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An Emendation of R. G. Collingwood's Doctrine of Absolute Presuppositions

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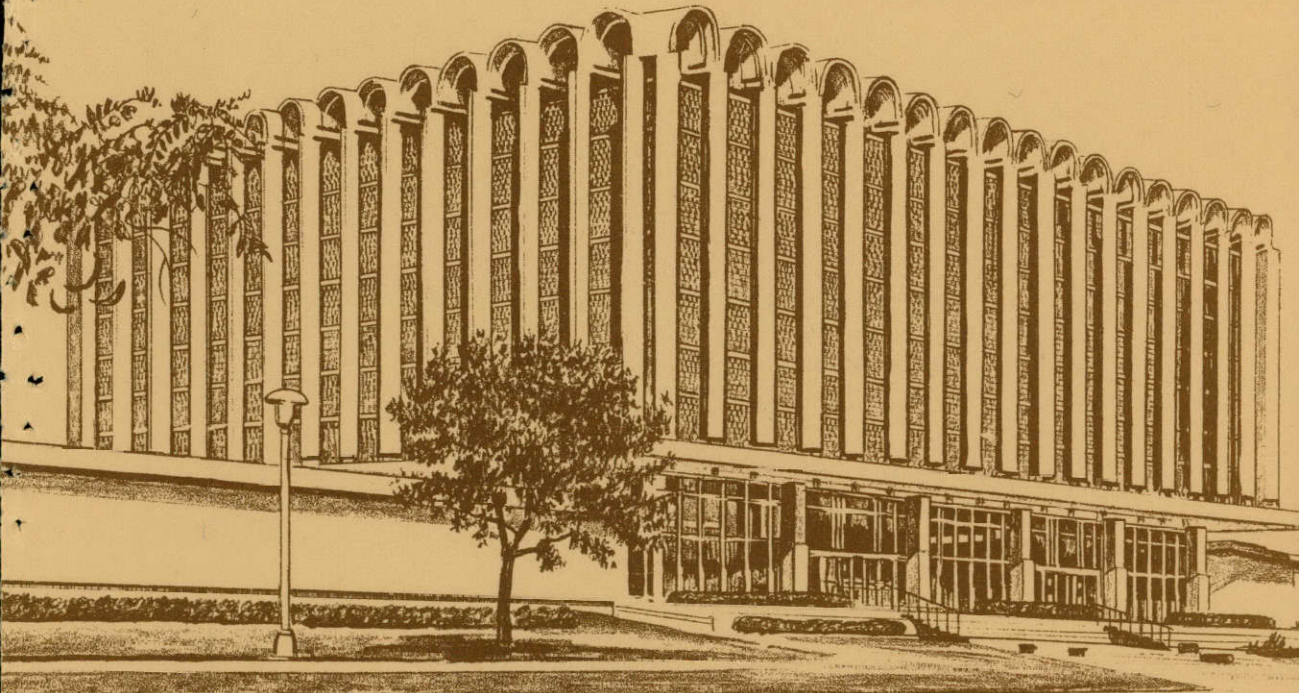
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This essay has several intertwined purposes. My primary goal is to provide a reinterpretation and revision of Collingwood's Doctrine of Absolute Presuppositions and his theory of the nature of metaphysics. My central thesis is that Collingwood's absolute presuppositions are basically beliefs that function in a certain way, and that what he calls metaphysics is actually the study of belief systems. In addition to presenting and defending this thesis, I shall be trying to show some parallel's between Collingwood's position concerning the nature of metaphysics and what I take to be similar points in the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce.[1] I trust that this essay will be of interest as a work in philosophy, but I also hope that it will be of theoretical value to scholars in anthropology and folkloristics who deal with world views and other belief-related phenomena, as well as to students of the sociology of knowledge and historians who work in intellectual history.

Briefly stated, Collingwood claimed that metaphysics

> is no futile attempt at knowing what lies beyond the limits of experience, but is primarily at any given time an attempt to discover what the people of that time believe about the world's general nature. . . . Secondarily, it is the attempt to discover the corresponding presuppositions of other peoples and other times, and to follow the historical process by which one set of presuppositions has turned into another.[2]

A key factor in this presentation is my interpretation of Collingwood's basic term, 'presupposition.' In order to get a preliminary idea of his intention for this term, consider the following characterization which introduces a chapter entitled "On Presupposing" in his *An Essay on Metaphysics*.

> Whenever anybody states a thought in words, there are a great many more thoughts in his mind than there are expressed in his statement. Among these there are some which stand in a peculiar relation to the thought he has stated; they are not merely its context, they are its presuppositions.[3]

The term 'presuppose' is quite common in contemporary academic discussion, and one should not assume immediately that Collingwood's use of the word is identical with any one of these.[4] In what follows I shall urge that Collingwoodian

1. References to materials published in the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1-6, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds., vols. 7-8, Arthur Burks, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965 and 1966), are cited using the volume and paragraph numbers separated by a period, so that "5.20" refers to volume 5, paragraph 20. Peirce's unpublished writings from the microfilm edition of the Peirce manuscripts, available from Harvard University Library, are cited with the manuscript number according to Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalog of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967) and the page number according to Peirce's manuscript pagination.

2. R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1939), p. 66.

3. R. G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 21.

4. An article that provides a helpful summary of some of the more frequent meanings for the word is that of Vergil H. Dykstra, "Philosophers and Presuppositions," *Mind*, 69(1960):63-68.

presupposition is more comparable to what has been called contextual implication[5] than to many of the various senses of 'presupposition' known today. Collingwood used the term to refer to a relation standing between a communicative act and its context rather than to refer to some unique entity that is a presupposition *sui generis*. Such an interpretation, stressing the contextual nature of the phenomenon Collingwood called 'presupposing' provides, I believe, a basis for gaining a clearer understanding of his doctrine of absolute presuppositions.

COLLINGWOOD'S STUDY OF QUESTIONING

Collingwood developed his fundamental notion of presupposition within the context of his remarks on questioning. His account of the relationship between presupposing and questioning is presented principally in chapter four of the *Essay*[6] by means of a series of propounded propositions and definitions with a running commentary, in much the same "geometrical" style as that favored by Spinoza, although I am sure that in Collingwood's case it is merely a stylistic device, for he does not think that metaphysics is a deductive science.[7] Proposition two states: "Every question involves a presupposition."[8] In the commentary one learns more about the crucial term 'presupposition'. First, any single question directly or immediately involves just one presupposition. Second, this presupposition may in turn have other presuppositions, which are said to be indirect presuppositions of the original question. That is, the immediate presupposition of a particular question could itself be an answer for another question, which, of course (according to proposition two), also has just one immediate presupposition. An example similar to one Collingwood used[9] might be helpful here. In examining an excavation, an archaeologist could ask: "Does this mark mean 'man'?" The immediate presupposition of this question would be that this mark means something. This presupposition is in turn an answer to the question "Is this mark part of this piece of writing?" And the last question immediately presupposes that this is a piece of writing. But the direct or immediate presupposition of the latter question would be, according to Collingwood, an indirect presupposition of the first question.

This example I have used is a question of the form "Is X a Y?" There are other question forms, for instance, "What is X?" or "Why is X?" or "How is X?" I propose to establish a somewhat broad distinction between the former kind of question (questions having both a subject and predicate) and the kind represented

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5. See Isabel Hungerland, "Contextual Implication," *Inquiry*, 3(1960):211-258. As my discussion unfolds, a debt to Hungerland's view will be apparent.

6. The topic of questioning appears at two other points in Collingwood's works: *An Autobiography* and *Speculum Mentis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 76-80. However, the notion of presupposing is not mentioned in either of these two works, at least not in conjunction with his remarks on questioning. Furthermore, the material in *Essay on Metaphysics* appears to cover all the points mentioned in these earlier works. So, I shall depend primarily upon *Essay on Metaphysics* as a source for Collingwood's view on the relationship between questioning and presupposing.

7. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 67-68.

8. *Ibid.*, 25.

9. *Ibid.*, 26-27.

here by the latter three cases (questions with a subject and an "open" predicate position). Questions such as "What is X?" I shall call unsaturated. In describing unsaturated questions, I shall use only the "what" case, leaving it to the reader to fill in the similar details in the case of questions using words such as "why" or "how." "What is X?" is a request for (or an indication of the lack of) knowledge about X. This can be more easily seen if we transpose the question to the equivalent form, "X is————?" In other words, the questioner desires that the blank be filled correctly. Note that there are usually a large number of responses that possibly could fill this blank. This empty slot that the questioner wants filled is what characterizes unsaturated questions. On the other hand, I would describe "Is X a Y?" as a saturated question, because there are no slots or blanks that need to be filled—the answer can be given as either "yes" or "no." Furthermore, saturated questions can, in many cases, be viewed as instances of unsaturated questions that have the empty slot filled, although they remain questions because the empty slot is not filled with confidence, as it were. Thus, one might first ask, "What is X?" which means "X is————?" followed by a thought that X could be Y, so the further question, "Is X a Y?" is posed in order to find out the correct answer (that is, whether X is Y, or X is not Y). If it is correct that X is not Y, the process is often repeated with a new candidate (for instance, "X is Z") whereby the original question can become correctly saturated in the affirmative mode. In discussing questioning, Collingwood used both saturated and unsaturated questions as examples. It is clear that his theory of presupposing is meant to be applicable to both kinds. For the most part, however, I shall be discussing saturated questions.

Collingwood used the term "logical efficacy" to refer to something that causes a particular question to "arise." He did not define this notion clearly, although he did provide a few comments about it. The supposition that some sentence is the case is said to have the same logical efficacy as a statement that that sentence is the case.[10] Assumptions (suppositions, which are made consciously for the sake of argument) and presuppositions (which also are suppositions) also have logical efficacy. This property or aspect of assumptions, suppositions, and presuppositions does not depend on their being true or being thought true, but only on their being supposed. Collingwood claimed that there are clear examples of this last point in both everyday life and in the conduct of science

> where it is possible and often profitable to argue from suppositions which we know to be false, or which we believe to be false, or concerning which we have neither knowledge nor belief as to whether they are false or true.[11]

One aspect of Collingwood's work on the nature of questioning that easily could be overlooked is the fact that his line of research was directed by a particular outlook. He was investigating what might be called normal and serious occasions of questioning. His objective, as I see it, was to present a characterization of how such occasions or acts could be successful. I have found no passages in

10. *Ibid.*, 27.
11. *Ibid.*, 28.

which Collingwood expressly stated that this was his research goal; however, there are a few suggestive comments from which one can infer that he was intent upon studying what constitutes a normal act of questioning.[12] But in the main I must rest my case for this claim about Collingwood's goal upon the kinds of tactics that he employed in his method of work on the "logical" nature of questioning. He made the kinds of moves one would expect if he were interested in analysing the normal context. Specifically, his technique revolved around discovering what look like necessary conditions for the successful occurrence of normal questioning as a form of communication. His claim that a question cannot be asked "logically" unless its immediate presupposition has been made, was expressed metaphorically by stating that without its immediate presupposition, a question "does not arise." 'Can't be asked logically' and 'does not arise' in these uses seem to make the best sense when interpreted as expressive of some abnormality in the communicative context, an abnormality caused by the lack of a necessary condition, or (to be more accurate) caused by the lack of a condition which is present in a successful normal question (what I am describing as abnormality is, I believe, rather like what some contemporary philosophers, such as Gilbert Ryle, call "oddness"). Collingwood's admission that "verbally" a question can be asked without presupposing anything would then mean that although such an expression might be grammatically correct, it would not be normal. This comment of his serves, by the way, to indicate another necessary condition of questioning, namely that the linquistic expression of a question must be grammatically correct. Consider also the term 'logical efficacy'. If one interprets the phrase 'this question arises' as meaning (in part, at least) that a particular questioning act is successful and normal, then to say that a presupposition is logically efficacious in causing a question to arise would be a way of referring to the putative fact that in normally composing such an act of communication this presupposition has an important and indispensable function.

One other aspect of Collingwood's discussion of questions deserves attention. A fairly strong case can be made that he was discussing questions that are raised for the purpose of informing the questioner. It is clear that Collingwood's theory of presupposing is based on what occurs within the conduct of what he called "high-grade" or "scientific" thinking. He stresses this throughout the discussion of presupposing. If a man is thinking scientifically when he makes a statement, "he knows that his statement is the answer to a question and knows what that question is."[13] High-grade thinking also depends on an increase in mental effort. Collingwood described that in this manner.

> Increase of mental effort brings about not only a difference of degree in the intensity of thinking but also a difference of kind in its quality. At the lowest level of intensity, as

12. Just prior to discussing the series of "propositions" through which he propounds his theory, Collingwood warns (*Essay on Metaphysics*, 23): "I shall not be trying to convince the reader of anything, but only to remind him of what he already knows perfectly well." In introducing the notion of the presuppositions of a question, he states that (*Essay on Metaphysics*, 25) "ordinarily a question involves large numbers of them." See also pages 172 and 185 for similar comments. These utterances are somewhat vague, but they do provide some explicit textual evidence for my contention that Collingwood's principal intention was to examine questioning as it occurs in normal contexts of "thought."

13. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 24.

we have seen, one is conscious only of 'intuiting' or 'apprehending' what presents itself to one's mind. To say that it presents itself to one's mind is only a way of saying that one thinks about it without noticeable effort. When one becomes aware of effort, one becomes aware of a mental hunger that is no longer satisfied by what swims into one's mouth. One wants what is not there and will not come of itself. One swims about hunting for it. This ranging of the mind in search of its prey is called asking questions.[14]

The final sentence quoted above suggests another point about raising a question in order to get information. That sentence could be taken as a claim that questioning for the purpose of becoming informed is the central kind of questioning upon which all questions for other purposes are conceptually dependent. For example, one can ask questions to stimulate another person to think, or to amuse someone. In neither of these two cases does one ask the question for the purpose of getting information. Yet such cases seem to make sense only if one understands that the central case is questioning in order to be informed. I take Collingwood to be stating that what we call questioning in the basic and central sense is questioning in which we are in search of "prey." Thus I conclude that the kind of presupposing Collingwood was discussing occurs within the conduct of "scientific" thinking, which he believed was asking questions for the purpose of gaining information. Furthermore, I believe that he regarded questioning undertaken for that purpose to be the central and standard kind of questioning upon which questioning for other purposes is conceptually dependent.[15]

Collingwood apparently thought that the account of questioning summarized above was sufficient to make clear his basic concept of presupposing. But there are grounds for claiming that he did not succeed completely. Collingwood is not explicit about the nature of the relationship between a question and the phenomenon he calls its presupposition. Also, he did not fully explicate the means by which one can come to say that thus-and-so is the presupposition of a particular question; he only noted that it is done by a "kind of analysis."[16] I attribute the lack of these details to a pair of factors. First, Collingwood placed an undue reliance upon unexplained metaphors in developing his view, and second, he did not fully carry out the aims of his research program. Perhaps he fell short of his mark because he did not grasp the full import of the task he had set for himself, a situation not unusual in the work of a pioneer in a new area or style of inquiry. If my interpretation of the nature of his work is correct, Collingwood would be just such an innovator in the study of the philosophical aspects of communication; for example, there are similarities between Collingwood's view

14. *Ibid.*, 37.
15. The Peircean analogue to Collingwood's "scientific thinking" is "inquiry." Peirce's classic discussion of inquiry is in Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.358-387. For Peirce, inquiry is a form of rational self-control. On reasoning and self-control, see the following representative passages: MS 288, pp. 27-33; Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.418-420, 5.440-441. Compare "logic of question and answer" (Collingwood) with "inquiry" (Peirce) in the light of a very common use of 'inquire'; for example, "He was inquiring about your health," or "The purpose of this inquiry is to discover whether there is any truth in Smith's allegations."
16. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 22.

and the work of contemporary scholars who are interested in studying "speech acts."[17]

It will be necessary to fill these gaps in Collingwood's approach if his view is to fulfill the goals he had for it. Therefore, I shall suggest an improved schema for presupposing, following Collingwood's general guidelines for research as I understand them. I shall first develop a revised, though admittedly limited, model for questioning.

A MODEL FOR QUESTIONING

This model will be limited in two senses. First, there is an obvious lack of space for fully treating such a topic in a work of this nature and scope. Second, because my goal is to make Collingwoodian presupposition more understandable, I need present only those aspects of questioning which I think to be necessary to that end.

What follows is the result of reflecting upon questions of the form "Is X a Y?" I choose to discuss this kind of question because the examples with which I shall later deal fall under this type. Furthermore, I believe that a knowledge of the way in which saturated questions are structured can easily be used to illuminate the logic of unsaturated questions because the former seem to be somewhat more complex in arrangement. The model is based on several general assumptions. I presume that the object of study is what Collingwood might agree is the central case in questioning, that which is undertaken by the questioner in order to be informed by the respondent. I also stipulate that the question be serious and successful. In addition I am presuming that the normal conditions of communication for this kind of act are in effect. I am considering this example as an instance of questioning which occurs within the context of interpersonal communication. In order to account for questioning as it occurs within intrapersonal dialogue (self-dialogue) some modifications would have to be made, although I do not believe that they would be very extensive. With these points in mind, here are notes on some of the more important aspects of such questioning as I see them from the standpoint of a questioner (abbreviated Q), one who articulates the question.

Q1. There is, or Q establishes, a questioning context. Interrogative sentence form is obviously important as a context indicator. Such things as the speaker's manner and the nature of the immediate environment are examples of factors one could also cite as being relevant to the establishment of the context. The situation and the context indicators serve also to convey that Q is asking the question because he wants to be informed.

Q2. Suppositions about the subject of the question.
   a. Q has an understanding of the subject, X. I list this as a supposition because this understanding is composed of one or more suppositions about X which can be roughly described as "how Q is characterizing X." The exact content of

this understanding of the subject is dependent upon what words make up the subject and Q's degree of familiarity with them.[18] To use the example introduced above, one uttering the question "Does this mark mean 'man'?" would understand the subject "this mark" (if he didn't understand it at all and just uttered the sounds, it would not be a genuine question, or in Collingwood's terms, it would be "merely verbal"). Unless there is some indication to the contrary, one's understanding of the subject of a question of this type will also include a supposition that there is such a thing as X. By the phrase "some indication to the contrary" I mean that some aspect of the situation serves to show that an existential supposition is inappropriate for this act of questioning. For example, one could ask "Are unicorns white?" Here the word 'unicorn' along with one part of its standard meaning (namely, "beast which does not exist") is the indication that no existential supposition is being made. Another interesting kind of case is that in which the overall speech situation carries with it an openness concerning the existence of the subject. One sometimes encounters this in science; for instance, physicists are (or were) debating the properties of "quarks" without being at all sure whether such things actually exist. Often in an inquiry one must ask whether some concept has an actual referent, and such information is acquired through the very kind of question under consideration here.

    b. Q supposes that it is at least possible that R (the respondent, the person to whom Q directs the question) knows of X. This is the minimum state; very often one is quite sure that R knows X. If Q did not think that there was at least a possibility that R knew of X 's, it would not make much sense for him to ask R about X's. He would prefer instead to ask someone he thinks might know of X.

Q3.   Suppositions about the predicate of the question.

    a. Q understands what it is for something to have the predicate Y. Typically this consists of one or more suppositions that serve to characterize Y. Again using the example, "Does this mark mean 'man'?," one uttering this question would understand the predicate "mean 'man'." If he did not have this understanding, the charge of "merely verbal" would apply. On the assumption that Q is using standard English, Q's understanding of this predicate would be characterized as expressing or signifying the usual sense of the word 'man'.

    b. Q supposes that it is at least possible that R knows about Y. Without this supposition Q would direct his question to someone other than R.

Q4.   Concerning the questioning mode. To this point, much of what I have said about X and Y could be the case and we still would not have a question at hand. That is, one could have a conception or understanding of X and of Y while not conceiving them as subject and predicate in a question. In describing X, for example, as the subject of the question, I have been taking it for granted that the questioner has already placed X and Y together in a question. I must now make this assumption explicit by describing what constitutes the juxtaposition of X and Y as a question. In other words, I must give an account of the questioning mode because Q is indicating (Q1) that he is asking a question.

18. One might think that obvious counterexamples to this condition ($Q2a$) are questions that are asked in order to get information about how to understand X: for example, "Is a riskleng a kosher pickle or a Japanese tea ceremony—just what is it?" I accept this as being a request for information concerning how to further understand X, but surely even in such questions $Q2a$ must be satisfied if the question is normal. This is the case because questions like the "riskleng" example amount to asking "Is the meaning of X Y?" $Q2a$ applies here, for anyone seriously asking this question in the normal way must understand its subject, "the meaning of X," which in this case would involve such suppositions as "X is a meaningful word in some language."

a. First, Q supposes that in the response to his question, Y will either be affirmed or denied as a predicate of X. That is, Q is able to imagine as possible responses (is able to conceive to be intelligible as responses) both A, X is Y, and B, X is not Y.

b. Q supposes that just one of the two possible responses (A and B) is in actuality correct. That is, Q supposes that either 1) ... A is correct and B is incorrect or 2) ... B is correct and A is incorrect, but not both.

c. Although Q may feel quite strongly that one of these alternatives (1 and 2) is quite probable (quite plausibly true, quite likely to be true) and the other is rather improbable, Q must suppose that each of these two options is a "live" option. In other words, Q must suppose that each of the two responses (A and B) is in some sense possible or intelligible as a correct response to the question and that (at least minimally) there is something in favor of both A and B. Or, if we gloss "answer" as "correct response to the question," then we can describe this condition as Q's supposition that either A or B could be the answer.[19] I believe that these conditions (Q4a-c) are quite close to the core of Peirce's characterization of "true" or "genuine" doubt.[20]

d. In asking the question, Q does not know whether A is correct or B is correct, and Q wants (desires, wishes, is motivated) to know (wants to be told) which of these two alternatives is correct. In the absence of this kind of motivation, the question might be uttered, but it would not be a serious question.[21] This motivation might take some unusual form, but in a serious question it will be present in some way. For example, the question might be "Is my brother a

19. Collingwood has a discussion of this point. See Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, ch. 28. This condition ($Q4c$) has some bearing on Collingwood's observation that certain questions do not "arise" in one historical period or in a particular culture, but do come to be asked at a later period, or at a later development of a culture because of new experiences or cultural contacts or the like. For example, biologists at one time did not ask the question "Are birds descendants of reptiles?" even though they possessed all the concepts that are found in that question. They were led to ask this question partly because of the new experience represented by the discovery of the fossilized *Archeopteryx*, which possessed both reptilean and avian characteristics. But in the period in which special creation and the immutability of species were held to be correct, there would be a wide gap between concepts like "bird" and "reptile," at least within the context of their biological antecedents. With the advent of well-developed theories of evolution of the species, a step that involved modifications in the assumptions biologists had about the possible historical interrelationships of species, it became more likely that a question of the kind in my example would be asked, given the discovery of such a fossil. Indeed, until the evolutionist era, the discovery of *Archeopteryx* would probably be accounted for in some way consistent with the theory of special creation, a move which would militate against this particular question's serious occurrence.

20. The following two passages are fairly typical of the way Peirce characterized genuine doubt. "Two different and inconsistent lines of action offer themselves. His action [i.e., the questioner's action] is in imagination (or perhaps really) brought to a stop because he does not know whether (so to speak) the right hand road or the left hand road is the one that will bring him to his destination; and (to continue the figure of speech) he waits at the fork for an indication . . . " Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.510. "We cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have when we enter upon the study of philosophy. These prejudices are not to be dispelled by a maxim, for they are things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned. Hence, this initial skepticism will be a mere self-deception and not real doubt; and no one who follows the Cartesian method will ever be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up." Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.265. I take it that things that do not occur to us as among those that can be questioned are primarily things toward which we do not hold supposition $Q4c$. I think it would be an accurate paraphrase of Peirce's comments to state that belief is the matrix from which doubt arises in that there must be some conflict between two things, both of which one takes as intelligible and both of which one is inclined to believe to some extent. Furthermore, doubt logically requires the presence of certain beliefs: for example, the conflicting responses in a doubt require reference to a single object (whether an actual object or a concept), otherwise, there would be no source for the conflicting or contradictory responses. Hence, doubting requires a belief in the reality of the subject of the sentence expressing the doubt (see $Q2$).

21. A questioning act that lacks this feature bears close resemblance to what Peirce called "paper" doubts, or at least these paper doubts seem to lack a feature of this kind, although just the absence of this feature may not be the only thing that distinguishes them from genuine doubt. See Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.416, 5.373-376.

murderer?" In emotionally charged questions such as this, it might be quite natural to feel that one doesn't want to find the answer, but that one should (for some reason) after all try to learn the answer. However, surely it is fair to say that the questioner in such emotional cases is motivated, in some way, to seek an answer; otherwise, one is at a loss to understand why and how the question could be seriously asked.

e. Q supposes that it is possible that R knows which of the two possible answers (A and B) is correct. Without the presumption that R could conceivably have the knowledge Q seeks, there would be no reason to ask R.

Q5. Q uses standard grammar and accepted usage for his utterance.

Now I shall perform a similar examination of the same example from the standpoint of the person R who responds to the question, the one to whom the question was directed. The overall assumptions of my analysis still apply. And just as $Q1$ to 5 are conditions that must hold from Q's standpoint if his question is to succeed as a central and normal case of questioning, the following conditions are required if the respondent is to take the question as normal.

R1.   By means of contextual indicators from Q (and perhaps because of the situation), R comes to understand two things:

  a.   He sees that a standard questioning context is present and that he is expected to respond with an answer in order to inform Q.

  b.   And just as Q indicates by his manner and speech that he is a questioner in search of information, R will indicate his willingness to respond to the question by giving the information if he has it.

R2. R understands that Q is holding the kind of suppositions about the subject which are outlined in $Q2$. R understands that Q is supposing that it is possible that R knows X.

R3. R understands that Q is holding the kind of suppositions about the predicate that are given in $Q3$. R also understands that Q is supposing that it is possible that R knows about Y.

R4. R understands that Q is holding the kind of suppositions and motives outlined in in $Q4$. Furthermore, R is willing to provide the information Q is seeking (in the form of what R believes to be the correct answer) if R is able to do so (if R does in fact have some kind of belief about the matter).

R5. R listens to Q in terms of standard grammar and correct usage for Q's utterance.

Some further annotations of the basic model are required. First, the model is based on a conversational (face-to-face) setting. Some appropriate changes would have to be made if one were considering a written correspondence, or a dialogue with one's self, or if one were considering such nonconversational contexts as writing a book, or telling a bedtime story. It is possible that the differences in these various contexts might be philosophically significant, just as a question having a form different from the one considered might require a different characterization.

Second, just as I have discussed only one form a question can take, I do not claim to have included all the aspects necessary for a full treatment of that form. And even the points I have raised would require more detailed consideration if this were an essay on questioning. However, since this is a discussion of Collingwood's concept of presupposing, I have tried to gauge the scope and completeness of the model to fit that kind of project.

Third, a very essential part of the overall scheme is that both Q and R themselves presume that normal conditions of communication hold for this particular communicative act. This in turn is possible only if they know how to communicate in this particular way (standard questioning) and only if each presumes that the other has this know-how. In laying out this model I have made this assumption about myself, that I have this know-how; then I have tried to describe my know-how in what amounts to a fairly complex hypothesis. The obvious possibility that I might have given a poor description of my ability is distinct from the fact that I do have the ability to communicate. That is, I am not trying to argue (fallaciously) that because I know (equals "has the ability to communicate in") the language, I know (equals "can give an accurate and complete philosophical description of") what it is to communicate in that language. My hypothesis must be regarded on its merits (which would involve how well it might explain the matter at hand as compared with competing hypotheses), not because someone might (mistakenly) regard such accounts as correct because of a linquistic form of the doctrine of self-evident truths.[22]

Fourth, I have adopted the convention of speaking in terms of supposing and suppositions because that locution falls easily to the tongue when the subject is presupposing or presupposition. 'Supposition' is a rather neutral term, operating in this case something like a placeholder or a blank which is to be filled with an appropriate mental attitude. To be more precise, instances in which I have said "Q (or R) supposes . . ." are instances in which that which fills the blank is a belief on the part of Q (or R). In other words, instead of saying "Q supposes . . ." it would be more precise to say that "Q believes . . ." where this belief stands in the relation of presupposing to the overall communicative act. These suppositions are beliefs, for in questioning of this kind belief is the normal mental attitude found in each of the appropriate suppositions.[23]

INTERPRETING COLLINGWOODIAN PRESUPPOSITION

Inasmuch as the foregoing model is presented as an extension of Collingwood's research, it is proper to point out now that this extension can account for

22. Contrary to a significant part of contemporary philosophy, I agree with Peirce that it is an important part of the philosopher's business to propound explanatory hypotheses about his subject matter, hypotheses which are then tested in the appropriate sense. For examples of Peirce's discussion of philosophy as a "science of discovery," see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 1.180-202, 1.246-255, 1.126-134, 5.413; MS 280, pp. 1-6. For an example of the way in which philosophical hypotheses can be tested, see "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man," Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.213-263. For an example of a position that is radically skeptical both of the possibility of a science of philosophy and of the assertion that there are testable explanatory hypotheses in philosophy, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: MacMillan, 1958), paragraphs 109-133.

23. Concerning doubt, Peirce held a similar position, namely that doubts do not occur in a vacuum, there being reasons for doubt plus other cognitions or beliefs assumed in any given doubt (see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.369, 5.265, 5.416, 5.512). Wittgenstein came to hold a similar view late in his life [see his *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), paragraphs 122, 150, 160, 247, 341-343, 354]. Much of what Wittgenstein has to say in this book parallels Peirce's account of doubt and belief. There is evidence that Wittgenstein was in some sense aware of this similarity, for he states (paragraph 422): "So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism. Here I am being thwarted by a kind of *Weltanschauung*." Perhaps his doubts that his remarks in *On Certainty* amount to pragmatism can be explained in terms of the hypothesis that he might have had in mind the pragmatism of James and not the pragmaticism of Peirce.

some of the missing details in his notion of presupposing. First, I shall consider the "kind of analysis" by means of which, Collingwood claims, one can come to say that thus-and-so is the immediate presupposition of a question.

According to my model, there are several suppositional components in normal questioning of this kind. The suppositions Collingwood noted under the rubric "presuppositions of a question" are limited to the kinds listed under $Q2a$ and $Q3a$ (and possibly aspects of $Q4$) in my presentation. There are other kinds of suppositional components (as noted in my questioning model), which he did not take into account. We might label those he clearly noted ($Q2a$ and $Q3a$) the Collingwood-suppositions of a question. That the Collingwood-suppositions in my model amount to the same thing as Collingwood's notion of a question's immediate presupposition can be seen by working through the example given above: the immediate presupposition of "Does this mark mean 'man'?" is "This mark means something." This question is somewhat ambiguous. I believe that it could be translated as either 1) "Is the meaning of this mark 'man'?" or 2) "Is this mark a mark meaning 'man'?"

If version 1 is the intended import of the original question, then given the principles of $Q2$-3, I can easily state the Collingwood-suppositions. In this case they include the suppositions that there exists this (demonstratively indicated) trace or impression, and that it (the mark) is a sign in some language. These two suppositions come to about the same thing as the immediate presupposition Collingwood might give ("This mark means something") for this question.

If version 2 is the intended sense for the given question, a complication arises because this version is ambiguous concerning whether the mark is understood as just a meaningless piece of erosion or as being an actual inscription. My model provides a way to make explicit the Collingwood-suppositions of such a question while preserving this original ambiguity. On the assumption that version 2 is a normal question, by the use of $Q2$ one can derive the supposition that there exists this demonstratively indicated impression. The principles in $Q4$ yield this supposition: " 'This mark is a mark meaning *man*' is intelligible when seen as the correct response." That supposition makes sense only if one is willing to consider that this mark is conceivably a meaningful part of some inscription. This is the case because "mark meaning 'man' " could not be predicated intelligibly of that which is being considered definitely to be a meaningless piece of erosion or the like. If "mark meaning 'man' " is intelligibly predicable of this mark, then this mark must be taken as conceivably meaningful. Therefore, the Collingwood-suppositions for version 2 are: "This mark exists" and "This mark is conceivably a meaningful mark." Although these are slightly different from the Collingwoodian immediate presupposition originally given, I believe that they are more accurate and appropriate for this version of the original question.

I have worked through this example to show that my model can handle more accurately the kinds of tasks Collingwood originally intended for his technique. What I have called the Collingwood-suppositions are the aspects of my revision of his approach which most clearly resemble his original procedure. The model is an improvement in several ways because it takes notice of Collingwood-sup-

positions as well as other kinds of appropriate suppositions, and it suggests procedures for identifying all these suppositions.

These Collingwood-suppositions have another feature worth noting. They are based on content, one might say, whereas the other suppositions in the model are more concerned with formal or procedural aspects. The exact nature of these Collingwood-suppositions changes from one question to another, but the procedural suppositions would apply to any question of this kind.

With these points in mind, it is possible to turn to the second difficulty in Collingwood's characterization of the phenomenon he called presupposing: what is the nature of the relationship between a question and its presupposition? I shall adopt the term 'contextual supposition' as a means of referring to any of the suppositions noted in my model. In terms of my interpretation, Collingwood's presuppositions of a question are the same as the Collingwood-suppositions in my model, which are, in turn, contextual suppositions; thus, a presupposition in his sense is a contextual supposition. The task at hand can now be seen as a requirement to explain the relationship between a question and one of its contextual suppositions. The following argument schema summarizes my answer to that problem.

1. Q (a person) asks q (a question, for example, "Is X a Y?").
2.   If there are no reasons to think that this case (1) is not a normal, central case, it is presumed to be a normal case.
3.   There are no reasons to think that this case is not a normal, central case. Therefore, this case is presumed to be a normal case of questioning of this kind (that is, questioning in order to be informed).
4.   All normal cases of questioning of this kind are cases in which the person asking the question supposes s (a contextual supposition).
5.   Therefore it is reasonable to hold that Q supposes s.

As it stands, this argument schema does not obviously show the relationship between a question and one of its contextual suppositions, but requires further commentary. Premiss 1 is straightforward with one exception: I have limited the range of the variable q so that the only instances it can have are questions of the form considered in my questioning model. If one developed a comprehensive theory to include questions of any form, I suspect that no difficulty would arise in permitting this variable to range over any form a question might take. Premiss 4 is correct if my model is correct. The model gives a series of contextual suppositions, each of which is a necessary condition of any normal case of questioning of this kind. In this premiss, s can be any one of those contextual suppositions. So, the fourth premiss simply restates the model in general terms.

The second premiss is a new factor in my discussion and is intended as a description of what might be termed a social custom within our language community. That is, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, in our society we presume that communicative acts of questioning of this kind are normal. This principle holds because the central case is one in which no additional factors or any other evidence need be brought in before one can understand what is happening, whereas in the cases of questioning that are parasitic upon the central case (such things as questioning in order to "needle" someone) one has these

other factors as a matter of necessity. The second premiss is a description of an important principle we use in communicating; it is not a generalization stating that most people operate this way or that one operates this way most of the time. In its overall structure and use, this principle is similar to our legal principle of the presumption of innocence until proof of guilt.

Premiss 3 is based on one's knowledge of the immediate communicative situation. "Based on" in this instance means that the third premiss is the conclusion of a piece of interpretive inference, the premisses of which are specific details of the communicative situation. Obviously, not just any detail of a situation can serve as a premiss. For example, the color of the speaker's clothing is usually irrelevant (but there are exceptions—clowns or escaped convicts, for instance). Generally the kinds of situational details that are pertinent for this inference are the kinds mentioned in the questioning model. Because the model is limited, it may not include all the features or details one should (or could) give, but on the assumption that those which are given are correct, they are the kinds of things that are relevant to this inference. To restate that point in a slightly different way: what will count as premisses for this inference depends upon what one counts as normal for such questions, where 'normal' is being used in its natural language sense as synonomous with "genuine" (and not synonomous with "usual").[24] In the sense I intend, 'normal' when employed as a modifier, is used to call attention to a standard against which we evaluate something. And in the kind of questioning I have been discussing, what counts as genuine, as the norm against which such questioning acts are evaluated as standard, is given in the model. In this sense, to say that a question is normal is to say that it is a real question.

Someone might object that I am confusing contextual implication with presupposing. I believe that such a complaint would be founded upon a misunderstanding of what I have been trying to accomplish. I have not approached Collingwood's work with the preconception that what he is talking about is the same thing as some accepted sense of the term 'presupposition'. I have been trying to find out what he meant when he used that term, as if he simply had used *X* or *Q-factor* (or any other mysterious title) instead of 'presupposition'. The above objection, however, violates this part of my procedure, for the objection can only make sense if one has already given some particular meaning to 'presupposition'. I think that I have discovered what Collingwood was getting at when he used the term in question. To avoid confusion, perhaps it would be appropriate (as I have suggested above) to describe Collingwoodian presupposition as "contextual supposition," because it is not quite the same as what has been called contextual implication. Neither is it identical with something like

24. In referring to doubt and its role in initiating an inquiry, Peirce constantly reminded his readers that in order for an inquiry to arise, a real or genuine doubt must be present; otherwise (*i.e.*, if the doubt is only a nominal doubt or a "paper" doubt) one will simply continue in the state of belief as before and no inquiry will begin. In Collingwoodian language, one would say that in order to seek an answer, one must have a real (normal) question, not merely a verbal one; otherwise (*i.e.*, without a real question arising), one would have no need to seek an answer, so one would simply continue on without an increase in "mental effort" or without feeling any "mental hunger" (see *Q4c* above). The following citations are also representative of Peirce's view concerning real doubt: Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.370-387, 6.485, 6.469.

Strawsonian presupposition. In Strawsonian presupposition, to say that the statement S presupposes S' is to say that the truth of S' is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of S.[25] A major dissimilarity here is that Collingwood is dealing with questions, and it would be difficult to see how a question could be understood as being either true or false. Alan Donagan, a leading student of Collingwood's work, suggested another way of looking at Collingwoodian presupposition, a suggestion that I take to be misleading. He stated that "the logical relation in terms of which a presupposition is defined is, for Strawson, a relation between two statements, for Collingwood it is a relation between a statement and a question."[26] Thus I take it that Donagan was proposing to interpret Collingwoodian presupposition as being some kind of logical relationship, after the fashion of material implication or entailment, which exists between a question and a statement. Aside from difficulties one might encounter in trying to use a question much as one would use a proposition to form a logically compound sentence with its main connective being something called a "presupposition connective," Donagan's proposal points our attention toward the possibility that questions are some kind of logical entity on a parallel with propositions. And this misinterprets Collingwood, for Collingwood was writing about questioning acts, not just questions. When Collingwood stated that a question p presupposes p' (a supposition), what he meant was that supposing p' is one of the background conditions for the normal act of someone communicating p (that is, as a question). Furthermore, "supposing p'" is not the same as "stating p'" a condition which would be required given Donagan's interpretation. In Collingwood's view, the relationship is based on the nature of the communicative act of questioning in its normal instances; he did not see presupposing as some kind of logical connective that links "questions" and "statements."

This concludes my attempt to explain further the phenomenon Collingwood called "presupposition of a question." To summarize, it appears that "presupposition" as used by Collingwood is ambiguous, sometimes referring to the relationship between a question and that which it might presuppose, or sometimes referring to that which a question presupposes, namely its presupposition, which could be such linguistic entities as a belief, a presumption, or a statement. This suggests that no linguistic entity is, in and of itself, a presupposition. Such an entity acquires status as a "presupposition" only insofar as it enters into the presupposing relation as the background condition of a communicative act. So it appears that there is no unique linguistic entity identifiable as being a presupposition *sui generis*. This suggests that the interesting thing about presupposition is its relational aspect, not its putative status as a special generic entity. It would thus be wise to be explicit about this ambiguity in using the term 'contextual supposition', which is my emendation for Collingwood's 'presupposition'. Therefore I shall employ that term only in the relational sense. To say that a communicative act contextually supposes S will serve as saying that S stands in that relation to this act, S being some appropriate linguistic entity,

25. P. F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory* (London: Methuen, 1952), 175.
26. Alan Donagan, *The Later Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 70.

such as a belief or a presumption. On the other hand, to use the substantive mode in saying that S is a contextual supposition of some communicative act is not a way of saying that S is some special kind of linguistic entity known as a "supposition" or a "contextual supposition"; rather it is a way of saying that S stands in the relation of contextual supposing to that act, the term 'supposition' in this locution being a space holder for whatever the background condition might be (S in this case). For example, to say "belief X is a contextual supposition of act Y" is not a way of saying that X is a supposition as opposed to being a belief. The fact that X enters into the relation of contextual supposing does not alter its status as a belief. Rather, it is a way of expressing the relation of belief X to act Y, 'supposition' being used as a place holder for X's place in the relation. One could coin a name for the place that Y holds in the relation, 'base' for instance. Thus to say that Y is the communicative base for X would not denote that Y is some special kind of entity—it remains as an act of questioning or whatever. This way of speaking is simply a means for noting the relation between Y and X.

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITIONS

Collingwood distinguishes between presuppositions that are relative and those that are absolute. He maintained that any particular presupposition, given the context within which it occurs, is correctly described with just one of these terms—it could not be at once both relative and absolute in the same context.

In Collingwood's scheme a relative presupposition (abbreviated RP) is "one which stands relatively to one question as its presupposition and relatively to another question as its answer."[27] Furthermore, only RP's can be verified.

> To question a presupposition is to demand that it should be 'verified'; that is, to demand that a question should be asked to which the affirmative answer would be that presupposition itself, now in the form of a proposition. To verify the presupposition that my measuring tape is accurate [a presupposition of his use of the tape] is to ask a question admitting of the alternate answers 'the tape is accurate,' 'the tape is not accurate.' Hence to speak of verifying a presupposition involves supposing that it is a relative presupposition.[28]

Collingwood dealt more extensively with absolute presuppositions (abbreviated AP) than he did with RP's. The following list summarizes the way he characterized this notion. I have appended convenient symbols in order to facilitate subsequent references to this summary. No doubt many questions concerning the correctness of what Collingwood is proposing will occur to readers of the following list. Because my purpose is to get Collingwood's account of the nature of AP's before the reader in a succinct form, I will not try either to attack or defend these statements. Subsequently I shall offer several criticisms, although surely I shall not mention all that might come to mind.

$AP1$.—An AP is "one which stands, relatively to all questions to which it is related, as a presupposition, never as an answer."[29]

27. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 29.
28. *Ibid.*, 30.
29. *Ibid.*, 31.

AP2.—Among those persons who adopt a particular *AP*, that *AP* is not questioned.[30]

AP3.—People are likely to be ticklish with regard to their absolute presuppositions.[31] By this metaphor, Collingwood meant that when one questions an *AP* that a person holds, that person is liable to become evasive or angry; in short, he will refuse, often in a testy manner, to accept the question, or if he accepts it in some sense, he may angrily refuse to answer it.

AP4.—Because whatever is stated is in answer to a question, and a proposition is that which is stated, and because *AP*'s are never answers to questions, it follows that *AP*'s can not be propositions. This being the case, the distinction between truth and falsehood does not apply to them.[32]

AP5.—*AP*'s are not capable of being verified; the idea of verification is not applicable to them.[33]

AP6.—An *AP* cannot be undermined by "experience" because it is (in a given society) the yardstick by which experience is judged.[34]

AP7.—The importance of *AP*'s is due to their logical efficacy by means of which questions are enabled to arise. This efficacy in turn does not depend on their being true or verifiable, but only on their being supposed.[35] Of course, *RP*'s also have logical efficacy, so this feature is not generic for *AP*'s. What Collingwood probably had in mind was that for *AP*'s this feature takes on new importance, which it does not have in the case of *RP*'s.

AP8.—Although an *AP* is not a proposition, a metaphysical statement—a statement of the form that on such-and-such an occasion thus-and-so (an *AP*) was absolutely presupposed by someone—is indeed a proposition that will be either true or false. Metaphysical statements are clearly a subclass of historical propositions.[36] Metaphysics for Collingwood is the historical science of *AP*'s.

> Metaphysics is the attempt to find out what absolute presuppositions have been made by this or that person or group of persons, on this or that occasion or group of occasions, in the course of this or that piece of thinking.[37]

AP9.—An *AP* never occurs alone; rather *AP*'s are always found in what Collingwood called "constellations of *AP*'s. Furthermore, *AP*'s in such a constellation will be "consupponible," meaning that "it must be logically possible for a person who supposes any one of them to suppose concurrently all the rest."[38] The relationship of consupponibility is not one of implication, for if it were, the consequent of such an implication would not be an *AP*, because it would become relative to the antecedent of the implication.[39] Thus, metaphysics as the historical science of *AP*'s is not deductive in the fashion of Spinoza's *Ethics*.

30. *Ibid.*, 31.
31. *Ibid.*, 31.
32. *Ibid.*, 32.
33. *Ibid.*, 32.
34. *Ibid.*, 193-194.
35. *Ibid.*, 32.
36. *Ibid.*, 55.
37. *Ibid.*, 47.
38. *Ibid.*, 66.
39. *Ibid.*, 67.

AP10.—Absolute presuppositions change from one era to another. The sense of change that Collingwood seems to have had in mind here could be described as a change, within the thought of one person or a group of persons, from holding one presupposition as absolute to holding another (although perhaps related) presupposition as absolute, the former presupposition no longer being an *AP* in the thought of this person or group. The example he gave[40] dealt with what he took to be a transition, within the historical development of physics, from the *AP* "some events have causes" to the *AP* "all events have causes" to the *AP* "no events have causes." The picture Collingwood was presenting seems to be that the first *AP* in this series was replaced, as an *AP* (ceased to be an *AP* for physics), by the second in the series, and so on. Collingwood also held that because people are not ordinarily aware of their *AP*'s (hence they are not usually aware of any changes, in the above sense, that occur in them), changes in *AP*'s are typically not a matter of choice.[41]

AP11.—*AP*'s undergo changes because a given constellation is always subject to what Collingwood called "strains." He did little to explicate this notion, the following being the best account I have found in his work.

> [The metaphysician] will expect the various presuppositions he is studying to be consupponible only under pressure, the constellation being subject to certain strains and kept together by dint of a certain compromise or mutual toleration having behind it a motive like that which causes parties to unite in the face of an enemy. This is why the conception of metaphysics as a 'deductive' science is not only an error but a pernicious error, one with which a reformed metaphysics will have no truce. The ambition of 'deductive' metaphysics is to present a constellation of absolute presuppositions as a strainless structure like a body of propositions in mathematics. That is all right in mathematics because mathematical propositions are not historical propositions. But it is all wrong in metaphysics. A reformed metaphysics will conceive any given constellation of absolute presuppositions as having in its structure not the simplicity and calm that characterize the subject-matter of mathematics but the intricacy and restlessness that characterize the subject-matter, say, of legal or constitutional history.[42]

Collingwood has given a long example of the occurrence of an *AP*, which it would be helpful to quote in its entirety along with his analysis of such an event.

> Thus if you were talking to a pathologist about a certain disease and asked him "What is the cause of the event E which you say sometimes happens in this disease?" he will reply "The cause of E is C"; and if he were in a communicative mood he might go on to say "That was established by So-and-so, in a piece of research that is now regarded as classical." You might go on to ask: "I suppose before So-and-so found out what the cause of E was, he was quite sure it had a cause?" The answer would be "Quite sure, of course." If you now say "Why?" he will probably answer "Because everything that happens has a cause." If you are importunate enough to ask "But how do you know that everything that happens has a cause?" he will probably blow up right in your face,

40. *Ibid.*, 49-51.

41. Footnote on p. 48. Given this part of Collingwood's view, it is difficult to see why he thought it was appropriate to use the adjective "absolute" to describe this kind of presupposition. Other writers, noting (as Collingwood also did) that "absolute" presuppositions often lose their status as "absolutes" in the passage from one epoch to another, have preferred locutions such as "ultimate presupposition," as did, for example, E. A. Burtt, in his *In Search of Philosophic Understanding* (New York: New American Library, 1965), 150. Collingwood could say that an *AP* is, relative to the system of thought in which it is found, absolute. But that way of talking is more trouble than it is worth.

42. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 76-77; compare points of similarity in footnote on p. 48.

because you have put your finger on one of his absolute presuppositions, and people are apt to be ticklish in their absolute presuppositions. But if he keeps his temper and gives you a civil and candid answer, it will be to the following effect. "That is a thing we take for granted in my job. We don't question it. We don't try to verify it. It isn't a thing anybody has discovered, like microbes or the circulation of the blood. It is a thing we just take for granted." He is telling you that it is an absolute presupposition of the science he pursues.[43]

If the inquirer can find a person to experiment upon who is well trained in a certain type of scientific work, intelligent and earnest in his devotion to it, and unaccustomed to metaphysics, let him probe into various presuppositions that his 'subject' has been taught to make in the course of his scientific education, and invite him to justify each or alternately to abandon it. If the 'inquirer' is skillful and the 'subject' the right kind if man, these invitations will be contemplated with equanimity, and even with interest, so long as relative presuppositions are concerned. But when an absolute presupposition is touched, the invitation will be rejected, even with a certain degree of violence.

The rejection is a symptom that the 'subject', cooperating with the work of analysis, has come to see that the presupposition he is being asked to justify or abandon is an absolute presupposition; and the violence with which it is expressed is a symptom that he feels the importance of this absolute presupposition for the kind of work to which he is devoted.[44]

'ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITION', AN INAPPROPRIATE TERM

This list of attributes points out a problem for Collingwood. Nowhere did he explicitly state exactly what an AP is. He provided us with many qualities and symptoms of AP's, but he did not openly declare what they might be, aside from being AP's. And that is obviously not adequate if one accepts the interpretation of his term 'presupposition' developed above. On that account, to say that something is a presupposition is to claim that it stands in the relation of contextual supposing to some particular communicative act. But, in itself, this knowledge does not tell us anything about the nature of the contextually supposed thing; on the basis of just this much information any number of things could qualify to stand in such a relation—beliefs, statements, propositions, dispositions, assumptions, choices, and so on. Saying that the contextually supposed thing is also absolute does not help either, for one wants to know what is absolute. The answer to this conundrum cannot be that the contextually presupposed thing is a presupposition, for we have seen that this term is only the substantive mode for expressing the relation of contextual supposing and is not descriptive of the thing that occupies the "blank" in that relation. Thus, it seems reasonable to assert that Collingwood's phrase "absolute presupposition" is an unhappy choice of words, not only because of difficulties with 'presupposition', but because AP's are not truly absolute, in that they change (in the sense mentioned above). This result does not mean that there is no genuine phenomenon corresponding with Collingwood's phrase; it only means that an inappropriate set of words were chosen to describe the phenomenon.

43. *Ibid.*, 31.
44. *Ibid.*, 43-44.

We now require an indentification of the basic nature of the phenomenon Collingwood characterizes with the term *AP*. If one takes note of *AP*1, which is his fundamental description of *AP*'s, I think it will be fairly easy to satisfy this requirement. According to that description, an *AP* always stands as a contextual supposition to the requisite kind of questioning. Furthermore, the particular kind of contextual supposition Collingwood had in mind would be one of those I have called Collingwood-suppositions. And, as I have indicated in discussion of the questioning model, in the normal case these are beliefs. Because the kind of questioning mentioned in *AP*1 is normal questioning like that in my model, it follows that *AP*'s are basically beliefs of some kind. There is textual evidence that Collingwood would have agreed with this conclusion, for in discussing "God exists" as an *AP* he stated:

> a person accustomed to metaphysical thinking, when confronted with the words "God exists," will automatically put in the metaphysical rubric and read "we believe (i.e., presuppose in all our thinking) that God exists."[45]

Here Collingwood was explicitly stating that the thing which stands in the relation of contextual presupposing to many questions having to do with God (in these persons' minds) is a belief. Thus, we seem to be licensed to substitute "belief" for "presupposition."[46] Perhaps the reason Collingwood preferred to describe certain kinds of beliefs as *AP*'s stemmed from his intention to develop a relational account, that is, a description of the systemic aspect inherent in belief systems by means of which the system is ordered, one set of beliefs thereby being more "basic" than others. In describing this relational aspect, he seems to have taken for granted that the things being so related are beliefs.

Conclusions similar to those I have just mentioned concerning *AP*'s will also be applicable to *RP*'s, especially to the use of 'presupposition' in that locution. I shall use the term 'principium'[47] to characterize the basic beliefs that Collingwood described as *AP*'s and 'reasoned belief' (a new term, which, for reasons stated below, I believe is more appropriate than *RP*) as a substitute for his phrase "relative presupposition."

Subsequently I shall offer numerous comments concerning the status of principia within a belief system, but at the moment, it is necessary to say something about the nature of belief in general. A belief is basically a habitual way of acting, not the actions themselves; belief is a habit such that, given a particular situation, one will act in a certain way. Collingwood used phrases suggestive of this doctrine in enough instances to lead one to suspect that he might have been willing to concur with it had it come explicitly to his attention. For example, in discussing a change from one *AP* to another, he stated that "it is the most radical change a man can undergo, and entails the abandonment of all his most firmly

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45. *Ibid.*, 188.

46. See also pp. 193 and 197. Additional, rather explicit comments along these lines can be seen in Collingwood's *Autobiography*, 66-67.

47. This general use of the term is not original with me—see José Ortega y Gasset, *Concord and Liberty* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), 159-160; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book Delta (New York: Dutton, 1956).

established habits and standards for thought and action."[48] However, there is little in Collingwood's work that can be of assistance in focusing more sharply this view of the nature of belief. For that, I must turn to Peirce, who, following Bain,[49] made an anlysis of belief an important part of his philosophy. According to Peirce, the function of belief is to serve as a guide to our actions. Beliefs can fulfill this role because they are essentially in the form of a habit. And 'habit' has the following meaning:

> Let us use the word "habit," throughout this book, not in its narrower, and more proper sense, in which it is opposed to a natural disposition (for the term *acquired habit* will perfectly express that narrower sense), but in its wider and perhaps still more usual sense, in which it denotes such a specialization, original or acquired, of the nature of a man ... that he ... will behave, or always tend to behave, in a way describable in general terms upon every occasion (or upon a considerable proportion of the occasions) that may present itself of a generally describable character.[50]

Peirce rejected the notion that single deeds constitute the belief-habit. It is instead a general way of acting, often expressed in conditional propositions, which comprise the belief. Nor does belief, in many instances, make us act at once; it puts us into a condition such that we will behave in a particular way should the occasion arise. Belief is a satisfactory state, one which we do not avoid or change into another belief unless we are faced with a shock or surprise brought about by certain kinds of new experiences, experiences which interfere with the smooth operation of the habitual way of acting such that the habit is no longer followed, and action is suspended in a state of hesitancy, or would be so suspended in an appropriate situation.[51]

Concerning this characterization of belief, a friend of mine, who is a very accomplished folklorist, proposed the following objection. "The statement that belief is basically a habitual way of acting blurs an important distinction between thinking and acting, since one can hold a belief which does not result in action. For example, someone might believe that a dog's howl is a sign (in the sense of "omen") of impending death in one's family. Now believing that is surely not a way of acting in the normal sense of the word acting, for belief is a state of mind, and states of mind are not actions." This is a felicitous complaint, for it offers an opportunity to clear up some common misunderstandings about this way of conceiving the nature of belief.

First, by "way of acting" I do not mean something like the use of "way" in "See that action he is taking; isn't he performing it in an admirable way?" This sense of the word refers to a particular quality in a person's actions as they occur in the present. The meaning I attached to the word when I used it in describing belief is something like its meaning in "My way is to keep my feet widely spread when trying to hit the ball to left field." Here the speaker is talking about one way as opposed to another, and the kind of action of which he speaks is not

48. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, footnote on p. 48. Compare with pp. 96, 133, 134, 192, and 194-196. Compare this with Peirce's account (for example, Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.358f) of the difficulties inherent in the passage from belief to doubt to belief.

49. See Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.12.

50. Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.538.

51. See Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.370f., 5.417, 5.480, 5.510.

necessarily now occurring. Note also that the general form of this comment is conditional—given situation *A*, action *B* will be taken (as opposed to action *C* or *D*, and so on). Thus, a belief is more than actions or regularity in actions; however, given a certain belief, there will be a regularity or pattern in my actions in appropriate situations. This factor is important in the study of belief systems, for an observed regularity in action is good grounds for the hypothesis that the person or persons involved in the action have a particular belief. But the belief cannot be reduced to an action or a set of actions, just as a rule cannot be reduced to the set of instances in which it is obeyed. In Peirce's terms, a belief (since it is a habit) is an example of an irreducible "Third."[52]

Is it true, then, as my friend suggested, that one can hold a belief that does not result in action? In one sense, this is a correct statement, because having a belief does not imply that one is now acting. As in the case of the example given above, one can believe that a dog's howl is an omen of death while taking no action related to such an omen. However, there is one sense in which it is true that having a belief must result in action. Suppose that someone hears a dog's howl under the appropriate circumstances, and then behaves as if there is no impending death in his family (or in the appropriate group). Then we would rightly think that he does not in reality have this belief about the significance of a dog's howl. In other words, having a belief means that, given a particular type of circumstance, one has a habitual way of acting. So, if a person declares that he has a certain belief, yet does not act in the appropriate way in the kind of situation relevant to his belief, he does not have that belief. Paraphrasing Collingwood, we could say that this would be a "merely verbal" belief, or in Peircean terms, a "paper" belief; that is, this person has only uttered the words, "I believe *X*." He does not have the requisite kind of habit. Hence, he does not have the belief in question.

PRINCIPIA AND JUSTIFICATION

It will be convenient now to consider Collingwood's observation that an *AP* is not questioned among people who adopt it (*AP2*) by examining the kind of situation Collingwood depicted in the example of a pathologist. For the sake of brevity, I shall shorten "questioner" and "respondent" to *Q* and *R* respectively.

On the basis of Collingwood's example, it is clear that the context of questioning relevant to the characterization of principia (*AP*'s, roughly) is that of questioning a principium's justification, for in this example *Q* continually asks *R* to inform *Q* of the justification *R* has for some belief *R* holds.[53] This procedure

52. First, second, and third are the terms Peirce used to designate his "categories." These categories are very wideranging in Peirce's philosophy; furthermore, they take on different aspects depending on which philosophical issue is under discussion. It would be virtually impossible to provide any kind of short summary of this doctrine that would be fair to Peirce's intentions. Therefore, I ask the interested reader to consult the following article, which provides a good introduction to this aspect of Peirce's thought: Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Categories, and Language," *Philosophical Review*, 70 (1961):197-223.

53. In addition to the light these comments might throw on the nature of a principium, they are important for another reason, for they confirm something that has been implicit in my discussion of Collingwood on questioning (the questioning model) as annotated by Peirce's views on doubting. It now seems clear that what Collingwood meant by "questioning" was normal questioning directed toward finding out a belief's justification, and this sense of "question" is that which is often used as a surrogate for "doubt."

reaches a point at which R responds with a belief that is a justification for previous responses in which R believes, but which itself has no further justification, or at least R (or any other member of his society, Collingwood suggests) is unable to inform Q of any further justification for it. The requests for justification take this form: "Is what you say (believe) justified?" In the final request for justification, "what you say (believe)" refers (in this particular case) to "Every event has a cause." This belief is identified as a principium because R does not question its justification, or he simply refuses to question its justification, perhaps becoming angry when asked to justify it. The fact that in regard to justification, R "calls a halt" at this point is one fact that leads Q to entertain the hypothesis that this belief is a principium in R's thought. This kind of example is important for understanding principia; thus, it deserves detailed attention.

Taking "Every event has a cause" to be represented by E, the question at which R balks is written as "Is E justified?" The following account is an abstract of certain aspects of this situation in terms of appropriate parts of the questioning model. In seriously asking this question, Q believes that the possible answers are: 1) E is justified and 2) E is not justified ($Q4a$). Q believes that just one of these two possible answers is in actuality correct ($Q4b$), and Q believes that each of

One could say that the communicative activity of serious questioning in search of information about a belief's justification is one speech counterpart of honest doubt in search of a stable belief, doubt being often discussed in personal or psychological terms and questioning being often discussed in linguistic or communicational contexts. Collingwood emphasized questioning and speech, whereas Peirce often focused on the personal aspect in terms of doubt and belief. Epistemically, there seems to be no important difference between these two schemata; the two accounts appear to be functionally identical. This suggests that Collingwood's logic of question and answer and Peirce's account of the process of the fixation of belief (what he generally refered to as inquiry, see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.374) are somewhat equivalent descriptions of the same process. Peirce preferred the general designation, inquiry, whereas Collingwood, emphasized what Peirce would call the scientific kind of inquiry (as opposed to nonscientific kinds of inquiry), scientific thinking. Both of these terms were intended to stand for something other than the meanings usually associated with "science," as found in such locutions as "physical science" or "empirical science." I think that the process they were meant to describe is something like "mental life as ordered, ongoing thinking which is directed toward truth," or at least, one's best attempt at that kind of thinking. It would also be pertinent to add here that Peirce's doubt-belief model could also be seen as a communicational model, inasmuch as it seems to be ultimately based on his "theory of signs," which is a general logic of communication. No one has shown this, to my knowledge, nor do I intend to do it now, but I feel certain that this is the matrix for Peirce's theory of inquiry. I have mentioned Collingwood's account of "scientific thinking" in earlier remarks. For Peirce's theory of inquiry, consult "The Fixation of Belief," Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.358f. For some relevant comments by Peirce on questioning, see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.394, 6.191, 5.584, 5.370f.

I will not attempt to defend this comparative thesis in detail here. Instead, in addition to the suggestive comments I have made above, I shall only add that I am not alone in advancing it. Professor Louis O. Mink, *Mind, History, and Dialectic: The Philosophy of R. G. Collingwood* (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1969), p. 7 stated: "The themes most explicit in Collingwood's later work but discoverable throughout the whole career of his thought are those commonly associated with *pragmatism* and *existentialism*. In a very general way, this may account for the fact that philosophers have found in Collingwood a provocativeness not easy to dismiss as merely a matter of style or manner, while nonphilosophers have endured his philosophical arguments in the feeling that they carry significance beyond the intramural disputes of professional philosophers." Mink continued by noting in some detail certain affinities between Collingwood and the pragmatists, primarily Dewey (see Mink, *Philosophy of Collingwood*, 7-9). Of specific interest to the issue at hand is the fact that Mink agrees that Collingwood's logic of question and answer is best understood as a theory of inquiry in the pragmatist mold. One additional bit of textual information from both Collingwood and Peirce seems to provide further evidence for this thesis. In his *Autobiography*, Collingwood exposed his brand of pragmatism very nicely (p. 26f.) in that he admitted that he was of the "laboratory" frame of mind when it came to knowledge. This phrase is one of Peirce's favorite locutions for describing his own view in contrast to what he called "seminary" philosophy (see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 1.126-129, 5.411, 6.3). Paragraph 1.129 (Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*) also suggests that Peirce's view of the nature of metaphysics parallels that advanced by Collingwood.

these options is in some sense possible and intelligible as a correct answer (*Q4c*). Furthermore, *Q* does not know which of these two options is correct, and *Q* is motivated to learn which option is actually correct (*Q4d*). Meanwhile, upon hearing this question, *R* understands that *Q* is holding the kinds of beliefs outlined above (*R4*). However, *R* does not understand that option 2 is even possibly correct, so in the absence of this component (that part of the *R* side that corresponds to *Q4c*), *R* rejects this question as being abnormal. We must remember that *R* believed that what he was about to hear from *Q* would be a normal question. He believed this because questions preceding this one were normal and the questioning context for this one suggested that what *Q* was about to say would be normal. But, in effect, *R* comes to reject this contextual supposition and says instead that this is not a normal question, not a question that would be asked in his group. That is the impact of *R* in Collingwood's example saying, "We don't question it."

The important issue now becomes the reason (or reasons) why *R*, from his side of the communication, rejects *Q4c* for this particular question. In approaching an answer to this matter, I shall first focus upon a more complete characterization of that issue in terms of this specific request from *Q*. What we have here is not simply normal questioning, but rather normal questioning of justifications. Prior to the question at which *R* "balks," the questions had been directed toward eliciting beliefs from *R*, beliefs expressed in the form "*S* is the justification of *T*." In the final question, *R* has no belief that could serve in the slot for *S* in the foregoing format. Although he might believe *E* is justified, *R* cannot provide *Q* with a statement of a belief that justified *E* because he does not know of such a belief. If he admits *R*'s question as normal, he will be forced to think that *E* is possibly not justified. Prior to this, in the earlier questions, *R* had been willing to comprehend *Q*'s entertaining the possibility that *R*'s beliefs were not justified because he knew that they were justified and he could give reasons for them; it was harmless for him to empathize with the requirement placed upon *Q* that both alternatives be possibly correct. Although *R* knew which alternative was correct, he was not himself required to conceive that both alternatives were possibly correct; *R* was only required to understand that *Q* was holding both options as "live." But in the case of the final question concerning the justification of *E*, *R* is placed in a different position. *Q*'s question is no longer one step removed by empathy. This question becomes *R*'s question as well as *Q*'s question. That is, because *R* does not know an answer to give in this case, he, in effect, becomes a second *Q*, or he assumes the role of *Q*, in that now he is actually required to entertain honestly the two options as "live" options, as both being possibly correct.

What is this condition into which *R* has been thrust? I believe that, in order to be absolutely accurate in describing this situation, talking in terms of questioning is no longer completely correct. What *R* is faced with in assuming the role of *Q*, in this specific instance, is a request or suggestion that he *really* be in doubt about *E*. This is the case because doubt is a normal question in which the issue is that of the justification of the belief in question. When concerning a particular belief, one honestly opens up the two options (*A* and *B*, see *Q4a*) as being "live"

or possibly correct, with the predicate of both options being " . . . justified?" (that is, when the normal question has this minimum content: "Is————justified?"), that is doubt. Since normal questioning of the justification of a belief is doubt, R is being thrust into the role of doubter of one of his beliefs, namely E. But R does not doubt E. So it is understandable that he rejects the question, for in doing so, he rejects placing himself in the role of doubter of one of his beliefs. He would only come to doubt one of his beliefs for some reason, not because someone is presumably urging him to take the role of a doubter. A principium is a belief, which implies that in order to doubt it successfully, the person in question must genuinely doubt it, which means doubting it for some putatively sound reason, and not because of being asked to doubt it.

Pragmatic Justification

To continue with Collingwood's example, given that R does not doubt E but can give no other belief justifying his belief in E, does that mean that E is not justified? I think not. R obviously will think that it is somehow appropriate for him to believe E. This puts him into something of a dilemma, given the context of his interchange with Q. For while he believes that E is correct, he may not be able to think of any reason for believing that, and so far he has defended his beliefs by giving Q a reason for them. And here, he can give no reason. On the other hand he does believe E and does not want to abandon it, and probably would not abandon it even if he could not think of a reason for it, because he senses that it is valuable and vital in his life and in the life of his associates. Exasperation and embarrassment at these two undesirable alternatives might partially explain why persons in such situations often "blow up" or become "ticklish," as Collingwood noted. Of course, this emotional reaction does not serve to help develop the logic of this situation; however, it does serve as a useful symptom when dealing with actual situations of the kind depicted by this example.

In any case, I think it is not necessary that R lose his head at this juncture. He could be operating on the assumption that E could only be justified in the same way that one might justify claims such as "Alcohol is an antiseptic," that is, by reference to other beliefs through tests or verifications. If R were a bit more relaxed, he could argue that while E cannot be justified in that way, it can be justified in some sense by pointing out that E makes possible and intelligible a particular cognitive way of life. Another reason an overly emotional respondent might "blow up" then is that he recognizes to some extent that if E is thrown out, a sizeable portion of his way of life as it is now practiced also must be thrown out. And because R sees no other way to practice his life, no alternative that he thinks might in some sense be better than living in terms of E, he quite rightly clings to E. It is only natural that a good deal of emotion is associated with this kind of event, for seriously contemplating the absence of one's present way of life (without having in mind a possible substitute) can be very disturbing. I might propose another example here in order to make this point in terms of a more familiar situation. In discussions calling into question a person's religion, the conversation often ends with a sentence such as "I just believe in God," with

a heavy emotional stress on the word, believe. What a declaration such as this might mean is that this belief in God is not just a belief in the minimum sense, but a special belief, which justifies other beliefs, yet is not itself justified by any other belief. Hence, we witness the above mentioned emotional declaration of a principium in response to questions about the justification of one's religion. This person is telling us that the life he lives is this belief, in an important sense, for this basic belief is reflected in a great many of his actions. Indeed, in Peirce's way of looking at belief, the fact that this person behaves in the way that he does is what enables one to infer that "He believes in God." His whole life is ordered such that he never knowingly contradicts this belief as long as it remains his belief. And of course, there is a big connection between Peirce's analysis of belief and contemporary existentialists such as Sartre, for Peirce would acknowledge that a person who merely verbalizes a "belief" while declining to act in a way appropriate to that belief (given appropriate circumstances) is a self-deceived person.[54]

I think that it is reasonable to describe this sort of appeal to one's way of life as being a justification of some kind; furthermore, it strikes me that it is in some way a pragmatic form of justification because it is an appeal to practice, albeit in a way slightly different from certain kinds of pragmatic justification philosophers often discuss (for example, matters such as simplicity, convenience, or fruitfulness, these usually being mentioned within the context of comparing competing hypotheses). In what follows, therefore, when I speak of pragmatic justification for principia, I shall mean the special sense I have outlined above.[55]

Collingwood, however, insisted that "absolute presuppositions do not need justification,"[56] but by this he seems to mean that they do not need justifying in the same way that RP's need justifying. Thus, we could say that principia are not justified by other beliefs, whereas reasoned beliefs (what Collingwood referred to as RP's) are those beliefs that, within a given belief system, can be justified by reference to other beliefs. This kind of arrangement leaves one free to hold that principia are justifiable in the pragmatic sense, but not in the "reasoned" sense in the manner appropriate to reasoned beliefs. Thus, principia are "unreasoned" beliefs, in that because they are the basis for giving reasons in a particular belief system, it is not possible to cite other beliefs as reasons for believing the principia.[57]

Pragmatic justification also permits one to make sense of "logical efficacy," another of Collingwood's partially explained metaphors. In speaking of AP's he

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54. For representative statements on self-deception from Peirce, see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.265, 5.416. For a careful account of the nature of self-deception, see Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

55. There is, however, some precedent for something like the kind of pragmatic justification I am developing. See Herbert Feigl, "De Principiis non Disputandum ... ? On the Meaning and the Limits of Justification," pp. 119-156, in *Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Max Black (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); C. I. Lewis, "A Pragmatic Conception of the *A Priori*," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 20 (1923):169-177.

56. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 44.

57. Wittgenstein appears to be working along similar lines in the recently published *On Certainty*. What Wittgenstein called "beliefs which stand fast" seem to be similar to what I call principia (see, for example, paragraphs 87, 116-117, 144, 151-152, 167). For comments that take note that "beliefs which stand fast" are not verified or tested, see paragraphs 110, 164, 166, 192.

stated: "their use in science is their logical efficacy."[58] I presume this means that principia would be "efficacious" in that they make possible a fairly large realm of inquiry or a rather broad way of life. This is the kind of pragmatic justification I have mentioned. At another place, Collingwood stated: "it is proof that depends on them [AP's], and not they on proof."[59] That such principia serve thus (that their logical efficacy is) to make proof possible strikes me as being a forceful kind of justification.

This kind of approach would give the pathologist a strong way of replying to his questioner. One can imagine him uttering the following comments:

> How else are we to operate as pathologists? Do you have any better ideas? We train our students and young practicioners in this principle. It has, in a large part, enabled us to do the kinds of things we can now do in terms of diagnosing disease and in terms of our continuing research directed toward obtaining a wider understanding of disease. This research, in turn, continues to give us increasing control so that we can prevent or cure disease. We are quite pleased with the kinds of results we have obtained using this principle. If we gave up this principle, we would in effect be giving up the practice of pathology; and we know that to give up the practice of pathology would eventually be harmful to humanity. Thus, we do not see "E is not justified" as being a correct response to your question. E is justified. The possibility and worth of the practice of our way of life as it is now known justifies it, and that is an adequate justification. No inadequacy is suggested here simply because this principle is not supported by that other kind of justification, which is often called verification. That is as it should be, for one cannot verify all of one's beliefs.

There is evidence that Collingwood was aware of the kind of feature I refer to as pragmatic justification. For example, consider the following statement about AP's in terms of their being principles for a science (or system of orderly thinking).

> The principle that natural science is essentially an applied mathematics is thus by no means an indispensable presupposition for any science of nature. A presupposition it certainly is, and an absolute presupposition. It could not possibly be learnt from experience or justified by research.[60]

Collingwood saw that there might be good reason for saying that AP's, although not justified in the same manner as RP's (that is, "by research"), are justified, at least in some sense. He also described the kind of justification appropriate to AP's as being pragmatic; it closely resembles the kind of pragmatic justification I have presented.

> The only sense in which it [an AP] can be justified by research is the pragmatic sense. You can say, and rightly, "See what noble results have come from its being accepted for the last three hundred years! One must surely admit that it works; and that is sufficient justification." Perhaps. It depends upon what you want. If all you want is to congratulate yourself on having the kind of science that you have, you may do so. If you want to congratulate yourself on having the best of all possible kinds of science, that is not easy; for nobody knows what all the possible kinds would be like.[61]

58. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 32.
59. *Ibid.*, 173.
60. *Ibid.*, 254; compare with 255, 263-264.
61. *Ibid.*, 254; compare with 263-264.

While I can agree with Collingwood's comment that we do not know what all possible kinds of science would look like, pragmatic justification is not simply a matter of congratulating oneself upon having a science that works. That might be part of what is involved. But this kind of justification goes further and includes what Collingwood has praised under the rubric of "logical efficacy," that feature of principia by means of which they make an inquiry possible or intelligible, or enable it to "arise." Furthermore, although one might not congratulate himself for having a particular science, one could do something similar to that by being aware of the value of one's science in terms of one's way of life. As I have suggested above, this awareness of the value of a science (in Collingwood's broad sense for this term) and its corresponding principia is heightened by contemplating what life would be without it. This is not a form of congratulation, but something rather like appreciation of the value of a way of life, an appreciation that occurs (in imagination) in the context of being aware (at least to some extent) of the emotional and practical difficulties involved in having no principia, or no science, or no way of life.[62]

REVIEW

After presenting the overall program of this essay in the introduction, I became involved in dealing with several details concerning Collingwood's metaphysics and the nature of principia. It will be appropriate to pause here to summarize the foregoing discussion in terms of its relationship to my general thesis that Collingwoodian metaphysics is the study of belief systems. Inasmuch as many of my comments have arisen within the context of Collingwood's characterization of AP's, it will be appropriate to present this review in a way that takes account of that factor.

In considering Collingwood's comments about the nature of metaphysics, I suspected that AP's were basically beliefs. I defended this conjecture through my consideration of his meaning for 'presupposing', 'presupposition', and 'question', which later was used to achieve a better understanding of Collingwoodian AP's. Through a consideration of Collingwood's theory of absolute presuppositions in light of those earlier results, I developed an account of what I call principia, which are the "basic beliefs" or "building blocks" of a belief system. Several properties of principia have been developed to this point, and in the spirit of this review, I want to recapitulate those in terms of Collingwood's original comments about AP's (which I condensed into $AP1$-11).

In terms of the amendments I have proposed, $AP1$ can be rewritten as: "A principium is a belief that always stands (within a specific belief system), relatively to all normal questions concerning verificational justification with which it is meaningfully connected, as a reason in a verificational justification; it never stands as a belief that is verificationally justified by another belief within its belief system." One could add that a belief's status as a principium is not

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62. Peirce held a view similar to that of Collingwood concerning the role of principles in science (see Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 1.129).

intrinsic to that particular belief, but instead is a function of its place within a system of believing and justifying. This comes close to being a kind of "grammatical" property of principia, for we see that a principium is distinguishable in that it can never serve, with respect to a normal question concerning justification, as that which is verificationally justified by another belief in the same system. Or, one could say, a principium always stands as a reason in a verificational test, never as a result of such a test or request for justification (a question). On the other hand, a reasoned belief (Collingwood's *RP*) has the property that it can serve both as a reason in some verificational events and as a result in others.

Given that way of rewriting *AP1*, it becomes clear why *AP2* is roughly correct, for given the nature of a principium, it follows that within its system, it is not questioned. That is, a principium is not itself open to verificational justification (although it is justified in the pragmatic sense I have outlined), so questions involving its verificational justification in terms of some other belief will not be present in that system. Similar comments would apply to *AP5* and *AP6* because a belief system is constituted by its principia to a large extent inasmuch as they are the bases of verification in that system and thus, because of this status, are not themselves verified. Here I am interpreting "experience" (in *AP6*) to mean something like verification. I have already commented upon *AP3* in the two sections immediately preceding, so I will not repeat those remarks again. The argument concerning *AP4* appears to equivocate on 'proposition', for in one premiss the sense utilized is that of "whatever is stated" whereas in the conclusion, the sense seems to be "that which has a truth value." What is needed here is some kind of assumption which would connect 'proposition' in the sense of "that which is stated" with the notion of truth value; I believe that there is, in Collingwood's writing, just such a presumption to be found. It is clear that Collingwood regarded truth (true propositions) as the results of an inquiry, or of questioning, or of episodes of verificational justification (these three are roughly the same thing). Consider the following remarks, which support that contention.

> To inquire into the truth of a presupposition is to assume that it is not an absolute presupposition but a relative presupposition. Such a phrase as 'inquiry into the truth of an absolute presupposition' is nonsense.[63]

> In Chapter XIV I have in effect defined the positivistic mistake about metaphysics as the mistake of thinking that metaphysics is the attempt to justify by appeal to observed facts the absolute presuppositions of our thought. This attempt is bound to fail because these things, being absolute presuppositions, cannot stand as the answers to questions, and therefore the question whether they are justifiable, which in effect is identical with the question whether they are true, is a question that cannot logically arise. To ask it is the hall-mark of pseudo-metaphysics.[64]

> There will also be something which I call pseudo-metaphysics. This will be a kind of thought in which questions are asked about what are in fact absolute presuppositions, but arising from the erroneous belief that they are relative presuppositions, and

63. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 53-54.
64. *Ibid.*, 162.

therefore, in their capacity as propositions, susceptible of truth and falsehood. Pseudo-metaphysics will ask such questions as this . . . : Is AP true? Upon what evidence is AP accepted? How can we demonstrate AP? What right have we to presuppose it if we can't?[65]

So, for Collingwood, something is labelled as true only if it is the result of a successful inquiry, and inasmuch as AP's cannot be the result of an inquiry (because if they were, they would be verificationally justified by another belief, and thus no longer AP's), it follows that the distinction between truth and falsity (at least in Collingwood's sense for these two terms) does not apply to them. Thus we see that given the way in which Collingwood wants to characterize truth and falsehood,[66] this argument seems to make good sense.

These considerations do seem to clear up what Collingwood meant when he wrote that an AP is neither true nor false. However, this way of treating principia as being neither true nor false seems to conflict with actual experience. Persons holding principia do say that they are true. That is, if I believe a sentence, I will say when asked that that sentence is true. And because principia are beliefs, people holding them do say that they are true.[67]

These difficulties can be met in the following way. One regards a proposition as true if one has confidence in that proposition such that one will act upon it in the appropriate circumstances. One can come to have confidence in a proposition in more than one way. One very common way is through an inquiry in which one obtains a verification that can be seen as a reason for the confidence. That is, one sees that confidence in the proposition is justified. This way of coming to have confidence was emphasized by the Logical Positivist school, against which Collingwood was reacting. The Positivists said in effect that one does not come to have confidence in a principium through inquiry, and inasmuch as principia are not tautologies, they concluded that principia are either nonsense or are simply emotional expletives. Collingwood agreed that one does not come to have confidence in principia or AP's through inquiry, but he insisted that principia

65. *Ibid.*, 47.

66. Collingwood's way of treating truth and falsehood is in substantial agreement with a Logical Positivist (such as A. J. Ayer, compare with Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 163f.) in that Collingwood wanted to limit the legitimate use of the phrase "is true" to statements that are verified by sound inquiry. A difference, however, lies in what the two parties do after agreeing that an AP is inappropriately labelled with either "true" or "flase." The Positivist, when faced with an AP, usually wants to characterize it as being meaningless or as being a worthless pseudoproposition. Collingwood agreed that an AP is neither true nor false, and that it is not a proposition, but wanted to include it as being a meaningful and useful phenomenon in its own right (see Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 165).

67. Peirce maintained, as early as 1877, that for one to believe some sentence suggests that one would also say that that sentence is true. This principle is contained in the following comment (Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*, 5.375): "We think each one of our beliefs to be true, and, indeed, it is a mere tautology to say so." Compare the preceding statement with the following one from paragraph 5.376 (Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*): "It is a very common idea that a demonstration must rest on some ultimate and absolutely indubitable propositions. But, in point of fact, an inquiry, to have that completely satisfactory result called demonstration, has only to start with propositions perfectly free from all actual doubt. If the premises are not in fact doubted at all, they cannot be more satisfactory than they are. . . . We have to acknowledge that doubts about them may spring up later; but we can find no propositions which are not subject to this contingency." Of course, Peirce was using 'proposition' here to refer to both principia and reasoned beliefs, a usage not preferred by Collingwood. One finds similar comments about believing a sentence and saying that a sentence is true in more recent discussions of belief [see, for example, Bernard Williams, "Deciding to Believe," p. 96, in *Language, Belief, and Metaphysics*, ed. H. E. Kiefer and M. K. Munitz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970)].

were valid phenomena in their own right and were neither tautologies nor nonsense nor mere expletives. But in rejecting the Positivist critique of principia by admitting that they are not the sort of thing that can be true or false, Collingwood falls into the Positivist mistake of having a very narrow conception of truth—namely that we only correctly say that something is true if it is either a tautology or the result of inquiry or verificational justification.

It is important here to stress that there are ways other than tautology or verification by which one comes to have confidence in a proposition. Some propositions, including principia, are propositions in which one simply has confidence. This confidence is not attained through tautology or verification or testing or through scientific inquiry. A person comes, for example, to have confidence in the proposition "God exists" through socialization or perhaps through a conversion (which is not a verificational experience, but more like making an ungrounded decision). Furthermore, these other ways of attaining confidence in a proposition are perfectly appropriate in their own way. Now to have confidence in a proposition is the same as believing what the proposition describes or states. So, any proposition I believe will be a proposition in which I have confidence (this is probably part of what Peirce meant in his "tautology" remark in 5.375). Therefore, it makes good sense for me to say, contrary to Collingwood's inclinations, that my principia are true, because principia are beliefs. My confidence in my principia does not come from inquiry, but nevertheless, I am confident in them, and I will say that they are true; and, it makes very good sense to do so. Of course, if one limits the appelation "is true" as being appropriate only for statements that are either tautologies or the results of successful empirical inquiries, then this claim that it is perfectly intelligible to say that a principium "is true" will perhaps seem somewhat odd. But such oddness is due to an inappropriate restriction of occasions for which it is proper to apply the phrase "is true."[68]

In terms of these remarks, it is possible to revise *AP4* along the following lines. "Because whatever is justifiably stated (verificational sense) is the result of an inquiry, and because Collingwood considered 'proposition' that which is thus justifiably stated, and because a principium is never the result of an inquiry within its own belief system, it follows that principia are not propositions (that is, they are not verificationally justified and cannot be "stated" in Collingwood's sense). Because principia are not verified through inquiry, one does not come to say they are true (come to have confidence in them) because of an inquiry; however, principia are 'true' in that they are beliefs, and a person holding a belief has confidence in his belief and is willing to say that it is true." The result achieved here is that principia cannot be said to be knowledge if one means by knowledge something like "justified (verificationally) belief." However, one can appropriately say that one's principia are true in that one has confidence in them.

68. The suggestions I am making here appear to agree with one aspect of Wittgenstein's comments in *On Certainty*. I have in mind his insistence that there are certain ungrounded beliefs that one regards with conviction and confidence, but not because of an inquiry or through tautology. Remarks on this topic are found throughout Wittgenstein's book, but see especially section III (paragraphs 193 through 299). Peirce also presented a similar view (see MSS 846-857).

These considerations save a great deal that is correct in the remarks by Collingwood cited above while emending a shortcoming in the way he dealt with "truth."

These comments lead very nicely into the matter of *AP7*, inasmuch as a principium is important for reasons other than those associated with verificational justification. As I have argued elsewhere in this essay, the importance a principium has lies in its pragmatic justification, namely that it makes a way of life intelligible such that without it the way of life in question would no longer be possible in its present form. Using these notions, *AP7* can be revised as follows. "The importance of principia is due to their pragmatic justification in that because of them certain kinds of inquiry (or, more generally, certain modes of life) are made possible or intelligible. This intelligibility or possibility does not depend on a principium having been justified verificationally, but only on its being actually believed."

Also *AP8* can be rephrased more adequately without much difficulty. "Although a principium is not verificationally justified (that is, is not a 'proposition' in Collingwood's sense), a sentence of the form that on such-and-such occasion thus-and-so was a belief (that someone held as a principium) is a sentence that can be verificationally justified." Such a sentence can be so justified because of the existence of the science of metaphysics, which, as Collingwood rightly saw, has its own principia (because it is a science or system of orderly thought) by means of which the metaphysician is enabled to inquire into who held what principia at what time.[69]

Collingwood's claim, noted in *AP8*, that metaphysics is a "historical" science is very appropriate given the thesis I am defending, namely that metaphysics is the study (also a science, in Collingwood's sense) of belief systems. As I have argued above, principia do not *intrinsically* have the status that they have—they achieve their status because of their participation within a given system of belief that exists in a given place among specific persons. Thus, that a belief is a principium will be a fact that is tied to certain persons at a certain time and place. In other words, a principium is not "necessary," neither is it an "absolute truth for all time." A principium is a belief and therefore is contingent on there being someone that believes it.[70]

I am not yet sure that I comprehend fully what Collingwood meant in regard to his theory of "constellations" and "consupponibility" as summarized in *AP9*. However, I will offer a few statements about this general subject using the concepts I have been developing. To say that a principium never occurs singly, but always in the presence of other principia, might be a way of stating a contingent fact about belief systems. *Prima facie*, this contention does have plausibility. However, from the standpoint of logic only, I can think of no reason why there could not be a belief system with just one principium in it. Yet, I know of no belief system, as found in some in some actual society, which does not have many principia in it. Concerning what Collingwood termed

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69. Collingwood, *Essay on Metaphysics*, 63.

70. Compare with Peirce's remarks along this line in paragraph 5.416 (Hartshorne and Weiss, *Papers of Peirce*).

"consupponibility," that could be a way of referring to the fact that a given belief system is ultimately delineated by virtue of the contingent fact that it is the beliefs of a particular person or group of persons. Thus, "consupponibility" becomes "believed by these people." This would be some kind of "relationship," loosely taken. To use Collingwood's language, it would be a kind of "historical" relationship in that the relation between one principium and another in the same "constellation" would be that these principia are believed by these persons at this time, perhaps because of something in their history (not because of an inquiry, however). That suggests that the relation of consupponibility could be described as "joint belief" which would be parallel to, but not identical with, ordinary conjunction in logical theory, which means something like "joint assertion" or "jointly stated." Thus, Collingwood seems to be correct in his insistence that "joint belief" is not a relation involving implication in the way that traditional "deductive" metaphysics involves implication.

If this way of interpreting Collingwood's remarks about "constellations" is on the right track, then one would expect to find "strains" (as noted in *AP11*) if that term means either conflicts between beliefs or conflicts among persons (in the given group) *vis-a-vis* their belief system. Within a given belief system, which of necessity includes a social dimension, there will be slight disagreements among persons as to various beliefs. And in terms of the beliefs themselves, if one takes a list of the beliefs in a group's belief system, one would surely find that there are inconsistencies in a logical sense, a phenomenon often known under the title of "compartmentalization." This inconsistency among beliefs in a belief system is not completely accessible to a typical person in the given group because of the fact that many of the beliefs in his system are not verbalized in a selfaware manner, but are instead present in the form of unverbalized habits of action. Thus, it is possible for one to have beliefs that are logically in conflict and to fail to be fully aware of that fact. This feature of belief systems, the presence of "strains," is no doubt one of the reasons why it is natural that persons at times tend to become philosophical and reflective, because one can become aware of these "strains" then try to resolve them in a critical manner. And, as I suggested above, it is possible for one person who shares a belief system with another person to have a slightly different set of beliefs than the other has, different either in the sense of having an additional belief or in the sense of having rather similar beliefs such that perhaps one could say that they are slightly different interpretations of a single belief. Thus, "strains" are a combination of both logical and social factors.

Given these kinds of features, one can begin to understand why changes in belief systems are inevitable, although perhaps usually slow. These changes would occur for a variety of reasons, both logical and social, and would resemble (see *AP11*) the restlessness of something like legal or constitutional history. And, as Collingwood suggests (*AP10*), changes are often made in a belief system without the persons involved being fully aware that a change has occurred. Saying that the changes sometimes are either retarded or facilitated because of "pressure" (*AP11*) is probably a way of referring to the social side of the coin. To give a

simplistic example, a powerful and charismatic leader can, through force of personality and prestige, hold a social grouping together in a *status quo*. When he dies, the group might begin a period of change, including some kind of change in their belief system. Understanding this kind of interaction between logical and social factors at this point would require more than just philosophical analysis—various kinds of social scientific knowledge about persons and groups will also be required to complete the picture.[71]

A belief system will include all of the beliefs of a particular social group, not only principia but reasoned beliefs as well. This is the case because there would not be principia without reasoned beliefs, and *vice versa*, for the existence of these two broad types of belief is dependent upon the structure of the entire set of beliefs. In other words, the distinction between principia and reasoned beliefs is a way of characterizing the system of belief. So, a belief system includes the entire system of believing and justifying as it is found in a particular group of persons. Principia are, perhaps, of more interest because they do convey much of the "flavor" of a belief system. And indeed, some small changes in a group's reasoned beliefs will not have as large an effect, in many cases, as will changes in principia. Yet we must realize that the whole system is important, for it is in terms of this whole that the distinctions I have offered can be made.

CONCLUSION

Although this essay is not a complete account of the nature of belief systems and does not consider the important topic of the nature of the relationship between differing belief systems, I believe that the discussion has presented a viable basis for beginning to understand the nature of systems of belief. On the basis of the work presented here, I can see that it might be plausible to presume that metaphysics, as a discipline within philosophy, is an activity that critically studies existing belief systems and creatively proposes new systems of belief. Such a conclusion, if borne out by further work, would indeed show an interesting connection between metaphysics, sociology of knowledge, and intellectual history. That is, metaphysics is a discipline that enables one to understand the nature of belief systems, to identify existing systems, and to propose new systems. The sociologist of knowledge would be interested in seeing how social conditions affect systems of belief, and the intellectual historian would be interested in tracing the changes in belief systems over a period of time. The student of anthropology or folkloristics has a problem similar to that of the intellectual historian in that he would be interested in noting the differences between two or more systems of belief (usually termed "world view") as they occur cross-culturally. The intellectual historian operates not cross-culturally, of course, but across epochs or periods of history. However, the logic of the two projects (study of different belief

71. These are the kinds of problems that are treated in sociology of knowledge, a discipline that combines both philosophical and social scientific skills. Representative works on the sociology of knowledge are: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970); Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1936).

systems from various cultures versus study of different belief systems from various epochs) seems to be virtually the same.

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