“Dr Liu is to be congratulated for writing an impressive book which addresses original and important questions, regarding the relationships between China and the British idealist philosopher and activist T.H. Green. Dr Liu’s central argument shows a detailed knowledge and understanding of the major contributions to the scholarship on Green’s theory of the will, political thought and practical activities. Dr Liu engages fully with the complete range of Green’s writings, including his political speeches and letters, which many other scholars have wrongly underemphasised. The result is a book that is scholarly, subtle and original.”

— Professor Colin Tyler, Director of the Centre for Idealism and the New Liberalism, Hull University, UK
Ethical Politics and Modern Society

*Ethical Politics and Modern Society* introduces and critically examines British idealist philosopher, Thomas Hill Green, his practical philosophy, and its reception in China between the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.

As a response to the modernity issue in Great Britain, Green’s philosophy, in particular his ethical politics, anticipated a practical solution to the individual alienation issue in modern society. Witnessing the resemblance between Green’s ethical politics and classical Chinese ethical and political thought, some Chinese scholars became inclined to take Green’s thought as an intellectual approach to assimilate Western modernity. While Green and the Chinese scholars both intended to articulate an ethical conception of modern politics in response to the issue of modernity, their results were very different. In this book, James Jia-Hau Liu analyses why modern Chinese scholars introduced Green’s philosophy to China and why the studies of Green’s philosophy in China have since faded away. Modern Chinese scholars, such as Gao Yi-Han, Chin Yueh-Lin, Tang Jun-Yi, Chang Fo-Chuan, and Yin Hai-Guang, are explored in greater detail. The contradictory standings towards modernity between Green and Chinese scholars illustrate how to understand the difference forms of modernity that can be embodied therein.

*Ethical Politics and Modern Society* is a valuable resource to scholars of political philosophy, political theory, history of social and political thought, British idealism, and the work of Thomas Hill Green.

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Ethical Politics and Modern Society
T. H. Green’s Practical Philosophy and Modern China

James Jia-Hau Liu
## Contents

*Acknowledgements*  ix

**Introduction**  1

*The Perplexity of Modernity*  2
*Green, British Idealism, and Modern Society*  8
*Ethical Politics and the Modernisation of China*  13

1 **Individual Emancipation after the Enlightenment**  23

*Individual Emancipation as a Modern Issue*  25
  *The Reformation and the Enlightenment*  25
  *The Modern Spirit: ‘to be free, to understand, to enjoy’*  28
  *Two Legacies of David Hume*  34
*Unity and Plurality*  39
  *The Demise of the Spiritual*  39
  *The Division of Modern Society*  42
*The Individual Trumps the Community*  44
  *External Laws and Internal Conscience*  44
  *Monism and Pluralism*  48

2 **The Shadow of Metaphysics**  56

*Metaphysics, Psychology, and Theory of Knowledge*  58
*The Structure of Truth and the Eternal Consciousness*  63
*Interpretations of Green’s Determinism*  66
*The Transcendental, the Immanent and Human Agency*  71

3 **Human Perfection and Moral Community**  80

*The Modes and Transformation of Human Consciousness*  81
*The Good and the Self*  86
*Objectivism and Subjectivism in the Moral Sphere*  92
*Freedom, the Common Good and Social Duty*  99
Contents

4 Ethical Politics and Sovereign Power 108
   Rights, Social Equality, and Mutual Recognition 110
   Discipline and Self-government 117
   Sovereignty and Might 118
   Civic Agency and State Action 121
   Modern Politics as an Ethical Praxis 127

5 Green's Practical Philosophy and Modern China 133
   The Reception of Green's Practical Philosophy in East Asia 134
   A Different Issue of Modernity 138
   The Development of Greenian Study in Hong Kong and Taiwan 144

Conclusion 156
   Practical Philosophy and Ethical Politics 156
   The Multiplicity of Modernity 159
   The Legacy of Green's Ethical Liberalism 161

Index 163
The present book is a revision based on my doctoral thesis. Professor David Boucher and Professor Andrew Vincent helped and guided me to accomplish my thesis when I studied at Cardiff University, UK. I really appreciate their advices and suggestions. Roy Tseng, my mentor who inspired me to study Green and political philosophy, has also provided many insightful ideas helping me complete the present project. His warm encouragement also is one of the reasons I can accomplish the work. I am very grateful to him for all the support and guidance.

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Ethical politics, as a distinctive conception of political life, has a long history in the human world. For example, in the ancient Greece, Aristotle had defined the end of politics as nurturing the noble virtues of citizens for the highest good of humanity; also, in the ancient China, Confucius had regarded the core of political life as Ren (仁), the virtue of following one’s conscience authentically and treating others selflessly, and taken Ren as the fundamental virtuous principle of ruling and governing. These ‘ancient’ views of politics and political life, along with the development of human history, have made pervasive influences on human societies; and, in the modern era, they have become particular ways for people to adapt to massive transformations of social life.

The features of modern society, according to Anthony Giddens, include the separation of time and space, the dis-embedding of social mechanisms, and the intrinsic institutional reflexivity (Giddens, 1991: 16–21). By means of the invention of advanced techniques of mapping and timing devices, an abstract but global image of the human world has been constituted and transformed the pre-modern ways of life. Pre-modern societies and cultures used to connect their perceptions of time and space with particular places. A group of persons who lived by rivers made their maps, calendars, and images of the world by reference to dry and flood periods of rivers; a group of persons who lived by mountains made their maps, calendars, and images of the world in accordance with the life cycle of forests and rocks; and people who lived by oceans, deserts, or plain fields also had diverse ways to perceive the world. However, the advancement of mapping and timing methods has designated a universal image of the world and a global order of time and space that are not necessarily connected with any particular place, and therefore empty out of time and space. What follows from this emptying is the dis-embeddedness of social institutions. Since the modern perception of time, space, and the world is not in connection with particular places but based on a global image, the pre-modern social mechanisms have come to be outmoded and replaced by new institutions. Nevertheless, the new institutions as conditions of modern social life are symbolic and abstract, as they are shaped in the process of emptying out of time and space and established
based on different modes of scientific knowledge that have validity from abstract reasoning and laboratory research rather than life experiences and direct perceptions situated in particular contexts.

This abstract and dis-embedding feature of modern society, in Giddens’s view, then, indicates the intrinsic institutional reflexivity of modernity (Giddens, 1991: 20–21). Since from the time of the Enlightenment, the invention and the achievement of human knowledge are closely related to the sceptical attitude held by scientists and philosophers. With their doubts on the dogmas of tradition and ancient regime, scientists and philosophers have accelerated the development of human technology and envisaged institutions in the light of new knowledge. However, while the sceptical attitude has been the primary methodological principle for accumulating knowledge, which is the foundation of modern institutions, the distance between ordinary people’s concrete local lives and these abstract and dis-embedding institutions established by the sophisticated professional knowledge creates lots of room for doubt as well. Since people do not always understand the professional knowledge behind modern institutions, they have to trust the knowledge and the institutions founded on it; otherwise, the thoroughgoing scepticism would cause modern society to break down. But the room for doubt is there, so when people reflect on the social and cultural mechanisms of modern life, they can always raise questions to the mechanisms and modern society. What this intrinsic reflexivity of modernity leads to, therefore, is an existential crisis for each individual human being; as people may question all the social and cultural institutions around them and become uncertain about their daily lives, they can be sceptical of the very existential condition of themselves in modern society. Hence, constantly asking questions like ‘who I am’ or ‘what I am’ is typical of the moderns.

What Green’s practical philosophy, especially his ethical politics, anticipates is a way of life in response to this issue of modernity, the existential crisis of individuals in modern society. In the following sections of this introduction, I will give a preliminary account of the relationship between Green’s philosophy and the issue of modernity, and how Green’s practical thought has connected to the modernisation of China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, before going to this prelusive discussion of Green’s practical philosophy, it will be helpful to have a more comprehensive view of the perplexity of modernity alongside Giddens’s sociological analysis.

The Perplexity of Modernity

By Giddens’s analysis of the features of modern society, we can learn that there are two dimensions of modernity, one is institutional and instrumental, the other is agential and subjective. The institutional and instrumental dimension of modernity covers extensive innovations of
mechanic devices and techniques, economic and financial structures, political and juridical systems, and scientific knowledge. The agential and subjective dimension of modernity indicates an image of human being, a person who is capable of self-reflection and has the power to envisage and implement a life plan by reference to the self-reflection. A global view of human life is, then, a creation by the collaboration and interaction of these two dimensions of modernity. However, these features and elements of modernity, to be frankly, are ‘European’. They are what Europeans have achieved under certain historical and geographical circumstances. Hence, it is odd and inappropriate to claim that all the peoples on earth embrace the same global view of human life without indicating the multiple historical and geographical differences between Europeans and non-Europeans.

Nonetheless, the achievement of European modernity and its world view have indeed made tremendous impact on the non-Europeans. Innovative technology, capital market, industrialisation, instrumental rationality, the separation of the moral and the political sphere, liberal democracy, the nation-states, secularisation, ethnic and gender equality, and bourgeoisie culture are all parts of the impact that European modernity has incurred worldwide. In order to analyse and apprehend the impact of European modernity that has transformed human societies, including non-Europeans and Europeans, scholars have proposed diverse theses from different disciplines. For instance, apart from Giddens’s analysis, social thinkers, as Charles Taylor (1999) indicates, have developed two general theories of the modern culture. The first theory is cultural-neutral and describes the modern culture as an ideal type of social formation that every society can undergo or adopt. While modernity means a set of social changes, involving the development of rational technology and scientific knowledge, the rise of reason and secularisation, the process of industrialisation, and the division of private and public spheres, all these are considered universalisable. On the other hand, the second theory conceives the modern culture as a specific constellation of values and ideas emerging from the transition of European society. Moving from a religious and organic form of society to a scientific and mechanic one, the rise of the modern culture in Europe, according to this second theory, indicates the process of the ‘enlightened’ ideas and values dissipating the power of traditional beliefs supported by the reign of Christianity; and modernity is thus understood as a set of social transformations within a particular historical and cultural context.

Concerning the connection of modernity and historical contexts, researchers have also proposed at least two general views. The first is a doctrine understanding modernity as a process of modernisation. It claims that modernity is a human achievement ensued from a series of institutional and ideological revolutions in Europe, and other nations could share the achievement and its subsequent benefits by adopting the same
revolutionary institutions and ideologies of Europeans’. This doctrine of modernisation was popular and prevalent among scholars during 1950s. However, with the growing interest in globalisation and cultural studies, some researchers, such as Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2000), have developed a counter-view considering modernity as diverse, multiple, and ambivalent rather than singular-developmental.\(^1\) To be specific, this counter-view can be further divided into three different stances. For one thing, modernity signifies a historic situation that different peoples in different regions have undergone and have taken diverse approaches in response to the social changes coming with the situation. That is, modernity does not restrict to a set of universal values and ideas, or a series of institutional changes, which is applicable for Europeans and non-Europeans indifferently, but suggests a specific event in a particular period of human history.\(^2\) For another, there is no singular and uniform development of modernity among European nations, either. Gerard Delanty, for instance, argues that there are multiple routes to modernity in Europe by virtue of different civilizational backgrounds behind the six regions of the continent, the North Western, Mediterranean, Central, East Central, South Eastern, and North Eastern parts of Europe (Delanty, 2012). On this point, modernity denotes a certain end or objective that different regions of Europe and places outside Europe have been going after by multiple routes.\(^3\)

For another, modernity is neither a term describing an event in human history, nor an end encouraging peoples to accomplish, but a conception indicating a radical break between the present and the past, a rupture between values. Here, what the ‘modernity’ means is a significant social and cultural rupture with the past and traditions that can happen in any place on earth and refers to something ‘new’, ‘innovative’, and ‘revolutionary’; that is, modernity, by definition, requires an ‘other’, the stamp of which is ‘old’, ‘obsolete’, and ‘antique’. And, in terms of this conception of modernity, the division between the Classical Greek and Roman age and the Renaissance in European history, or the division between the pre-modern and the modern period in the history of any place is not merely a neutral distinction for chronological usage but involving a sort of value judgement.\(^4\)

Furthermore, the thinking of ‘modern as something new’ resonates with Charles Pierre Baudelaire’s perception of modernity from an art critic point of view. In ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ Baudelaire remarks that modernity is ephemeral, transient, contingent because the beauty of life is what time ‘imprints on our sensations’ (Baudelaire, 1964: 13–14). What modernity means, for Baudelaire, then, is not about singular development, progress, rational project, or a universal end, but about an innovative spirit expressing through artistic works in catching the transient beauty of life. This aesthetic idea of modernity has become an intellectual origin for criticisms of modern society and bourgeoisie culture.
After Baudelaire, thinkers such as Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno had reflected on the characteristics of the modern society and engaged critical studies on the mechanism, rationalism, and progressivism of modern culture. One critical thought on modernity evolving in these studies is that while the machinery of modern society seeks to build a wonderland where humans can enjoy a rich and prolific life under the techno-industrial governance, this ‘bourgeoisie’ vision of the world nonetheless overstates the importance of rational technology and industrialisation and conceals the real condition of modern life. Whereas modernity is ephemeral, transient, and contingent, the formation and operation of human society cannot be built and run in accordance with a universal rational design perfectly; instead, modern society is fragmented as the beauty and meaning of each existence in the society is always at present and momentary and is constantly in pursuit of a new expression of itself. In other words, the techno-industrial utopian is ultimately unattainable, and the only way to manifest the significance of one’s existence is to express oneself creatively and genuinely.

Thus, it appears that the implication of modernity is ambivalent. Sometimes, the features of modernity project a developmental, progressive, and optimistic vision of the human world (though there may be multiple routes and varied patterns towards it), but sometimes it rather depicts a momentary, contingent, and fragmented condition of human life. What this ambivalence of modernity hereby exposes is an underlying crisis of modern society, which is in connection with the agential and subjective dimension of modernity mentioned earlier, namely the emptiness and segregation of the self-reflective modern subject.

As indicated, European modernity connotes an image of human being who is capable of self-reflection and has the power to envisage and implement a life plan by reference to the self-image. However, the source of the contents of one’s self-image and the corresponding life plan has been generally divided into two: by the faculty of human reason or non-reason. Kant, for example, delimits the function of human reason and claims that despite that reason cannot acquire any knowledge of the world of things in themselves, which is beyond the ken of humans, the right usage of the reason can nonetheless help us to accumulate universal knowledge of the laws of nature and morality within the terrain of phenomena, and then help us to envisage and implement a rational life plan for establishing an ideal just society. Here, the contents of one’s self-image and life plan are provided by reason, while feelings, emotions, and desires are non-cognitive and contingent and therefore are not adequate for formulating self-image and life plan. Nevertheless, Hume, on the other hand, asserts that ‘when I turn my reflexion on myself, I never can perceive this self without some one or more perceptions’, and this is because that self is nothing but a bundle of different perceptions (Hume, 1888: 634; cf. 251–263). That is, for Hume, the contents of self-image are not from
reason but from perceptions, feelings, emotions, and desires, as these ‘non-rational’ elements of human being, though are contingent, provide the necessary materials for the human mind to generate impressions and ideas that are the primary sources of knowledge. Taking Kant’s and Hume’s accounts of the constitution of the self as two typical conceptions of the modern subject, it is obvious that the subject’s self-knowledge is supposed to be corresponding with what human faculties provide to the human mind. However, while the contents of one’s self-image are provided by the faculty of reason or non-reason, the self thus constituted will not be permanent or persistent, since one can reflect his or her self-image critically and formulate a new image of self from time to time. What the ambivalence of modernity shows herein is the gap between a craving for the realisation of a conceptual self and a radical desire of constantly expressing one’s existence in an innovative and unique way, and the modern subject who stands in this gap is void and is always in the course of formulating self-image. That is to say that what is latent in the agential and subjective dimension of modernity is an internal division, according to which the modern subject is an empty existence standing in between an expressive self and an objectified self.

This emptiness of the modern subject, in turn, signifies a significant alienation of the individual in the modern era. As indicated, what the abstract and dis-embedding feature of modern society and the intrinsic reflexivity of modernity lead to is the existential crisis of the individual. For the individual no longer has a firm sense of belonging to a particular society under the influence of industrial technique and universal knowledge but acquires the reflective capability to question everything around, or even him or herself. This doubt over everything makes the individual feel alienated from others, from the society and the entire world. In the meantime, the internal division of the modern subject indicates a pathological condition that as the individual stands in between the expressing self at present and the objectified self as an abstraction, the individual’s self-conception is segregating into two parts and this would cause self-identity conflicts and self-doubts. The alienation of the individual in the modern era, therefore, is not merely about the relation between the individual and the society or the world but also about the relation between the individual’s different self-images.

As for the solution to the existential crisis of the modern individual, Hegel’s philosophical discourse has been considered as an important proposal, as he is the first philosopher ‘for whom modernity became a problem’ (Habermas, 1987: 43). In Hegel’s view, the principle of modernity is the principle of subjectivity and what this subjectivity denotes is the freedom and the reflection of the individual (Hegel, 1995: 423). Since from the time of Francis Bacon and René Descartes, methodological reflection has been reckoned as significant for humans to acquire a better knowledge of the world, but what the series of works in reflecting on
scientific method has achieved then is more than better knowledge. For the advancement of human knowledge had opened the minds of those Europeans living in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and helped them emancipate from the theological dogmas of Christianity. What followed from this intellectual emancipation was moral and political liberations; the fights of secular princes and kings against the popes or each other, and the fights of peoples against the kings and the churches. Here, the development of knowledge not only freed the Europeans from the reign of Christianity but also projected a vision of the ideal society where every individual person is morally and politically equal. Considered historically, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution are the three epochal events that symbolise the triumph of modern subjectivity in Europe (Habermas, 1987: 17–19). Nevertheless, when the principle of subjectivity reached its culmination in Europe, the underlying defect of it has also been disclosed, that the individual living in modern society will always have a radical feeling of alienation from the society, from the world, or even from him or herself.

The solution to this radical alienation that Hegel’s philosophical thought proposed is to reconcile the individual with the society, the world, and him or herself, apparently. Taking the development of subjectivity as a journey for a rational spirit to discover and to return to itself, Hegel differentiates several stages of the journey in which the feeling of alienation is a symptom indicating an immediate but abstract state of the consciousness of an individual subject, where the objective manifestations of the rational spirit are negated by the naïve subjective manifestations. To be sure, it is the state that the subject who presents itself as an ‘I’ takes the society, the world, and the others as what perceive immediately, and the objectivity of the society, the world, and the others is nullified by this perceiving ‘I’; for the objectivity is assimilated and confined to this subject’s immediate perceptions. However, without recognition of external objects the subject as an ‘I’ is nothing but abstract and partial. In order to overcome this abstractness and partiality, the subject is conversely to surrender itself to the objectivity, which leads to the next stage of the journey of the rational spirit where the original negation of the objectivity is negated. At this moment, the subject is to suspend its reflective capability and obey the norms and laws from without, by which the contents of its self-image are thus determined by some externally imposed term such as a holder of rights, a bearer of obligations, or a subject ruled by a king, a natural law, or the God. As to the following stage of the journey, it is a further negation of this self-surrender to the objectivity. While the individual subject can acquire a certain content of its self by surrendering to the external objectivity, the condition for this, the suspension of the subject’s reflective capability, has restrained subjectivity. Nevertheless, since the subject still has the capability, though it is in suspension, when the unhappy consciousness caused by the external
restraint at certain point arises, it will lead the subject to question the discipline and to seek to renovate its subjectivity. Now, while the subject has been through the restraint and discipline of the objective manifestations of the rational spirit and embraces substantial experiences of its self, the society, and the world, the renovated subjectivity is not to return to its immediate and abstract state but a concrete consciousness of its self and the others. And, by this concrete consciousness, the subject would come to realise that its self, the society, and the world are all manifestations of a rational spirit and they are unified with each other. Then, once this awareness comes to its mind, the individual subject will not feel alienated from the society and the world, while the journey of the rational spirit will reach its completion at this very moment.6

Accordingly, by this brief account of Hegel’s solution to the existential crisis of the modern individual, it is clear that Hegel was not only proposing a solution but also providing a meaning for the individual alienation in the modern era. But, as Habermas indicates, Hegel’s proposal nevertheless presumes the unity of the individual subject with the objective world (Habermas, 1987: 42–43). When the subject and its surrounding world are both taken by Hegel as manifestations of a rational spirit, it appears that the unity of the subject with the world is enclosed a priori. Here, an individual subject’s freedom and self-reflection are to be modes and conditions of understanding of its predetermined place in the world, while the critical emancipatory power of the subjectivity is concealed by the predetermination.7 Nevertheless, in Robert Pippin’s view, what Hegel actually proposed was not a discourse of the enclosed relation of the individual subject with the objective world but an open text depicting the dialectical process of how the subject achieves autonomy, a process that the subject can impose and determine its own contents through the mutual recognition between the subject and its others (Pippin, 1999: 165; cf. 60–77). For Pippin, it is this dialectical thinking, not the a priori presumption, that provides a way out of the individual alienation in the modern era by Hegel. The two approaches of understanding Hegel’s response to the perplexity of modernity, as a controversy among Hegelian studies, are not the issue which would be explored in detail in the present book; however, under the influence of Hegel’s thought, Green’s philosophy, as we will see, implicates a similar dual response to modernity.

**Green, British Idealism, and Modern Society**

During the nineteenth century, with the advancement of knowledge and technology, Great Britain went through a dramatic transformation, moving from a primarily agricultural society to an industrial one. The resultant massive changes within the cultural, economic, and social structures of the country caused many traditional ideas and values to be challenged and even abandoned. The new theories and ideas formulated
Introduction

by biologists and geologists, such as Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* or Sir Charles Lyell’s *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man*, and the new devices and machines invented by scientists and technicians, like the improved steam engine, the sewing machine or the cotton gin, and the new process of making steel out of iron, had made adverse but pervasive impact on the religious and moral beliefs of British people and their daily lives. For one thing, while those innovative notions and instruments were applied to improve the economic production and the social condition of the country, not everyone on the island had a fair share of the increased wealth; instead, the great amount of the wealth of the nation was in the hands of the privileged few, including the nobles, landlords, squires, and the rising middle class. As for the vulgar, laymen, and common people, working more than ten hours a day for a meagre income was the kind of normal life that they had to accept; otherwise, they could choose to be a rouge, a gangster or a crook, or to starve to death. Charles Dickens had made a portrayal of this ‘modern’ life of British people at the beginning of his famous novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, that:

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...

(Dickens, 1863: 7)

It is to say that the modernisation of British society had its bright side and dark side with benign and malign consequences.

Meanwhile, the emergence of new theories and ideas has constituted a dissolving power confronted with the stability of the social and political hierarchy of Britain. Taking the theory of evolution as an example, it envisages a rational explanation of how species survive and adapt to the changing environment by natural selection, and discredits the theological doctrine of ‘God creates the world’. Like the heliocentric theory developed and proved in seventeenth century, the theory of evolution has thus challenged the authority of the Christian church and shaken the beliefs of people in the teaching of Christianity. Also, the idea of natural selection has led people to think that it is the fittest and strongest one who will survive in a changing world and that each person has to compete with others and to win for survival. Herbert Spencer, an influential social thinker in nineteenth century, had applied the notion of ‘the survival of the fittest’ to his studies of human society and politics, and in his view, each person should find his or her fittest position in society for securing personal welfare, while it is through personal achievements that society as an organism can maintain its life and pass the trials of the
environment (Spencer, 1877: 465–488, 1884: 60–77). And then, under such sort of influence of the evolution theory, it has been considered that the state and the government should not intervene in spontaneous activities of individual persons, as having a fair share of national wealth is a prize for which each one must fight alone by overwhelming others.

On this point, the thought that an individual has to accomplish what he or she desires by competing with others and this is the way for survival and the prosperity of society leads to a paradox, however. On the one hand, since the great amount of the wealth of the nation was in the hands of the privileged few, it was difficult for common people to compete with them from the outset; but, on the other hand, since it is the fittest and strongest one who will survive, one possible way for common people to overwhelm the privileged few was to fight against them together and to overthrow the current social and political hierarchy. Hence, for the nineteenth-century British people, there seems to be a choice between an unequal but stable society and a liberating but anarchic revolution. What Green and most British idealists were concerned about was to find and to propose alternatives.

Green was a person who had the passion for the common good of society and the compassion for his fellows, no matter which social class they were belonging to. He urged for the enfranchisement for all adults, supported the reform of education system to abolish the distinction of students in accordance with their social backgrounds, demanded regulations for child labour, fair wage, safe working environment, reasonable working hours, and strict liquor licensing, and propagated the importance of establishing labourers’ unions. Green, apparently, was a reformer and a forerunner of social justice, and the way he chose to change the existing social and political system was not revolution, but to seek popular support from his fellows to repeal inadequate regulations and to legislate new laws. As a radical liberal in the nineteenth-century Britain, Green had faith in the crowd taking the responsibility of making political judgements and expressing their opinions for public issues by vote or public speech. Here, while most of the people in the country had to spend more than ten hours a day to earn their living and had no chance to attend school education and to learn sufficient knowledge for making judgement, the reason Green believed the people could still have responsible and fair judgements was that there has been a sense of community shared by the people and this sense of community had inured them to care more about public welfare than personal interests. However, while the dissolving power of new theories and ideas was prevalent, the communal bond which people were used to share with each other was about broken, as people came to be more and more egoistic and selfish for surviving in a transformative world. What Green intended to achieve by his philosophical discourse and public speeches accordingly was to restore the communal bond of the people and to secure the foundation of British society.
The primary thing Green seemed to be determined to do to maintain the sense of community among British people, then, was to disclose the inadequacy and partiality of the new theories and ideas. For instance, he urged that what made the theory of evolution and Spencer’s studies partial, or even false, was the metaphysical assumptions presupposed in them. Between 1877 and 1881, Green had three articles published in Contemporary Review, and in these articles, he made vehement criticisms of Spencer’s and G. H. Lewes’s metaphysics and methodology applied in their studies. For Green, while Spencer’s and Lewes’s research could be considered as an heir of Hume’s empirical philosophy, the most important deficiency of their studies is that they have not made any progress in response to the metaphysical question left by Hume. He said, ‘It had seemed to me, indeed, that a clear exposition, such as I sought to furnish, of the state of the question in metaphysics, as Hume left it, would suffice to show that it has not been met but ignored by his English followers’ (Green, 1885: 373). As to the question in metaphysics Hume left, Green nonetheless gave us a quite broad statement as ‘how is knowledge possible?’ (ibid.: 374). However, if we turn to another article of Green’s, ‘Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life’, published in 1868, we can find a more lucid elucidation of the issue that Hume’s empirical philosophy as a branch of the Enlightenment philosophy, in Green’s view, ‘rested on a metaphysical mistake, on an attempt to abstract the individual from his universal essence, i.e. from the relations embodied in habitues and institutions which make him what he is; and that thus to unclothe the man, if it were possible, would be to animalise him’ (Green, 1906: 116–117). Here the question Hume left is identified clearly as a false apprehension of the relationship between the individual and the things related to him or her, that the individual is like an isolated atom independent of anything surrounding.

About how this apprehension of the existential condition of the individual is relating to the question ‘how is knowledge possible?’, it will be discussed in the following chapter. Nevertheless, what we should keep in mind from here is that Green’s apprehension of the human condition and its relation to political life is closely related to his criticisms of the metaphysical and methodological assumptions of empirical philosophy. In fact, for most of British idealists, empirical philosophy and its derivative social and moral discourses were one of their main targets of criticism, and the reason behind this critical attitude is in relation to their reception of German idealism. As indicated, the theory of evolution and its profound influences have been considered by Green as with deficiencies relating to the metaphysical and methodological assumptions of empirical philosophy, and this view of Green’s was shared by most British idealists who thereby intended to establish new metaphysical and methodological approaches that can correct the deficiencies of empirical philosophy. German idealism, then, was one of the most important sources for
inspiration to the British idealists. While Hume and most empiricists consider the individual as an isolated atom and believe that there is no such thing as a social whole but only an aggregate of individuals which we name it as ‘society’. Hegel instead claims that the society is an organic unity in which each individual can constitute his or her personality and have life meaning by serving the organic social whole (Hegel, 1991: 290, 304–314). For, in Hegel’s view, as seen before, the individual and the society are both manifestations of a rational spirit, and they are both indispensable for the spirit to achieve its self-completion. The individual and the society are hence interrelated with each other as a unified whole. With impact from Hegel, British idealists also think that the individual and the society are mutually interdependent and are two integral parts of a unified organic whole, as ‘they are complete only in and through each other as playing a constitutive role in the make-up of each other’ (Simhony, 1991a: 522; cf. Quadrio, 2012). And, for the idealists, it is because the empiricists fail to apprehend this mutually constitutive relationship between the individual and the society that they misconceive the nature of theory of knowledge and the existential condition of the individual in the society.

Yet, by means of the prevalent influence of the Enlightenment philosophy and the improvement of experimental technology, the atomic view of the individual has been popular both in the fields of metaphysical and epistemological study and social and moral research. As a result, not only was the moral attitude of British people to be individualistic, or even egoistic as mentioned earlier, but also the social and political notions of British governmental system were to be based on self-centredness and self-mastery. As the opening of Samuel Smiles’s Self-Help exemplified:

> The spirit of self-help is the root of all genuine growth in the individual; and, exhibited in the lives of many, it constitutes the true source of national vigour and strength. Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates. Whatever is done for men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves; and where men are subjected to over-guidance and over-government, the inevitable tendency is to render them comparatively helpless.

> Even the best institutions can give a man no active aid. Perhaps the utmost they can do is, to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well-being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct.

(Smiles, 1859: 1; italics in original)

Therefore, the moral and political thought founded on the atomic view of the individual tends to support the theory of limited government and
to advocate the ethical significance of one’s self-independence. However, considering about the social condition of the nineteenth-century Britain, this thought of letting an individual person to improve his or her life condition by his or her own effort alone without assistance from the society or the government is simply to mean that the underprivileged common people will have to accept the unfair terms capitalists or landlords offer whatsoever. Accordingly, in order to propose alternatives for reforming British society, rather to choose between an unequal but stable society and a liberating but anarchic revolution, Green and British idealists had started their works from re-estimating the metaphysical and methodological assumptions of the empirical philosophy of the Enlightenment, particularly the atomic view of the individual; and, what Green proposed and established hereby is a unique view of politics, which we have mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, an ethical conception of political life.

Ethical Politics and the Modernisation of China

Among Aristotle’s massive writings, metaphysics, ethics, and politics are three correlative subject matters. Metaphysics indicates the relation of the world and the highest being and the nature of the universe, ethics indicates the telos and the position of human beings in the universe, and politics indicates the means and conditions for the telos of being human to be actualised. In other words, what metaphysics and ethics do is to depict an ideal of human life, and this ideal of life is the end for politics to consider under what form of life and government that could be reached. Here, from Aristotle’s perspective, ethics and politics thus have a double link. On the one hand, they are related as end to means, but, on the other hand, since a form of life and government is indispensable for the telos of human beings to be actualised, politics as a means for ethics is not dispensable as purely secondary; on the contrary, it bears ethical commitments and is an integral part of the ontological condition of human life.10

Similarly, in Green’s practical philosophy the relation of politics and ethics is also ontological as they are both necessary conditions for human beings to have a good life. However, since the social and historical circumstances are profoundly different between the ancient Greece and the nineteenth-century Britain, the reasons for Aristotle and Green to envisage an ethical view of politics are different. In the ordinary city life of ancient Greeks, to participate in public affairs and to make contribution to the city are significant for being a citizen. If one has devoted his life to his city, he would be honoured and memorised as a virtuous man. When Aristotle was born in Stagira, the two most powerful cities among the Greeks, Sparta and Athens, were declining due to the wars between them and the wars between the Persians and the Greeks. What this decline of powers of Sparta and Athens signified was the downturn of the entire
ancient Greek civilisation. Living in this strife age of the Greece, Aristotle nonetheless insisted and believed the importance of noble virtues for citizens to perfect their lives and to actualise the telos of human beings within their glorious cities. Insofar as the end of politics is the highest good, the praxis of virtues for public affairs is the very practical way for human beings to realise the ideal form of life (Aristotle, 1984: 13).

As to Green’s case, we have seen that the reason he envisaged an ethical view of politics is that he wanted to propose persuasive discourses to earn the support of his British fellows for social and political reformations. To achieve that, he looked into the current social and political discourses in nineteenth-century Britain and found out that the atomic view of the individual espoused by the Enlightenment philosophy, and empirical philosophy in particular, was a major obstacle for reformation. Thereby, the primary work Green engaged in was to arrest against the atomic view of the individual and the metaphysical and methodological assumptions of empirical philosophy. The strategy he adopted to proceed this work was twofold. On the one side, he made great efforts, as indicated earlier, in finding the wrongness of empirical philosophy. ‘Popular Philosophy in Its Relation to Life’, the three articles published in Contemporary Review, and the two long introductions to Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature are all the works of Green’s that manifest his efforts and visions in criticism of empirical philosophy. On the other side, he devoted to establishing an alternative view of the individual, of which that the individual can enjoy a self-realising life without being isolated and alienated from the world, the society, and all the surrounding others. For, as mentioned, what Green tended to achieve by his writings and speeches was to restore the communal bond of the British people. In Prolegomena to Ethics, he has remarked that one’s individuality and true freedom can only be formulated and achieved in and through a reconciliatory relationship with the world, the society, and the others, and this means that the communal life is not just a means for individuals to accomplish their personal goals or to maximise their self-interests; instead, it is indispensable for the individuals to realise their ideal states of life.

Having this sort of socially constitutive view of the individual in mind, Green, like Aristotle, highlighted the ontological relationship of ethical practice and political life and anticipated a solution to the existential crisis of individuals in modern society. As for the details of Green’s arguments and discussions for these findings, I will expound in Chapters 2–4. Here, for the rest part of this introduction, I would like to briefly illustrate the connection between Green’s practical philosophy and the modernisation of China during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The modernisation of China is a lasting issue for scholars around the world. The earliest studies of China might be from European missionaries in sixteenth-century. However, although some of the missionaries,
such as Matteo Ricci, Giulio Aleni, and Giuseppe Castiglione, even chose to stay in China until the end of their days, their main interest was preaching. In nineteenth century, the frequency of interaction between the European and the Chinese was increasing as the European merchants had growing interests in trading with China. Nevertheless, the trade with China was not a good business for European countries in terms of national finance. Between 1368 and 1912, China was under the rule of Ming and Qing dynasties. In this period of Chinese history, the trade between China and Europe was prohibited several times by the degrees of Chinese government but it still became tremendously profitable. By exporting tea, silk, porcelain products to the other continents, particularly Europe, China had increased its trade income for years as there was about 100 metric tons of silver per year imported from the world to the country between 1600 and 1800 (Huang, 1974: 266–305; Po, 2018; von Glahn, 1996). This situation was not good for other governments of course. The British, the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the United States all wanted to reduce their trade deficit with China. And opium was the product which the British government took as the means to improve their trade profit with China. Scholars have indicated that the British government made a great fortune by opium trade. Whereas the Chinese government allowed foreign merchants coming to trade in Canton only since 1757, the British East India Company had smuggled chests of opium into China. From 1773 to 1839, the amount of opium imported into China increased dramatically. In 1773 the amount of opium imported to China was about 1,000 chests but in 1838 the amount increased to 40,200 chests (Greenberg, 1951: 104–143, 221; Spence, 1975: 149–151). The amount of silver flowed from China to other countries, then, was great. It has been estimated by scholars that the sum of silver exporting from China was 1,523 metric tons between 1817 and 1839 (von Glahn, 2018: 101). The increase of trade loss forced the Chinese government to place restrictions on the opium trade. The imperial officer Lin Zexu (林則徐) was ordered to manage the issue in 1838. However, when Lin and the Chinese government decided to compel foreign merchants to obey the restrictions, the British parliament, urged and persuaded by William Jardine, voted to send troops to East Asia to defend their national interests in 1840 (Grace, 2014: chap. 10). This military action caused the First Opium War between Qing dynasty and British Empire. The war ended in 1842 and the result was that the Chinese army was defeated by the British with casualties up to 20,000 men and the Chinese government was demanded to open five ports on its East coast to foreigners for trade (Wakeman, 1978: 163–212).

After the First Opium War, foreign governments gradually realised that although Qing dynasty had a great amount of land and people, their weapons and war techniques were out-dated. The relationship between foreign governments and Qing dynasty was then changed. The foreign governments, including Britain, France, Russia, Japan, Germany, Italy,
and the United States, turned to take the so-called ‘gunboat diplomacy’ and threatened the Chinese government to accept series of unequal treaties, unequal in the sense that 22 trading sites in China were under the rules of these governments as concessions, tariff arrangements were fixed and then the infant Chinese industries could not be protected by national tariff policies, and nearly 100 trading sites were forced to open. These foreign interventions then caused waves of reformation and modernisation of China while Green’s thought was introduced into China in the process.

The first wave mainly focused on industrialisation and military modernisation. After the First Opium War, there were only a few intellectuals and officers realising that the Chinese empire did not have the power to meet the foreign challenge. However, when the British army invaded Canton again in 1856 and sailed north to attack Tianjin with the French army and eventually occupied the Qing royal capital, Beijing, the country was finally aware of the urgent threat, and a group of officers then promoted a series of reforms called ‘self-strengthening movement’ (自強運動). During the movement, the officers and intellectuals who believed that the Qing dynasty needs reform for self-strengthening by learning from the West established Zongli Yamen (the first Manchu institution in charge of foreign affair and policy), arsenals and shipyards in Tianjin, Shanghai, Hubei, Nanjing, Fuzhou, and Xi’an, and many other institutions applying with or learning for new technologies and theories, such as Telegraph offices, the modernised army and navy, industrial business and language schools (Kuo and Liu, 1978: 491–542). However, the result of the movement was not successful in its military department. From 1894 Qing dynasty and Japanese Meiji government began a series of military conflict in Korean Peninsula and Yellow Sea, and Meiji government won the war at the end. The newly established Qing army and navy were both defeated by Japanese in 1895. One of the reasons for the failure was the incompleteness of military reform. As Pong points out, most of the officers who participated in the reform movement were educated with traditional Chinese statecraft and this training background invariably limited their conceptions of the new technologies and theories imported from Europe (Pong, 1985: 52–53). Also, although the three chancellors (Prince Gong, Guiliang and Wenxing) who submitted the reform proposal to the Qing emperor were Manchu, many powerful officers who urged for reformation were Han such as Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong, Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠), Shen Baozhen (沈葆楨), and Liu Kunyi (劉坤一). The rise of the Han officers made the Manchu rulers concern and begin to doubt the purpose of the movement, then (cf. Qu, 2016).

After the war between China and Japan (also called the First Sino-Japan War), the second wave of the modernisation of China began. At this time the modernisation of China paid attention to the entire structure of
the empire, including the political. On 22 April 1895, five days after the Chinese government signed the treaty of Shimonoseki with the Japanese and promised to pay 7,500 metric tons of silver in total as a war indemnity and to cede Taiwan and the eastern portion of the bay of Liaodong Peninsula to Japan, Kang Youwei (康有為) and more than a thousand intellectuals signed a petition to the emperor and suggested a comprehensive reform of the country. In 1898, when Prince Gong, who had actually controlled the empire for thirty years, died on 29 May, Xu Zhijing (徐致靖) and Kang petitioned the emperor to start reform. Thereafter, the reform began with the emperor Guangxu’s support. The range of the reform was far-reaching indeed such as establishing national schools, national colleges and bureaus of mine, industry, agriculture, and commerce all over the country, adopting Westernised military training comprehensively, providing incentives for private companies to publish newspapers or establish factories, and so on. Moreover, according to Kang’s proposal, there would be a revolutionary reform of political structure as the existing imperial system was going to be replaced by constitutional monarchy and a constitutional law and a national assembly would be instituted (Chang, 1980: 283–338). Unfortunately, the constitutional law and the national assembly never occurred and the reform only lasted for a hundred days. As the conservatives worried that the reform would damage their interests and threaten the rule of the Manchu, they asked Empress Dowager Cixi to intervene and most of the reformers were then arrested or even executed (Liew, 1985).12

Meanwhile, when the second wave of the modernisation of China was interrupted by the conservatives and the Manchu Royals, xenophobia reached its peak in China (Fenby, 2008: 79–94). In 1900 a nationalist movement organised by groups of Chinese people who believed that their martial arts and religion can let them be unharmed by guns and cannons of the Western powers spread in the north provinces of China. This movement was called ‘the Boxer Rebellion’ as the nationalist groups not only attacked foreigners but also robbed cities and villages in the north provinces and killed Qing officers. Certainly, the offensive behaviours of the boxers would irritate foreign powers. Troops from Britain, France, Germany, Russia, United States, Japan, Italy, and Austria were sent to China in August and they successfully defeated the boxers and the Qing army. The legations then occupied Beijing and invaded into several north provinces of China. In the meantime, Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong, Liu Kunyi, and other Han governors of south provinces of China signed an agreement with foreign governments. They assured the foreign powers that they do not recognise the court’s war declaration as legitimate and will protect those foreigners who live, work, and travel in the south provinces. So, what the Boxer Rebellion brought to the Qing dynasty was a siege of eight foreign powers and a political separation between the north and the south of China. After negotiation, the Chinese government was
demanded to pay an indemnity of 450 million taels (equal to 67.5 million pounds) (Hsu, 1980: 115–130). And the authority and the power of the Qing dynasty were thus damaged by the event tremendously. In order to save the country and maintain the rule of the Qing dynasty, Empress Dowager Cixi directed a series of reforms and resumed the institutional modernisation of China since 1901 while constitutional monarchy came to be the main goal of the Qing imperial court this time. Chancellors and officers were sent abroad to learn how to draft constitutional law and direct the political institution designed by the idea of separation of powers. Besides this, the old civil examination system was abandoned, the number of students sent abroad was increasing, the tax and financial system, the local administrative system, and the national and local education system were all under reform (Fenby, 2008: 95–116; Ichiko, 1980: 375–415; Rozman, 1981: 225–231). Hence, it seemed that the Chinese government was finally determined to engage a far-reaching reformation, but the only problem was that it was too late for Han revolutionists. On 10 October 1911, the revolutionists and few modernised troops rebelled in Wuchang, and soon all the provinces in south and central China joined the rebellion. On 12 February 1912, the emperor Puyi announced the abdication of the Qing throne. Qing dynasty ended, then. And the second wave of modernisation of China was stopped at that moment.

At this point we can see that the modernisation of China had been through several stages and involved with many dimensions. As to the third wave of modernisation of China, it gradually emerged and spread after the Republic government was established in 1912. At this stage, the main target of Chinese modernisation turned to the social and cultural tradition as those intellectuals educated abroad with public funding returned and held the view that the traditional Chinese social and cultural institutions have to be abolished in order to build a new society where people can adapt themselves to the modern life. These intellectuals, including Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀), Hu Shih (胡適), Lu Xun (魯迅), Li Dazhao (李大釗), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Qian Xuantong (錢玄同), Gao Yihan (高一涵), and many others, devoted themselves to introduce Western knowledge and the modern ways of life to the people. Among them, Gao was one of the scholars who discussed Green’s thought in his writings. Nonetheless, Gao, as a Marxist, was critical of Green as he believed that Green was a statist just like Hegel. On the other hand, Yang Changji (楊昌濟), the mentor of Mao Zedong (毛澤東), was one of the few Chinese scholars who was influenced by Green’s thought. As we will see in Chapter 5, Yang’s interest in Green was mainly focused on his ethics which had inspired Yang to develop an account of the condition of China in the modern age. Yet, the issue of modernity which China and its periphery have encountered with is different from the one Britain faced with, and this difference is one of the reasons why the study of Green and British idealism in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong did not last long.
Notes

1 In *Modernization: Protest and Change* (1966), Eisenstadt was basically standing for the classical singular-developmental view of modernity, but in his essay ‘Multiple Modernities in an Age of Globalization’, Eisenstadt has come to claim that ‘what we witness in the contemporary world is the development – certainly not always peaceful and indeed often confrontational – of multiple modernities. Such a view necessitates a far-reaching appraisal of the classical visions of modernity and modernization’ (1999: 284). And he has then given a more systematic account of this view of multiple modernities in the essay mentioned here, ‘Multiple Modernities’, one year later.

2 Modernity in this sense indicates what Carol Gluck remarks a historical condition which has been ‘produced over three centuries around the globe in processes of change that have not ended yet’ (Gluck, 2011: 676). See also Subrahmanyam (1998: 99–100).

3 In Delanty’s view, modernity and modernisation always involve with certain normative claims, such as making a better world, and it is in this sense that modernity is a cultural reference and an end for societies to develop different routes to approach it (Delanty, 2015: 27–30). For Delanty’s wider discussion on modernity, see Delanty (2000, 2013).

4 For discussion on the complexity of this periodisation issue, see Chakrabarty (2011), Symes (2011).

5 For more details about the ambivalence of modernity, see Bauman (1993).

6 This is a quick sketch of Hegel’s systematic philosophy. The pattern and the stages of the evolution of the rational spirit drawn here are manifest in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* especially. For consideration of the dialectical structure of Hegel’s philosophical system, see, for example, Findlay (1977: v–xxx), Kainz (1996: chaps. 1–4), Luther (2009: chaps. 3–6), and Taylor (1975).

7 As to a critical consideration of Habermas’s discussion of Hegel, see Dallmayr (1987).

8 Radical liberalism is a variant of liberal political thought during the nineteenth century. Its main urges include universal suffrage, advanced reforms of political system, government intervention, and progressivism. Green’s radical tendency was well-known among his liberal fellows at the time. For further discussion on this radical dimension of Green’s political stance, see Arblaster (1984: 285–288), Leighton (2004: chap. 1), MacCunn (1907: 185–266), Rodman (1964), Tyler (2003a).

9 For discussion on the philosophical connection between British empiricism and British idealism, see Mander (2011: chaps. 2–3); also, for the general reaction of British idealists to the theory of evolution, see Boucher and Vincent (2012: 20–29).


11 Wei Yuan (魏源) was one of the most famous and important figures among them. In *Illustrated Treatise on the Sea Kingdoms* (海國圖志), published in 1843, Wei urged that the Chinese have to learn from the advanced technologies in the West in order to resist the invasion of the Western powers (師夷長技以制夷). Wei’s thought had then made impact on several leaders of the later reformation movement in China such as Zeng Guofan (曾國藩), Li Hongzhang (李鴻章), and Zhang Zhidong (張之洞).

12 The reform, also called Wuxu Reform (戊戌變法), was influenced by the self-strengthening movement to a certain extent. For the language schools established during the self-strengthening movement, such as Tongwen Guan (同文館), translated and published books and texts of Western theories and
technologies that helped many intellectuals and officers who participated in the Wuxu Reform to draft reform plans. Nevertheless, the range of the reform was too comprehensive and rushed for most of the Manchu officers (Fenby, 2008: 65–78).

1 Between 1811 and 1851, the total population of the Great Britain had increased from about 9.5 million to 16.8 million. However, the distribution of the population changed significantly under the influences of the Industrial Revolution and the profound transformations of the social structure, that the population in cities was rapidly increasing while in rural regions it was declining. For the related discussions and illustrations of the population history in Britain, see Woods (1995), Wrigley and Schofield (1981: chap. 6).

2 For more discussions about the dualism of Descartes’s thought, see Alanen (2003), Baker and Morris (1996), Hill (2012), Marion (2018), and Rozemond (1998).

3 About the meaning of ‘indulgence’ see Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994: n. 1471–1479).

4 As for the details of Green’s elucidation of the role of the self-consciousness in human activities, see chaps. 2–3.

5 To Descartes, this does not mean that our knowledge of the universe is infallible, but merely means that what we have in our minds when we are thinking are all actual and clear. In his view, it is at the time we are making judgement that the ideas presenting in our minds pertain to truth and falsity (see Descartes, 1993: 72–80).

6 This issue Descartes left is one of the main subjects that the Cartesian Occasionalists, such as Géraud de Cordemoy, Arnold Geulincx, and Nicolas Malebranche intended to tackle with (see Nadler, 2010).

7 This does not mean that Locke ignored the issue of the existence of God (see Locke, 1975: 619–630).

8 While the different views of the human condition implied in Descartes’s and Locke's thought are significant, another well-known issue between Descartes and Locke is about the research methods they adopted, that is the reasoning methods of deduction and induction. For related discussions about this methodological issue between Descartes and Locke, see Owen (2002: chaps. 2–3).

9 For, in Hume’s view, there are only three kinds of rational knowledge that can be certain rather than probable, that is geometry, algebra, and arithmetic (Hume, 1888: 69–73).

10 This development of German philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, from Kant to Fichte and from Schelling to Hegel, is what Beiser refers as ‘the struggle against subjectivism’ (Beiser, 2002). For all the four philosophers noted that individual emancipation in the modern age is an urgent issue that has to be addressed. For an alternative interpretation of this development of Germany philosophy see Henrich (2003).

11 Indicating the eighteenth century.

12 Although it has been considered commonly that Green is a critic of Hume’s philosophy, Dimova-Cookson argues that there is at least one similarity between them that their philosophies are both transcendental. For Dimova-Cookson, transcendental philosophy is a study addressing on the conditions of human experience, and following Husserl and David Carr, she thinks that Hume’s analysis of human nature is precisely a study of that kind (Dimova-Cookson, 2001: 26–27, 32–40). Dimova-Cookson’s claim has indeed indicated an alternative view about the connection of Hume and Green. Nonetheless, the differences between what Hume and Green have argued, respectively, are still substantive, among which their conceptions of the individual person are significant.
One of the examples of the former view is Herbert Spencer’s ‘Social Darwinism’ discourses that we have mentioned in the Introduction, and for the latter view, a typical example should be Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill’s Utilitarianism which we will consider in Chapters 3 and 4.

In fact, the thought that there is a common spiritual principle behind all the human activities is the very outset of Green’s practical philosophy. See discussions in Chapter 2.

For thinkers, like Adam Smith or John Stuart Mill, who consider the division of labour important and consider it as a strategy to increase production effectively, the division does have some positive standing. And they basically believe that when each individual person learns to fulfil his or her duty and social character, ‘the evolution of human sentiments would ultimately overcome’ all the obstacles that hinder fair distribution of social benefits (Bellamy, 1992: 4). Nonetheless, the actual social conditions were unfortunately not as optimistic as these thinkers expected, and it seemed that in order to check the social inequality and unfairness, state intervention was necessary.

Capitalists and the educated class were two chief social groups that advocated the revolution in France. And after ‘the people’ seized the political power and the National Constituent Assembly was established, members of the two groups organized several parties and factions such as National Party, the Feuillants, the Girondins, the Montagnards, and Jacobins. However, the new government held by these parties and factions was not democratic or stable. On the contrary, these social and political elites occupied the power and attacked their political rivals by slander or assassination. For discussion on the political situation after the Revolution, see Tackett (2006: chaps. 5–7).

A curious thing that may catch readers’ attention would be that different from his discussion of human understanding, Locke employed a notion of God to develop his theory of government. Nonetheless, as I indicate in the previous chapter, Locke did not ignore the importance of God to human beings and believed that human capabilities are from God’s work. Moreover, in his view, the end of understanding and knowledge is for humans to reach the laws of nature which God creates to guide the operation of the universe. That is to say, although the constitution of knowledge is about human capabilities, the source of laws, regulations, and norms are from God’s work, the supreme lawmaker. For discussions about Locke’s view of the laws of nature and human knowledge see Lamprecht (1918: 49–74), McGovern (1958), Oakley (1966).

See my discussion in Chapter 1. As to Kant’s and Hegel’s discussions of consciousness, see Henrich (2003).

Here, Green’s thought is not just akin to Kant’s but also similar to Hume’s. For Green like Hume holds that the idea of a self-existent world beyond the ken of humans is a self-contradictory and illegitimate question of human knowledge. Nonetheless, their different notions of human experience and theories of knowledge make them have divergent views of the human condition. For further discussion about the relation between Green and Hume, see Brink (2003: 9–20), Tyler (2010: 55–60).

A classical elucidation of the coherence theory of truth is H. H. Joachim’s The Nature of Truth: An essay (1906). That truth is considered as an organic unity or a significant whole ‘such that all its constituent elements reciprocally involve one another, or reciprocally determine one another’s being as contributory features in a single concrete meaning’ (Joachim, 1906: 66). Nonetheless, Bertrand Russell is against Joachim’s account for the truth. See Russell (1906).
To be sure, not only do Green’s critics take the idea of the eternal consciousness as equal to God, the commentators who concentrate and contend theological implications of Green’s moral philosophy also connect the idea with God. For these commentators, the eternal consciousness is related to Green’s doctrine of the Christed self as mentioned in the first chapter that takes Christ as an ideal of our moral self to signify our potentiality for being morally good (see Leighton, 2004: 172; Reardon, 1986: 41–42; Richter, 1964: 108–110; Vincent and Plant, 1984: 13–15). Adding to this point, Green’s idea of the eternal consciousness has been argued by A. M. Quinton as influenced by the pantheistic tendency of Hegel when Green contended that ‘there is one spiritual and self-conscious being of which all that is real is the activity and expression; that we are all related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes itself and distinguishes itself from the world; that this participation is the source of morality and religion; this we take to be the vital truth which Hegel had to teach’ (Green, 1906: 146; Quinton, 1986: 130).

In Andrew Seth’s 1883 article ‘Philosophy as Criticism of Categories’, which was written in memory of Green who passed away in 1882, he traced the root of the twofold conception of the mind back to Kant. For Seth, when we conceive Kant’s critical philosophy of reason as a sort of rational psychology, Kant’s critical study of categories and concepts is easily to be confused with a criticism of faculties, and then the meaning of the ‘consciousness’ will become ambiguous for the state of consciousness can be considered as either a psychological occurrence or a logical condition (Seth, 1883: 15–16). About this issue of the two conceptions of consciousness, the psychological and phenomenal and the logical and transcendental, see also Ameriks (1992: 259), Hatfield (1992), Jones (2004), Schurman (1898: 135–136).

I will discuss Green’s analysis of moral action in the next chapter.

As Aristotle claims, ‘[s]ince happiness is an activity according to virtue, it is reasonable that it should be an activity according to the highest virtue; and this would be an activity of the best part of man. So whether this be intellect or something else which is thought to rule and guide us by its nature and to have comprehension of noble and divine objects, being itself divine or else the most divine part in us, its activity according to its proper virtue would be perfect happiness. That this activity is contemplative has already been mentioned…’ (Aristotle, 1984: 193). Nevertheless, Aristotle is not like Green implies a philosopher advocating intellectualism thoroughly, for he is clearly aware of the imperfect nature of human beings (see Aristotle, 1984: 194–198).

In his 1874 review, Sidgwick remarked that ‘Mr. Green states very clearly at the outset his reasons for adopting this treatment of the subject. The point of view from which he writes is that of Kant’s “new method of philosophy as elaborated by Hegel,” which, as he afterwards says, reduces “psychology to metaphysics.” He is, therefore, altogether hostile, not only Hume, but to the manner of philosophising generally prevalent in England; which, (with whatever differences in specific doctrines), has always shown the contrary tendency to reduce metaphysics to psychology’ (Sidgwick, 1874: 2–3). However, in Sidgwick’s view, Green’s points of view are not well-made in his introductions, for ‘he is so much more anxious to exhibit the conclusions at which they ought logically to have arrived, that these latter are likely to get confused in the reader’s mind with the real tenets of the philosophers’ (ibid.: 3). In his another two reviews of Green’s introductions published in 1875, Sidgwick continued to criticise Green’s objective, philosophical method, and
arguments. In fact, Sidgwick seemed to take Green’s thought so serious that he not only wrote another review in 1877 to criticise Green but also kept writing and lecturing materials on Green’s arguments until his death in 1900, some of which were collected in his two posthumous books—Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green, Mr. Herbert Spencer, and J. Martineau (1902) and Lectures on the Philosophy of Kant and Other Philosophical Lectures and Essays (1905). Also, Sidgwick’s last philosophical lecture delivered on 21 May 1900 was entitled as ‘the philosophy of T. H. Green’.

Before Sidgwick’s first review of Green’s introductions published on 30 May 1874, Green had noted about Sidgwick’s disproval and criticism. In his letter to Sidgwick dated on 27 May, Green said that ‘I am sorry not to have convinced you about Locke, for if I don’t convince you, I shall convince few worth convincing…’ (Green, 1997: 458).

To some extent, these issues of Green’s arguments correspond to four difficulties he identified in Kant’s moral philosophy (Green, 1886b: 154–155). In my point of view, these issues may be persistent among modern moral philosophy as long as we demand individual freedom and independent moral authority at the same time. Nonetheless, as we shall see, Green’s thought may still depict a way for us to relieve the tension between individual freedom and moral authority in his discourse of the common good.

The full text is in Green’s 1881 lecture on ‘Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract’ as follows: ‘But we rightly refuse to recognise the highest development on the part of an exceptional individual or exceptional class, as an advance towards the true freedom of man, if it is founded on a refusal of the same opportunity to other men. The powers of the human mind have probably never attained such force and keenness, the proof of what society can do for the individual has never been so strikingly exhibited, as among the small groups of men who possessed civil privileges in the small republics of antiquity. The whole framework of our political ideas, to say nothing of our philosophy, is derived from them. But in them this extraordinary efflorescence of the privileged class was accompanied by the slavery of the multitude. That slavery was the condition on which it depended, and for that reason it was doomed to decay. There is no clearer ordinance of the course of man’s affairs, than that no body of men should in the long run be able to strengthen itself at the cost of others’ weakness. The civilisation and freedom of the ancient world were short-lived because they were partial and exceptional. If the ideal of true freedom is the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves, we are right in refusing to ascribe the glory of freedom to a state in which the apparent elevation of the few is founded on the degradation of the many, and in ranking modern society, founded as it is on free industry, with all its confusion and ignorant licence and waste of effort, above the most splendid of ancient republics’ (Green, 1906: 371–372).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Green’s idea of the common good has incurred criticisms from several liberal scholars. Nevertheless, the common good in Green’s view is an idea conceived by individuals jointly, and for the idea of the common good to be a moral norm demanding individuals to follow and obey, the idea has to be recognized by all the individuals as virtually common for them all first. So, by virtue of this condition, Green’s idea of the common good is not as critics think, that it is a collective norm independent of individuals and their wills. For more details about Green’s view of the common good and individual freedom, see my following discussion in this chapter. As to the relationship between rights and the common good in Green’s thought, I will discuss in the next chapter.
Apparently, the distinction here involves different understandings of freedom. For the idea that freedom is about a power for a person to achieve something, this is more like a positive conception of freedom; and for the idea that freedom is a state of a person which is protected and secured by a community, this is more like a negative conception of freedom. Regarding this issue, Dimova-Cookson has made an insightful analysis of the different meanings of freedom in Green’s writings (see Dimova-Cookson, 2012).

1 While Mill and Green have different views of human nature and moral principle, their considerations of government’s function are similar. For they both hold the view that government intervention is legitimate under certain circumstances. About similarities and differences between Mill’s and Green’s view on government, see Bellamy (2000: 22–46); Nicholson (1990: 132–197).


3 Green was an active citizen. He was interested in education reform since 1860s, and was then involved in the temperance movement for some personal and public reasons. According to Nettleship, Green was trying to help his brother to abstain from alcohol, but he failed. Then, in 1872, Green came to engage in the temperance movement actively because he thought that excessive drinking has done a lot of harm to British people and caused plenty of social problems. Besides these, Green also ran for local election and sat in the Oxford City Council for the Liberal Party in 1876. For further discussions of Green’s public activities, see de Sanctis (2005: 89–92), Nicholson (1997: xv–xxxi), Richter (1964: chap. 11).

4 For example, as Nettleship said that most of the time John Bright and Richard Cobden, two famous nineteenth-century liberals, would endorse Green’s opinions on public issues, ‘but neither Bright nor Cobden could understand the process by which Green’s opinions are obtained, nor the arguments by which they are defended’ (Nettleship, 1906: xx). What underlies Green’s views on social and political issues is an idealist philosophical world view and this has made Green different from other nineteenth-century British liberals.


6 Scholars have proposed many interpretations of Green’s rights recognition thesis. Besides Ross and Boucher, Ann Cacoullos, Gerald Gaus, Rex Martin, and Darin Nesbiit also have their views on it. And one of the most important issues for these scholars to debate is precisely whether Green’s right recognition thesis can justify the rights that have not been generally accepted by the majority or not. See Boucher (2011: 755–759), Cacoullos (1974), Gaus (2006), Martin (2011), Nesbitt (2001).

7 Years later, Bernard Bosanquet, one of Green’s pupils, made a clear distinction of the ethical and political conceptions of self-government. According to Bosanquet, ethical self-government means that a self exercises authority over itself, and political self-government means that what is accepted as authority can be applicable at once to the agent and the patient, generally exercised by some persons over others. However, although Bosanquet made such a distinction of the idea of self-government, he also stated that they ‘cannot be ultimately separated’ (Bosanquet, 2001: 86). For more details, see Bosanquet (2001: chaps. 3–6).

8 To be sure, scholars have noted the significance of the idea of ethical citizen in Green’s thought. Yet, the relationship of the idea with Green’s account of sovereignty has not been addressed. About different accounts of Green’s idea of ethical citizen, see Boucher and Vincent (2000: 47–50), Vincent (2001: 208–216), Hann (2014), Martin (2014), Simhony (2014a: 442, 452–455; 2014b).
1. Such as the London Missionary Society Press, the American Presbyterian Mission Press, Tongwen Guan, Shanghai Guangfangyan Guan (Shanghai Foreign Language), and the Commercial Press.

2. Original text: ‘至格林乃巧融合古今有數之惟心論的倫理學說之長處，大成自我現質主義’.


4. Original text: ‘中國近年可謂大變矣，然其變方始，吾民尚未得變之利，而往往得變之害。蓋所變者政治之粗迹，所未變者民族之精神。從政治上求變，變之自上者也；從教育上求變，變之自下者也。變之自上者效速而速易變；變之自下者效遅而可久。高以下為基，吾寧自教育始矣’.

5. Original text: ‘近世倫理學說中有三種主義。其一為自然主義，其二曰絕對主義，其三曰人本主義。第三說則為今日歐美倫理學說上新傾向也。自然主義又謂之惟物論，絕對主義又謂之絕對惟心論，人本主義又謂之格惟心論。凡夫子欲仁仁至，蓋實為人格惟心論，孟子、陸、王均此派也’.

6. This thought of Yang's on Green might be influenced by Japanese scholars as well. For those Japanese scholars who had interest in Green, Green's idea of personality was one of their foci and this research interest also had its influence on Abe Jiro, Nitobe Inazo (新渡戸稲造), and Kawai Eijiro (河合栄治郎). Yet, whereas these Japanese scholars had strong interest in Green's idea of personality, they also noted that Green's idea of the eternal consciousness causes some tension in his argument (see, for example, Nakajima, 1909: 337–382; Kawai, 1938: 770–775).

7. Original text: ‘道德之原因不存在於行為者以外，而出於其內界之要求。吾人究竟之目的不在于一時之快樂，而在于理想的自我之實現，吾人欲以是為道德之真說明’.

8. Original text: ‘吾國無教會而民不散，實賴有家族主義以維持之。近人有提倡破壞家族主義之說者，驚恐徒長淺薄之風，而社會終不蒙其福利，不可不加深察也。’ Nonetheless, while Yang was cautious of the urge for abolishing patriarchy in China, he was also aware of the defects of the patriarchy (see Yang, 1981: 68–69).


11. Original text: ‘現代生活，以經濟為之命脈，而個人獨立主義，乃為經濟學所產之大則，其影響遂及於倫理學。故現代倫理學上之個人人格獨立，與經濟學上之個人財產獨立，互相證明，其說遂至不可搖動；而社會風紀，物質文明，因此大進。中土儒者，以翰常立教。為人子為人妻者，既失個人獨立之人格，復無個人獨立之財產。父兄負其子弟，子弟負其父兄。…人格之個人獨立既不完全，財產之個人獨立更不相涉’.

12. Original text: ‘從前的家族主義、國家主義的道德，因為他是家族經濟，國家經濟時代發生的東西，斷不能存在於世界經濟時代的…我們今日所需要者，不僅有國家的道德，不是天的道德、宗教的道德、古典的道德、階級的道德、私營的道德、占據的道德，乃是由人的道德，美化道德、實用的道德、大同的道德、互助的道德、創造的道德’.

13. Original text: ‘現在有人對你們說：‘犧牲你們個人的自由，求去國家的自由！‘我對你們說：‘爭你們個人的自由，便是為國家爭自由！爭你們自己的人格，便是為國家爭人格！自由平等的國家不是一群奴才建造得起來的！’’.
「在1918到1920年這一段時間之後，我就沒有離開過抽象思想」。在1918到1920年這一段時間之後，我就沒有離開過抽象思想。在1918到1920年這一段時間之後，我就沒有離開過抽象思想。在1918到1920年這一段時間之後，我就沒有離開過抽象思想。在1918到1920年這一段時間之後，我就沒有離開過抽象思想。
References


