STUART HAMPSHIRE *Orren Jack Turner*

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Stuart Newton Hampshire
1914–2004

STUART HAMPSHIRE WAS ONE OF the most interesting philosophers of the last half-century. He wrote extensively on ethics and politics during the second half of his career, but everything he wrote reflected the concerns that drew him to Aristotle, Spinoza and Freud at the beginning of his career; and although he was never a Marxist, he never lost his respect for Marx's analysis of the conflicts and tensions inherent in any economically complex society. The last book he published in his lifetime was called, characteristically, *Justice is Conflict*, having begun with the title, *Justice is Strife*. To the very end of his life, he wrote with an extraordinary freshness and lightness of touch, and preserved an open-minded curiosity about the human condition in all its aspects that would have been remarkable in someone fifty years younger. If it was sometimes less than clear at what destination an argument had arrived, the journey was always worthwhile.

Hampshire made a less visible impact than several contemporaries; he was less of a public figure than Isaiah Berlin, less of a celebrity than A. J. Ayer, and less influential in setting the philosophical agenda of the day than John Austin, Peter Strawson, or Donald Davidson. Conversely, he had a strikingly wide range of close friends in the worlds of literature, art, and politics. His work was never less than engrossing, perhaps because he tackled philosophy with an outsider's perspective as much as an insider's; he saw philosophy in its cultural and historical context as one of many ways in which a culture and the individuals who embody it come to terms both with their own cultural and intellectual artefacts and with the non-human world in which culture is embedded. Philosophy neither could be nor should be insulated from the ethical and political concerns of the

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surrounding culture nor from that culture's scientific and non-scientific understanding of human and non-human nature. A measure of indecisiveness was a small price to pay for the resulting richness of perspective. Nor was this richness all; his treatment of ethics and political morality was unforcedly radical. If morality is a cultural artefact, one should not expect a comfortable answer to the question of how deeply rooted in underlying human nature any particular set of values is, and Hampshire never offered comfortable answers.

Stuart Hampshire was born in Healing, Lincolnshire on 1 October 1914. Healing is a village on the outskirts of Grimsby where his father had a fish merchant's business. The family was prosperous, and Hampshire was duly sent to Repton School, a school that specialised in the production of eminent cricketers and Archbishops of Canterbury. One future Archbishop, Geoffrey Fisher, was headmaster at the time, though Hampshire remembered him as more interested in the stock market reports than in the Bible. At Repton Hampshire overlapped with Roald Dahl without either of them mentioning the fact thereafter. In 1933 Hampshire gained a scholarship in Modern History to Balliol. His time at Repton coincided with what Hampshire later saw as his social and political awakening. As he describes it in *Innocence and Experience*, early in the Depression he and his family were holidaying in North Wales and went to Liverpool's Adelphi Hotel for lunch; outside, old women begged in the street and proffered sprigs of lucky white heather to passers-by, and the journey to and from North Wales took them past the silent and deserted shipyards of Birkenhead and clusters of unemployed men hanging about on street corners. The sharpness of the contrast between upper-middle-class comfort and grinding poverty was intolerable. *Innocence and Experience* also records his distress at the sight of ragged children in Oxford going barefoot even in the middle of winter. It did not produce an immediate conversion to any particular form of political activism, but it did produce a deep contempt for the sort of conservatism that set the protection of private property ahead of the welfare of the most vulnerable. The Second World War had a greater impact on his politics, but Hampshire never deviated from his hostility to conservatism or from the egalitarianism of his youth.

Hampshire had gained his scholarship in Modern History, but he switched to Greats. Like many students whose tastes ran to philosophy and history rather than to ancient languages, he by-passed Honour Moderations in favour of the three-year Greats course, graduated with a First in 1936 and that autumn was elected to an All Souls Fellowship. He

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was already a friend of Isaiah Berlin, who gave Elizabeth Bowen a thumbnail sketch in the summer of 1936: Hampshire was 'approved by Maurice [Bowra] who declares that he has a keen sense of enjoyment, and is a good loyal boy, thought silly by Goronwy [Rees], unfascinating by B.J. [Maire Lynd], is much admired by Freddie Ayer; I feel both respect and affection, the former because of Cambridgy qualities, intelligence, integrity, purity of character, awkwardness, donnishness etc., the latter for the same reasons again, &, I suppose, because I seem to be able to talk about my subjects to him more successfully than to most people, also he likes music and bullies me politically. He is and looks a gentle, antelopelike, herbivorous character.' 'Antelopelike' was replaced with 'the Gazelle,' soon afterwards. Hampshire recalled at the time of Berlin's death that they had first met in 1934 to talk about Kafka; the conversation continued for the next sixty-four years.

On arriving at All Souls, Hampshire became a member of the philosophical group that Berlin and J. L. Austin had just established. Of their meetings, Berlin later said that 'in retrospect they seem to me to be the most fruitful discussions of philosophy at which I was ever present'. They went on until the outbreak of war in 1939. Their object was simply the pursuit of the truth about whatever the term's topic happened to be, with no thought of publishing whatever conclusions they might come to or of disseminating them more widely than among the group of Austin, Berlin, Hampshire, Ayer, Macnabb, MacKinnon and Woozley. Berlin later deplored their uninterest in the wider philosophical world, but the habit of attending carefully to what was being said at the moment and by the particular persons in the room was itself a valuable one, and Hampshire's attentiveness to his students when he subsequently taught in the United States struck his colleagues both in Princeton and in Stanford.

Hampshire gave a brief but engrossing account of his frame of mind at the time in the autobiographical introduction to *Innocence and Experience*. Since All Souls was deeply implicated in the policy of appeasement pursued by the Conservative government of the day, Hampshire could there observe at first hand the 'servility of Conservatives in the face of Fascism'. Unlike many of his contemporaries, his distaste for conservatism did not lead to an enthusiasm for its communist opposite; to the extent that he succumbed to any doctrinal position, it was to the positivism of the Vienna Circle; and in the cold light of logical positivism, all theories of history, whether Hegelianism, Marxism, Comtean positivism, or liberal doctrines of progress, looked like the decayed remnants of metaphysical systems that had been erected

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to console their adherents for the death of Christianity. The Nazi government of Germany was vile and appeasement disgusting, but one needed no theory of history to confirm that.

In 1937 Hampshire began the long relationship with Renée Ayer that ended only with her death in 1980. Today, nobody would flinch at a wife abandoning her husband for one of his colleagues after five years of a marriage that had been ricketty from the beginning; but for a decade after 1937 the attachment threatened to destroy Hampshire's chances of an established career, either in academic life or in the civil service. Most of Hampshire's friends disapproved of the relationship, not because they had moral objections but because they thought it rash, and some of them had never much liked Renée, whose indifference to the world's expectations they mistook for selfishness. It did not inhibit Queen's College from appointing Hampshire to a college lecturership. The person apparently least put out by it was Ayer himself; he finally divorced Renée in 1941, citing Hampshire as co-respondent, but so far from bearing a grudge, acknowledged the child born to his friend and his wife in 1939 as his own. Julian Ayer was inevitably known as Julian Ayrshire. Julian's younger sister, Belinda, was acknowledged as Hampshire's from the first.

On the outbreak of war, Hampshire joined the army; he was sent, briefly, to Sierra Leone. He was not a natural infantryman and was rapidly transferred into military intelligence. He spent much of the war analysing the activities of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, the central command of Himmler's SS; unlike some of his colleagues, he did not afterwards talk much about what he had done there, but like almost everyone else in military intelligence he came across an assortment of characters whose loyalty lay to the Soviet Union rather than their own country. One story told by his obituarists was that Hampshire had in late 1942 drawn up a plan for encouraging the hostility to the Nazi regime on the part of senior military officers that later gave rise to the Stauffenberg Plot; the proposal gained general support but was shot down by Kim Philby. Nobody could understand why, but retrospectively, it seemed plausible that Philby had been acting on the Soviet line that it was better to prolong the war until the Red Army was firmly on German soil. At the end of the war, Hampshire himself was interviewed at length about his ties to Guy Burgess, during the first of several failed attempts by MI5 to uncover the full extent of the spy ring that Burgess had established. Many years later Goronwy Rees sought to blacken Hampshire's name by accusing him of having been, as it might be, the Sixth, Seventh or Eighth Man; he was duly investigated, questioned by Peter Wright, and cleared. The occasion

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was somewhat awkward for everyone because Hampshire had been appointed in 1965–6 to conduct a review of the intelligence gathering activities of GCHQ at Cheltenham.

By the end of the war, Hampshire was fully acquainted with the atrocious history of the SS in occupied Europe and Russia. It made him realise that 'unmitigated evil and nastiness' are as natural to human beings as kindness, a thought that as he said he might have gleaned from Shakespeare but previously had not. The feeling was sharpened when he had to interrogate Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the successor to Heydrich as head of the SS, and a man who was thought by his fellow SS officers to be a particularly ruthless and unpleasant piece of work. He took what even they thought a disgusting interest in the various methods of execution practised by the SS, and was eventually executed for the long list of war crimes for which he was tried at Nuremberg in 1946. The war over, Hampshire's future was uncertain. Ayer was appointed to a vacant philosophy fellowship at Wadham; the Master of Balliol, Lord Lindsay, blocked Hampshire's appointment to a fellowship, and Herbert Hart was appointed at New College. A permanent post in the Foreign Office was unlikely in view of Hampshire's marital status, and for over two years, Hampshire occupied a variety of slightly obscure positions in the Foreign Office that must sometimes have been a cover for continuing to work for MI5. They took him to San Francisco for the opening session of the United Nations and to Paris for some hard work on setting up the Marshall Plan.

Hampshire's return to academic life was brought about by Ayer. He had left Wadham for University College London when he became Grote Professor in 1947; determined to create a philosophy department to outshine Oxford, he immediately appointed Hampshire to a lecturership. In 1950, a long drawn-out game of musical chairs began, as Berlin left New College for All Souls, and Hampshire became a philosophy fellow at New College. In 1955 Hampshire was elected to a Senior Research Fellowship and the Domestic Bursarship at All Souls; in 1960, Ayer left University College London for New College as Wykeham Professor of Logic, and Hampshire succeeded him as Grote Professor. Berlin advised him not to move to London, and the fact that he remained there for only three years before moving to Princeton suggests that Berlin may have been right to warn him against the job. On the other hand, he was a very successful head of department, and graduate seminars in his large L-shaped office overlooking Gordon Square were wonderfully interesting occasions, not least for the variety of personal and intellectual styles on display.

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By this time, Hampshire had written the two books for which he is best known, *Spinoza* in 1951 and *Thought and Action* in 1959. In 1960 he was elected to the British Academy. But America beckoned, and in 1963 Hampshire joined the Department of Philosophy at Princeton. At this time, it was the best philosophy department in the world, and it remained so during Hampshire's years there. He became chairman of the department the year after he arrived, and was a very successful chair. He had a sharp eye for talented young people and was instrumental in bringing David Lewis to Princeton among others. Hampshire's teaching style was—and remained—at odds with the conviction of his more analytically minded colleagues that philosophy should aim to achieve as sharp, brisk, and non-complex an account of the world as reality would accommodate; Hampshire invariably conducted seminars in a more circumambulatory fashion than that. Paul Benacerraf later recalled Hampshire's pleasure at the savagings he received from then Young Turks such as Gil Harman and Robert Nozick; they in turn later recalled Hampshire taking the same pleasure in the savagings he received from Benacerraf. To Hampshire, who had experienced much worse at the hands of J. L. Austin both before and after the war, it was more exhilarating than painful.

Hampshire's years at Princeton coincided with the increasing hostility to the Vietnam War, and by extension to modern capitalism and its political manifestations that convulsed American campuses. He played an important role in defusing conflicts at Princeton that could all too easily have led to real bloodshed. Princeton students were determined to have the Institute for Defense Analysis evicted from the campus, and on at least one occasion the local police faced protesting students with their weapons at the ready. Hampshire chaired the crucial meeting of the entire academic community in the enormous Jadwin Gym at which they hammered out not only enough of a compromise to keep the campus from erupting into the sort of violence experienced in Berkeley and elsewhere, but the beginnings of a much more open and democratic administration for the university as a whole. Hampshire tended to play down the whole business, and self-deprecatingly referred to himself as having joined 'the stage army of the good', whose house journal was *The New York Review of Books*, or—as George Will had it, *The English Review of Vietnam*. He enjoyed Princeton even though he found its pastiche Gothic painful; but he had no difficulty deciding to return to Oxford as Warden of Wadham when the chance came.

In 1970, Maurice Bowra retired from the position as Warden of Wadham that he had occupied since 1938. He had been elected a Fellow

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in 1922. The college had flourished under Bowra, and although Bowra was a markedly twenties-ish figure, Wadham was the most left-leaning, radical and 'modern' of the traditional colleges. Bowra was something of a *monstre sacré*, however, and dining in his company could be mildly terrifying as one waited for the next loud, and not infrequently gross, observation about a fellow diner. The college was not of one mind about how different it wished the next Warden to be, and initially there was little support for Hampshire's candidacy. Wardens had always been chosen from among fellows and former fellows; and Hampshire was very much not one. Details of the election were widely leaked, as often as not by Bowra, who was supposed to be wholly in the dark about events. The older fellows thought Ayer should become Warden, the younger fellows preferred Hampshire, once his name was in contention; when Ayer backed out on discovering that it was not to be a shoo-in, other fellows threw their hats in the ring. What clinched things for Hampshire was the issue of co-education. He was unequivocally in favour of Wadham admitting women undergraduates, Ayer was mildly hostile; in the eyes of young fellows, it was a litmus test of one's attitude to all aspects of university and college life.

Hampshire later said that he thought the fourteen years of his wardenship were the best thing he ever did. By the end of his time, that would have been the consensus among both students and fellows. Initially, things were awkward. Renée was not cut out for the role of 'Head of House spouse' as it was then understood, and was considered eccentric by the more conservative fellows. She never dined on high table, and if the Warden was forced to give a dinner party for people who bored her, she would cook dinner and retire to the kitchen. But she was unfailingly kind to the unhappy and the bewildered; she was much liked by the undergraduates, for whom she evidently felt a great deal of affection, and whom she happily invited to lunch; and she was seen as a role model by the new generation of women undergraduates. She had her own enthusiasms, of which the annual children's party complete with donkey rides is the best remembered, not least for the sight of Hampshire trying to coax the donkey—in one version—or manhandle it—in another—into the back of a small car. Hampshire had more trouble with the two fellows who thought they should have had the job rather than he; they sulked ostentatiously. Nor was he assisted by the continued presence of Bowra. Bowra was loudly in favour of Hampshire, and did his best to be unobtrusive, but unobtrusiveness was not in his repertoire. Having decided to die where he had lived for so long, Bowra established himself in rooms

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above the main gate; the porters continued to refer to him as 'the Real Warden' in contradistinction to 'the New Warden,' and it was only when Bowra died (suitably enough on Independence Day 1971) that Hampshire could get on with the job.

Because Wadham had become a thriving modern institution, Hampshire's task was essentially to keep it true to itself and to ensure that it could weather the assorted financial and emotional storms to which all such institutions are exposed. He maintained that he disliked administration, but sometimes pulled rank by reminding his colleagues that he had been a very efficient domestic bursar some twenty years before. Comparisons with Bowra inevitably lingered; Bowra had dominated a small governing body, most of whose members he had—or said he had—been instrumental in appointing. Hampshire faced a more numerous body and was less concerned to get his own way on all occasions. He had none of Bowra's passion for string-pulling either in the college or in the wider university and none of his taste for sliding unlikely candidates into not wholly suitable posts. His authority over the college was that of someone who was seen to be a considerable figure in the culural and intellectual life of the country as a whole, but he neither sank into college life nor became irritated by it.

In 1979 Hampshire was knighted for services to philosophy; the following year, Renée died. Initially, Hampshire withdrew into himself, but then turned more often to colleagues and the college for companionship. Students from the early 1980s remember Hampshire with affection, as someone whose conversation ranged over everything from the quality of the beer in the college beer cellar to the particular form of moral enlightenment to be gained from a careful reading of Henry James. In 1984, Hampshire reached the age of seventy and had to retire from the wardenship. He was appointed to a chair in philosophy at Stanford University, and remained there until 1990, when he returned to Oxford. He purchased a small house in Headington within a few yards of the Berlins. In 1985, he had married Nancy Cartwright who was at the time a professor of philosophy at Stanford; they immediately adopted their first daughter, Emily, and the following year had a daughter of their own, Sophie. Nancy Cartwright became professor of philosophy and scientific method at the London School of Economics, and Hampshire very happily—though somewhat to the alarm of some of his old friends—settled into the role of househusband, while continuing to write on Spinoza and much else until the very end of his life. On 13 June 2004 he died of cancer of the pancreas after a short illness.

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Hampshire was part of a very remarkable philosophical generation. In the first decade after the war, what was generally called 'Oxford philosophy' was not only felt by philosophers to be fresh and exciting, but was thought by a much wider audience to mark a new, unstuffy, unpretentious approach to philosophy. For that decade, it was the cutting edge of anglophone philosophy, though despised then as later by anyone who craved the excitement of the latest Parisian fashion, and disliked by the fiercer sort of logical empiricist. Of course, many distinct varieties of philosophy were practised under that capacious umbrella; not everyone wanted to follow J. L. Austin down the path of mapping the ways of ordinary language, and an antipathy to the excesses of Heideggerian existentialism did not exclude an acknowledgement of the merits of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the one French philosopher of the day for whom Hampshire had a lot of time.

The distinctiveness of Hampshire's own view of the analysis of mind was announced forcibly enough in a review of Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind* that was notably unsparing in its criticism of what Hampshire saw as an overly simple behaviourism. Hampshire began by demolishing Ryle's identification of the 'Ghost in the Machine' model with Cartesianism by pointing out that the model was built into the natural languages of Europe and the Middle East, and rubbed salt into the wound by going on to argue that Ryle had essentially resiled from his avowed intention to stick to what was revealed by the way we ordinarily and actually speak by resorting to a vulgar verificationism. It is easy to suspect that what had got under Hampshire's skin was Ryle's claim that human beings are 'relatively tractable and relatively easy to understand'. War service in MI5 had no doubt made Hampshire more keenly aware that human beings are genuinely 'Occult' not 'Obvious': that 'just because they alone of natural objects are language-users and therefore are potential reporters, they are (unlike stones and dogs) liars, hypocrites, and suppressors of the truth about themselves'. He was no kinder about Ryle's claim that what novels record is essentially and overwhelmingly what their characters *do*. It was, after all, implausible as a claim even about the novels of Ryle's beloved Jane Austen, and as a claim about Proust, it was jaw-droppingly unlikely.

Spinoza was the first book that brought Hampshire to public notice; it sold 45,000 copies in a few months, and is sometimes said even now to have been Hampshire's best book. It appeared in a Penguin philosophy series in 1951 with a friendly preface from the series editor, Freddie Ayer, who confessed that he did not wholly understand what Spinoza had been

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up to, and was not sure that he wholly understood Hampshire's explanation. It remains a book worth worth reading fifty-five years later, especially in *Spinoza and Spinozism,* which reprints the revised edition of 1987 accompanied by Hampshire's last thoughts on Spinoza and a wonderful short essay on Spinoza's conception of freedom from 1962.

It is not quite true that *Spinoza* is the essence of Hampshire; for one thing, Hampshire simply refused to follow Spinoza more than a very short way in his theological concerns. Perhaps more importantly, Hampshire was quite certain that Spinoza's hankering for a social and political harmony that was to be instituted by the educated elite's dexterous but paternalistic manipulation of untutored opinion, was not an option for a modern society, however much of an improvement it was on the violent and fanatical politics of the era of the wars of religion in Holland and the rest of Europe. For another, Hampshire himself was deeply sceptical of the role of reason in ethical and political matters, and did not entertain Spinoza's rationalist conception of knowledge that provided the foundation of his political rationalism.

The affinity lay elsewhere. Hampshire always thought of Spinoza as a philosopher who displayed the openness to the findings of science in whose absence philosophy would simply wither. He did not quite think of Spinoza as engaging in a Collingwoodian search for the presuppositions of the scientific world-view of his day—though there are elements of that thought in Hampshire's account—so much as someone sketching a programme for an absolute world-view consistent with the advances to be expected of science as it developed. The master science of Spinoza's day was physics, but Hampshire thought that Spinoza provided even greater illumination in a world where biology and psychology had been put on a scientific basis. Like Spinoza, Hampshire thought that these sciences had ethical implications. Berlin would occasionally tease Hampshire by telling him that he saw Spinoza, Marx, and Freud as the three Jewish prophets of freedom and himself as their Aryan interpreter. There was a small grain of truth in the joke. The grain of truth was not that they were Jewish, but that in different ways they put forward the seemingly paradoxical thought that freedom—autonomy—was the rational determination of the will.

Hampshire's understanding of Spinoza's conception of freedom contrasts quite sharply with Berlin's in 'From Hope and Fear Set Free'. The latter was part of Berlin's broad-brush assault on all and every 'positive' conception of liberty; Berlin's anxiety was always that, *pace* the intentions of the originator of these ideas, some form of totalitarian state attached

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to an ideal of 'compulsory rational freedom' will be the end point. Hampshire treads more delicately, seeing Spinoza's insistence that we can liberate ourselves from self-destructive and unhelpful reactions as interestingly anticipating twentieth-century writers such as Freud, and not looking backwards to the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia*. Almost more interestingly, Hampshire argued something he did not subsequently make much of, which was that just as Spinoza thought the science of his day would liberate us in all areas of life, so we should now deepen our understanding of the forms of freedom available to us by using all the resources of the sciences of our own day. It was absurd to defend the liberalism of John Stuart Mill as though we had learned nothing more about human nature than Mill had known.

The crucial feature of Spinoza's metaphysics, of course, and the thing that Hampshire found most fruitful for his own work was Spinoza's insistence that Nature was one substance, not as in Descartes, Mind and Matter interacting unintelligibly, but one substance viewed under its active aspect as *natura naturans* and under its passive aspect as *natura naturata*. Man was not a union of Mind and Matter, but part of the natural order, containing in Spinoza's view, more reality than lesser creatures, but separated by no sharp gulf from them—not that Spinoza was any more concerned than Descartes with the interests of the inferior animals. The 'double aspect' theory that Spinoza provided was in its own time an answer to questions that Descartes's interpretation of the new mechanics had posed, but it was also the basis of a research programme for the future. Hampshire was much taken with an interpretation of Spinoza's concept of the *conatus* that every entity possessed that identified it with what sustained any entity as an individual of that particular kind.

For many students of philosophy 1959 was an *annus mirabilis*. It was the year Peter Strawson published *Individuals* and Hampshire published *Thought and Action*. Fifty years later, one can see what they had in common: an ambition to do philosophy in a more constructive vein than had been the case for the previous fifteen years, a greater friendliness towards the metaphysical ambitions of the past, and an emphasis on the centrality to our understanding of the world of the fact that we are embodied individuals who act on the world. The 'spectatorial' vision that had characterised traditional empiricism was replaced with a starting point that emphasised the role of individuals acting in and on the world. What made *Thought and Action* unusual at the time was the way in which Hampshire linked epistemology, the theory of action and moral philosophy; some of the contemporary reviews were mildly uncomprehending of what was

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going on; reading *Thought and Action* forty years later, some of Hampshire's *obiter dicta* retain a power to shock, but the project that animates the book has long since become part of the mainstream.

At the time of the publication of *Thought and Action*, Mary Warnock described Hampshire as an 'Aristotelian existentialist', an evocative phrase that catches the flavour of his writing, if not much of the detail. Hampshire's later account of Aristotle's contribution to ethics picks up the theme. On Hampshire's reading, Aristotle was right on one crucial issue—what 'good' means. A great deal of time could have been saved if this had been better understood. This was a rebuke to those who had profferred emotivist and imperativist analyses of 'good'. The larger point was enshrined in Hampshire's argument that what was needed was an analysis of the particular virtues, with due attention to the social and epistemological conditions that made sense of them. He has therefore sometimes been regarded as a communitarian ahead of his times. This slights the other striking feature of Hampshire's work, which was the emphasis, much influenced by his reading of psychoanalytic theory, on what he described as the 'unsocialized' mind.

While Hampshire had sided with Aristotle's view that the task of ethics was—in large part—to explicate the nature of the virtues, he was far from endorsing very many of Aristotle's substantive views, and over the years distanced himself still further from Aristotle. One of the pleasures of Hampshire's work was that he himself had a strong sense of how far he had travelled intellectually and perhaps more importantly morally. At the beginning of *Two Theories of Morality*, he reflects on the fact that we all have something like fifty years in which to make moral sense out of the world and our lives within it; children, as Aristotle said, were too busy being formed by others to embark on the process, but childhood over, we had, if we cared to undertake it, a project before us, in which we can draw on the assistance of other people, of imaginative literature, and of philosophy.

It usually appeared that Hampshire thought that most moral philosophy in the immediate post-war years had dropped below the level of interest or sophistication that was needed, though he always praised the insights of such authors as Ross and Prichard even when agreeing that they might have done well to choose more interesting examples. The standard he thought we should live up to was set, as it was in *Two Theories*, by the writers to whom Hampshire always returned for inspiration: Aristotle and Spinoza. This was not because one or other of them claimed his allegiance, let alone both. The idea that both might do so was

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absurd, since they represented the opposite poles of ethical thinking; the idea that one or other might was not at all absurd, but Hampshire had in fact come to think that there was little room for theory in ethics.

There was room for scrupulous and exact argument, and where argument was in place, nothing less than scrupulous and exact argument would do. But the ambition to systematise ethics was, he came to think, fundamentally mistaken. Morality was not 'about' one thing but many, and certainly about two very discordant things. On the one hand, there was the search for first principles that could claim universal validity and might plausibly be seen as the dictates of reason; on the other was the elaboration of ways of life, culturally grounded ways of dealing with the exigencies of existence that were quite obviously local in their reach. The tension was not always sharp, at least according to many philosophers, because it seemed to them that the local, culturally grounded ways of life and the attitudes and affections associated with them were also grounded in nature, and to that extent were the dictates of reason. But once it was claimed that the dictates of a local culture were also the dictates of nature, the door was open to unsettling questions about what it was that nature really demanded.

There is an interesting paragraph in *Two Theories* which justifies Mary Warnock's description of Hampshire as an Aristotelian existentialist. Looking back to the arguments of *Thought and Action*, Hampshire recalled that he had there emphasised that actions and intentions were susceptible to multiple descriptions, if not infinitely many, at any rate indefinitely many; 'I stressed the inexhaustibility of features that may be discriminated within situations requiring action and that may be morally interesting, and of the confinement within a morality left to itself, not to be further developed imaginatively, as a giving up of much of practical thinking.' Any one moral perspective, adopted once and for all, irrationally dictates only one set of acceptable reasons for action. When the argument, as it in this context, is directed against utilitarianism, it very elegantly illuminates the many tensions in J. S. Mill's attempt to make morality systematic and yet endlessly open to experiments in living.

It also illuminates Hampshire's criticisms of Aristotle's vision of the good life; in part, they are conventional, emphasising the narrowness of Aristotle's view of what sorts of good lives there were and the implausibility of his belief that there could be ultimate and unresolvable conflicts of obligation. But characteristically, Hampshire went beyond those observations to argue that what most thoroughly undermined Aristotle's ethics was the arrival of the modern world; a new sense of time and a new

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conception of freedom could not be accommodated within Aristotle's metaphysics and theory of action. Spinoza's theory of morality provided Hampshire with the foil he needed. This was not because Hampshire was himself much attracted to Spinoza's view that the good life culminated in a transcendence of time and space in thinking the thoughts of God, or at any rate, thinking with the freedom with which God thinks. Aspects of that view were attractive; liberation from irrational desire was certainly to be wished for and worked at. But Hampshire's exploration of the nature of ethical conviction led him to the view that in the last resort people had to choose between one way of life and another, and neither Aristotle nor Spinoza could show that one ideal was uniquely required by reason.

This became a more prominent theme of Hampshire's later thoughts on ethics and politics. Both in *Justice is Conflict* and *Innocence and Experience*, he pursued a line of thought that done in a less deft fashion might have seemed simply nihilistic or irrationalist. Hampshire subscribed to much of the ethically pluralist view of the world that Herbert Hart, Isaiah Berlin, and Bernard Williams shared, but he added nuances of his own. One was a focus on the difference between private and public virtue that followed, though it did not seem to do so quite exactly, a parallel distinction between the virtues of innocence and the virtues of experience; the sense in which it did so was, largely, that the virtues of innocence could be pursued in ways that guaranteed clean hands, while the virtues of experience were those proper to leaders, the visualisers of great projects, and the takers of risks. It was, and was intended as, a restatement of Machiavelli, but Machiavelli with a stronger sense of the costs of effectiveness in the public realm, and without any of Machiavelli's relish for dirty tricks as an art form. Nor was there any of Machiavelli's brusqueness about the relative attractions of different kinds of life; the virtues of innocence were not 'monkish,' nor suited only to those without the nerve to risk their necks in the political realm.

The most striking part of the argument, perhaps, was the analysis of justice. It was not quite true that Hampshire set himself against the dominant trend in political philosophy since John Rawls first sketched his account of the two principles of justice in the 1950s, but it was certainly true that where Rawls had set out to find constitutional and allocative principles that could command the conscientious allegiance of any rational person, Hampshire emphasised the role of justice in allowing us to live with conflict rather than trying to eliminate it. With some pulling and pushing, one could assimilate Hampshire's contrast between the realm of ultimate ideals where no convergence of view is to be expected—

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any more than a convergence of tastes in music and art—and the realm of those rules that allow us to live with each other in spite of our disagreements to Rawls's contrast between our metaphysical convictions and our commitment to the 'political' conception of justice. But the entire tone and purpose of *Justice is Conflict* and *Innocence and Experience* are too different to make any such enterprise worthwhile.

Hampshire was defending just what Rawls repudiated: the institutionalisation of compromise. He ended the lecture that was expanded into *Justice is Conflict* with a rousing defence of 'smart' (as distinct from 'shabby') compromise: 'To speak of a smart compromise, as opposed to the usual shabby one, is half serious. A smart compromise is one where the tension between contrary forces and impulses, pulling against each other, is perceptible and vivid and both forces and impulses have been kept at full strength: the tension of the Heraclitean bow.' The analogy that springs to mind is with an artistic performance, but Hampshire repudiates it, as he did elsewhere in discussion with Elaine Scarry. It is rather that we must not expect too much of reason, must expect to change our minds and must not expect to convince everyone else of our own unique wisdom. 'Let there be no philosopher-kings, and no substantial principles of justice which are to be permanently acceptable to all rational agents, seeking harmony and unanimous agreement. Rather political prudence, recognized as a high virtue, must expect a perpetual contest between hostile conceptions of justice and must develop acceptable procedures for regulating and refereeing the contest.'

To the end of his life, Hampshire was reworking his view of Spinoza. The posthumous volume, *Spinoza and Spinozism*, that reprints his *Spinoza* and his essay on Spinoza's view of freedom, begins with his last essay on Spinoza. The book provided what it was supposed to do: an account of Spinoza that stuck quite closely to Spinoza's own exposition of his views in the *Ethics* and *The Correction of the Understanding*. In this last essay, Hampshire allowed himself to reflect more freely on what one might do with Spinoza's insights in a world quite unlike the world he had lived in, and against a scientific background unlike that against which he was writing. The main thread is familiar; it is once again the 'double aspect' picture of human beings as embodied intelligences and all that flows from it; and as before, Hampshire defended one kind of materialism against all others. That is, he was utterly unconvinced by any form of reductive materialism, but happy to accept the Spinozistic view that the mental and the material were two aspects of the same single Nature, as it were the concave and convex faces of a sphere. This was not to subscribe

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to the panpsychism that some critics have thought Spinoza's system implied, though Hampshire found room for the thought that the question of how an individual entity of any degree of complexity maintained itself as such was something towards which Spinoza had pointed the way.

Nonetheless, Spinoza omitted too much from his picture of the freedom that was for him the only unequivocal and unqualified value. 'Spinoza wrote that we know and we feel that we are eternal. But we also know and we feel that we have moments of ecstasy, and momentary aspirations that go beyond reason, and we have obsessions that lead to the making of music, poetry, sculpture, architecture and dance. The uses of imagination are also paths to freedom, alongside the uses of reason.' Many philosophers have gestured at the importance of the imagination, but few have written as though they really meant it. Hampshire was one of those few.

Indeed, if one were looking for a passage of deeply felt argument to press on an intelligent person who wished to understand why philosophers were obsessed with the issues that in fact engross them, one very good place to look would be the Introduction to Hampshire's collected literary criticism, *Modern Writers and Other Essays*, published in 1969. Everyone who read Hampshire in *Encounter* or the *New York Review*—perhaps above all, everyone who read him in the *New Statesman*—was entranced by his reviews; he had an uncanny ability to depict the inner workings of an author's mind and to hold in balance an attention to the deeply individual features of a writer and to the culture in which he or she worked, and the universal features of human life that he or she illuminated. Hampshire discounted these essays as contributions to criticism properly speaking; this was not affectation but the reflection of a sense of the different tasks proper to the critic and the philosopher.

The critic ought, on this view, to tackle single works, one at a time, and evaluate them by the standards of the genre and the aspirations of those who worked in that genre. Hampshire, on the other hand, was doing what the remark quoted above suggested; he was trying to show the philosophically minded how they might nourish their imaginations, and was uncovering for the benefit of anyone interested the intellectual and theoretical allegiances that animated much modern literature. The account of *Dr Zhivago* that he wrote for *Encounter* was thought by Pasternak himself to be the most insightful of any; it is hard to believe that Pasternak did not flinch momentarily when Hampshire contrasted the chaotic and coincidence-driven narrative of *Zhivago* with the swift, decisive beginning of *Anna Karenina*, and hard to believe that he did not relax two pages

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later when Hampshire said that the book's deepest and most moving theme was 'the overwhelming need to communicate one's own individual experience, to add something distinctive to the always growing sum of the evidences of life', and that the inconsolable characters in the work were those who had never 'succeeded in communicating perfectly with one other person, giving the testimony of their own experience, either in love or in a work of art'. It is not surprising that the author of that sentence was so engaging, both in himself and on the page.

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