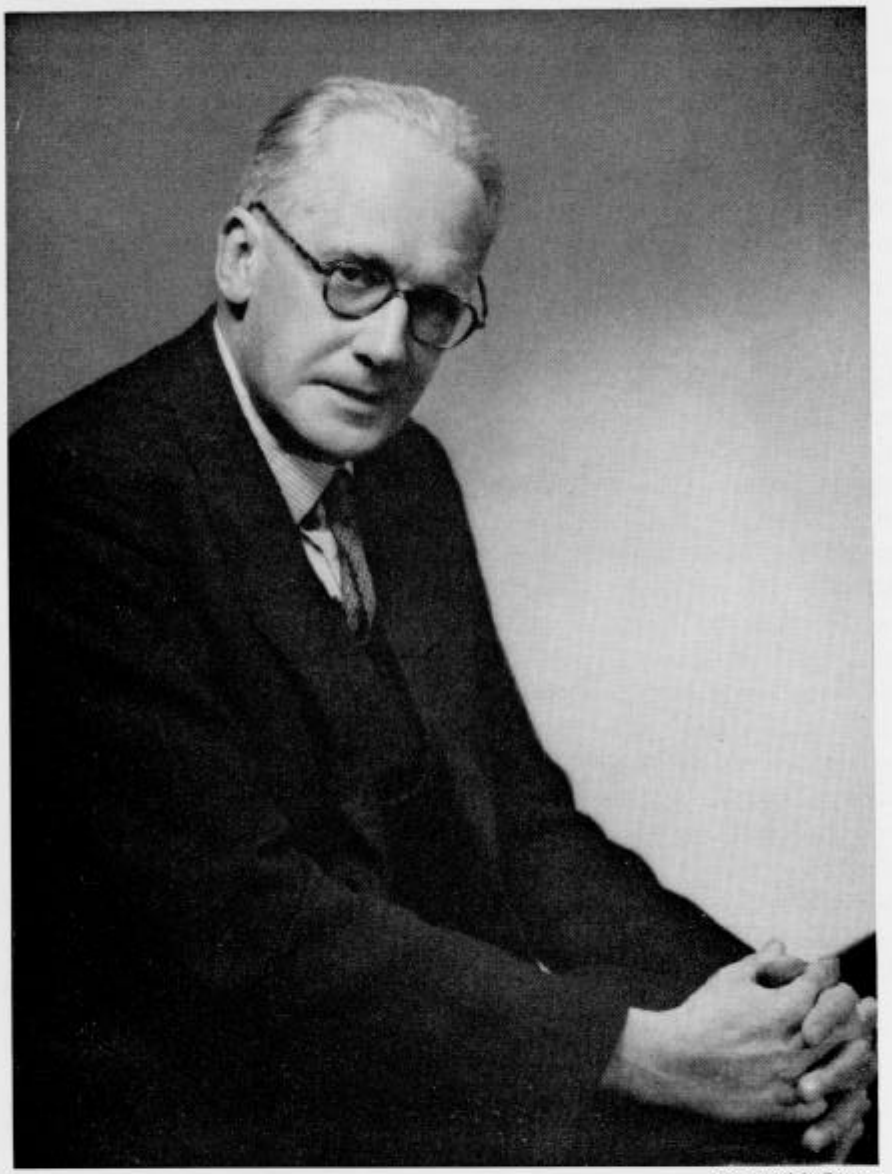
PLATE XX



Photograph by Bassano

HERBERT JAMES PATON

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1887–1969

HERBERT JAMES ('HAMISH') PATON was born on 30 March 1887 at Abernethy, Perthshire, where his father William Macalister Paton was Free Church minister. William Paton, an able and scholarly man, was a graduate of Glasgow and had taken second prize in the Logic class during his time there; Hamish's mother was Jean Robertson Miller, of a family which came from Paisley. Within seven years the Patons had four children (Hamish was one of twins) and must have been anything but well off, nevertheless everything suggests that Hamish was deeply attached to his boyhood home. In 1936 he bought a house only a few miles away at Bridge of Earn, and it was there that he spent his retirement and died.

In 1896 the Patons moved from Abernethy to Glasgow, which was to be William Paton's home for the rest of his working life. Hamish Paton was a pupil at Glasgow High School and a student at Glasgow University before going to Balliol College, Oxford, as Snell Exhibitioner in 1908. His main field of study in Glasgow was classics, in which he graduated with first-class honours. At Oxford he took firsts in Classical Moderations in 1909 and *Literae Humaniores* in 1911, and it was in the latter year that he was elected to a fellowship to teach classics and philosophy at Queen's College. In the First World War which broke out not long afterwards he was employed in the Intelligence Division of the Admiralty, along with his fellow-philosopher R. G. Collingwood. In 1919 Paton attended the Versailles Conference as a British expert on Polish affairs; later he wrote about the Polish Settlement in the official *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. After the war he returned to Oxford to act as Dean of his college and was Junior Proctor in the university in 1920; in both offices he was notably successful in dealing with the problems created by an undergraduate population made up in large part by men who had served in the war.

* I am grateful to the following who have supplied personal information: Miss Kerstin Dow, Lord Elton, Professor T. E. Wright, Sir Malcolm Knox, Professor Gilbert Ryle, Professor D. R. Cousin. I am also indebted to the editor of *Kantstudien* who gave permission to reproduce substantial parts of a shorter notice of Paton I wrote for that periodical.

By all accounts Paton made a careful and efficient Oxford tutor, and he had the good fortune to have a number of outstanding pupils during his time at Queen's, including Gilbert Ryle and Oliver Franks. He also left his mark on the college generally, through the work he did as a member of the Governing Body. But despite these successes he was already looking for wider worlds to conquer. In 1925 he went for a year to California as Laura Spelman Rockefeller Research Fellow, and it was there that he wrote his first philosophical book, *The Good Will*. A year after his return to Oxford, in 1927, he was appointed Professor of Logic and Rhetoric in his old university of Glasgow. The ten years he spent as professor in Glasgow were the most fruitful in Paton's professional life: during them he was engaged in working out his ideas about the *Critique of Pure Reason* and writing what were to be the two volumes of *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*. The publication of that work in 1936 established him at once as a major philosophical scholar, and it was perhaps no coincidence that he was invited to return to Oxford next year as White's Professor of Moral Philosophy. Unhappily his tenure of that office, which lasted until his retirement in 1952, included six years of war and two years of preparation for war. But even in the worst days there were pupils to teach, mostly servicemen on short courses, and Paton lectured to them in addition to doing a part-time job for the Foreign Office. He also continued his study of Kant, preparing the commentary on his ethical ideas which was eventually published as *The Categorical Imperative* in 1947. After the war he took an active part, along with his colleagues Gilbert Ryle and H. H. Price, in promoting postgraduate studies in philosophy at Oxford, particularly for the newly instituted degree of B.Phil. Paton held regular classes for the paper on Kant, and proved an exacting if always courteous taskmaster, those who turned up were expected not only to take their turn in introducing discussions, but to submit their ideas to Paton's critical scrutiny in advance. They may well not have liked it, but could hardly fail to profit from the experience.

In the last two years of his Oxford professorship Paton gave the Gifford lectures at St. Andrews, and his first task on returning to Scotland was to prepare these for the press. His connection with St. Andrews was strengthened by his appointment, in 1953, to the specially devised post of Crown Assessor on the University Court. The university had been weakened by dissension between constituent colleges in St. Andrews and Dundee, a commission

under Lord Tedder had transformed it into something like a federation. Paton saw his task on the Court as being to try to hold the two parts together, and to that end made himself freely available on both sides of the Tay. He also entered readily into more routine duties; he was especially useful as a member of committees concerned to make appointments to chairs. Paton was away from home for the year 1955–6, which he spent happily as a visiting professor in Toronto, but otherwise served St. Andrews continuously until his office came to an end in 1960.

Paton's last years were clouded with misfortune. His first wife, Sheila Todd-Naylor, whom he married in 1936, died in 1959, and his second wife Sarah Irene Macneile Dixon, daughter of a well-known Glasgow professor, lived for only two years after their marriage in 1962. Paton had no children of his own, but remained deeply attached to the younger members of his first wife's family. He kept up his many friendships to the last, though he was increasingly feeble after a spell in hospital in February 1969. He died on 2 August of that year.

Paton was a man of distinguished appearance, he had a fine head and dressed carefully. Without ever striving for effect in conversation he had a certain dry wit, and was always good company. His judgement in practical affairs was shrewd, as was shown not only by the work he did on the governing bodies of his Oxford colleges and on the Court at St. Andrews, but also in his editorship of the philosophical section of Hutchinson's University Library, which he made one of the best in a good series. Altogether, he had qualities which would have made him an excellent head of an Oxford college or a successful principal of a Scottish university; that he never attained either eminence is perhaps surprising. Some people found him too patrician in his manner, and he was certainly severe in his personal judgements in his years as a tutor at Queen's. But against this should be set his patience with pupils and the ready and generous help he gave to younger colleagues. It might further be mentioned that he got on particularly well with women, in much the same way, one supposes, as did David Hume; he was also much liked by children. The explanation of these paradoxes may be that he was at once a man of learning, an academic of academics, and someone who was fundamentally simple, without any love of intellectual subtlety for its own sake. Some saw the one side of him, some the other. But it was perhaps the simple side which was the more constantly influential.

Paton's interests outside philosophy were predominantly

practical. A friend writes that he 'seemed to know, and care, little about the arts or crafts, and seemed indifferent to architecture, furniture, pictures, and the like. In moments of relaxation he would read thrillers and do crosswords', or, one may add, play golf. But he always cared deeply about politics. *The Good Will* contains an emotional passage in which Paton declares that 'war, unless waged against an aggressor, is nothing but wholesale murder', and it is clear that the thought of good men lost in 1914–18 was at this time constantly in his mind. Paton tried to express his opposition to the old order by working for the League of Nations Union, on whose executive committee he served between 1939 and 1948. Apart from this his only real incursion into politics was in the last years of his life, when the problem of Scotland began to occupy his thoughts more and more. He worked on all aspects of this problem for ten years before publishing his book *The Claim of Scotland* in 1968. It is, on the surface, an urbane and polished work, like the other productions of its author, but one has only to read a chapter or two to see how deeply felt is its argument that Scottish interests and rights are given scant consideration in the present United Kingdom set-up. Paton in fact never joined the Scottish National Party, but like many other Scottish intellectuals he became more than sympathetic with much of its outlook, if not with its demand for total independence. And even this, as the book shows, was a possibility he was prepared to contemplate. He could see its disadvantages, but thought they might well have to be borne as an alternative to the destruction of so many things he held dear.

To Paton's English friends *The Claim of Scotland* came as something of a paradox. Here was a man who had spent more than half his working life in Oxford and had entered into the ways of that university with success and seeming approval, one who was at home in English society and appeared in it to great advantage, castigating the English for their insensitivity to the claims of others and pouring scorn on many of their favourite beliefs, for all the world like a writer to the *Scotsman*. The temptation to think that Paton's enthusiasm for Scottish nationalism was an aberration of his old age is strong, but it should be resisted. Like many Scots, Paton was cautious in showing his emotions; he tended, on this and other matters, to keep his opinions to himself. But he remained throughout his life deeply bound up with his native country: when friends suggested to him that it might have been more convenient to have a house in the south, he replied that they must remember what he owed to Scotland. He

resembled his hero Kant in wanting to realize cosmopolitan ideals. But he never thought that the pursuit of such ideals meant giving up one's original loyalties, and in Paton's case those loyalties were first to Scotland, in some degree to Great Britain, not at all to England as such. He admired many things English, and liked individual Englishmen, but that was as far as he would go.

Paton was a student at Glasgow and Oxford at a time when the philosophy of Absolute Idealism in the form given it by Bradley and Bosanquet still enjoyed wide support in British universities, and during his early career at least he would have had no hesitation in describing his philosophical standpoint as Idealist. He admired some non-Idealist philosophers at this stage, notably Samuel Alexander, but was moved comparatively little by the criticisms of Idealism advanced by Moore and Russell. It was not to these critics but to European thinkers such as Bergson and above all Croce that he looked for further philosophical advance. Paton owed his interest in Croce to his Oxford tutor J. A. Smith, who also made him alive to the importance of exact philosophical scholarship at a time when it was being increasingly said that what mattered in philosophy was problems rather than actual opinions.

Until he was almost forty Paton published very little, he then produced a large-scale work on ethics, in the shape of *The Good Will* (published in 1927). *The Good Will* has the subtitle 'A Study in the Coherence Theory of Goodness', its aim is to show that, just as the notion of truth can be understood in terms of coherent thinking, so can that of goodness be understood in terms of coherent willing. Goodness is not, as Moore said it was, something independent and indefinable, for if there were no such thing as willing nothing would be good or bad: 'to be good is to will (or to be willed) coherently'. Paton tried to make this unlikely conclusion palatable by arguing that human action normally took the form not of the doing of isolated acts, but of the carrying out of what he called a 'policy': action was adjusted not simply to the envisaged situation, but also in the light of what had been done and what was contemplated. The will was thus even at a low level constantly 'transcending' itself, in the sense of engaging in enterprises which went beyond the immediate moment. But it was a mistake to think that pursuing a policy meant carrying out a previously formulated plan. Such an 'intellectualistic' approach to conduct was profoundly mistaken, for it was with

practical rather than theoretical reason that the will was to be equated. A coherent will could accordingly not be assessed in terms of the internal consistency of its objects, but was, roughly, a will which was ongoing and not self-defeating. And men displayed such a will, first at the individual level, in bringing order into their personal lives; next at the social level, in co-operating with their fellows in common enterprises and in working the community's institutions; finally, on the level of mankind as a whole in co-operating with humanity generally. The fully coherent will was thus the moral will, it was a will which stood in harmony not only with itself, but with the wills of all other beings so far as they were moral.

There is much that is obscure in these doctrines, in particular it is not clear that Paton has shown more than that there is *some* connection between goodness and willing. That there is some connection is clear: this much at least Paton got right against Moore. The argument he set out in terms of willing is the argument others have presented more cogently in terms of wanting: unless there were such things as wants and the satisfaction of wants, nothing would be good or bad. But of course it is one thing to say this and another altogether to try to define goodness in terms of consistent or coherent wanting or willing. In a later discussion contributed to the Schilpp volume on G. E. Moore Paton spoke as if the proposition 'A good will is a coherent will' were to be taken as *synthetic*: coherence implies goodness, and goodness coherence, but the two are not identical. But this of course leaves the question what more there is to a good will besides its coherence, and on this Paton has little or nothing to say. In general, the weakness of his ethical theory lies in failure to deal adequately with the objective side of value: he is so anxious to connect goodness with willing that he forgets that a will must have a content as well as a form. No doubt devotion to the common Idealist slogan about the inseparability of form and content, subject and object, helped to conceal this important truth from him, and the fact that his own brand of Idealism was that of Croce, with its all too slight emphasis on the negative element in Spirit, could well have contributed to the same result.

The Good Will is not free from faults, but it is by no means a negligible book, and it certainly deserved a better reception than it got. The time of its appearance was unfortunate, for it came out when the thesis that truth is coherence was beginning to seem ever less plausible, and when Idealist claims in ethics were under sharp attack from Prichard as well as Moore on the

ground that they blurred what could be shown to be distinct. Paton did little to meet such attacks, and as a result his book provoked no controversy. In setting it aside, however, readers were overlooking its points of strength, above all the emphasis on the social dimension of morality and the attempt to show that the truly good man goes beyond the standards of any particular society and conforms to the requirements of an ideal community. In putting these views forward Paton was, of course, far from original: his book in these respects was no more than an up-to-date version of the ethics of T. H. Green. But the lesson he repeated here was one which needed repetition, as anyone reading other ethical writings of the period will now agree. Moral philosophers must not only be logically sharp, but also have a sense of moral reality. Paton certainly had the second, and if he was not so sharp logically in 1927 as he became later he was not wholly incompetent in this respect either. His arguments deserved study, even if they did not fully support the conclusions to which he thought they led.

In the preface to *The Good Will* Paton acknowledged indebtedness to Kant, but spoke as if he owed more to Plato and 'to the great tradition, written and unwritten, of English idealism'. His lectures to the Logic class in Glasgow were, initially at least, still largely coloured by Crocean ideas. But his private thinking was more and more directed on the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the main achievement of his Glasgow years, and indeed of his philosophical life generally, was the detailed commentary he produced on the first half of that work.

To understand Paton's approach to the first *Critique* it is necessary to say a little about attitudes to Kant then prevailing in Britain. Three writers on Kant were influential in British philosophical circles at the time. First, Edward Caird, whose *Critical Philosophy of Kant* had appeared in its original form as far back as 1877, but who continued to be read as a clear and comprehensive expositor. Caird was an Hegelian who argued that Kant was right to maintain the thesis of transcendental idealism, but wrong to try to set limits to the sphere of knowledge. Kant glimpsed the truth in his doctrine of ideas of reason, but then shied away from it. Next, the Oxford philosopher H. A. Prichard, who in his powerfully argued book *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (1909) had challenged the whole idea that the objects of human knowledge might be constituted, even in part, by mind. For Prichard the very possibility of knowledge presupposed the existence of independent objects; knowing and making

were totally different in kind. The object of detailed study of the *Critique*, for Prichard, was to expose the contradictions into which Kant was led in seeking to evade these obvious truths. Third, Norman Kemp Smith, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh, who had written the most recent and most detailed commentary on the *Critique* in the English language (1st edition, 1918; 2nd edition, 1923). Kemp Smith was deeply influenced by the ideas of Adickes and above all Vaihinger; he took it as established that the *Critique* is in some sense a mosaic of passages composed at widely different dates, and that in consequence it contains a good deal of internal inconsistency. Kemp Smith was certainly not unappreciative of Kant's philosophical merits, but he expounded him even so as a writer who was unable to follow his ideas to their logical conclusions or to free himself from doctrines which in his better moments he knew to be erroneous.

Caird, Prichard, and Kemp Smith agreed in thinking Kant a major philosopher, yet all three regarded him as fundamentally confused. It was this verdict Paton set out to challenge. He began by questioning the general approach to the *Critique* favoured by Kemp Smith and his German predecessors, devoting his important paper 'Is the Transcendental Deduction a Patchwork?' (1930) to a minute examination of the ideas of Vaihinger on the subject. The result of the examination was distinctly unfavourable. Next year came 'The Key to Kant's Deduction of the Categories', in which Paton attempted a defence of the Metaphysical Deduction against what he described as 'the orthodox theory' that 'for Kant the forms of judgement are forms of analytic judgement only'. That they were was maintained by, among others, Kemp Smith. The latter was emerging as the primary target for Paton's criticism in the commentary on the *Critique* on which he was now engaged, and which was published as *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* in 1936. But he was only one target among others, for if Paton wanted to show against Kemp Smith that Kant had a coherent and unitary doctrine, he also wanted to show against Caird and Prichard that the general position he took up was philosophically defensible.

The great merit of *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* is that it treats Kant's text with the seriousness it deserves. It begins with the simple and perhaps not unreasonable assumption that a great philosopher will not only know his own mind, but also have at least some degree of competence in expressing it. Paton never denied the difficulty of following Kant's argument (at one

point he compared finding one's way through the Transcendental Deduction to crossing the Great Arabian Desert), but equally he never tried to evade what he took to be his first responsibility as a commentator, to make as much sense of the text as he could. To this task he brought a variety of useful qualities: endless patience, great persistence, exegetical skill of the kind shown by the best classical scholars. Passages from the entire corpus of Kant's writings were adduced to support or confute an interpretation; enormous care was taken to ferret out the precise meaning of particular words or phrases, and to find a way of taking particular arguments which would not only make them internally intelligible, but also render them consistent with what was argued elsewhere in the *Critique*. Paton commented on the Aesthetic and Analytic not only paragraph by paragraph, but often line by line; he undertook to explain Kant's meaning in a way never before attempted in English, and perhaps not in German either.

As an expounder of Kant in Kantian, or near-Kantian, terms Paton very largely succeeded. The patchwork thesis, if not finally overthrown, was at any rate discredited in its existing forms. Many prevalent misunderstandings, like the one about forms of judgement referred to above, were quietly cleared away. It became possible for an English reader to follow large parts of Kant's arguments which had previously proved opaque. Paton left some obscurities as an interpreter, it was, for example, not clear where he stood on the status of 'appearances', or what he meant when he said that for Kant there was only one space and one time. Was the one space public to many observers or not? Paton's Kant did not always have unequivocal answers to such questions, and sometimes he had seemingly not even put them to himself. But he was, even so, largely intelligible when taken in his own terms, and he had large philosophical insights which Paton set clearly before his readers. How much of an improvement this constituted is probably best known to persons like myself who, at the time Paton's book appeared, were struggling to master Kant on the basis of resources available in English. I can testify that in my own case the resulting enlightenment was profound.

On the philosophical level *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* was less successful. Those who were antipathetic to Kant (and there were more then than there are now) complained that Paton had expounded Kant in his own language, and so explained nothing. The charge was a little unfair, but had enough substance to win

wide acceptance. Nor were more sympathetic readers altogether satisfied with Paton's defence of his author. They noted his tendency to content himself with saying that a proposition was plausible when he should have been asking if it was true, and they observed his relative unwillingness to face fundamental criticisms, such as those produced by Prichard. The scope of the book in any case precluded thorough discussion of the points of view adopted by Caird and Prichard, neither of which could be dealt with satisfactorily without a lengthy examination of the Antinomies. Paton never extended his commentary to cover the Dialectic, nor did he at any time pronounce on what was living and what dead in the *Critique of Pure Reason.* It may be that at this stage of his career he had become too absorbed in Kant to stand back and assess him independently. But even if this is so (and it is instructive that both Jonathan Bennett and R. P. Wolff among recent writers on Kant clearly find Kemp Smith more philosophically rewarding), we should not allow that fact to blind us to the very real merits of Paton's work. As a piece of exegesis it is masterly. And if too often it fails to raise basic philosophical questions about Kant, it nevertheless supplies a foundation on which such questions can be posed. Before you can ask whether what an author says is true, you have to find out what it is that he says.

Paton's exchange of a chair in logic for one in moral philosophy gave him the opportunity of turning his attention to Kant's ethics, which became his main centre of interest from 1937 onwards. His method of working was much as it had been in the case of Kant's theoretical philosophy: he lectured on Kant continuously, produced a series of preliminary studies, and finally came up with a book. The preliminary studies in this case included a striking lecture entitled 'Can Reason be practical?' (1943) and a paper called 'Kant's Idea of the Good' (1944). The book was *The Categorical Imperative*, published in 1947. An elegant translation of the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, on which it is almost a commentary, appeared in the same year under the slightly misleading title *The Moral Law.* By general agreement it is among the most successful of English versions of philosophical classics. It brings out the eloquence of the original, without sacrifice of accuracy or resort to paraphrase.

I described *The Categorical Imperative* as 'almost a commentary' on the *Grundlegung*; Paton himself gave it the subtitle 'A Study in Kant's Moral Philosophy'. It is a commentary in so far as topics are treated in an order which corresponds to that in which

they appear in the *Grundlegung*, a study in so far as Paton supplements their discussion there by exploring the background at some length. It is *not* a study in the sense of an independent attempt to state what was distinctive in Kant's ethical thought and to assess its importance; there is, for example, no direct comparison between Kant's way of thinking about the moral life and that of, say, Aristotle or Hume. As in Paton's earlier book the main effort is devoted to making clear the internal articulation of what Kant has to say and to clearing away persistent misunderstandings about it. Paton certainly seems to accept Kant's ethical doctrines with a confidence altogether greater than he showed in Kant's epistemology; his exposition gains considerably in interest and vigour as a result of this fact. But here again the limits within which he permits himself to speculate are narrow, and there is a certain reluctance to raise fundamental questions, a reluctance which springs in part from a desire to put first things first, in part perhaps from philosophical timidity.

The interpretation of Kant's ethical thought offered by Paton contained certain novelties. Most prominent among these was the insistence, against many conventional critics, that Kant was not a formalist in any pejorative sense of that term. It was not true, in the first place, that Kant thought of men as making their moral decisions in a vacuum: for Kant as for the rest of us men have wants and inclinations, pursue purposes and consider the consequences of their acts. Moral judgements come in only when they reflect on what they propose to do and ask themselves if the maxim of their projected action could form part of a scheme of universal legislation. But it was a mistake, Paton thought, to lay undue stress on the first formulation of the categorical imperative, with its strongly logical overtones. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* what Paton called 'the formula of autonomy' took pride of place, and even in the *Grundlegung* the principle in its abstract form was made concrete by means of the notions of a law of nature, an end in itself and a kingdom of ends. The Hegelian charge that Kant had only one moral injunction, to pursue moral consistency, thus fell to the ground, for it emerged that Kant had a plurality of internally connected criteria for deciding what was permissible or forbidden. In estimating the value of his theory, however, we must judge it on its merits and not through its application in the *Grundlegung* itself. Kant could have been wrong in the examples he offered and nevertheless remained correct about his central principles.

One of Paton's main aims, here as generally in his exegesis of Kant, was to show that Kant held a sensible doctrine; Kant as understood by many of his critics was, he believed, ingenious but silly. Paton's chief contribution to the understanding of Kant's ethics was to bring out this sensible quality, and in doing so to dissipate some widespread illusions. It is safe to say that the level of philosophical discussion on this whole subject has been raised appreciably as a result of Paton's work, just because criticism can now be brought to bear on the real Kant instead of a man of straw. One wonders, even so, if Paton's Kant is not sometimes a bit too sensible. Although, of course, Paton comments at length on the third part of the *Grundlegung* he is apt to take the doctrine of the two standpoints as something which has no particular mystery about it; he does not emphasize its origins in the strange speculations of the *Träume*, and so has less to say than he might about the non-natural character of moral activity as Kant saw it. Again, by confining his study of Kant's moral theory largely to the *Grundlegung* he exempts himself from any comment on the postulates of practical reason, though as Hegel saw these are far more an integral part of Kant's ethical thinking than a sensible man might wish to believe. But to say this is only to point out that Paton's work is incomplete, not that it is unsound within its own limits. In these terms it is, indeed, a major success. It offers a rare example of a philosophical scholar setting himself a task and carrying it out in full.

Paton continued to work on Kant until shortly before his death, his last production, an essay entitled 'Kant on the Errors of Leibniz', appeared in Lewis White Beck's *Kant Studies Today* in 1969, but he never again wrote a book on Kant. Instead, his main philosophical effort after his retirement was devoted to putting into book form the Gifford lectures he had given in St. Andrews. They appeared as *The Modern Predicament* in 1955.

The task of a Gifford lecturer, as Paton understood it, was to address himself to thinking men generally rather than to specialists in philosophy or theology. Accordingly he tried in his book to present complicated arguments in relatively simple terms and, wherever possible, to avoid technical jargon. The results, as might have been expected, were mixed. The educated public generally liked the book, which had reached its fourth printing by 1967; they found it to be lucid, well-planned, and well-written. Reviewers in the professional journals were less complimentary, they complained that the book contained comparatively little in the way of taxing argument, and that points

were indicated rather than established. They were undoubtedly looking for something which Paton did not profess to provide. Whether he could have provided it, in a different sort of book on the same general subject, is an interesting question.

The 'predicament' faced by modern man arises, according to Paton, from the now exacerbated conflict between science and religion. The world in which we live is one in which science goes from strength to strength, so much so that people have come to believe, willingly or unwillingly, that the scientist must have the ultimate answer to every question. Without wishing to denigrate scientific achievements Paton argues that there is no reason to accept this conclusion. There are many things on which the scientist neither has nor can have anything to say: the whole sphere of morals, for instance. Values cannot be deduced from facts, with the result that no amount of successful inquiry into fact can throw light on what is to be done. And morals are, in a way, bound up with religion, though not in the manner favoured by older writers who equated 'this is good' with 'this is commanded by God'. The connection is rather that the absolute character of moral obligation as it were points forward and gives substance to the thought of an infinite being which we acquire in religious experience. Religion is not mere fancy or a mere fairy-tale, it has, as writers like Otto and Buber have made clear, a genuine experiential basis. But the basis is peculiar in that it is the experiencing of a subject, not an object; in religious experience we do not encounter one more fact, or one more area of fact, among others. If we did there would be nothing to prevent the scientist appropriating the fact and interpreting it in his own way. But his procedures are, as it turns out, quite unsuitable to the religious situation, and they are that because that situation is one where person confronts person, rather than person scrutinizes thing.

In the course of his book Paton more than once expresses dissatisfaction with metaphysics of the old-fashioned kind: the sort of solution to the conflict between science and religion which he must have favoured in his younger days is now ruled out. Philosophy cannot rival science by revealing facts about an order of being superior to that known through the senses. Nor will it do, he argues, to accept a version of the double-aspect theory according to which science and religion can each be pronounced true on its own ground; that savours too much of double-think, and means in effect trying to have your cake and eat it. The trouble is to see what Paton's own solution amounts to if it does

not fall under one of these two heads. It is plain enough that science is limited, in the sense that there are some things on which scientists do not profess to pronounce, at least in their professional capacity; if that is so there is certainly a field left for morals, if not for religion. But it would not follow that this is a field for truth, though obviously enough an enormous amount turns on whether or not it is. The real weakness of Paton's studies in philosophy of religion is that they do not raise the all-important question of the logical status of religious claims, they do not inquire whether, strictly, they can be taken as asserting or denying what is the case. Paton certainly touches on this question, as for instance where he points out that God cannot on any account be an existent like any other, and argues that perhaps for this reason he should not be described as an existent at all. But unlike his master Kant Paton undertakes no detailed examination of the status of religious belief, he scarcely sees that it might be wholly different in kind from belief about matter of fact. In *The Good Will* (p. 430) he had written that 'it is difficult to be satisfied with the Kantian view that our practical reason entitles us to a faith in the character of the real which can at most be considered as not impossible by the theoretical reason'. It is indeed difficult. But when he wrote those words Paton accepted the general metaphysics of idealism; in protesting against 'a divorce between the practical and the theoretical reason' he was sustained by the confidence that theoretical reason could establish that reality is spirit. By the time he came to write *The Modern Predicament* Paton had retreated from that position: Kant (or perhaps Professor Ayer) had convinced him that knowledge of ultimate reality is impossible, and he now found himself asserting no more than that the world we know in everyday life and science is a 'between world' which points to but does not reveal the true nature of things. Do morals and religion enable us to know how things really are? My suspicion is that Paton thought they did, but could not quite bring himself to say so, since he could not solve the philosophical problems involved. But failing such a solution his position must necessarily remain incomplete, and could ultimately satisfy neither philosopher nor common man.

Paton was not a major figure as an independent philosopher. *The Good Will* is an ambitious work which set out to restate the central principle of Idealist ethics in a new form; it certainly deserved more attention than it attracted, but it did not, for all

that, succeed in establishing its claims, or even in making them clear. That Paton had a strong sense of moral reality was allowed by all reviewers of the book, that he had decisively confuted Moore or made a strong case for equating goodness with coherent willing was less generally agreed. Large parts of the book were devoted to a useful but uncontroversial sketch of certain aspects of the moral life; so far from generating argument they could only induce torpor. One is tempted to think that the explanation of this is to be found in a certain timidity in the author, he felt in his bones that the kind of philosophy on which he had been brought up was not satisfactory, and at this stage had nothing to put in its place. Later he found a substitute in the philosophy of Kant, but did this, in effect, at the cost of transforming himself from a philosopher to a philosophical scholar. True, *The Modern Predicament* makes independent philosophical claims, and though the influence of Kant is strong it is not untempered. The argument that religion has an experiential basis is not exactly Kantian, and there are respects in which the influence of Idealism continues, particularly in some of the things said about science. But the book, as already explained, moves at a relatively unsophisticated level: it is the puzzles of the plain man, not those of the professional philosopher, that Paton seeks to dispel. There is enlightenment for the plain man, and there are ideas for the philosopher, but generally Paton achieves less than he might have hoped. He sets out a position which is undoubtedly widely held, but does comparatively little to make it palatable.

It is rather as a philosophical scholar that Paton will be remembered. His work on Kant is not to everyone's taste, it does not satisfy the non-Kantian who wants to be shown in his own terms that Kant has something important to say, and even among specialists there are some who find it inadequate. Kemp Smith was undoubtedly much too obsessed with the composition of the *Critique*, but he managed, despite this, to present Kant as a living thinker. For Paton he was always a middle-of-the-road philosopher, eminently reasonable but just a trifle dull. However, it must be said on the other side that Paton has the enormous merit of commenting on what Kant said and doing his best to make it clear, without going off into this or that blind alley. If you want to know what some obscure sentence in the first half of the *Critique* means you look in Paton before you look anywhere else; if he does not deal with it the chances are that no-one will. After reading Paton one can at any rate find one's

way inside Kant's system, even if one may still be far from clear about one's external orientation. That may seem to some a minor achievement, but only those who have struggled with Kant without benefit of Paton know how great it is. What Paton accomplished here can be seen if we reflect that, though we now have a comparable commentary by Lewis White Beck on the second *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgment* still awaits this sort of exegesis. The fact is that there are whole paragraphs, and indeed whole sections, of that important and intriguing work whose meaning remains obscure. We should be in the same position about much of the first *Critique* and the *Grundlegung* if it were not for the efforts of Paton.

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