

Oakeshott on the State: Between History and Philosophy

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I

Oakeshott was a philosopher as well as an historian. He engaged in philosophy by reflecting upon the character of experience and was an historian of political thought in examining the historical conditions in which distinct forms of political thinking arise. For Oakeshott these two activities are separate. Philosophy understands experience in an unconditional and general way. It understands the postulates of activities, such as art, history and practical life. It conceptualizes the experiential orientation of thinking historically, practising science, contemplating artistic images and negotiating the twists and turns of practical life. Insofar as it is philosophical, thought does not engage with practical tasks, recognize how the past has changed into the present, contemplate scenes artistically or generate hypothetical scientific laws. Rather it conceptualizes what we are up to in undertaking practical action or in tracing antecedent events, which relate to a political action such as the referendum decision of the UK to leave the European Union. An historian understanding an event such as Brexit, the prospective withdrawal of the UK from the European Union, relates the referendum decision to leave the EU to past events that preceded it and rendered it possible. So a series of events and developing attitudes within the Conservative Party might be invoked to explain why Cameron considered it useful to stage a referendum on this issue of EU membership. At the same time historical events and developing attitudes in the UK to issues relating to UK membership of the EU might be referenced to explain the vote for Brexit. The historian by his study of events preceding the referendum decision to withdraw from the EU would not be committed to either supporting or denouncing Brexit. The moral and instrumental preferences of practical life are irrelevant to historical understanding. Likewise the historian does not have to frame a philosophical understanding of the postulates of history to justify her narrative. The past may be real or imagined, and the status of beliefs and practices

unquestioned, but the historian can still provide a convincing account of an historical topic. Hence for Oakeshott, philosophy, history and practice are separate from one another and according to some of the idioms that he uses to describe their relations, they are insulated from one another. Yet, in fact, are philosophy and history distinct from one another? Are philosophical and historical forms of inquiry to be considered altogether distinct from one another? In this essay I will argue that they are intertwined in Oakeshott's own account of the state, notwithstanding his own reading of their distinctness.<sup>1</sup> Of course to criticize Oakeshott on this score is susceptible to the caveat entertained by Minogue in his essay, "The Fate of Rationalism in Oakeshott's Thought," "As ever with Oakeshott, the detail of the argument is marvelously suggestive, and its development so subtle that it can be criticized only by the most brutish grasp of what he might be up to."<sup>2</sup> If critiquing Oakeshott is hazardous, to accept his self-understanding of his enterprise is misplaced if it means maintaining a sense of the independence of modes of thought from one another that cannot be sustained in practice. In what follows I will run through Oakeshott's practice as an historian of political thought and then invoke his philosophical account of the state and in so doing show how they are not discreet activities but are inter-related.

## II - Oakeshott: Historian of Political Thought

In the lecture series on the history of political thought that Oakeshott delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science in the 1960s he provided a history of the development of political thought. These lectures, now published posthumously as *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, differ from preceding lecture series that concentrated upon specific texts and theorists in that they set out the contexts in which historic texts of political

theory are situated. They are historical in character and set out a basis for explaining political thought historically. They show Oakeshott's understanding of the contextual setting for political thought. He relates historic theories of politics to the traditions and forms of political experience associated with differing political regimes. Oakeshott outlines the political experience of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, the character of medieval government, and the nature of a modern European state. These then serve as contextual settings for the political thought of Ancient, medieval, and modern theorists. The lectures reflect Oakeshott's understanding of how political thought depends upon the historical conditions of political practice and his method in the history of political thought is to relate theory to actual forms of political experience.<sup>3</sup> At the outset of the lectures, Oakeshott declares, "History I take to be a mode of thought in which events, human actions, beliefs, manners of thinking are considered in relation to the conditions, or the circumstantial contexts in which they appeared."<sup>4</sup> He distinguishes such an approach from a scientific one, which would provide general laws to establish a causal understanding of past phenomena. Oakeshott's historical approach renders past events, beliefs, and actions more intelligible by relating them to affiliated kinds of things, such as beliefs and actions rather than to record the regularities with which they occur. The thought is that contextualizing ideas in the broader context of a political culture enhances understanding without either establishing their necessity or justifying them in a general normative sense.<sup>5</sup>

In his *Lectures in the History of Political Thought* Oakeshott is at pains to highlight how his enterprise disavows a teleological conception of the progress or regress of political thought over time, which would imply a philosophical reading of history. He emphasizes the distinctness of particular forms of past thinking to the extent that he denies the prospect of a continuous history of political thought. He observes, "I want to avoid the appearance of putting before you anything like a continuous history of European political thought."<sup>6</sup>

Oakeshott's *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, then, do not provide an overall account of the historical development of political thought but instead concentrate upon specific historical periods. Thompson in "Michael Oakeshott on the History of Political Thought" questions their status as exemplifying Oakeshott's notion of a history of political thought. For Thompson, "they are sophisticated lectures, but their purpose is introductory."<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding their introductory character, however, they reveal key aspects of Oakeshott's notion of the history of political thought. As Thompson himself suggests, "But although the lectures are not the best source for Oakeshott's conception of the history of political thought, they do contain some important observations central to that conception."<sup>8</sup> In relating past political thought to the public culture of past political contexts Oakeshott follows Hegel, whom he admires, but he is against the supervening teleology of Hegel and his philosophical history, which perceives a developmental continuity in the history of political thought. Oakeshott opposes the idea of a continuous history of political thought because he concentrates on distinct past forms of political thinking, which derive from past circumstances that are held to be necessarily distinct from the present. Oakeshott is against retrojecting onto the political past ideas without reference to their local contexts. Oakeshott may be said to be implacably opposed to grand narratives which either reduce history to philosophy or history to philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Rather he relates political ideas to the political cultures within which past political thinkers operated.<sup>10</sup>

To understand Greek political thought, Oakeshott invokes the political experience of the Greeks, analysing the conditions of their political culture and more specifically their political vocabulary and distinctive images of the world. He then focuses upon the political thought of Plato and Aristotle taking them as sifting and criticizing the current general beliefs about politics so as formulate coherent ideas.<sup>11</sup> Again, Oakeshott imagines modern thinkers to be operating within a specific historical context, namely that of the emergence of the modern

state. He identifies characteristics of the modern European state such as its composition of legally free human beings, its centralized and sovereign authority, and its inter-relations with other similar states as informing the theories of modern political thinkers. In considering forms of modern political thinking, he identifies an interpretation of the state, which, in relying upon organic and nationalistic formulas, suffers from its failure to register the constructed and free nature of the association of individuals in a modern state. In contrast, he recognizes how Calvin, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill, amongst others, theorize the state as an association of individuals, who associate together freely to achieve a variety of freely chosen purposes.

### III - History and Other Disciplines

Oakeshott's *Lectures in the History of Political Thought* assumes history to be a constructive activity, in which the past is different from the present, and it is also separate from philosophy, science, or the practical needs of the present. In *Experience and Its Modes* (1933) Oakeshott argues for the radical insulation of modes of experience from one another. Modes of experience, save for philosophy, namely history, science, and practice arrest experience in organizing it from a particular perspective, while philosophy reviews the conditions of experience completely, observing the limits of the other modes. Hence history is neither linked to philosophizing nor to current practical issues. In "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," an essay in *Rationalism in Politics*, Oakeshott reformulates how he sees relations between modes of experience, imagining that they relate to one another conversationally rather than operating completely independent of one another or being dependent upon one another.<sup>12</sup> The character of the imagined conversation of mankind is indeterminate, though it is taken to be a conversation in which no one voice is dominant.<sup>13</sup>

The assumption is that interlocutors respect one another and that there is no supervening goal of the conversation. In “The Activity of Being and Historian,” another essay in *Rationalism in Politics*, Oakeshott observes a sharp divide between the historian’s study of the past and other ways of imagining the past. Oakeshott insists that the past of the historian is different from the practical, scientific, and aesthetic attitudes to the past. A practical attitude to the past looks to the past in the light of the present and hence assimilates the past to present concerns. For instance a lawyer is interested in the past insofar as it relates to the concerns of his client in the present. If evidence from the past can prove the innocence of a defendant whom a barrister is defending in a criminal case, then it will be used. The barrister is not interested in the past for its own sake. The historian in contrast studies the past for its own sake and respects its distinctness from present concerns. An historian in the present who wishes to defend the Normans will not do justice to what happened at the Battle of Hastings.<sup>14</sup> Oakeshott’s sympathy for Butterfield’s studies of the past reflects his distrust of Whig interpretations of history that reduce the past to the political ideology of the present.<sup>15</sup> Oakeshott is categorical in his recognition of the historian’s appreciation of the separation of past from present interests. Hence Oakeshott insists that philosophy should not determine the direction of historical inquiry. Philosophy can review the postulates of historical understanding, but its review is not judged to impose a pattern upon narratives of the past. Hegel’s philosophy of history supersedes the narrative of empirical pragmatic historians, but, for Oakeshott, Hegel in his philosophical history is undertaking philosophy not history. Likewise the demands of practical political life are not to dictate to the historian an account of the past, which is not justified evidentially.

Yet Oakeshott, in fact, allows for significant connections between philosophy, political practice, and history, even if the three worlds are specified in distinctive ways. In his celebrated “Introduction to *Leviathan*” (1946), Oakeshott presents a general characterization

of the history of political philosophy by identifying it in terms of three traditions. The three traditions are the rational natural tradition, the tradition of will and artifice, and that of rational will.<sup>16</sup> What Oakeshott has to say on this score is elliptical and yet suggestive for he implies that there are connections between philosophy, politics, and history. His identification of traditions in the history of political philosophy presumes that philosophical expertise is required. Political philosophy is a style of thought that is conceived as a distinct and highly abstract form of reflection on politics. Its style is not to be recognized by the relating of past events, the character of the style has to be appreciated and that demands first hand expertise of the subject matter. Its identification depends upon philosophical rather than historical expertise.<sup>17</sup> This philosophical recognition of the character of philosophical argument is of a piece with what he has to say in his *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*. In this latter study he maintains that a presupposition of the inquiry is a prior identification of styles of political thought so that, for instance, explanatory and practical forms of thinking are distinguished from one another.<sup>18</sup> In the “Introduction to *Leviathan*” Oakeshott discusses the nature of the three specified traditions of political philosophy by highlighting their textual masterpieces. Plato’s *Republic* is held to be the masterpiece of the rational natural tradition. Hobbes’s *Leviathan* is supreme in the tradition of will and artifice and Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is exemplary in the tradition of rational will. Oakeshott’s identification of traditions in political philosophy unites political philosophies historically by noting their adherence to common if developing conceptual standpoints. Identification of and assessment of a tradition depends upon a mix of philosophical and historical forms of understanding. Hence, Oakeshott sees history as bearing upon philosophy and shows how the disciplines of history and philosophy are connected with one another. Again, he imagines that each of the traditions of political philosophy is aligned to practice in that each develops in relation to practical historical circumstances. The focus upon will in the will and artifice and rational will

traditions reflects modern developments in various spheres of conduct, which is distinct from Plato's assumptions about a natural order of things. This alignment of philosophy with historical conditions of practice is not to imply that Oakeshott either imagines that philosophy is prescriptive for practical life, or that philosophical ideas are to be reduced to practical interests or to historical moments. Its alignment with practice enables its understanding of practice but does not supply a recipe for political action. Oakeshott's understanding of the ways in which modes of experience are related is finely balanced. On the one hand, he insists upon their independence throughout his career and yet the metaphor of a conversation between experiential activities allows for engagement between them but it is a form of engagement that is not taken to obtrude upon their character. In fact the relations between modes of experience bear significantly upon their individual character. A history of political philosophy presumes a philosophical understanding of its nature. The development of political philosophy depends upon an historical understanding of its commerce with practice.

In "Practical Life and the Critique of Rationalism," Smith rightly observes Oakeshott's determination to isolate philosophy from practical considerations. He remarks, "The central thrust of *Experience and Its Modes* is to protect philosophy and the other modes of experience from the blandishments of praxis. 'A philosophy of life,' Oakeshott avers, 'is a meaningless contradiction.' Life—practical experience—and philosophy—the quest for intellectual coherence—remain fundamentally inimical to one another."<sup>19</sup> It is true that, for Oakeshott, political philosophy is not an ideology aiming to impact upon practice. In a posthumously published essay, "Political Philosophy" Oakeshott observes, "[W]e must expect from political philosophy no practical conclusions whatsoever."<sup>20</sup> Yet Oakeshott aligns the identities of political philosophies to particular historical contexts and understands political philosophy as arising out of practical experience and as developing historically. His own substantive political philosophy, which is elaborated in *On Human Conduct*, is self-

consciously related to the development of the modern state and to a particular tradition of political philosophy. As McIntyre notes, Oakeshott in fact takes philosophical understanding to develop out of a practice of philosophy that resists specification in express terms. The tradition of philosophy suggests its implication in practice rather than abstract theory.<sup>21</sup>

In *On Human Conduct*, a classic work of substantive political thought, Oakeshott employs a new and original vocabulary to specify the conditionality of political association, which is derived from reflection upon the development of the modern European state.<sup>22</sup> The work consists of three inter-related sections: (i) *On the Theoretical Understanding of Human Conduct*; (ii) *On the Civil Condition*; and (iii) *On the Character of the Modern European State*. The opening section is a theoretical exploration of the character of human conduct by theorizing its component conditions of agency and social practice. Oakeshott distinguishes the character of a practice from that of a process. A practice is constituted by the contingent beliefs of their human participating agents, while processes are composed of natural phenomena, which are determined by scientific hypotheses explaining the generic recurrence of patterns amidst change. Insofar as the three essays are mutually complementary, the relationship between social practices and their constituent reflective agents is held to demonstrate how individuals are enabled to participate in a scheme of social and political cooperation, which Oakeshott designates as civil association. Civil association, for Oakeshott, represents an ideal mode of political association, in which individuals consent to procedural rules of conduct, which regulate but do not determine the behavior of individuals. These rules do not prescribe particular forms of conduct because they depend upon individual interpretation of their application to particular circumstances. The rules shape but do not direct their actions, and hence allow for individuality and freedom in their performance. Oakeshott's analysis of the postulates of the human condition and his related construction of an ideal form of civil association is followed by the third essay that reviews the historical

formation of the modern European state, which intimates the form of civil conduct that is theorized in the preceding section, under the title, “On Civil Association.” Hence Oakeshott’s own political thought is shown to develop out of his historical understanding of the development of European politics.

In delineating the history of the modern European state, Oakeshott distinguishes between two historic forms of political association, a *societas* and a *universitas*. A *societas* is a form of political association, which constitutes what Oakeshott terms the civil condition. In a *societas* individuals recognize the authority of a set of general laws, which provide a framework of order that permits them to follow their own independently formulated activities. It is a free association of individuals, who are united by their common commitment to establish a cooperative social framework that enables individuals to undertake their several self-chosen purposes and activities. A *universitas*, on the other hand, focuses upon achieving a common collective goal. Its members are unified by their determination to achieve a common purpose. Oakeshott takes the outlines of both forms of society to be discernible in modern European history. For Oakeshott, prospects for civil freedom are compromised by the contemporary strength of collectivism. In his account of the modern European state, Oakeshott refers to several political theorists, who have framed historic theories of a political association, which follow one or the other of his paradigmatic models of political association. His commentaries are economical but incisive. For instance, he identifies Machiavelli tellingly as a theorist of a *societas*. Likewise, Hobbes is perceived to be an outstanding theorist of a *societas*, while Bentham receives a masterly footnote that identifies him to be an energetic advocate of a *universitas*.<sup>23</sup> His brief but compelling analysis of Hegel as a theorist of a *societas* interprets Hegel to be a political theorist, who, in framing an authoritative political philosophy, attends carefully to the experience of agents, social practices, and states in the modern world.<sup>24</sup>

Oakeshott's *On Human Conduct* is an intricate analysis of the nature of human conduct, the character of an ideal civil association, and the development of the modern European state. These elements of analysis go together in that human beings are shown to be reflective and free agents, whose possibilities for undertaking freely self-chosen individual actions are enhanced by their subscription to a civil association, which in turn is shown to be intimated in historical development. While Oakeshott imagines historical understanding to be autonomous, his philosophical exploration of the conditions of political association depends upon an historical reading of modern European history. Oakeshott's carefully contrived philosophical account of a state that allows for individuality and freedom and his antipathy towards collectivism are shaped by and in turn reflect upon his reading of European political history. His substantive political thought is constructed in the light of preceding historical developments of the political experience of modern Europe and the political theorizing of philosophical predecessors, notably that of Hobbes and Hegel, and his own substantive political thought in turn shapes his interest in the development of the modern state. *On Human Conduct* is a notable contribution to modern political thought. Its value derives from its drawing upon historical and philosophical forms of understanding. The ideal of civil association is related to the conditions of reflective practice that allow for individual agency in social contexts. The ideal of individuality and the value of civil association are related to conditions of agency but they also are intimated in the political experience of the modern world. This experience shows the feasibility of the ideals and their possibilities in concrete shape. Oakeshott blends historical and philosophical expertise in his account of the modern state which is at once philosophical and historical.

#### IV – Conclusion

Oakeshott is an idealist thinker, who was influenced by Hegel, both as a philosopher and more particularly as a political theorist. Hegel recognized the relative autonomy of a variety of modes theory and practice. He was a profoundly historical thinker, who imagined that all subjects including philosophy were historical in character. A significant difference between his philosophy and Plato's for instance, involves his sense of the historical determination of human thought and practice.<sup>25</sup> Yet Hegel imagines that philosophical history superseded other forms of history in supplying an absolute understanding of things. Hence he considered the *Philosophy of Right* to go beyond a merely historical justification of the conditions of a rational and just political association. Ultimately it may be said that Hegel reduces history to philosophy in allowing philosophy the final reconciliatory word on mankind's engagement with experience.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Oakeshott's sensitivity to the perils of advancing the claims of a single discipline over that of others informed his reading of the strict independence to be assigned to modes of experience or forms of understanding. Likewise he was critical of what he took to be Collingwood's late dissolution of philosophy into history.<sup>27</sup> It is beside the point that Collingwood's later thought is best interpreted as maintaining an independence between philosophy and history, because it is clear that Oakeshott imagined that Collingwood had slipped into an error in reducing philosophy to history.<sup>28</sup>

Oakeshott aimed to guard against a reductive understanding of the relations between philosophy and history, just as practical undertakings are different from artistic contemplation, scientific understanding, philosophical speculation and historical understanding. Even where he allows for relations between them, his designation of them as conversational sees each as constituted separately and engaging in talk that does not affect their identities. However, in his actual practice of history and political theory Oakeshott identifies political theorists as responding to historical change and his historical perspective influences his own political philosophy The upshot is that Oakeshott's thinking about the

state operates between history and philosophy. The irony is that it is precisely this overlapping of modes of thinking that endows a value to his writings which is lacking in other perspectives. Hegel's political philosophy is a testament to considered historical and philosophical thinking but its philosophical absolutism constitutes a grand narrative that devalues the openness and contingency of the historical process.<sup>29</sup>

Oakeshott's practice of the history of political thought allows him to make a variety of connections in the history of political thought. Thompson, in a careful essay on Oakeshott as an historian of political thought, observes how Oakeshott distinguishes his approach from that of Skinner by allowing for a variety of forms of political thinking, which are not to be reduced to "ideology."<sup>30</sup> Skinner and the Cambridge School of the history of political thought have tended to interpret forms of political thought as being designed to justify or disrupt political authority, and this "ideological" reading of political thought has been applied to Hobbes and Machiavelli amongst others. Skinner has been concerned to disparage "influence" as a category in the history of political thought as he is skeptical of causal claims of one thinker influencing another when they are subject to differing ideological and political contexts.<sup>31</sup> To deny the influence of one philosopher upon another across time implies that philosophy is not to operate as a distinct form of thinking, which appears implausible given, say Hegel's own account of the impact of Plato and Aristotle on his thought. Oakeshott's recognition that philosophy is a distinct form of thought allows for a way of reading its development that can take account of the impact of a preceding political philosopher upon a succeeding one.<sup>32</sup> Oakeshott's plausible criticism of Skinner turns upon his own recognition of the differing nature of particular forms of political thinking. Political philosophy is not to be reduced to history and ideology.

The value of Oakeshott's political thought and his theorizing about the state resides in its capacity to relate together differing forms of thought rather than upon its self-proclaimed

sharp separation of them from one another. In *On Human Conduct* his reading of an ideal mode of political association is linked to his reading of the historical development of forms of the state in modern Europe. Philosophy is not thereby reduced to history, just as history is not to be seen as a mere instrument to the framing of a political philosophy. But if Oakeshott avoids the reduction of one form of thinking to another, he is not to be interpreted as establishing their independence from one another. The skills of Oakeshott as an historian of political thought and a theorist of the state are that he links differing forms of thinking so as to see the messy world of practice as registering historical development that can be reflected upon philosophically. Philosophy is not set apart from history and practice but neither is to be read as a form of ideology or as superseding history by showing the historical necessity of an ideal state.

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<sup>1</sup> In my book on the nature of the history of political thought I argue this case at greater length. See Gary Browning, *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). In this monograph my reading of Oakeshott is part of a wider argument that history and philosophy are necessarily intertwined in the practice of the history of political thought.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Minogue, “The Fate of Rationalism in Oakeshott’s Thought,” in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, ed. Paul Franco and Leslie Marsh (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 247.

<sup>3</sup> . M. Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, eds. Terry Nardin and Luke O’Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>7</sup> Martyn Thompson, “Michael Oakeshott on the History of Political Thought,” in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, 198.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of what is meant by grand narratives in the work of Lyotard, and for a critique of his critique of them, see my earlier work on Lyotard and grand narratives. Gary Browning, *Lyotard and the End of Grand Narratives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000). For a sympathetic if critical account of Hegel’s philosophy of history see, Gary Browning, *Hegel and the History of Political Philosophy* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>12</sup> See M. Oakeshott, “The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind,” in Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (London and New York: Methuen & Co, 1962). In his posthumously published *Notebooks* Oakeshott sketches plans for producing a text that rehearses a conversation between a number of interlocutors representing differing styles and activities in life. See Michael Oakeshott, *Notebooks: 1922–86*, ed. Luke O’Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2014), 307–70.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 418–19.

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- 14 Michael Oakeshott, "The Activity of Being An Historian," in *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, 168–75.
- 15 On Oakeshott's sympathy for Butterfield, see Geoffrey Thomas, "Michael Oakeshott's Philosophy of History," in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, 95-120. See also Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1965).
- 16 Michael Oakeshott, "Introduction to *Leviathan*," in Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1975), 3.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 18 Oakeshott, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, 4–3.
- 19 S. Smith, "Practical Life and the Critique of Rationalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Oakeshott*, ed. Efraim Podoksik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 131-152.
- 20 Michael Oakeshott, "Political Philosophy," in Michael Oakeshott, *Religion, Politics and the Moral Life*, ed. Timothy Fuller (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1993), 153.
- 21 Note the comment, "...philosophy is a practice like other human practices, it involves 'knowing how' to do things philosophically." See Kenneth McIntyre, "Philosophy and its Moods: Oakeshott on the Practice of Philosophy," in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, 82.
- 22 Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 185–326.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 169.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 257–63.
- 25 See Gary Browning, *Plato and Hegel – Two Modes of Philosophizing About Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).
- 26 See Gary Browning, "The Night in Which All Cows Are Black: Ethical Absolutism in Plato and Hegel," *History of Political Thought*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1991).
- 27 See Michael Oakeshott, "Review of R. G. Collingwood. *The Idea of History* (1947)," in Michael Oakeshott *Selected Writings*, vol. 3, *The Concept of Philosophical Jurisprudence*, ed. Luke O'Sullivan (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2014), 199.
- 28 For a reading of Collingwood that takes him to recognise close but non-reductive relations between history and philosophy see Gary Browning, *Rethinking R. G. Collingwood- Philosophy, Politics and the Unity of Theory and Practice* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

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<sup>29</sup> See Gary Browning, “Lyotard and Hegel: What is Wrong with Modernity and What is Right with the *Philosophy of Right?*” *History of European Ideas*, vol. 29, no. 2 (2003), 223- 239.

<sup>30</sup> See M. Thompson, “Michael Oakeshott on the History of Political Thought,” in *A Companion to Michael Oakeshott*, 69.

<sup>31</sup> See Quentin Skinner, “The Limits of Historical Explanation,” *Philosophy*, vol. 41, (1966), 199-215.

<sup>32</sup> For a justification of the use of the concept of influence in the history of political thought, see Gary Browning, “Agency and Influence in the History of Political Thought: The Agency of Influence and the Influence of Agency,” *History of Political Thought*, vol. 31, no. 2, (2010), 345- 66.