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F. H. Bradley's Feeling as Hegelian Phenomenology

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Abstract

In this essay, I argue for a reinterpretation of F. H. Bradley's theory of feeling based on the underemphasized influence of Hegel's phenomenology on Bradley's philosophy. While traditional interpretations of Bradleyan feeling often understand it to have strong metaphysical connotations, I argue that such interpretations result in an important distortion of the overall structure of Bradley's thought. Contra the metaphysical interpretation, I argue that Bradley's account of feeling can only be properly understood by interpreting his theory in light of his own explicit attributions of the theory to Hegel. By taking Bradley at his word that feeling truly is derived from Hegel, I argue that we are better able to understand the overall structure of Bradley's thought and the way in which he belongs to the neo-Hegelian tradition of philosophy. Through explaining the debt that Bradley owes to Hegel regarding feeling, an important source of disagreement between Bradley and Hegel will become apparent, namely, the ability for feeling to be subsumed within thought, thereby differentiating Bradley's and Hegel's ultimate characterizations of reality.

I. Introduction

There is nothing that is more foundational to F. H. Bradley's philosophy than his theory of feeling;¹ yet, because of Bradley's rather unsystematic style of presenting his philosophy, his explanations of feeling are peppered throughout his work. Based on its presentation and the somewhat vague terminology that Bradley employs, feeling has maintained an ambiguous status throughout the various interpretations of Bradley's philosophy and yet, despite this ambiguous status, many interpretations of Bradley's work make it clear that feeling is the ground upon which all else in his philosophy rests.² The foundational importance of the theory when combined with its piecemeal explanation has brought a sense of confusion to

the very basis of Bradley's philosophy and has obscured the reasoning which supports the rest of his philosophical system.

Among the various accounts of Bradley's theory of feeling is what I refer to as the 'traditional interpretation', a loose grouping of scholars whose accounts of Bradley's work, though not united in all respects, posit that there is a fundamental metaphysical weight that Bradley attaches to feeling.³ The traditional interpretation understands Bradleyan feeling to be a 'metaphysical substratum'⁴ at the base of Bradley's account of reality where it operates as a generative source (Crossley 1996: 310fn) for the world of appearances which is continuous across every consciousness (Ferreira 1999: 172–73). Within this account, feeling sits at the bottom of a three-tiered, hierarchical ontology⁵ acting as the arational, mystical basis of reality, a 'perfect harmony' lying beneath our ordinary experience of life (Mander 2018: 687). The basis for the metaphysical interpretation of feeling seems to be Bradley's insistence that there is neither subject nor object within feeling (Bradley 1996b: 41; 2001: 77). Based on Bradley's claim that the subject/object dichotomy does not exist within feeling, the traditional interpretation understands feeling to act as a monistic substance from which both subject and object emerge as real, independent entities. Here the claim is made that as Bradley describes feeling as the ground or foundation of ideal construction (or thought) it must be accorded some metaphysical value (Bradley 1996a: 87) though the reason for such an interpretation of Bradley's claim is unclear.

Despite the number of influential and rigorous scholars who make up this interpretation, I believe that their interpretation of Bradley's theory of feeling is incorrect and necessarily leads to an important distortion of the overall structure of Bradley's thought. The fundamental mistake made by the traditional interpretation of Bradley's philosophy is construing feeling, at least in part,⁶ as a metaphysical theory despite Bradley's multiple claims that 'the detail of this discussion [i.e., the operation of feeling] does not belong to metaphysics' (*AR*: 93fn).⁷ Rather, as I will argue, Bradley is actually providing a phenomenological description of the way that reality is given in immediate experience. Due to the complexity of Bradley's theory and its foreign character when compared to our everyday, naïve realist or empiricist interpretations of reality, it is somewhat understandable why the traditional interpretation takes Bradley's account of feeling to be a metaphysical theory yet, despite my sympathies, such an interpretation is unable to withstand scrutiny. While insightful in many respects, the traditional interpretation does not provide sufficient textual evidence to support its argument that Bradley is making metaphysical claims when he discusses the subject/object dichotomy and the lack of such distinction within feeling. In this definition of feeling as a metaphysical substance, the function of feeling within Bradley's philosophy becomes obfuscated. Granting feeling's importance within his system and its confusing presentation, Bradley's readers are left to question what exactly is 'feeling' and what role does it have within his system?

My polestar for navigating this question is Bradley's claim 'that I myself derived [the theory of feeling] from Hegel is perfectly certain. If I had ever been asked if it was Hegel's teaching, I should have replied that so much at least was indubitable' (*ETR*: 153). This attribution of his theory of feeling to Hegel is not an isolated instance (*AR*: 569). It can also be found in his early *Principles of Logic* wherein he writes that:

There is much in Hegel's psychology which I do not understand, and there are things in it from which, as I understand them, I am forced to dissent. Still it was here that I found that help which I needed the most [. . .] Hegel's doctrine of feeling, as a vague *continuum* below relations, seemed and seems to me to have an importance which really is vital. Against an exaggeration of this importance Hegel often, and perhaps too sweepingly, protests. (*PL*: 515)

Given such an explicit attribution of the theory to Hegel bookending his career, it seems obvious that it is not possible to understand Bradley's conception of feeling without addressing Bradley's debt to Hegel's accounts of feeling or immediate experience. Further, based on Bradley's explicit attribution of feeling to Hegel between his early *Principles of Logic* and late *Essays on Truth and Reality*, it is clear that his conception of feeling did not undergo 'radical development in the course of Bradley's career' (Bradley 1984: 235), but retained its basic Hegelian character throughout his writing. What remains unclear, however, is why so few scholars have discussed this fundamental connection between the basis of Bradley's and Hegel's philosophies and why even fewer scholars have chosen to rely on this attribution as their hermeneutic frame for interpreting Bradleyan feeling.⁸

Based on this attribution to Hegel, I argue that by interpreting Bradley's work through Hegel's philosophy and the influence that it exerted on Bradley's thought, we will be better positioned to appreciate the role of feeling within Bradley's own system. This argument offers an important clarification of Bradley's philosophy in so far as it frees Bradley from the charge of dogmatic mysticism and positions him as the sceptical thinker, in the sense of Hegel's account of phenomenology as scepticism (*PbG*: ¶78), that he describes as the ideal philosopher (*AR*: xii; *PL*: x). To support my reinterpretation of Bradleyan feeling, I will provide an excavation of feeling's Hegelian roots as found within Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Bedell 1977: 274) and *Philosophy of Mind*. Due to Bradley's explicit reference to Hegel's notion of feeling as the basis of his own theory and the similarities between Bradley's and Hegel's accounts of immediate experience, it will become clear that Bradley's notion of feeling is a derivation from Hegelian phenomenology. Through demonstrating that Bradleyan feeling is actually such a phenomenology, I will show that the traditional interpretation obscures feeling's function as

phenomenological theory and reduces it to, ‘a highly problematic doctrine’ (Bradley 1996b: 43) that is very difficult to make sense of. By rejecting the traditional interpretation of Bradleyan feeling in favour of the Hegelian interpretation, the theory becomes fairly easily understood as a phenomenological description of the way in which immediate experience functions as the foundation of knowledge. By explaining Bradley’s debt to Hegel and the way in which Bradley deviates from Hegel, an important difference in emphasis will become apparent that will have systematic reverberations for both Bradley’s and Hegel’s philosophies.

II. Feeling’s immediacy and the subject/object distinction

Bradley’s phenomenology begins with a mode of mind which he calls ‘feeling’ or ‘immediate experience’ which is the most direct contact with reality that we can have.⁹ Within feeling, experience has not yet been sorted by our minds into the categories of subject and object, making this experience one in which we feel ourselves united with reality (*ETR*: 420; cf. *ES*: 288). Given the unity of feeling, there is no distinction between being and knowing (*ETR*: 160) in so far as for Bradley, following Hegel (*PM*: §447), that which we know is simply the content of our own minds and is, therefore, part of mind itself. When I feel cold, the feeling of cold is nothing more than *my feeling*; any conjecture about the cause of that feeling is secondary to the actual feeling and the feeling itself is the content of *my* consciousness (*ETR*: 159). As my feeling is part of me and has not yet been analysed by a reflective act of thought, there is no subject/object distinction within feeling until my mind moves beyond merely feeling and into thinking about and interpreting that feeling. Once this transition into thought proper occurs, the subject/object distinction emerges, and we enter the domain of our everyday, adult experience which is characterized by the near ubiquity of thought. The unity of feeling with my mind necessitates that there is no metaphysically distinct object which is separate from my own being. So, to the extent that we know anything in feeling, what we know is our own minds (*PM*: §404), thereby requiring the acknowledgement that in feeling, as Bradley says, being and knowing are one as the knowledge provided by feeling is the simple certainty afforded by feeling’s immediacy. The claim that within feeling being and knowledge are united is controversial, but if we assume that Bradley derives feeling from Hegel’s phenomenology, it becomes clear that Bradley’s account is a direct parallel to Hegel’s claim that in feeling, ‘what I feel I am, and what I am I feel’ (*PM*: §402A).

That feeling is prior to the subject/object distinction is also supported by Bradley’s pointing out of the false dichotomy between either 1) experiencing something as an object or 2) not experiencing something at all. While our commonplace experience may suggest that anything we experience must be some sort of object,

Bradley has an obvious counterargument, namely, our own emotions. When we experience any of our own emotions, it is clear that these are not specific objects that we encounter but are more akin to ‘lenses’ which colour the way in which the phenomenal world appears to us. The emotion itself is neither subject nor object but is a more ambiguous experience which is both part of one’s own mind and also the content of one’s experience, in other words, they are part of the unitary experience of feeling. This unity of experience is clear in that either we experience something, and it is therefore a component of our experience, or it is not such a component and is therefore nothing to us in so far as even our thoughts of things not immediately before our senses are contained within our experience. Thus even when we consider abstract, scientific objects such as chemical formulae or mathematical equations, these things, by being thought by us, exist within our experience. Because the subject/object distinction is derivative of feeling’s unity, the attempt to isolate consciousness from experience must result in the dissolution of consciousness itself as the immediacy of experience provides the basis on which consciousness is built.

According to Bradley, when we examine our everyday experience, it is apparent that there is more in our felt environment than that of which we are explicitly aware (*ETR*: 159), various sensations which we may not currently recognize as anything in particular, but which may enter into our explicit, conscious awareness following an appropriate shift in our attention. While feeling is the immediate and indefinite acquaintance that we have with reality as the perception is the finite and explicit interpretation of feeling through the most basic form of thought. Bradley claims that our perception is not merely the recognition of what is already cleanly divided into discrete objects but is instead, following Hegel (*PM*: §405), the product of an act of mind wherein thought selectively isolates certain regions of its feeling and identifies the isolated region as a specific thing. We do not immediately perceive that ‘the wind is cold’, but we immediately *feel* cold and interpret that cold as being due to the wind, thereby deriving our perception from the more basic feeling. Because Bradley understands feeling to be a whole which is only divided up into parts through the act of perception, feeling should be understood as ‘a non-discrete continuum of sense-contents’ (Bradley 1991: 539) which includes other mental content such as emotion, will, and desire that accompanies our experience of reality (Mander 2011: 112; cf. Sievers 2002: 45). For him, anything that is contained within our experience of reality is a part of feeling as it is most basically found within this non-discrete continuum. Although feeling includes everything that may be contained in our perception of an object, it also includes more than any particular perception is capable of containing (*ETR*: 159). This is due to any perception of an object being focussed solely on the qualities of that object while feeling contains all that is found in that perception and everything else in one’s environment that could *become* objectified, thereby containing everything

that currently is perceived and everything that is capable of being perceived (*AR*: 93). In perception, we are explicitly aware of a limited amount of the content that is within our felt experience and our recognition of that content as a specific object depends upon an act of judgment performed by our minds which distinguishes the object from the undifferentiated mass of feeling.

As feeling describes the experiential state from which objects rise into and fall out of our perception, Bradley claims that experience is not easily distinguished into subject and object as at any time any given piece of the field of our experience can become the focus of our attention, thereby transforming it from being merely a non-explicit component of one's own feeling and into an object (*AR*: 95). Based on the way in which aspects of our immediate experience can become explicit objects or recede back into the depths of our experience, Bradley claims that we find that our most basic awareness of reality is a state in which the world is not cleanly divided into the categories of 'subject' and 'object' but that we instead find ourselves already immersed in a reality from which we are inseparable (*ETR*: 159). Bradley's discussion of the subject/object dichotomy is not an ascription of the presence or absence of an 'inner world' to a given entity, but is instead a description of the way in which reality is found in any particular experience. The subject is that aspect of experience which is identified with the 'self' while the object is that aspect of experience to which the 'self' finds itself opposed (*AR*: 92). It is important to notice that this is a *phenomenological* description of the way in which experience is structured and is distinct from a description of independent entities within reality in so far as a discussion of such entities demands a metaphysical analysis involving questions of identity, form, matter and a wide variety of other concerns which are impossible within feeling due to the immediacy which characterizes it. As such, subject and object are shifting categories which can be applied alternately at various moments to different aspects of experience based on their functional role in that experience (*AR*: 90–91). In this way, Bradley will describe the way in which aspects of one's own self alternate between the subject/object categories. When we consider our own process of thought in a given moment, that thought process becomes objectified and is no longer part of the subject. But when we cease to consider that thought process it loses its object status and returns to its place as part of the subject (*AR*: 92). This variability of the subject/object categories show that nothing is intrinsically a subject/object but that the classification of anything as such depends upon an abstraction from feeling's unity. As we will shortly see, aspects of feeling can variously be either explicit objects or parts of the subject depending on the focussing of attention (*AR*: 91) all the while having no metaphysical prescriptions made regarding how we are to understand the entities which are so categorized.

Bradley's claims about the relationship between subject and object are quite clearly derived from Hegel's treatment of immediate experience in the *Philosophy*

of *Mind* and *Phenomenology of Spirit*. While the account of immediate experience found in the *Phenomenology* was written earlier, Hegel takes it up again in his *Philosophy of Mind* wherein the emphases are slightly altered but the basic account is preserved (Hyppolite 1974: 84–85). In the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel describes feeling as the first, immediate mode in which mind encounters reality which is logically prior to the mediation characteristic of thought and from which thought draws its content (*PM*: §400). Just as Bradley will emphasize, ‘the sensuous soul does not yet distinguish itself from its object’ (Hyppolite 1974: 84) in so far as ‘the subjectivity of the sensing soul is one so immediate, so undeveloped, so little self-determining and self-differentiating, that the soul to the extent that it *only* feels, does not yet seize itself as a subject confronting an object’ (*PM*: §400A).

From the above, it is also clear that Bradley’s discussions of attention are fundamental to his account of feeling and the structural role that feeling has within Bradley’s philosophy. Given the Hegelian heritage of feeling, it will come as no surprise that Bradley owes these discussions to arguments made far earlier by Hegel. In §448 of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel explains that the immediate unity of feeling becomes broken up through the use of attention. Hegel believes that if we direct our attention to a region of feeling’s immediate unity and pay attention only to that selected region, we are able to objectify it and come to learn about it as an object (*PM*: §448A). In this objectifying process, we must be careful not to introduce any content into the object that is not found in that region of feeling. The process of paying attention is necessarily passive as regards the content that it objectifies whereas it is active in its abstraction from the unified whole of feeling. Hegel’s account of attention and the role it has in apprehending objects is largely the same as the basic account that Bradley provides with the sole major exception being the extra detail of Bradley’s account.

While the account that Hegel gives of feeling in the *Philosophy of Mind* is the more easily digested, the account of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides the key argument which Bradley will adopt in presenting his account of immediate experience as holistic. The starting point for Hegel’s phenomenology is immediate experience or sense-certainty wherein we experience a basic awareness of *something* intruding upon our experience. Hegel writes that ‘the knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or what simply *is*’ (*PbG*: §90). What it is that is *doing* the intruding is unclear and even naming it is impossible at this stage of consciousness (Hyppolite 1974: 86), but we have a vague awareness of it. This awareness comes in the form of sense-certainty, a non-discursive sort of experience that is immediate, passive or receptive (*PM*: §406; cf. *PbG*: ¶91), and forms the basis from which the rest of our knowledge grows. Importantly, ‘no distinction whatever can penetrate’ (*PbG*: ¶104) the experience of sense-certainty and, as such, there can be no absolute separation between

that which is experienced and the experienter, in short, all that sense-certainty can be characterized as is experience itself. While sense-certainty initially seems like a rich source of knowledge due to its immediacy and the concreteness of its form, Hegel warns us against sense-certainty's seduction, for while its immediacy does lend it a certain persuasiveness, it is actually the *most abstract* knowledge that we possess (*PbG*: ¶91). Sense-certainty promises an unadulterated experience of the object which removes nothing from it, thereby presenting the object wholly as it is and without modification within our experience of the object yet, in the very certainty with which sense-certainty presents itself, we find that the truth expressed in it is the poorest in content, it is mere *certainty not truth*.

Due to the immediate character of sense-certainty, there can be no use of universals (Westphal 2000: 175; cf. Voogt 2022: 5) to characterize its contents as doing so would *mediate* the content, thereby bringing it beyond the *immediacy* of sense-certainty (*PbG*: ¶91); as such, there is not yet any predication occurring, there have been no judgments made, and we cannot actually say anything about the content of the experience (Westphal 2000: 182–83). The use of universals necessarily introduces mediation into feeling in so far as the direct experience of reality, per Hegel, is felt or sensed rather than thought. When we think, we rely upon universals which stand in for the reality that is first felt, and which allow us to grasp the experience in finite thought and to manipulate it as desired. In so far as we rely upon the universals to understand the experience rather than relying upon the immediate experience itself, the experience is mediated through the universals. Given the need for immediacy, the object cannot be characterized in any way other than through our simple awareness of the object or the acknowledgement of its mere being (Hyppolite 1974: 85; cf. Rosen 2014: 108–109) through the certainty that we are experiencing *something we know not what*. Anything more would be to rely upon the mediation of universals to furnish the predication which we would seek to make and take us beyond feeling. This means that as thought necessarily relies upon universals there is no thought occurring about the felt content and by definition there can be no knowledge of that content without moving beyond feeling and into explicit thought about the experience.

According to Hegel (and Bradley) we experience a flux within immediate experience, and though we have no knowledge of what is changing, change itself is nevertheless present. Although sense-certainty seemed to convey pure being, upon closer inspection we find that that which is given in sense-certainty is actually only an *instance* of pure being rather than pure being *as such* (*PbG*: ¶92). The reason for the distinction between being *qua* pure being and being *qua* sense-certainty is that sense-certainty divides upon itself, producing countless unqualified 'thises' or particulars whose identities remain unknown at this stage of experience. If sense-certainty acquainted us with pure being *qua* pure being, then there would be no alteration; on the contrary, sense-certainty provides a feeling of difference

and although that difference is not made explicit via thought, the alteration itself is enough to invalidate the claim that we immediately experience pure being itself. Most crucially for Hegel, the various ‘thises’ which sense-certainty divides into are distinguished between those with which we can identify ourselves and refer to as the subject or ‘I’ and those we must label as object yet, ‘when we reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only immediately present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time mediated: I have this certainty through something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty through something else, viz. through the “I”’ (*PbG*: ¶92). Through the elaboration of the relation between subject and object, Hegel’s phenomenology demonstrates that neither the object nor the subject has any priority over the other but that each is necessarily mediated through the other: the subject is only as knowing its object while the object is only as known by the subject. What Hegel determines through this analysis in the *Phenomenology* is that in so far as subject and object are mediated one through the other and as sense-certainty itself is immediate, both the subject and object are derivative upon the original unity of sense-certainty (*PbG*: ¶103). Sense-certainty then is not any of the distinctions between the various universals that had initially appeared to characterize sense-certainty but is only the entire, immediate experience (*PbG*: ¶103). Thus, in sense-certainty most properly understood, there is neither subject nor object, nor any other sense of distinction or opposition and, instead, all that is to be found is the simple certainty of being itself, from which other entities are able to be derived through processes of abstraction.

Through his analysis, Hegel passed through the various tensions inherent in sense-certainty and has found it to be pure immediacy in its essence; and it is in this respect that Bradley will adopt Hegel’s account of immediate experience and make it his own. In acknowledging the immediate holism of sense-certainty to be its essence, Hegel claims that the truth of this experience is its self-identical relation, ‘which makes no distinction of what is essential and what is unessential, between the “I” and the object, a relation therefore into which also no distinction whatever can penetrate’ (*PbG*: ¶104). We find that the experience of sense-certainty itself is without the later distinctions that are found within it by discursive thought and that the ‘I’ which was so fundamental to sense-certainty is not a distinct self, but is merely pure intuition (*PbG*: ¶104). As with Hegel, Bradley takes the relation between the subject and object to be subsistent upon the foundation of feeling (*ETR*: 200). What we experience in thought is never an *abstract* subject confronted by an *abstract* object, what we experience is a *concrete* subject confronted by a *concrete* object within a conditioning environment that is the ground upon which both subject and object depend. The ‘concreteness’ of both sides of the dichotomy is the result of the emergence of the subject/object from out of feeling which necessarily grounds the subject/object as particular, concrete entities within a more general felt experience and a phenomenal world which is equally derived from feeling as

its condition. Within thought, we treat relations as primary while ignoring the felt background from which relations emerge as objectified phenomena, yet to ignore the felt condition upon which the subject and object depend is, as Bradley and Hegel both recognize, a clear falsification of reality. Bradley and Hegel's accounts of immediacy then demonstrate how subject and object emerge from the unity of immediate experience.

III. Undeveloped ideality and the emergence of thought from feeling

Though we have seen how Bradley describes the emergence of the subject/object dichotomy from within feeling and how his account relates to similar passages in Hegel's work, it is still unclear how there can exist diversity within a supposedly unitary experience, given that Bradley understands feeling to be non-relational. Bradley's solution to this query is that although feeling is an organic unity without any divisions, the experience *does* contain diversity. Despite this claim's near-contradictory tenor, Bradley's claim is a subtle one that does not actually imply any contradiction but does require a careful parsing out of what is meant by both 'division' and 'distinction'; here his claim, yet again, derives from Hegel (*PM*: §447A).

According to Bradley, in feeling we have, 'an awareness which, though non-relational, may comprise simply in itself an indefinite amount of difference. There are no distinctions in the proper sense, and yet there is a many felt in one. We may thus verify even here what we may call, if we please, an undeveloped ideality' (*ETR*: 174). What Bradley intends in this enigmatic but central passage is that within feeling, we may be aware of any number of differences which occur within feeling but that these differences are not distinctions if we take distinctions to imply divisions/separations between the differences. Bradley's model here is the sort of unity that we find in organic notions of unity such as is found in our own bodies. While we may distinguish between any of our organs, notice their specific functions and understand how they differ from each other, we cannot separate them from each other as such separation is fatal to the very concept of both the organs and the body as a whole. If we consider sensory experience, we can notice something similar. If I close my eyes at this moment and try to avoid thinking about what I am currently experiencing, I realize that I am aware of a fan making noise, a bird chirping, the smell of baking, the pressure of my arms on a table, the shirt on my back, and any other indefinite number of different things.¹⁰ Though I must speak or write about these things in objectified terms, the actual experience of these feelings is a felt unity in so far as the sounds, smells, and tactile sensations all occur simultaneously within me and alongside other sensations; they are *my* feelings, and they compose the fabric of my experience simultaneously and may pass in and out of

my explicit awareness, sometimes acting as objects and other times acting as parts of myself. While experiencing these various aspects of feeling, they cannot be separated from each other in so far as they are each part of the basic experience, and each characterize it in a different though interpenetrating way. When felt, I do not hold these aspects in explicit relation; rather they force themselves upon my experience in such a way that they can at one moment be present, alter in intensity, and then disappear again. There is no clear relation between them as contained in feeling because 1) they are all simultaneous and any attempt to compare them would impose the categories of thought upon feeling, thereby ruining the attempt to compare feeling with itself, and 2) any such relating implies independent entities that are brought together through the relation, which requires mediation. This is what Bradley means by claiming that feeling is non-relational, and it is of utmost importance to understanding his theory of feeling.¹¹ For example, we cannot even distinguish between visual and auditory content without the knowledge of them *as* sights and sounds, which introduces mediation into the immediacy of feeling and thereby transposes these presumably basic sensations from feeling into thought.

The preceding account serves to show the way in which feeling is able to encompass diversity without any relational difference. Relational difference, in Bradley's understanding, would be the sort of difference that we might find between two explicit objects held in opposition to oneself. As a relation is something that exists between terms or objects, we must have already directed our attention to a given aspect of feeling and objectified it via thought, thereby elevating it beyond feeling as such. As relational, such differences require explicit objects that are to be held in relation with each other, something that is impossible for feeling and its absence of distinct objects. So, as exemplified by the co-occurrence of various sorts of differences within the one felt experience, feeling can contain difference yet, without containing explicit objects, it cannot be relational. Consider an analogy with one's own body: there is certainly a difference between one's arm and one's leg, yet these two things are integrated with each other in an organic unity (they are both part of the same body) which is prior to the distinction between the two. To relate the two is for our mind to abstract them from their place in the body and to bring the abstract, objectified body parts into relation with each other. This organicism is fundamental to Hegelian thought in general and to Bradley in particular in its ability to describe the distinction without separation that is fundamental to the Hegelian holistic understanding of reality.

Bradley's understanding of experience necessitates that 'my actual experience, however relational its contents, is in the end non-relational' (*ETR*: 176). The reason for this is that once we transpose experience into thought we inevitably leave some experiential content aside as 'everything which is got out into the form of an object implies still the felt background against which the object comes and, further, the

whole experience of both feeling and object is a non-relational immediate felt unity' (ETR: 176). As discussed earlier, feeling cannot be relational in so far as it is a singular, ongoing activity of mind in which reality is given to it. Thus, if we were to try to place all of experience within the relational form (i.e., thought) we would inevitably be leaving aside content that is unable to be placed within the relational form in so far as thought is *necessarily* finite and thereby cannot include the totality of feeling whose boundaries are indefinite. Equally as fundamental, the relational form would itself be unable to persist without the felt background upon which thought depends in so far as relations are abstractions from feeling. This insight that non-relational feeling necessarily subsists beneath thought leads him to adopt the position that everything which we experience is contained *within* feeling (ETR: 176). Rather than following Hegel in claiming that thought sublates feeling, both negating it and elevating it to a higher level of truth, Bradley restates the necessity that feeling, as existing prior to the subject/object dichotomy, cannot actually be so opposed (ETR: 176–77). Such a statement has the iconoclastic significance that Bradley inverts Hegel's claim that feeling is contained within thought and positions thought as contained within feeling.

If we consider pain, it is easy to provide an example of such an experience from our own adult lives (ETR: 159). If I absentmindedly cut my finger while slicing vegetables, the immediate experience that I have is one of pain. Prior to any awareness of what causes the feeling, the pain becomes obtrusive and may momentarily exclude my conscious deliberation about the feeling. In such a situation, the feeling is without a proper subject and object in so far as my awareness is saturated with only the feeling and any knowledge of myself as subject and the cut as object are a secondary derivation from the feeling based on a judgment that my mind makes in an attempt to understand what is causing the pain.¹² While Bradley claims that it is doubtful that we are ever in a state of *mere* feeling without consciousness itself entering into the experience (ETR: 175), he argues that it is from feeling that these more developed stages of experiences are derived (CE: 654). Thus, while we cannot pinpoint any experience in our daily lives where there is *only* feeling, we can point towards moments where feeling may become more obvious and rise above thought in intensity, importance or force.

As in Hegel's treatment of feeling, the moment that we attempt to translate feeling into thought the very character of feeling is lost in so far as we have 'translated' its content into thought and have imposed the structure of thought upon that which is not itself thought. Rather than simply having a pure grasp of what is found in reality, the movement from feeling to thought is achieved via a process which necessarily leaves its marks upon its product (AR: 27; cf. *PbG*: ¶132). Thus, Bradley's implicit critique that Hegel does not truly grasp the nature of feeling in so far as he believes that its significance can be translated into thought and feeling itself can be left behind.¹³ Bradley's counterclaim is that because feeling occurs

prior to any distinction between subject and object, it is senseless to speak of a relation between feeling and thought; rather, thought should be understood to occur *within* feeling and is therefore a part of it. So, while thought inevitably brings about knowledge that we could not have had within mere feeling, the very knowledge that transcends feeling is itself *found within* feeling. It does not matter the degree to which thought permeates our experience of reality as Bradley's phenomenology describes a porous boundary between thought and feeling with thought sometimes returning into the undifferentiated mass of feeling and feeling containing content that remains as of yet implicit and unthought (ETR: 177).

The non-relational character of feeling becomes even clearer when we consider the 'undeveloped ideality' which is the key to understanding the relationship between feeling and thought. As I will now show, the undeveloped ideality of feeling does *not* demand a dualism between feeling and thought but shows that thought is a *development from within* feeling itself. Against Hegel's movement beyond feeling and into thought, Bradley takes thought to be an occurrence within feeling itself. Bradley's difference from Hegel here is important in so far as it shows that Bradley has 'inverted' Hegel's phenomenological schema: while Hegel takes all experiences to occur within *thought*, Bradley shows that all experience occurs within *feeling*. Bradley's position suggests that even though feeling is prior to the divisions found in thought, those very distinctions are implicit within feeling and are merely made explicit by thought.¹⁴ This is Bradley's ambiguous claim as to the 'undifferentiated' character of feeling; in feeling there is an indefinite amount of undeveloped ideal content which can be derived from feeling upon investigating the experience. This already present diversity amongst the unity of immediate experience will come to be developed by Bradley into the notion of unity-in-diversity that is so characteristic of Hegelian thought, in so far as our most basic experience, that of feeling, already contains within its primordial unity a plurality that has not yet been made explicit though persists nonetheless (Mander 1994: 56). In order to understand exactly what Bradley means by this undeveloped ideality and the way in which it bridges the distinction between feeling and thought, we need to understand Bradley's account of attention which is the qualitative tipping point between feeling and thought.

Consider sitting in a crowded café while reading a book. There will be an assortment of noises, smells and visuals which you are not focussed on and are generally unaware of. You feel the bare stimuli, but without turning your attention to that felt mass, you do not know what any of these things actually are and they are given immediately as the holistic experience, the 'atmosphere', of being in the café. Then, the second that you *do* turn your attention to the felt mass, suddenly your thought has become directed, and you *perceive* something particular. Suddenly, the ambiguous noise to your left has become the voice of a friend calling out to you. No more are we speaking of feeling; suddenly, the felt stimuli, one among

many of the undifferentiated differences without separations that are endemic to feeling, has become a perceived voice. Taking sound as the example, while in the café, all of the ambiguous noise that you hear is a mass of feeling. Once your consciousness attends to that noise, the ‘undeveloped ideality’ that Bradley speaks of becomes idealized and suddenly your real world is characterized by more than feeling. Suddenly, the reality to which your attention has been turned is intimately informed by thought and conceptual content. The simple feeling becomes known as first a human voice, then as the particular voice of a friend calling out. That undeveloped ideality which persists everywhere becomes developed and objectified, thereby bringing what was already contained *implicitly* in feeling to explicit awareness in thought via perception. Per K. H. Sievers, ‘this means that Bradley does not believe that thought or judgment completely creates its divisions from nothing, drawing them as it were on a blank slate. Thought develops differences which were felt but not known’ (Sievers 2002: 50). Importantly, perception for Bradley (as with Hegel) is characterized at a fundamental level by the universals endemic to thought rather than feeling and is therefore *not* immediate. Thus, perhaps counterintuitively, when we are engaged in most of our daily life, our experience is dominated by thought rather than the immediacy of feeling, in so far as we perceive that which demands our attention. This focussing of attention describes how, for Bradley, ‘we have no “direct” acquaintance of separate individuals or objects. They are either given in feeling, and undiscriminated, *or are discriminated as separate objects in judgment* and therefore known’ (Sievers 2002: 45).

Bradley’s account of the ‘undeveloped ideality’ of feeling is *precisely* what Hegel explains in the sense-certainty chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and it is directly related to Hegel’s goal in this chapter, which is to show, *contra* certain empiricist and naïve realist positions, that we cannot have direct *knowledge* of anything. Hegel’s strategy in this chapter is to examine the presuppositions of such naïve realist positions and, through analysing them, show that such presuppositions are *not* what is found in immediate experience but that, rather, immediate experience is a unified whole which requires abstraction to arrive at the typical sort of perceptions that guide our everyday life. This is demonstrated through Hegel’s analysis of the way in which experience ‘divides upon itself’ to produce an assortment of ‘thises’, immediate content that is felt to possess a certain character which differs from other such content.

The problem with this internal division of sense-certainty back upon itself is that the very act of pointing out anything through the use of indexicals such as ‘this’ or ‘mine’ demands the use of concepts by which we can anchor those indexicals within our context; without the conceptual anchors for those indexicals, there is no way to determine what they refer to and they become empty universals devoid of content (Westphal 2000: 179). Through a series of investigations of the various ‘thises’ that appear within sense-certainty, Hegel determines that characterizing any particular ‘this’ leads to a temporary truth which becomes invalidated upon a

different contextualization of the ‘this’ as a universal. If we take Hegel’s example of the claim that ‘Now is Night’, it is easy to see that sometimes now *is* indeed night but, just as easily, we can see that sometimes now *is not* night. As the statement, ‘Now is Night’ was supposed to simply be true, the initial account of the statement has been falsified and requires further conceptual determination in order to explain how it is that ‘Now is Night’ is true and false in alternating contexts.¹⁵ Were we to begin comparing the ‘now’ as I currently experience it with the now that I experienced in claiming that ‘Now is Night’, I would be deviating from the self-identical relation that characterizes the immediacy of sense-certainty and would have entered the mediation of thought, leaving sense-certainty behind (*PbG*: ¶105). This is due to the abstraction required to compare the immediate experience that I am currently experiencing with the experience that was referred to in saying ‘Now is Night’. To compare the two experiences and the two referents which ‘Now’ referred to, we must move beyond the immediate experience and rely upon judgments of thought by which the comparison can be made. Hegel thereby shows that the ‘now’, one form of sense-certainty’s ‘this’, is not immediate but is mediated (*PbG*: ¶96). Though the divisions that he relies upon are crucial examples, they do not contain any greater phenomenological privileges than any other valid division of the ‘thises’ (Westphal 2000: 184; cf. Hyppolite 1974: 95–96). Thus, Hegel’s sense-certainty begins with an account of a non-cognitive experience in which reality is simply given through an experience which is not known via propositions but is given through a bare experience of simple being.

Fundamentally, this experiment of trying to understand the claim made by sense-certainty itself shows that the immediacy which characterized sense-certainty is falsified. What is true in sense-certainty is not something immediate; rather, the moment that we attempt to formulate truth it must take the shape of judgments which require universals, the truth of sense-certainty (*PbG*: ¶96), for its expression. The problem with sense-certainty then is that in attempting to get to the truth of it, we must exceed the immediacy that characterized it and inevitably destroy that of which we attempt to predicate truth (*PbG*: ¶97). Language, the mediator of the universal, necessarily leads us from sense-certainty in the very attempt to express sense-certainty. Instead of conveying the particular aspect of sense-certainty which we desired to express through our use of universals, language provides a description of the object through the operations of thought. The product of this attempt to know the object is that the object as sensuous content has disappeared, and our thought has transposed it into a universal. We come to see that rather than the object itself being the essential aspect of sense-certainty through its independent existence from mind, the very truth of the object depends upon the mind by which it is known (*PbG*: ¶100).

Universals then cannot be used to get to the truth of sense-certainty. When one tries to discuss or think about the content of sense-certainty it will be found to

be impossible as the sensuous experience, ‘cannot be reached by language, which belongs to consciousness, i.e., to that which is inherently universal’ (*PbG*: ¶110). For Hegel (and Bradley), access to the content of sense-certainty is therefore not translatable beyond sense-certainty itself. Instead, when we attempt to understand or communicate sense-certainty’s content to others, we attend to the truth that is contained within it and express that truth via universals and language. In this way, despite being unable to contain the particularity that we intend to express through our thought and language, we nonetheless are able to understand the truth, rationality, and *significance* of sense-certainty’s content.

The tensions found in sense-certainty and mind’s search for truth lead it to go beyond sense-certainty through relinquishing the certainty provided by the sensuous given and instead relying upon the mediation of universals by which knowledge *proper* is first able to take shape as perception (*PbG*: ¶110).¹⁶ Hegel’s account of sense-certainty can then be summarized as an undifferentiated continuum of content that, in itself, is unable to be characterized or known but which comes to be known through the spontaneous contradictions that arise in its felt content. From these contradictions, the mind is inevitably drawn to seek truth about sense-certainty in the form of universals which come to stabilize and make explicit that which was effervescent and implicit in feeling. Yet, upon becoming explicit through the use of universals, mind has left behind sense-certainty and has moved into perception wherein its commonplace engagement with reality occurs. While it is clear that Hegel takes the ‘significance’ of feeling to be sublated within thought, Hegel *does* seem to acknowledge that there is some remainder which is not taken up by thought in the dialectical progression beyond mere feeling, though he takes this merely felt remainder as being unimportant to philosophical reflection. This attitude towards the merely felt content is an important contrast between Hegel and Bradley, which marks Bradley’s departure from the orthodox Hegelian fold.

Obviously inspired by Hegel’s account of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*ETR*: 262), Bradley explains that the immediately given ‘this’¹⁷ which presents itself in feeling is subject to the dichotomy of this/that by which the initial unity of feeling becomes a perceived plurality (*PL*: 654). As with Hegel, Bradley explains that the ‘this’ and ‘mine’ are correlated concepts, analogous to Hegel’s ‘I’ and ‘this’, which do not exist independently of each other, which are mediated content, and yet are emergent from out of feeling. It is clear that Bradley takes the this/mine to be an aspect of feeling and that it is part of what he describes as the ‘undeveloped ideal content’ that is found in feeling (*AR*: 223). Bradley claims that, ‘the “this” and the “mine” express the immediate character of feeling, and the appearance of this character in a finite centre’ (*AR*: 224), thereby indicating that ‘this’ corresponds to the immediate content within feeling whereas ‘mine’ corresponds to the link between feeling and the subject. Because of the way in which

this/mine indicate these aspects of feeling, it is clear that the 'this-mine' acts as the first ideal distinction found within the transition from feeling to thought. The 'this' contributes the notion of the immediacy of feeling (*AR*: 225) while possessing no relations (*AR*: 231) and does not provide any knowledge about what is being felt, whereas the 'mine' contributes the notion of the intrinsic unity between the finite centre of experience and what is felt (*AR*: 237) while also providing no knowledge about what is felt. The indexical use of 'this' allows for the immediacy of feeling embodied in the 'this' to compare itself to other 'thises' and to recognize qualitative distinctions between the 'thises' which facilitates mind's transition from the immediacy of feeling to the universal mediated thought.

Based on this investigation of the undeveloped ideality of feeling, consciousness is *entirely* dependent upon immediate experience (*ETR*: 194) and yet it remains unclear how we may have knowledge of that experience due to the very immediacy which characterizes it. The issue is that, for Bradley, as with Hegel, feeling is immediate and without qualification yet may become known and mediated in thought. Through mediation, the immediate experience is transcended as it becomes an object of knowledge and loses the primal immediacy which precedes the subject/object division, and which defines the very nature of immediate experience. Indeed, wherever we speak of knowing immediate experience, the object of our knowledge (i.e., feeling itself) is not present. Thus, in coming to know immediate experience we actually lose the very nature of that which we sought to know and are therein left with a paradox: How do we know immediate experience? Bradley's solution to this paradox is that every development of consciousness is dependent upon immediate experience which remains implicit and active in all subsequent ideal developments. As such, whether we experience something explicitly through thought or whether it remains implicit within feeling, we are always experiencing the world immediately through feeling (*ETR*: 175).

IV. Conclusion

From the preceding it is clear that Bradley's theory of feeling is derived from Hegel's philosophy and belongs to the genus of Hegelian phenomenology. Given that Bradley explicitly cites Hegel as the originator of the theory of feeling and that very few if any interpretations of Hegel understand Hegelian feeling/sense-certainty as a substance, there is no way that Bradleyan feeling could diverge in such a dramatic way from Hegelian feeling as to shift from phenomenological description to metaphysical speculation. The notion that Bradleyan feeling is a metaphysical category also seems fundamentally out of place in so far as it postulates an unfounded metaphysical holism at the very base of Bradley's philosophy. Given Bradley's programmatic explanation that 'the chief need of English

philosophy is, I think, a sceptical study of first principles' (*AR*: xii), it is unlikely that he would base his philosophy upon a metaphysical principle prior to his having proven it through sceptical inquiry. Despite some interpretations of Bradley's philosophy asserting that reality itself is non-relational on the basis of feeling's non-relationality,¹⁸ such interpretations do not reckon sufficiently with the fact that the relations that are made explicit in thought are contained *implicitly* within feeling.

The error of such interpretations comes from misunderstanding the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics within Bradley's and Hegel's systems. Granting that feeling is phenomenological description rather than metaphysical speculation, we might rightfully ask what the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics within Bradley's work is. While a complete account of the relationship of phenomenology and metaphysics would be too lengthy to address in this paper, it will suffice to say that, as with feeling, I believe that we must turn to Hegel's philosophy to grasp the complexity of this relationship and the way in which Bradley conceives of it. Having begun with feeling as an undifferentiated experience, Bradley is forced to adopt Hegel's account of judgment (*Urteil*) as the division of what is originally united (*SL*: 625). He is forced to accept this because, beginning with feeling, there is only an undifferentiated mass and Bradley is clear that this mass is divided through the act of judgment wherein the mind is able to discern and make explicit that which subsists within feeling as an 'undeveloped ideality' (*AR*: 168, 223). Bradley and Hegel both suggest that it is through this act of judgment that appearances (in their 'two-fold' phenomenological and metaphysical senses) are formed (*ETR*: 272).

An improper account of the way in which metaphysics and phenomenology are related within Bradley's thought results in an inability to take Bradley seriously when he claims that the ideality that becomes developed in thought is already contained in an undeveloped form in feeling¹⁹ or his further claim that feeling 'is most imperfect and unstable, and its inconsistencies lead us at once to transcend it. Indeed, we hardly possess it as more than that which we are in the act of losing' (*AR*: 159–60). What this means is that the relationship between thought and feeling is far closer than many interpretations allow and that the appearances that we deal with in thought are the ideal perceptions of that which is already found within feeling. Thought abstracts what is already found implicitly in feeling and makes it explicit so that we may know it while providing its own elaborations which may go beyond feeling but always refer back to it. Per Bradley, for anything to be thought there must be some ground for the thought within feeling and while this ground may be mediated through memory, discussions, or other modes of mediation, for thought to make sense it must refer back to feeling.

While I have shown that Bradleyan feeling is derived from Hegel's phenomenology, Bradley's analysis shows that, *pace* Hegel, feeling *does not* permit a dialectical sublation of feeling within thought given the qualitatively distinct characters of each

mode of experience. Hegel's phenomenology purported to show that the significance found in feeling is only able to be expressed via thought and that having brought the truth of feeling into thought, we are able to leave feeling behind in our philosophical considerations. In claiming this, Hegel restricts the role of feeling to being a source of content for thought, explaining that 'the unutterable—feeling or sensation—far from being the highest truth, is the most unimportant and untrue [and] since I am at the same time in all my sensations, conceptions, and states of consciousness, thought is everywhere present, and is a category that runs through all these modifications' (*EL*: §20). Hegel's claim then is that thought is present in all aspects of our experience and that as it is present throughout and makes explicit that which is found only immediately in feeling, thought is the category of mind which encapsulates all the others. This allows Hegel to discard feeling as unable to characterize reality itself as everything of importance in feeling is recapitulated and made explicit in thought.

Bradley, by contrast, claims that in transitioning to thought, the immediate unity of feeling is lost and that if we do not recognize this loss, we will inevitably mischaracterize reality. While thought draws its content from feeling and allows mind to grasp truth *per se*, feeling provides the basic unity by which reality is given to the mind and is never left behind in the mind's development.²⁰ The reason for this qualitative distinction is that judgment, the mechanism of thought, by definition creates divisions within reality that break it into pieces which are capable of being grasped by thought, thereby introducing divisions into the experience which were not there to begin with.²¹ Thought must always take place through terms and relations and therefore can never recapitulate the basic unity that is found within feeling, yet judgment allows the finite mind to break the indefinite content of feeling into smaller, manageable portions which the mind can then analyse and come to understand. This divisional nature of thought is what gives rise to Bradley's infamous regress of logical relations which will become a factor that importantly distinguishes his system from Hegel's.²²

When compared with Hegel's account of immediate experience, Bradley's account shows that Hegel's analysis is overly dismissive of feeling and suggests that, as Bradley states, Hegel underemphasizes its philosophical importance, thereby providing an important and overlooked critique of Hegel's account of immediacy. While Hegel is certainly right that truth cannot be conveyed without thought, Bradley is *also* certainly right that feeling provides both the qualitative aspect that cannot be found in pure thought as well as the holistic intuition that experience is unified regardless of any of the plurality of appearances that come to fill it. In showing this, Bradley problematizes the initial stage of Hegel's phenomenology from within, thereby destabilizing the primacy of thought which occupies Hegel's philosophy.

Through demonstrating the origin of Bradley's theory of feeling in Hegel's philosophy and by explaining its functioning within Bradley's system, I have

shown that Bradleyan feeling is more adequately understood by approaching it phenomenologically rather than metaphysically. While the theory has a functionally important metaphysical implication for Bradley's philosophy, namely the apprehension of the immediate unity of both experience and reality, feeling is not itself a metaphysical entity but is rather an activity of mind, and its metaphysical importance is found in the information that it conveys regarding reality rather than in it being any sort of metaphysical substrate in its own right; as Bradley says, 'the detail of this discussion does not belong to metaphysics' (*AR*: 93).²³

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Notes

¹ See Wollheim (1959: 127), Ferreira (1995: 125) and Bradley (1996b: 36).

² See Mack (1945), Cresswell (1977; 1979), Bradley (1984), McHenry (1992) and Mander (1994).

³ See Bradley (1985; 1984; 1996b)

⁴ Ilodigwe (2005: 101); McHenry (1992: 22); Bradley (1985: 254); Crossley (1999: 49).

⁵ See Mander (1995: 485; 2011: 118); Ilodigwe (2018: 14); Bradley (1985: 258–60); Sprigge (1993: 264).

⁶ James Bradley has always recognized an epistemological function of feeling, though it has remained marginal in his work. See Bradley (1996b: 42; 1996a: 152; 2001: 77ff).

⁷ Abbreviations used:

AR = Bradley, *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay*, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897).

CE = Bradley, *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1935).

EL = Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

ES = Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, Cambridge Library Collection. Philosophy (Cambridge: University Press, 2013).

ETR = Bradley, *Essays on Truth and Reality*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914).

PbG = Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

PL = Bradley, *The Principles of Logic*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1922).

PM = Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971).

SL = Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, ed. H. D. Lewis (Amherst NY: Humanity Books, 1969).

⁸ See the following for examples of sources in which Hegel's influence was recognized but underexplored: Bradley (1985: 254; 2001: 102); Mander (1994); Wollheim (1959).

⁹ To avoid confusion, I will always refer to the theory as ‘feeling’ rather than ‘immediate experience’. Contra Ferreira’s distinction between immediate experience and feeling (1999), the consideration of immediate experience and feeling as synonymous holds both textual (*ETR*: 173) and scholarly (Sievers 2002: 43) support.

¹⁰ Though we should be aware that these feelings are already made explicit and are thereby objectified and colonized by various concepts that allow me to explain the feeling. In doing this, I have, as Bradley recognized, destroyed the actual experience of feeling and brought its contents into thought proper. While it has been destroyed, such explanation is nonetheless useful in pointing towards feeling much as indexicals are used to point towards particulars without the use of abstraction.

¹¹ Indeed, the non-relational aspect of feeling was the primary locus of confusion in his dialogue with William James and was the sticking point of their disagreements. James could not grasp what Bradley was attempting to explain through the theory of feeling and insisted that experience was inherently relational. This was obviously problematic for Bradley given his distinction of feeling from perception. Upon a proper understanding of Bradley’s phenomenology, it becomes clear that James’s confusion was based on his lack of grasping this fundamental Hegelian insight. See C. S. Peirce’s phenomenology for an example of a pragmatist who *did* grasp the phenomenological importance of a holistic origin of experience: ‘This is the pure Feeling which forms the warp and woof of consciousness, or in Kant’s phrase its matter. In this kind of consciousness subject and object are nowise discriminated, in fact there is no discrimination, no parts, no analysis, there is no considering a thing for anything else, no relation, no representation, but just a pure indescribable quale which is gone in the twinkling of an eye and which bears no resemblance to any memory of it’ (Peirce 1992: 282).

¹² We should also note that the pain, the temperature of the room, and any other sensations come to be part of the basic, unified feeling which is my immediate experience. The focus on pain is here merely illustrative.

¹³ This critique is the central reason underlying Bradley’s rejection of the label of Hegelian. In so far as Bradley takes Hegel to have overlooked the importance of feeling and to have completely subordinated it to thought, Bradley cannot himself claim to be a Hegelian philosopher. Whether or not this is a valid distinction between the two philosophers is an open question as, without entirely negating the differences between them, Bradley himself seems to posit a much closer relationship between thought and feeling than he often makes explicit while Hegel seems to allow that something of feeling’s character is left behind in its sublation by perception. Despite these tempering factors on the differences between Bradley and Hegel, there remains the problematic distinction between Bradley’s characterization of the Absolute as experience and Hegel’s characterization of it as thought. What exactly this means will be taken up in the final chapter of the dissertation.

¹⁴ Though it could be argued that this action is *precisely* what Hegel takes the mediation of thought to be performing thereby bringing Hegel’s sense-certainty even closer to Bradleyan feeling. See also Sievers (2002: 50).

¹⁵ For a longer discussion of the reasoning behind this, see Westphal (2000: 186).

¹⁶ We should notice that the use of universals throughout the investigation of sense-certainty was imposed upon it from the position of the reflective phenomenologist, rather than from within sense-certainty itself (Westphal 2003: 3).

¹⁷ A point of contention with regards to Bradleyan feeling that has been raised by David Crossley is the relationship between the purported immediacy of feeling and the requisite mediation of the ‘this/mine’. Crossley contends that there must be multiple senses of immediacy in Bradley’s philosophy and that the ‘this/mine’ which Bradley characterizes feeling as must be a secondary derivation from the pure immediacy of feeling in so far as to characterize the immediate as ‘this’ or ‘mine’ is itself a mediation. Crossley’s characterization does not recognize that Bradley’s account of feeling’s ‘undeveloped ideality’ is explicitly an account of how mind moves from the immediacy of feeling into the mediation of thought. The this/mine is simply the initial point of departure from feeling and into thought. See Crossley (2003: 75ff.).

¹⁸ Bradley explicitly denies this and claims that reality itself is *supra-relational* in so far as it includes the truth signified via relations while also including the ground of those relations.

¹⁹ ‘Feeling is the beginning, and it is the source of all material, and it forms the enfolding element and abiding ground of our world. But feeling is not that world, and it is not the criterion of Reality. The criterion for each of us is that system of developed content which we call true and good and beautiful’ (ETR: 420).

²⁰ It should be noted that what Hegel describes as ‘perception’ occurs within Bradley’s description of ‘relational thought’. Further, that Hegel’s phenomenology is more nuanced than Bradley’s is clear but that this reduces the importance of Bradley’s claims is unlikely given the actual functioning of Bradley’s phenomenology.

²¹ The operations of judgment in both Hegel’s and Bradley’s philosophies will inform the second chapter of this dissertation.

²² Indeed, it was the championing of relations and relativity that Bradley held to be the ‘sin of Hegel’ (PL: 158).

²³ I would like to thank John Hacker-Wright, Sean McGrath, and the two anonymous reviewers for reading and commenting on various versions of this paper. I would also like to thank John Russon for an invaluable class on Hegel’s phenomenology.

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