. Greco-Medieval

^{61. (}i) We will have more to say about Collingwood's notion of "truth" in the next chapter. (ii) We disagree with Rubinoff when he says that Collingwood is attempting "to develop an alternative logic to the propositional logic of realism". See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 248. Rather, we agree with Mink that Collingwood's logic of question and answer "supplements" propositional logic. But Mink says that this was not Collingwood's intention. We wish to argue that this was Collingwood's intention. See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History, And Dialectic</u>, p. 131. The strength of our interpretation is that it is consistent with Collingwood's acceptance of the distinction between truth and validity in logic.

scientists held telological absolute presuppositions and these absolute presuppositions logically gave rise to teleological questions. Modern scientists hold regularian absolute presuppositions and these absolute presuppositions logically give rise to regularian questions. We will have more to say regarding this matter in Chapter IV. But at this point, let us examine what other commentators have said about the status of absolute presuppositions.

T.M. Knox has claimed that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities. Knox says that absolute presuppositions "belong to the field which Collingwood thought was legitimately occupied by psychology".⁶² According to Knox's interpretation, absolute presuppositions lie in the recesses of your unconscious mind. This leads Knox to claim that "[a]greement with Dilthey's doctrine turns out to be surprisingly near".⁶³ If our analysis in this chapter is correct, Knox's interpretation concerning the status of absolute presuppositions is dubious for at least four reasons. First, Collingwood says that psychology is the pseudo-science of thought. It would be odd indeed, then, for Collingwood to suggest that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities. Collingwood does not say, as Knox's interpretation implies, that absolute presuppositions psychologically give rise to questions. Rather, Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions logically give rise to questions. And Collingwood does not say that we must use the methods of psychology to uncover absolute presuppositions, as Knox's interpretation implies.

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^{62.} T.M. Knox, The Idea Of History, p. xiv.

^{63. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>., p. xiv.

Rather, Collingwood says that we must use the methods of history to uncover absolute presuppositions. Also it would appear that Collingwood does not end up in a position "surprisingly near" to Dilthey, as Knox claims. In The Idea Of History Collingwood criticizes Dilthey for assuming "that the self-knowledge of mind is identical with psychology" (IH, 174). Secondly, absolute presuppositions are an integral part of the logic of question and answer. Absolute presuppositions are not psychological entities which can be separated from the question-andanswer complex, as Knox implies. Thirdly, Collingwood says that we must use metaphysical analysis in order to uncover absolute presupposi-If Knox's interpretation were correct, Collingwood would have tions. had to have said that we need to use psychological analysis in order to uncover absolute presuppositions. Fourthly, although Collingwood did say that some thinkers are unconscious of their absolute presuppositions, at no time did he say that all thinkers are unconscious of their absolute presuppositions. And when Collingwood used the word 'unconscious' in reference to absolute presuppositions, he did not have a psychological doctrine in mind, as Knox seems to imply. Rather, by the word 'unconscious' in reference to absolute presuppositions, Collingwood means 'implicit'. On this point we agree with Rubinoff.⁶⁴ So when Collingwood says that a particular thinker is unconscious of his absolute presuppositions, he means that this thinker is not aware of how these absolute presuppositions are implicitly operating in his thinking. We will have more to say in this regard in the next chapter.

^{64.} L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 288.

It is our claim in this thesis that if you claim that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities, as Knox does, then you cannot go on to argue that there is a logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. It is our claim that it is only if you see absolute presuppositions as logical entities that you can go on to argue that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and history. And it must be emphasized that our thesis does not hinge on the question of whether or not Collingwood's analysis of psychologism is correct. Our main purpose in the first section of this chapter was to get as clear as possible about the notion of an absolute presupposition. The reason that we examined Collingwood's discussion of psychologism was to give added weight to our claim that absolute presuppositions are not psychological entities.⁶⁵

As we have seen earlier, Alan Donagan regards absolute presuppositions as empirical propositions. Donagan is misinterpreting Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions in the same way that Ryle did in the "Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence". It would appear that Donagan did not not take Collingwood's attack on positivism seriously enough. One aim of Collingwood's attack on positivism was to show that absolute presuppositions

^{65.} It would appear that Knox did not take Collingwood's attack on psychologism seriously enough. If one sees absolute presuppositions as psychological entities, then one cannot save metaphysics. Given our analysis, Knox has failed to recognize that Part II of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> was an attempt on Collingwood's part to prevent someone from misinterpreting his doctrine of absolute presuppositions in such a way as to see absolute presuppositions as psychological entities. It is also interesting to note that Knox's apparent misinterpretation on this particular point probably led him to the mistaken conclusion that Collingwood is ruling out what we have called philosophical questions.

are not empirical propositions. This was Collingwood's point in criticizing positivistic thinkers like Mill and Ayer. And one further aim of Collingwood's attack on positivism was that if one regards absolute presuppositions as empirical propositions, then one cannot save metaphysics. Given our analysis, Donagan has failed to recognize that Part II of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> was an attempt on Collingwood's part to prevent someone from misinterpreting his doctrine of absolute presuppositions in such a way as to see absolute presuppositions as empirical propositions. And once again, it must be emphasized that our thesis does not hinge on the question of whether or not Collingwood's analysis of positivism is correct. The reason that we examined Collingwood's discussion of positivism was to give added weight to the claim that absolute presuppositions are not empirical propositions.

Lionel Rubinoff has argued that in order to uncover the absolute presuppositions of other thinkers one must do metaphysics.⁶⁶ On this point we agree with Rubinoff. But Rubinoff goes on to claim that if a thinker wants to uncover his own absolute presuppositions, he must use the methods of psychology. So Rubinoff seems to be implying that, for ourselves, absolute presuppositions are psychological entities. At this point we disagree with Rubinoff. Since, for Collingwood, psychology is the pseudo-science of thought, the methods of psychology will not

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^{66.} Rubinoff states: "In the language of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, I would distinguish myself from the agent whose thought I am studying by distinguishing clearly between the presuppositions of his thought and the presuppositions of my own thought. In this way, I will be doing metaphysics and not psychology." See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 304.

help us to uncover our own absolute presuppositions. If we wish to uncover our own absolute presuppositions we must analyse metaphysically what our questions logically presuppose. Whether we are attempting to uncover the absolute presuppositions of other thinkers or the absolute presuppositions that we ourselves hold, we must use metaphysical analysis and not psychological analysis. If our analysis is correct, absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities for all thinkers.⁶⁷

It would appear as though Michael Krausz has failed to understand Collingwood's position when he says that, for Collingwood, "no person can be aware of one's own absolute presuppositions."⁶⁸ But Collingwood in his <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> explicitly says that with a lot of hard work one can become aware of one's own absolute presuppositions. "In this kind of thinking", Collingwood says, "absolute presuppositions are certainly at work; but they are doing their work in darkness, the light of consciousness never falling on them. It is only by analysis that any one can ever come to know either that he is making any absolute presuppositions at all or what absolute presuppositions he is making" (EM, 43). It seems clear, then, that Collingwood thinks that a thinker can become aware of his own absolute presuppositions. He says that it is by "analysis" that we can uncover our own absolute presuppositions. "reausz's interpretation is also questionable when he says that Collingwood

^{67.} W.H. Walsh claims that the metaphysician does not hold absolute presuppositions himself. See W.H. Walsh, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 142. For Collingwood, all thinkers hold absolute presuppositions. In fact, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood explicitly says that metaphysicians hold absolute presuppositions. See <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 63.

^{68.} M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 227.

did not give us "satsifactory criteria" for identifying absolute presuppositions.⁶⁹ For Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities that make up the foundation of a conceptual system. Absolute presuppositions can be seen as ultimate or 'bedrock' presuppositions. What distinguishes an absolute presupposition from a relative presupposition (or any other empirical proposition) is that absolute presuppositions are non-verifiable, that is, they are not empirical answers to empirical questions. It is very odd that Krausz would suggest that Collingwood did not give us satisfactory criteria for identifying absolute presuppositions, when he himself tells us that "[a]t the base of the hierarchy of questions and answers are 'absolute presuppositions', presuppositions which answer no questions and which Collingwood views as having no truth value."70 Collingwood not only gives us criteria, but many times in his writings lists the absolute presuppositions underlying certain periods of history (eg. Greek science, European science in the central Middle Ages, European science in the seventeenth century and Modern science).⁷¹

Let us turn now to the third major claim of this chapter: that absolute presuppositions underlie all science, and not just natural science. In the first section of this chapter we have attempted to show that all

9. Ibid., p. 226.

Ibid., p. 223.

71. Krausz concludes saying that "ultimately, Collingwoodian absolute presuppositions are ontological commitments,..." See M. Krausz, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 240. It would appear as though Krausz has not taken Collingwood's chapter entitled "Metaphysics Without Ontology" in his 1940 publication seriously enough. Given our analysis, absolute presuppositions are not "ontological commitments", as Krausz claims.

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science is inextricably united with metaphysics. And we have seen that by the term 'science' Collingwood means all orderly and systematic thinking. We were led to the conclusion that all scientists, for Collingwood, hold absolute presuppositions. If our analysis is correct, Donagan is mistaken to claim that there are only absolute presuppositions in natural science.⁷² According to Donagan, Collingwood is only uncovering the absolute presuppositions of natural science. For Donagan, then, other scientists, including historians, do not hold absolute presuppositions. This interpretation leads Donagan to claim that in An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood did not ask the question, 'What are the presuppositions of history?'⁷³ If Donagan is right, then we have very little ground upon which to argue that there is an important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical understanding. In short, if Donagan is right on this point, then our thesis comes very close to being undermined. At the very most, all we could argue, given Donagan's analysis, is that historians hold absolute presuppositions only when they are copying the methods of the natural scientist.⁷⁴ But Donagan doesn't even mention this possibility. The question before us now is: Is Donagan right to claim that Collingwood

72. A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, pp. 210, 273.

73. Ibid., p. 210.

74. In Chapters IV-VII we will argue that one major aim of <u>The Idea of</u> <u>History</u> is to attack those historians who do copy the methods of the natural scientist. Collingwood finds many of the absolute presuppositions of natural science inapplicable in the study of history. Collingwood will offer some absolute presuppositions which are compatible with the "science" of history.

does not relate absolute presuppositions to history in An Essay on Metaphysics? It would appear that Donagan's analysis is not tenable because Collingwood says that all orderly and systematic thinking rests on absolute presuppositions, and history is an orderly and systematic study. In fact, in An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood explicitly says that historians do hold absolute presuppositions. For example, Collingwood says that "[n]ature seemed to the eighteenth-century historian an absolute presupposition of all historical thinking" (EM, 98). In other words, eighteenthcentury historians held the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' (EM, 98). So it is clear that one of the jobs of the metaphysician will be to detect or uncover the absolute presuppositions of history. This evidence gives added weight to our claim that all scientists hold absolute presuppositions. And given our analysis in this chapter, it would now appear to be the case that absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities that lie at the foundation of an historian's conceptual framework. Collingwood also tells us in his 1940 publication that historians hold relative presuppositions (EM, 26-27). In addition, in An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood discusses the claims of many historians, including Tacitus, Gibbon, Voltaire, Hume, Hegel, Marx, Spengler and Toynbee. It seems clear, then, that Collingwood thinks that there is an important relationship between metaphysics and history. It will not be necessary at this point to discuss the relationship between metaphysics as the study of absolute presuppositions and history because Chapters IV-VII are really an attempt to systematically defend this

claim.75

In the third chapter of this thesis we will continue with our study of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We will be specifically concerned with Collingwood's foundationalist view of knowledge and his analysis of conceptual change.

^{75.} It would appear as though a number of commentators, including Rubinoff, E.E. Harris, and Van Der Dussen, would be 'open' to this thesis. Rubinoff says that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-thinking. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, p. 305. But, for Rubinoff, this is more of a suggestive claim. At no point did Rubinoff systematically develop this claim. E.E. Harris in a conversation (November, 1980) told us that when Collingwood talks of the presuppositions of history, he probably does mean absolute presuppositions. And Van Der Dussen in a conversation (April, 1980) mentioned the possibility that 'the past is intelligible' is an absolute presupposition for Collingwood. But Van Der Dussen does not defend this claim in his major work on Collingwood.

CHAPTER III

FOUNDATIONALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF CONCEPTUAL CHANGE

In the first section of Chapter III we will continue with our study of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We will attempt to demonstrate that Collingwood holds a foundationalist theory of knowledge. But Collingwood's foundationalism is different from the traditional foundationalist position in two important ways. First, Collingwood claims that the foundation of a conceptual system lacks truth-value in two important senses. Secondly, Collingwood claims that the foundation itself can 'shift and change'. This brings us to the problem of conceptual change. In the second section of this chapter, we will again point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators on the questions of foundationalism and conceptual change in an attempt to make what we consider to be Collingwood's position clearer.

Ι

"Science", Collingwood says, "is 'experience' interpreted in the light of our general convictions as to the nature of the world,..." (EM, 198). Here again we see the important overlap between thought and experience and we are led to the realization that we must give up the notion of a pure datum. Collingwood rejected the notion of a "given" in experience as early as 1925 in "Nature And Aims Of A Philosophy Of History". In 1925,

he states:

Perception appears to the perceiver as immediate; this is what is meant by speaking of the object of perception as 'given'. But it is not in reality immediate, and its object is not in the strict sense given. Reflexion shows in all perception two elements, sensation and thought: thought 'interpreting' or reflecting upon the 'data of sensation'. Sensation here is a mere abstraction, the limiting case in which we are supposed to receive unreflectively a pure datum. In actual experience we never get such a pure datum; whatever we call a datum is in point of fact already interpreted by thought...[I]n all perception we are making a judgment, trying to answer the question what it is that we perceive,...(NAPH, 49-50).¹

Now in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he adds presuppositions to the element of thought in experience. What Collingwood is trying to do is to replace the notion of pure datum or ultimate datum, even in the realm of consciousness, by the logic of question and answer.² And presuppositions are an integral part of the logic of question and answer. For Collingwood, then, it would be incorrect to say that thinking "proceeds by mere 'apprehension' or 'intuition' of something 'given'" (EM, 170).

Once we are aware of the fact that there are no presuppositionfree experiences, we will be led to the view that "[a]n absolute presupposition cannot be undermined by the verdict of 'experience', because it is the yard-stick by which 'experience' is judged" (EM, 193-4). No pure

^{1.} This passage gives added weight to the continuity thesis.

^{2.} Here we are qualifying a point made by Nathan Rotenstreich. Rotenstreich says that "Collingwood tried to replace the notion of ultimate data, even in the realm of consciousness, by the notion of absolute presuppositions". See N. Rotenstreich, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 197. We would want to argue that Collingwood is replacing the notion of ultimate data with the whole logic of question and answer and not just absolute presuppositions, as Rotenstreich claims.

datum could ever undermine an absolute presupposition because we are never presented with a pure datum in our experience. For example, if a group of people held the absolute presupposition that 'everything whatever is due to magic' "it is certainly not" presupposition-free experience "that could shake it". But Collingwood tells us that this absolute presupposition might be "shaken" by presupposition-laden experiences. "It might be shaken through the influence of a very powerful tribesman who found himself taking a different view; or by the prestige of some other community, accepted and revered in the first instance as extremely powerful magicians, and later found to reject and despise it" (EM, 194). It would be correct to say that whenever the stresses and strains of this presupposition-laden experience are too great, an absolute presupposition will be undermined.

Absolute presuppositions cannot be derived from a pure sensedatum. "Absolute presuppositions", Collingwood writes, "are not 'derived from experience', but are catalytic agents which the mind must bring out of its own resources to the manipulation of what is called 'experience'" (EM, 197). Since absolute presuppositions can be relinquished, what is called "'experience'" is not the same for all men. What is called experience has a history. And Collingwood gives us an example of what would be contained in this history of experience. "[T]he ancient Greeks and Romans classified colours not as we classify them, by the qualitative differences they show according to the places they occupy in the spectrum, but by reference to something quite different from this, something connected with dazzlingness or glintingness or gleamingness or their opposites,..." (EM, 195). Collingwood adds that he rejects the suggestion "that this is because the Greeks and Romans were colour blind" (EM, 195). As he says, "no sort of colour-blindness known to physiology would account for the facts" (EM, 195). For Collingwood, only a history of experience using his conceptual tools could account for the facts. And this history of experience³ would include the important role played by absolute presuppositions.⁴ Since absolute presuppositions can change, no one set of absolute presuppositions underlies all experience. One set of absolute presuppositions, then, does not have a transcendental ground in the structure of the mind.⁵

For Collingwood, all thinkers are foundationalists whether they are aware of this fact or not. By 'foundationalism' is usually meant the doctrine that knowledge constitutes a structure the foundations of which support all the rest but themselves need no support. And the sense in which a foundation needs no support is that it is not justified by its relation to other justified beliefs; in that sense it does not 'rest on' other beliefs. For Collingwood, all thinkers are foundationalists because they all hold absolute presuppositions which do not rest on any other beliefs. It will be recalled that Collingwood said that absolute presuppositions are not subject to proof because "it is proof that depends on

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^{3.} The claim that experience has a history appears to be a respectable view in the philosophy of science today. See, for example, Paul Feyerabend, <u>Against Method</u>, London, 1975, pp. 273-274.

^{4.} Before the writing of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood had already given us at least two works that dealt with the history of experience. These works would be The Idea of Nature and The Idea of History.

^{5.} In regards to this point we are implicitly criticizing Rubinoff. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 65.

them, not they on proof" (EM, 173). An absolute presupposition, for Collingwood, could not be proved by showing it to be entailed by something more fundamental; for then it would not be an absolute presupposition.

Collingwood, however, is a foundationalist in a different sense from the traditional foundationalists, like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz and Husserl. Traditionally, foundationalists have built up their foundation with allegedly true propositions or true ideas. Traditional foundationalists, then, regarded the foundation itself as having truth-value. For Collingwood, we cannot stop the regress of proofs with any flash of intuition, self-evident principle, clear and distinct idea, principle of sufficient reason or an absolute foundation in the Husserlian sense. And for Collingwood, we cannot stop the regress of proofs with interpretation-free experiences (or pure data) which are given. For Collingwood, the regress is stopped with absolute presuppositions. In order to escape an infinite regress or a vicious circle we must in the end refer back to absolute presuppositions which are not themselves subject to proof.⁶ And since absolute presuppositions can be relinquished, the foundation can shift and change. Collingwood, then, rejects two major claims of the traditional foundationalists. First, he says that the foundation itself does not have any truth-value. And

^{6.} When Collingwood says that we cannot prove absolute presuppositions, we could call this type of proof foundational proof. Foundational proof, or proof in the strong sense, is not possible, for him. But proof is possible, for Collingwood, in two weaker senses. First, he speaks of "historical proof". We will have more to say about historical proof very shortly. Secondly, we could say that Collingwood allows for logical proof. We would have a logical proof if we could prove something, given our presuppositions. And this would be consistent with Collingwood's claim that proof depends on absolute presuppositions.

secondly, he says that the foundation of a conceptual system can shift and change. We wish to argue, then, that Collingwood is a foundationalist in a unique sense.

In Part III of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood is attempting to show how metaphysical inquiry will be conducted if the principles laid down in his opening chapters are taken as sound.⁷ Although the first chapter of Part III is entitled "The Proposition 'God Exists'", Collingwood argues that 'God exists' is an absolute presupposition and not an empirical proposition. So, what Collingwood is doing in this chapter is attacking those thinkers who believe that 'God exists' is a proposition. It is very important, then, not to misinterpret his title. 'God exists' is not a proposition because it is non-verifiable. And 'God exists' can be neither proved nor disproved (EM, 188). We cannot prove the absolute presuppositions that lie at the foundation of a particular piece of thinking "because it is proof which depends on them". But, Collingwood adds that, although we couldn't prove this absolute presupposition itself, we could prove that at a particular time this

^{7.} It would be correct to say that in Parts I and II of <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood is operating more as a philosopher than as a metaphysician understood in his own sense. In Part III of this work, he is doing the job of the metaphysician as he has defined that job in Parts I and II. Parts I and II are mainly an essay on metaphysics and anti-metaphysics. Part III is mainly an essay in metaphysics. Operating mainly as a philosopher in Parts I and II, Collingwood attempts to uncover the principles of metaphysics (i.e. Proposition I, Proposition II, etc.). Whereas absolute presuppositions themselves are historically de-limited concepts, the principles of metaphysics are not historically de-limited propositions. If our analysis is correct, we have more evidence to support our claim that Collingwood has not abandoned his position in "Croce's Philosophy of History" when he says that philosophy cannot be subordinated to history.

absolute presupposition was held. And to prove that 'God exists' was absolutely presupposed at a particular time, we would have to use the methods of history. This is why Collingwood calls this kind of proof "an historical proof" (EM, 188).⁸

Collingwood tells us that Anselm uncovered a foundational concept of all the thinking done at his time (EM, 189). It will be recalled that, for Collingwood, 'God exists' is not a proposition because it is neither empirically true nor empirically false. And it will be recalled that the claim that "'somebody believes that God exists'" is a "metaphysical proposition". What Collingwood is claiming is that Anselm asserted a correct metaphysical proposition when he asserted that all the thinking done at his time presupposed that 'God exists'. Now Collingwood interprets Anselm as giving us an historical proof and not a foundational proof or a logical proof.⁹ Anselm has given us an historical proof because he has proved that somebody believes that God exists. And this probably explains why Collingwood prefers to call this proof "Anselm's Proof" rather than an "Ontological Proof". The proposition that someone believes in God is a metaphysical proposition and can only be proved by using the methods of history. That is, this metaphysical proposition can only "stand on historical evidence" (EM, 190). According to

^{8.} When Collingwood talks about historical proof he is using the term 'proof' in the weak sense. There is always the possibility that new evidence may be uncovered which suggests that we were mistaken about an absolute presupposition of some period of history.

^{9.} On the distinction between foundational proofs and logical proofs see footnote #6 in this chapter.

Collingwood, Anselm didn't prove the existence of God¹⁰, but the fact that 'God exists' was presupposed by all the thinking done at his time. It is clear that Collingwood sees Anselm as an archeologist of the recesses of the mind where foundational concepts lie hidden. But Anselm failed to point out that the absolute presupposition 'God exists' may be 'taken up' at a certain point in history and later relinquished. To this extent Anselm did lack an historical consciousness and was not a reformed metaphysician in the complete sense.

Kant also uncovered foundational concepts of all the thinking done at his time. The value of Kant's work was that he made explicit the absolute presuppositions of his time. And this leads Collingwood to interpret Kant in accordance with his own view of metaphysics. To give one example, Kant stated a true metaphysical proposition when he said that the thinking done at his time absolutely presupposed that every event has a cause.¹¹ "[A] first-hand physicist of considerable distinction", Kant threw himself "into the work of stating as fully and accurately as he could what exactly the presuppositions were which in his

^{10.} For Collingwood, Anselm is right that the concept 'God exists' is referential, but wrong that it is <u>certain</u> that this 'concept' refers to an existing reality. On reflection, in the correspondence with Gaunilo, Anselm became a reformed metaphysician in the Collingwoodian sense (EM, 189). Anselm doesn't prove that the concept 'God exists' refers to an existing reality when he attacks Gaunilo. Anselm just attacks Gaunilo's logical analysis because Gaunilo "did not know that the presupposition 'God exists' was a presupposition he himself made" (EM, 189).

^{11.} True metaphysical propositions cannot be divorced from their context. It would actually be more accurate to say that a metaphysical proposition is right if it is the right answer to a question in a questionand-answer complex. In this case we would say that the entire complex is true.

work as a physicist he found himself making" (EM, 240). Kant stated "these presuppositions" in the "part of the <u>Critique</u> which is called 'Transcendental Analytics'". And since the absolute presuppositions that Kant uncovered in his own thinking were "on the whole acceptable to the other physicists of his time, it would follow that an account of his own absolute presuppositions as a physicist was on the whole an account of the absolute presuppositions made by his scientific colleagues" (EM, 243-4).

It is also interesting to note that Collingwood also says that Kant's postulates of practical reason are "presuppositions". Collingwood states:

> Kant here professes only to enumerate the absolute presuppositions of natural science, or theoretical thinking in its special application to the world of nature. Practical thinking also has its presuppositions, and the investigation of these he calls the 'metaphysics of morals' (EM, 248).

And since Kant uncovered the "'metaphysics'" of the moral thinking of his day, it would be correct to say that these moral presuppositions were absolute presuppositions. Although Collingwood does not make this point, it would probably be correct to say that Kant uncovered the absolute presuppositions of the aesthetic experience of his day in the third <u>Critique</u>. And the absolute presuppositions of aesthetic experience, like theoretical and practical experience, can be relinquished. This interpretation is actually quite consistent with Collingwood's claim that a constellation of absolute presuppositions underlies all experience.

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood is attempting, among other things, to reconstruct Kant's doctrine of the categories. Collingwood tells us that if Kant "had known more history" he would have realized that instead of giving us a list of the permanent categories of the human mind, he was simply stating the absolute presuppositions underlying the natural science of his day. As early as "Ruskin's Philosophy", Collingwood claimed that Kant lacked an historical consciousness. In <u>An Essay</u> on <u>Metaphysics</u> Collingwood tells us that "the Kantian 'principles' are nothing more permanent than the presuppositions of eighteenth-century physics, as Kant discovered them by analysis. If you analyse the physics of today, or that of the Renaissance, or that of Aristotle, you get a different set" (EM, 179).¹² For Collingwood, absolute presuppositions have a beginning and an ending. No absolute presupposition, for Collingwood, is a "presupposition innate in the human mind" (EM, 265).

Although we can learn a great deal about what Collingwood means by an absolute presupposition by studying Kant's doctrine of the categories, it would be a mistake to equate Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions with Kant's doctrine of the categories. For Kant, 'a priori' categories are universal and necessary, and these categories are categories imposed on all experience and judgement. Now, of course, absolute presuppositions are 'a priori' in the sense of being before experience. It will be recalled that Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions "are not 'derived from experience' but are catalytic agents which the mind must bring out of its own resources to the manipulation

^{12.} For Collingwood, it is incorrect to say that no thought is genuinely scientific unless it proceeds according to the absolute presuppositions accepted at a certain place and time (eg. the absolute presuppositions underlying the science of Kant's day). Even though the Greeks, for example, held different absolute presuppositions, Collingwood still wants to call their orderly thinking 'science'. This interpretation is also consistent with The Idea Of Nature.

of what is called 'experience'" (EM, 197). So, Collingwood agrees with Kant that absolute presuppositions are not derived from experience. And Collingwood agrees with Kant that absolute presuppositions provide the general structure of experience when schematized or applied over time to the raw data of the manifold of sensation. But, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are not 'a priori' in Kant's sense of being necessary and universal. According to Collingwood, all absolute presuppositions can be relinquished. For example, he tells us that it used to be presupposed that every event has a cause (as with Kant), but today physicists have stopped looking for causes.¹³ Kant was wrong, according to Collingwood, when he said that the categories of the understanding were the necessary conditions of the possibility of all experience. For Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are the necessary conditions of the possibility of experience, but there is no permanent set of categories or absolute presuppositions.

Collingwood gives us an example of one thinker in modern times who constructed his metaphysics under the illusion that all human beings accept "what Mill calls the law of universal causation, and for that matter everything enunciated in Kant's 'System of Principles'" (EM, 179). This thinker was Samuel Alexander, and Collingwood tells us that "he was too much under the influence of eighteenth-century thinkers". But not

^{13.} When Collingwood says that physicists today have stopped looking for causes, he is repeating one of Russell's claims from <u>Mysticism and Logic</u>. See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 322. Although Russell sees this claim as a generalization, Collingwood sees it as an absolute presupposition. It is up to other metaphysicians to check and see if, in fact, this is an absolute presupposition of modern physics.

only did Alexander make a Kantian mistake by not taking history seriously enough, he also made a positivistic mistake. He thought that the statement 'every event has a cause' was a summary statement of observed facts. In his unpublished rough draft of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood

states:

What Alexander has done here (<u>Space, Time and Diety</u>) is to take the <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u> and turn it inside out. All Kant's categories are there, very much as Kant left them; but instead of being presuppositions of our thinking they are regarded as empirical features of the things about which we think. Thus instead of categories of the pure understanding they become 'categorial characteristic of reality.' This attempt to construct a merely empirical theory of knowledge, i.e. a theory of knowledge in which the process of coming to know things is regarded as a process involving no presuppositions at all, would if successful result in abolishing the distinction between metaphysical propositions and ordinary propositions, because it would explain metaphysical propositions as simply one class of ordinary propositions, viz. those which are concerned with the pervasive or categorial characteristics of reality.¹⁴

According to Collingwood, Alexander was wrong to say that Kant's categories are "pervasive" facts about nature, and omnipresent facts which you have only to open your eyes in order to see. In short, Alexander regarded Kant's categories as having the same logical status as empirical propositions. It is probably not too misleading to say that Alexander is moving back to Aristotle's position in one sudden jump. Alexander takes Kant's categories out of the mind and puts them back into the world

^{14. (}i) R.G. Collingwood, "Function of Presuppositions in Civilization", unpublished manuscript, 1937-1938, p. 49. (ii) It is clear that Collingwood thinks that it is a mistake to confuse the notion of an absolute presupposition with the ordinary sense of the term 'presupposition'. Actually the ordinary sense of the term 'presupposition' comes closest to what Collingwood called a relative presupposition. If Collingwood had equated absolute presupposition', there would have been no point, as Collingwood does, in distinguishing between absolute and relative presuppositions.

where Aristotle had put his categories. This, of course, is not to say that Alexander's categories are equivalent to Aristotle's categories. Now, from this attack by Collingwood on Alexander, we should be able to learn at least one more thing about Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Absolute presuppositions are not "categorial characteristics" in experience.

Collingwood's discussion of "causation" is another example of metaphysical analysis in the reformed sense.¹⁵ Collingwood tells us that "the term 'cause', as actually used in modern English and other languages, is ambiguous. It has three senses; possibly more; but at any rate three" (EM, 285). He proceeds to tell us what the three senses of the term 'cause' are that he has uncovered in his metaphysical work. He states:

Sense I. Here that which is 'caused' is the free and deliberate act of a conscious and responsible agent, and 'causing' him to do it means affording him a motive for doing it.

Sense II. Here that which is 'caused' is an event in nature, and its 'cause' is an event or state of things by producing or preventing which we can produce or prevent that whose cause it is said to be.

Sense III. Here that which is 'caused' is an event or state of things, and its 'cause' is another event or state of things standing to it in a one-one relation of causal priority: i.e. a relation of such a kind that (a) if the cause happens or exists the effect also must happen or exist, even if no further conditions are fulfilled, (b) the effects cannot happen or exist unless the cause happens or exists, (c) in some sense which remains to be defined, the cause is prior to the effect; for without such priority there would be no telling which is which (EM, 285-286).

Sense III "is the sense which the word 'cause' has traditionally borne in physics and chemistry and, in general, the 'theoretical sciences of

^{15.} Whether or not Collingwood's reformed metaphysics is correct is beyond the scope of this thesis.

nature'" (EM, 287). Sense II "is the sense which the word 'cause' has in the 'practical sciences of nature'". Unlike the theoretical sciences of nature whose primary aim is to achieve theoretical knowledge, the practical sciences of nature "attempt to enlarge man's control of nature". "For example, in engineering and medicine", Sense II of the word 'cause' is absolutely presupposed. Sense I referes to "human activities such as form the subject-matter of history". "When historians talk about causes", Collingwood says, "this is the sense in which they are using the word 'cause', unless they are aping the methods and vocabulary of natural science" (EM, 286). So, historians absolutely presuppose the word 'cause' in Sense I, unless they are copying the natural scientist, and in this case they are absolutely presupposing the word 'cause' in Sense III. In our next chapter we will concern ourselves with Collingwood's attack on positivistic historians who refuse to recognize Sense I of the word 'cause'.

Collingwood goes on to tell us that "the relation between these three senses of the word 'cause' is an historical relation: No. I being the earliest of the three, No. II a development from it, and No. III a development from that" (EM, 289). At this point Collingwood is drawing an important distinction between a claim being logically prior in an historical sense and a claim being logically prior in a foundational sense. When Collingwood says that "sense II and sense III logically presuppose sense I" (EM, 292), he means that Sense I is logically prior to Sense II and Sense III in an historical sense. If he did mean logical priority in a foundational sense, this wouldn't have allowed him consistently to claim, as he does, that Sense II and Sense III are absolute presuppositions. This is the case because if Sense I is logically more fundamental than Sense II and Sense III, only Sense I would be an absolute presupposition. Sense II and Sense III would become relative presuppositions. But, Collingwood says that 'every event has a cause' (see Sense III) is an absolute presupposition. So, for Collingwood, we must say that Sense I is logically prior in an historical sense to Sense II and Sense III.

Collingwood again emphasizes the point that we can evaluate absolute presuppositions.¹⁶ We have already seen in <u>The Idea of Nature</u> that scientific work "seldom goes on for any length of time without reflection intervening" (IN, 2). To give just one example from <u>The Idea Of</u> <u>Nature</u>, the transition from Thales to Pythagoras is seen as a transition in which the absolute presuppositions of Thales are evaluated critically. And we have already seen in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that nineteenthcentury historians "dispelled this illusion" that "historical events were the effects of causes in the world" (EM, 98). Also, it will be recalled that Collingwood told us that the sixteenth-century psychologists evaluated the absolute presupposition that 'feeling is a cognitive activity' and found it wanting (EM, 109). In addition, Collingwood told us that eighteenth-century biologists evaluated critically the absolute presuppositions in regard to teleological explanations (EM, 113). Eighteenth-century biologists rejected the "typically Greek" absolute

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^{16.} It might be suggested that Collingwood is inconsistent when he claims that the evaluation of absolute presuppositions is really an historical activity. But, for Collingwood, criticism is an important component of the historical method (IH, 215). See Chapter VII.

presupposition that 'the idea of purposve action could be applied to all organisms'. Now, in the section on causality in An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood tells us that the modern physicist gives us reasons for rejecting the notion of cause altogether. Collingwood says that it was once absolutely presupposed that 'some events have causes' (Newton) and then later absolutely presupposed that 'all events have causes' (Kant) and now it is absolutely presupposed that 'no events have causes' (modern physics). "Causation in Sense III" is now considered by modern physicists to be "an anthropomorphic idea" (EM, 322). "And that may be why, in Earl Russell's own words, 'physics has ceased to look for causes'" (EM, 322). The use of "anthropomorphic terms" is, of course, quite common in the history of thought and an analysis shows that the word 'cause' in sense III partly grew up "in connection with the same animistic theory of nature to which [Collingwood] referred in discussing sense II of the word 'cause'" (EM, 323). After a reflection on the word 'cause' in sense III, it turns out that causal propositions in sense III are descriptions of relations between natural events in anthropomorphic terms. In reference to sense III of the word 'cause', Collingwood concludes:

> It would have become plain that there is no truth concealed beneath the animistic metaphor; and that 'the idea of causation' is simply a relic of animism foisted upon a science to which it is irrelevant.

This is what modern physics has done. Developing the Newtonian doctrine in the simplest and most logical way, it has eliminated the notion of cause altogether. In place of that notion, we get a new and highly complex development of the Newtonian 'laws of motion' (EM, 327).

For Collingwood, the debate concerning the idea of causation is considered to be a rational debate. The modern physicist gives us reasons for rejecting the absolute presupposition that 'all events have causes' and the
absolute presupposition that 'some events have ćauses'.¹⁷

Besides giving us many examples from the history of thought to show how absolute presuppositions have been evaluated, Collingwood evaluates absolute presuppositions himself. In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, we have already seen Collingwood attacking the absolute presuppositions of psychology and logical positivism. And when we turn to an examination of <u>The Idea Of History</u>, we will find Collingwood attacking many absolute presuppositions. For example, he will evaluate critically the absolute presupposition that 'mental processes can be reduced to physical processes'.

Since Collingwood says that we can and that we should evaluate absolute presuppositions, it would be a mistake to claim that Collingwood is metaphysically neutral.¹⁸ Another important critical role that the metaphysician has is to check to make sure that previous metaphysicians have uncovered the proper absolute presuppositions. And Collingwood does exactly this in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. For example, he tells us that Aristotle failed to correctly describe the absolute presuppositions of Greek science (EM, 214). Collingwood is not saying that the metaphysician can only record and never judge. And we know that, for Collingwood,

^{17.} C.J.N. Wallace has claimed that all absolute presuppositions are anthropomorphisms. See C.J.N. Wallace, "Metaphor And Anthropomorphism in Collingwood's Theory of Absolute Presuppositions", pp. 11, 129. If our analysis is correct, Wallace is confusing a reason for rejecting an absolute presupposition with the logical status of an absolute presupposition. Collingwood is saying that the word 'cause' in Sense III is an anthropomorphism and that this is a reason for rejecting this notion.

^{18.} We are implicitly criticizing Walsh's interpretation in this paragraph. See W.H. Walsh, <u>Critical Essays</u>, pp. 134, 145.

unless the metaphysician does judge, European civilization will be destroyed. Now, it would also be a mistake to claim that Collingwood is philosophically neutral. For Collingwood, the philosopher must, among other things, attempt to uncover the exact nature of metaphysics. The philosopher has the task of defining the role for the metaphysician.¹⁹ Operating as a philosopher, and not as a metaphysician (in the reformed sense), Collingwood rejects certain accounts of what metaphysics is. For example, he rejects parts of Aristotle's analysis of metaphysics. So, for Collingwood, the philosopher is not neutral because he has the important task of evaluating or reflecting upon particular accounts of what metaphysics is given by past philosophers. Also in his 1940 publication, Collingwood is operating as a philosopher when he rejects particular attempts to account for experience. Collingwood rejects "the doctrine that we learn of the natural world's existence by the use of our senses". He tells us that the Greeks held this view and that this error was "consciously" corrected by the Patristic writers (EM, 218-9). And Collingwood tells us that when the positivists assumed that a presupposition-free experience was possible, they were repeating this same error. Operating as a philosopher, Collingwood also rejects certain accounts of knowledge. In An Autobiography and again in An Essay on Metaphysics, he rejects the assumption of the realists "that knowing makes no difference

^{19.} In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood sees metaphysics as one 'branch' of philosophy. Collingwood does not equate philosophy and metaphysics as Walsh claims. See W.H. Walsh, <u>Critical Essays</u>, pp. 134, 145. W.M. Johnston also mistakenly equates philosophy and metaphysics. See W.M. Johnston, <u>The Formative Years of R.G.</u> <u>Collingwood</u>, (The Hague, 1967), p. 144.

to what is known" (A, 44, EM, 34). And, he also rejects the account of knowledge given by psychologists and pragmatists (EM, 112, SM, 182). Later, in our next chapter, we will see that Collingwood rejects the account of historical knowledge given by the "scissors and paste" historians.

In addition to the fact that it is incorrect to say that Collingwood is metaphysically neutral and philosophically neutral, it is also incorrect to say that Collingwood dispenses with the notion of truth. As we have already seen, in Part II of An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood attacked the psychologists for "teaching that there is no difference between the pursuit of truth, or science, and the pursuit of falsehood, or sophistry;..." (EM, 120). According to Collingwood, the psychologists are actually teaching that the word 'truth' is devoid of meaning. Collingwood does not want to dispense with the "belief that truth [is] the most important thing in the world" (EM, 133) because all "systematic" and "orderly thinking" (and civilization) rests on it. For him, truth is supremely worth pursuing and scientific thinking must at all costs go If we refuse to give up this conviction that the "truth is the on. most precious thing in the world", the "epidemic" of irrationalism can be stayed (EM, 140).

For Collingwood, the notion of truth is an important regulative idea. All scientists must strive to get closer and closer to the truth. By the word 'truth' here, he means truth in the strong sense. Let us call this sense of the word 'truth', truth in Sense I. And for Collingwood, truth in the strong sense "is not historically circumscribed".²⁰

20. See Religion and Philosophy, p. 167.

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In other words, truth in Sense I is not grounded in history. Collingwood does not say that we will never attain the truth in the strong sense. For him, it is an open question whether or not we will ever arrive at the truth in Sense I. So, it would be correct to say that Collingwood does not deny the possibility of a highest standpoint from which to comprehend the truth. And it would be correct to say that he has not abandoned, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, the claim "that ultimate truth is to be reached, if at all, only by hard thinking, by critical development of rational theory, and not by any kind of intellectual intuition."²¹ It is important to distinguish between this "ultimate truth", or truth in the strong sense, from a weaker sense of the term 'truth'. Let us call this weak sense of the term 'truth' Sense II.

Collingwood uses the notion of truth in the weak sense when he says that a whole question-and-answer complex is true. And when he says that a whole question-and-answer complex can be true and yet subject to criticism, he is using the word 'truth' in the weak sense. Only if we make this important distinction between the ultimate truth (or truth in the strong sense) and a whole question-and-answer complex being true (truth in the weak sense), will we be able to understand Collingwood's claim in <u>An Autobiography</u> that "[c]ases are quite common in which the 'right' answer to a question is 'false';..." (A, 37). By this claim, he means that an answer to a question may be the "'right' answer to a question" in a question-and-answer complex (and therefore we would say that

^{21.} R.G. Collingwood, "Can the New Idealism Dispense with Mysticism?", <u>Aristotelian Society</u>, <u>Supplementary Volume III</u>, 1923, p. 171.

the whole question-and-answer complex is true in the weak sense) and yet "'false'" when considered from a higher standpoint. For example, if we gradually abandon a set of presuppositions because they are unacceptable in some way, we will also gradually abandon the question-and-answer complexes of which the previous set of presuppositions was a part. In other words, although we once regarded a particular question-and-answer complex to be true, we now regard that question-and-answer complex to be false when judged in the light of our higher presuppositions and the complex in which they are a part.²² Now, if Collingwood didn't distinguish between these two senses of the term 'truth', there would be no reason to evaluate question-and-answer complexes critically. We could simply set up a consistent conceptual system and call it true. Collingwood must be appealing to another sense of the word 'truth' (what we have called Sense In other words, only if we accept the notion of ultimate truth, or I). truth in the strong sense, does it make sense to judge our question-andanswer complexes in a critical light.

Since Collingwood says that we have not yet arrived (and may never arrive) at the ultimate truth, it would be incorrect to say that he criticizes presuppositions from the highest standpoint. For him, contextladen presuppositions can only be evaluated from what is considered to be a higher standpoint. For those thinkers who regard themselves as already being at the highest standpoint, the problem of conceptual change (in the radical sense) does not arise. In other words, for those thinkers

^{22.} See the rest of this chapter for what it would mean to say that a set of presuppositions is higher.

the following questions do not arise: (1) Should I ever change my absolute presuppositions? (2) Can I rationally change my absolute presuppositions? and (3) How do I know that one set of absolute presuppositions is better than another set? The only problem in this connection is how to move from absolute presuppositions which are regarded as false to those absolute presuppositions which are regarded as self-evident, intuitively true, or habitually accepted. For Collingwood, on the other hand, the problem of conceptual change does arise because he does not believe that any absolute presupposition is intuitively true, self-evident, or habitually accepted.

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood rejects the claim that an absolute presupposition is self-evident (true in the strong sense). And therefore, for Collingwood, the metaphysician cannot have the job of saying which absolute presupposition in a group of absolute presuppositions is self-evident. If a thinker believes that it is his job to say which absolute presupposition in a group of absolute presuppositions is selfevident, that thinker has made an "error" in his philosophical analysis of "metaphysical foundations". Collingwood admits that it is "an embarrassing problem" that we cannot say that any absolute presupposition is "self-evident" or a given. He adds:

> If he is an irresponsible and dogmatic person it will not embarrass him at all. He will pronounce loudly and confidently in favour of one alternative, whichever he fancies, expressing the fact that he fancies it by calling it 'selfevident' or the like, and will pour scorn on any one who hesitates to agree with him; and this will give him a good deal of satisfaction. But if he is a conscientious man, who thinks that the right way of dealing with problems is to solve them, the problem will embarrass him because there is no way in which he or for that matter any one else can solve it. (EM, 51-52).

Since absolute presuppositions are not "self-evident", Collingwood rejects the claim that metaphysics is a deductive science. Metaphysics is not a deductive science because there are no axioms (strong sense) to begin with. In this 1940 publication, then, Collingwood has not abandoned his claim made in <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> (1933) that there is no principle and no assumption that may not be questioned. In this 1933 work, Collingwood states:

> A principle...is necessarily provisional. To commit oneself to it at the beginning of one's inquiries, as a cast-iron rule to be followed, come what may, in every possible variety of problem and subject-matter, would be foreign to the whole spirit of philosophical thinking. Thinking philosophically, whatever else it means, means constantly revising one's starting-point in the light of one's conclusions and never allowing oneself to be controlled by any cast-iron rule whatever (EPM, 52).

It would be correct to say that those thinkers who regard their absolute presuppositions as self-evident or givens are treating their absolute presuppositions as "cast-iron rules". From time to time, one must go back and evaluate starting-points or absolute presuppositions. And since "every new discovery reacts upon what we knew before, the whole body of knowledge must be remade from the foundations at every step in advance" (EPM, 180).

Since there are no givens in experience, for Collingwood, we could never appeal to pure data to justify the move from one absolute presupposition to another. Nor could we appeal to a principle outside of our conceptual system in order to justify the move from one absolute presupposition to another. This is the case because if we appealed to a higher principle in order to justify replacing one absolute presupposition with another, what we have called an absolute presupposition would not

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really be an absolute presupposition.²³ Rather, what we have called an absolute presupposition would really be a relative presupposition because it is logically less fundamental than the higher principle. The reasons for criticizing an absolute presupposition (and this is the case with all criticism) must always come from 'within' the conceptual system.²⁴ And the result of this analysis is that the rational change of an absolute presupposition in the strong sense is ruled out. We can only rationally change an absolute presupposition in the weak sense because there is no "transcendent" or highest standpoint that we could appeal to in order to rationally change an absolute presupposition.²⁵

Collingwood tells us that "...it is impossible to deny one principle except by asserting another, however little that other is explicitly developed" (RP, 65). And this is exactly what happens when the modern physicist rejects the absolute presupposition that 'every event has a cause'. The modern physicist is not rejecting this absolute presupposition from some Olympian or highest standpoint because he has not arrived (and may never arrive) at this Olympian or highest standpoint. The modern physicist could not offer reasons for rejecting

^{23.} On this point we agree with Stephen Toulmin. See S. Toulmin, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 211. But Toulmin concludes that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms.

^{24.} This assumes, of course, that we are attempting to change an absolute presupposition in a rational manner.

^{25.} Collingwood made this point as early as 1921 in "Croce's Philosophy of History". In this 1921 publication he states: The transcendent attitude asserts "the existence of a criterion outside the historian's mind by which the points of view which arise within that mind are justified and condemned" (CPH, 16).

this absolute presupposition unless he held other absolute presuppositions that gave rise to these reasons. For example, the modern physicist still holds the absolute presupposition that 'nature is uniform'. If our analysis is correct, the debate concerning the absolute presupposition 'every event has a cause' is regarded as a rational debate in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. And given our analysis, it would appear to be a mistake to claim that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms.

It would be incorrect to rule out the possibility that we could find some reasons within our conceptual system for deciding to change an absolute presupposition. If we changed one of our absolute presuppositions, we may find that our conceptual system would become internally more consistent. For example, in an attempt to eliminate all anthropomorphic conceptions in his conceptual system, the modern physicist has been led to the view that the idea of causation must be rejected because it was an anthropomorphic conception. Another reason for changing one of our absolute presuppositions is that with a new absolute presupposition our conceptual system may be more comprehensive (EPM, 11, 170, IH, 230).²⁶ Or if we change one of our absolute presuppositions our conceptual system might have greater explanatory power. In other words, if we adopt a new absolute presupposition, our conceptual system might be able to "explain" everything which the previous conceptual system "explained", as well as other "'phenomena" which have until this time gone unexplained.

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^{26.} This is not to say that our previous conceptual system has been relinquished in its entirety. We may just think that the conceptual system needs to be modified in some way.

And we may rule out certain types of so-called phenomena that are not really phenomena at all which needs to be explained. For example, in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, Collingwood tells us "that Darwin's theory of the origin of the species" is an improvement in regards to explanatory power over "the theory of fixed species" and that Einstein's work is an advance in regards to explanatory power over Newton's work (IH, 332). Another reason for changing an absolute presupposition is that a number of bogus questions may be eliminated in our conceptual system. For example, Collingwood rejected all questions of the form 'What is 'x'?' because these questions all arose from the absolute presupposition that 'substance exists'.²⁷ We will see Collingwood's attack on this absolute presupposition in our next chapter when we turn to an examination of The Idea Of History.

For Collingwood, the only kind of justification that we are left with is a weak form of justification. And in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he calls this weak sense of justification "pragmatic" justification. He states:

> The principle that natural science is essentially an applied mathematics is thus by no means an indispensible presupposition for any science of nature. A presupposition it certainly is, and an absolute presupposition. It could not possibly be learnt from experience or justified by research. The only sense in which it can be justified by research is the pragmatic sense. You can say, and rightly, 'See what noble results have come from its being accepted for the last three hundred years! One must surely admit that it works; and that is sufficient justification.' Perhaps. It depends on what you want. If all you want is to congratulate yourself on having the kind

^{27.} Let us mention just one other example in this connection. Collingwood says that modern scientists reject teleological absolute presuppositions. For these scientists, teleological questions would not arise.

of science that you have, you may do so. If you want to congratulate yourself on having the best of all possible kinds of science, that is not so easy; for nobody knows what all the possible kinds would be like (EM, 254-255).

We are left with this weak form of justification because we cannot appeal to a highest standpoint, ultimate data, or self-evidence to justify an absolute presupposition in the strong sense.

Since Collingwood rules out the possibility of justification in the strong sense, he also rules out the possibility of progress in the strong sense. This is the reason that he calls progress a "reasoned conviction" or absolute presupposition, and not a self-evident truth.²⁸ Every change in our conceptual system is not necessarily an improvement. All that we can say is that we regard that change as an improvement. For Collingwood, then, it would be correct to say that progress is not necessary. If anyone believed in an abstract law of progress, Collingwood would regard this belief as an absolute presupposition (and one that Collingwood himself does not accept) and not as a belief which is self-evident.

Although Collingwood himself holds the reasoned conviction or absolute presupposition that 'progress is possible', by 'progress' he also does not mean the mere accumulation of facts. Knowledge is not an expanding body of true statements, as the realists or positivists claim. And realists only give us a partial account of what progress means when they say that progress is a succession of better solutions to the same

R.G. Collingwood, "The Present Need of a Philosophy", <u>Philosophy</u>, IX, 1934, p. 265.

problem. Now, for Collingwood, it would be correct to say that when we are working within a particular conceptual system, 'progress' is being made when we can give better solutions to the same problem. But, when our conceptual system changes, due to modifications at the presupposition level, it would be incorrect to say that we are still giving a succession of better solutions to the same problem. If we now hold some different presuppositions, then different questions will arise and we must start answering these new questions.

It would be a mistake to say that, for Collingwood, changes in our absolute presuppositions must be made either for bad reasons or for change's sake. We can provide criteria for deciding when to reject an absolute presupposition. But these criteria must come from within our conceptual system. In other words, we can only offer criteria in the weak sense (like consistency, comprehensiveness, and explanatory power) for rejecting an absolute presupposition. We can never offer criteria in the strong sense for rejecting an absolute presupposition, by which we mean criteria 'outside' of our conceptual system. This is the reason that Collingwood says that "external criticism is valueless" (SM, 45) and the reason that he says that a "critic must work from within" (EPM, 219). It would be correct to add that, for Collingwood, there are no neutral criticisms because criticisms only arise from presuppositions.²⁹

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^{29.} This probably explains why, to quote Louis Mink, Collingwood "for most of his life simply ignored the criticism of others" and "was his own best, as well as his most nagging and irritating critic." See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History And Dialectic</u>, p. 18. Now, Collingwood is not saying that all criticism is valueless. For him, "internal" criticism is important and necessary.

In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood tells us that "we do not acquire" a constellation of "absolute presuppositions by arguing; on the contrary, unless we have a constellation of absolute presuppositions arguing is impossible to us" (EM, 173). Nor can we change a constellation of absolute presuppositions by arguing. We could never rationally change a constellation of absolute presuppositions because "all of our arguments would fall to pieces" (EM, 173). Since arguments only arise because we hold absolute presuppositions, if we abandoned all of our absolute presuppositions all at once (that is, our entire constellation) we would have nothing left to justify our arguments. In fact, if we abandoned a constellation, we would have no arguments. So, for Collingwood, although we can rationally change (weak sense) an absolute presupposition (for example, 'every event has a cause') within our conceptual system, we could never rationally change (even in the weak sense) a constellation of absolute presuppositions because our entire conceptual system would collapse and we would have no arguments to justify the adoption of a new constellation.

Collingwood also tells us that <u>most</u> people are not "aware of their absolute presuppositions" and therefore if these people change their absolute presuppositions in a radical manner (or even in a partial manner), it cannot be a rational decision. For these people who are not aware of their absolute presuppositions, a change in presuppositions cannot be a matter of choice. Collingwood states:

> People are not ordinarily aware of their absolute presuppositions (p. 43), and are not, therefore, thus aware of changes in them; such a change, therefore, cannot be a matter of choice. Nor is there anything superficial or frivolous about it. It is the most radical change a man can undergo,

and entails the abandonment of all his most firmly established - habits and standards for thought and action.

Why, asks my friend, do such changes happen? Briefly, because the absolute presuppositions of any given society, at any given phase of its history, form a structure which is subject to 'strains' (pp. 74, 76) of greater or less intensity, which are 'taken up' (p. 74) in various ways, but never annihilated. If the strains are too great, the structure collapses and is replaced by another, which will be a modification of the old with the destructive strain removed; a modification not consciously devised but created by a process of unconscious thought (EM, 48).

Given our analysis, Collingwood is not claiming that we <u>always</u> change our absolute presuppositions due to a "process of unconscious thought". And given our analysis, he is not claiming that we <u>always</u> change our absolute presuppositions in a rational manner. Also he is not claiming that the "process of unconscious thought" is unintelligible. By the word 'unconscious' Collingwood means implicit or nonconscious. In other words, he means going on behind the back of consciousness, to use a phrase of Hegel's. And what is implicit or nonconscious for someone is not necessarily beyond the reach of explanation for someone else. If our analysis is correct, Collingwood has not abandoned his claim that the history of thought is an intelligible process. In fact, <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> can be seen as an attempt to make the changes in absolute presuppositions throughout history an intelligible process.

Although we cannot rationally choose a <u>constellation</u> of absolute presuppositions, it would be incorrect to say that we cannot rationally choose <u>one</u> absolute presupposition. And if we adopt a new absolute presupposition, we are still accepting the other absolute presuppositions (for a time at least) on "faith". If our analysis is correct, it would be incorrect to claim that a constellation of absolute presuppositions is self-contained and self-consistent.³⁰ A constellation of absolute presuppositions is not self-contained because we can adopt a new absolute presupposition without abandoning all of our other absolute presuppositions. And, for Collingwood, not all absolute presuppositions change at the same rate. He states:

The presuppositions that go to make up this 'Catholic Faith', preserved for many centuries by the religious institutions of Christendom, have as a matter of historical fact been the main or fundamental presuppositions of natural science ever since. They have never been its only absolute presuppositions; there have always been others, and these others have to some extent differed at different times (EM, 227).

Also, a constellation is not self-consistent. This claim would not be compatible with Collingwood's doctrine of "stresses and strains".

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter III where we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators in regard to issues arising out of our first section. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

The four following major claims arise directly out of the first section of Chapter III: (1) although there are affinities between Kant's notion of a category and Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition, it is a mistake to equate Kant's notion of a category with Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition, (2) the doctrine of absolute presuppositions does not land Collingwood into scepticism, (3) the

^{30.} We are implicitly criticizing Stephen Toulmin in this paragraph.

doctrine of absolute presuppositions does not land Collingwood into relativism, and (4) those critics are mistaken who claim that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms.

Let us turn to the first major claim of this chapter: although there are affinities between Kant's notion of a category and Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition, it would be a mistake to equate Kant's notion of a category with Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition. Nathan Rotenstreich has argued that "Collingwood may not have been fully aware of the extent to which his views were influenced by Kant."³¹ Rotenstreich claims that Collingwood's absolute presuppositions "correspond" to Kant's categories, except for "one obvious difference." Rotenstreich says that, for Kant, the categories of the understanding do have truth-value, whereas Collingwood's absolute presuppositions lack truth-value.³² It is extremely odd that Rotenstreich would claim that "Collingwood may not have been fully aware of the extent to which his views were influenced by Kant" after Collingwood had devoted a whole section to Kant's notion of a category in An Essay on Metaphysics. And we should add to this Collingwood's claim that Kant was a classic example of metaphysics "without ontology". Given our analysis in section one, Collingwood's whole point in his section on Kant in An Essay on Metaphysics was to re-construct Kant's notion of a category. But still, Rotenstreich must be commended for emphasizing this Kantian influence on

31. N. Rotenstreich, Critical Essays, p. 188.

32. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 188.

Collingwood. Most of Collingwood's critics emphasize the Hegelian influence on Collingwood and totally overlook the Kantian influence on Collingwood's thought. In fact, as we see it, there is an important dialogue between the Kantian and the Hegelian position in Collingwood's writings. This dialogue is evident in Collingwood's writings after 1926, and is especially evident in his doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Collingwood takes Kant's notion of a category and attempts to re-construct this important notion by giving it an historical dimension (due to the Hegelian influence) which is lacking in Kant's analysis of a category. For Collingwood, Kant's categories are not 'a priori' givens, but 'a priori' assumptions.³³ And this leads Collingwood to claim that Kant only uncovered the historically de-limited categories or absolute presuppositions of the science of his day.

The only "difference" between Kant and Collingwood that Rotenstreich points out is the difference concerning the issue of truth-value. But, given our analysis, Collingwood never claimed that absolute presuppositions do not have truth-value in any sense. So although Rotenstreich is correct to claim that Kant's notion of a category is not equivalent to Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition, his reason for making this claim is incorrect. In our first section we pointed out the differences between Kant's notion of a category and Collingwood's notion of an

^{33.} Louis Mink argues that "absolute presuppositions are a priori conceptual systems." See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History and Dialectic</u>, p. 146. According to our analysis, Mink's claim is a little misleading. Absolute presuppositions only make up part of a conceptual system. That is, absolute presuppositions are fundamental concepts that make up the foundation of a conceptual system.

absolute presupposition. For one thing, we pointed out that absolute presuppositions do not have a transcendental ground in the structure of the mind. Absolute presuppositions are not categorical entities in the Kantian sense, but logico-regulative entities that have a history. So although these absolute presuppositions regulate in the Kantian sense of guiding the mind, they are not permanent regulative entities.³⁴

Lionel Rubinoff claims that, for Collingwood, 'God exists' is a transhistorical truth.³⁵ We agree with Rubinoff that 'God exists', for Collingwood, is an absolute presupposition and that 'God exists' is 'a priori' in the sense of being before experience. But we disagree with Rubinoff that 'God exists', for Collingwood, is 'a priori' in another sense. Rubinoff claims that "absolute presuppositions which underlie

^{34.} The reason that we have not called absolute presuppositions constitutive entities in the Kantian sense is that, for Kant, constitutive entities are principles capable of giving us knowledge. For Kant, the categories of the understanding are constitutive principles in the sense of being true or false theoretical statements which constitute knowledge. On the other hand, regulative principles are not in themselves knowledge. For Kant, regulative principles merely regulate knowledge by guiding thought along certain lines. And for Kant, the Ideas of Reason are regulative principles. We have already mentioned that Collingwood is attempting to re-construct Kant's doctrine of the categories. For Collingwood, Kant's categories are to be seen as regulative entities. In other words, Kant's categories have been logically transformed into 'Ideas of Reason' which regulate knowledge. But, for Collingwood, unlike Kant, these regulative entities are historically de-limited. So, all of Kant's categories and Ideas of Reason have been logically transformed into historically de-limited 'Ideas of Reason' or regulative entities. It must be added that, for Collingwood, these de-limited regulative entities are referential and have truth-value, although not in an empirical sense. See An Essay on Metaphysics, p. 164. It is interesting to compare this position with the earlier position of "Faith and Reason". See especially "Faith and Reason", p. 139, for a discussion of Kant.

^{35.} L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 11.

historical experience have a transcendental ground in the structure of mind."³⁶ If our analysis is correct, absolute presuppositions are not transcendental or transhistorical in the sense of being universal and necessary. Our analysis appears to be consistent with Collingwood's remark that the rise of modern science was possible only because Christianity had provided the needed metaphysical analysis for empirical science. For example, Christianity uncovered the absolute presupposition that the universe is one system which meant that it was created by one rational deity.³⁷ Rubinoff, with his claim that 'God exists' is a transcendental or transhistorical presupposition, seems committed to the view that monotheistic science has always been with us and will always be with us. But Collingwood denies that monotheistic science has always been with us (EM, 201-2), and he refrains from speculating on the issue of whether or not monotheistic science will always be with us. It appears that Rubinoff is mistaken to claim that 'God exists' (for Collingwood) has a transcendental ground in the structure of the mind, just as Kant is mistaken to claim that 'every event has a cause' has a transcendental ground in the structure of the mind. If our analysis is correct, Rubinoff has made a Kantian mistake in his interpretation of Collingwood by not realizing that absolute presuppositions can be 'taken up' and 'given

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^{36.} Ibid., pp. 65, 389.

^{37.} The "belief" in a unitary world was actually regarded by the Greeks as a relative presupposition (i.e. empirical presupposition). See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, pp. 215, 219. This metaphysical error was corrected by the Patristic writers (EM, 215, 218-219). So the Patristic writers uncovered an absolute presupposition that was implicitly held in Greek thinking.

up'.³⁸

Let us turn to the second major claim of this chapter: the doctrine of absolute presuppositions does not land Collingwood into scepticism. By 'scepticism' in this context we mean that knowledge is impossible and that we must give up the search for truth.³⁹ T.M. Knox says that "absolute presuppositions are no longer said to be knowledge; as presuppositions they are neither true nor false."⁴⁰ Knox is led to the view that, for Collingwood, "[p]hilosophical scepticism in one form or another was the price he paid for the endeavour to compress philosophy into history."⁴¹ Alan Donagan follows Knox on this assessment. According to Donagan, Collingwood's claim that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false.⁴² Following the lead

- 39. The 'truth' here would include both Sense I and II.
- 40. T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. xvi.
- 41. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. xi.
- 42. A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 276. According to Donagan, Collingwood held the view in 1933 that some systems of thought are nearer to the truth than others. See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 9. And, according to Donagan, Collingwood claimed in <u>The Idea Of History</u> that the truth is the goal for the historian. See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 180. But, says Donagan, Collingwood relinquished both of these claims in the late 1930's. According to Donagan, there is a conversion to scepticism in Collingwood's thought in the (continued on p. 181)

^{38. (}i) Rubinoff claims that, for Collingwood, we cannot choose absolute presuppositions. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 285. This appears to be based on Rubinoff's Kantian mistake that we have just discussed.
(ii) Collingwood does believe that there are transhistorical principles. But he does not believe that absolute presuppositions are transhistorical principles. In Chapter IV we will discuss Collingwood's transhistorical principles. It appears as though Rubinoff is mistaken not to distinguish between absolute presuppositions, which are not transhistorical, and transhistorical principles.

of Knox and Donagan, C.K. Grant says that Collingwood's reform of metaphysics "was in a sceptical and historicist direction, for it was there represented as an historical investigation of the absolute presuppositions of past science, these presuppositions being themselves neither true nor false."⁴³ H.B. Acton also agrees with this assessment. Acton says that in <u>An Autobiography</u> (1939) and in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> (1940) Collingwood "took up a sceptical or 'historicist' position arguing that philosophy cannot discover truth but can only record as matters of history, 'absolute presuppositions' which vary from one time to another."⁴⁴ Now, this 'sceptical' interpretation of Collingwood's thought in the late 1930's, offered by Knox, Donagan, Grant, and Acton, is largely based on Collingwood's

^{42.} continued. late 1930's and this was the result of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions. If we are right that the late development thesis is mistaken, it would appear that Donagan cannot reconcile this fact with his claim that in 1933 and in The Idea of History truth is an important regulative idea for Collingwood. Given Donagan's claim that the theory of absolute presuppositions leads to scepticism, Collingwood's so-called conversion to scepticism should have taken place in the early 1930's and before he wrote the 1935-36 papers on history which are found in The Idea Of History. It would appear as though our interpretation is more consistent. We do not think that Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions leads him into scepticism. And if we are right that the theory of absolute presuppositions was worked out in the early 1930's, we can account for the fact that Collingwood claimed in 1933 that some conceptual systems are nearer to the truth than others. As we see it, Collingwood never relinquished this claim. And we can account for Collingwood's claim in The Idea Of History that the truth is the goal of the historian.

^{43.} See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 22. See also C.K. Grant, "Professor Collingwood's Conception of the Relations between Metaphysics and History, and its Consequences for the Theory of Truth", Doctoral Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1950, pp. vi, 190. We also disagree with Grant's claim (p. iii) that absolute presuppositions are propositions.

^{44.} See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 22.

claim that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false. But, once again, this interpretation is dependent on the claim that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions do not have any truth-value in any sense. Given our analysis, this claim is not tenable.

Has Collingwood given up the search for the truth as Acton explicitly claims, and as Knox, Donagan, and Grant implicitly claim? It is very difficult to reconcile this interpretation with Collingwood's claim in An Essay on Metaphysics that "truth is the most important thing in the world". Since Collingwood attacked psychologists for abandoning the notion of truth, it would have been odd indeed for Collingwood himself to make this mistake. In Knox's case, he may have been led to the view that Collingwood gave up the notion of truth because Knox thinks that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are psychological entities. But as we attempted to show in Chapter II, absolute presuppositions are logico-regulative entities and not psychological entities. We do not see any way in which Knox, Donagan, Grant, or Acton can reconcile their interpretations with Collingwood's claim that truth is an important regulative idea. According to our analysis, Collingwood's whole point in criticizing the psychologists was that in their attempt to be a criteriological science they undermined the distinction between truth and falsity. This is the reason for Collingwood's calling psychologism, on this point, a "propaganda of irrationalism". And we do not see any way that these critics can reconcile their claim that Collingwood ends up in scepticism with Collingwood's

expressed desire to "save" metaphysics.45

Let us turn to the third major claim of this chapter: the doctrine of absolute presuppositions does not lead Collingwood into relativism. By 'relativism' we mean that no one opinion is preferable to another.⁴⁶ D. Emmet has claimed that "Collingwood's views did change substantially, especially as between the constructuve metaphysics of the <u>Essay on Philosophical Method</u> and the historical relativism of the <u>Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>."⁴⁷ Here we find Emmet suggesting that there is a conversion in Collingwood's thought somewhere between 1933 and 1940 and that Collingwood ends up in historical relativism in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Nathan Rotenstreich claims that Collingwood is espousing a relativistic position in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Rotenstreich says that Collingwood "looked at metaphysics as an historicist and assumed that a metaphysical system is determined by the state of science in a particular era."⁴⁸ Rotenstreich adds that Collingwood "combined the historicistic aspect with the relativistic one: theoretically he could argue

46. The end result of this view is that no one conceptual system is preferable to another.

48. N. Rotenstreich, Critical Essays, p. 197.

^{45. (}i) In our thesis we take Collingwood's expressed desire to save metaphysics very seriously. We are attempting to come up with an interpretation that is compatible with this claim.
(ii) Collingwood is not a sceptic in the sense that knowledge is impossible. But it could be argued that Collingwood is a sceptic in one of the traditional senses of scepticism. He accepts the regulative idea of an ultimate truth, but claims that we have not attained (and may never attain) this ultimate truth.

^{47.} See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 22.

that no metaphysical system has an established validity."49

Stephen Toulmin also argues that Collingwood ends up in historical relativism. Toulmin states: "Though, in the last resort, he succumbed to the charms of an historical relativism..., his Essay on Metaphysics nevertheless presents the most careful account yet available of the arguments which may lead a man to that extremity;..."⁵⁰ Michael Krausz also claims that Collingwood ends up in historical relativism. Krausz says that "Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions implies an extreme relativism..."⁵¹ But does Collingwood really end up in

S. Toulmin, Critical Essays, p. 202. See also S. Toulmin, Human 50. Understanding, p. 53.

^{49. (}i) <u>Ibid</u>., p. 197.
(ii) At this point we should distinguish between a sceptical form of historicism and a relativistic form of historicism. Knox, Donagan, Grant, and Acton claim that Collingwood is committed to a sceptical form of historicism. Emmet, Rotenstreich, Toulmin, and Krausz claim that Collingwood is committed to a relativistic form of historicism. (iii) But Rotenstreich traces the conversion to historical relativism back to The Idea of Nature which contain the papers written by Collingwood in the early 1930's. Rotenstreich claims that Collingwood reduces nature to history. See N. Rotenstreich, Critical Essays, p. 200. It should be pointed out at this stage that W.H. Walsh claims that Collingwood reduces metaphysics to history. See W.H. Walsh, Critical Essays, p. 148. F.H. Heinemann says that Collingwood equated philosophy and metaphysics and adds that Collingwood "made philosophy dependent on history." See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 21. A.B. Gibson says that Collingwood holds the view that "[p]hilosophy as a separate discipline is liquidated by being converted into history." See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 22. Now, as early as "Croce's Philosophy of History", Collingwood claimed that Croce was mistaken to subordinate philosophy to history. According to our interpretation, Collingwood never relinquished this point made in his paper on Croce.

^{51.} (i) M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 222. (ii) W.J. Van Der Dussen also agrees with this assessment. But Van Der Dussen offers no reasons to justify this interpretation. Van Der Dussen states: 'We will not discuss here, however, the relativism implied by the theory of absolute presuppositions, developed in An Essay on Metaphysics." See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 120. Van Der Dussen is concerned with Collingwood's philosophy of history and makes no attempt to work out Collingwood's metaphysical views. On the subject of An Essay on Metaphysics, Van Der Dussen implicitly accepts the assessment given by Emmet, Rotenstreich, Toulmin, and Krausz.

relativism? Does Collingwood say that one conceptual system is as good as another? He does say that absolute presuppositions are not givens, but, as we see it, this does not commit him to the view that one set of absolute presuppositions underlying a conceptual system is as good as another. According to our analysis in the first section of this chapter, Collingwood does believe that a conceptual system can be better than others, although he does not think that we can ever establish this in any strong sense. In regard to absolute presuppositions underlying a conceptual system, Collingwood does believe that we can evaluate absolute presuppositions and that we can say that some absolute presuppositions are better than others, at least in a weak sense.⁵² And we have already seen that Collingwood regards the rejection of the absolute presupposition 'nature is the cause of historical events' as an advance. In our next chapter we will see that Collingwood regards the rejection of the absolute presuppositions 'mind is a substance' and 'mental processes can be reduced to physical processes' as advances. For Collingwood, unless we evaluate absolute presuppositions, "the clock of scientific progress" will be put back (EM, 343). And, according to Collingwood, unless we evaluate critically the absolute presuppositions of psychologism and positivism, the result will be the collapse of civilization. We do not see any way in which the relativistic interpretation of Collingwood offered by Emmet, Rotenstreich, Toulmin, and Krausz can be reconciled

^{52.} As we see it, there is only one move open for him at this point. The reasons that we offer for rejecting one absolute presupposition and adopting a new one must come from within the conceptual system. Granted there is an element of circularity in this procedure, but Collingwood suggests that this is the best that we can do.

with Collingwood's professed desire to save metaphysics and thereby, according to him, civilization. As we see it, Collingwood would have said the same thing about relativism that he said about psychologism and positivism, and that is that relativism is the "propaganda of irrationalism". And we do not see any way in which these critics can reconcile their interpretations with Collingwood's claim that the "truth is the most important thing in the world." If we are right that Collingwood does not rule out the possibility of absolute presuppositions having truth-value in some sense, then it would appear that Collingwood can avoid the charge that, for him, one set of absolute presuppositions is as good as another set of absolute presuppositions.

Let us turn to the fourth major claim of this chapter: those critics are mistaken who claim that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms. We will argue against those critics who hold, what we will call, the irrationalist thesis. T.M. Knox is one commentator who holds the irrationalist thesis. Knox says that Collingwood is unable to provide a rational account of changes from one set of absolute presuppositions to another. According to Knox, "[w]ith the <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> the attitude of reason toward absolute presuppositions becomes one of unquestioning acceptance, the basis of which is more irrational than rational."⁵³ Knox adds that absolute presuppositions, "together with their acceptance

53. (i) L. Rubinoff, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 91. T.M. Knox, <u>The Idea of History</u>, pp. xiv, <u>xvi</u>.
(ii) Knox apparently believes that we cannot question absolute pre-suppositions because Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are never answers to questions. As we see it, Collingwood only ruled out that absolute presuppositions can be answers to questions in two senses. In at least two other important senses, absolute presuppositions can be answers to questions.

and alteration, fall into the sphere of the 'unconscious'," and for this reason "they belong to the field which Collingwood thought was legitimately occupied by psychology."⁵⁴ Knox concludes that such explanations belong not to history, but to psychology.⁵⁵ Due to the fact that Collingwood believes that psychology is the pseudo-science of thought, we do not think that Collingwood is offering us a psychological analysis of the changes in absolute presuppositions. Rather, we would want to claim that Collingwood is open to the possibility that a rational account of the changes in absolute presuppositions is possible. For example, if our analysis in the first section of this chapter is correct, the debate concerning the absolute presupposition 'all events have causes' is regarded by Collingwood as a rational debate in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.⁵⁶

Following Knox, Alan Donagan claims that Collingwood is committed

54. T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, p. xiv.

- 55. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. xiv.
- (i) According to Knox, Collingwood gave up the search for the truth 56. somewhere between 1936 and 1938. See T.M. Knox, The Idea of History, pp. x-xi. If our analysis is correct, Collingwood never relinquished the claim that the philosopher has the important task of searching for the truth. (ii) A real case can be made for saying that Knox bungled the job of editing Collingwood's manuscripts. First of all, Knox did not have all of Collingwood's manuscripts. (But it is not entirely clear if Knox can be totally blamed for this.) Secondly, Knox accepted what Rubinoff has called the "radical conversion hypothesis". We agreed with Rubinoff in Chapter I that this hypothesis is mistaken. Thirdly, Knox accepted what we have called the late development thesis. We attempted to show in Chapter I that this 'thesis' is mistaken. Fourthly, Knox accepted what we have called the irrationalist thesis. One purpose of Chapter III is to show that this 'thesis' is mistaken. It is our claim that these mistakes on Knox's part shaped Knox's editing of Collingwood's manuscripts. If we are right, Knox set Collingwoodian scholarship off on the wrong foot by editing Collingwood's manuscripts in the light of his own questionable interpretation of Collingwood.

to the irrationalist thesis. According to Donagan's interpretation, Collingwood did not provide us with a rational account of how absolute presuppositions change. Donagan states: "From Collingwood's theorem that absolute presuppositions are neither true nor false it follows inexorably that no good reason can be given for preferring one to another; and, if that is so, then changes in absolute presuppositions must be made either for bad reasons or for change's sake."⁵⁷ We have already pointed out that Collingwood did not say that absolute presuppositions lack truth-value in all senses. If we are right, Donagan's reason for claiming that Collingwood is committed to the irrationalist thesis misses the mark. And, according to our analysis, Collingwood is not committed to the view that "changes in absolute presuppositions must be made for bad reasons or for change's sake." As we see it, Collingwood does say that it is possible to give reasons for deciding to abandon an absolute presupposition. For example, when the modern historian rejects the absolute presupposition 'nature is the cause of historical events' he is doing it for a reason, and that is "that man's historical activities" are "conditioned not by nature itself but by what man is able to make of nature" (EM, 98). For the modern historian, this is a good reason, when judged in the light of his own conceptual system, for rejecting the absolute presupposition 'nature is the cause of historical events'.

Michael Krausz also interprets Collingwood as holding the irrationalist thesis. For Krausz, Collingwood did not offer us a rational

^{57.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 276 and 273.

account of how absolute presuppositions change. Krausz states: "Collingwood holds that one cannot be aware of one's own absolute presuppositions.... He also maintains (without satisfactory argument) that awareness of presuppositions is necessary for rational choice between them. Thus rational choice between absolute presuppositions is impossible."58 According to Krausz's interpretation, "absolute presuppositions are culturally inherited and not acquired by argument,..."⁵⁹ Krausz's interpretation is based on his claim that Collingwood said that one cannot be aware of one's own absolute presuppositions. But, as we stated in section one of this chapter, Collingwood explicitly denies this. Now Collingwood does say that most people are not aware of their absolute presuppositions, and so it would be correct to say that for these people their absolute presuppositions are "culturally inherited". Krausz says that Collingwood did not give us "objective reasons" to account for the changing of absolute presuppositions and that therefore, according to Krausz, Collingwood's analysis is "an embarrassment to the rationalist historian of ideas."⁶⁰ Krausz is led to the view that, for Collingwood, the historian of ideas can account for the changes in absolute presuppositions only in non-rational terms. Krausz is right that Collingwood did not give us "objective reasons" to account for the changes in absolute presuppositions, if he means that there are no objective reasons outside of our conceptual system that we could appeal to in order to justify the replacing

- 58. M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 227.
- 59. Ibid., p. 227.
- 60. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 240.

of one absolute presupposition with another. According to Collingwood, we can only offer reasons that arise within our conceptual system to justify the replacing of one absolute presupposition with another. Collingwood calls this weaker form of justification "pragmatic" justification. Krausz says that Collingwood's pragmatic justification is inconsistent with Collingwood's explicit thesis.⁶¹ But, if our analysis in the first section of this chapter is correct, Collingwood's pragmatic justification is consistent with his explicit thesis. Krausz also argues that, for Collingwood, an absolute presupposition cannot become a relative presupposition, and that this is another reason for saying that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms.⁶² As we see it, this interpretation is questionable. In section one of this chapter we offered one example of where an absolute presupposition logically turned into a relative presupposition. And, for Collingwood, reasons or an explanation can be given for claiming that an absolute presupposition has turned into a relative presupposition.63

- 61. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 228.
- 62. Ibid., pp. 226, 240.
- 63. Krausz says that most of Collingwood's examples of absolute presuppositions are not presuppositionless. See M. Krausz, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 236. One possible response that Collingwood could make in regard to Krausz's point is that if Krausz can find a presupposition that is more fundamental than one of Collingwood's examples of an absolute presupposition, then, this more fundamental presupposition becomes an absolute presupposition. And the presupposition that Collingwood called absolute would become a relative presupposition. This analysis is consistent with Collingwood's claim that a metaphysician must evaluate the work of other metaphysicians. Collingwood is open to the possibility that he may not have uncovered a correct absolute presupposition.

We also find Stephen Toulmin claiming that Collingwood holds the irrationalist thesis. Toulmin says that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms.⁶⁴ According to Toulmin's interpretation of Collingwood, all modifications in our intellectual structures are not due to reasons, considerations, arguments, justifications.⁶⁵ Rather, according to Toulmin, Collingwood seems committed to the view that all modifications in our intellectual structures are due to forces, causes and compulsions.⁶⁶ Toulmin adds:

> Until a new constellation of presuppositions has established its authority, and the basic strains have been eliminated, the normal procedures of rational debate are held in suspense. At this fundamental level, conceptual changes can be discussed only in terms of unconscious thoughts, socio-economic influences, and other such causal processes.⁶⁷

As Toulmin sees it, Collingwood accounted for conceptual change in terms of "processes of unconscious thought, socio-cultural strains, and the like".⁶⁸ Is Toulmin right in saying that Collingwood cannot solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms? As we see it, Toulmin is right when he says that, for Collingwood, there is no "impartial standpoint for rational judgement."⁶⁹ And Toulmin is right, according to our analysis, to claim that, for Collingwood, we cannot appeal to a principle outside of our conceptual system to justify a

- 64. S. Toulmin, Critical Essays, p. 211.
- 65. S. Toulmin, Human Understanding, p. 76.
- 66. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 76.
- 67. Ibid., p. 100.
- 68. Ibid., p. 82.
- 69. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 66.

change in absolute presuppositions.⁷⁰ But, according to our analysis, Collingwood can argue that all of our reasons for changing an absolute presupposition must come from within our conceptual system. Toulmin doesn't even seem to be aware of this possible move on Collingwood's part. And the major reason why Toulmin is not aware of this possibility is that he thinks that Collingwood's constellations of absolute presuppositions are "self-contained".⁷¹ That is, Toulmin believes that Collingwood is committed to the view that we can only move from one constellation of absolute presuppositions to another constellation of absolute presuppositions.⁷²

According to Toulmin's interpretation, Collingwood did not talk about modifications within a constellation of absolute presuppositions. Toulmin only talks about constellations changing and not individual absolute presuppositions changing.⁷³ This interpretation appears to be based on Toulmin's claim that constellations are "absolute".⁷⁴ But, if we are right, Collingwood never said that constellations are absolute. Rather, for Collingwood, constellations are made up of absolute presuppositions. Toulmin's interpretation appears to be guilty of atomism. And Collingwood

- 72. S. Toulmin, Critical Essays, p. 221.
- 73. S. Toulmin, Human Understanding, p. 76.

74. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 77.

^{70. (}i) S. Toulmin, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 211.
(ii) Toulmin only uses this higher principle argument when he is talking about changing a constellation of absolute presuppositions. According to our analysis, this higher principle argument can be used for the changing of individual absolute presuppositions.

^{71.} S. Toulmin, <u>Critical Essays</u>, p. 206. S. Toulmin, <u>Human Understanding</u>, p. 78.

would have rejected Toulmin's interpretation for the same reason that he rejected Spengler's "atomic" cultures.⁷⁵ Toulmin is committed to the view that, for Collingwood, all conceptual changes are <u>radical</u> revolutions. For Toulmin, all conceptual changes are radical because if we change our conceptual system, we have moved from one constellation to another constellation. But Collingwood explicitly denies that all conceptual changes are radical changes. Collingwood says that "revolutions of this kind (like all revolutions, when you understand their true

^{75.} That is, constellations should not be seen as being self-contained. It would be correct to say that Collingwood is criticizing implicitly a claim that he made in "Ruskin's Philosophy" (1922). Collingwood's metaphor of the "ring" in his 1922 paper is a result of the same atomistic thinking that he criticized Spengler for in 1927. Instead of criticizing Collingwood's later position, Toulmin is actually offering a criticism of Collingwood's position in "Ruskin's Philosophy". And Collingwood would agree that we can legitimately criticize the notion of a "ring of principles". It would also be correct to claim that Collingwood is implicitly critizing his 1927 position. In his 1927 paper on Spengler, he claimed that there is only one fundamental idea that underlies each culture. But this notion is also a result of the same atomistic thinking. Apparently Collingwood came to realize this in An Essay on Metaphysics, for in this work he claims that a constellation of absolute presuppositions is subject to stresses and strains. This view is actually more consistent with Collingwood's process view of history. In other words, the doctrine of stresses and strains avoids the atomistic thinking in 1927, both by Spengler and Collingwood himself, and is more consistent with Collingwood's view that history is a "becoming" or "process". One might say that <u>An Essay on Meta-</u> physics is an attempt to overcome the following problem that arises. in the 1927 publication: how can one fundamental idea change into another fundamental idea? In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he says that there are many fundamental ideas (i.e. absolute presuppositions) and these fundamental ideas do not change all at once. It would appear as though this gets Collingwood around the atomistic thinking in regard to fundamental ideas in his own thought in 1927. It is interesting to note that Thomas Kuhn also runs into the same difficulties as Collingwood does in 1927 with his notion of a "paradigm" which is also atomistic in nature. And this point we might suggest to the reader that Toulmin is offering a Kuhnian interpretation of Collingwood's notion of a constellation of absolute presuppositions which is not justified.

history) happen very gradually."⁷⁶ This text appears to be consistent with our interpretation. According to our analysis, there can be modifications within a conceptual system, for Collingwood. In fact, in <u>The</u> <u>Idea of History</u> Collingwood says that "Greek mathematics" is still a part of our "foundation" (IH, 225). Toulmin fails to see that we could change one of our absolute presuppositions within a constellation while still accepting the rest of our absolute presuppositions in the constellation.⁷⁷ In the first section of this chapter it was mentioned, that if we abandoned one absolute presupposition and adopted a new absolute presupposition that our modified conceptual system may be more consistent, or more comprehensive, or it may have more explanatory power.⁷⁸ If our analysis is correct, Collingwood can give reasons for rejecting one absolute presupposition and adopting a new one.⁷⁹ And if we are right, Collingwood is not committed to the irrationalist thesis. In fact, as we see it, the irrationalist thesis is incompatible with Collingwood's attempt to offer

76. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 238.

- 78. It appears as though Mink is mistaken to claim that Collingwood offered no criteria to decide which next step is correct. See L. Mink, <u>Mind</u>, <u>History And Dialectic</u>, p. 192.
- 79. It appears that Rotenstreich is mistaken to claim that Collingwood has abandoned the notion of justification. See N. Rotenstreich, <u>Critical Essays</u>, pp. 179-180. This interpretation is inconsistent with Collingwood's notion of "pragmatic" justification.

^{77.} Of course, the new absolute presupposition will "colour" the conceptual system in a slightly new way. But Collingwood insists that this is not a radical conceptual revolution. It might be suggested that if we change one absolute presupposition in a constellation, we necessarily modify the entire constellation in a radical fashion. But this is inconsistent with the gradualist thesis which we have claimed Collingwood holds.

us a "logic" of conceptual change.⁸⁰

Lionel Rubinoff has claimed that Collingwood attempted to offer transcendental criteria for evaluating absolute presuppositions. According to Rubinoff's interpretation of Collingwood, these transcendental criteria are derived from the absolute standpoint. Rubinoff states: "Collingwood does more than merely describe these presuppositions; he criticizes them as well, by explaining how they arose in the first place, and in so doing 'vindicates' them from the absolute standpoint, which is precisely what the metaphysician of the <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> is required to do."⁸¹ With Rubinoff's interpretation, a genuine critique of either past or present thought is only possible from the absolute standpoint, as <u>Speculum Mentis</u> makes clear.⁸² It will be recalled that Rubinoff attempts to interpret Collingwood's writings, including <u>An Essay on</u> <u>Metaphysics</u>, in terms of <u>Speculum Mentis</u>. Rubinoff says that Collingwood did not deny a transcendental standpoint from which to comprehend the truth.⁸³

- 81. L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 231.
- 82. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 242.
- 83. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 37.

^{80.} The change in absolute presuppositions from Newton (i.e. some events have causes) and Kant (i.e. all events have causes) to Einstein (i.e. no events have causes) is not only an intelligible process for Collingwood, but a rational process. (See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 51 for a reference to Einstein.). This interpretation is consistent with a claim that Collingwood made in <u>An Essay on Philosophical Method</u> which was written in the same 'period' that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions. In 1933 he states: "Thus, 'from the point of view of a rational theory of philosophy', the past history of philosophical thought no longer appears as irrational; it is a body of experience to which we can appeal with confidence, because we understand the principles at work in it, and in the light of those principles find it intelligible" (EPM, 224).

And by 'transcendental', Rubinoff means universal or absolute.⁸⁴ As we see it, Rubinoff is right in holding that absolute presuppositions can be elicited and evaluated.⁸⁵ And we agree with him when he says that, for Collingwood, our present thought differs from previous stages by employing new presuppositions and criteria which supersede the presuppositions and criteria of past stages.⁸⁶ But we disagree with Rubinoff when

84. Ibid., pp. 37, 93.

85. (i) Ibid., p. 235.

(ii) Is Rubinoff claiming that Collingwood only attempted to offer a rational account of changes from one set of presuppositions to another? See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 270-1. (iii) Rubinoff claims that "the critical evaluation of absolute presuppositions is the only thing that would distinguish Collingwood's theory from positivism." See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 245. As we see it, there are other things that distinguish Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions from positivism. First of all, according to Collingwood, positivists do not even recognize that they hold absolute presuppositions. Secondly, absolute presupposi-tions lack empirical truth-value. (Positivists think that all legitimate presuppositions have empirical truth-value.) Thirdly, positivists fail to recognize that absolute presuppositions have a metaphysical meaning. Fourthly, positivists fail to see that absolute presuppositions are not empirical answers to empirical questions. Fifthly, positivists fail to recognize that absolute presuppositions have truth-value by being an integral part of a question-and-answer complex. Now, if our analysis is correct, we must also add that W.H. Walsh is mistaken to claim that a positivist could accept Collingwood's views as entirely compatible with his own intentions. See W.H. Walsh, Critical Essays, p. 146.

86. (i) L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, pp. 59-60. (ii) According to our analysis, Rubinoff is correct to argue against what we have called the irrationalist thesis. And as we see it, Rubinoff is correct to claim that Collingwood is not just describing absolute presuppositions. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 240, 270. Since Rubinoff's book was published, one other commentator has argued that Collingwood is just describing absolute presuppositions. This commentator is W.H. Walsh. Walsh argues that Collingwood is "metaphysically neutral". See W.H. Walsh, <u>Critical</u> Essays, pp. 134, 145. According to Walsh's interpretation, we cannot argue for or against an absolute presupposition. If our analysis is correct, Walsh's interpretation on this point is untenable. Nor is Collingwood philosophically neutral, as Walsh's interpretation implies. Also it would appear as though Walsh is mistaken to claim that Collingwood does not hold any principles or presuppositions of his own. See W.H. Walsh, Critical Essays, pp. 142-143. Given our analysis, Collingwood admits that he holds principles and presuppositions.
he says that Collingwood is evaluating absolute presuppositions from the absolute standpoint.⁸⁷ As we see it, Collingwood never claimed to be at the absolute standpoint.⁸⁸ Given our analysis, Collingwood is only offering us rational conceptual change in the weak sense because all conceptual change can only be justified by presuppositions and criteria within our conceptual system. This interpretation appears to be consistent with Collingwood's claim that he is only giving us "interim reports" and not a "system" or a conclusive (i.e. strong sense) position. And this interpretation appears to be consistent with Hegel's claim, which Collingwood quotes with approval, that "this is as far as consciousness has reached."⁸⁹

89. Rubinoff thinks that Collingwood is giving us rational conceptual change in the strong sense. Rubinoff holds this view because he thinks that Collingwood is appealing to transcendental criteria. If we are right, Rubinoff is mistaken to call Collingwood a transcendental historicist for this reason.

^{87.} This claim on Rubinoff's part appears to be inconsistent with his claim that absolute presuppositions have a transcendental ground in the structure of mind. Apparently, Rubinoff wishes to claim that some absolute presuppositions are open to question, while others are not. For example, Rubinoff claims that 'God exists' is not open to question for Collingwood. If our analysis is correct, all absolute presuppositions are open to question. As we see it, absolute presuppositions are not transcendental or transhistorical entities.

^{88.} Louis Mink has claimed that Collingwood "retained dialectic and abandoned the Absolute." See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History And Dialectic</u>, p. 78. We agree with both Rubinoff and Mink that Collingwood has retained dialectic. But we disagree with both Rubinoff and Mink on the issue of the Absolute. Rubinoff says that Collingwood is justifying his position from the absolute standpoint. If we are right, Collingwood never pretended to be at the absolute standpoint. But we also disagree with Mink that Collingwood abandoned the Absolute. As we see it, it is an open question for Collingwood whether or not there is an Absolute. And given that there is an Absolute, it is an open question for Collingwood whether or not we will ever reach it. Until we reach the Absolute, if there is such a thing, we must think in terms of starting-points or presuppositions which are regarded as absolute.

We are now ready to turn to The Idea Of History which contains Collingwood's 1935-1936 papers on history. It is our major claim in this thesis that there was an important turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935. As we see it, this new turn was the result of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions that was apparently worked out in the early 1930's. One major purpose of Chapter I was to attempt to demonstrate that the late development thesis is untenable. And it appears to be the case that the major claims of An Essay on Metaphysics had been made by 1935, although there is no explicit mention of the theory of absolute presuppositions in any of Collingwood's published writings until 1939.⁹⁰ We will attempt to show that <u>The Idea Of History</u> cannot be fully understood independently of the theory of absolute presuppositions. This is the reason we attempted to get as clear as possible about the notion of an absolute presupposition in Chapters II and III. We attempted to demonstrate that an absolute presupposition is a logicoregulative entity. And we were led to the view that, for Collingwood, all orderly and systematic thinking rests on a foundation of absolute presuppositions. According to our analysis, there is an important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the science called history. If we are right, a re-interpretation of The Idea Of History is now warranted.

^{90.} See An Autobiography, p. 67.

CHAPTER IV

HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN HISTORY

In the first section of Chapter IV we will examine Collingwood's rejection of the positivistic attempt at a "science of human nature". We will attempt to demonstrate that there is an important logical relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical explanation. In the second section of this chapter we will attempt to show that no commentator has yet recognized this logical relationship. Reasons will be given to account for this fact.

Ι

In this section we will be mainly concerned with Collingwood's "Human Nature And Human History". This paper was delivered as a lecture to the British Academy on 20 May 1936 and published in the <u>Proceedings</u> <u>of the British Academy</u> 22 (1936), 97-127. The paper is also found in <u>The Idea Of History</u> which was published posthumously in 1946 by Sir Malcolm Knox. Collingwood once said that Knox was his only real pupil. Although "Human Nature And Human History" had already been published in 1936, Knox decided to add this paper to Part V of <u>The Idea Of History</u>.¹

^{1.} The paper is to be found in the first section of Part V. For this reason we will examine this paper before we examine "The Historical Imagination" (1935). "The Historical Imagination" is found in the second section of Part V in The Idea Of History.

<u>The Idea Of History</u> is largely based on thirty-two lectures which Collingwood wrote during the first six months of 1936. These thirtytwo lectures are found in a manuscript which falls into two parts. In the first part of this 1936 manuscript, Collingwood gives an historical account of how the idea of history has developed from Herodotus to the twentieth century. Following Collingwood's customary procedure of reflecting on work done, the second part of the 1936 manuscript is a reflection on the nature, subject-matter, and method of history. It should be added that part of the 1936 manuscript was revised in 1940.²

Since the second part of the 1936 manuscript is entitled "metaphysical epilegomena", it is clear that Collingwood thinks that there is an important relationship between metaphysics and history. And it is clear that the metaphysician, for Collingwood, plays an important reflective role in regards to the historian's work. We have already seen in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that one important job for the metaphysician is to reflect on the work of science. And one aspect of this reflection on science is the uncovering of absolute presuppositions. It will be recalled that, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood said that the metaphysician has the task of uncovering the absolute presuppositions of historical thinking. Again in <u>An Autobiography</u>, Collingwood says that there is an important relationship between metaphysics and history (A, 77).

Collingwood's fundamental contention in "Human Nature And Human History" is that only history can give us a true "science of human nature". And for Collingwood, only a true science of human nature can

^{2.} See T.M. Knox, The Idea Of History, p. v.

give us self-knowledge. History, he tells us, is for human selfknowledge (IH, 10). Historical thinking is a means of self-knowledge because the historian absorbs historical knowledge into his own experience. Collingwood makes the same point in An Autobiography (A, 114-5). Historical knowledge is achieved by re-thinking past thoughts. And when past thoughts are absorbed into the historian's own experience, the historian is learning about himself. And Collingwood is well aware of the fact that he is agreeing with Croce on this point. Following Croce, he says that "[h]istory is the self-knowledge of the living mind" (IH, 202). When Collingwood says that history is the self-knowledge of mind, it is important to be aware of the fact that he is not saying that "mind" is more fundamental than history. "History does not presuppose mind", he says, "it is the life of mind itself, which is not mind except in so far as it both lives in historical processes and knows itself as so living" (IH, 227). Nor would it be correct to say that history is more fundamental than "mind". Collingwood adds: "It is only in the historical process, the process of thoughts, that thought exists at all; and it is only in so far as this process is known for a process of thoughts that it is one" (IH, 227).

Although, for Collingwood, the problem of self-knowledge is a transhistorical problem, it is important to point out that this problem is only transhistorical at one level of analysis. At another level of analysis, the problem of self-knowledge varies from age to age. For example, the problem of self-knowledge for the Greeks is not the exact problem that we are faced with today. This is the case because the Greeks held the absolute presupposition that the 'mind is a substance'.

Collingwood tells us that, generally speaking, the absolute presupposition 'mind is a substance' has been rejected since the time of Hume. So, for Collingwood, at one important level of analysis, the problem of selfknowledge is a different problem for us today. Collingwood says that it is essential to distinguish between these two levels of analysis. He states: "In part, the problems of philosophy are unchanging; in part, they vary from age to age, according to the special characteristics of human life and thought at the time; ... " (IH, 231-232). So, when Collingwood attacks the realists for their belief in "eternal problems", he is referring to their failure to notice this important point. For Collingwood, it is a mistake to claim, as the realists do, that there is a complete separation between philosophical and historical questions. And it was the denial of this abstract separation of philosophical and historical questions that led Collingwood to claim that mind's selfknowledge is not an accumulation of information. Since all thinkers hold absolute presuppositions and absolute presuppositions vary from age to age, the methods that are used in order to solve the problem of self-knowledge will change. If in a particular age the absolute presupposition that 'there is no difference between mental phenomena and physical phenomena' is held, then the methods of natural science will be used in an attempt to attain self-knowledge. And if this absolute presupposition is denied, then other methods will have to be found in order to proceed with the attempt at self-knowledge. So, when Collingwood tells us that we ought to obey the oracular precept "know thyself", we must not assume that the problem of self-knowledge has remained the

same in all respects.³

By self-knowledge, Collingwood does not mean "knowledge of man's bodily nature, his anatomy and physiology". Nor by self-knowledge does he mean "knowledge of man's mind, so far as that consists of feeling, sensation, and emotion" (IH, 205). Rather, by self-knowledge he means "knowledge of his knowing faculties, his thought or understanding or reason" (IH, 205). Here, Collingwood is making an important distinction between mind-as-feeling and mind-as-thought.⁴ Mind-as-thought can only be studied by using the methods of history. Now, Collingwood has no objection to the claim that the psychologist can study mind-as-feeling by using the methods of natural science. Nor has he any objection to the claim that we should study man's physiology or anatomy by using the methods of natural science. But he does object to the psychologist's claim that we can study mind-as-thought by using the methods of natural science. So, when Collingwood says that history is the self-knowledge of mind, it is mind-as-thought that he is referring to. And when Collingwood says that only history can give us a true science of human nature, he is limiting the notion of human nature to mind-as-thought.

It is the use of the logic of question and answer that distinguishes man from the animal. For Collingwood, man is a questioning animal. And

^{3.} The know thyself theme does not first appear in this paper. We also find this theme in Speculum Mentis (SM, 245).

^{4.} This terminology (i.e. mind-as-thought and mind-as-feeling) was first used by Rex Martin. See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, pp. 31, 35. It should be pointed out, however, that the way in which this distinction is worked out in this thesis differs from Martin. The reader should consult our criticisms of Martin later in this chapter on the question of where we differ from Martin.

as Collingwood sees it, psychology is only a science of man's animal nature. It is not a science of man's human nature. Although psychologists use the logic of question and answer in their own work, it is not their job to analyse this logic. And since psychologists do not study this logic, they do not study what is distinctively human about man. It will be important to keep this distinction between mind-as-thought and mind-as-feeling clearly in view when we turn to the problem of rethinking thoughts in Chapter VII.

Collingwood rejects the claim that it is possible to attain "a 'science of human nature' whose principles and methods are conceived on the analogy of those used in the natural sciences" (IH, 206). "The thesis which I shall maintain", he tells us,

> is that the science of human nature was a false attempt-falsified by the analogy of natural science--to understand the mind itself, and that, whereas the right way of investigating nature is by the methods called scientific, the right way of investigating mind is by the methods of history. I shall contend that the work which was to be done by the science of human nature is actually done, and can only be done, by history: that history is what the science of human nature professes to be, and that Locke was right when he said (however little he understood what he was saying) that the right method for such an inquiry is the historical, plain method (IH, 209).

It is important to see here that Collingwood is not saying that it is impossible to attain a "science of human nature". Collingwood does believe that a science of human nature is possible. But this 'science' must use the methods of history and not the methods of natural science. So, although Collingwood does approve of Hume's desire for a science of human nature, he insists that we must use the methods of history to

^{5.} When Collingwood speaks of the "mind itself" in this text he is referring to mind-as-thought.

attain this science.

Collingwood is engaging "in a running fight with what may be called a positivistic conception, or rather misconception, of history, as the study of successive events lying in a dead past, events to be understood as the scientist understands natural events, by classifying them and establishing relations between the classes thus defined" (IH, 228). Let us call this positivistic attempt at a science of human nature the analogy thesis. It will be recalled that the positivists claimed that it is possible to attain a science of human nature whose principles and methods are conceived on the analogy of those used in the natural sciences. Collingwood tells us that, in addition to Hume, Locke, Reid, Kant and Mill subscribed, at least in part, to the analogy thesis. The analogy thesis "was based on the conception of mind as in no way fundamentally different from nature" (IH, 128). Collingwood tells us that "[h]istorical process, for the positivists, was in kind identical with natural process, and that was why the methods of natural science were applicable to the interpretation of history" (IH, 128). The formula of positivism was that history is, following Bury, "a science (i.e. natural science), no less and no more". The positivistic historian thought that he was to copy the natural scientist by ascertaining facts and then framing laws. And the positivistic historian arrived at this conclusion because he simply accepted the absolute presupposition that 'all processes are natural processes', along with other positivistic absolute presuppositions, in an unquestioning manner.

Collingwood's major objection to this positivistic conception of history is that mind (i.e. mind-as-thought) is systematically

dementalized by being converted into nature (IH, 96, 190). This attack on the metaphysics of positivism or naturalism is not a new development in Collingwood's thought in the mid-1930's. As early as Religion And Philosophy (1916), he attacked the metaphysics of positivism saying that it could not "account for particular facts in the world". In this 1916 publication, he says that positivism is inadequate when it comes to explaining things like "thought, action, aesthetic and moral values" (RP, 80). And in "The Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927) Collingwood said that it is important not to collapse mental processes and natural processes.⁶ And again in "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" (1925) and "The Philosophy Of History" (1930) he rejected the view that the historian should attempt to copy the natural scientist by searching for general laws in history. In the 1930 paper he talks of "the utter bankruptcy of attempts, like that of Buckle, to 'raise history to the rank of a science' (i.e. natural science) by extracting general laws from it".⁷ It is clear, then, that before the mid-1930's Collingwood saw the positivist as making a number of metaphysical errors. But in the mid-1930's there is a new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history. At this stage in Collingwood's intellectual career, he sees it as the metaphysician's job to elucidate and evaluate the absolute presuppositions underlying science.

R.G. Collingwood, "The Theory of Historical Cycles" in <u>R.G. Colling-wood:</u> Essays in the Philosophy of History, ed., W. Debbins, (Austin, 1965) p. 86.

R.G. Collingwood, "The Philosophy Of History", <u>Essays</u>, ed., Debbins, p. 133.

In order to escape the dominating pretensions of natural science (IH, 318), we must reject the claim that all past actions can be explained by subsuming them under general laws of nature. To use the language of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, positivists are mistaken to use Cause III explanations in their study of history. Cause III explanations are totally inadequate when we are studying historical thought, that is, thought about rational activity. When historians are using the term 'cause', they are using this term in a completely different sense.⁸ For Collingwood, causal explanations in history are totally distinct from causal explanations (i.e. Cause III explanations) in natural science. No reconciliation between the causal explanations of history and the causal explanations of natural science is possible.⁹ According to Collingwood, then, historical thought is free from the tyranny of Cause III explanations.¹⁰

One main purpose of "Human Nature And Human History" is to give reasons to justify the rejection of particular positivistic absolute presuppositions.¹¹ We have already seen in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>

^{8.} They are using the term 'cause' in Sense I.

^{9.} Collingwood would disagree with Patrick Gardiner's attempt to do just this. See P.L. Gardiner, <u>The Nature of Historical Explanation</u>, (Oxford, 1952).

^{10.} It might be suggested that modern science has abandoned causality and therefore it is difficult to see how it can remain so tyrannical. But Collingwood has only claimed that modern physics has rejected the notion of causality. It will be recalled that, for Collingwood, some disciplines may lead the way when it comes to the rejection of an absolute presupposition. Whereas the modern physicist has rejected the absolute presupposition 'every event has a cause', positivistic historians still hold it.

^{11.} It is clear that Collingwood is not metaphysically neutral. Here (and in the rest of this chapter) we are continuing our debate with W.H. Walsh.

that it is possible to give reasons for rejecting a particular absolute presupposition. For example, nineteenth-century historians offered reasons when they rejected the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' (EM, 98).¹² Collingwood agrees with nineteenth-century historians that the eighteenth-century absolute presupposition 'nature is the cause of historical events' is a metaphysical error. Collingwood makes the same point in The Idea Of History:

When people think that it can, and speak (as we saw that Montesquieu, for example, did) of the influence of geography or climate on history, they are mistaking the effect of a certain person's or people's conception of nature on their actions for an effect of nature itself (IH, 200).

For Collingwood, it would be a mistake to claim that historians are necessarily the slaves of a particular historical tradition. They can become aware of their absolute presuppositions and evaluate them critically.

In addition to attacking positivistic theories of history, Collingwood attacks psychological theories of history. He sees psychological theories of history as a sign of crisis. Psychological historians fail to recognize that they are holding absolute presuppositions. So, like the positivistic historians, psychological historians fail to see these important subjective elements in history. For example, the foundational concept that 'there is no such thing as mind but only conditioned reflexes' is not a conclusion that comes at the end of an empirical study. Rather, this concept is an absolute presupposition.

^{12.} On page 98 in his 1940 publication, he is using the term 'cause' in Sense III.

We have already seen in An Essay on Metaphysics that psychology is not the science of mind-as-thought. According to Collingwood, psychology can only give us a science of mind-as-feeling. He makes the same point in The Idea Of History (IH, 186).¹³ It is for this reason that Collingwood attacks Dilthey for claiming "that the self-knowledge of mind is identical with psychology" (IH, 174). Mind-as-feeling, or what Collingwood calls man's "animal nature", is "part of the process of nature, not of history" (IH, 330). As he puts it in "Human Nature And Human History", "so far as man's conduct is determined by what may be called his animal nature, his impulses and appetites, it is non-historical; • the process of those activities is a natural process" (IH, 216). And this explains why Collingwood says that psychological history is not history at all. He states: "Now what is psychological history? It is not history at all, but natural science of a special kind. It does not narrate facts for the sake of narrating facts. Its chief purpose is to affirm laws, psychological laws" (IH, 29). Collingwood would not object to the psychologist's desire to uncover laws about man's animal nature. But he would object to the claim that the psychologist can uncover psychological laws about man's human nature. The attempt on the psychologist's part to attain a science of human nature is based on at least two absolute presuppositions which Collingwood regards as being erroneous. They are that 'mental events can be reduced to natural events' and that 'all events happen according to law'. According to Collingwood, we

^{13.} When Collingwood speaks of the "mind as it actually is" on page 186 in The Idea of History, he is referring to mind-as-thought.

must reject these two absolute presuppositions and adopt the methods of history if we want to attain a true science of human nature.

It is interesting to note that Collingwood also wanted social scientists to use the historical method. In a number of unpublished manuscripts written in 1936 and 1937, he uses his ideas about history in the field of the social sciences.¹⁴ He rejects the view that a social scientist should use the methods of natural science. For example, he criticizes Grimm, Müller, Tylor, Frazer, Freud and Jung because they all use the methods of natural science in their study of the concept of magic. "Each of them", Collingwood tells us, "treats its subjectmatter as something to be contemplated from without, something external to the thinker, something that is not himself but something else." Using the methods of natural science, these thinkers end up constructing a "primitive mind" and see this as the essential characteristic of the "savage". Collingwood states: "We have already seen that naturalistic methods lead to the conception of the savage mind as groaning beneath a load of mythopoeic insanity (Müller), folly (Frazer), or neurosis (Freud)."¹⁵ He adds:

^{14.} It is generally known that Collingwood intended to publish a major work on the philosophy of history which was to be entitled The <u>Principles of History</u>. Collingwood once said that this work was to be his 'magnum opus'. But it is not generally known that Collingwood was working on the philosophy of social science in the late 1930's. We have only become aware of this fact since the unpublished manuscripts became available, although there is an indication of this fact in <u>The Principles of Art</u> which was published in 1938. It seems reasonable to conjecture that, in addition to <u>The Principles of History</u>, Collingwood would also have published a work on the philosophy of social science if he had lived longer.

^{15.} R.G. Collingwood, "The Historical Method", (unpublished manuscript) 1936-1937, pp. 4-5.

These conceptions do not rest on evidence; they are read into the evidence, and rest on the false assumption, implicit in the naturalistic method, that subject and object are external to each other and that each is the other's opposite; an assumption made explicit at the very beginning of modern scientific history when Descartes, expounding the presuppositions of physics, distinguished mind as thinking and unextended from matter as extended and unthinking.¹⁶

It is clear in these unpublished manuscripts that Collingwood takes Freud and Jung to be not only psychologists, but social scientists. While they are psychologists, it is correct to say that they should be using the methods of natural science. But while they are acting as social scientists, they should be using the methods of history. It is also clear in these manuscripts that Collingwood sees the social scientist as holding absolute presuppositions.¹⁷ And Collingwood regards it as a mistake for social scientists to be using the absolute presuppositions of natural science in their study of mind-as-thought. Social scientists who use the methods of natural science fall prey to the absolute presuppositions of Cartesian dualism. The subject-object distinction of Cartesian dualism leads the social scientist to mistakenly study his fellow-man as a mere external object.

Instead of recognizing that we must all take absolute presuppositions to our subject-matter, the naturalistic scientist thinks that he is a neutral observer. And the untenable notion of a neutral observer arises from the philosophical error of Cartesian dualism. Only by

^{16.} Ibid., pp. 6-7.

This is a point that Van Der Dussen fails to make in reference to these 1936-1937 manuscripts. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As</u> <u>A Science</u>, p. 183.

refraining from separating the subject from the object in a radical manner can we avoid the "fantastic distinctions between the savage and . civilized minds". For Collingwood, the so-called primitive mind has a "rationality" of its own (IH, 227), but we will only recognize this fact if we adopt the sympathy principle. According to Collingwood, then, it is the historical approach with its sympathy principle (and not the naturalistic approach with its external observer principle) that is the 'sine qua non' of all studies of mind-as-thought.¹⁸

In "Human Nature And Human History", Collingwood makes a distinction between history in the proper sense and history in the wide sense. He uses the inside-outside metaphor in order to explain this distinction. "The historian, investigating any event in the past", Collingwood tells us,

> makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event. By the outside of the event I mean everything belonging to it which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements: the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men, across a river called the Rubicon at one date, or the spilling of his blood on the floor of the senate-house at another. By the inside of the event I mean that in it which can only be described in terms of thought: Caesar's defiance of Republican law, or the clash of constitutional policy between himself and his assassins. The historian is never concerned with either of these to the exclusion of the other. He is investigating not mere events (where by a mere event I mean one which has only an outside and no inside) but actions, and an action is the unity of the outside and inside of an event....His work may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent (IH, 213).

^{18.} It seems that Collingwood has not abandoned a claim that he made as early as 1916 when he said that we should enter "with some degree of sympathy into the problems which men wished to solve, and...comprehend the motives which led them to offer their various answers" (RP, 42). See also The Idea of History, p. 218.

For Collingwood, history in the proper sense is restricted to the inside of the event. History in the proper sense is concerned with mind-asthought.¹⁹ When Collingwood says that "[a]ll history is the history of thought" (IH, 215), he is using the term 'history' in the proper sense, that is, as the study of mind-as-thought. And history in the wide sense is the study of actions and an action is the unity of the inside of the event and the outside of the event.²⁰ All history in the wide sense of the term is the history of actions.

It is important to keep in mind that Collingwood is speaking about history in the proper sense when he says:

In thus penetrating to the inside of events and detecting the thought which they express, the historian is doing something which the scientist need not and cannot do. In this way the task of the historian is more complex than that of the scientist. In another way it is simpler: the historian need not and cannot (without ceasing to be an historian) emulate the scientist in searching for the causes or laws of events. For science, the event is discovered by perceiving it, and the further search for its cause is conducted by assigning it to its class and determining the relation between that class and others. For history, the object to be discovered is not the mere event, but the thought expressed in it (IH, 214).

When Collingwood says that the historian does not search for the causes of events, he is using the term 'cause' in Sense III.²¹ History in the proper sense is not knowing what events followed what. History as the study of mind-as-thought means "getting inside other people's heads,

- 20. According to Collingwood's terminology, it would be a mistake to equate the inside of an event with an action.
- 21. In a conversation (March, 1981), William Dray agreed with us that Collingwood in The Idea Of History uses the term 'cause' in Sense III.

^{19.} This is not to say that we do not use the logic of question and answer in our study of the outside of events.

looking at their situation through their eyes..." (A, 58). With mind-asthought, it would be a category-mistake to use the methods of natural science for its study.²² Collingwood regards the positivistic view that we can collapse mental phenomena and physical phenomena as "onesided" and "extreme". And by calling this view one-sided, he means that only the outside of events is dealt with and that the inside of events is ignored. For Collingwood, it is a metaphysical error to use Cause III explanations for <u>all</u> phenomena. According to him, Cause III explanations can only be used legitimately for the study of the outside of events or mere events.²³ Once we understand his inside-outside metaphor we see why Collingwood claimed that man has an "ambiguous" nature: "'Man' occupies an ambiguous position. He stands with one foot in nature and one in history."²⁴ It would not be an exaggeration to say that Collingwood's lifetime occupation was to explain and describe, as far as possible, the ambiguous nature of man.

24. R.G. Collingwood, "Notes on History of Historiography and Philosophy of History", (unpublished manuscript) 1936, pp. 27-28.

^{22.} What Gilbert Ryle called a category-mistake, Collingwood called the "fallacy of swapping horses".

^{23.} According to the terminology of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, it would be better to talk about general law explanations rather than Cause III explanations (since we want to avoid anthropomorphic conceptions in natural science). For Collingwood, then, it would be better to say that general law explanations can only be used legitimately for the study of the outside of events or mere events. When it comes to the inside of events, general law explanations are to be avoided. If Collingwood were to use the language of contemporary philosophers of history, he would say that we can only use the covering law model of explanation for the outside of events or mere events, and that we should use the rational model for explanation for the inside of events. And it is clear that, for Collingwood, we would need to use both of these models to explain the whole action (i.e. unity of the inside and outside of the event).

The historian in the proper sense does not absolutely presuppose 'causation in Sense III', and this accounts for the fact that the historian asks different questions. Collingwood states:

> This does not mean that words like 'cause' are necessarily out of place in reference to history; it only means that they are used in a special sense. When a scientist asks 'Why did that piece of litmus paper turn pink?' he means 'On what kinds of occasions do pieces of litmus paper turn pink?' When an historian asks 'Why did Brutus stab Caesar?' he means 'What did Brutus think, which made him decide to stab Caesar?' The cause of the event, for him, means the thought in the mind of the person by whose agency the event came about:... (IH, 214-215).²⁵

The historian in the proper sense uses the term 'cause' in a "special" sense and not in Sense III. And when Collingwood says that the historian uses the term 'cause' in a special sense, he means that the historian uses the term 'cause' in Sense I.²⁶ For Collingwood, a genuine science of mind-as-thought must apprehend its object under the absolute presupposition 'man is free'. The absolute presupposition 'man is free' logically gives rise to different questions than the absolute presupposition 'all events happen according to law'. And for this reason, the historian in the proper sense must use a different language from that of the natural scientist. Whereas the historian uses the language of motives, the natural scientist uses the language of bodily motions.

In The Idea Of History, Collingwood tells us that he traces his

25. When Collingwood refers to the historian in this text he means the historian in the proper sense. And when Collingwood refers to the scientist in this text he means the natural scientist.

^{26.} On page 41 of <u>The Idea Of History</u> he is also using the term 'cause' in this special sense. (All other times that he uses the term 'cause' in <u>The Idea Of History</u> he is referring to Sense III of the term.)

inside-outside metaphor back to Hegel.²⁷ Collingwood states:

[H]istory consists of actions, and actions have an inside and an outside; on the outside they are mere events, related in space and time but not otherwise; on the inside they are thoughts, bound to each other by logical connexions. What Hegel is doing is to insist that the historian must first work empirically by studying documents and other evidence; it is only in this way that he can establish what the facts are. But he must then look at the facts from the inside, and tell us what they look like from that point of view. It is no reply to him to say that they look different from the outside (IH, 118).²⁸

We see in this text that Collingwood regards the "outside" of an event as a "mere event".²⁹ Mere events are "related in space and time". Mere events are not, however, bound to each other by logical connexions. Only "thoughts" are "bound to each other by logical connexions". It will be recalled that Collingwood made the same point in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> when he said that there is a "logical connexion" between absolute presuppositions, relative presuppositions, questions and answers. For Collingwood, an historian cannot neglect the thought-side of an action which is a logic of question and answer.

The inside of an event is not to be seen as a substantial entity.

29. The outside of events are a species of mere events.

^{27.} It would be a mistake to claim that Collingwood's inside-outside metaphor first appears in <u>The Idea of History</u>. As early as <u>Religion</u> <u>And Philosophy</u>, he claimed that history should be studied from within. And in "The Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927), we also find the inside-outside metaphor. See R.G. Collingwood, "The Theory of Historical Cycles" in <u>Essays</u>, ed., Debbins, p. 86. But in <u>The Idea</u> <u>Of History</u>, the inside-outside metaphor is seen in the new light of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.

^{28.} But Collingwood disagrees with Hegel (and Marx) when Hegel said that mind is a product of nature (IH, 123). Collingwood regards the claim that 'mind is a product of nature' as an untenable absolute presupposition.

Collingwood is not saying that the mind is a sort of Cartesian mental substance inhabiting a physical body and having properties which are introspectable but not otherwise observable.³⁰ Collingwood does not hold the absolute presupposition that 'the mind is a substance'. Rather, he sees the mind as an activity. Collingwood made this point as early as <u>Religion And Philosophy</u>. He states: "the mind 'is' what it 'does', it is not a thing that thinks, but a consciousness; not a thing that wills, but an activity" (RP, 34). And in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> he rejects the view that the mind is a substance which exists independently of the process that knows it.³¹ Collingwood continues his attack on the notion of 'mind as substance' in <u>The Idea Of History</u>. "[M]ind is what it does," he says, "and human nature, if it is a name for anything real, is only a name for human activities,..." (IH, 226).

In an unpublished manuscript on cosmology written in 1933-1934, Collingwood discusses the relation between mind and body. This is an important manuscript to consult when we are attempting to understand the inside-outside metaphor. Collingwood speaks of "the mind of 'that' body and the body of 'that' mind" and says that their relation is "...very unlike the Cartesian dualism of two substances: more like Spinoza's

^{30.} See L. Mink, <u>Mind</u>, <u>History And Dialectic</u>, p. 8. At this point it would actually be better to speak of mind-as-thought, rather than just mind.

^{31.} In <u>Speculum Mentis</u> he says that the mind can never know itself in an immediate and direct way, but only through the mediation of external worlds such as art, religion, science, history and philosophy (SM, 315). The mind can only know itself in an indirect way by observing the evidence that art, religion, science, history, and philosophy leaves behind and interpreting this evidence.

conception of the mind as the idea of the body. Mind is a specific type of activity (viz. perceptual activity) present in a body which in order to act in that way must have a specific bodily (physical, and proximately physiological) character". ³² For Collingwood, mind and body are not different parts of man. According to him, man only has one nature, but that this nature is known in two different ways. As Collingwood put it in The New Leviathan, "man's body and man's mind are not two different things. They are one and the same thing, man himself, as known in two different ways" (NL, 11).³³ The distinction between mind and body, then, for Collingwood, is an epistemological distinction.³⁴ We know the mind in a different way from the way we know the body. And for this reason we use a different language to describe the mind (i.e. the language of motives) than we do to describe the body (i.e. the language of bodies). So, when Collingwood distinguishes between the inside of events and the outside of events, this distinction is to be understood in an epistemological sense. And also, when Collingwood says that man has an ambiguous nature, this is to be understood in an epistemological manner. It will be recalled that man has an ambiguous nature in that

32. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 261.

^{33.} For Collingwood, it remains an open question whether or not man will ever come up with a single language that adequately describes man's nature.

^{34.} Collingwood is only a dualist in regards to man's nature in an epistemological sense. Apparently, he thought that important epistemological questions had to be adequately dealt with before we could move to a discussion of the oneness of man. It is interesting to note that in 1935 Collingwood attempted to work out a "neutral monist theory". R.G. Collingwood, "Experiment in New Realism", 1935 (unpublished manuscript), pp. 1, 4.

he has one foot in history and one foot in nature. When Collingwood says that man has one foot in history, he is referring to the inside of events, and when he says that he has one foot in nature, he is referring to the outside of events.³⁵

It is correct to say that in <u>The Idea Of History</u> Collingwood is continuing his attack on the notion of 'mind as substance'. In fact, in <u>The Idea Of History</u> he regards this notion as an erroneous "presupposition" (IH, 85). And it seems to be the case that Collingwood regards this notion as an absolute presupposition because he calls this notion a "metaphysical principle" (IH, 43).³⁶ It will be recalled that Collingwood said in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that an absolute presupposition colours our entire conceptual system. In <u>The Idea Of History</u>, he tells us that Greco-Roman historiography "from beginning to end, is constructed on a framework of substantialistic metaphysical principles which influence its every detail" (IH, 43).³⁷

It is very important to be very clear about Collingwood's conception of mind when we are attempting to understand what has been called

^{35.} The inside-outside metaphor should indicate to us that Collingwood rejected two other absolute presuppositions besides the absolute presupposition that 'the mind is a substance'. The metaphor shows that Collingwood rejected the absolute presupposition that 'every-thing can be reduced to history' (i.e. mind-as-thought). The metaphor also indicates that Collingwood rejected the absolute presupposition that 'mind (i.e. mind-as-thought) pervades the whole of nature'.

^{36.} Given our analysis in our opening chapter, when Collingwood refers to the term 'metaphysics' in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, he means the science of absolute presuppositions.

^{37.} The term 'framework' should remind us of Collingwood's notion of a constellation.

the 'what-why paradox'.³⁸ Collingwood tells us that when an historian knows what happened, he already knows why it happened (IH, 214). Now, the following objection may arise in reference to the what-why paradox: If it is the case that when an historian knows what happened (the outside of the event) he also knows why it happened (the inside of the event), why has Collingwood said that the historian must "penetrate" the outside of an event to discover the thought-side of the event? According to his own terms, there would be no reason why we have to discover the thoughtside of an event after we have discovered the outside of the event. But this possible objection misses the point. When Collingwood says that when an historian knows what happened, he already knows why it happened, he is referring only to the inside of the event. In other words, the what-why paradox only refers to history in the proper sense (i.e. mindas-thought). What Collingwood is saying is that when an historian knows what the thought-side of the event is, he already knows the 'why' behind the thought-side of the event. As we see it, this is the only interpretation that is consistent with Collingwood's claim that an historian must penetrate the outside of an event in order to discover the inside of the event. The notion of penetration, in this connection already assumes that the historian knows the outside of the event. In other words, the historian is attempting to penetrate to the inside of the event after he knows the historical agent's external behaviour. And, of course, the

^{38.} We first heard about the "what-why paradox" in a lecture by William Dray at Trent University (March, 1978). This lecture can be found in <u>Perspectives on History</u>. In reference to the what-why paradox, see W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, (London, 1980), p. 16.

historian only knows the agent's external behaviour in the sense that he has evidence to indicate what the agent's external behaviour actually was. For Collingwood, evidence of the agent's external behaviour would never be enough to tell us what the thought-side of an event was.

Once we see that Collingwood is only referring to the inside of an event when he offers his what-why paradox, we will recognize that another possible objection misses the point. This other possible objection would run as follows: It is extremely odd that Collingwood would make this claim (i.e. what-why paradox) after he has insisted that questions can be asked only after we have presupposed a number of things. According to his own terms, if two questions resemble each other but arise from different presuppositions, then they are not the same question. Surely when we ask the question 'What?' we are not presupposing the same things as when we ask the question 'Why?' When a person asks the question 'What?' he is looking for a description of an event. And when a person asks the question 'Why?' he is looking for an explanation of an event. Isn't Collingwood wrong to think that the answers to 'What?' and 'Why?' questions will be exactly the same? The reason that this possible objection misses the point is that, for Collingwood, 'What?' and 'Why?' questions collapse when we are referring to the inside of an event. ³⁹ If a

^{39.} It might be asked: why did Collingwood make this distinction between 'what' and 'why' in the first place? Collingwood makes this distinction because he is responding to positivistic historians who take this distinction for granted. So from the positivistic startingpoint or frame of reference (where the distinction is justified with Cause III explanations), Collingwood moves on to point out that this distinction is not applicable when a Cause I explanation is being attempted at the level of mind-as-thought. At the level of mind-as-thought, the distinction collapses, although the distinction is justified at the level of mere events.

person knows what an agent thought, he also knows why he thought it. When we are referring to the inside of the event, we "cannot separate the 'what' from the 'why'" (IH, 156). It would be incorrect, then, to say that when we are studying the inside of events, we first of all answer the 'What?' question and then attempt to answer the 'Why?' question. 40

It is only after we understand Collingwood's inside-outside metaphor, that we will be able to understand his distinction between 'causa quod' and 'causa ut'. The 'causa quod' refers to the agent's beliefs about his situation and the 'causa ut' refers to the agent's purpose in acting a certain way. In Aristotelian language, Collingwood describes the 'causa quod' as the act's "efficient cause" and the 'causa ut' as the act's "final cause". He states:

> A cause in sense I is made up of two elements, a 'causa quod' or efficient cause and a 'causa ut' or final cause. The 'causa quod' is a situation or state of things existing; the 'causa ut' is a purpose or state of things to be brought about. Neither of these could be a cause if the other were absent....

The 'causa quod' is not a mere situation or state of things, it is a situation or state of things known or believed by the agent in question to exist....

The 'causa ut' is not a mere desire or wish, it is an intention. The 'causa ut' of a man's acting in a certain way is not his wanting to act in that way, but his meaning to act in that way. There may be cases where mere desire leads to action without the intermediate phase of intention; but such action is not deliberate, and therefore has no cause in sense I of the word

^{40.} William Debbins makes the mistake of thinking that the 'What?' question precedes the 'Why?' question. See W. Debbins, <u>Essays</u>, p. xxii.

(EM, 292-293).⁴¹

The distinction between a 'causa quod' and a 'causa ut' refers to the inside of events.⁴²

For Collingwood, an adequate theory of action cannot neglect a discussion of the important logical role of absolute presuppositions. An example from <u>The Idea Of History</u> makes this point clear: a man may fear to cross the mountains because he is frightened of the devils in them. A modern historian may regard this absolute presupposition that 'devils exist' as "sheer superstition", but this will not help the historian understand the agent's attitude. For the devil-fearer, it is a fact that "he cannot help believing in the devils" (IH, 317); it is the way that the devil-fearer "has been taught to think" (IH, 317). Colling-wood adds:

The hardness of the fact consists in the man's inability to think of his situation otherwise. The compulsion which the devil-haunted mountains exercise on the man who would cross them consists in the fact that he cannot help believing in the devils.... The man who suffers from it when he tries to cross the mountains is not suffering merely for the sins of his fathers who taught him to believe in devils, if that is a sin; he is suffering because he has accepted the belief, because he has shared the sin. If the modern historian

^{41.} There is not a radical distinction between a 'causa quod' and a 'causa ut'. As he says, "neither of these could be a cause if the other were absent." This claim allows Collingwood to consistently claim that 'What?' and 'Why?' questions still collapse in reference to a 'causa quod' and a 'causa ut'. Note also that a "mere desire" is not an "intention". "Mere desires" refer to man's animal nature, whereas "intentions" refer to man's human nature. It should also be pointed out that Collingwood is using the term 'action' in the wide sense in this text.

^{42.} According to Collingwood's own terms, the distinction between a 'causa quod' and a 'causa ut' would also have to be an epistemological distinction.

believes that there are no devils in the mountains, that too is only a belief he has accepted in precisely the same way (IH, 317-318).

The absolute presupposition that 'devils exist' will logically regulate the aims and motives of the agent and the way in which the agent conceives of his situation. We will never understand the devil-fearer if we fail to take this into account.

There are many other passages in Collingwood's works to support the claim that, for him, an adequate theory of action cannot neglect a discussion of the important logico-regulative role of absolute presuppositions.⁴³ For example, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he tells us that there are peoples "who believe that there is no such thing as natural death" (EM, 193). For these "primitive" men, "every instance of death is due to magic" (EM, 193). It is clear that if a primitive man held the absolute presupposition that 'death is due to magic', then his attitude is going to be shaped by this absolute presupposition. If we are going to uncover a primitive man's 'causa quod' and 'causa ut', it will be important that we know this absolute presupposition. In addition, Collingwood tells us that another absolute presupposition of a primitive man is that 'all things are full of gods'. This is the absolute presupposition will logically regulate a primitive man's

^{43.} Collingwood's philosophy of social science that we find in his unpublished manuscripts of 1936-1937 can and should be read in the light of this paragraph.

attitude.44

It will be recalled that Collingwood does say that only a very few people are aware of their absolute presuppositions. But, for Collingwood, an historian can assign a belief or a motive to an agent that the agent was not fully aware of. Cause I explanations (or rational explanations) don't necessarily require the agent to be fully conscious of his 'causa quod' and 'causa ut'. As long as an action is intelligible at a mind-as-thought level, it is a rational action. And just because we would not consider the action to be rational according to our absolute presuppositions, it does not mean that the action is not rational as seen in terms of other absolute presuppositions. Perhaps at this point it would be useful to distinguish between two senses of the term 'rational'. Let us call an action rational in Sense I if that action is rational when judged by our absolute presuppositions. And let us call an action rational in Sense II if that action is rational when judged by absolute

Since Collingwood tells us in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that 'beliefs' such as 'death is due to magic' and 'all things are full of gods' 44. are absolute presuppositions, we think that this gives added weight to our claim that 'devils exist' is also an absolute presupposition. A belief which is today regarded as superstition can still be an absolute presupposition. As long as this belief for some person or group of persons does not logically rest on other beliefs which are more fundamental, it would be correct to call this belief an absolute presupposition. It is our claim that the belief 'devils exist' is consistent with this analysis. Now it might be suggested that a positivist like Auguste Comte would claim that these primitive men are just pre-scientific thinkers. But Collingwood would reject this positivistic analysis. For Collingwood, even primitive men had a science (i.e. organized body of thought) which rested on a metaphysic. He would reject Comte's division of the history of humanity into three stages (i.e. a theological, a metaphysical, and a positive, in the last of which metaphysics is dissolved by science) and argue that the whole history of scientific thought rests on metaphysics.

presuppositions other than our own. These two senses of the term 'rational' would allow us to say that the devil-fearer's action (mentioned above) was rational in Sense II when judged by one set of criteria, and yet not rational in Sense I when judged by our criteria. This distinction allows us to regard the devil-fearer's attitude as rational in his eyes and yet as superstition in our eyes.

For Collingwood, it is a mistake to think that all human beings must think and act in terms of the same absolute presuppositions. One thinker who made this mistake was Hume. Collingwood says that Hume "assumes that 'our' reasoning faculty, 'our' tastes and sentiments, and so forth, are something perfectly uniform and invariable, underlying and conditioning all historical changes" (IH, 83). He adds that Hume "never attempted to go beyond observing that in point of fact 'we' think in certain ways, and left undiscussed the question what he meant by the word 'we'" (IH, 224). One thing that Collingwood means here is that Hume was claiming that all men in all ages must think about the world in terms of the same fundamental habits of the mind. According to Collingwood, Hume makes the mistake of thinking that he is giving us the absolute presuppositions underlying all possible experience, when in fact he is only giving us the absolute presuppositions underlying the experience of his day. But, we would still want to say that Hume contributed, although unknowingly, to the concept of a history of human nature. And this is the case because Hume gives us the "nature of a western European in the early eighteenth century" (IH, 83).

Collingwood tells us that Kant also "mistakes the transient conditions of a certain historical age for the permanent conditions of

human life". Collingwood states:

What Kant, for example, wanted to do when he set out to justify our use of a category like causation, can in a sense be done; but it cannot be done on Kant's method, which yields a merely circular argument, proving that such a category can be used, and must be used if we are to have Newtonian science; it can be done by research into the history of scientific thought. All Kant could show was that eighteenth-century scientists did think in terms of that category; the question why they so thought can be answered by investigating the history of the idea of causation. (IH, 230).

Collingwood's own history of the idea of causation is found in <u>An Essay</u> <u>on Metaphysics</u>. In this work the category of causation is regarded as an absolute presupposition. And absolute presuppositions, including the Kantian category that 'every event has a cause', are subject to historical change. So, it would be correct to say that, in the above quotation, we find Collingwood claiming that Kant only uncovered the absolute presuppositions of the science of his day. It seems to be the case, then, that in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, Collingwood regarded metaphysics as an historical science.⁴⁵ Collingwood says that Kant only gave us "the kind of experience enjoyed by men of his own age and civilization" (IH, 224).

Like Hume, Kant contributed, again unknowingly, to the concept of a history of human nature. "Kant's ethical theory", Collingwood tells us, "expresses the moral convictions of German pietism; his <u>Critique of</u> <u>Pure Reason</u> analyses the conceptions and principles of Newtonian science, in their relation to the philosophical problems of the day" (IH, 229). In

^{45.} This evidence adds weight to our claim that the major ideas of <u>An</u> <u>Essay on Metaphysics</u> were worked out prior to the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history. There is other evidence in <u>The Idea</u> <u>of History</u> that supports this interpretation. See <u>The Idea of</u> <u>History</u>, pp. 206, 229-30.

addition, Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes, among others, contributed to the concept of a history of human nature. Collingwood states:

The Republic of Plato is an account, not of the unchanging ideal of political life, but of the Greek ideal as Plato received it and re-interpreted it. The Ethics of Aristotle describes not an eternal morality but the morality of the Greek gentleman. Hobbes's Leviathan expounds the political ideas of seventeenth-century absolutism in their English form....These limitations are often taken for defects, as if a more powerful thinker than Plato would have lifted himself clean out of the atmosphere of Greek politics, or as if Aristotle ought to have anticipated the moral conceptions of Christianity or the modern world. So far from being a defect, they are a sign of merit; they are most clearly to be seen in those works whose quality is of the best. The reason is that in those works the authors are doing best the only thing that can be done when an attempt is made to construct a science of the mind. They are expounding the position reached by the human mind in its development down to their own time (IH, 229).

It would be correct to say that Plato, Aristotle and Hobbes are true metaphysicians in the Collingwoodian sense of the term. And by this claim is meant that these thinkers have uncovered the absolute presuppositions underlying the experience of their day. These thinkers have made important contributions to man's self-knowledge. And this is the case because they stated the stage that consciousness had reached in their own time.⁴⁶

Collingwood is not saying that all historical periods are radically dissimilar. Not only is there some short-term carryover from

^{46. (}i) In the same section that Collingwood says that metaphysics is an historical science he discusses morality and politics. This supports our claim that metaphysics underlies more than just natural science. At this point we are continuing our debate with Alan Donagan. (ii) Although, for Collingwood, there are "limitations" with the thought of Plato, Aristotle or Hobbes, we can still learn from them. Collingwood is not saying that their thought is valueless because it is historically situated. In <u>An Autobiography</u> Collingwood learns from Plato's logic of question and answer. In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood learns from Aristotle's view on metaphysics. And in <u>The New Leviathan</u> Collingwood attempts to re-construct Hobbes's science of politics.

one historical 'period' to the next, but at one level of mind-as-thought there is an identity throughout all periods of history. It would be incorrect to say that, for Collingwood, there is no identity in the long run between past and present.⁴⁷ Let us now see why it would be incorrect to say that Collingwood holds what could be called the radical dissimilarity thesis.

Collingwood is not ruling out long-term recurrence or regular connection in historical phenomena. For Collingwood, we can make the following generalizations about the way the mind (i.e. mind-as-thought) works in all historical periods: (1) all human beings hold absolute presuppositions, (2) all human beings hold relative presuppositions, (3) all propositions belong to a particular question and answer complex, (4) all human beings are problem-solvers, (5) all human beings have a 'world' of experience, (6) all human beings inherit a whole tradition of thought, (7) all human beings are purposive beings, (8) all actions have an inside and an outside, (9) all actions in the narrow sense (i.e. the thought-side of an event) contain a 'causa quod' and 'causa ut', (10) all thought exists for the sake of action, and (11) all history is the history of strains.⁴⁸ Let us call these generalizations about the way the mind works in all historical periods, transhistorical principles. These

^{47.} We are criticizing implicitly Rex Martin's interpretation of Collingwood at this point. See Rex Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 31.

^{48.} This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the generalizations that apply at the mind-as-thought level for all historical periods. And some of these generalizations do overlap. Also it should be pointed out that these generalizations are not to be understood as generalizations of natural science.

transhistorical principles are "the universal and necessary principles of historical thought" (PhH, 128).⁴⁹ And these transhistorical principles are "philosophical" in the sense that "they apply universally to all evidence whatever, and compose the logic of historical method" (PhH, 136-137).⁵⁰ Collingwood said that the aim of the philosopher is to try and "reach something deeper down and more fundamental." And by attempting to uncover the universal and necessary principles of historical thought, Collingwood was doing just this.

For Collingwood, it is the case that there are transhistorical principles that apply to all the thought and deeds of historical agents. But these transhistorical principles only apply to what we could call the structural level of mind-as-thought.⁵¹ We can make a distinction between the formal structure of mind-as-thought and the content of mind-as-thought. The content of mind-as-thought would include the level of particular presuppositions, the level of particular questions, and the level of particular answers. It is the case that we cannot come up with

^{49.} We could say that these transhistorical principles are the working out of "the universal and necessary principles of historical thought" that Collingwood referred to in "The Philosophy of History".

^{50.} When Collingwood attempts to uncover the principles of metaphysics in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he is operating as a philosopher. These principles of metaphysics should be understood as transhistorical principles. See Collingwood's "propositions" (i.e. proposition I, proposition II, etc.) in Chapter II of this thesis. It should also be noted here that these principles of metaphysics allow for the possibility of re-thinking thoughts. We will have more to say about the relationship between these transhistorical principles and rethinking in Chapter VII.

^{51.} This structural level, of course, is not something physical. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, pp. 221-222.

any transhistorical principles when we are dealing with the content of mind-as-thought. But at the structural level of mind-as-thought, there are principles which are transhistorical. And this is the case because, although we may hold different presuppositions and ask different questions, it is still the case that we have to think in terms of presuppositions, questions, and answers.⁵²

Collingwood is attempting to give us the permanent structure of all experience. We have already seen that Kant, for example, did not give us the permanent structure of all experience. Collingwood is trying to reach something deeper down and more fundamental than Kant did. Like the archeologist, the philosopher must 'dig'. Kant didn't 'dig' deep enough since he only uncovered the absolute presuppositions of the experience of his day. As Collingwood sees it, although particular categories or absolute presuppositions cannot make up the permanent structure of mind-as-thought, transhistorical principles do. Even though it is the case that particular absolute presuppositions can be relinquished, it is still a "law of our nature" (CPH, 11) that we have to think in terms of some set of absolute presuppositions.

As we have seen, Collingwood is not saying that all uniformities are delimited, in scope and validity, to a definite period of time. He

^{52.} Transhistorical principles are not logically more fundamental than absolute presuppositions. Transhistorical principles are descriptive claims about the structural level of mind-as-thought in all conceptual systems. For Collingwood, although the content of every conceptual system can vary, the structure of every conceptual system remains the same. We should also add that the formal relation between the structure and any particular content would also remain the same.

doesn't want to replace the idea of transhistorical principles with the idea of delimited uniformities. For Collingwood, some uniformities at the mind-as-thought level are transhistorical (i.e. transhistorical principles) and some uniformities at the mind-as-thought level are delimited, in scope and validity, to a definite period of time. Now Collingwood is well aware of the importance of delimited uniformities. He states:

> Types of behaviour do, no doubt, recur, so long as minds of the same kind are placed in the same kind of situations. The behaviour-patterns characteristic of a feudal baron were no doubt fairly constant so long as there were feudal barons living in a feudal society (IH, 223).

Collingwood, however, gives us the following warning:

But they will be sought in vain (except by an inquirer content with the loosest and most fanciful analogies) in a world whose social structure is of another kind. In order that behaviourpatterns may be constant, there must be in existence a social order which recurrently produces situations of a certain kind. But social orders are historical facts, and subject to inevitable changes, fast or slow. A positive science of mind will, no doubt, be able to establish uniformities and recurrences, but it can have no guarantee that the laws it establishes will hold good beyond the historical period from which its facts are drawn (IH, 223-224).

This point was made as early as "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" when it was claimed that uniformities "which pretend to be true of all history are, as a matter of fact, true only of certain phases in history" (NAPH, 35). What Collingwood is claiming is that there are no uniformities at the content level of mind-as-thought that apply to all phases in history. All uniformities at the content level of mind-asthought are delimited, in scope and validity, to a certain period of time. And Collingwood regards these historically localized uniformities as possible whenever there is a more or less common historical inheritance of thought.
Collingwood is not open to the objection that he is only left with delimited uniformities at the mind-as-thought level. As we have seen, he does have his transhistorical principles. So, it would be erroneous to claim, that for Collingwood, there is no identity in the long run between past and present. For him, there is an identity at the structural level of mind-as-thought. And as Collingwood puts it, "[a] mind which knows its own change, is by that very knowledge lifted above change" (SM, 301). As early as 1927, he attacked Spengler's thesis that cultures are closed or self-contained systems and that there is no identity between cultures. And in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, he attacks Toynbee for claiming that all societies are self-contained (IH, 162). Toynbee's error was in claiming that historical time is divided into "mutually exclusive parts". Toynbee, then, failed to see not only the identity between past and present, but also the "continuous development" from one point in historical time to another.

For Collingwood, it is impossible to hold the view that only delimited uniformities are possible. We actually need transhistorical principles before we could even talk of historically delimited uniformities. In other words, historically delimited uniformities already assume the adoption of transhistorical principles. For example, Collingwood tells us that the "presuppositions according to which Plato met the crisis of his age were false" (PA, 103). But before we can say that Plato held particular presuppositions, we first of all must accept the transhistorical principle that all human beings hold presuppositions. And in <u>An</u> <u>Autobiography</u> he asks: "How can we discover what the tactical problem was that Nelson set himself at Trafalgar?" (A, 70). But once again, before

we can ask this question, we must first of all accept the transhistorical principle that all human beings are problem-solvers. And again in <u>The</u> <u>Idea Of History</u>, he tells us that the historian "may begin by discovering the outside of an event, but it can never end there; he must always remember that the event was an action, and that his main task is to think himself into this action to discern the thought of the agent" (IH, 213). Once again, before we can talk of the actions of historical agents, we must first of all accept the transhistorical principle that all human beings are purposive beings. Whenever we use terms like 'presupposition', 'problem', 'action', 'thought', or 'situation', just to name a few, and apply them to historical periods other than our own, we are assuming transhistorical principles.

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter IV. In this second section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators in regard to issues arising out of our first section. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

In this second section we will make three major claims that arise directly out of the first section of Chapter IV. The three major claims of this chapter are as follows: (1) Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "Human Nature And Human History", (2) although Collingwood attacks a 'science' of human nature based on the methods of natural science, he has not relinquished the search for a science of human nature and (3) Collingwood is not committed to what we have called the radical dissimilarity thesis.

Let us turn to the first major claim of this chapter: Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "Human Nature And Human History". In this paper there is an important logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and historical explanation which no commentator has yet recognized mainly because most of them hold the late development thesis. Louis Mink, for example, accepts the late development thesis. Mink argues that the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed after the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history and that this theory only throws "retrospective" light on these papers.⁵³ And Mink argues that the theory of absolute presuppositions only throws retrospective light on the 'a priori' imagination and the problem of re-thinking thoughts in these papers.⁵⁴ There is no attempt made by Mink to work out the logical connection between this theory and the problem of historical explanation. Peter Skagestad also holds the late development thesis.⁵⁵ Skagestad thinks that the theory of absolute presuppositions is a theory of historical explanation and that this theory of absolute presuppositions is a completely different theory of historical explanation than the theory of re-enactment.⁵⁶ In fact, Skagestad says that the theory of re-enactment in The Idea Of

- 54. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 140, 182.
- 55. P. Skagestad, Making Sense of History, p. 71.
- 56. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 87.

^{53.} L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 140.

<u>History</u> "is self-contained without the theory of absolute presuppositions."⁵⁷ For Skagestad, there is a radical break on the subject of historical explanation between <u>The Idea Of History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Skagestad claims that Collingwood first of all offered the notion of re-enactment as a theory of historical explanation in <u>The Idea Of History</u> and then later in the late 1930's offered the theory of absolute presuppositions as an entirely different theory of historical explanation.

As we see it, the theory of historical explanation in <u>The Idea Of</u> <u>History</u> is not self-contained in such a way that this theory of historical explanation can be fully understood independently of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.⁵⁸ And we should add that other commentators besides Skagestad, including William Dray, Leon Goldstein and Rex Martin, treat <u>The Idea Of History</u> as though it were self-contained.⁵⁹ According to our interpretation, Skagestad is mistaken to claim that the notion of

- 58. Skagestad makes the further error of limiting Collingwood's theory of historical explanation to the notion of re-enactment.
- 59. See W. Dray, "R.G. Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Know-ledge", <u>Revue Internationale de Philosophie 11</u> (1957), 420-432; W. Dray, "Historical Understanding as Re-thinking", <u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u> 27 (1958), 200-215; W. Dray, "Historical Causation and Human Free Will", <u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u> 29 (1960), 357-369; W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u> (London, 1980); Leon Goldstein, "Collingwood on the Constitution of the Historical Past", in Krausz, ed., Essays, 241-267; Rex Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, (Ithaca, 1977). In "Historical Causation and Human Free Will", Dray does discuss the last section of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. And Dray does say that the historian uses the term 'cause' in Sense I (p. 363). But Dray does not call Sense I of the term 'cause' an absolute presupposition, and there is no attempt to relate this absolute presupposition to <u>The Idea Of History</u>. In fact, Dray does not mention the theory of absolute presuppositions in any of the above listed writings.

^{57.} Ibid., p. 85.

re-enactment in The Idea Of History is a completely different theory of historical explanation than the theory of absolute presuppositions. This claim is based on the view that the theory of absolute presuppositions itself is meant to be a theory of historical explanation. As we see it, absolute presuppositions underlie all attempts at a theory of historical explanation and the theory of absolute presuppositions itself is not to be seen as one attempt at a theory of historical explanation. There is no radical break on the subject of historical explanation between The Idea Of History and An Essay on Metaphysics, as Skagestad says. In "Human Nature And Human History", Collingwood uncovers the absolute presuppositions underlying different attempts at a theory of historical explanation. For example, he uncovers the absolute presuppositions underlying the positivistic attempt at a theory of historical explanation. And as we have seen, Collingwood regards this theory of historical explanation (and the absolute presuppositions that it rests on) as mistaken. In its place Collingwood offers an alternative theory of historical explanation. This alternative theory of historical explanation would rest on other absolute presuppositions, including the absolute presupposition 'man is free' (i.e. sense I of the term 'cause'). If we are right, Skagestad has failed to recognize the important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and any attempt at a theory of historical explanation.

There are two major commentators who reject the late development thesis, namely Lionel Rubinoff and W.J. Van Der Dussen. But neither Rubinoff nor Van Der Dussen recognize the important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical explanation. As we have seen earlier, Rubinoff interprets The Idea Of History in terms of the theoretical framework of <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>. It is our claim that Rubinoff's 'a priori' interpretative framework prevents him from seeing the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935.⁶⁰ And as we have seen earlier, Van Der Dussen's study of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts has led him to the view that the theory of absolute presuppositions dates back to 1934. But Van Der Dussen does not see the implications of this new evidence that suggests that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of the 1935-1936 papers on history. We agree with Van Der Dussen that we must put <u>The Idea Of History</u> into a broader context, but it is our claim that this context should include the theory of absolute presuppositions. By overlooking this important element, Van Der Dussen has failed to recognize the important new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935. Van Der Dussen does not see the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical explanation.⁶¹

^{60.} Rubinoff does make the suggestive comment that there is a relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and re-thinking thoughts. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform Of Metaphysics</u>, p. 305. But there is no attempt made by Rubinoff to systematically work out this suggestive claim. Nor is there any mention on Rubinoff's part to relate this suggestive comment to the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935.

^{61.} In fact, Van Der Dussen says that Collingwood "nowhere explicitly stated" that metaphysical problems cannot be separated from the study of history. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 65. But Collingwood did state explicitly that metaphysics cannot be separated from the study of history. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, pp. 3, 23, 43, 47; <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 98. In <u>The Idea Of History</u> when Collingwood uses the term 'metaphysics' we must remember what he means by 'metaphysics' in 1935-1936. Metaphysics in this 'period' of Collingwood's intellectual career is the science that studies absolute presuppositions. And, for him, metaphysics is only one branch of philosophy. See The Idea Of History, p. 3.

Let us turn to the second major claim of this chapter: although Collingwood attacks a 'science' of human nature that is based on the methods of natural science, he has not relinquished the search for a science of human nature. One of Collingwood's major aims in "Human Nature And Human History" is to evaluate critically the positivistic attempt at a science of human nature. According to Collingwood, the positivistic attempt at a science of human nature is based on absolute presuppositions which are metaphysically unacceptable.⁶² From this attack on a positivistic science of human nature, we must not conclude that Collingwood has relinquished the search for a true science of human nature. His claim is that we must adopt the methods of history if we want to attain a science of mind-as-thought, which for him, is the true science of human nature.

From this attack on the absolute presuppositions of positivism, we must not conclude that the methods of natural science are never to be used in our study of man. The science of <u>human</u> nature is only one component in a complete science of man. And it follows, from his claim that an action is the unity of the inside and outside, that, for Collingwood, the results of natural science will be of value when we are attempting to determine the outside of events. Now, for him, the results of natural science could not establish the outside of an event. This is the case because we would have to have historical evidence in order to

^{62.} In this chapter we are continuing our debate with Alan Donagan and other defenders of the irrationalist thesis. Absolute presuppositions are not being relinquished for bad reasons or for change's sake.

determine the outside of an event. But the results of natural science will be of value to the historian in determining the outside of an event to the extent that they will provide a framework for what is physically possible. The generalizations of natural science will place limits on what could possibly be the outside of an event.⁶³ This interpretation is quite consistent with Collingwood's claim that man has one foot in history and one foot in nature. For Collingwood, then, an adequate theory of action cannot ignore the fact that man has one foot in nature. We also find this point expressed in a paper entitled "The Present Need of a Philosophy" (1934). In this 1934 publication Collingwood says that man should not be conceived as "lifted clean out of nature nor yet as the plaything of natural forces,..."⁶⁴

A number of commentators have restricted the notion of an action to the inside of events. It would appear as though Alan Donagan is committed to this view because he says that, for Collingwood, history cannot incorporate any of the results of natural science.⁶⁵ W.H. Walsh also restricts the notion of an action to the inside of events. Walsh says that "[h]istorians describe what was going on in terms of thoughts or

65. A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 203. See also A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 205.

^{63.} Collingwood thinks that it is justifiable to take the absolute presupposition 'all mere events happen according to law' to our evidence in order to help us establish the outside of events.

^{64.} R.G. Collingwood, "The Present Need of a Philosophy", <u>Philosophy</u> 9 (1934), p. 265.

purposes; their central concept is the concept of action."⁶⁶ Leon Goldstein seems to be following Donagan and Walsh when he claims that, for Collingwood, the results of natural science are of no value in history. Goldstein claims that Collingwood contradicts himself because he sometimes uses covering law explanations implicitly and that this is inconsistent with his notion of re-enactment.⁶⁷ As we see it, Collingwood is not contradicting himself. Although Collingwood does reject the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law', because this absolute presupposition rules out the important notion of re-enactment, he does not reject the absolute presupposition that 'all mere events happen according to law'. Since the inside of an event is not a mere event, Collingwood is not ruling out the notion of re-enactment by adopting this absolute presupposition. And with the absolute presupposition that 'all mere events happen according to law', Collingwood can still consistently use covering law explanations when he is dealing with mere events. For Collingwood, when we are dealing with the outside of events,

66. (i) W.H. Walsh, Essays, p. 150.

67. L. Goldstein, Essays, p. 243.

⁽ii) Walsh says that Collingwood is ruling out generalizations in history. See W.H. Walsh, Essays, pp. 150, 153. We agree with Van Der Dussen that Walsh is mistaken on this point. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 118. Van Der Dussen is correct, as we see it, that, for Collingwood, history is not exempt from generalizations. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 42, 47-48.
(iii) Walsh says that, for Collingwood, "the social sciences are either impossible or otiose." See W.H. Walsh, Essays, p. 150. But the unpublished manuscripts clearly show that Collingwood is not ruling out the social sciences. Collingwood's point in these manuscripts was that the social sciencity should use the methods of history when he is studying the inside of events. It is interesting to note that we should consult the works of Evans-Pritchard for a working out of Collingwood's ideas on social science. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 411 for a reference to Evans-Pritchard.

covering law explanations (or what we have called Cause III explanations) can be of value. And, according to Collingwood, re-enactment alone cannot give us a complete explanation of an action in the past. This is the case because a genuine Cause I explanation would only give us the inside of an event and would not be a complete explanation of the whole action.⁶⁸

When Collingwood offers his what-why paradox (i.e. when an historian knows what happened he also knows why it happened), this paradox is only to be seen in reference to Cause I explanations. One commentator who fails to recognize that this paradox only applies to the inside of events is Alan Donagan. Donagan says that Collingwood meant by the paradox that when we know the outside of an event (i.e. what happened) we will know the 'why' of the inside.⁶⁹ Donagan goes on to claim that this position is unacceptable. Donagan is correct to point out that this

69. A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 201.

⁽i) Goldstein says that re-enactment has nothing to do with explana-68. tion. See L. Goldstein, Essays, pp. 244-245. Goldstein seems to be following Danto in claiming that Collingwood distinguished between understanding and explanation. See R. Martin, Historical Explanation, p. 43. Actually, re-enactment is a type of explanation for Collingwood. Re-enactment is a Cause I explanation. But Cause I explanations are logically distinct from Cause III explanations. In fact, Collingwood collapsed the terms 'understanding' and 'explanation' both in reference to Cause I and Cause III explanations. On the collapsing of the terms 'understanding' and 'explanation' in reference to Cause III explanations see the unpublished manuscript "Reality as History" (1935), p. 14. (ii) On the issue of whether or not Collingwood overintellectualizes history by excluding from it natural events and processes, we are in basic agreement with Louis Mink, William Dray, and W.J. Van Der Dussen. Mink, Dray, and Van Der Dussen think that the charge of overintellectualism against Collingwood is exaggerated. See L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 160. (Although Mink does slip on page 171.) See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, pp. 9-10. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, pp. 42, 47-48.

position is unacceptable, but he fails to recognize that this is not Collingwood's position. Donagan's interpretation of the paradox is based on the collapse of Cause I and Cause III explanations which Collingwood would reject. Leon Goldstein follows Donagan in thinking that the paradox refers to the whole action. Goldstein interprets Collingwood to mean that when we know what the outside of the event was, we will know the 'why' of the inside. Goldstein states: "[W]here he had a perplexing body of evidence, we now have a conception of 'what' happened. 'Why' that sort of thing could happen in a situation of the sort that existed, is something else again."⁷⁰ Once again this interpretation is based on the failure to recognize that the paradox only refers to the inside of events. Louis Mink also misunderstands the paradox. Mink says that the full description of an action is at the same time its explanation.⁷¹ But once again this interpretation is based on the view that Collingwood is referring to the whole action when he offers his paradox. As we see it, this is a mistaken interpretation of Collingwood's position. If we wanted to use Mink's language, it would be more accurate to say that, for Collingwood, if we had a full description of the inside of an event (i.e. the thought-side of an event) we would have at the same time its

^{70.} L. Goldstein, <u>Essays</u>, p. 262. See also L. Goldstein, <u>Essays</u>, pp. 242, 261.

^{71.} See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, p. 17.

explanation.⁷²

Let us turn to the third major claim of this chapter: Collingwood is not committed to what we have called the radical dissimilarity thesis. By the radical dissimilarity thesis, we mean the contention that the development and differentiation of mind (i.e. mind-as-thought) in historical process results in a marked heterogeneity over time in the thoughts and deeds of human beings. According to this radical dissimilarity thesis, all historical periods are radically dissimilar in the sense that there is no identity at any level in the long run between past and present. As we see it, Collingwood is not committed to this thesis. Although Collingwood was well aware of the importance of delimited uniformities, he is not committed to the view that one can only have delimited uniformities. In the first section of this chapter we argued that Collingwood does hold the view that some principles of thought do apply to all 'periods' of history. For example, the logic of question and answer is transhistorical for Collingwood. According to Collingwood, the logic of question and

^{72.} (i) It would appear as though William Dray agrees with Donagan, Goldstein, and Mink that the paradox refers to the whole action. See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, pp. 15-19. This is not to say that Donagan, Goldstein, Mink, and Dray agree on every point in their understanding of the paradox. What we are saying is that they all agree that the paradox refers to the whole action. (ii) William Dray does see the importance of the logic of question and answer when we are attempting to understand the what-why paradox. See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, p. 18. But he fails to point out that absolute presuppositions are an integral part of this logic of question and answer. In this chapter we have also tried to relate the theory of absolute presuppositions to this paradox. It is also important to point out that, given our analysis in the first section of this chapter, Dray is mistaken to collapse 'what' and 'why' questions in natural science (i.e. Cause III explanations that deal with mere events). As we see it, 'what' and 'why' questions only collapse with Cause I explanations.

answer is not limited, in scope and validity, to a definite period of time. The logic of question and answer is one identity at the mind-asthought level that operates in the long run between past and present.

One commentator who holds the radical dissimilarity thesis is Alan Donagan. Donagan says that, for Collingwood, "no system of laws of human behaviour in any department of life would hold good in all periods of human history."⁷³ W.H. Walsh also holds the radical dissimilarity thesis. Walsh interprets Collingwood as having said that "there are no 'eternal truths' about human nature, only truths about the way in which human beings behaved at this epoch or that. There are no eternal truths about human nature...because human nature is constantly changing."⁷⁴ Louis Mink also accepts this thesis. Mink says that Collingwood is committed to the view that "there is no fixed or determinate human nature."⁷⁵ There is one other major commentator who accepts the radical dissimilarity thesis, namely Rex Martin. According to Martin, Collingwood argued against the "idea of an 'identity of nature' between men at

75. L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 10.

^{73.} Donagan not only holds the radical dissimilarity thesis at the mind-as-thought level, but holds this thesis at the mind-as-feeling level. Donagan thinks that Collingwood is committed to the view that there are no laws even at the level of man's animal nature. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 234. Rex Martin correctly points out that Donagan is mistaken to claim that, for Collingwood, there are no laws at the mind-as-feeling level. See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 36. But, as we will see shortly, Martin fails to recognize that Collingwood does not hold the radical dissimilarity thesis at the mind-as-thought level.

^{74.} See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 30. See also W.H. Walsh, <u>Essays</u>, p. 150.

different times."⁷⁶ Martin says that "the 'fundamental invariance' of the 'structure of human nature' was the very thing that Collingwood denied."⁷⁷ For Martin, what Collingwood is left with is "a transhistorical heterogeneity in the phenomena of human thought and action."⁷⁸ According to Martin, then, one of Collingwood's primary assumptions is transhistorical, or cross-cultural, difference at the mind-as-thought level.

We think that Martin is right to point out the importance of delimited uniformities for Collingwood. Martin does say that Collingwood believed "that historically localized generalizations, delimited statements about the thought and action of agents at a given stage in historical process, could be framed."⁷⁹ As we see it, Collingwood did contend that there were regular patterns of thought and action common to men at any given stage in the historical process and that this did allow for the use of historically delimited generalizations. But, given our analysis in the first section of this chapter, Martin is mistaken to claim that Collingwood wanted to replace the idea of transhistorical generalizations with the idea of historically delimited generalizations.⁸⁰

- 79. R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 46. And Martin is well aware of the fact that these historically delimited generalizations are not to be understood as being identical to the generalizations of natural science.
- 80. <u>Ibid</u>., p. 46.

^{76.} R. Martin, Historical Explanation, p. 18.

^{77.} Ibid., p. 18.

^{78. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>., p. 29.

As we see it, Collingwood did not rule out transhistorical general principles. as Martin claims.⁸¹ If we are right, Collingwood argued that some generalizations are historically delimited and that some generalizations are transhistorical. Martin seems to think that since Collingwood rejected the claim that the generalizations of natural science could be applied to mind-as-thought, that Collingwood is necessarily committed to the view that only historically delimited generalizations are possible. In other words, Martin thinks that since Collingwood rejects what we have called the analogy thesis, that Collingwood is necessarily committed to the view that transhistorical generalizations are impossible. We would want to argue that Martin's argument on this point does not follow. By rejecting the analogy thesis, one is not necessarily committed to the radical dissimilarity thesis. Even though Collingwood does not think that mental phenomena can be reduced to natural phenomena, he is not logically committed to the position that all historical periods are radically dissimilar. Although Collingwood rejects the analogy thesis, he still argues for transhistorical principles.⁸²

It would be correct to say that W.J. Van Der Dussen rejects

81. Ibid., p. 221.

82. Martin says that Collingwood's position would lead to scepticism in regard to the possibility of re-enactment. See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 222. If Collingwood did hold the radical dissimilarity thesis, then Martin's conclusion would follow. But given our analysis, Collingwood does not hold the radical dissimilarity thesis. Collingwood does have his transhistorical principles and therefore it would appear as though Collingwood is not necessarily committed to a sceptical position in regard to re-enactment.

the radical dissimilarity thesis.⁸³ But Van Der Dussen offers no interpretation of Collingwood to justify this position. Van Der Dussen quotes Collingwood saying: "There is a kind of pre-established harmony between the historian's mind and the object which he sets out to study; but this pre-established harmony, unlike that of Leibniz, is not based on a miracle--it is based on the common nature uniting the historian with the men whose work he is studying" (IH, 65). But, then, Van Der Dussen remarks: "On the character of this common human nature, however, Collingwood does not elaborate."⁸⁴ According to our interpretation, this "preestablished harmony" that Collingwood speaks about in The Idea Of History, is based on the claim that there is a "common human nature" at the structural level of mind-as-thought. And this structural level of mind-asthought is composed of Collingwood's transhistorical principles. These transhistorical principles describe man's common human nature and allow for this pre-established harmony between the historian and the men he is studying. For example, the logic of question and answer, that all men use, implicitly or explicitly, would partially account for this preestablished harmony. The logic of question and answer is transhistorical and allows the historian to be united with not only other historians but

^{83.} It also appears as though P.H. Nowell-Smith rejects the radical dissimilarity thesis. In a conversation (April, 1979), Nowell-Smith suggested that Collingwood is in the Aristotelian tradition. Nowell-Smith adds: "For Collingwood, man is a rational animal. This is what distinguishes man from the rest of the animals. Aristotle and Collingwood are looking for what is distinctively human. This is why Collingwood talks of man's human nature and not his animal nature."

^{84.} W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 341.

historical agents. Transhistorical principles provide the historian with an identity between past and present, and this identity allows for the possibility of re-enactment. Now Van Der Dussen does say that the primitive mind has a rationality of its own, but he does not relate this claim to Collingwood's transhistorical principles, including the logic of question and answer.⁸⁵ Van Der Dussen makes no mention of Collingwood's transhistorical principles that provide the historian with a uniformity at the structural level of mind-as-thought. Van Der Dussen does not recognize that, for Collingwood, at the structural level of mind-as-thought, human nature remains the same, and that, at the content level of mind-as-thought (to which only delimited uniformities apply), human nature is changing.⁸⁶

In the next chapter we will turn to "The Historical Imagination". The apparent fact that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of this paper leads us to see "The Historical Imagination" in a new light.

^{85. &}lt;u>Ibid</u>., p. 340.

^{86.} Van Der Dussen is correct to claim that, for Collingwood, man has a common emotional nature. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 340. As we would put Van Der Dussen's point, Collingwood rejected the radical dissimilarity thesis at the mind-as-feeling level. But Van Der Dussen collapses mind-as-thought and mind-asfeeling. See History As A Science, pp. 340-341. Van Der Dussen thinks that since Collingwood argued for common emotional aspects that this demonstrates that Collingwood believed that there was a common human nature. But the fact that Collingwood believed that man has a common emotional nature would only establish that Collingwood thought that there was a uniformity at the mind-as-feeling level. And Van Der Dussen's claim that, for Collingwood, man has a permanent emotional nature would not allow for the possibility of re-thinking. According to our analysis, only uniformities at the mind-as-thought level (both transhistorical uniformities and delimited uniformities) would allow for the possibility of re-thinking. See Chapter VII of this thesis.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

In the first section of Chapter V we will examine Collingwood's "The Historical Imagination". We will continue our analysis of the important new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936 and offer a re-interpretation of the "'a priori' imagination". In the second section of this chapter we will argue against Louis Mink's claim that the 'a priori' imagination is an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. And we will argue against Alan Donagan's claim that Collingwood revised his doctrine of the 'a priori' imagination' in the light of his theory of absolute presuppositions. Both Mink's and Donagan's interpretation of the 'a priori' imagination is based on what we have earlier called the late development thesis.

Ι

"The Historical Imagination" (Oxford, 1935) is the Inaugural Lecture which Collingwood delivered in October 1935 as Waynflete Professor of Metaphysical Philosophy. Although "The Historical Imagination" had already been published in 1935, Sir Malcolm Knox

decided to add this paper to Part V of <u>The Idea Of History</u>.¹ Like "Human Nature And Human History", "The Historical Imagination" is an attempt to make the history of the idea of history intelligible.

Collingwood begins by saying that it is a "legitimate" undertaking for philosophers to reflect on the nature of historical thinking. And not only is this reflection a legitimate undertaking, at the present time, it is a "necessary" undertaking (IH, 231). It would be correct to say that Collingwood is following Dilthey in the attempt to construct a Critique of Historical Reason. This critique would include an examination of the absolute presuppositions underlying historical thinking and include an examination of the nature, subject-matter, and method of history. And this critique will throw some new light on the traditional problems of philosophy.² Following the attempts made, "chiefly in Germany and Italy", we must answer the questions: "What is historical thinking? and What light does it throw on the traditional problems of philosophy?

^{1. &}lt;u>The Idea Of History</u> comes close to the format of Croce's '<u>Teoria e</u> <u>Storia della Storiografia</u>'. See "Croce's Philosophy of History", p. 5. There is one important difference between <u>The Idea Of History</u> and Croce's '<u>Teoria e Storia della Storiografia</u>'. In Croce's work, the theoretical section precedes the historical section, whereas, in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, the historical section precedes the theoretical section. But it must be remembered that <u>The Idea Of History</u> was edited by Knox. (Collingwood did call the theoretical section of the manuscript "metaphysical epilegomena".) This format of putting the historical section before the theoretical section is actually quite consistent with Collingwood's claim that reflective work should come at the end of a study. So Collingwood would have certainly approved of Knox's decision.

^{2.} This is not to say that the traditional problems of philosophy have remained the same in all respects. In the first paragraph of "The Historical Imagination", Collingwood says that, "in part, the problems of philosophy are unchanging; in part they vary from age to age" (IH, 231).

and by answering these questions to do for the historical consciousness of to-day what Kant's transcendental analytic did for the scientific consciousness of the eighteenth century" (IH, 232-233). Just as Kant's <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u> explored the foundation of the scientific consciousness of his day, so Collingwood's Critique of Historical Reason will explore the foundation of the historical consciousness of to-day.³

Collingwood tells us that English philosophers ignore historical thinking either because they think that history is a pseudo-science that "is not knowledge at all but only opinion", or because they think that the science of history calls for "no special treatment" (IH, 233). Collingwood thinks that the ignoring of historical thinking for either of these reasons is the result of positivistic absolute presuppositions. In the case of those who claim that the science of history calls for no special treatment, the reason for their view is that they think that historical explanation should be based on the model of explanation used in the natural sciences. For these English philosophers, then, history, "so far as it is knowledge, its problems are those of knowledge in general,...(IH, 233). According to Collingwood, English philosophers have totally overlooked the important role of the "historical imagination".

^{3.} There is one major difference between Dilthey's and Collingwood's attempt at a Critique of Historical Reason. Dilthey, following in the Kantian tradition, thought that one could discover the permanent categories of the historical consciousness. Collingwood, on the other hand, attempts to uncover the historically delimited categories of the historical consciousness. We should add that Collingwood's historically delimited categories of the historical consciousness are not to be confused with Collingwood's transhistorical principles. Collingwood's transhistorical principles could be seen as a critique at another level of analysis.

This is the reason that Collingwood tells us that we must follow the lead of European philosophers, chiefly in Germany and Italy, and reflect on the historical imagination.⁴

The accounts of knowledge given by English philosophers, Collingwood says, seem to be based "primarily on the study of perception and of scientific thinking" (IH, 233). And not only do English philosophers "ignore historical thinking", their accounts of knowledge are "actually inconsistent" with there being historical thinking at all. Now Collingwood does say that there are similarities between history and natural science in regard to methodology. For example, in both history and natural science "knowledge is inferential or reasoned" (IH, 234). And Collingwood does say that there is one similarity between history and perception in regard to the "object" of study. Both historical thinking and perception has for its "object something individual" (IH, 233). But, he adds that historical thinking cannot be completely based on the model of perception. This is the case because only when objects "are no longer perceptible do they become objects for historical thought (IH, 233). Objects for historical thought, he says, "are events which have finished happening, and conditions no longer in existence" (IH, 233). It is clear that Collingwood is speaking about the outside of events at this point

^{4.} Actually this trend of ignoring the historical imagination among English philosophers (and even English-speaking philosophers) has continued to the present day. The debate among English-speaking philosophers of history centres around the problem of historical explanation. This is evident in the debate between the defenders of the covering law model of historical explanation, the defenders of the rational model of historical explanation, and the defenders of the dialectical materialist model of historical explanation.

because the inside of events are never perceptible at any time. This is the only interpretation that is consistent with Collingwood's claim that these objects "are no longer perceptible". So at this point Collingwood is rejecting what could be called the direct observation principle. The direct observation principle is simply inconsistent with there being such a thing as historical thinking about the outside of events because the historian can never perceive the outside of past events. But, Collingwood also rejects the claim that perception should be the model for historical thinking for another reason. And this reason is that the inside of events (i.e. thought-side of events) were never perceptible and will never be perceptible. So when Collingwood rejects those "theories that take acquaintance as the essence of knowledge" because they "make historian cannot perceive the outside of past events and (2) the historian can never at any time perceive the inside of events.⁵

Although the objects of historical thought are not objects of perception, these objects are referred to in something "here and now"

^{5.} We are criticizing William Dray implicitly at this point. Dray says that historical objects cannot be perceived because historical objects have a thought-side, not because these historical objects are no longer going on. See W. Dray, "R.G. Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge", <u>Revue Internationale de Philosophie</u> 11 (1957), p. 426. On this point, Dray apparently is limiting the term 'action' to the thought-side of the event. Dray is right that, for Collingwood, we can never perceive the inside of events. But Dray overlooks the fact that Collingwood also rejected the model of perception for the outside of past events because past events are no longer perceptible. Dray may have overlooked this point because he only discusses "Human Nature And Human History" and "History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience" in his paper and does not discuss "The Historical Imagination". We should add, however, that Dray usually does not limit the term 'action' to the inside of events.

which is perceptible, namely evidence. The historian can perceive evidence here and now which refers to the inside of events and the outside of past events. For Collingwood, the historian is always placed in the present. He can only indirectly study the objects of his science with the use of evidence. And although the historian can perceive evidence here and now, Collingwood does not assimilate historical knowing to the perception of evidence. Evidence does not exist ready-made before the historian begins the process of interpreting it. Evidence must always be selected in accordance with the historian's presuppositions and questions.⁶

If an historian wishes to be scientific, he should not blindly accept any piece of evidence. Collingwood says that the scientific historian should "tamper" with all evidence, including the evidence offered by so-called authorities. He points out that the truly scientific historian consciously tampers with what he finds in his 'authorities' in three ways. "He selects from them what he thinks important, and omits the rest; he interpolates in them things which they do not explicitly

^{6.} In this paragraph we are criticizing Alan Donagan implicitly. Donagan has argued that Collingwood "assimilated knowing to seeing." See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 287. Although historical thought is in one way like perception, Collingwood does not assimilate knowing to seeing. Donagan's interpretation would only be correct if Collingwood did believe in ready-made facts. It would be correct to say that Collingwood is in the Platonic tradition on this point when he rejects the assimilation of knowledge to perception. It will be recalled that Plato in the <u>Thaetetus</u> rejected the claim that knowledge is sensation. It is also important to point out that Collingwood rejected the assimilation of knowledge to perception for another reason that is directly related to his rejection of ready-made facts. For Collingwood, perception is limited by the historian's presuppositions and questions. This is the reason that Collingwood says that "no two historians start from the same 'data of immediate perception'" (NAPH, 53). For Collingwood, the perception of evidence has a history.

say; and he criticizes them by rejecting or amending what he regards as due to misinformation or mendacity" (IH, 235). This is why Collingwood rejects the "common-sense theory" of history, a theory of history which states that the historian should never tamper with what he finds in his authorities in any way. The common-sense theory assumes that there are authorities who can give us ready-made facts. What this theory fails to account for is the important subjective element in all historical thinking. And for Collingwood, what this important subjective element would include is the fact that the historian tampers with his authorities whether he is aware of this or not. History, to be, must always be seen from a particular perspective. As we have seen elsewhere, this is a "law of our nature" (CPH, 11).⁷ In fact, it is not even desirable that the historian not tamper with his authorities. To give up tampering with our authorities would be to give up the search for the truth.

Since tampering is a law of our nature, the tenets of the commonsense theory of history (or what Collingwood sometimes calls "scissorsand-paste-history") cannot in the strict sense be adhered to. The historian always selects from his authorities. And this selection process will always depend on what questions that the historian puts to his authorities, even if the historian is not fully conscious of these questions. It will be recalled that questions only arise because we hold presuppositions. Since this is the case for Collingwood, the selection process will always be dependent on a particular perspective which is

^{7.} This would be a law of our human nature and not a generalization of natural science.

logically regulated by the presuppositions that the historian holds.

The historian also tampers with his authorities by filling in the gaps left to him by his authorities. This act of filling in what is unsaid Collingwood calls "historical construction" or "interpolation". For example, if an authority says that Caesar was in Rome on a certain date and in Gaul on a later date, the historian can imagine a journey from one place to the other in order to fill out his picture of the past. This imaginative act of historical construction allows the historian to fill out his picture of the past with statements which are left unsaid. But these statements must always be logically inferred from the evidence. So, if we are told that Caesar was in Rome on a certain date, and that he was in Gaul on a later date, we can logically infer from our evidence that he journeyed from one place to the other. As Collingwood sees it, this is one advantage over the common-sense theory of history because with the common-sense theory the historian is not allowed to fill in the gaps that his authorities have left him with. When the historian is engaged in this imaginative act of historical construction, he is not "depending on his authorities". In fact, for Collingwood, the historian himself is his only "authority" and he must take responsibility for everything that goes into his picture of the past. The historian's "socalled authorities" are really "not authorities at all but only evidence" (IH, 237). All so-called authorities hold presuppositions and therefore approach their subject-matter from a particular perspective. And although the accounts of the past given to us by these 'authorities' may be true, it is not the case that these 'authorities' possess ready-made facts. It should also be noted that an historian's perspective, which is founded

on presuppositions, will logically regulate who the historian considers to be an 'authority'.

As with the selection process, all historical construction depends on the presuppositions, including absolute presuppositions, that an historian holds. If an historian is a positivist, he is going to construct the past in terms of the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law'. For example, when Spengler "plugged a hole" in his knowledge by inventing a fact, what he invented was not an individual but simply an instance of some general law (PhH, 132). Spengler's positivistic absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law' leads him to claim that "every idea will take the same number of years to develop through its different phases and exhaust its possibilities, no matter what idea it is" (SHC, 72). According to Collingwood, Spengler has failed to study history from within because he reduces history to nature. It is clear that Collingwood rejects Spengler's method of plugging holes with claims that arise from the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law'. Spengler ends up plugging holes only with mere events. So, for Collingwood, just as we can evaluate critically the selection process of another historian, we can evaluate critically the imaginative acts of historical construction given to us by another historian. This brings us to the third and last type of tampering.

For Collingwood, all so-called authorities must, as it were, be placed in a "witness-box" and cross-examined until the historian uncovers what he wants to know. So-called authorities do not give ready-made answers, but must be questioned for answers. In the type of tampering

called "historical criticism" the "autonomous" character of history is clearly exhibited; the historian must question his sources in order to elicit answers. Just as the natural scientist finds his proper method when he, "in Bacon's metaphor, puts Nature to the question", so the historian must use the logic of question and answer by putting his authorities in the witness-box and "cross-questioning" them (IH, 237). In contrast to the common-sense theory of history, by adhering to Baconian questioning it is possible to uncover facts in seemingly remote or obscure historical subjects. So, for Collingwood, the truly scientific historian can discover facts heretofore unknown. And not only can he discover facts heretofore unknown, he can rediscover facts which have been forgotten.

The result of Collingwood's analysis of the content of historical studies is that there are no "fixed points" in the strict sense of the term. In other words, there are no givens that the historian can start with. All so-called fixed points are subject to historical criticism. The historian's thought is autonomous because he can question any so-called authority to see whether the authority's statements can be fitted into a coherent account of the past. What the historian is left with is a construction of a network of presuppositions, and answers to questions, none fixed, and all dependent upon each other. The historian's picture of the past, then, according to Collingwood, is "freed from its dependence on fixed points supplied from without;..." (IH, 245).

We now see more clearly the reason why Collingwood rejected the common-sense theory of history that is based on memory and authority. The common-sense historian did not raise any questions that could not be answered in his sources. In other words, the common-sense historian

claimed that we should only ask those questions which our authorities could answer. The common-sense historian did use the logic of question and answer, but he did not use this logic in a critical fashion. What Collingwood has attempted to demonstrate is that the methodology of Baconian questioning must be adopted in historical studies. But it is important to point out that Bacon himself did not transcend common-sense history. Bacon only put his critical questioning to Nature. For Bacon, "historical knowledge is at bottom simply remembering, and what we cannot remember we must take on authority from those who do or did" (PH, 126, IH, 58). Thus for Bacon, "[m]emory and authority...form the double root of all history" (PH, 126). This is the reason why Collingwood says that Bacon's theory of history is quite "simple". Now, although Bacon's theory of history is unacceptable, we can adopt the tenets of Baconian questioning in our study of the past. The historian should use Baconian tenets and force his authorities to answer the questions he puts to them. And these questions that he puts to his authorities must not be "blind and random", but asked in an orderly fashion where "definite questions" are asked and definite answers insisted upon" (A, 124). It will be recalled that systematic and orderly questioning was insisted upon in An Essay on Metaphysics. Unlike the common-sense theory of history, then, questions must always be asked in a methodical and critical fashion. And all answers must be recognized explicitly as answers to questions in a question and answer complex where this complex includes relative and absolute presuppositions.

Collingwood turns to a discussion of the "criterion of historical truth". We have already seen that Collingwood rejects the criterion of

historical truth offered by the common-sense theory of history. According to the common-sense theory of history, the criterion of historical truth is "the agreement of the statements made by the historian with those which he finds in his authorities" (IH, 238). Since this account appears to be mistaken, it is important, Collingwood says, to seek another criterion of historical truth because "we cannot renounce the search" (IH, 238). One answer to the question of the criterion of historical truth was offered by "the greatest English philosopher of our time", namely F.H. Bradley, in "The Presuppositions of Critical History" (1874). Although Collingwood regards "The Presuppositions of Critical History" as unsatisfactory and inconclusive, this essay does bear "the stamp of his genius". Bradley's essay "remains memorable for the fact that in it the Copernican revolution in the theory of historical knowledge has been in principle accomplished" (IH, 240). And by this, Collingwood means that Bradley, in principle, has successfully attacked the common-sense theory of history. In this essay, Bradley deals with the question of "how it is possible for the historian, in defiance of the common-sense theory, to turn the tables on his so-called authorities and to say 'This is what our authorities record, but what really happened must have been not this but that'" (IH, 239).

It is our claim that Collingwood was led to examine (or re-examine) Bradley's "The Presuppositions of Critical History" in 1935 in "The Historical Imagination" because he had developed his theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of "The Historical Imagination".8 As we see it, Collingwood did not examine Bradley's essay in "The Historical Imagination" before he worked out his theory of absolute presuppositions, as the defenders of the late development thesis might suggest. Bradley's essay deals with the presuppositions of history and this is the major reason for Collingwood's saving that this essav "remains memorable". And when Collingwood says that the "Copernican revolution" had been "in principle accomplished" in Bradley's essay, it is the revolution at the presupposition level of historical thinking that Collingwood is mainly referring to. Bradley was one of the very few English philosophers who took the subject of the presuppositions of history seriously and this partially accounts for Collingwood's high regard for Bradley's work. But, as Collingwood will point out, Bradley's analysis is coloured too much by the tenets of positivism. So although Bradley attempted to uncover the presuppositions of history, Collingwood is of the opinion that Bradley did not 'dig' deep enough.

Although there are many points of agreement between Bradley and

^{8. (}i) Although Bradley's essay was published in 1874, there is no serious examination of Bradley's essay in any of Collingwood's papers on history prior to the mid-1930's. (ii) It is interesting to note that Collingwood delivered a Balliol lecture on Bradley in January of 1934. This lecture dealt with metaphysics and cosmology. In 1934 Collingwood was just completing his intensive study of metaphysics and cosmology that began in 1932.

Collingwood⁹, Collingwood does say that there are many objections to Bradley's position. Bradley did attack positivism, but his fight against the tyranny of natural science, Collingwood says, did not go far enough. According to Collingwood, Bradley did not move far enough away from the absolute presuppositions of positivism in his analysis of history. Bradley had claimed that history must be based on the presupposition of "the universality of law, the assumption of the essential uniformity of nature and the course of events."¹⁰ At this point Bradley made a mistaken concession to positivism. For Collingwood, history in the proper sense cannot be based on the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law'. Now, it will be recalled that, for Collingwood, all

10. F.H. Bradley, <u>Critical History</u>, ed., Rubinoff, pp. 96-99. See also L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 355.

^{9.} The points of agreement between Bradley and Collingwood are as follows: (1) rejection of the common-sense theory of history, (2) the philosophy of history should reflect on the foundation of history, (3) discussion of the historical imagination, as well as the problem of historical explanation, (4) testimony is to be regarded as evidence, (5) evidence must be here and now before us (See F.H. Bradley, The Presuppositions of Critical History, ed., L. Rubinoff, (Toronto, 1968) p. 109.), (6) evidence must be critically interpreted according to a criterion which is no other than the historian himself, (7) an historical witness is the "son of his time", (8) historical world is one (See F.H. Bradley, <u>Critical History</u>, ed., Rubinoff, p. 97.) and (9) some presuppositions are "absolute" (See F.H. Bradley, <u>Critical History</u>, ed., Rubinoff, p. 97.). This list is not meant to be exhaustive and some of the points of agreement do overlap. To avoid a possible misunderstanding, we should point out that Bradley and Collingwood disagree on what they mean by an absolute presupposition, although they both speak about absolute presuppositions. For Bradley, an absolute presupposition is a given. For Collingwood, an absolute presupposition is 'accepted' as a given. For this reason, An Essay on Metaphysics can be seen as an attack on Bradley's notion of an absolute presupposition. It is interesting to note that some commentators, for example, Alan Donagan, think that they are attacking Collingwood's notion of an absolute presupposition, when in fact, they are really attacking Bradley's notion of an absolute presupposition.

mere events happen according to law. As Collingwood says, the "laws of nature have always been the same, and what is against nature now was against nature two thousand years ago;..." (IH, 239).¹¹ But, as Collingwood goes on to say, historical conditions (or mind-as-thought) cannot be studied as natural conditions (or mere events) are studied. He tells us that "the historical as distinct from the natural condition of man's life differ so much at different times that no argument from analogy will hold" (IH, 239). Collingwood adds: "That the Greeks and Romans exposed their new-born children in order to control the numbers of their population is no less true for being unlike anything that happens in the experience of contributors to the Cambridge Ancient History" (IH, 240). As Collingwood sees it, Bradley's claim that the "future will resemble the past" (IH, 139), which, for him, arises from the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law', is inappropriate when we are studying mind-as-thought. It is for this reason that Collingwood rejected Bradley's acceptance of what we have called the analogy thesis. The criterion that the historian brings to history should not be the experience of a natural scientist, as Bradley assumes. Once we study history from within, as Collingwood says that we should, we will recognize that the content of mind-as-thought or human experience is not uniform throughout history. Collingwood does say that Bradley came close to recognizing this point when he said that the historical "witness is always a son of his time" (IH, 138). But for Collingwood, this claim of Bradley's

^{11.} Although nature has no history, man's conception of nature has a history. See <u>The Idea Of Nature</u>.

was really inconsistent with his acceptance of the analogy thesis.

Bradley thinks that he is giving us the presupposition of history when he claims that all events happen according to law. Collingwood rejects this claim for at least two reasons. The first reason is a philosophical reason. As Collingwood argues, Bradley's claim is not the presupposition of history because this presupposition only holds for natural conditions (or mere events). Collingwood's second reason for rejecting Bradley's claim is an historical reason. What Bradley calls the presupposition of history is only an absolute presupposition that a positivistic historian holds when he is studying the past. The absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law' has not been held by all historians. For example, in Greco-Roman historiography, this absolute presupposition was not held. In fact, this absolute presupposition was not held by historians until the time of Bury and Buckle. Although Bradley failed to see the changes in absolute presuppositions and the logicoregulative nature of these absolute presuppositions, it would still be correct to say that Bradley was a metaphysician in the Collingwoodian sense of the term. Bradley uncovered an absolute presupposition underlying all of the experience had by positivistic historians.

Bradley rejects all testimony about alleged happenings which are not analogous with his own experience. According to Bradley, when statements are made about happenings which are, according to an historian's experience, impossible, they should be disbelieved. We have already seen that Bradley gave us the experience had by the natural scientist of his day. Bradley's experience placed logical limits on what Bradley conceived to be possible and not to be possible. It was for this reason that Bradley

was compelled to reject miracles. Miracles did not square with Bradley's experience. It would be correct to say that when Bradley rejected the claim that miraculous events happen, what he was really doing was rejecting one absolute presupposition (i.e. 'miraculous events happen') by means of reasons that arose from other absolute presuppositions that he did hold (eg. 'all events happen according to law'). Thus, we see the reason that Bradley agreed with the Biblical criticism as developed by the Tubingen school when it rejected the claim that miracles happen. Under the leadership of F.C. Baur and David Strauss, a school of theologians had sprung up at Tubingen with the explicit aim of subjecting the narratives of the New Testament to the rigorous test of the new methods of historical criticism (IH, 135). They wanted to eliminate the miraculous and superstitious elements in Christian teaching. In this way, what survived of orthodoxy could rest on the foundation of solid ascertained fact. For example, Strauss had written a life of Jesus from which the miraculous was eliminated. Now, since Bradley in "The Presuppositions of Critical History" set about "investigating philosophically their [Tubingen school] methods and the principles on which they depend" (IH, 137), it is no wonder that he lapsed into posivivism. As Collingwood says: "These German theologians had applied the new methods of historical criticism to the narratives of the New Testament, and the result was very destructive to belief in the credibility of those narratives. The destructiveness of this result, however, was due not simply to the use of critical methods, but to the positivistic spirit in which those methods were used" (IH, 135). Although the Tübingen school correctly rejected the criterion of historical truth offered by the common-sense theory of

history (i.e. a statement is true if and only if it corresponds with a statement made by an authority), this school made a retrograde step when it adopted a positivistic criterion of historical truth (i.e. the criterion that what the historian brings to history should be the experience of the natural scientist).¹²

The absolute presuppositions that an historian holds will logically regulate the way in which the historian constructs the past. And it is clear that, for Collingwood, the historical imagination will charge as absolute presuppositions change. As Collingwood says, the historical imagination at one point in history invented "miracles" (IH, 136). The absolute presupposition that 'miraculous events happen' shaped the way in which the members of the early Church constructed the past. When the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law' was later adopted by positivistic historians, the historical imagination changed. This absolute presupposition gave new content to the historical imagination. For Collingwood, then, the historical imagination is not fixed once and for all. And this is one major point where Collingwood disagrees with Bradley. Bradley only uncovered an absolute presupposition that logically regulated the historical imagination of the positivistic historian. So what Bradley failed to recognize is that he really only uncovered an historically delimited metaphysical concept and not an empirical presupposition. And all conceptions of what is or is not

^{12.} For another example of how absolute presuppositions shape interpretation, see the chapter entitled "A Positivistic Misinterpretation of Plato" in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.

possible is logically regulated by metaphysical concepts.¹³ As Collingwood puts it himself, history has continually to "determine what events are possible and what are not possible, and this can only be done in virtue of some general metaphysical conclusions..." (RP, 47).¹⁴

Collingwood has already pointed out some important differences between history and natural science in "The Historical Imagination". And so we know that, for Collingwood, the historical imagination is not identical with the scientific imagination. Since Collingwood wants to emphasize the fact that historical construction or interpolation is not "arbitrary and merely fanciful", he turns to a discussion of the major differences between the historical imagination and the aesthetic imagination. By calling the act of historical construction 'imaginative', he does not mean to suggest that this act is "fictitious" or "fanciful". For Collingwood, the fictitious or fanciful imagination is the aesthetic imagination. At this stage, Collingwood wants us to be very clear about the point that history is not identical with art, as Croce claims (PH, 135). In our opening chapter we saw that one of Collingwood's major themes was the attack on identities. It would be correct to say that

^{13.} Even the members of the early Church had some conception of what was possible and not possible. It would have been impossible for them to believe in something that was not consistent with Christian experience as understood in their time. When the Tübingen school criticized the members of the early Church for not distinguishing between what was possible and not possible, what the Tübingen school was really saying was that the members of the early Church did not see this distinction in terms of the claim that 'all events happen according to law'.

This text is no longer accepted in an unqualified sense in 1935. Metaphysical concepts are now understood as logico-regulative starting-points.
in "The Historical Imagination" Collingwood is continuing his attack on identities.

For Collingwood, the historical imagination and the aesthetic imagination differ in the following ways:

...[T]he historian's picture is meant to be true. The novelist has a single task only: to construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense. The historian has a double task: he has both to do this, and to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened. This further necessity imposes upon him obedience to three rules of method, from which the novelist or artist in general is free.

First, his picture must be localized in space and time. Secondly, all history must be consistent with itself. Purely imaginary worlds cannot clash and need not agree; each is a world to itself. But there is only one historical world, and everything in it must stand in some relation to everything else,...

Thirdly, and most important, the historian's picture stands in a peculiar relation to something called evidence. The only way in which the historian or any one else can judge, even tentatively, of its truth is by considering this relation; and, in practice, what we mean by asking whether an historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence: for a truth unable to be so justified is to the historian a thing of no interest (IH, 246).

In contrast to historical construction, the novelist's construction, although it may very well represent reality, does not necessarily have a basis in evidence. The novelist is allowed to use the free play of his imagination, to use an expression of Kant's. The novelist can create 'facts' or boundaries within which he wants to play. His only guideline is that his "picture" must make sense. So, although the novelist must "construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense", his picture is not meant to give us an account of what "really happened". The historian, in contrast to the novelist, has as his special task the imagining of the past as it actually happened. It is clear that what "really happened" is an important regulative idea for historians. Since the historian is attempting to give us a "true" picture of the past, Collingwood is insistent on the point that the historian is not just building up a fantasyworld, like artists, as a psychologist might claim that the historian is doing (IH, 2). When Collingwood cites with approval Grote's famous charge that Thucydides' histories contain more imagination than history (IH, 30), what is being said is that Thucydides' work contains more that is arbitrary or merely fanciful than actual history.

There is only "one historical world", Collingwood says. Everything in this one historical world "must stand in some relation with everything else". There is only one historical 'grid' and all historical facts must be related to each other in a consistent manner. The historical world, unlike the artistic world, must be consistent with itself. In art, every creation must be consistent with itself, but every artistic creation doesn't have to be consistent with other artistic creations. It would be correct to say that Collingwood in "The Historical Imagination" has not relinquished his claim in Speculum Mentis that every work of art is a "windowless monad" (SM, 71). By this claim he means that every work of art is internally coherent and independent of all other artistic works. The primary characteristic of the aesthetic imagination is what he calls the "monadism of art". Each monad is windowless by which he means that each monad is unrelated to and unaffected by all other monads.¹⁵ Unlike art, where the monad metaphor is appropriate, in history the 'grid' metaphor must be used. In history, there is only one 'grid' and every

15. See L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 30.

historical claim on this 'grid' must stand in some relation to the other historical claims on this 'grid'.¹⁶ And so, unlike artistic creations, historical creations are not unrelated to and unaffected by other historical creations.

History, says Collingwood, is more "reflective" than art (IH, 313). On this point, Collingwood has not relinquished his claim in <u>Speculum</u> <u>Mentis</u>. That history is more reflective than art leads him to claim that history is more scientific (i.e. as organized body of knowledge) than art. It is clear that Collingwood is disagreeing with Aristotle on this point. In a well-known passage of the <u>Poetics</u>, Aristotle remarks that poetry is more scientific than history (HSc, 23). So although Collingwood agrees with Aristotle that we must distinguish between poetry and history, he doesn't accept Aristotle's claim that poetry is more scientific than history. One reason that Collingwood says that history is more scientific than art is that the historian can formulate his problem whereas the artist cannot (IH, 314). Although the artist begins in every case with a problem before him, he is not explicitly aware of this problem. So, although the historian and the artist use the logic of question and answer, the artist does not use this logic in any explicit way.¹⁷ The claim that

17. Aristotle and Collingwood, of course, disagree on the criteria that are to be used for deciding if one subject-matter is more scientific than another. The major reason that Aristotle said that poetry is more scientific than history is that poetry deals with the universal, whereas history deals with the particular. In Collingwood's case, history is more scientific than art because the historian uses the logic of question and answer in a more explicit way than does the artist.

^{16.} It follows from the 'grid' metaphor that if two historians have conflicting interpretations of the same event, only one of these interpretations can be true (i.e. Sense I of the term 'truth'). And, of course, it may be the case that neither interpretation is true (i.e. Sense I of the term 'truth'). So if a Marxist historian and a capitalist historian give conflicting interpretations of the same event, either both accounts are false or one of these accounts is true.

history is more scientific or reflective than art, then, gives us another important difference between history and art for Collingwood.

Collingwood says that there are important similarities between history and art (IH, 192). But, as mentioned, Collingwood doesn't regard history as being identical with art, as Croce did. We have already seen that both the historian and the artist attempt to give us a coherent picture (IH, 246). And we have also seen that the work of the historian and the artist is imaginative. "As works of imagination", Collingwood says, "the historian's work and the [artist's] work do not differ" (IH, 246). Also, for Collingwood, the historian and the artist are both attempting to solve problems. The historian, like the artist, "does not create his works out of nothing. He begins in every case with a problem before him" (IH, 313).¹⁸ In addition, since problems only arise because we hold presuppositions, both the historian and the artist hold presuppositions.¹⁹ Collingwood tells us that "Dante has fused the Thomistic philosophy into a poem expressing what it feels like to be a Thomist. Shelley, when he made the earth say, 'I spin beneath my pyramid of night', expressed what it feels like to be a Copernican" (PA, 295).²⁰ We can see here, then,

- 19. But just as the artist was not explicitly aware of his problem, so he is not explicitly aware of his presuppositions.
- 20. Although the logic of question and answer does not operate at the level of emotions themselves, when we intellectualize about our emotions we do use the logic of question and answer. So when Dante expressed what it feels like to be a Thomist and Shelley expressed what it feels like to be a Copernican, they were using the logic of question and answer.

^{18.} Collingwood says that there can be "no history of artistic problems" (IH, 314). By this claim, Collingwood must mean, if he wishes to be consistent, that there can be no history of the artist's explicit problems.

that Collingwood thinks that there is an important relationship between absolute presuppositions and art. Absolute presuppositions also operate as logico-regulative entities in art. Dante's artistic creation was shaped by the absolute presuppositions of Thomistic philosophy and Shelley's artistic creation was shaped by the absolute presuppositions of Copernicus' thought. Absolute presuppositions, then, for Collingwood, shape the aesthetic imagination, just as they shape the historical imagination. And just as when absolute presuppositions change the historical imagination changes, so when absolute presuppositions change the aesthetic imagination changes.²¹

21. (i) Other similarities between history and art are as follows: (1) the historical imagination and the aesthetic imagination are not "arbitrary" (IH, 242), (2) there is an internal necessity in history and art (IH, 242), (3) history and art are self-justifying (IH, 246), (4) history, like art, is a "corporate activity" (PA, 324), (5) there is interpolation in history and art (IH, 243), (6) history and art are intelligible, that is, they make sense (IH, 246), (7) historians and artists deal with problems arising here and now (PA, vi, 325), (8) historians and artists must learn from each other (PA, 299), (9) historians and artists inherit a whole tradition of thought (PA, 324), (10) history (as written) and art has a beginning and end (A, 98), (11) history and art must be studied from within, (12) history and art, are purposive (although there is no fixed plan) (PA, 122), (13) history and art yield self-knowledge, (14) the methods of psychology are inappropriate for the study of history and art (PA, 36) (the psychologist deals with feelings and studies them in a naturalistic way, whereas the artist deals with thoughts about feelings), (15) in history and art, there is an inside and an outside (PA, 302) (but the outside is worked out differently in history and art), (16) in history and art, there are no insoluable problems (NAPH, 52), (17) historians and artists must select, (18) no work of history or art is ever finished (A, 2). This list of similarities is not meant to be exhaustive. (ii) The exact nature of the relationship between absolute presupposi-

tions and the aesthetic imagination is beyond the scope of this thesis. If we are right in our opening chapter that the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed before Collingwood wrote <u>The Principles</u> <u>Of Art</u>, then the way is now clear for someone to work out the important relationship between absolute presuppositions and art.

Let us turn now to the rewriting of history. History will be rewritten as the historical imagination changes. As we have seen, the historical imagination is logically regulated by presuppositions, and as presuppositions change, the historical imagination changes. The result of the historical imagination changing is that new questions must be asked. Collingwood states:

> [E]very new generation must rewrite history in its own way; every new historian, not content with giving new answers to old questions, must revise the questions themselves; and-since historical thought is a river into which none can step twice--even a single historian, working at a single subject for a certain length of time, finds when he tries to reopen an old question that the question has changed (IH, 248).

For Collingwood, each "new generation" will ask its own presuppositionladen questions and this will lead each new generation to "rewrite history" in its own unique way.²² "Everyone brings his own mind to the study of history", Collingwood says, "and approaches it from the point of view which is characteristic of himself and his generation; naturally, therefore, one age, one man, sees in a particular historical event things which another does not, and 'vice versa'" (PH, 138). The attempt to eliminate this subjective element from history, or any science, is always insincere. In fact, if we succeeded in eliminating this subjective element, which is not even possible, "history itself would vanish" (PH, 138). It is because of this important subjective element that history is continuously rewritten. Collingwood is quick to add that this is not an argument for historical scepticism (IH, 248). For him, every science must be rewritten and therefore history is not unique in this regards. In The Idea Of Nature we have

^{22.} This is not to say that each new generation will not share some presuppositions with the previous generation.

seen that natural science is continuously rewritten.²³ But the natural scientist does not see this fact as an argument against the possibility of knowledge in his area of study. Similarly, for Collingwood, the historian should not conclude that historical knowledge is impossible just because history must be continuously rewritten. Subjective elements enter into natural science, just as they enter into history. In fact, both The Idea Of Nature and The Idea Of History can be seen as histories of these important subjective elements. The Idea Of Nature can be seen as a study of the changes in the scientific imagination over time. And The Idea Of History can be seen as a study of the changes in the historical imagination over time. The conclusion of each work is not that knowledge is impossible. Although there are disagreements in natural science and what was once considered to be true may now be considered to be false, the natural scientist is not plunged into despair. And although natural science is rewritten, the natural scientist would not change his account of things unless he thought that his new account of things was closer to the truth. Similarly, the historian should not be plunged into despair because there are disagreements in history and that what was once considered to be true may now be considered to be false. Although history is rewritten, the historian would not change his account of the past unless he thought that his new account of the past was closer to what actually happened.

^{23.} For Collingwood, the rewriting of natural science does not have to be the result of absolute presuppositions being relinquished. The rewriting of natural science may be required if a modification is seen to be needed in the conceptual system. The rewriting of science, then, must be interpreted in the light of Collingwood's gradualist thesis.

We have already seen a number of examples of where history has been rewritten. We have seen that with the Baconian revolution in historical methodology the result was the rewriting of history. Now, major changes in historical methodology are always the result of deeper and more fundamental changes at the absolute presupposition level. When particular absolute presuppositions are relinquished, significant changes are made in regard to how history is rewritten. For example, when the absolute presuppositions of positivism were accepted by some historians, history was rewritten in a significantly new way. Following historians like Bury and Buckle, positivistic historians attempted to raise history to the rank of a natural science by extracting general laws from it. History was rewritten according to positivistic absolute presuppositions, including the absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law'. Positivistic historians were reacting against the teleological explanations of post-Renaissance science. In their place positivists substituted regularian explanations (i.e. explanation by law). Positivists insisted on asking regularian questions as against the teleological questions of post-Renaissance science.

The asking of teleological questions did not begin in post-Renaissance science. The asking of teleological questions goes back at least as far as Greco-Roman science. For example, with Greco-Roman historiography, teleological questions were asked. And these teleological questions arose from absolute presuppositions concerning teleology. Greco-Roman historians assumed that everything happened as the result of deliberate human purposes. Greco-Roman historians absolutely presupposed that "the human will freely chooses its own ends". Collingwood states: "The

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philosophical idea underlying it [Greco-Roman historiography] is the idea of the human will as freely choosing its own ends and limited in the success it achieves in their pursuit only by its own force and by the power of the intellect which apprehends them and works out means to their achievement. This implies that whatever happens in history happens as a direct result of human will; that some one is directly responsible for it, to be praised or blamed according as it is a good thing or a bad" (IH, 41).²⁴ Collingwood tells us that absolute presuppositions concerning teleology continued on in Christian historiography. But he adds that one error of Greco-Roman historiography was corrected by Christian historiography. This error was the overintellectualism in Greco-Roman historiography. Christian historians, he says, are to be commended for their attack on the "naive" view "of the power of man to control his own destiny" (IH, 24). Christian historians recognized "that what happens in history need not happen through anyone's wishing it to happen" (IH, 48). This was a revolutionary advance in historical thinking. Christian historiography was founded on a number of absolute presuppositions concerning teleology, one of them being that "[a]ll persons and all peoples are involved in the working out of God's purpose" (IH, 49). With the adoption of some new absolute presuppositions, all history for Christian historians

^{24.} Greco-Roman historiography was also founded on the absolute presupposition of substantialism. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, p. 42. Collingwood tells us that this was the major reason for the downplaying of history in the Greco-Roman world. What history studied was not "substantial" but changing. This also partly accounts for Aristotle's low estimate of history. Collingwood tells us that "substantialism" in the Greco-Roman world gave rise to a "theory of knowledge according to which only what is unchanging is knowable" (IH, 42). It is clear that Collingwood sees an important relationship between absolute presuppositions and a conception of knowledge that is accepted in any 'period' of science.

became "universal, providential, apocalyptic, and periodized" (IH, 49). And with Christian historiography, history becomes "a play written by God" (IH, 50). So, Christian historiography was still teleological, and therefore Christian historiography was not a complete break from Greco-Roman historiography, but with Christian historiography one error of Greco-Roman historiography was corrected and that was the erroneous view that man had complete power to control his own destiny.

Nor was the move from Christian science to post-Renaissance science a sudden break. As we have already seen, absolute presuppositions concerning teleology lingered on in post-Renaissance science. This fact is quite consistent with Collingwood's point, discussed in Chapter III, that the changes in absolute presuppositions, along with the questions that they give rise to, are quite gradual. With post-Renaissance science, absolute presuppositions concerning teleology were held and teleological questions asked. Collingwood tells us that Herder and Kant held absolute presuppositions concerning teleology and asked teleological questions (IH, 89, 94). Although this is the case, post-Renaissance scientists did start to evaluate this framework of thought in a critical manner. And later with the positivist movement, this attack on teleological absolute presuppositions and teleological questions became even more evident. Positivists attempted to systematically eliminate all teleological thinking. Positivistic historians attempted to rewrite history in terms of regularian thinking. This led the positivistic historian to think of history "as the proper field for a dispassionate and therefore truly scientific study, from which partisan spirit, praise and blame, should be banished" (IH, 146).

The Idea Of History is really a study of how history has been

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rewritten through the ages. But in An Essay on Metaphysics, we also find examples of where history has been rewritten. And many of the examples in An Essay on Metaphysics overlap with and throw light on the examples already discussed in The Idea Of History. In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood tells us that Voltaire claimed that historians should confine their attention to the period after the end of the Middle Ages. Voltaire said that this was the only period in which we possessed sound and sufficient information. "One of Voltaire's own declared principles of historiography", says Collingwood, "was that only the recent past is knowable" (EM, 247). Collingwood made this same point in The Idea Of History. In The Idea Of History he says that "Voltaire openly proclaimed that no securely based historical knowledge was attainable for events earlier than the close of the fifteenth century;..." (IH, 77-78). So, Voltaire was saying that "nothing earlier than the modern period could be known, and that nothing earlier than the modern period deserved to be known" (IH, 328). In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood says that Hume also "took little interest in the remoter past" (EM, 247). And once again, Collingwood made this exact same point in The Idea Of History. He states: "Hume's History of England is a very slight and sketchy piece of work until he comes to the same period, the age of the Tudors. The real cause of this restriction of interest to the modern period was that with their narrow conception of reason they had no sympathy for, and therefore no insight into, what from their point of view were non-rational periods of human history; they only began to be interested in history at the point where it began to be the history of a modern spirit akin to their own, a scientific spirit" (IH, 78). Hume, like Voltaire, failed to

study the whole of history from within. In other words, the "sympathy" principle was not used for periods of history other than their own. If a period of history in their eyes was not scientific, as they defined the word 'scientific', then that period of history could not be known and did not deserve to be known. It is clear that Collingwood sees Voltaire and Hume as having a very limited conception of rationality. For Voltaire and Hume, a period of history was rational only if it shared the presuppositions of the modern "scientific spirit". They had no conception of a period of history being rational if it was consistent with another set of presuppositions other than their own.²⁵

In <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood gives us other examples of history being rewritten. Collingwood says that in the eighteenth century historians came to hold the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events'. Eighteenth-century historians held the view that "historical events were the effects of causes in the world of nature: causes physiological, psychological, climatic, geographical, and so forth" (EM, 98). In <u>The Idea Of History</u> Collingwood makes the same point and tells us that Montesquieu held this absolute presupposition. Montesquieu explains the "differences between different nations and different cultures"

^{25.} For Collingwood, historians like Hegel and Marx are to be commended for widening the scope of history. Hegel goes back to the Orient in his study of history (IH, 125). And Marx goes back to Primitive Communism in his study of history (IH, 125). (Using Marx's terms, Hegel only went back to King-state societies.) But still with Hegel and Marx, there is still not a full appreciation of the sympathy principle. For Hegel and Marx, rationality is still 'tied up' with a scientific spirit either in the present or in the future. Historians like Hegel and Marx still see the "entire history of man as a single process of development from a beginning in savagery to an end in a perfectly rational and civilized society" (IH, 88).

as due to the "differences in climate and geography". With Montesquieu, man becomes assimilated to nature, "and the explanation of historical events is sought in the facts of the natural world" (IH, 78-79). All of man's institutions become "the necessary effects of natural causes" (IH, 79). Collingwood adds: "Montesquieu in fact conceived human life as a reflection of geographical and climatic conditions, not otherwise than the life of plants, and this implies that historical changes are simply different ways in which one single and unchangeable thing, human nature, reacts to different stimuli" (IH, 79). In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood evaluates the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' and finds it wanting (EM, 98). Again in The Idea Of History he attacks this absolute presupposition. He states: "This misconception of human nature and human action is the real flaw in any theory which, like Montesquieu's, attempts to explain the features of a civilization by reference to geographical facts. To be sure, there is an intimate relation between any culture and its natural environment; but what determines its character is not the facts of that environment, in themselves, but what man is able to get out of them; and that depends on what kind of man he is" (IH, 79). Here, Collingwood is distinguishing between nature in itself and how man conceives of nature. It is only man's conception of nature that has an effect on history in the proper sense. Nature itself has no effect on history as mind-as-thought. So, when people speak of the influence of geography or climate on history, "they are mistaking the effect of a certain person's or people's conception of nature on their actions for an effect of nature itself" (IH, 200). The rejection of the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical

events' leads Collingwood to make the following remark: "The fact that certain people live, for example, on an island has in itself no effect on their history; what has an effect is the way they conceive that insular position; whether for example they regard the sea as a barrier or as a highway to traffic" (IH, 200). This will appear to be a staggering remark until one recognizes that Collingwood is saying that nature has no effect on history in the proper sense (i.e. history as mind-as-thought).

Collingwood also tells us in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that history was rewritten when it was recognized that all history is the history of

strains. He states:

Thus if Gibbon seems out of date to a modern student of the Roman Empire it is not because Gibbon knew fewer facts than the modern student knows; it is because Gibbon was not sensitive enough to the internal strains of what he wrote about. He begins by depicting the Antonine period as a Golden Age, that is, an age containing no internal strains whatever; and from the non-historical or anti-historical tone of its opening his narrative never quite recovers. If Hegel's influence on nineteenth-century historiography was on the whole an influence for good, it was because historical study for him was first and foremost a study of internal strains, and this is why he opened the way to such brilliant feats as that analysis of internal strains in nineteenth-century economic society which entitles Karl Marx to the name of a great historian. If Oswald Spengler, who was so much talked about a few years ago, is to-day deservedly forgotten, it is because whenever he set himself to describe a constellation of historical facts (what he called a 'culture') he deliberately ironed all the strains out of it and presented a picture in which every detail fitted into every other as placidly as the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle laying at rest on a table (EM, 74-75).²⁶

Although Collingwood calls Marx a "great historian", because he recognized

^{26.} When Collingwood says that Spengler was so much talked about a few years ago, Collingwood is, of course, referring also to himself.

the "strains" in history²⁷, Collingwood also says that Marx made a number of retrograde steps in historical methodology. Like Spengler, Marx thought that he could foretell the future (SHC, 68). But, as Collingwood sees it, all universal history is foredoomed to failure. This is because we do not have any historical evidence for the future.²⁸ And, according to Collingwood, Marx made a retrograde step when he made too many concessions to positivism. Marx, like Spengler, failed to follow Hegel in distinguishing nature and history.²⁹ In fact, Marx reasserted the eighteenth-century positivistic absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' (IH, 125). So, for Collingwood, Marx made a retrograde step because he did not take advantage of Hegel's successful attack on this absolute presupposition in the early nineteenth century.

Collingwood ends his essay entitled "The Historical Imagination" by saying that all human beings have an imaginary picture of the past. He tells us that this imaginary picture of the past is "not a chance product of psychological causes;..." (IH, 248). Nor is it an empirical

28. For Collingwood, of course, there can be no eschatology (which literally means the study of last things).

^{27.} But, although Marx recognized the strains of history, there is still an element of atomism in his thought when he divides the past into periods. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, p. 125. And the same can be said about Hegel. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, p. 125. Dividing history into periods actually comes out of the Christian tradition. Christian historians were the first historians to divide history into periods. So, Hegel and Marx on this particular point were following in this tradition.

^{29.} But Collingwood adds that Hegel was mistaken to deny evolution. For Collingwood, although nature has no history, nature itself is in process.

summary of the historian's experience. This imaginary picture of the past, he says, is "not a generalization empirically discovered by the historian in the course of his inquiry,..." (IH, 109). And it is not founded on a body of ready-made facts. Instead, "[s]o far from relying for its validity upon the support of given facts, it actually serves as the touchstone by which we decide whether alleged facts are genuine" (IH, 244). Collingwood tells us that this imaginary picture of the past or "web of imaginative construction" is something "far more solid and powerful than we have hitherto realized" (IH, 244). This web of imaginative construction is "an 'a priori' condition of historical knowledge" itself (IH, 109). And so, this "web" is not a product of the historian's experience and knowledge, but is prior to the historian's experience and knowledge. Collingwood says that it is this imaginary picture of the past that is the criterion of historical truth (IH, 248). The criterion of historical truth is not "the raw material of historical knowledge, the detail of the here-and-now as given in perception" (IH, 248). Now, this is not to say that, for him, history is entirely 'a priori'. For him, the historian must give us a construction of the past that is based on empirical evidence. And he emphasizes the fact that the historian's account of the past must be based on empirical evidence because he doesn't want to be guilty of Fichte's mistake. Fichte thought that "history could be reconstructed on a purely 'a priori' basis" without any appeal to "empirical evidence" (IH, 117). So it is clear that Collingwood's discussion of the 'a priori' condition of historical knowledge is not to be confused with Fichte's position. For Collingwood, there is an important overlap between 'a priori' and empirical elements

in all historical knowledge (IH, 117). And so, Collingwood is also criticizing those thinkers who claim that history is entirely empirical. Historical knowledge is not entirely empirical because it is grounded on an imaginary picture of the past which is an 'a priori' condition of historical knowledge.

For Collingwood, historical construction is "'a priori" and "imagined". For this reason he calls this activity of historical construction, with this double character, the "'a priori' imagination" (IH, 241).³⁰ This "'a priori' imagination" is "active", not "passive" (IH, 245). And by "active" here, Collingwood means "structural" (IH, 241). This 'a priori' imaginary picture of the past is not "ornamental", as Macaulay suggested that the historical imagination was. Calling the historical imagination "ornamental", as Macaulay did, is really, Collingwood says, to "under-estimate the part played by the historical imagination" (IH, 241). When Collingwood says that the historical imagination is "structural", he is referring to the idea of an imaginary picture of the past. It would be correct to distinguish between the idea of an imaginary picture of the past and any particular imaginary picture of the past. It is the idea of the imaginary picture of the past that is structural. And it is historical thinking that gives this structural idea content. In other words, historical thinking is the attempt to provide this idea of an imaginary picture of the past "with detailed content" (IH, 247). The idea of an imaginary picture of the past, which is structural, is a law of our nature or a "law of the historical spirit" (IH, 140). And it would be

^{30.} In Collingwood's terminology, this study of the "'a priori' imagination" would be a "mental science" (IH, 221).

correct to call this structural imaginary picture of the past a transhistorical principle. In other words, all human beings have an imaginary picture of the past at the structural level. Here we have another instance of Collingwood's claim that "[a] mind which knows its own change is by that very knowledge lifted above change" (SM, 301). So, structurally the historical imagination is fixed or permanent. But the content of the historical imagination changes. It is the historian's presuppositions, including absolute presuppositions, that shape a particular imaginary picture of the past. In other words, the content of the historical imagination will depend on the historian's presuppositions. For example, although Christian historians and positivistic historians both have an imaginary picture of the past at the structural level, they will both fill in the content of this imaginary picture of the past in different ways.³¹ So, although all historians have an imaginary picture of the past at the structural level, the particular presuppositions that an historian holds will shape his picture of the past at the content level. It follows from Collingwood's analysis that, for him, a particular imaginary picture of the past which is adopted at a particular time will serve as a "touchstone" for constructive and critical purposes (IH, 245). This touchstone will be used by the historian in order to "decide" if "facts are genuine". The touchstone, then, for Collingwood, is not a "fixed point supplied from without" (IH, 245). Rather, the touchstone operates within the

^{31.} This is not to say that Christian historians, or positivistic historians for that matter, have not changed the content of their imaginary picture of the past. The 'Christian' historical imagination has changed throughout the ages.

historian's perspective. And as the historian's perspective changes, his touchstone changes. This is the reason that Collingwood concludes his essay entitled "The Historical Imagination" by saying that "[t]he historian, however long and faithfully he works, can never say that his work, even in crudest outline or in this or that smallest detail, is done once for all" (IH, 248-249).

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter V. In this second section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators in regard to issues arising out of our first section. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

In this second section we will make two major claims that arise out of the first section of Chapter V. The two major claims of this chapter are as follows: (1) Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "The Historical Imagination" and the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936 is evident in this paper and (2) Collingwood's doctrine of the "'a priori' imagination" is not an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.

Let us turn now to the first major claim of this chapter: Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "The Historical Imagination" and the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936 is evident in this paper. It is our claim that there is an important logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the historical imagination.³² One reason that partially accounts for this logical connection being overlooked is that many commentators hold the late development thesis. Peter Skagestad, for example, claims that there is a "radical" break in Collingwood's philosophy of history between The Idea Of History and An Essay on Metaphysics. 33 In the first section of this chapter we attempted to demonstrate that there is no radical break between these two works. We examined Collingwood's analysis of a number of examples from history in An Essay on Metaphysics and saw that Collingwood used these very same examples in The Idea Of History and offered the same analysis. Now not only does Skagestad see no relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and reenactment, he sees no relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the historical imagination. In fact, he doesn't even discuss the historical imagination. What we have attempted to do in this chapter is defend the claim that the historical imagination is not selfcontained without the theory of absolute presuppositions.

It was our claim in the first section of this chapter that Collingwood was led to examine (or re-examine) Bradley's "The Presuppositions of

^{32.} Many commentators do not see any relationship at all between absolute presuppositions and history. These commentators would include William Dray, William Debbins, Leon Goldstein, Rex Martin and W.J. Van Der Dussen. It is interesting to note that all of these commentators are mainly concerned with the problem of historical explanation in Colling-wood's thought and virtually ignore the historical imagination. See footnote #4 in this chapter. The trend of ignoring the historical imagination appears to exist even among Collingwood's commentators. In Van Der Dussen's case, this may account for his underplaying of the European influence on Collingwood's thought. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 3.

^{33.} P. Skagestad, <u>Making Sense of History</u>, p. 87.

Critical History" in 1935 in "The Historical Imagination" because he had developed his theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of "The Historical Imagination". As we see it, this examination of Bradley's essay was the next logical step, given the 'period' in which Collingwood worked out his theory of absolute presuppositions. We agree with Louis Mink that "The Historical Imagination" is best understood as a commentary on Bradley's "The Presuppositions of Critical History".³⁴ But Mink does not recognize the reason why Collingwood took Bradley's essay so seriously in 1935. And this is the case because Mink holds the late development thesis. If "The Historical Imagination" is to be interpreted in the light of the continuity of Collingwood's ideas developed through his other writings, as we think that it should, then this essay should be read in terms of the theory of absolute presuppositions.

William Debbins has claimed that "from the earlier essays to the later works there is no significant change in Collingwood's conception of history or philosophy of history".³⁵ But, as we see it, by the time Collingwood resumed his study of history in 1935, he had arrived at a new conception of metaphysics. Metaphysics had now become the science which studies absolute presuppositions. So, when Collingwood uses the term 'metaphysics' in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, and he does, we must read for the term 'metaphysics' in this work, 'the science which studies absolute presuppositions'. As we have attempted to show in this chapter, "The Historical Imagination" is partially a metaphysics of the historical

^{34.} L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 183.

^{35.} W. Debbins, Essays, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

imagination. Every instance of the historical imagination rests on a foundation of metaphysical concepts (i.e. absolute presuppositions). Metaphysical concepts logically regulate the way in which historians imagine the past. And as we have seen, the same set of metaphysical concepts are not always in operation when the historian imagines the past. When a metaphysical concept is relinquished and another metaphysical concept is taken up, the historical imagination changes and the historian is logically compelled to rewrite history. In this chapter we have discussed a number of examples where Collingwood says that history was rewritten as the result of new metaphysical concepts being taken up. In fact, both <u>The Idea Of History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> can be seen partially as an account of how the historical imagination has changed throughout the ages.

Let us turn to the second major claim of this chapter: Collingwood's doctrine of the "'a priori' imagination" is not an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Alan Donagan has claimed that Collingwood revised his doctrine of the 'a priori' imagination in the light of his theory of absolute presuppositions.³⁶ Louis Mink has claimed that the 'a priori' imagination is an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.³⁷ In fact, Mink claims that the 'a priori' imagination is "identical" to the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.³⁸ Now although Mink, unlike Donagan, claims that the

^{36.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 211.

^{37.} L. Mink, <u>Mind, History And Dialectic</u>, pp. 140, 151, 185.
38. Ibid., p. 151.

'a priori' imagination is identical to the doctrine of absolute presuppositions, both Mink's and Donagan's interpretation of the 'a priori' imagination is based on the late development thesis. According to our interpretation, the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed prior to the writing of "The Historical Imagination". If we are correct, the 'a priori' imagination cannot be an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Collingwood does speak of absolute presuppositions prior to the writing of "The Historical Imagination", and therefore it seems reasonable to suggest that if Collingwood meant the doctrine of absolute presuppositions when he referred to the 'a priori' imagination, as Mink claims, then Collingwood would have referred to the doctrine of absolute presuppositions in "The Historical Imagination". So it appears as though Collingwood must mean something else besides the doctrine of absolute presuppositions when he discusses the 'a priori' imagination in 1935. This is really the interpretative starting-point of this chapter. If our interpretative starting-point is correct, a re-interpretation of the 'a priori' imagination is now warranted. And we have attempted such a re-interpretation in this chapter.

Donagan does distinguish between the idea of an imaginary picture of the past and any particular imaginary picture of it³⁹, and we do agree with Donagan on this point. But Donagan claims that only scientific historians have an idea of an imaginary picture of the past.⁴⁰ According to our interpretation, all historians have an idea of an imaginary

39. A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 210.

40. <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 210.

picture of the past. This interpretation is actually more consistent with Collingwood's claim that an idea of an imaginary picture of the past is "part of the furniture" of every historian's mind. As we have argued in the first section of this chapter, the idea of an imaginary picture of the past is structural. All historians have an imaginary picture of the past at the structural level. But the content of particular imaginary pictures of the past can be different. And we have suggested that the content of particular imaginary pictures of the past will be different if historians hold different presuppositions. So, although Donagan is right, as we see it, to distinguish between the idea of an imaginary picture of the past and any particular imaginary picture of it, he fails to point out that the content of any particular imaginary picture of the past will be dependent on the historians presuppositions. Donagan does say that no two historians interpret the evidence in exactly the same way and that therefore each historian will have a different particular imaginary picture of the past⁴¹, but he doesn't point out that historians will interpret the evidence differently if different presuppositions are held.⁴² We will have more to say about the important

42. (i) It might be suggested that although Donagan doesn't make this point, he assumes it. But, Donagan doesn't assume it because he says that Collingwood only thought that there were absolute presuppositions in natural science. According to Donagan, Collingwood never asked the question, 'What are the presuppositions of history?' See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 210. (ii) As we see it, Collingwood never relinquished his distinction between the idea of an imaginary picture of the past and any particular imaginary picture of it, as Donagan claims. In short, Collingwood did not revise his position in "The Historical Imagination" in the light of his theory of absolute presuppositions. Rather, the distinction between the idea of an imaginary picture of it is to be interpreted in the light of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions.

^{41.} Ibid., p. 211.

relationship between presuppositions and evidence in the next chapter.

Mink says that Collingwood in The Idea Of History was on his way to recognizing that "all" thinking is informed by absolute presuppositions.⁴³ Mink thinks that Collingwood did not arrive at the conclusion that all thinking is informed by absolute presuppositions until the late 1930's. But, according to our analysis, Collingwood arrived at this conclusion before he wrote the papers that make up The Idea Of History. And it was because he had already arrived at this conclusion that he says in these papers that history will be rewritten as metaphysical concepts change. Mink does make the suggestive comment that "there are discernible patterns of imagination" in every historical epoch. 44 But this suggestive comment is not worked out in any systematic way by Mink. In this chapter we have taken Mink's suggestive comment very seriously and have attempted to work it out. We have argued that, in fact, there are discernible patterns of imagination in every historical 'epoch' and that these discernible patterns of imagination are the result of historians sharing presuppositions in a particular historical 'epoch'.

We also have a disagreement with Lionel Rubinoff on his interpretation of the 'a priori' imagination. Rubinoff has claimed that the idea of an imaginary picture of the past is an absolute presupposition of

^{43.} L. Mink, <u>Mind, History And Dialectic</u>, p. 185.44. Ibid., p. 156.

the historical standpoint.⁴⁵ We think that Rubinoff is right in holding that the idea of an imaginary picture of the past is not a generalization discovered by the historian in the course of his inquiry.⁴⁶ But, Rubinoff is mistaken to call this idea of an imaginary picture of the past an absolute presupposition. According to our analysis, absolute presuppositions can be given up, but the idea of an imaginary picture of the past (i.e. structural level) cannot be given up. Rubinoff may have misinterpreted Collingwood on this point because he thinks that some absolute presuppositions cannot be given up.⁴⁷ But, according to our analysis, all absolute presuppositions can be given up. This is the reason why we have suggested that absolute presuppositions only operate at the content level of any particular imaginary picture of the past, and not at the structural level, as Rubinoff's interpretation on this point implies. Rubinoff overlooks Collingwood's structure-content distinction and for this reason he fails to recognize that the content of a particular imaginary picture of the past can change. And, as we have argued, the content will change as presuppositions change. This is the only way that we can make sense of Collingwood's claim that the historical imagination changes.

47. For example, see L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 11.

^{45. (}i) Rubinoff, <u>Reform Of Metaphysics</u>, p. 182. (ii) It will be recalled that Rubinoff does not hold the late development thesis. Rather, Rubinoff thinks that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions goes back to Collingwood's World War I period. As we see it, Rubinoff's incorrect placement of the theory of absolute presuppositions in Collingwood's intellectual development prevents Rubinoff from recognizing the important new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935.

^{46.} L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 283.

In the next chapter we will turn to "Historical Evidence" and continue our analysis of the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936. The apparent fact that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of this paper leads us to see "Historical Evidence" in a new light.

CHAPTER VI

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

In the first section of Chapter VI we will be mainly concerned with Collingwood's "Historical Evidence". We will attempt to demonstrate that there is an important logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical evidence. In the second section of this chapter we will argue that no commentator has yet recognized this logical connection and reasons will be suggested to account for this fact.

Ι

"Historical Evidence" is taken from the manuscript of "The Principles of History" which Collingwood began in the spring of 1936, and which grew out of some of the lectures of 1936. "Historical Evidence" was revised and completed in 1939. Sir Malcolm Knox decided to add this paper to Part V of <u>The Idea Of History</u>.¹ And since "Historical

^{1.} The Idea Of History is largely based on thirty-two lectures which Collingwood wrote during the first six months of 1936. These thirtytwo lectures are found in a manuscript, entitled "The Philosophy of History", which falls into two parts. The first part of the manuscript is a history of the idea of history. The second part of the 1936 manuscript is made up of a series of "metaphysical epilegomena". This 1936 manuscript was to be the groundwork for two projected books. The first section of this 1936 manuscript was meant to be a companion volume to The Idea Of Nature. See T.M. Knox, The Idea Of (continued on p. 297)

Evidence" arises out of the second part of the 1936 manuscript which consists of "metaphysical epilegomena", it is clear that he thinks that there is an important relationship between metaphysics and historical evidence.²

Collingwood begins "Historical Evidence" by saying that history is a "science" and by the term 'science' he means an "organized body of knowledge" (IH, 249). But anything that is an organized body of knowledge must be more than "merely organized", it must be an organized body of knowledge of "some special kind" (IH, 249). Although history is an organized body of knowledge, it is not organized in the same way that, say, "meteorology" or "chemistry" or mathematics is organized. This is not to say that history has no similarities in the way that it is organized with other organized bodies of knowledge. In history and all of the other sciences, including mathematics (IH, 251), the logic of question and answer is used. History, like all of the other sciences, is trying to find things out by the use of questions and answers (IH, 9-10). And

^{1.} continued. <u>History</u>, p. v. In 1940 Collingwood decided to call this part of the manuscript "The Idea Of History". The second part of the 1936 manuscript was to be called "The Principles of History". Collingwood did some work on "The Principles of History" in 1939, but this book was never completed. It should also be noted that Knox did not carry out Collingwood's intentions in the strict sense when he edited The Idea Of History. Only the first four sections of Knox's 'edition' (i.e. historical sections) correspond to Collingwood's projected book on the history of the idea of history. Part V of Knox's 'edition' actually corresponds to Collingwood's projected book "The Principles of History". So, given Collingwood's intentions, it could be argued that the title The Idea Of History is misleading when we read Part V of Knox's 'edition'.

 ⁽i) This is not to say that there is only an important logical connection between metaphysics and historical evidence. As we have seen in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, there is an important logical connection between metaphysics and all evidence.
 (ii) He is also dealing with epistemological problems in Part V of <u>The Idea Of History</u>.

history, like all of the other sciences, is "inferential". By the term 'inferential' Collingwood means that a scientist "is not allowed to claim any single piece of knowledge, except where he can justify his claim by exhibiting to himself in the first place, and secondly to any one else who is both able and willing to follow his demonstration, the grounds upon which it is based" (IH, 252). At this point let us mention just one other similarity between history and all of the other sciences. For Collingwood, every science is "autonomous". Autonomy is the condition of being one's own authority, of making knowledge claims on one's own initiative and not because these knowledge claims are authorized by anyone else. With this notion of autonomy, the idea of "ready-made answers" is rejected. So, for Collingwood, all sciences are autonomous because they are self-authorizing and self-justifying forms of inquiry. And when Collingwood says that history is autonomous, he means that "[t]he historian has the right, and is under an obligation, to make up his own mind by the methods proper to his own science as to the correct solution of every problem that arises for him in the pursuit of that science" (IH, 256). When Collingwood says that history is autonomous, he does not mean that the principles of history are independent of those of every other science.³

^{3.} In this paragraph we are implicitly criticizing Alan Donagan. Donagan has claimed that with history "its principles are independent of those of any other discipline." See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 212. Although history does have some of its own unique principles, history does share some structural and methodological principles with all other disciplines. We should not understand Collingwood's notion of 'autonomy' in the light of the above claim by Donagan. And the possible objection that we are blurring the very distinction between science and history that Collingwood went to such pains to emphasize is really based on Donagan's misinterpretation that science and history share no principles. It should be added that this is probably the major reason that Donagan claims that there are absolute presuppositions in natural science, but not in history.

It is only after we are aware of the structural and methodological similarities between history and all of the other sciences, including mathematics, that we can understand Collingwood's claim that "an historical argument" can be proved "as conclusively as a demonstration in mathematics" (IH, 262). Since, for Collingwood, all sciences use the logic of question and answer, the historian is answering questions that arise from presuppositions in a similar structural and methodological way as the mathematician.⁴ The scientific historian must ask questions in a methodical and orderly way, just as the mathematician should.⁵ Earlier we have attempted to show that all historical thinking is intimately related or logically connected with metaphysics. All mathematical thinking is also intimately related or logically connected with metaphysics (SM, 177-178, IN, 4, 20, EM, 249-257).⁶ It is for this reason that Collingwood says that mathematicians hold metaphysical concepts (i.e. absolute presuppositions), just as we have seen that historians hold metaphysical concepts (EM, 156, 239). It is only after we recognize these points of similarity that we will be able to understand Collingwood's claim that "an historical argument" can be proved "as conclusively as a demonstration in mathematics."

By 'conclusiveness', Collingwood does not mean finality. For

^{4.} See An Essay on Metaphysics, pp. 238-239.

^{5.} This is not to say that mathematics shares all of the structural and methodological principles of history.

^{6.} That every science rests on a foundation of metaphysics is another feature that all of the sciences share. And this is another point that Donagan overlooks. See footnote #3 in this chapter.

example, the conclusiveness of history "is the certainty that the evidence in our possession points to one particular answer to the question we ask of it."⁷ 'Conclusiveness' in history, for Collingwood, refers to a specific question-and-answer complex, and a question-and-answer complex is conclusive if it is beyond reasonable doubt given the evidence here and now. It is clear that 'conclusiveness' is not being used in the strong sense by which we mean that the process of inquiry ends. Rather, Collingwood is using the term 'conclusiveness' in the weak sense by which we mean that a question-and-answer complex is beyond reasonable doubt at a particular stage in the inquiry. And this is what Collingwood means by 'conclusiveness' in all of the other sciences.⁸ We should also add at this point that Collingwood is not talking about 'psychological conclusiveness' or 'psychological certainty' when he says that an historical judgment can be as 'conclusive' or 'certain' as a mathematical judgment. Instead, he is talking about 'logical conclusiveness' or 'logical certainty'. Historical judgments are logically entailed in a structural and methodological way that is similar to mathematical judgments.9

^{7.} R.G. Collingwood, "Philosophy of History" (unpublished manuscript) 1927, p. 53.

^{8.} Collingwood is countering the standard view that mathematics is 'final'. For Collingwood, no science is 'final'. And so, Collingwood is not so much 'raising' history to the structural and methodological level of mathematics, as he is 'lowering' mathematics to the structural and methodological level of history.

^{9.} If our analysis is correct, Mink is mistaken to claim that Collingwood confuses logical certitude with psychological certitude. See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History And Dialectic</u>, p. 263. Mink has failed to take seriously Collingwood's claim that psychology is the pseudoscience of thought (EM, 112).

Although history has structural and methodological similarities with all of the other sciences, it is still a science of a special kind. History is a science, Collingwood says, "whose business is to study events not accessible to our observation,...arguing to these from something else which is accessible to our observation, and which the historian calls 'evidence' for the events in which he is interested" (IH, 251-252). History is not the perception of past events. In fact, the claim that historical thinking can be based on the study of perception is inconsistent with there being such a thing as historical thinking. We can no longer perceive the outside of past events (IH, 233) and we could at no time perceive the inside of events. We can only argue to the inside and outside of events from something "which is accessible to our observation" here and now, namely "evidence". Although history is not the perception of the inside and outside of past events, in "Historical Evidence" Collingwood is mainly attempting to demonstrate that history is not the perception of the inside of events. History in the proper sense is the study of mind-as-thought (i.e. inside of events) and mind-as-thought is never an object of perception. Even if we had a "Wellsian machine for looking backwards through time", Collingwood says in reference to history in the proper sense, "this would not be historical knowledge;..." (IH, 252). A 'Wellsian machine' would never give us the inside of events because penetration is always necessary for uncovering mind-as-thought. So even an eyewitness would have to penetrate to the inside of an event

before he could claim to have historical knowledge.¹⁰ Now, mind-asthought is expressed or embodied in something which is perceptible here and now, and that is evidence. So perception does play an important role in historical knowledge. Although the thoughts of historical agents cannot be perceived, evidence that expresses or embodies the thoughts of historical agents is perceptible. The function of perception, then, is to 'acquaint' the historian with evidence that refers to past thoughts. But, as we have seen, the evidence which is perceptible here and now is not ready-made evidence. When an historian reads a passage in a document, for example, all he perceives "is merely a pattern of black marks on white paper" (IH, 244). This pattern of black marks always has to be interpreted.¹¹ And therefore, although the black marks that the historian perceives are an important starting-point for the historian, what the historian perceives is not historical knowledge at all. It must be added that the perceptible here and now is not limited to documents. For Collingwood, "everything is evidence which the historian can use as evidence". But penetration must always take place

^{10.} We must emphasize that even an eyewitness account of the outside of the event is only evidence. This evidence would still have to be interpreted critically. In other words, an eyewitness account of the outside of the event would not be ready-made evidence. For one thing, the memory of an eyewitness would not give us historical knowledge about the outside of the event because, for Collingwood, "memory is not organized, not inferential, at all" (IH, 252). Here again, Collingwood is implicitly attacking Bacon and his followers who claim that memory is historical knowledge.

^{11.} This claim is a little misleading because even the distinction between black and white is an interpretation at a more fundamental level. It would appear that this claim necessarily follows from Collingwood's theory of perception. But with any analysis, you must start somewhere.

before one can claim to have historical knowledge about the thoughts of historical agents. A trace of the past never gives us ready-made thoughts. One must always penetrate this trace of the past in order to discover the thoughts that are expressed or embodied in it.

There is a 'limit' which can be set on the possibilities of using a particular perceptible trace as evidence. And this limit is the world that the historian perceives. But, historians do not perceive the same world because all perception is mediated by thought (SM, 204-205, NAPH, 49-51). It will be recalled that we never perceive a pure sense datum. Whatever is called a 'datum' is already interpreted by thought. "In all perception we are making a judgment, trying to answer the question of what it is that we perceive" (NAPH, 50). And, for Collingwood, historians perceive in terms of different questions. This is the reason why Collingwood claims that "no two historians start from the same data of immediate perception" (NAPH, 53). The questions that the historian asks places a limit on what the historian perceives here and now. This limit is not fixed once and for all. Not only is the limit different for each historian, but the limit can shift and change for a particular historian if he raises new questions. The limit at any particular stage in the inquiry will be dependent on the historian's world of perception which is logically regulated by the questions that he asks. "The historian's data", Collingwood says, "consist of what he is able to perceive; and if he can perceive little, no one but himself is to blame" (NAPH, 52).

When Collingwood says in <u>The Idea Of History</u> that all perception is mediated by thought, this 'thought' includes presuppositions. So at this stage in Collingwood's intellectual career, perception is mediated also by presuppositions which are an integral part of any question-andanswer complex.¹² And he is now saying that the limit which can be set on the possibilities of using any particular perceptible trace as evidence will be dependent on the historian's presupposition-laden questions.¹³ Collingwood has still not relinquished his claim that the historian's world of perception can shift and change. But, since all thinkers inherit a whole tradition of thought, if we compared the world of perception of two historians living in the same 'age', we would see some discernible patterns in the way that the world was perceived.

For Collingwood, all scientists distinguish between evidence and non-evidence in terms of question-and-answer complexes. Questions only arise because we hold presuppositions, and questions set us off looking for evidence that will help us answer our questions. Questions which "arise must of necessity, to an intelligent mind, convey some hint of the direction in which evidence for [their] solution is to be sought" (NAPH, 52-53). And, to use the metaphor of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, a set of absolute presuppositions is the 'yard-stick' by which a scientist decides if something is evidence.¹⁴ For example, the cardinal who refused to look through Galileo's telescope did so because he knew that nothing

- 13. Collingwood never relinquished this view. We also find it expressed in his 1940 publication. See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, pp. 26-27.
- 14. This is the case even if the scientist is not aware of his absolute presuppositions.

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^{12. (}i) The end result of Collingwood's analysis is that perception has a history. As we see it, Collingwood never relinquished this claim. See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 195.
(ii) That all perception is mediated by thought is a transhistorical principle for Collingwood.
he could possibly see would be evidence for him.¹⁵ Galileo and the cardinal distinguished between evidence and non-evidence in terms of their world of perception. For Collingwood, our absolute presuppositions logically regulate what we consider to be evidence and non-evidence. In reference to Plato's theory of Ideas, Collingwood says that "[e]verything is evidence for it, if you believe it; everything evidence against it, if you disbelieve it" (LHK, 92). Collingwood's dictum that "what you are not looking for, you do not see" is especially applicable to evidence. An adequate analysis of the notion of evidence, then, for Collingwood, cannot neglect important subjective elements. Any attempt to eliminate these subjective elements is always insincere. In fact, if it succeeded, science itself would vanish because nothing would be judged as evidence.

Whenever absolute presuppositions change, what is considered to be evidence will change. The yard-stick by which the scientist distinguishes between evidence and non-evidence, then, is not fixed. If the yard-stick changes, new limits will be placed on what is considered to be evidence or even possible evidence. Everyone brings absolute presuppositions to his subject-matter, and approaches it from the point of view which is characteristic of himself and his generation. Naturally, therefore, one age, one man, sees evidence which another does not. For

^{15.} We have slightly altered Mink's example. See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History</u> <u>And Dialectic</u>, p. 179. Mink claims that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and "methods of argument". We agree with this point but also wish to claim that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and what is considered to be evidence.

example, one age, one man sees animal tracks where the other sees fossils.¹⁶

In Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts on the philosophy of social science we have already seen that he thinks that absolute presuppositions are "read into the evidence". In these unpublished manuscripts he discusses different naturalistic conceptions that are used in the social sciences. He states:

> These conceptions do not rest on evidence; they are read into the evidence, and rest on the false assumption, implicit in the naturalistic method, that subject and object are external to each other and that each is the other's opposite; an assumption made explicit at the very beginning of modern scientific history when Descartes, expounding the presuppositions of physics, distinguished mind as thinking and unextended from matter as extended and unthinkable.¹⁷

It is clear that Collingwood sees the social scientist as sometimes borrowing the absolute presuppositions that are held in the natural sciences. And Collingwood regards it as a mistake for social scientists to be using the absolute presuppositions of natural science in their study of mind-as-thought. Collingwood says that this leads the naturalistic social scientist to divorce the "primitive mind" from the "civilized mind". The "primitive mind" is the object, while the civilized mind" is the subject. These naturalistic conceptions, for Collingwood, are foundational concepts and are not the conclusions of an empirical study. Naturalistic social scientists have confused the logical status of absolute presuppositions with the logical status of evidence. Here again

^{16.} Here, of course, we are referring to the famous story concerning Hegel. Hegel thought that what we today call fossils were animal tracks.

^{17.} R.G. Collingwood, "The Historical Method", (unpublished manuscript) 1936-1937, pp. 6-7.

we have an instance of the fact that the naturalistic "scientist never sees 'himself'".

Not only is there a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and what is considered to be evidence in the natural and social sciences, there is also a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and what is considered to be evidence in the subject-matter called history. In The Idea Of History Collingwood states:

> The evidence available for solving any given problem changes with every change of historical method and with every variation in the competence of historians.... [T]he interpreting of evidence is a task to which a man must bring everything he knows: historical knowledge, knowledge of nature and man, mathematical knowledge, philosophical knowledge; and not knowledge only, but mental habits and possessions of every kind:... (IH, 248).

Historical evidence is not "unchanging". Evidence, for Collingwood, changes as "mental habits" change. And these "mental habits" would include particular absolute presuppositions. And as we have seen elsewhere, "none of these is unchanging". A fundamental change at the absolute presupposition level will lead the historian to question what was previously thought to be evidence. And a fundamental change at the absolute presupposition level will set the historian off looking for new evidence. For example, in the previous chapter we saw that the Tübingen school of Biblical criticism rejected miracles as evidence when they adopted the positivistic absolute presupposition that 'all events happen according to law'. This absolute presupposition set the Tübingen school off looking for new evidence. For Collingwood, then, the historian can always bring new presuppositions to his subject-matter. When new problems arise, the historian must look for evidence that will help him solve his new problems. And for Collingwood, new evidence can always become available that will aid the historian in solving his problems.¹⁸

For Collingwood, what we regard as evidence has a history. This is why history, like all of the other sciences, must be rewritten. And The Idea Of History can partially be seen as a study of how history has been rewritten as the result of evidence changing. Greco-Roman historiography only recognized teleological evidence. With Medieval historiography, the evidence still had to be teleological, but now all peoples are involved in the working out of God's purpose. Anything that was to be considered as evidence for Medieval historiographers, then, had to fit into this metaphysical framework. During the Enlightenment, Voltaire claimed that historians should confine their attention to the period after the end of the Middle Ages.¹⁹ Voltaire argued this way because he thought that this was the only period concerning which we possessed sound and sufficient evidence. By 'sound and sufficient evidence' he meant evidence as measured by the standards of the modern scientific spirit. And Hume followed Voltaire in claiming that only the recent past was knowable, given the standards of the scientific spirit of his day. With Montesquieu we have another example of how absolute presuppositions logically regulate what is considered to be evidence. Montesquieu was dominated by

^{18.} It should be noted at this point that to speak of 'interpreting the evidence differently' is actually a little misleading because this phrase suggests that there is ready-made evidence that can be interpreted in many different ways.

Note that Voltaire still accepted the periodizing of the Medieval historiographers. But Voltaire did not attempt to write a universal history.

the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events'. This absolute presupposition led Montesquieu to treat climatic and geographical factors as historical evidence.

The logico-regulative relationship of absolute presuppositions to evidence is especially evident in what Collingwood calls "pigeonholing". Collingwood tells us in "Historical Evidence" that many historians have the desire to invent "a system of pigeon-holes in which to arrange their learning" (IH, 264). Historians who like to pigeon-hole arrange "the whole of history in a single scheme" (IH, 264). Collingwood accuses Vico, Kant, Hegel, Comte, Marx, Petrie, Spengler and Toynbee of pigeon-holing.

Collingwood tells us that Vico was guilty of pigeon-holing with his pattern of historical cycles. Vico agreed with the claim made by some Greco-Roman historians that history was cyclical, but rejected their claim that history was circular. Vico rejected the absolute presupposition that 'history repeats itself' that was held by some Greco-Roman historians and even by some Renaissance historians. For Vico, history never repeats itself "but comes round to each new phase in a form differentiated by what has gone before" (IH, 68). So, for Vico, we have cycles along with new phases. This is the reason that it is actually more accurate to call Vico's theory a 'spiral' theory of history. Vico's spiral theory was a logico-regulative starting-point and this led Vico to construct the past²⁰, according to a pattern which was "necessary 'a

^{20.} Vico did not attempt to predict the future. So, although Vico was guilty of pigeon-holing, he was not a universal historian.

priori' on logical grounds" (IH, 264). It will be recalled that a logico-regulative entity operates in an 'a priori' fashion. Vico logically forced history into pigeon-holes according to his interpretative framework. Now historians who force history into pigeon-holes only accept evidence which fits into their grand scheme. Vico was no exception. Vico's grand scheme logically regulated what was considered to be evidence and non-evidence. Anything that was to be considered as evidence had to fit into Vico's metaphysical framework. All Vico had to do was interpolate between Greco-Roman evidence, most of which he regarded as ready-made evidence, in order to make room for his new phases. In short, Vico had to make room for novelties.

Kant was also guilty of pigeon-holing. Kant also gave us a "chronological" and "qualitative scheme" according to a pattern which was necessary 'a priori' on logical grounds. Kant attempted to construct a "'universal history from a cosmopolitan point of view'". Kant was dominated by the absolute presupposition that 'history is a progress towards rationality, which is at the same time an advance in rationality'. This absolute presupposition logically regulated Kant's "universal" history.²¹ And we could say the same thing about Kant's metaphysical framework that Collingwood said about Plato's metaphysical framework, and that is that everything is evidence for it, if you believe it; everything evidence against it, if you disbelieve it.

^{21.} Kant also accepted the notion of ready-made evidence (IH, 97). He thought that the facts of history were already 'in' and that all the historian had to do was theorize about these ready-made facts. Kant may have been led to this view because, for him, all categories and regulative ideas were fixed in the strict sense of the term.

Collingwood also tells us that Hegel and Marx committed the fallacy of pigeon-holing. Both Hegel and Marx give us a chronological and qualitative metaphysical scheme for interpreting history. And Collingwood does add that these metaphysical schemes, as with all cases of pigeon-holing, do have a "magical value" in the sense that the metaphysical schemes provide "a focus for emotions and in consequence an incentive to action" (IH, 265-266). Although Hegel and Marx divided history into periods, they did not agree on how these periods were derived. For Hegel, the periods were derived from "'ideas'". And for Marx, the periods were derived from "natural facts" (IH, 125). Even though both of these thinkers accepted the absolute presupposition that 'history is an advance in freedom', they did not share the absolute presupposition that 'nature is the casue of historical events'. While Marx held it, Hegel did not. With Hegel and Marx it is a metaphysical scheme which is used to distinguish between evidence and non-evidence. Anything which cannot be fitted into their own particular metaphysical scheme is rejected as evidence. And with these two examples of pigeon-holing, as with all examples of pigeon-holing, Collingwood's two dicta concerning the logical status of evidence are especially applicable: 'what you are not looking for, you do not see' and 'everything is evidence for it, if you believe it; everything evidence against it, if you disbelieve it'.

Collingwood goes on to tell us that some historians thought that their pigeon-holing enterprise could raise history to the rank of a natural science (IH, 264). These historians were positivists who thought that natural processes were analogous to historical processes and that therefore history should be constructed on the analogy of the natural

sciences. Earlier we called this claim the analogy thesis. And we have already seen that the claim that 'natural processes are analogous to historical processes' is an absolute presupposition. But in addition to this absolute presupposition, positivistic historians also held the absolute presuppositions that 'all events happen according to law' and 'the future resembles the past'. With these absolute presuppositions, only regularian evidence was admitted by positivistic historians. In other words, only evidence that was consistent with Cause III explanations was genuine evidence. Positivistic historians thought that all the evidence was 'in' and that all one had to do was to look for regularity. And so positivistic historians failed to recognize that their presuppositions were read into the evidence when they attempted to construct a "universal" history.²²

In "Historical Evidence" Collingwood examines how historical methodology has changed throughout the ages. And, for him, changes in historical methodology always indicate deeper and more fundamental changes at the presupposition level. In "Historical Evidence", Collingwood is actually continuing his reflection on the changes in the presuppositions of historical methodology. Already in Parts I-IV of <u>The Idea</u> <u>of History</u> Collingwood had studied the changes in the presuppositions of

^{22.} It might be argued that Collingwood is giving us a grand scheme because he holds a great man theory of history. But this interpretation would be premature. Although he speaks of, for example, Caesar's intentions, it would not necessarily follow that he holds a great man theory of history. We must continually keep in mind that history must be based on evidence in order to be fully scientific. And so, <u>if</u> an unequal proportion of the 'evidence' <u>here and now</u> centred around a 'great man', it would follow that our written history is going to reflect this. This analysis is consistent with <u>Roman Britain</u>.

historical methodology and offered a critical examination of those presuppositions. So the first four sections of <u>The Idea Of History</u> were not just a descriptive study of these presuppositions.

Collingwood begins his study of the changes in the presuppositions of historical methodology with an examination of what he calls "scissors-and-paste history". "Scissors-and-paste history" is actually equivalent to what he called "common-sense history" in "The Historical Imagination". Scissors-and-paste history "depends altogether upon the testimony of authorities" (IH, 257). This kind of 'history' is "constructed by excerpting and combining the testimonies", spoken or written, "of different authorities". Scissors-and-paste historians accept "readymade answers" to the questions that he asks. The person who offers the ready-made answer is called the "authority". And the ready-made answer that is accepted by the historian is called "'testimony'". Collingwood tells us that "scissors and paste was the only historical method known to the later Greco-Roman world or the Middle Ages" (IH, 258). Although the scissors-and-paste historian can ask different questions, for this historian "there is only one kind" or type of question "which is capable of being settled by any sort of argument" (IH, 261). And the one kind or type of question is "whether to accept or reject a certain piece of testimony bearing upon the question in which he is interested" (IH, 261). For Collingwood, scissors-and-paste history "is not really history at all, but we have no other name for it" (IH, 257). Here Collingwood is saying that scissors-and-paste history is not really scientific history in the complete sense. The scissors-and-paste historian does not recognize "the

necessary conditions of science".²³ For one thing, the scissors-andpaste historian does not recognize his autonomy. Although the scissorsand-paste historian is using the logic of question and answer, he is not using it in a fully scientific way. He is using this logic in its "simplest form".

Collingwood is quick to add that he is not saying "that testimony ought never to be accepted". Testimony may actually turn out to be knowledge. But testimony, although it may turn out to be knowledge, is not ready-made "scientific knowledge". Testimony is not scientific knowledge because it cannot be supported "by appeal to the grounds on which it is based" (IH, 257). The statements made by a so-called authority cease to be testimony only when the statements are evaluated critically and reinforced or grounded by evidence. And if they have survived the test of evidence and criticism, only then do these statements deserve the name historical knowledge.²⁴

There are at least two implications of scissors-and-paste history that Collingwood finds unacceptable. The first implication is that what is not contained in the testimony of authorities cannot be known. But, according to Collingwood, the truly scientific historian can throw light on seemingly remote or obscure historical subjects by compelling his sources to answer questions that are not raised in his sources. And

^{23.} Collingwood would be the first person to admit that the necessary conditions of science, as he sees them, arise from presuppositions.

^{24.} But we must emphasize that Collingwood means historical knowledge in the weak sense here. By historical knowledge, he does not mean finality. Rather, historical knowledge here refers to what we have called truth in Sense II.

it is the important notion of autonomy in the scientific historian's methodology that allows him, unlike the scissors-and-paste historian, to do this. The scientific historian, for Collingwood, can and must 'read between the lines'. In other words, he can and must read between the statements of the so-called authorities. Collingwood states:

> Where the scissors-and-paste historian said quite confidently 'There is nothing in such-and-such an author about such-andsuch a subject', the scientific or Baconian historian will reply 'Oh, isn't there? Do you not see that in this passage about a totally different matter it is implied that the author took such-and-such a view of the subject about which you say his text contains nothing?' (IH, 270)

With the methodology of scientific history it is possible to uncover facts which 'authorities' don't give us. And it should be noted that Collingwood does exactly this in <u>Roman Britain</u>.²⁵ One other implication of scissors-and-paste history is that there is no satisfactory way of solving the problem of conflicting evidence. When the scissors-andpaste historian takes statements from authorities, he is simply 'lost' when his authorities disagree. The scissors-and-paste historian could prefer one authority to another, but this procedure, according to his own methodology, would be simply arbitrary. For Collingwood, it is only by becoming a scientific historian that one can attempt to solve the problem of conflicting evidence. The scientific historian, according to his own autonomous methodology, can consistently offer reasons for preferring one account of the past to another. In other words, the scientific historian is not 'lost' when he is faced with conflicting accounts of the past because he can argue for a particular account of the past by

^{25.} See, for example, Roman Britain, p. 316.

appealing to the grounds upon which it is based. For Collingwood, it is only by becoming autonomous that one can attempt to solve the problem of conflicting evidence.

From the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, a "form" of scissors-and-paste history was accepted. Collingwood calls this form of scissors-and-paste history "'critical history". Critical history "was worked out from the seventeenth century onwards, and officially acclaimed in the nineteenth as the apotheosis of the historical consciousness" (IH, 259). In critical history, the word 'authority' was relinquished by historians and replaced by the word "'source', a word indicating simply that it contains the statement, without any implications as to its value" (IH, 259). With critical history, the historian is only concerned with whether a particular statement in a source is true or false and it is he who decides. The problem for the critical historian is whether he should "incorporate the statement into his own narrative or not". "The presupposition of the problem", Collingwood says in reference to critical history, "is that in a certain source we have found a certain statement which bears on our subject" (IH, 259).²⁶ The critical historian can "solve this problem in one or other of two ways: affirmatively" by accepting the statement "or negatively" by rejecting the statement (IH, 259).

^{26. (}i) To use the language of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, when Collingwood uses the term 'presupposition' in this text he means a relative presupposition.
(ii) Note also that the logic of question and answer is still being used by the critical historian. But, as we will soon see, the critical historian is still not using this logic in a fully scientific way.

For Collingwood, the move from scissors-and-paste history to critical history is not a radical move. Although one class of witnesses is disqualified from giving testimony, the other class of witnesses is treated exactly as authorities were treated under scissors-and-paste history. With critical history, the Baconian revolution in history has still not been accomplished. Collingwood does see the move from the presuppositions of scissors-and-paste history to the presuppositions of critical history as an advance, because some of the statements of witnesses are evaluated critically, but the presuppositions of modern scientific history have still not been adopted. Now, by calling critical history still a form of scissors-and-paste history, Collingwood does not mean that the critical historian cannot consistently attempt to solve the problem of conflicting evidence, for actually, according to his own methodology, he can make such an attempt. The critical historian can offer reasons for preferring the statement of one witness to that of another witness. And so, the critical historian was to some extent autonomous, whereas the notion of autonomy was completely unknown to the scissors-and-paste historian. What Collingwood does mean by calling critical history still a form of scissors-and-paste history is that with critical history an historian can still only ask questions that were raised in his sources. So if a source was silent on a particular topic, the critical historian had to remain silent on that topic. And so the critical historian was not at all autonomous in the sense of 'reading between the lines'. The critical historian, then, made some advance over the scissors-and-paste historian by being to some extent more critical and reflective, but made no advance at all in throwing light on

seemingly remote or obscure historical subjects.

Collingwood tells us that Vico was the first person to recognize that it is possible to uncover facts which 'authorities' don't give us. In Collingwood's language, Vico was the first person to recognize that critical history was still a form of scissors-and-paste history. According to Vico, the historian can 'read between the lines', or, in other words, compel his 'sources' to answer questions that were not raised in his 'sources'.²⁷ Vico claimed that the historian must attempt to find out what a statement contained in a source "means". And for Vico, "this is not equivalent to the question 'What did the person who made it mean by it?', although that is doubtless a question that the historian must ask, and must be able to answer" (IH, 275).²⁸ Collingwood adds approvingly:

> It is equivalent, rather, to the question 'What light is thrown on the subject in which I am interested by the fact that this person made this statement, meaning by it what he did mean?' This might be expressed by saying that the scientific historian does not treat statements as statements but as evidence: not as true or false accounts of the facts of which they profess to be accounts, but as other facts which, if he knows the right questions to ask about them, may throw light on those facts (IH, 275).

^{27.} But with Vico there is still a trace of critical history in the sense of treating some witnesses as authorities. But as far as 'reading between the lines' is concerned, Vico broke away from critical history.

^{28.} The question of what the person meant by the statement is still an important question for the historian. Although Collingwood does not deal with this question in "Historical Evidence", he will deal with this question in "History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience". And it should be noted that Collingwood had already touched on this problem in "Human Nature And Human History", not to mention isolated occurrences even earlier.

For example, Vico pointed out that false statements in sources can still throw light on the historian's present problems. In other words, Vico claimed, and Collingwood agrees with this assessment, that false statements are by no means worthless as historical evidence. Following Vico, Collingwood says: "[I]f in some source you found a statement which for some reason could not be accepted as literally true, you must not on that account reject it as worthless. It might be a way, perhaps a wellestablished way according to the custom of the time when it was written, of saying something which you, through ignorance of that custom, did not recognize as its meaning" (IH, 259). So by the term 'meaning' in this text, Collingwood is not saying that the historian is to uncover the meaning of the words in the statement. Rather, the historian is to ask the question: 'Why did the author make this statement?' And to uncover the 'meaning'' of a statement in this sense, the historian must be autonomous.

For Collingwood, the scientific historian is a "detective". Collingwood is thus led to a discussion of the similarities between a scientific historian's work and a criminal detective's work. This discussion is found in a section of "Historical Evidence" entitled "Who killed John Doe?" Collingwood constructs a detective story in order to highlight those areas where the scientific historian's work and the criminal detective's work are identical. But, he is quick to point out that the "methods of criminal detection are not at every point identical with those of scientific history, because their ultimate purpose is not the same" (IH, 268). However, so long as one recognizes that the methods of criminal detection and scientific history are not at every point identical, "the analogy between legal methods and historical methods is of some value for the understanding of history; of sufficient value, I think, to justify my having put before the reader in outline [a]...sample of a literary genre which in the absence of any such motive it would, of course, be beneath his dignity to notice" (IH, 268).

Collingwood begins his detective story by saying: "When John Doe was found, early one Sunday morning, lying across his desk with a dagger through his back, no one expected that the question who did it would be settled by means of testimony" (IH, 266). In the very first sentence of this story, Collingwood is pointing out an important similarity between the scientific historian's work and the criminal detective's work, and that is that testimony as testimony cannot solve the problem about what actually happened in the past. In all scientific thinking, there are no authorities, only evidence or 'sources'. And the criminal detective, like the scientific historian, must put his sources 'to the question'. The methodology of scissors-and-paste is inadequate because if the scissors-and-paste detective or historian is faced with conflicting testimony, he is simply 'lost'. It is for this reason that a scientist must always treat testimony as possible evidence, and not as containing readymade facts.

The scientific detective, like the scientific historian, cannot come to his evidence or sources in a receptive manner. A scientist "cannot be simply a tranquil mirror reflecting what that evidence tells him; until he has exerted himself and laboured to interpret it, it tells him nothing,..." (IH, 137). Collingwood rejects the view "that when we have made our minds a perfect blank we shall 'apprehend the facts'" (IH,

274). And so, we could say that Collingwood rejects the principle of the 'blank mind'. For Collingwood, the scientist must come to his sources with a question in mind. Both the scientific detective and the scientific historian must 'torture' the statements in his sources by the use of questions. All 'authorities' must be placed in a witness-box and crossexamined until the scientist discovers what he wants to know. And by cross-examining the 'authorities', the scientist can extort from them "information which in their original statements they have withheld, either because they did not wish to give it or because they did not possess it" (IH, 237). So, the scientific detective, like the scientific historian, is not limited to the statements made by 'authorities', as was the case in the methodology of scissors-and-paste. The scientific detective and historian, then, can uncover facts on his own by 'reading between the lines' or reading between statements.

We find the questioning activity in all scientific work. And no scientist will ask the same questions all the time. In Collingwood's detective story, the detective will not "go on asking the same question all the time, 'Who killed John Doe?'" (IH, 273). Rather, "[h]e asks a new question every time" (IH, 273). And the scientific detective, like the scientific historian, knows what questions to ask. But, although a scientist must ask his questions in an orderly and methodical manner, there is no "catalogue of all the questions that have to be asked". The scientist must answer one question before he knows what is the next logical question. And he will not know the next logical question unless he is aware of the presuppositions that logically give rise to his questions. In all scientific work, then, questions "must be asked in the right order", as was recognized by Socrates, Bacon and Descartes, "the three masters of the Logic of Questioning" (IH, 273). And although a scientific detective and historian have their own specific questions and their own specific order for those questions, depending on the 'case', it is still the case that both of these scientists use the logic of question and answer.

For both the scientific detective and historian, question and evidence are "correlative" (IH, 281). That is, one cannot divorce questions from evidence, as the defenders of propositional logic might claim. "Nothing is evidence except in relation to some definite question" (IH, 281). And by 'relation' here, Collingwood means a logical relation. The scientific detective, like the scientific historian, cannot select ready-made evidence. Rather, they can only select the problems that they wish to solve. And so, what the scientist does select is his problems. Now, presuppositions are even more fundamental in a logical sense than problems. And so, nothing is evidence that is not logically related to presuppositions. Presuppositions and evidence, then, are also correlative.

Anything can be used as evidence, for the scientist. Both the scientific detective and historian can use written and unwritten sources. Evidence may be a "written-page", a "spoken utterance, this building, this finger-print" (IH, 247). Anything, then, for Collingwood, is evidence

which enables the scientist to answer his questions.²⁹ Collingwood adds that the scientist will avoid asking pseudo-questions. A pseudo-question is a 'question' that the scientist does not think that he can or will be be able to answer. On the other hand: "A sensible question (the only kind of question that a scientifically competent man will ask) is a question which you think you have or are going to have evidence for answering" (IH, 281). This is not to say that if at one stage in the inquiry a question is regarded as a pseudo-question, that this question will always remain a pseudo-question. At a later stage in the inquiry a scientist may no longer regard this question as a pseudo-question. So, for Collingwood, there are no pseudo-questions in the strong sense. One can only talk of pseudo-questions in relation to the present state of knowledge (EM, 26). Collingwood, then, is not ruling out the possibility that a pseudo-question may later become a legitimate question and that new evidence will be sought. And if this did happen, the scientific detective or historian may be logically forced to re-open a 'case'.

The scientific detective and historian will attempt to attain Cause I or rational explanations. And both of these scientists will look for evidence that refers to the thought-side of the event.³⁰ Since, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, cause in Sense I is an absolute presupposition, this presupposition will logically regulate the kind of

^{29.} There is no ready-made criterion independent of the scientist's work that places a limit on what he can use as evidence. The scientific detective's and historian's search for the truth depends on nothing more than their willingness to proceed in strict accordance with the rules of scientific thinking which includes the important notion of autonomy.

^{30.} Collingwood's entire "John Doe" story can be seen as an attempt at a Cause I explanation.

evidence that the scientific detective or historian is looking for. This is not to say that the outside of the event (i.e. external behaviour) is unimportant. In Collingwood's detective story, for example, someone has to plunge a knife into John Doe before the detective starts searching (or penetrating) for the motive that the 'murderer' had. As Collingwood has already told us, an action is the unity of the inside and outside of an event. And, since the scientist is also concerned about the outside of the event, generalizations (i.e. the generalizations of natural science) can be of use for the detective, just as they are for the historian. But, the detective, like the historian, can never stop with generalizations about the outside of the event when he is attempting to provide a Cause I explanation. Even if one explained the outside of the event, one would only have attained a Cause III explanation. The detective, like the historian, then, must penetrate the external behaviour and attempt to uncover the inside of the event. It should also be pointed out that with Cause I explanations, value judgements are necessary, as Collingwood tells us not only in "Historical Evidence" but in An Essay on Metaphysics and his unpublished manuscript entitled "Can Historians be Impartial".³¹ This is the case because Cause I explanations are 'tied up' with the notion of responsibility (EM, 291). As Collingwood puts it in "Can Historians be Impartial": "Judgments of value are nothing but the ways in which we apprehend the thought which is the inner side of human

^{31.} See <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 291 and "Can Historians be Impartial", 1936, p.12.

action".32

Both the scientific detective and historian must imagine the past. For one thing, the scientist will have to interpolate between the statements of others, that he does accept after critical reflection, by offering other statements of his own devising. But this is not to say that the scientist is just offering us a fanciful account of the past. The search for what actually happened has not been given up. 'What actually happened' is still an important regulative idea for both of these scientists. For both the scientific detective and historian, there is only one 'grid'. And all of the facts must consistently fit on to this one 'grid'. This is not to say that there will be no stresses and strains in the scientist's working out of his account of the past. The scientific detective and historian will continually be faced with possible counter-examples or counter-evidence when he attempts to construct the past. But a consistent account of the past has not been given up as a goal for either of these scientists. As we see it, one reason that Collingwood compares the scientific detective's work with the scientific

^{32.} R.G. Collingwood, "Can Historians be Impartial" (unpublished manuscript), 1936, p. 12. Van Der Dussen has pointed out that Collingwood's position concerning value judgements is not altogether consistent. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 426. We agree with Van Der Dussen's assessment but only up to 1936. Our claim is that from the new turn in Collingwood's thought in the mid-1930's until the end of his life, Collingwood was consistent on the point that historians must make value judgements when they are attempting to attain a Cause I explanation. Collingwood was rather ambiguous about the issue of value judgements until he worked out the differences between a Cause I and Cause III explanation. From the mid-1930's until the end of his life, he realized that value judgements were 'tied up' with the notion of cause in Sense I. This evidence appears to add weight to our claim that there is indeed a new turn in Collingwood's thought in the mid-1930's.

historian's work is to emphasize that the important notion of 'what actually happened' has not been given up.

When Collingwood says that the scientific detective and historian attempt to discover what actually happened, he does not want us to confuse this claim with a positivistic analysis of 'what actually happened'. This is the reason that Collingwood criticizes Ranke's analysis of ""what actually happened" (A, 72). Positivists, like Ranke, think that their evidence contains bare facts which gives them direct access to the past. In other words, positivists think that they are in possession of readymade facts which directly refer to the past as a thing in itself. Now, according to Collingwood's analysis, the scientist comes to know the past, not immediately, but through the asking of questions which points him towards evidence. Collingwood states: "The beginning of historical research is...not the collection or contemplation of crude facts as yet uninterpreted, but the asking of a question which sets one off looking for facts which may help one to answer it" (PH, 137). For Collingwood, the positivist's notion that the historian directly apprehends the past is ruled out as entirely inapplicable to history. And, according to Collingwood, if one accepts a positivistic analysis of 'what actually happened', one will be plunged into scepticism because, as Collingwood sees it, one does not have any ready-made facts to use as a logicoregulative starting-point. We must emphasize that Collingwood is not rejecting the notion of 'what actually happened' when he attacks Ranke. 'What actually happened' is still an important regulative idea for Collingwood. So all that Collingwood is rejecting is Ranke's positivistic

analysis of 'what actually happened'.³³

Collingwood distinguishes between two senses of the phrase 'what actually happened'. Let us call the past as a thing in itself, Sense I of the phrase 'what actually happened'. Collingwood tells us that the ultimate goal for the historian is to apprehend the past as a thing in itself. He states: "[I]t is the historian's business...to apprehend the past as a thing in itself, to say for example that so many years ago such-and-such events actually happened" (IH, 3). What we have called Sense I of the phrase 'what actually happened' is found not only in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, but is also found in <u>Roman Britain</u> (RB, 35, 194, 214). It is clear that Sense I of this phrase is an important regulative idea for Collingwood.³⁴ Now, if an historian ever attained an adequate account of the past as a thing in itself, this historian would have attained truth in Sense I.³⁵ But, whether or not an historian will ever

^{33.} We have already seen that Collingwood rejects the scissors-and-paste historian's analysis of 'what actually happened'.

^{34.} In this paragraph and in the preceding paragraph we are implicitly criticizing Lionel Rubinoff. Rubinoff has claimed that Collingwood rejected "the past as a thing in itself". See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 296. As we have just seen, Collingwood explicitly says that the historian's goal is to apprehend the past as a thing in itself (IH, 3). It may be the case that Rubinoff was misled on this point as the result of Collingwood only rejected Ranke. But, as we have attempted to show, Collingwood only rejected Ranke's positivistic analysis of 'what actually happened'. Collingwood did not want to abandon the whole notion of 'what actually happened'. And as we see it, this was Collingwood's whole point in comparing history with criminal detection, a point which Rubinoff apparently overlooks. With Rubinoff's interpretation, he is left with what we will call Sense II of the phrase 'what actually happened'. But, as we will soon see, if one only has Sense II of the phrase 'what actually happened'.

^{35.} We find Sense I of the term 'truth' used in <u>Roman Britain</u> (RB, v, 70, 174).

attain an adequate account of the past as a thing in itself is an open question. Sense I of the phrase 'what actually happened' must be distinguished from 'what actually happened' in the sense of what the evidence here and now obliges us to believe. Let us call this other sense of the phrase 'what actually happened', Sense II. Sense II of this phrase is nothing other than what appears to have happened in the past, given the evidence here and now. And this sense of the phrase 'what actually happened' corresponds to Sense II of the term 'truth'. With Sense II of the term 'truth', a question-and-answer complex is true if that question-and-answer complex is beyond reasonable doubt, given the evidence here and now. Sense II of the term 'truth' is arrived at in history when an historian can show that his view of 'what actually happened' is the one which is supported by the evidence after being thoroughly examined.

It is Sense II of the term 'truth' that Collingwood is using when he says that St. Augustine, Tillemont, Gibbon and Mommsen asserted true question-and-answer complexes, given their evidence (IH, xii).³⁶ And it is Sense II of the term 'truth' that Collingwood is using when he says: "[T]he historian's picture stands in a peculiar relation to something called evidence. The only way in which the historian or any one else can judge, even tentatively, of its truth is by considering

^{36.} For some background information concerning the St. Augustine passage, see W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 394. Our claim is that this passage should be interpreted in the light of the logic of question and answer and not in terms of a radical historicist framework as Knox has suggested. See T.M. Knox, <u>The Idea Of History</u>, p. xii. Knox emphasizes this passage (which is not contained in a manuscript) because he thinks that it supports his interpretation.

this relation; and, in practice, what we mean by asking whether an historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence:..." (IH, 246). Sense II of the term 'truth' is a tentative truth. And the historian who asserts "tentatively" true question-andanswer complexes wins the game. Collingwood states:

> The game is won not by the player who can reconstitute what really happened, but by the player who can show that his view of what happened is the one which the evidence accessible to all players, when criticised up to the hilt, supports. Suppose a given view is in fact the correct one, and suppose (granted it were possible) that all the extant evidence, interpreted with the maximum degree of skill, led to a different view, no evidence supporting the correct view: in that case the holder of the correct view would lose the game, the holder of the other view win it. Not only is this rule accepted by every player of the game without protest or question, but anyone can see it is reasonable. For there is no way of knowing what view is 'correct', except by finding what the evidence, critically interpreted proves (LHK, 97-98).

For Collingwood, the "game" of history can only be played with "evidence". As Collingwood sees it, the historian who wins the game may not have discovered the past as a thing in itself. That is, the historian who wins the game may not hold the correct view (i.e. what we have called truth in Sense I). All Collingwood means when he says that a particular historian has won the game is that this historian's view of the past is best supported by the evidence. That is, this historian holds the "'correct" view (i.e. what we have called truth in Sense II) given the evidence here and now which has been thoroughly examined. And as Collingwood says, even if some one knew the past as a thing in itself (granted it were possible), but could not support his claim with evidence, he would still lose the game of history. This is not to say that the ultimate goal of the historian is not to discover the past as a thing in itself. As we

have already seen, Collingwood explicitly says that the historian's business is to discover the past as a thing in itself. Collingwood's point is that the historian does not know in the strong sense if he has apprehended the past as a thing in itself.³⁷

All the scientific historian can do is offer hypotheses about the past and then critically evaluate these hypotheses. In other words, all the scientific historian can do is offer "interim reports", which are based on the evidence here and now, and then critically examine these interim reports. And this is exactly what Collingwood admits that he is doing himself in <u>Roman Britain</u> (RB, 16, 40, 107, 153, 188). In his <u>Auto-biography</u> he says that future historians will have to reckon with the questions he has raised, and either accept his answers or produce better ones (A, 131). For Collingwood, the scientific historian does not claim to have the final answer. A scientific historian speaking to other scientific historians, Collingwood says, "speaks on the basis of an assumed agreement on this point, and is able to speak as if he thought his own views wholly adequate to the facts: he does not perpetually qualify his statement with 'in my opinion,' 'probably,' 'so far as the available evidence goes,' just because a qualification of this kind is

^{37.} We also find Collingwood's 'game' metaphor in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, but this time in a reference to the natural sciences. He tells us that "to the mere spectator, there seems to be evidence that the 'mechanists' are winning" over the "'vitalists'" in the biological sciences today (EM, 255). But for Collingwood, this is not to say that the "'mechanists'" will necessarily continue to 'lead' in the game. The evidence in the future may suggest that the mechanists are no longer "winning" the game. For Collingwood, then, natural science must be rewritten, just as history is rewritten. See <u>The</u> <u>Idea Of Nature</u>. And, for Collingwood, it is an open question whether or not the natural scientist will ever reach truth in Sense I.

assumed as a standing order in all historical thinking" (NAPH, 43). And Collingwood is insistent on the point that this doctrine is not scepticism, "for scepticism implies that no one opinion is preferable to any other; and it is certainly possible to choose between different historical views,..." (NAPH, 43). For him, the scientific historian can still choose, on the basis of evidence, to accept one historical view over another. According to Collingwood, although the scientific historian does not claim to have the final answer, he is not plunged into scepticism. The scientific historian still accepts the regulative idea of a final answer (i.e. the past as a thing in itself) and is actively pursuing this final answer. And with this regulative idea of a final answer, he can consistently argue that he thinks that a particular historical view is a better approximation to this final answer than another historical view.³⁸

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter VI. In this section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators in regard to issues arising out of our first section. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

In the second section we will make two major claims that arise out

^{38.} It could be argued that Collingwood holds a correspondence theory of truth (i.e. Sense I of the term 'truth') and a coherence theory of knowledge (which refers to Sense II of the term 'truth'). But 'correspondence' and 'coherence' are not to be understood in terms of propositional logic. In the case of history, a question and answer complex would be true in an ultimate sense if that complex referred to the past as a thing in itself. And a question and answer complex would be true in Sense II if it is coherent with the present state of knowledge.

of the first section of Chapter VI. The two major claims of this chapter are as follows: (1) no commentator has yet recognized the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical evidence and (2) Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "Historical Evidence" and that the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936 is evident in this paper.

Let us turn now to the first major claim of this chapter: no commentator has yet recognized the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical evidence. As we see it, there are at least four reasons to account for this fact. One reason that accounts for this fact is that some commentators offer a questionable interpretation of the status of absolute presuppositions. As we have seen earlier, T.M. Knox holds the view that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities and that these psychological entities are not an integral part of the logic of question and answer. With this interpretation, Knox is prevented from claiming that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and evidence, including historical evidence. In the first section of this chapter we have seen, for example, that Greco-Medieval historians were dominated by teleological absolute presuppositions which placed limits on the types of questions that could be asked and the types of evidence that could be accepted. Greco-Medieval historians asked teleological questions which set them off looking for teleological evidence. And the evidence that was deemed to be genuine evidence just reinforced and legitimized the presuppositions

held and the questions asked.³⁹ It is our claim that once we regard absolute presuppositions both as logico-regulative entities and as being an integral part of the logic of question and answer, that we will see that absolute presuppositions logically determine what is considered to be evidence. And, as we see it, this was the primary reason that Collingwood rejected the notion of ready-made evidence. It is our contention that Collingwood not only saw evidence as question-laden, but in addition saw evidence as more fundamentally presupposition-laden.

In addition to Knox, Alan Donagan misinterprets the status of absolute presuppositions. As we pointed out earlier, Donagan misinterprets Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions in the same way that Gilbert Ryle did in 1935.⁴⁰ In addition, Donagan does not think that absolute presuppositions underlie history. Donagan's claim that absolute presuppositions are empirical propositions and his claim that absolute presuppositions only underlie natural science prevents him from seeing the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence. In fact, since Donagan holds the view that absolute presuppositions are empirical propositions, he is prevented from claiming that there is even a logico-regulative relationship of absolute presuppositions to evidence in natural science. As we have attempted to demonstrate in the first section of this chapter, absolute presuppositions,

^{39.} However, this is not to say that there were no stresses and strains in the Greco-Medieval 'conceptual system'. And these stresses and strains can also give rise to conflicting evidence. See also <u>An</u> Essay on Metaphysics, pp. 193-194.

^{40.} In one sense, Donagan's work on Collingwood can be seen as an expanded ""Collingwood-Ryle Correspondence".

for Collingwood, are logically prior to all evidence. As we have seen, Collingwood thinks that absolute presuppositions are not based on evidence, but rather are read into the evidence. Donagan fails to see that absolute presuppositions are foundational concepts and not the result of an empirical study. And so, given our analysis, Donagan has confused the logical status of absolute presuppositions with the logical status of empirical propositions. Our interpretation, unlike Donagan's, appears to be consistent with Collingwood's claim that there is no readymade evidence that we could use to justify an absolute presupposition (EM, 33). For Collingwood, there is no ready-made evidence that could be used to legitimize an absolute presupposition because it is our absolute presuppositions that have already logically determined what we consider to be evidence. Donagan does say that no two historians work with the same evidence⁴¹, but he doesn't recognize the primary reason which led Collingwood to this view.

Another reason that accounts for the failure by Collingwood's commentators to recognize the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence is the widespread acceptance of the late development thesis. The defenders of the late development thesis, including Knox, Donagan, Mink and Skagestad, claim that the doctrine of absolute presuppositions grew out of Collingwood's intensive

41. A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 211.

study of history in 1935-1936.⁴² It is the acceptance of the late development thesis that prevents many commentators from interpreting <u>The Idea Of History</u> in terms of the theory of absolute presuppositions. The defenders of the late development thesis do not recognize that when Collingwood uses the term 'metaphysics' in <u>The Idea of History</u>, he now means 'the science which studies absolute presuppositions'. For example, in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, he says that Greco-Roman historiography was "constructed on a framework of substantialistic metaphysical principles which influence its every detail" (IH, 43). Given our analysis in our opening

42. (i) Some commentators overlook the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence for more than one reason. (ii) As mentioned earlier, most commentators just follow Knox in accepting the late development thesis. It will be recalled that Knox was not in possession of all of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts when he edited The Idea Of History and The Idea of Nature. Most importantly for this thesis, Knox was not in possession of Collingwood's manuscripts on metaphysics that date back to the early 1930's which seem to provide conclusive proof that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in this 'period'. Knox did see some of these 'metaphysical' manuscripts (although he apparently didn't read them), but was of the opinion that Collingwood destroyed these manuscripts. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History</u> <u>As A Science</u>, p. 192. These 'metaphysical' manuscripts from the early 1930's, however, have survived. It is our contention that if these 'metaphysical' manuscripts had been available to Knox then the development of Collingwoodian scholarship would have taken a significantly different direction. It should also be noted that by the late 1930's Knox had moved on to St. Andrews. Knox was no longer in direct contact with Collingwood. As we see it, this fact partially accounts for Knox's misinterpretation of Collingwood's theory of metaphysics in An Essay on Metaphysics. It is our contention that if Knox had still been in direct contact with Collingwood when An Essay on Metaphysics was published, and had discussed its contents, that Knox would not have attempted to defend the radical conversion hypothesis or the irrationalist thesis in his interpretation of Collingwood. Given our contention, this is another area where the development of Collingwoodian scholarship would have taken a significantly different direction.

chapter as to the 'period' that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions, these "metaphysical principles" are to be understood as absolute presuppositions. In fact, in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, he speaks of "metaphysical hypotheses" or "metaphysical presuppositions" which are regarded in a "dogmatic and absolute" manner (IH, 75, 85). And so, given our analysis in our opening chapter and in this chapter, when Collingwood says in his "metaphysical epilegomena" to <u>The Idea Of</u> <u>History</u> that there is a relationship between metaphysics and historical evidence, we should understand Collingwood as saying that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence.

Another reason that accounts for the failure among Collingwood's commentators to recognize this logical connection is that a number of commentators interpret <u>The Idea Of History</u> as though it were selfcontained in such a way that <u>The Idea Of History</u>, including "Historical Evidence", can be fully understood independently of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. The commentators who treat <u>The Idea Of History</u> as though it were self-contained include William Dray, Leon Goldstein, Rex Martin, Alan Donagan, Peter Skagestad and W.J. Van Der Dussen. With Dray, Goldstein and Martin we cannot say that they are prevented from seeing the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence because they hold the late development thesis. This is the case because all three of these commentators do not take a stand on the question of when Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions. Dray, Goldstein and Martin are largely concerned with <u>The</u> Idea Of History alone and do not interpret this work in terms of the

continuity of Collingwood's thought. In fact, while they are discussing The Idea Of History, all three of these commentators are mainly concerned with the problem of historical explanation, which includes the notion of re-enactment, and say very little about the problem of historical evidence. This is not to say that their studies are not valuable. Many of the claims offered by all three of these commentators are quite compatible with this thesis. All we are saying is that these commentators have overlooked an important component in Collingwood's thought that is presented in The Idea Of History. As regards Van Der Dussen, he has taken a stand on the question of when Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions. As we have seen earlier, Van Der Dussen, as the result of his study of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts, has traced the theory of absolute presuppositions back to 1934. But Van Der Dussen, like Dray, Goldstein and Martin, sees no relationship at all between absolute presuppositions and history, although he does say, as we have seen earlier, that there may be such a relationship. Van Der Dussen holds the implicit view that this work can be understood independently of the theory of absolute presuppositions and as a result overlooks, as we see it, an important component of Collingwood's later philosophy of history.⁴³ With Donagan and Skagestad, both take a stand on the question of when Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions, and they both hold an explicit view on the question of whether or not The Idea Of History is self-contained. As we have seen

^{43.} Van Der Dussen does discuss "Historical Evidence", but there is no mention of the theory of absolute presuppositions. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 292-295.

earlier, both Donagan and Skagestad hold the late development thesis. However, Donagan and Skagestad disagree on the reason for treating this work as though it were self-contained. As regards Donagan's position, he thinks that absolute presuppositions only underlie natural science. As regards Skagestad's position, he thinks that the theory of absolute presuppositions is meant to be a theory of historical explanation and that this theory is a completely different theory of historical explanation from that offered in The Idea Of History. With this interpretation, Skagestad is prevented from seeing the logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the discussion of historical evidence in The Idea Of History. As we see it, An Essay on Metaphysics is an attempt at a more fundamental analysis of scientific thinking than is offered in The Idea Of History. The analysis in An Essay on Metaphysics throws additional light on The Idea Of History when Collingwood is discussing scientific thinking and especially the most fundamental level of scientific thinking. So, with our view, unlike Skagestad's view, the analysis in The Idea Of History cannot be separated from the analysis in An Essay on Metaphysics.

There is at least one other reason that accounts for the failure to recognize this logical connection. Some commentators approach <u>The</u> <u>Idea Of History</u> in an 'a priori' fashion by interpreting this work in terms of one or more of Collingwood's other writings. Lionel Rubinoff and Louis Mink are examples of commentators who fall into this camp. With Rubinoff's Hegelian reading of <u>The Idea Of History</u>, we are reminded of Collingwood's dictum that 'what you are not looking for, you do not see'. Once again, we are not claiming that Rubinoff's study is not a valuable

study. All we are claiming is that there is an aspect of Collingwood's thought that Rubinoff has overlooked. Since the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not found before or even in Speculum Mentis, if our analysis is correct, Rubinoff misses the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence by interpreting The Idea Of History in terms of Speculum Mentis. As regards Mink's position, he says that The Idea Of History is to be interpreted in terms of the relevant ideas of The Principles of Art and The New Leviathan. And in regard to the subject of this chapter, Mink's interpretative framework prevents him from seeing the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence. Since the doctrine of absolute presuppositions is not mentioned in either The Principles of Art or The New Leviathan, Mink overlooks this logical connection by interpreting The Idea Of History in terms of his interpretative framework. In fact, one could easily argue that Mink has a problem of chronology by approaching The Idea Of History in terms of his interpretative framework. In addition, Mink has claimed that the "'a priori' imagination" is an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions, a view which we have rejected in the previous chapter, and this claim also partially accounts for Mink's failure to recognize the relationship between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence. This is the case because there is no mention of the "a priori' imagination" in Collingwood's paper entitled "Historical Evidence".

Let us turn to the second major claim of this chapter: Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions throws direct light on "Historical Evidence" and that the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in 1935-1936 is evident in this paper. In the first section of this chapter we examined Collingwood's unpublished manuscript on the philosophy of social science entitled "The Historical Method" (1936-1937). In this manuscript Collingwood says that absolute presuppositions are read into the evidence. Collingwood adds that it is very important not to confuse the logical status of absolute presuppositions with the logical status of empirical evidence. Absolute presuppositions are logically prior in an 'a priori' fashion to evidence, and that what is considered to be evidence depends on the scientists' absolute presuppositions. The defenders of the late development thesis cannot account for these remarks in Collingwood's unpublished manuscript of 1936-1937. This is the case because these remarks are inconsistent with the claim that Collingwood did not develop his theory of absolute presuppositions until An Autobiography and An Essay on Metaphysics. Our claim is that Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's, worked out the relationship of absolute presuppositions to historical evidence in The Idea Of History 44, and then in 1936-1937 turned to the relationship between absolute presuppositions and evidence in the social sciences. In the unpublished manuscripts on the philosophy of social sciences (1936-1937), Collingwood was applying his historical methodology that he had worked out in 1935-1936 to the social sciences. And our claim is that the specific methodology that Collingwood argues for cannot be accounted for unless Collingwood had already thought in 1935-1936 that there was a relationship between absolute presuppositions and evidence.

^{44.} The unpublished manuscripts show that Collingwood did not work on the philosophy of history from 1933 to 1934. Collingwood did not resume the study of the philosophy of history until 1935.
In the first section of this chapter we attempted to demonstrate that Collingwood did see a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and historical evidence in 1935-1936. We saw that the whole of <u>The Idea Of History</u> can be seen partially as an attempt to show that what is considered to be evidence has a history. In fact, the whole of <u>The Idea Of History</u> can be seen partially as an examination of the logicoregulative relationship of absolute presuppositions to historical evidence over time. In this chapter we have discussed a number of examples of where Collingwood says that history was rewritten as the result of new metaphysical concepts being 'taken up' and new evidence sought.

In the next and last chapter we will turn to the problem of rethinking thoughts or re-enactment and continue our analysis of the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY AS RE-ENACIMENT OF PAST EXPERIENCE

In the first section of this chapter we will examine the relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts or re-enactment. A number of commentators, including E.M.F. Tomlin, Lionel Rubinoff, Louis Mink, Michael Krausz and M.H. Nielsen, have made suggestive claims as to the relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-thinking thoughts. But no commentator has systematically worked out this relationship. And no commentator has yet claimed that there is a logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. As we see it, although numerous commentators have examined Collingwood's doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment, the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and re-thinking or re-enactment is an aspect of Collingwood's thought that has been overlooked. In the second section of this chapter we will suggest reasons that account for the failure to recognize this logical connection.

Ι

In "Human Nature And Human History" (1936) and "History As

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Re-enactment Of Past Experience"¹, Collingwood was not discussing the problem of re-thinking thoughts for the first time. Collingwood's published and unpublished writings show that he returned to this problem time and time again. It would be correct to say that the attempt to solve this problem was really a lifetime occupation for Collingwood. And it is interesting to note that Collingwood remarked in his Autobiography that the problem of re-thinking thoughts was the most difficult problem in history that he ever dealt with (A, 112). As early as Religion And Philosophy (1916), he tackled the problem of re-thinking thoughts.² Collingwood also discussed the problem of re-thinking thoughts in "Croce's Philosophy of History" (1921).³ And we have already seen in our opening chapter that Collingwood discussed this problem in "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927). Collingwood also discussed the problem of re-thinking thoughts in his Die Manuscript of 1928. Collingwood refers to this unpublished manuscript of 1928 in An Autobiography (A, 107), and this manuscript is now available for consultation at Oxford.

^{1. &}quot;History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience" is drawn from the manuscript of 1936 from which material for Parts I-IV of <u>The Idea Of</u> <u>History</u> was also drawn. This paper is found in the "metaphysical epilegomena" of the 1936 manuscript. Collingwood revised and completed this paper in 1939. Knox placed this paper in Part V of <u>The</u> Idea Of History.

^{2.} See <u>Religion And Philosophy</u>, pages 98-99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106, 116-117, 156, 161. Van Der Dussen appears to be mistaken when he claims that Collingwood did not deal with the problem of re-thinking thoughts until 1921. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As a Science</u>, p. 72. On this point we agree with Rubinoff that Collingwood dealt with the problem of re-thinking thoughts as early as 1916. See L. Rubinoff, Reform Of Metaphysics, p. 39-40.

^{3.} R.G. Collingwood, "Croce's Philosophy of History" in Essays, ed., Debbins, p. 15.

In "Human Nature And Human History" (1936) and "History as Reenactment Of Past Experience", Collingwood's attempt to solve the problem of re-thinking thoughts moved in a significantly new direction. It was during this period that Collingwood recognized the relationship between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. As we have just seen, Collingwood did discuss the problem of re-thinking thoughts prior to 1935, but prior to 1935 there is no mention of the theory of absolute presuppositions in any of his discussions concerning the problem of re-thinking thoughts, including the discussion on re-thinking in the unpublished Die manuscript of 1928. As we see it, in The Idea Of History Collingwood was led, as a result of his intensive study of metaphysics in the early 1930's, to see the problem of re-thinking thoughts in a new light. Collingwood's "interim report" in The Idea Of History indicates that he is now of the opinion that re-thinking or reenactment cannot be divorced from absolute presuppositions because absolute presuppositions are an integral part of any question-and-answer complex.

We have already seen in our opening chapter that Collingwood developed his logic of question and answer as early as his World War I 'period'. But we did not find the doctrine of absolute presuppositions in either <u>Religion And Philosophy</u> or "Truth and Contradiction". We also found Collingwood's logic of question and answer later in <u>Speculum Mentis</u> (1924), but once again we found no mention of the theory of absolute presuppositions. In "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927), we saw that the "fundamental idea" which dominated the thought of every culture was 'tied up' with the logic of question and answer, and that if we wanted to re-think the thought of another culture, we had to uncover this fundamental idea. But we offered reasons to support our claim that this notion of a fundamental idea is not equivalent to the theory of absolute presuppositions.⁴ Nor did we find the theory of absolute presuppositions in "The Philosophy of History" (1930). In 1930 Collingwood still held the view that questions are context-laden, but this context was only made up of previous thoughts which logically gave rise to questions (PhH, 137). Given our analysis in our opening chapter, absolute presuppositions did not make up part of the context that logically gave rise to questions until just prior to the writing of <u>The Idea</u> <u>Of History</u>. And although there was a relationship between the problem of re-thinking thoughts and the logic of question and answer prior to <u>The Idea Of History</u>, there was no mention of a relationship between the problem of re-thinking thoughts and the theory of absolute presuppositions.

As early as 1917 in the unpublished "Truth and Contradiction", Collingwood claimed that the meaning of any statement could not be divorced from its context. This claim runs through all of Collingwood's writings and is reaffirmed in <u>The Idea Of History</u>, <u>An Autobiography</u>, and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. For example, in <u>An Autobiography</u> he says that "meaning" does not belong "to propositions in their own right, propositions

^{4.} For one thing, with the theory of absolute presuppositions, a conceptual system does not rest on <u>one</u> foundational concept. On this particular point, Collingwood has returned in his later thought to the position expounded in "Ruskin's Philosophy" (1922). Although the theory of absolute presuppositions is not found in 1922, in 1922 Collingwood claimed that a conceptual system rested on a "ring of principles". And it will be recalled that in 1922 Collingwood was saying that if we wanted to understand or re-think another man's thought we had to uncover his ring of principles.

by themselves;" it belongs "only to propositions as the answers to questions: each proposition answering a question strictly correlative to itself" (A. 33). He adds:

> [Y]ou cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer (A, 31).

Now just prior to the writing of The Idea Of History, Collingwood makes an important qualification to the claim that the meaning of a statement cannot be divorced from its context. At this point Collingwood claims that the meaning of a statement cannot be divorced from the metaphysical framework which is an integral part of the context (IH, 43). In The Idea Of History he says that to understand the meaning of a statement one must uncover the presuppositions, including the dogmatic and absolute metaphysical presuppositions, that logically give rise to the question that the statement was meant to answer (IH, 43, 75, 85). So, in The Idea Of History it is also a metaphysical framework, made up of absolute presuppositions, that colours the meaning of a statement. Collingwood was to make this same point again in An Autobiography and An Essay on Metaphysics (A, 65-67, EM, 40-41). It would not be accurate to claim that, for Collingwood, only propositions in a context have meaning. For him, the whole context has meaning. Just as it was more accurate to say that the whole question-and-answer complex was true rather than just the answer (A, 38), so it is more accurate to say that the whole question-and-answer complex (including presuppositions) is meaningful, rather than just saying

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that the answer has meaning.⁵ In <u>The Idea Of History</u>, <u>An Autobiography</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood is continuing his archeology of the mind. He is attempting to 'dig' deeper to a more fundamental level of analysis, as he says the philosopher must do. As a result of this attempt to dig deeper, he now thinks that all questions arise from presuppositions, including metaphysical presuppositions, and that the meaning of a context cannot be separated from this more fundamental level of logical thinking. So, at this stage in Collingwood's intellectual career, he is implicitly admitting that he did not dig deep enough with his analysis of meaning in his earlier writings, including "Truth and Contradiction".

For Collingwood, the history of philosophical thought can only be approached through the logic of question and answer. Before we can uncover the reason why a philosopher offered one particular solution to a problem rather than another, we must uncover his presuppositions. The philosopher's presuppositions will not only place limits on the kinds of solutions that he can offer, but actually logically regulate the choosing of a solution. By uncovering the presuppositions we will know what a solution to a problem was and why the author chose that particular solution.⁶ We have here another instance of Collingwood's view that what and why questions collapse when we are studying mind-as-thought. What and why questions do not

^{5.} For Collingwood, the foundational component of a particular context has a metaphysical 'meaning', and the other part of the context has an empirical 'meaning'. One cannot have metaphysical meaning or empirical meaning without the other.

^{6.} Just 'understanding' the question will not be enough in order to understand the meaning of a philosophical thought.

collapse only with actions (i.e. narrow sense) but with all activities at the mind-as-thought level. Whenever we uncover the meaning of a philosophical thought, we will know not only what the philosopher thought, but why he thought it. And we cannot know what the philosopher thought without also knowing why he thought it.

For Collingwood, one understands the meaning of an action in the same structural way as one understands the meaning of a philosophical thought. In The Idea Of History he states:

> The historian of philosophy, reading Plato, is trying to know what Plato thought when he expressed himself in certain words. The only way in which he can do this is by thinking it for himself. This, in fact, is what we mean when we speak of 'understanding' the words. So the historian of politics or warfare, presented with an account of certain actions done by Julius Caesar, tries to understand these actions, that is, to discover what thoughts in Caesar's mind determined him to do them. This implies envisaging for himself the situation in which Caesar stood, and thinking for himself what Caesar thought about the situation and the possible ways of dealing with it (IH, 215).

^{7. (}i) Collingwood is not referring to a 'situation-in-itself'. On this point we agree with William Dray that Karl Popper has misunderstood Collingwood's re-enactment doctrine. See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, p. 20. For Collingwood, we can speak of an objective logic of the situation, but this logic refers to how the agent actually envisaged the situation, and not to the situation-in-itself as Popper claims. We will assume that Dray would accept this description of Collingwood's position on this point. And it would appear as though W.J. Van Der Dussen has also recognized this point. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 245. But Van Der Dussen slips when he says that, for Collingwood, bad weather itself can force a man to turn back. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 332. Van Der Dussen quotes Collingwood saying that "...bad weather causes [a man] to return from an expedition" (EM, 290), and then claims that Collingwood has contradicted himself because this sense of the term 'cause' is not a human action. As we see it, this is not a new sense of the term 'cause' as Van Der Dussen suggests. Collingwood is still using the term 'cause' in Sense I in this example. For Collingwood, it is the man's conception of the bad weather that forces him to turn back. It is not the bad weather itself that forces the man (continued on p. 349)

And if we wish to re-think or re-enact or reconstruct an action, we need the context, just as we need the context in order to re-think a philosophical thought. An action and a philosophical thought both have a common structure, the logic of question and answer, and this logic allows for intelligibility. Just as the philosopher is attempting to solve a problem (IH, 283), so the historical agent is attempting to solve a problem (A, 112). And just as there is a logical connection between presuppositions and philosophical thoughts, so there is a logical connection between presuppositions and purposes, aims, goals and perceived situations (IH, 317; see also EM, 21).⁸

8. It will be recalled that presuppositions logically regulate the historical agent's 'causa quod' and 'causa ut'. And the context of an action would include both the 'causa quod' and the 'causa ut'. It would also be correct to allow for an objective 'causa ut'.

^{7.} continued. to turn back. The agent in question could always think that 'God' or 'nature' was testing him and continue his journey, no matter how difficult, through the bad weather. As we see it, Colling-wood's use of the term 'cause' in Sense I can handle the 'bad weather' example. According to our view, there is no discrepency between Collingwood's theory and practice on this point as Van Der Dussen claims. We should also mention at this point that the agent's absolute presuppositions will colour how the agent envisages his situation. This is a point that Dray and Van Der Dussen overlook. (ii) To avoid a possible misunderstanding, we should mention that the meaning of a thought, in the case of an action, is not fixed before the act. As Collingwood says, the agent's "policy is not prior to his action in the sense of being fixed once for all before his action begins; it develops as his action develops;..." (IH, 309). And the agent's absolute presuppositions would place limits on how the action develops, by which we mean that the agent's absolute presuppositions will logically regulate the alternatives that the agent thinks are available to him. We should also mention at this point that, for Collingwood, there are degrees of deliberation (IH, 227). And if there is some degree of deliberation, a mind-as-thought explanation (or what we have called a Cause I explanation) will be needed in order to explain that element of the action (i.e. wide sense) that is the result of deliberation. It should also be added at this point that, for Collingwood, there are degrees of responsibility.

The problem of understanding, for Collingwood, is much wider than that of just understanding a philosopher or historical agent. The problem is one of understanding what anyone--past or present--thinks or says or does (IH, 219). And, for Collingwood, this includes oneself (IH, 219). To understand what anyone thinks or says or does, one must penetrate the external behaviour or document in order to re-think a thought.⁹ And the history of all thought can only be approached through the logic of question and answer. For example, if we wish to understand a Greek historian we will have to uncover his presuppositions, including his metaphysical framework, that gave rise to the questions he attempted to answer. And in the case of the Greek historian, we would have to uncover his teleological and substantialistic absolute presuppositions in order to understand the answers that he offered to his questions.¹⁰

To avoid a possible misunderstanding, we must stress that the historian of thought cannot claim to understand a context-laden presupposition, question, and answer in any final or strong sense. It is always possible that the historian has made a mistake about the context. Collingwood states:

> Over and over again, I would return to a familiar passage whose meaning I thought I knew--had it not been expounded by numerous learned commentators, and were they not more or less agreed about it?--to find that, under this fresh scrutiny, the old interpretation melted away and some quite different meaning began to take form (A, 75).

^{9.} A document can also be seen as an "outside". See <u>The Principles of</u> <u>Art</u>, p. 302.

^{10. (}i) On uncovering what Collingwood calls the "metaphysical rubric", see <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, pp. 55, 68-69, 328.
(ii) For the logical connection between presuppositions and Greek literature, see <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, p. 208.

According to Collingwood, the historian of philosophical thought does not know in any final or strong sense that his 're-enactment' of a thought is identical with the thought 're-enacted'. And for Collingwood, this is also the case for historical actions, or for that matter anything that a person--past or present--thinks or says or does. For him, there is no such thing as a ready-made thought in the sense that the meaning of a thought is a given. All accounts of what a person thinks or says or does are open to critical scrutiny. As early as Religion and Philosophy Collingwood made this point and in The Idea Of History, An Autobiography and An Essay on Metaphysics we find him reaffirming this point. In Religion and Philosophy it will be recalled that Collingwood claimed that the "identity" of thoughts or "complete communication" is a regulative ideal. And he added in his 1916 publication that although complete communication between two thinkers has not been attained, and may never be attained, complete communication is still "our constant aim" (RP, 98-99). In Religion and Philosophy Collingwood is claiming that there are degrees of understanding and that the identity of thoughts is a regulative ideal that the historian is striving for. Now in The Idea Of History, An Autobiography and An Essay on Metaphysics, although he accepts the position that there are degrees of understanding and that the identity of thoughts is a regulative ideal, he makes a qualification to this position which indicates that he now thinks that the problem of understanding is even more complicated than was suggested in his earlier writings, including <u>Religion and Philosophy</u>.¹¹ Just prior to the writing of the

^{11.} See also <u>The Principles of Art</u>, pages 250-251, where Collingwood claims that there are degrees of understanding. And partial understanding is all that is needed for communication, although it would not be complete communication.

papers that make up <u>The Idea Of History</u>, Collingwood has arrived at the conclusion that it is always possible that the historian may have been mistaken about the metaphysical framework or constellation of absolute presuppositions that along with other presuppositions gave rise to a person's problems. Whenever an historian returns to a text or action it is always possible that the old interpretation of the metaphysical framework has "melted away" and a new interpretation of the metaphysical framework has begun to take form which colours the meaning of the whole context in a new way.¹²

For Collingwood, we will never have complete communication or the re-thinking of an identical thought if we remain at the level of the answer as the realists do (A, 30). In order to re-think a thought we must always uncover the question, and we can only do this by uncovering the presuppositions of the question. And it is only by logical analysis that we will bring a question-and-answer complex to the light of consciousness.¹³ As we see it, this is exactly what Collingwood is doing

13. It would be a misinterpretation to claim that, for Collingwood, we can only uncover absolute presuppositions by logical analysis. See An Essay on Metaphysics, p. 39.

^{12.} We agree with Louis Mink that Collingwood is not referring to rethinking in the strong sense. Mink calls this interpretation the "fictional" Collingwood. See L. Mink, <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed., M. Krausz, p. 156. But we have added one argument to Mink's point. And the argument is that it is always possible that an historian may be mistaken about the metaphysical framework that colours the context. If the historian is mistaken about the metaphysical framework, he could not re-think the identical thought. It will be recalled that Collingwood tells us in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> that one important job for the metaphysician is to check and see if other metaphysicians have correctly uncovered the metaphysical framework of their 'age'. With Collingwood's identity thesis, then, he is not committed to what we could call the infallibility thesis (i.e. misinterpretations are impossible).

in <u>The Idea Of History</u>. In this work he is using logical analysis in order to uncover all of the levels of a question-and-answer complex, including the metaphysical level. And in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood carries on the task of uncovering absolute presuppositions by the use of logical analysis.¹⁴ In fact, in <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, he says that previous metaphysicians were also using logical analysis and not introspection or intuition in order to uncover absolute presuppositions. This same view is expressed in <u>The Idea Of History</u>. For example, Collingwood says that Kant uncovered the metaphysical framework of the thought of his day by the use of analysis (IH, 229). As Collingwood sees it, understanding or re-thinking can only be accomplished after a process of logical analysis.¹⁵ Understanding or re-thinking is not the result of intuition in the sense of an immediate grasping of a thought.¹⁶ The ultimate truth as to what someone thinks can "be reached,

- 14. See for example the chapter entitled "Causation In History" in <u>An Essay</u> on <u>Metaphysics</u>. It is also interesting to note that Collingwood is using logical analysis when he distinguishes between three senses of the term 'cause'. He says that when you ask what the term 'cause' means you will get three different answers (EM, 288). And the three answers are Sense I, II, and III of the term 'cause'. Sense I, II, and III of the term 'cause', for Collingwood, are all absolute presuppositions. When he says that all three senses of the term 'cause' are answers to questions, he is not contradicting himself. Absolute presuppositions can be answers to historical questions. For example, if we ask the question 'What was one of Kant's absolute presuppositions?', we could answer 'every event has a cause'.
- 15. We are not conflating re-enactment and logical analysis. Whereas reenactment is the goal for the historian, logical analysis is the method that the historian uses in order to attain his goal.
- 16. On this point we agree with William Dray and Rex Martin. Dray attacks Patrick Gardiner and W.B. Gallie when they claim that re-thinking is a self-certifying intuition. See W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, p. 21. Rex Martin also attacks Patrick Gardiner, and in addition attacks W.H. Walsh, for claiming that re-thinking is a self-certifying intuition. See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, pp. 48, 49. Let us call the interpretation that re-thinking is a self-certifying intuition the intuitionist thesis.

if at all, only by hard thinking,...and not by any kind of intellectual intuition" (CNI, 171). It is only by "hard thinking", and not by a self-certifying intuition or self-explanatory intuition, that we can uncover the levels of a question-and-answer complex.¹⁷

For Collingwood, understanding or re-thinking can only be accomplished by a piecemeal process of logical analysis.¹⁸ Although Collingwood says that we must start with the answer (A, 69-70) in our attempt to re-think a thought, he is not suggesting that we start with a readymade answer in the sense that the answer is not open to interpretation. According to Collingwood, we do not start with a ready-made answer and then proceed to uncover the questions and presuppositions. Rather, for

^{17.} It is also interesting to note that Collingwood's doctrine of stresses and strains presents a problem for understanding. But this problem is not necessarily insurmountable. For Collingwood, it is always possible that we can uncover the stresses and strains in a person's conceptual system. And, according to Collingwood, it would also take logical analysis or hard thinking and not intuition to uncover these stresses and strains. The doctrine of stresses and strains makes understanding more difficult, but it does not rule out the possibility of understanding.

^{18.} As we see it, Leon Goldstein is right to stress that understanding is only accomplished in a piecemeal fashion. See L. Goldstein, Critical Essays, ed., M. Krausz, p. 253. But Goldstein speaks of re-thinking as though it were a method. Although Collingwood sometimes suggests that re-thinking is a method, it is actually more correct to claim that re-thinking is a goal for the historian. For Collingwood, it is actually more correct to say that logical analysis is the method for re-thinking. Later in this chapter we will have more to say concerning this issue. Goldstein also fails to see any connection between absolute presuppositions and re-thinking. And absolute presuppositions are also uncovered in a piecemeal fashion. Goldstein is right to claim that re-thinking requires a great deal of preparation, but this preparation will include uncovering the metaphysical framework. As Collingwood puts it in An Essay on Metaphysics, "[i]n metaphysics as in every other department of history the secret of success is to study the background" (EM, 191). And this "background" will include the person's predecessors and contemporaries. See An Essay On Metaphysics, p. 210.

him, we start with what we think is the answer and then proceed to uncover what we think is the entire question-and-answer complex. As Collingwood sees it, we must move 'back and forth' through all of the levels of a question-and-answer complex until we arrive at what we think is the meaning of the whole question-and-answer complex.¹⁹ At no point can we claim to know (i.e. strong sense) the meaning of a whole question-andanswer complex. There is always the possibility that our logical analysis of the complex is mistaken.

"Mere re-enactment", even if it is a genuine case of re-enactment, is not historical knowledge (IH, 289). The historian must always be prepared to offer the grounds for his knowledge claim. And the grounds for his knowledge claim will always include evidence (IH, 296, A, 69-70).²⁰ And we need evidence for every level in a question-and-answer complex in order to have historical knowledge.²¹ According to Collingwood, if the

^{19.} Although absolute presuppositions are logically first (i.e. logically prior in a foundational sense), it would be misleading to say that absolute presuppositions are epistemologically first (i.e. known prior to the other levels of a question-and-answer complex).

^{20.} We even need evidence for our own thoughts in order to have historical knowledge (IH, 296). Intuition, introspection or memory is not historical knowledge.

^{21.} William Dray and W.J. Van Der Dussen are correct, as we see it, to criticize Haskell Fain when he claimed that Collingwood was dismissing historical evidence altogether. See W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, p. 22 and W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 294. It is not known by us if Dray and Van Der Dussen are claiming that we always need evidence to re-enact. If this is their claim, we believe they are mistaken. Collingwood does allow for mere re-enactment without evidence. But Collingwood's point is that even if you did have <u>mere</u> re-enactment it would not be historical knowledge. As we see it, Collingwood is only committed to the view that in order to claim to have historical knowledge one must appeal to evidence. And if we are right that absolute presuppositions are an integral part of a question-and-answer complex, then we would also have to have evidence for the metaphysical framework in order to claim to have historical knowledge.

historian has no evidence to appeal to he is only guessing, and guessing is not historical knowledge.²² Since Collingwood says that the historian needs evidence in order to justify a knowledge claim about a particular question-and-answer complex, this is one more reason to support the view that Collingwood is not claiming that it is possible to re-think a thought in the strong sense. There is always the possibility that new evidence may arise or that previous 'evidence' will be rejected and as a result another attempt at a re-enactment will be necessary.²³

23. Alan Donagan has claimed that Collingwood did not "say anything about how reconstructions of past thoughts may be tested and verified." See A. Donagan, <u>Later Philosophy</u>, p. 215. In response to Donagan we would say that although Collingwood is ruling out sure-fire tests and verification in the strong sense, because a reconstruction is never infallible, he does allow for tests and verification in the weak sense. We can test or verify a reconstruction in the weak sense by seeing whether the reconstruction makes the best sense of the evidence. This evidence is not, of course, ready-made evidence. And we could perhaps also mention that if we wish to speak of falsifying an interpretation, the notion of falsification would also be used in the weak sense. Falsification in the strong sense would also be ruled out by Collingwood.

^{22.} When Collingwood says that we cannot re-think Villeneuve's plan at Trafalgar (A, 70), Collingwood is not saying that we can never rethink an unsuccessful plan, as Donagan claims. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 268. What Collingwood is claiming is that we do not have any evidence for Villeneuve's plan since he did not carry it out. For Collingwood, we can re-think an unsuccessful plan and have historiknowledge as long as we have evidence for our knowledge claim. Whether a plan is successful or not successful is really beside the point when we are speaking of historical knowledge. As we see it, Donagan misses Collingwood's fundamental point when it is claimed that we cannot rethink Villeneuve's plan. Collingwood is not committed to the view that there are no unsuccessful plans that were carried out, as Donagan's interpretation implies. For Collingwood, we can historically reconstruct any unsuccessful solution to a problem with any activity at the mind-as-thought level (eg. in philosophy) as long as we could appeal to evidence. This analysis is consistent with Collingwood's repeated assertion that it is possible to uncover errors in past thinking. And it should be recalled that all activities at the mindas-thought level have a common structure. On the point that we can re-think an unsuccessful plan, as long as we have evidence, see for example, Roman Britain, p. 84.

Evidence is only uncovered by logical analysis. Whenever "certain historians, sometimes whole generations of historians, find in certain periods of history nothing intelligible" (IH, 218), this is an indication of a failure of logical analysis. And Collingwood tells us that whenever historians speak of unintelligible ages or "dark ages,... such phrases tell us nothing about those ages themselves, though they tell us a great deal about the persons who use them, namely that they are unable to re-think the thoughts which were fundamental to their life" (IH, 218-219). An historian who speaks of unintelligible ages "has discovered a limitation of his own mind; he has discovered that there are certain ways in which he is not, or no longer, or not yet, able to think" (IH, 218). For Collingwood, the "limitation" will remain until the historian can uncover by logical analysis the fundamental ways of thinking in the ages that were previously regarded as unintelligible. "Dark ages" can only be penetrated by 'digging' below the surface of answers and solutions in such a way that the questions and presuppositions of the age are uncovered. This will require of the historian that he work "against the grain" of his own thinking (IH, 305). As Collingwood sees it, when Voltaire and Hume claimed that only the recent past was knowable (IH, 77-78, EM, 247), this was a sign of a failure of logical analysis on their part. Voltaire and Hume had discovered a limitation in their own thinking. These two historians were unable to re-think any thought that did not square with the question-and-answer complexes of the modern scientific spirit.

In both <u>The Idea Of History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> Collingwood accuses other thinkers of not working against the grain of their own

thinking in order to re-think the thoughts of other ages. For example, in An Essay on Metaphysics he accuses positivists of not working against the grain of their positivistic question-and-answer complexes in their attempt to understand Plato (EM, 155). For Collingwood, we can only re-think past thoughts if we have sufficient intellectual capacity to re-think, and this includes the realization that it is sometimes necessary to work against the grain of our own thinking in order to uncover the question-and-answer complexes of another thinker. And, for Collingwood, working against the grain is always a process of logical analysis.²⁴ It would be correct to say that in The Idea Of History and An Essay on Metaphysics, Collingwood is attempting to work against the grain of his own thinking in order to understand past thoughts. In The Idea Of History, for example, he is working against the grain when he uncovers the substantialistic absolute presuppositions of the Greco-Medieval world and the questions and answers that they logically give rise to. And in An Essay on Metaphysics, for example, he is working against the grain of his own thinking when he uncovers the eighteenth-century absolute presupposition that 'nature is the cause of historical events' and the questions and

^{24.} Collingwood's metaphor of working against the grain suggests that the attempt to understand is a piecemeal procedure. In the case of interpreting Plato, for example, if we work against the grain of our own thinking, it would be possible to uncover more and more of the intricacies of Plato's conceptual system. Or, it would only be a result of a piecemeal process of logical analysis that we could understand Greek literature and the metaphysical framework that it rests on (EM, 208).

answers that it logically gives rise to (EM, 98).²⁵

For Collingwood, when it is essential to work against the grain of one's own experience in order to understand, it is only necessary to work against the grain of question-and-answer complexes. At this point we must distinguish between question-and-answer complexes and contexts of "immediacy". A context of immediacy occurs at a certain time and can only occur once. In this sense the context of immediacy is a mere event (IH, 297). Although a question-and-answer complex occurs in a context of immediacy, it is not "mere immediacy" (IH, 297). A questionand-answer complex does occur in a context of immediacy which includes the question-and-answer complex itself, along with emotions, sensations, and so forth. In this sense the question-and-answer complex is "here and now". But although a question-and-answer complex does occur at a certain time in a context of immediacy, it cannot be reduced to the context of immediacy. The peculiarity of a question-and-answer complex is that, in addition to occuring here and now in a context of immediacy, it can sustain itself through a change in the context of immediacy and "revive itself" in a different context of immediacy (IH, 297). And it is in this sense that the question-and-answer complex somehow stands outside of time or the here and now (IH, 287). According to Collingwood, whereas a question-and-answer complex can be re-enacted, a context of immediacy

^{25.} It might be suggested that we are perhaps deceiving ourselves when we think that we have put our question-and-answer complexes, including presuppositions, out of sight and influence in order to do scientific history. Collingwood is well aware of the fact that there are many cases where we are deceiving ourselves. But these mistakes may be corrected. This is another reason why re-thinking should be regarded as a piecemeal procedure.

can never be re-enacted. In fact, even the immediacy of the questionand-answer complex cannot be re-enacted. In other words, we cannot reenact the here and now of a question-and-answer complex. Collingwood states:

> The immediate, as such, cannot be re-enacted. Consequently, those elements in experience whose being is just their immediacy (sensations, feelings, &c. as such) cannot be reenacted; not only that, but thought itself can never be reenacted in its immediacy. The first discovery of a truth, for example, differs from any subsequent contemplation of it, not in that the truth contemplated is a different truth, nor in that the act of contemplating it is a different act; but in that the immediacy of the first occasion can never again be experienced: the shock of its novelty, the liberation from perplexing problems, the triumph of achieving a desired result, perhaps the sense of having vanquished opponents and achieved fame, and so forth (IH, 297-298).

For Collingwood, a thought can be revived in a different context of immediacy. And without some context of immediacy, the thought could never be revived (IH, 301). It is because the context of immediacy is different and not the question-and-answer complex that is different, that Collingwood speaks of <u>re</u>-thinking or <u>re</u>-enacting in reference to a thought. If we re-think a thought, the context of immediacy is always different, and the question-and-answer complex must always be the same. For Collingwood, as long as the question-and-answer complex is the same, the meaning is the same.²⁶ This is the case even though the question-and-answer

^{26.} For Collingwood, a thought can never be revived in a different question-and-answer complex. But, a thought can be revived in 'different' question-and-answer complexes (along with a different context(s) of immediacy), as long as one of those question-and-answer complexes is identical to the thought (i.e. question-and-answer complex being revived). The strength of this interpretation is that it allows for the critical or judgemental aspect of thought which is evident in re-thinking. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, pp. 215-216 and the rest of this chapter.

complex is contained in different contexts of immediacy. And it is because the context of immediacy is different that Collingwood says that we do not become the person whose question-and-answer complex we are reenacting (IH, 174, A, 112-113). As he says, we do not become Julius Caesar when and if we re-enact his thoughts (IH, 174). Caesar's context of immediacy is not identical to our context of immediacy. In other words, Caesar's thoughts, feelings, sensations, and so forth occurred at one time, and our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and so forth, occurred at a different time. But if we are successful in re-thinking his thoughts, Caesar's question-and-answer complexes will be identical to the questionand-answer complexes that we ascribe to Caesar. As Collingwood sees it, there is no need to re-enact Caesar's context of immediacy in order to re-enact his thoughts. In fact, as we have seen, it is not even possible to re-enact Caesar's context of immediacy. According to Collingwood, all that is necessary for one to do in order to re-think Caesar's thoughts, is to uncover, with the use of logical analysis, Caesar's question-andanswer complexes. As Collingwood tells us, it is because, and so far as, a question-and-answer complex is misconceived as a context of immediacy that the idea of re-thinking a question-and-answer complex seems paradoxical (IH, 297).

When Collingwood speaks of the re-enactment of past experience, he only means the re-enactment of past question-and-answer complexes. By the re-enactment of past experience, he does not mean the re-enactment of past contexts of immediacy. And when Collingwood says that past question-and-answer complexes, including presuppositions, can live on in the present, he does not mean to suggest that these question-and-answer

complexes need to have had to survive continuously (A, 97; see also IH, 304-305, EM, 311). Although some question-and-answer complexes have survived continuously, other question-and-answer complexes have not. For example, he says that Greek mathematics has survived continuously. Greek mathematics, he says, is actually the foundation of our own mathematics (IH, 225; see also IH, 284-285). But other question-and-answer complexes have not survived continuously. Collingwood says that some ways of thinking "may have died and been raised from the dead, like the ancient languages of Mesopotamia and Egypt (A, 97). What Collingwood means when he says that past question-and-answer complexes live on in the present is that past question-and-answer complexes are either already a part of our logical experience (eg. Greek mathematics) or that they are open to the possibility of being a part of our logical experience (eg. ancient languages of Mesopotamia and Egypt). And by being open to the possibility of being a part of our logical experience, he means that past question-and-answer complexes are open to the logical possibility of being re-enacted if we have the appropriate evidence. Now when Collingwood refers to thoughts (i.e. question-and-answer complexes) as "eternal objects" (IH, 218), he does not mean to suggest that thoughts exist (one is tempted to say like Platonic Forms) when no one is thinking them. Even when Collingwood says that some thoughts exist continuously, he does not mean that these thoughts exist independently of human experience.²⁷ By an 'eternal object' he means that a thought is either already

^{27.} When Collingwood speaks of the inside of artefacts he does not mean that these insides exist independently of human experience. As we saw in Chapter IV, the inside-outside metaphor signifies different ways of knowing. His use of words like 'inside' and 'outside' is a metaphorical way of making an epistemological distinction.

part of our logical experience or that it is open to the logical possibility of being a part of our logical experience.²⁸ For Collingwood, only question-and-answer complexes, including presuppositions, can be eternal objects. Mere events, for Collingwood, are never eternal objects (IH, 158).²⁹ And since contexts of immediacy are mere events, in the sense that they can happen only once, contexts of immediacy are never eternal objects.³⁰

According to Collingwood, feelings and sensations are not eternal objects since they are transient and do not survive in any sense outside of the here and now. Feelings and sensations are nothing over and above the flow of immediate consciousness. As Collingwood sees it, this is why feelings and sensations cannot be re-enacted (IH, 297). With feelings and sensations, unlike thoughts, we cannot 'step into the stream twice'. He states:

> We shall never know how the flowers smelt in the garden of Epicurus, or how Nietzsche felt the wind in his hair as he walked on the mountains; we cannot relive the triumph of Archimedes or the bitterness of Marius; but the evidence of what these men thought is in our hands; and in re-creating these thoughts in our own minds by interpretation of that evidence we can know, so far as there is any knowledge, that the thoughts we create were theirs (IH, 296).

^{28.} Eternal objects in either of these two senses do not have an existence or even quasi-existence independent of human experience.

^{29.} But thoughts about mere events can be eternal objects. In <u>The Idea</u> Of Nature and in parts of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, Collingwood is re-thinking thoughts about mere events.

^{30.} Both the act of thought and the object of thought can live on. See <u>The Idea Of History</u>, p. 287. The act and object of thought are correlative and are capable of being revived in another context of immediacy.

Although we have no evidence for the feelings and sensations of these men, we do have evidence for their thoughts. And it is because we have evidence for their thoughts that we can, with the appropriate logical analysis, re-think their thoughts. Now earlier we saw that Collingwood distinguished between man's foot in history and man's foot in nature. It would be correct to say that, for Collingwood, there are only eternal objects with man's foot in history. With man's foot in nature, there are no eternal objects. And this particular view may account for Collingwood's analysis of his own intellectual life in An Autobiography. An Autobiography is really a history of Collingwood's logical experience. In this 1939 publication, Collingwood is attempting to re-think his own thoughts. And it is interesting to note that Collingwood did read some of his previous writings for this project. So even with Collingwood's own Autobiography we have an emphasis on the need for evidence. As he says in The Idea Of History, "autobiography" is the name "for a strictly historical account of my own past" (IH, 295).³¹

Collingwood strongly objects to any attempt at a psychological theory of meaning. As Collingwood sees it, the psychologist cannot give us an adequate theory of meaning because the psychologist only studies feelings and sensations as mere events. And logical experience, for Collingwood, cannot be reduced to the level of mere events, the level at

^{31.} With <u>An Autobiography</u> there is no attempt made on Collingwood's part to re-enact his animal nature (i.e. feelings, sensations, &c.). This is not to say that we cannot re-enact thoughts about feelings and sensations. For example, in <u>The Principles of Art</u>, Collingwood says that if we wish to understand an artist we must re-enact his intentional and imaginative expression of emotions.

which the psychologist conducts his inquiry. For Collingwood, any attempt at a psychological theory of meaning would be another instance of the propaganda of irrationalism. It will be recalled that in An Essay on Metaphysics, he says that we cannot substitute psychology for logic (EM, 104-5, 108-9, 112).³² Since Collingwood does not see his logic of question and answer as a psychological theory of meaning, he is led to the view that re-enactment cannot be a process of psychological analysis. All psycho-analytic models of 're-enactment' must be rejected since to re-enact is the following of the logical structure of a questionand-answer complex and not the following of a psychological process. Thoughts are not to be understood in an atomistic manner, for if we do 'understand' thoughts in this way, we have reduced thoughts to the status of mere events. Psychological processes, as natural processes, cannot 'live on' in any sense. And since psychological processes are carried away in the flow of consciousness, according to Collingwood, we cannot have evidence for past psychological processes.³³ So if we do treat 'thoughts' like mere events, as the psychologist does, history becomes impossible (IH, 173). It is for this reason that Collingwood rejects Dilthey's claim that history can be reduced to psychology (IH, 173-4). According to Collingwood, only past logical processes can 'live on', and we can uncover the meaning of logical processes if we have the appropriate

^{32.} Also, it will be recalled that psychology ignores the critical component of thought. And the critical or judgemental aspect of thought is evident in re-thinking (IH, 215-6).

^{33.} As Collingwood sees it, even the scientific generalizations of psychology could not be used in an attempt to re-enact a thought.

logical skills and evidence.

When Collingwood argues that logical processes can 'live on', he is suggesting that the modern conception of time is inapplicable for the inside of events. We could say that the modern conception of time is based on the absolute presupposition that time is a measurable continuum. With this metaphysical view, which generally speaking has been accepted since Galileo's age, all is becoming or process. And with this conception of time, only the present moment exists or is alive and the past becomes dead. For Collingwood, it appears as though he has no objection to this conception of time when it is applied to mere events. But, it appears as though he strongly objects to this conception of time for the inside of events. If we apply the modern metaphysical view of time to the inside of events, we eliminate mind-as-thought, including the important concepts of 'causa quod' and 'causa ut', from the world. To use Bergsonian language, we could say that scientific time is applicable to mere events and that lived time is applicable to the inside of events. Or as Collingwood might put this point, a regularian conception of time is applicable for mere events (where we can mathematically measure motions in space and time) and a teleological conception of time is applicable for the inside of events. In fact, one might argue that Collingwood's conception of time for the inside of events comes closer to the Greco-Medieval conception of time. For Greco-Medieval thinkers, time is the continuous transformation of potentiality into actuality. Collingwood would disagree with Greco-Medieval thinkers that this absolute presupposition is applicable to the outside of events. But, it appears as though he would accept a qualified form of this absolute presupposition for the

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inside of events. This analysis appears to be consistent with Collingwood's claim that one can apply the notion of purposiveness to mind-asthought but not to mere events. And this analysis appears to be consistent with Collingwood's doctrine of the historical past-as-thought living in the present.³⁴

Earlier in this thesis we argued that Collingwood believes that there are transhistorical principles that apply to all 'periods' of history. For Collingwood, it is transhistorical principles³⁵ that allow for the logical possibility of re-enactment. As he sees it, the logical conditions necessary for re-thinking are still present because at the structural level of mind-as-thought there is a uniform human nature.

^{34. (}i) This paragraph is meant to be more suggestive than explanatory. We do not pretend to understand the modern metaphysical view of time or the Greco-Medieval metaphysical view of time. The working out of Collingwood's conception of time that is being assumed in his reenactment doctrine will not be attempted in this project. In fact, as we see it, this topic would be a thesis in itself. (ii) Collingwood's acceptance of the notion of historical time as becoming in 1925 (and which also lingered on in his 1927 paper on Spengler) appears to have contributed to his defence in 1925 of what we could call the incommensurate thesis (i.e. to understand the past is to understand the past differently). Before Collingwood could reject the incommensurate thesis, which he did, he had to give up this notion of time for the inside of events. (iii) It could be argued that thinkers like Croce and Oakshott (and Gadamer today) are assuming the modern metaphysical view of time in their attempt to defend the incommensurate thesis.

^{35.} In this chapter we have seen that there are other transhistorical principles which overlap with the transhistorical principles mentioned earlier. It would be correct to say that the descriptive claim that all thoughts are contained in a context of immediacy is a transhistorical principle. And it would be correct to say that the descriptive claim that all thoughts are logically connected with other thoughts is a transhistorical principle. In addition, the descriptive claim that the meaning of a question-and-answer complex refers to both the act of thought and the object of thought (since the act of thought and the object of thought are correlative) is a transhistorical principle.

And for Collingwood, it is these transhistorical principles that describe man's uniform human nature at the structural level of mind-as-thought. Transhistorical principles make it logically possible to retrieve past thoughts for they allow past thoughts to live on in the present. If there was no identity at any level in our thought and the person's thought that we are attempting to re-enact, then re-enactment would be logically impossible. For Collingwood, re-thinking does not require a uniform human nature at all levels of thought. Re-thinking only requires the initial assumption of a uniformity at the structural level of mindas-thought. And once we have this uniformity at the structural level of mind-as-thought, we can re-enact the thought of another human being if we can uncover the content of thought that is contained within the transhistorical structure. In other words, once we have a uniform human nature at the structural level, as Collingwood thinks we do, we can attain a genuine re-enactment if we can uncover the content of the question-and-answer complex at issue.³⁶

For Collingwood, transhistorical principles provide the basis or ground of historical re-enactment or historical reconstruction. Transhistorical principles are really equivalent to Collingwood's principles of metaphysics (i.e. capital 'P' propositions) referred to in Part I of

^{36.} Our own question-and-answer complexes are not to be seen as insurmountable obstacles for re-enactment. If we can uncover the logic of our own question-and-answer complexes, we can work against the grain of these question-and-answer complexes and attempt to uncover the question-and-answer complexes of another human being. Our own question-and-answer complexes will only be a barrier to re-thinking if we fail to realize that it is sometimes necessary to work against the grain of our own thinking in order to re-think the thoughts of another human being.

<u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>.³⁷ These principles of metaphysics, as Collingwood sees it, correctly describe all conceptual systems.³⁸ And, for him, there is an important relationship between these principles of metaphysics and re-thinking. In fact, according to Collingwood's model of historical understanding, it is these principles of metaphysics that allow for the possibility of re-thinking. If there were no principles of metaphysics upon which to base or ground historical re-enactment or historical reconstruction, re-thinking would be impossible.

It would be correct to say that the uniformity at the structural level of mind-as-thought provides us with a transhistorical context. This transhistorical context (i.e. all men think and act in terms of question-and-answer complexes) allows for the logical possibility of reenactment. As we see it, when Collingwood is referring to the preestablished harmony between the historian and the object of his study (IH, 65), this pre-established harmony must be the identity at the structural level of mind-as-thought. And it is this pre-established harmony that makes re-enactment logically possible. In other words, this preestablished harmony allows for the possibility of there being eternal objects of thought. And it would also be correct to say that with this notion of pre-established harmony at the structural level of mind-asthought, we are back again to Vico's "'verum-factum'" principle. Following

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^{37.} In this chapter and in Chapter IV, we have made some additions to Collingwood's principles of metaphysics or transhistorical principles.

^{38.} These principles of metaphysics are the result of a philosophical reflection on the content of all activities at the mind-as-thought level.

Vico, Collingwood holds the view that anything that is made by the human mind is especially adapted to the human mind. As Collingwood says, "[i]t follows from the 'verum-factum' principle that history, which is emphatically something made by the human mind, is especially adapted to be an object of human knowledge" (IH, 64-65). But Collingwood believes that he has gone beyond Vico in uncovering the transhistorical principles that allow for the 'verum-factum' principle to hold. It is Collingwood's transhistorical principles that allow for the logical possibility of everything made by the human mind is made in terms of question-and-answer complexes, and that therefore, for Collingwood, what is made by one human mind is especially adapted to another human mind.⁴⁰

It would be correct to say that this transhistorical context is the criterion of intelligibility for any thought. Any thought found in this transhistorical context is open to the logical possibility of being re-enacted. For this reason, it is a little misleading to regard reenactment itself as the criterion of intelligibility.⁴¹ As we see it, it

^{39.} This is not to say that evidence is not required for historical knowledge concerning what is made by the human mind.

^{40.} With Collingwood's notion of re-enactment, we have another instance of the dictum that "a mind which knows its own change is lifted above change" (SM, 301). For Collingwood, mind only changes at the content level and it is the transhistorical principles at the structural level of mind-as-thought which lifts us above the changes at the content level. The transhistorical principles allow the mind to know the changes at the content level.

^{41.} William Dray regards re-enactment itself as the criterion of intelligibility. See W. Dray, "R.G. Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge", <u>Revue Internationale de Philosophe</u> 11 (1957), p. 432. And it would appear as though W.J. Van Der Dussen agrees with this assessment. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, pp. 103-104, 312.

is more accurate to regard re-enactment as <u>a</u> goal for the historian and not as the criterion of intelligibility.⁴² And, as we see it, the method of attaining this goal of re-enactment is by the use of logical analysis. It is only by logical analysis that the historian can uncover a questionand-answer complex, including presuppositions, and if the historian is successful in doing this, he will have a genuine re-enactment.⁴³ And the transhistorical context is the criterion of there being past thoughts and deeds that are meaningful to the historian. So, according to our view,

42. (i) As we will see shortly, the historian has other goals besides re-enactment and therefore re-enactment should not be seen as the only goal for the historian. (ii) A number of commentators have claimed that, for Collingwood, re-enactment is the goal for the historian. See, for example, A. Donagan, "The Verification of Historical Theses", <u>Philosophical</u> <u>Quarterly</u>, vi. (1956), p. 199; see also S. Toulmin, <u>Human Understand</u>ing, p. 491. It is not known if Donagan or Toulmin would claim that re-enactment is the only goal for the historian. If this is their position, we believe that they are mistaken. In addition, although a number of commentators have claimed that re-enactment is the goal for the historian, no commentator has yet claimed that uncovering the metaphysical framework of a question-and-answer complex would be part of that goal. As we see it, uncovering the metaphysical framework of a question-and-answer complex would be necessary in order to attain a genuine re-enactment. We should also point out that William Dray has claimed that re-enactment is the goal for the historian. See W. Dray, Perspectives on History, p. 22. So, Dray claims that re-enactment is both the goal for the historian and the criterion of intelligibility. If Dray means that re-enactment is a goal for the historian we agree with his assessment. But we think that it is a little misleading to regard re-enactment itself as the criterion of intelligibility.

43. (i) We agree with Dray that Collingwood does on occasion speak as though re-enactment was a method. See W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, p. 21; see, for example, <u>An Autobiography</u>, p. 112. But, as we see it, it is more accurate to regard logical analysis as the method.
(ii) Some commentators have suggested that re-enactment is a method that the historian uses. W.H. Walsh and Patrick Gardiner are two examples of commentators who fall into this camp. See W.H. Walsh, <u>An Introduction to the Philosophy of History</u>, (London, 1951), p. 49; see also Patrick Gardiner, <u>The Nature of Historical Explanation</u>, (London, 1952), pp. 29, 39, 49, <u>117</u>.

it is more accurate to regard the transhistorical context as allowing for re-enactment to be a goal for the historian and for logical analysis to be the method of inquiry for the historian.⁴⁴

In a genuine re-enactment, the historian will oftentimes have to make explicit what is implicit. And by making explicit what was implicit, the historian can put the thought into propositional form.⁴⁵ This will

45. On this point we agree with William Dray. See W. Dray, "Historical Understanding as Re-thinking", <u>University of Toronto Quarterly</u> 27 (1958), pp. 210-221; and W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u> (London, 1980), p. 26. But Dray does not mention the fact that, for Collingwood, we must also put the person's absolute presuppositions into propositional form.

^{44. (}i) In Chapter IV we distinguished between transhistorical principles and historically de-limited uniformities. Transhistorical principles give us the context for all historical 'periods'. Historically delimited uniformities would help us uncover the content of questionand-answer complexes, including presuppositions, in one particular historical 'period'. (ii) Some commentators regard re-enactment as a presupposition. Lionel Rubinoff and M.H. Nielsen fall into this camp. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, pp. 282-283; see also M.H. Nielsen, "Re-enactment and Reconstruction in Collingwood's Philosophy of History", in <u>History</u> and Theory, Vol. XX, Number 1, (1981), p. 17. As we see it, reenactment should not be seen as an absolute presupposition or even as a transhistorical presupposition. As Collingwood says in The Idea Of History, "the re-enactment of past thought is not a pre-condition of historical knowledge, but an integral element in it; ... " (IH, 290). This text would seem to preclude re-enactment as a presupposition. Also note that re-enactment is an integral part of historical knowledge. This claim implies that historical knowledge is more than just re-enactment. This is the reason that we have claimed that reenactment is only one goal for the historian. We should also note at this point that Rubinoff seems to confuse transhistorical principles with absolute presuppositions. Rubinoff says that 'history is intelligible' is an absolute presupposition for Collingwood. See L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 284. As we see it, 'history is intelligible' is a transhistorical principle for Collingwood. It should also be noted that H. DeLong confuses transhistorical principles and absolute presuppositions. DeLong says that the claim that ""[t]hought, in order to be historically significant, must be expressed" is an absolute presupposition. See M.H. Nielsen, History and Theory, p. 16. As we see it, this claim is not an absolute presupposition, but is a transhistorical principle.

include putting the person's absolute presuppositions into propositional form. It will be recalled that although absolute presuppositions themselves are not propositions, statements about the absolute presupposition that someone holds can be propositions. And it will also be recalled that although a person is usually unaware of his absolute presuppositions, the historian can, with the appropriate logical skills and evidence, uncover the person's absolute presuppositions.⁴⁶

Whenever the historian makes an attempt to re-enact past thoughts, the attempt is contained within the historian's own question-and-answer complexes. Since this is the case for Collingwood, the historian will "judge" the re-enacted thoughts in terms of his own question-and-answer complexes. Collingwood states: "What is required, if I am to know Plato's philosophy, is both to re-think it in my own mind and also to think other things in the light of which I can judge it" (IH, 301). What Collingwood is attempting to avoid here is the charge that he has divorced the reenacted thought from the historian's own question-and-answer complexes. For Collingwood, there is always a contextual relationship between the re-enacted thought and the historian's own conceptual system. And for this reason, the historian cannot re-enact a thought in isolation from

^{46.} The historian as writer would not be required to include the metaphysical framework in each instance of a re-enactment. As long as the metaphysical framework is dealt with at some point, the reader can, when it is appropriate, add the implied metaphysical framework. This analysis is consistent with <u>Roman Britain</u>. For example, in this work he speaks of "unquestioned convictions" (RB, 186). See also <u>Roman Britain</u>, pp. 252-3, 261, 269-70, 273, 308, 312. It should also be noted that Collingwood's transhistorical principles are repeatedly used in <u>Roman Britain</u>. On the doctrine of stresses and strains, for example, see pages 270, 273, 308.

his own question-and-answer complexes. In other words, the historian can only re-enact a thought in the wider context of his own knowledge. And this wider context logically forces the historian to evaluate critically the author's thought. "This criticism of the thought whose history he traces is not something secondary to tracing the history of it. It is an indispensible condition of historical knowledge itself" (IH, 215). And the reason that this criticism is "an indispensible condition of historical knowledge itself" is that the historian could not re-enact a thought in isolation from his own question-and-answer complexes. When Collingwood uses the term 'criticism', he means 'evaluate' or 'judge'. He does not mean by the term 'criticism' that the historian will necessarily disagree with the author of the thought.⁴⁷ The historican can always judge the thought and decide to accept it. For example, when Collingwood re-thinks Vico's claim that the historian must come to his own conclusions, Collingwood accepts Vico's assessment. And for Collingwood, the attempt at a re-enactment and the act of judging the thought are the result of asking different questions (A, 27).⁴⁸ The question of

^{47.} It would appear as though William Dray holds the view that by the term 'criticism' Collingwood means that the historian will necessarily disagree with the author of the thought. See W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, p. 24. If this is Dray's position, we believe that Dray has misinterpreted Collingwood on this point.

^{48.} It would appear as though William Dray collapses these different questions. Dray says that if the historian discovered any errors, "this would be equivalent to finding the agent's thought unre-thinkable." See W. Dray, <u>Perspectives on History</u>, p. 24. According to Dray's interpretation, we could only re-think those thoughts that we agreed with. But, as we see it, Collingwood did not collapse these different questions. And our interpretation appears to be more consistent with Collingwood's analysis in works like <u>The Idea Of Nature</u>, <u>The Idea Of History</u>, and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>, where he attempts to re-think the thoughts of other thinkers even though he sometimes disagrees with these thoughts.

what the author said and the question of whether or not the author is correct are questions that can be separated by logical analysis. Once we separate these questions, we will recognize, according to Collingwood, that even though we may disagree with the thought of an author on the question of the truth of the thought, we can still answer the question of what the thought was that the author had. Collingwood says that "even if I refuted [one of Plato's arguments], it would still be the same argument and the act of following its logical structure would be the same act" (IH, 301-302). But although these questions are logically distinct, both the question of what the author said and the question of whether or not the author is right will be in the historian's mind in the attempt at a reenactment. So, for Collingwood, the historian will judge the author's thought, even if it is only implicitly, in terms of his own question-andanswer complexes. The historian, then, according to Collingwood, should not be seen as a "tranquil mirror" just reflecting what the author is telling him. As Collingwood says, the attempt at a re-enactment "is not a passive surrender to the spell of another's mind; it is the labour of active and therefore critical thinking" (IH, 215).49

^{49. (}i) For Collingwood, judging or evaluating may include value judgements in addition to the question of whether or not the author of the thought was correct.
(ii) According to Collingwood, judging is connected with his doctrine of the historical past-as-thought living in the present. It will be recalled that a re-enacted thought is always found in a new context of immediacy (IH, 297). And this new context of immediacy would include the judging component (IH, 226, A, 114). As early as 1921 Collingwood thought that judging was connected with the doctrine that the historical past-as-thought can live in the present (CPH, 15). But, in 1921 it appears as though Collingwood collapsed the question of what the author said and the question of whether or not the author was correct. As we have just pointed out, Collingwood (continued on p. 376)

The re-enactment of past thought is only <u>one</u> goal for the scientific historian. The scientific historian must also attempt to uncover what past thoughts mean in Vico's sense of the term 'meaning'. Following Vico, Collingwood says that the scientific historian will attempt to uncover facts by 'reading between the lines' in his sources. In other words, the scientific historian will compel his sources to answer questions that were not raised in his sources. Collingwood states in reference to the scientific historian:

> The question he asks himself is: 'What does this statement mean?' And this is not equivalent to the question 'What did the person who made it mean by it?', although that is doubtless a question that the historian must ask, and must be able to answer. It is equivalent, rather, to the question 'What light is thrown on the subject in which I am interested by the fact that this person made this statement, meaning by it what he did mean?' (IH, 275)

The scientific historian is not only a detective when it comes to the attempt at a re-enactment. He is also a detective when it comes to reading between the lines. The scientific historian, then, for Collingwood, will not end his inquiry with what the authors of statements meant by their statements. He will also read between the lines or 'fill in gaps'.

^{49.} continued. later regarded these two questions as logically distinct. Also, in 1921 we do not find the view that we judge in terms of our absolute presuppositions, a view which we find presented in <u>The Idea</u> <u>Of History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. We should also point out that, for Collingwood, we can only judge what we think is the thought of the author. It will be recalled that there are degrees of understanding with complete understanding as the regulative ideal. No matter what degree of understanding we have of an author's thought, judging will be involved. For Collingwood, judging is not once and for all. If we attain a better understanding of the author in question, we will have to judge again. (Understanding is not an all or nothing affair. It is mainly those critics who see re-thinking as a self-certifying intuition who are to blame for suggesting that the attempt to understand is an all or nothing affair.)
And we could say that if an historian has nothing to add to what the author of statements meant by these statements, this would tell us more about the historian himself than the subject-matter. And once again, Collingwood's dictum that 'what you are not looking for, you do not see' is especially applicable to the task of reading between the lines. For Collingwood, the scientific historian is not only autonomous in regards to his task of attempting a re-enactment. He is also autonomous when he is attempting to read between the lines. In other words, the scientific historian must come to his own conclusions both in regards to his task of re-enacting past thought and in his attempt to read between the lines. And the scientific historian must come to his own conclusions because it is a prejudice that previous historians are necessarily "better informed than ourselves" (IH, 69).⁵⁰

Let us turn now to the second section of Chapter VII. In this section we will point out our agreements and disagreements with Collingwood's commentators in regard to issues arising out of our first section. Our examination of other commentators will make our interpretation clearer.

II

In the second section we will make two major claims that arise out of the first section of Chapter VII. The two major claims of this

^{50.} Both the meaning of a statement in Vico's sense and the meaning of a statement in the sense of what was meant by the author of the statement refer to the past-in-itself. But neither of these senses of the term meaning are to be understood as referring to the past as it actually was in Popper's sense. This is the case because Popper's analysis of the past as it actually was is laden with realist presuppositions.

chapter are as follows: (1) no commentator has yet recognized the logical connection between absolute presuppositions as logico-regulative entities and the problem of re-thinking thoughts and (2) in and after 1935 Collingwood's doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment moved in a significantly new direction as the result of the working out of the theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of <u>The Idea</u> Of History.

Let us turn now to the first major claim of this chapter: no commentator has yet recognized the logical connection between absolute presuppositions as logico-regulative entities and the problem of rethinking thoughts.⁵¹ One reason that this logical connection has been overlooked is that some commentators hold a certain view of the status of absolute presuppositions which prevents them from seeing this logical connection. As we have seen earlier, T.M. Knox explicitly holds the view that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities and implicitly holds the view that these psychological entities are not an integral part of the logic of question and answer. With this interpretation, Knox is prevented from claiming that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. It is

^{51.} In this thesis we will not explicitly judge Collingwood's doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment. What we are claiming is that there is an aspect of this doctrine that has been overlooked by the commentators. If we are right, the judging or critical evaluation of the doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment will have to be taken up in a new light. It might be suggested that we must judge Collingwood when we are attempting to re-think his thoughts. But, as we have seen earlier, the judging question and the re-thinking question are logically distinct. In this thesis, we have set aside the judging component even though it was involved when we attempted to understand Collingwood.

interesting to note that Knox's interpretation of absolute presuppositions as psychological entities may have contributed to his view that Collingwood ends up in scepticism.⁵² With Knox's view that absolute presuppositions are psychological entities, it would follow that absolute presuppositions are to be studied like mere events. But, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter, if we regard a question-and-answer complex as a mere event or natural event, we will be plunged into scepticism in regard to the possibility of re-enactment. Mere events 'pass away' and cannot live on in the present. So if we regard absolute presuppositions as psychological entities, it would be impossible for absolute presuppositions to live on in the present. The result of Knox's view of the status of absolute presuppositions is that the re-enactment of past thought would be impossible because the historian could never uncover absolute presuppositions in the present. Now, since Collingwood did regard re-enactment as logically possible, this would be another reason for not regarding absolute presuppositions as psychological entities. As we see it, absolute presuppositions can be retrieved by the historian. Since absolute presuppositions are an integral part of the logic of question and answer and can be uncovered by logical analysis, absolute presuppositions as a part of a question-and-answer complex can live on in the logical present. With our interpretation, Collingwood would not be plunged into scepticism in regard to the logical possibility of re-enactment. If we are right, this evidence counts against Knox's view that Collingwood ends up in scepticism.

^{52.} T.M. Knox, The Idea Of History, p. xi.

In addition to Knox, we would want to claim that Alan Donagan misinterprets the status of absolute presuppositions. And, as we see it, this also prevents Donagan from recognizing the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. As we have seen in Chapter II, Donagan holds the view that absolute presuppositions are empirical propositions. In addition, Donagan does not think that absolute presuppositions underlie history. Now, Donagan has pointed out a 'problem' regarding the attempt to re-enact the absolute presuppositions of natural science. Donagan claims that since the absolute presuppositions of natural science are not answers to questions, they cannot be recovered in the sense of being re-enacted.⁵³ But, as we see it, Collingwood did not claim that absolute presuppositions are never answers to questions. In fact, Collingwood explicitly stated that an absolute presupposition can be an answer to an historical question.⁵⁴ It is important to make this point because one may want to claim, although Donagan doesn't, that the re-enactment of the past thought of historical agents is impossible because past thoughts are only uncovered by reconstrucing the problems

53. A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 268.

^{54.} Donagan has also claimed that absolute presuppositions cannot be recovered because they are not successful solutions to problems. See A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, p. 268. As we see it, Donagan makes two mistakes at this point. First of all, an absolute presupposition can be a successful answer to an historical question. For example, we can correctly describe one of the absolute presuppositions of the science of Kant's day. Secondly, for Collingwood, whether a solution to a problem is successful or not is really beside the point in an attempt at a re-enactment. Collingwood's point is that we need evidence in order to re-enact. For Collingwood we can re-enact unsuccessful solutions to problems if we have the evidence. See for example, An Autobiography, p. 131.

which they solved and therefore absolute presuppositions, which are not answers to questions, cannot be recovered. But this objection will be seen to miss the mark once it is recognized that absolute presuppositions can be answers to historical questions and that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions can be uncovered with the appropriate logical skills and evidence. Donagan has also claimed that absolute presuppositions are not acts of thought and that therefore they cannot be the proper objects of a historical inquiry in regards to the task of uncovering the absolute presuppositions of natural science.⁵⁵ But Donagan has failed to recognize that absolute presuppositions are integral parts of a thought (i.e. question-and-answer complex). Collingwood's point is that with a thought it is usually the case that part of the thought is explicit and part of the thought is implicit. And it is the historian's job to make both the explicit and implicit part of the thought the objects of historical inquiry. So it would appear as though Donagan is mistaken to claim that absolute presuppositions cannot be proper objects of historical inquiry. In fact, the whole point of An Essay on Metaphysics was to demonstrate that absolute presuppositions are the proper objects of historical inquiry.⁵⁶ Once again it is important to make this point because one

^{55.} A. Donagan, Later Philosophy, pp. 69,279.

^{56. (}i) Absolute presuppositions are the proper objects of historical inquiry which the metaphysician uncovers by using the methods of history.

⁽ii) Donagan also fails to recognize that the historian must uncover the presuppositions of a question in order to understand the question which the thinker attempted to answer. If presuppositions were not the proper objects of historical inquiry, then questions and answers could not be the proper objects of historical inquiry. Donagan, then, fails to see that questions and answers cannot be understood independently of presuppositions.

could argue, although Donagan doesn't, that the re-enactment of the past thoughts of historical agents is impossible because absolute presuppositions, which are not acts of thought, cannot be recovered. But this objection will also be seen to miss the mark once we realize that questions and answers logically arise from presuppositions, including absolute presuppositions, and that therefore if we wish to re-enact a thought we must uncover the presuppositions of the questions and answers.

Michael Krausz also agrees with Donagan that absolute presuppositions cannot be the proper objects of historical inquiry. But Krausz offers different arguments to support this claim. Krausz argues that Collingwood does not provide adequate criteria for identifying absolute presuppositions and argues that Collingwood holds the view that one cannot uncover one's own absolute presuppositions.⁵⁷ Krausz thinks that it is for these two reasons that absolute presuppositions cannot be the proper objects of historical inquiry. And these two arguments lead Krausz to the conclusion that the re-enactment of past thought is impossible.⁵⁸ Now Krausz, unlike Donagan, does see a relationship between absolute presuppositions and the re-enactment of the past thought of historical agents. And on this point we do agree with Krausz. But with Krasuz this relationship is only referred to in a footnote and is not worked

57. M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 226.

58. Ibid., p. 226.

out in any systematic way.⁵⁹ In a footnote Krausz states: "In <u>The Idea</u> Of History Collingwood says that the historian discerns the thoughts of historical agents by rethinking those thoughts in his own mind. Yet, according to Collingwood's theory of meaning one could have the same thoughts as another person only if the first person presupposed all the second person's relevant presuppositions, including the second person's absolute presuppositions."⁶⁰ And so far we have no quarrel with Krausz's footnote. But Krausz ends up arguing that Collingwood lands in scepticism in regards to the possibility of re-enactment. Krausz continues and completes the footnote saying: "Lacking adequate criteria for identification of absolute presuppositions, one could not know that an historian had successfully rethought the thoughts of an historical agent. Collingwould compounds the problem by maintaining that no person can be aware of his own absolute presuppositions."⁶¹ Now, if our interpretation in Chapters II and III of this thesis is correct, Collingwood does provide adequate criteria for the identification of absolute presuppositions. And we have also seen earlier where Collingwood explicitly states that

^{59. (}i) Krausz sees no relationship between absolute presuppositions and historical explanation, historical evidence and the historical imagination. This is a major point of disagreement between ourselves and Krausz.
(ii) E.M.F. Tomlin, Lionel Rubinoff, Louis Mink and M.H. Nielsen have also suggested that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment or re-thinking. See E.M.F. Tomlin, R.G. Collingwood, p. 12; L. Rubinoff, Reform of Metaphysics, p. 305; L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 182; and M.H. Nielsen, "Re-enactment And Reconstruction", pp. 16-17. But none of these commentators work out this relationship in any systematic way.

^{60.} M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 226.

^{61.} Ibid., p. 226. See also M. Krausz, Critical Essays, pp. 227-228.

one can uncover not only the absolute presuppositions of the thinking done by others, but the absolute presuppositions of our own thinking (EM, 43).⁶² If we are right, the grounds for Krausz's claim that Collingwood ends up in scepticism in regard to the possibility of re-enactment do not stand up to critical analysis. In other words, Krausz's two arguments that are used to justify his claim that absolute presuppositions are not the proper objects of historical inquiry appear to be mistaken. Krausz has also argued that absolute presuppositions themselves are devoid of meaning⁶³, which, if this interpretation is correct, would raise another problem in regards to the possibility of re-enactment.⁶⁴ But, as we see it, Krausz's claim that absolute presuppositions are devoid of meaning rests on two errors. First, absolute presuppositions cannot be separated from a question-and-answer complex, as Krausz implicitly suggests. Krausz divorces absolute presuppositions from the context (i.e. question-and-answer complex) and then claims that absolute presuppositions are devoid of meaning.⁶⁵ Secondly, Krausz reduces all meaning

- 63. M. Krausz, Critical Essays, p. 226.
- 64. But Krausz does not see that if he is right on this interpretative point that this would raise a problem in regard to the possibility of re-enactment.

^{62.} For Collingwood, it is important to uncover one's own absolute presuppositions in order that one can work against the grain of them when it is necessary. And it would be necessary to do this when an author or agent holds different absolute presuppositions than the historian does. Krausz's interpretation prevents him from seeing this point.

^{65.} Krausz does not see that absolute presuppositions are meaningful in a question-and-answer complex and this is one reason that we are claiming that Krausz does not see the logical connection between absolute presuppositions as logico-regulative entities and the problem of re-thinking thoughts.

to empirical meaning, a view which Collingwood rejects. Krausz makes the mistake of restricting all meaning to the level of propositions⁶⁶, a view that Collingwood would regard as one of the central errors of propositional logic.

Unlike Krausz, Peter Skagestad claims that Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment is "self-contained" in such a way that this doctrine of re-enactment can be fully understood independently of the theory of absolute presuppositions.⁶⁷ It will be recalled that Skagestad claims that the theory of absolute presuppositions is meant to be a theory of historical explanation and that this theory is a completely different theory of historical explanation from that offered in The Idea Of History (i.e. the doctrine of re-enactment). As we see it, An Essay on Metaphysics is not an attempt at an alternative theory of historical explanation, as Skagestad claims. In the first section of this chapter we have attempted to demonstrate that, for Collingwood, one cannot re-think an identical questionand-answer complex without uncovering the metaphysical concepts that lie at the foundation of a particular question-and-answer complex. This is one point, among a number of points, that Skagestad misses by treating the doctrine of re-enactment as though it were self-contained. We must point out that Skagestad is not the only commentator who treats the doctrine of re-enactment as though it were self-contained in such a way that this doctrine of re-enactment can be fully understood independently of

^{66.} M. Krausz, <u>Critical Essays</u>, pp. 224-225. Krausz does say that relative presuppositions have meaning, but relative presuppositions are still empirical propositions for Collingwood.

^{67.} P. Skagestad, <u>Making Sense of History</u>, p, 85.

the theory of absolute presuppositions. Most commentators, in fact, including W. Dray, W.H. Walsh, Leon Goldstein, Rex Martin and W.J. Van Der Dussen, treat the doctrine of re-enactment as though it were selfcontained.68

As we have just suggested, Rex Martin treats Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment as though it were self-contained. As we see it, this is the major reason that accounts for Martin claiming that Collingwood ends up in a thorough-going scepticism in regards to the possibility of re-enactment.⁶⁹ It will be recalled that, according to Martin, Collingwood argues against the "idea of an identity of nature between men at different times."⁷⁰ For Martin, what Collingwood is left with is "a transhistorical heterogeneity in the phenomena of human thought and

70.

^{68.} We are not saying that these commentators are necessarily committed to Skagestad's view that there is a radical break between The Idea Of History and An Essay on Metaphysics. We are only saying that they implicitly hold Skagestad's view that the doctrine of reenactment is self-contained. In the case of Dray, his failure to recognize the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment prevents him from seeing the relationship between absolute presuppositions and rationality. For Collingwood, an adequate theory of rationality cannot divorce itself from the doctrine of absolute presuppositions. Before we can speak of 'the rational thing to do', in reference to an agent's situation, we must be able to uncover the agent's absolute presuppositions and attempt to discover what action for the agent would be rational, given that he holds the absolute presuppositions that he does. For Collingwood, an action can be rational from the agent's standpoint, even though we do not hold the same absolute presuppositions that the agent holds.

^{69.} R. Martin, Historical Explanation, p. 222.

 ⁽i) <u>Ibid</u>., p. 18.
 (ii) Donagan, Walsh and Mink also argue that Collingwood rejected the notion of a uniform human nature. It would also appear as though Rubinoff rejects the notion of a uniform human nature in his interpretation of Collingwood. See L. Rubinoff, Reform Of Metaphysics, p. 275.

action."71 As Martin sees it, one of Collingwood's primary assumptions is transhistorical and cross-cultural difference at the mind-as-thought level. And Martin argues that it is because Collingwood rejects the notion of a uniform human nature that Collingwood ends up in a thoroughgoing scepticism in regard to the possibility of re-enactment. Now, if our analysis in Chapter IV is correct, Collingwood does accept the notion of a permanent human nature. And in this chapter we have attempted to demonstrate that this permanent human nature provides us with a transhistorical context at the structural level of mind-as-thought. As we see it, this transhistorical context (i.e. all men think and act in terms of the logic of question and answer, including presuppositions) does allow for the possibility of re-enactment. If Martin is right that there is no permanent human nature at any level for Collingwood, then his conclusion that Collingwood ends up in scepticism in regard, to the possibility of re-enactment would follow. But, given our analysis, Collingwood is not committed to the radical dissimilarity thesis. Collingwood does have his transhistorical principles and therefore it would appear as though Collingwood is not necessarily committed to a sceptical position in regard to the possibility of re-enactment.⁷²

^{71.} R. Martin, Historical Explanation, p. 29.

⁽i) This identity between past and present at the structural level of mind-as-thought is not to be confused with one question-and-answer complex being 'identical' to 'another' question-and-answer complex. It is the identity between past and present at the structural level of mind-as-thought that allows for the logical possibility of one question-and-answer complex being 'identical' to 'another' question-and answer complex.
(ii) We agree with Martin that "historical understanding requires transhistorical application of the discursive principles ingredient in a re-enactment." See R. Martin, <u>Historical Explanation</u>, p. 222. But Martin says that this claim is inconsistent with Collingwood's position. It is at this point that we disagree with Martin. As we see it, the above claim is quite consistent with Collingwood's position.

As we have suggested above, W.J. Van Der Dussen also treats Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment as though it were self-contained in such a way that this doctrine can be fully understood independently of the theory of absolute presuppositions. This implicit interpretative point in Van Der Dussen's analysis contributes to his failure to recognize that, for Collingwood, there is a uniform human nature at the structural level of mind-as-thought. Now it would be correct to say that Van Der Dussen, unlike Martin, rejects the radical dissimilarity thesis in his interpretation of Collingwood. But Van Der Dussen does not attempt to justify this position.⁷³ As we have attempted to demonstrate, the "pre-established harmony" that Collingwood speaks about in The Idea Of History is based on the claim that there is a common human nature at the structural level of mind-as-thought.⁷⁴ Van Der Dussen makes no mention of Collingwood's transhistorical principles that provide the historian with a uniformity at the structural level of mind-as-thought. According to our interpretation, it is transhistorical principles that allow for the logical possibility of re-enactment. The logical conditions necessary for re-thinking are still present because at the structural level of mind-as-thought there is a uniform human nature. Once we have this uniformity at this structural level, as Collingwood thinks we do, we can re-enact the thought of another human being if we can uncover the content of thought that is contained within the transhistorical

73. W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 341.

^{74.} Very little has been said in the literature about this pre-established harmony that Collingwood refers to. In this chapter and in Chapter IV we have offered an interpretation of what Collingwood means by this expression.

context. For Collingwood, if we can uncover the content of another person's question-and-answer complex (i.e. the particular presuppositions, the particular question, and the particular answer), we will have reenacted the identical thought of the other human being.⁷⁵

Let us turn to the second major claim of this chapter: in and after 1935 Collingwood's doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment moved in a significantly new direction as the result of the working out of the

^{75.} The fact that Van Der Dussen treats Collingwood's doctrine of reenactment as though it were self-contained is evident when he turns to the question of whether or not Collingwood is a methodological individualist. Van Der Dussen says that Collingwood is not a methodological individualist in the strict sense, as Donagan claims, because certain holistic ideas play a role in actions of individuals. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, History As A Science, p. 325. But Van Der Dussen is quick to add that Collingwood is not a holist either. We agree with Van Der Dussen that Collingwood is not a methodological individualist in the strict sense or a holist in the strict sense. Collingwood's position appears to be an overlapping of the methodological individualist position and the holist position. Van Der Dussen sees no logical connection between absolute presuppositions and this issue. We have already attempted to show that there is a logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the aims, purposes, goals, and perceived situations of historical agents. For Collingwood, there is also a relationship between absolute presuppositions and holistic ideas. Collingwood does speak of the 'mind' or 'spirit' of an 'age' and this 'mind' or 'spirit' would include the absolute presuppositions of the 'age'. In An Essay on Metaphysics Collingwood speaks of the absolute presuppositions of a society, at any given phase of its history (EM, 48). (See also An Essay on Metaphysics page 197 where Collingwood says that we need institutions to perpetuate absolute presuppositions.) Van Der Dussen is right that, for Collingwood, holistic ideas can have an explanatory role in regards to the actions of individuals. And it would appear as though Collingwood is saying that holistic ideas must be studied from within. But, by treating re-enactment as though it were self-contained, Van Der Dussen does not see how holistic ideas in reference to absolute presuppositions can have explanatory power in regards to the actions of individuals. Now, to avoid a possible misunderstanding, Collingwood is not saying that holistic ideas in regards to the actions of individuals refer to a 'reality' that is independent of human beings. As Collingwood says in reference to a society, "a society is nothing over and above its members" (NL, 149).

theory of absolute presuppositions just prior to the writing of The Idea Of History. One commentator who has failed to recognize this new turn is W.J. Van Der Dussen. As we see it, Van Der Dussen fails to see the importance of Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts from 1933 to 1935 for understanding the doctrine of re-enactment. Since Van Der Dussen does not see the implications of this new evidence from 1933 to 1935, he does not recognize that a re-interpretation of the doctrine of re-enactment is now warranted. According to Van Der Dussen, Collingwood's theory of history as the re-thinking of past thoughts was worked out by him in the so-called Die-manuscript of 1928.⁷⁶ And Van Der Dussen concludes that the basic principles of Collingwood's ideas on history had been developed by 1930.⁷⁷ As we see it, with Van Der Dussen's analysis, we have a failure to see the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. If Van Der Dussen had seen this important aspect of Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935, he would have realized that we do not find the final theory of re-enactment in 1928. As we have pointed out in the first section of this chapter, there is no mention of Collingwood's doctrine of absolute presuppositions in the Die-manuscript of 1928. It is the claim of this thesis that Collingwood revised his theory of re-thinking thoughts that he worked on in his earlier writings, including the Die-manuscript of 1928, in terms of his doctrine of absolute presuppositions in the 1935-1936 papers on

76. W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science</u>, p. 41.77. Ibid., p. 41.

history.⁷⁸

Louis Mink also fails to recognize that Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment moved in a significantly new direction in and after 1935. Mink does make the suggestive claim that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment⁷⁹, but this claim is not worked out in any systematic way. For Mink, this relationship can only be seen retrospectively. It will be recalled that Mink claimed that the theory of absolute presuppositions only throws retrospective light on <u>The Idea</u> <u>Of History</u>.⁸⁰ Mink has also claimed that the 'a priori' imagination is an early formulation of the doctrine of absolute presuppositions, and this claim also partially accounts for Mink's failure to recognize the logical connection between absolute presuppositions and the problem of re-thinking thoughts. This is the case because there is no mention of the 'a priori' imagination in "Human Nature And Human History" and "History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience" both of which contain discussions of the doctrine of re-thinking or re-enactment. So by confusing the 'a

79. L. Mink, Mind, History And Dialectic, p. 182.

^{78.} Given our analysis in this chapter, William Debbins is mistaken to claim that "from the earlier essays to the later works there is no significant change in Collingwood's conception of history or philosophy of history." W. Debbins, <u>Essays</u>, pp. xxxi-xxxii.

^{80.} We have already stated that M.H. Nielsen and E.M.F. Tomlin have suggested that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment. See footnote #59 in this chapter. It would appear as though Nielsen, like Mink, holds the late development thesis. Nielsen only suggests that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment in Collingwood's paper entitled "History As Re-enactment Of Past Experience" which was revised and completed in 1939. And in Tomlin's case, he takes no stand on the question of when Collingwood developed his theory of absolute presuppositions.

priori' imagination with the theory of absolute presuppositions and by not tracing the genuine theory of absolute presuppositions back to the 'period' just prior to <u>The Idea Of History</u>, Mink overlooks the important logical connection between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment in and after 1935.⁸¹

Lionel Rubinoff also fails to recognize that Collingwood's doctrine of re-enactment moved in a significantly new direction in and after 1935. And this is the case even though Rubinoff, unlike Mink, rejects the late development thesis. Earlier we argued that Rubinoff's account of the development of the theory of absolute presuppositions is not discriminating enough. Now Rubinoff has suggested that there is a relationship between absolute presuppositions and re-enactment⁸², but this suggestion is not worked out in any systematic way. As we see it, one reason that accounts for Rubinoff not working out this suggestive claim is that he interprets the doctrine of re-enactment in terms of the

^{81.} Mink has also claimed that the theory of absolute presuppositions presupposes the logic of question and answer. See L. Mink, <u>Mind, History</u> <u>And Dialectic</u>, p. 126. As we see it, this claim is based on at least two errors. First, the theory of absolute presuppositions cannot be divorced from the logic of question and answer. And secondly, absolute presuppositions, for Collingwood, are logically more fundamental than questions and answers. These two errors may also partially account for Mink's failure to recognize the logical connection that we are arguing for. It would be correct to say that the theory of absolute presuppositions assumes the logic of question and answer in a chronological sense. But this is a point that Mink does not make.

^{82.} L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform of Metaphysics</u>, p. 305. This claim appears to be inconsistent with his other claim that re-enactment itself is a presupposition. See L. Rubinoff, <u>Reform Of Metaphysics</u>, pp. 282-283. See also footnote #44 in this chapter. The claim that re-enactment itself is a presupposition appears to have contributed to Rubinoff's failure to recognize the logical connection that we are arguing for.

theoretical framework of Speculum Mentis. Rubinoff's interpretative framework (i.e. Collingwood's theoretical concepts of the mid-1920's) leads him to claim that in The Idea Of History Collingwood rejected the concept of the past as a thing in itself.⁸³ But, as we have seen earlier, in The Idea Of History Collingwood explicitly accepted the concept of the past as a thing in itself. Collingwood says that it is "the historian's business...to apprehend the past as a thing in itself, to say for example that so many years ago such-and-such events actually happened" (IH, 3). It would be correct to say that in 1925 Collingwood did reject the concept of a past as a thing in itself. In "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History" (1925) Collingwood denied that it was possible to uncover the past as it actually happened. And the rejection of the concept of a past as a thing in itself included the view that it was not possible to re-enact an identical thought. In 1925 Collingwood was saying that the past as a thing in itself was external to the historian. Collingwood states: "Consequently he is always the spectator of a life in which he does not participate: he sees the world of fact as if it were across a gulf which, as an historian, he cannot bridge."⁸⁴ In 1925 Collingwood thought that there were obstacles, including the historian's own perspective, in the way of uncovering the past as a thing in itself. But this is not Collingwood's position in The Idea Of History. In The Idea Of History Collingwood did not think that there was a "gulf" that

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^{83.} L. Rubinoff, Reform Of Metaphysics, pp. 139, 296.

^{84.} R.G. Collingwood, "The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History", <u>Proc. Aris. Soc</u>. XXV (1924-1925), pp. 164-165.

could not be "bridged" between the historian and the past as it actually happened. Collingwood had come to the conclusion that there was a transhistorical context that all perspectives fit into and that this allowed for the logical possibility of uncovering the past as a thing in itself.⁸⁵ It would appear that since Rubinoff interprets <u>The Idea Of History</u> in terms of the theoretical framework of Collingwood's mid-1920's 'period', that he is led to the conclusion that in <u>The Idea Of History</u> Collingwood continued to reject the concept of the past as a thing in itself.⁸⁶ As

86. (i) As we see it, the whole point of speaking about an identical thought in The Idea Of History was to defend the notion of a past as a thing in itself. This is a point which Rubinoff apparently overlooks. (ii) In The Idea Of History Collingwood came to the conclusion that thinkers like Croce and Oakeshott had reduced all thinking to the context of immediacy and it was for this reason that they denied the concept of a past in itself (IH, 154-159, 202). With Croce and Oakeshott it is denied that historical knowledge is knowledge of past thought. And when Collingwood criticizes Croce and Oakeshott in The Idea Of History, he is implicitly criticizing his own position of 1925. As the result of reducing all thought to the context of immediacy, Croce and Oakeshott end up arguing that it is impossible to re-think an identical thought. With Rubinoff's interpretation of The Idea Of History, he fails to see the significance of Collingwood's attack on Croce and Oakeshott. And it would also appear as though Stephen Toulmin has overlooked the significance of Collingwood's attack on Croce and Oakeshott. See S. Toulmin, Essays, p. 206. We could add at this point that there is another thinker who like Croce and Oakeshott reduces all thinking to the context of immediacy, namely H.G. Gadamer. Gadamer claims that to understand is to understand differently. See H.G. Gadamer, Truth And Method. (Although Collingwood accepted the view that to understand is to understand differently in 1925, he had relinquished this view by the time he wrote the papers on history that make up The Idea Of History. Did (continued on p. 395)

^{85.} In <u>The Idea Of History</u> Collingwood argued that only past contexts of immediacy were external to the historian. The logic of past question-and-answer complexes could be uncovered and therefore, for Collingwood, this logic was not necessarily external to the historian. And so, Collingwood no longer collapsed question-and-answer complexes and contexts of immediacy.

we see it, although Collingwood did deny in 1925 that it was possible to re-think an identical thought, by the time he wrote the papers that make up <u>The Idea Of History</u> he had relinquished this position. With Rubinoff's interpretation, there is nothing to account for Collingwood's move from the position of 1925 that we cannot re-think an identical thought to the later position that we can re-think an identical thought. And this is the case because Rubinoff argues that Collingwood did not change his position in any substantial way after the mid-1920's. Now it should be noted that already in his essay "Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles" (1927) Collingwood had some doubts as to his position in 1925 that we cannot re-think an identical thought. In 1927 Collingwood claimed that Spengler contradicted himself when he argued that we cannot understand another culture. It will be recalled that Spengler claimed

^{86.} continued. Collingwood's 1925 position on understanding have anything to do with his Hegelianism during the mid-1920's? If it did, an Hegelian framework may have something to do with Gadamer's view on understanding and Rubinoff's interpretation of Collingwood.) As we will see shortly, Collingwood, according to his analysis in 1927 and in The Idea Of History, would regard Gadamer's claim that to understand is to understand differently as contradictory. This is the case because implicitly in this claim one is assuming that one knows how the 'understanding' is different. We should also add that Collingwood would agree with Gadamer that the logic of question and answer can be seen as an hermeneutics. And Collingwood would agree with Gadamer that the context of immediacy is different in a reenactment and in this sense to understand is to understand differently. But Collingwood would not agree with Gadamer that to understand is to understand differently in all senses. It will be recalled that, for Collingwood, the logic of a question-and-answer complex cannot be reduced to the context of immediacy. Collingwood thinks that if we have the appropriate evidence and logical skills that we can understand the identical question-and-answer complex. Although a past context of immediacy cannot live on in the logical present, a past thought can, says Collingwood. This would be a point that Gadamer, following Croce and Oakeshott, overlooks.

that we cannot understand another culture because we come to that culture with a different point of view or perspective. But in this 1927 publication, Collingwood pointed out that the claim that we do not understand another culture already presupposes understanding. Unless we understand another culture well enough to know that we do not understand it completely, we can never have reason to suspect that our errors about it are erroneous.⁸⁷ And by attacking Spengler's sceptical position in regards to the possibility of understanding, Collingwood was implicitly criticizing his own position in 1925.⁸⁸ But, in 1927, although he attacks Spengler and implicitly his own position of 1925, Collingwood does not offer a new position on the subject of understanding. It wasn't until a year later in 1928 in the unpublished Die-manuscript that Collingwood began to work out a new position on the subject of re-thinking or re-enactment. And his final position on this subject was not worked out until he turned to the papers that make up The Idea Of History.⁸⁹ Now in The Idea Of History

- 87. Collingwood was beginning to move to the position that one cannot talk of difference without identity (or at least the regulative idea of identity) since identity and difference are correlative. To argue only for difference leads one into a contradictory position.
- 88. As we have seen before, Collingwood was fond of criticizing a thinker for holding a certain view which Collingwood himself had held at a previous stage in his own thinking.
- 89. We wish to conjecture that the reason Collingwood didn't publish the Die-manuscript was that he still didn't have a ground or basis for re-thinking. Collingwood didn't work out the ground or basis for re-thinking until he uncovered the principles of metaphysics in the early 1930's. And in <u>The Idea Of History</u> these principles of metaphysics allowed for the re-thinking of an identical thought. The strength of our interpretation is that we can account for the move from the position of 1925 to the position of 1936. As far as we know, no other commentator has offered an interpretation of Collingwood's thought between 1925 and 1936 that accounts for this aboutface on Collingwood's part regarding the possibility of re-thinking an identical thought.

Collingwood did regard the problem of understanding as being a much more difficult problem than he had previously thought. And this was the case because he now thought that one had to uncover the absolute presuppositions of a question-and-answer complex in order to re-think an identical thought. But, Collingwood thought that with the appropriate evidence and logical skills it was possible to uncover an identical question-and-answer complex, including presuppositions. And it would be correct to say that Collingwood ended up reaffirming a view espoused in <u>Religion And Philosophy</u> which is that "complete communication" is a regulative ideal. But in <u>The</u> <u>Idea Of History</u> Collingwood was of the opinion that the problem of understanding was much more complicated than he had previously suggested in his earlier writings, including Religion And Philosophy.

CONCLUSION

The fundamental contention of this thesis is that there is a new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935 and that this new turn is the result of Collingwood working out his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's. In our opening chapter we attempted to situate the theory of absolute presuppositions in Collingwood's intellectual development. We argued that Collingwood was working on his theory of absolute presuppositions in the early 1930's and that the complete theory was worked out by 1935. Collingwood's unpublished manuscripts were examined in an attempt to justify this claim. We argued that the unpublished responses to Ayer in 1933 and Ryle in 1935 were necessary before Collingwood could develop his theory. And it appears to be the case that the major claims of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u> has been made by 1935, although there is no explicit mention of the theory of absolute presuppositions in any of Collingwood's published writings until 1939-1940.

In our second chapter we attempted to uncover the status of an absolute presupposition. It was our claim that absolute presuppositions are to be regarded as logico-regulative entities. By calling absolute presuppositions logical entities, we wanted to stress that absolute presuppositions are an integral part of the logic of question and answer. And by calling absolute presuppositions regulative entities, we wanted

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to stress that absolute presuppositions regulate a particular questionand-answer complex as the result of being logically first. We also attempted to demonstrate that, for Collingwood, absolute presuppositions underlie all science and not just natural science. One major conclusion of this chapter was that there is an important logical connection between the doctrine of absolute presuppositions and the science called history. Our analysis appears to indicate that Collingwood does not hold the selfcontained thesis.

In our third chapter we argued that Collingwood offers a foundationalist account of knowledge. But, he is a foundationalist in a unique sense because a foundation of absolute presuppositions can shift and change. This position, however, does not commit Collingwood to the radical conceptual revolution thesis. We also attempted to demonstrate that Collingwood can solve the problem of conceptual change in consistently rational terms and that he does not end up in scepticism or relativism as the result of his analysis of conceptual change. Our analysis appears to indicate that Collingwood does not hold the irrationalist thesis. The aim of this chapter, and the previous chapter, was to clarify the theory of absolute presuppositions as best we could before we moved on to defend our claim that there is a new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history in and after 1935.

In Chapter IV we attempted to demonstrate that there is an important logical connection between the theory of absolute presuppositions and the problem of historical explanation as this problem is dealt with in "Human Nature And Human History". We argued that absolute presuppositions underlie all attempts at a theory of historical explanation and that the theory of absolute presuppositions itself is not to be seen as an attempt at a

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theory of historical explanation. It was suggested that there is no radical break on the subject of historical explanation between <u>The Idea</u> <u>Of History</u> and <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>. Our analysis gives added weight to the claim that the discontinuity thesis (or radical conversion hypothesis) is mistaken.

In Chapter V it was our claim that Collingwood was led to examine (or re-examine) Bradley's "The Presuppositions of Critical History" in "The Historical Imagination" (1935) due to the fact that the theory of absolute presuppositions was developed just prior to the writing of this paper. It was suggested that this examination of Bradley's essay was the next logical step in Collingwood's analysis of history, given the 'period' in which Collingwood worked out his theory of absolute presuppositions. Bradley speaks of absolute presuppositions, but Collingwood argues that absolute presuppositions are not givens and empirical presuppositions, as Bradley claims. For Collingwood, absolute presuppositions are 'accepted' for a time as givens and are metaphysical presuppositions. We attempted to demonstrate that Collingwood's absolute presuppositions logically regulate the historical imagination and that the historical imagination has changed over time as the result of absolute presuppositions changing.

In Chapter VI we examined "Historical Evidence" and continued our analysis of the new turn in Collingwood's philosophy of history. We argued that there is a logico-regulative relationship of absolute presuppositions to historical evidence. We attempted to show that the historian, like every scientist, distinguishes between evidence and non-evidence in terms of question-and-answer complexes, which in and after 1935 included absolute presuppositions. Since questions set the historian off looking for evidence, and questions logically arise from presuppositions, including absolute presuppositions, we were led to the view that the historian's absolute presuppositions will logically regulate what he considers to be evidence.

In Chapter VII we turned to the problem of re-thinking thoughts. We suggested that it was necessary to account for Collingwood's acceptance of the incommensurate thesis in 1925 and his rejection of this thesis in 1936 for question-and-answer complexes. We argued that it was Collingwood's newly uncovered principles of metaphysics in the early 1930's that accounts for his about-face on the subject of re-thinking question-andanswer complexes. Collingwood still accepted the incommensurate thesis for contexts of immediacy, and so his new position was not a radical change, but his principles of metaphysics did allow for the re-thinking of an identical question-and-answer complex. We suggested that Collingwood's principles of metaphysics provided a basis or ground for re-thinking in the sense that they gave us a transhistorical context or uniformity or preestablished harmony at the structural level of mind-as-thought. This basis or ground made it logically possible to retrieve a past question-and-answer complex for it allowed the question-and-answer complex to logically live on in the present. We also argued that one could not re-think an identical question-and-answer complex without uncovering the absolute presuppositions that lie at the foundation of a question-and-answer complex. But, with Collingwood's identity thesis, we claimed that he was not committed to the intuitionist thesis or the infallibility thesis.

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- 1936-37 "Folklore: The Historical Method".
- 1937 "Notes on Causation".
- 1937-38 "Function of Presuppositions in Civilization",* (This manuscript appears to be Collingwood's rough draft of <u>An Essay on Metaphysics</u>).
- 1938-39 "Log of a Journey in the East Indies, 1938-39".
- 1938-39 "Historiography".
- 1939-40 "Moral Philosophy Lectures, 1940".

Correspondence

- 36 Letters of Collingwood to de Ruggiero, from 1920 to 1938.
- 6 Letters of Collingwood to Alexander, from 1925 to 1938.

*This manuscript is listed under the title of "Metaphysics" in Van Der Dussen's volume. See W.J. Van Der Dussen, <u>History As A Science: The</u> Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood, p. 451. Manuscripts of which no date is given or can be given

"Observations on Language".

"Comment on the Preface of Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason'", (It is our guess that this manuscript was written sometime between 1928 and 1935).

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"Causation in Spinoza".

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