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Causation and reason: R. G. Collingwood and causal analysis as the essence of social thinking

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ABSTRACT

How are we to understand causal relations and analysis in social science? This paper takes R. G. Collingwood's writing about causation as its point of departure for the answering of this question. Two different kinds of causal relations are distinguished from pseudo-causality; of the former, one is directly connected to reason, the other to our ability to manipulate the world. Their interconnection and significance are discussed and the conclusions are drawn that (a) causality belongs to the realm of human praxis and that (b) causal analysis proper is well suited for the social sciences. It is further showed that some important explanations are not causal in any of the above-mentioned senses. These explanations could conceivably be called interpretative descriptions, but it is suggested that perhaps they can be understood as examples of *causa sui*, of something self-caused.

KEYWORDS

Causality; Collingwood; scientific explanation; social science; social theory; philosophy of action; historicity; *causa sui*

For any worthwhile study of society must be philosophical in character and any worthwhile philosophy must be concerned with the nature of human society. (Peter Winch)

The history of social science can, with some plausibility and not too great of a simplification, be described as an ongoing double struggle for self-discovery; the reflective discovery of a partly new, modern form of social life and the creative discovery of a scientific discipline. Born, or at least developed and institutionalized at a time when the scientific field had been divided into a thoroughly explanatory and very successful natural scientific side and a more interpretative humanistic, slightly defensive yet often rather self-conscious side, social science had to find its own place and *raison d'être*. This was, and still is, a very complicated matter; which way one should follow is dependent upon one's understanding of (a) the nature of social life itself (i.e. questions about what has been called social ontology) and (b) the validity of the scientific methods at hand (i.e. questions about methodology and epistemology). And of course, to make things even more complicated, these questions are interrelated. On the one hand, the methods followed should be adequate for understanding social life, and therefore presuppose some fundamental already existing valid knowledge of this sphere. On the other hand, in order to be able to provide support

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for the choosing or developing of adequate methods, our knowledge of social life needs to be, or so it seems, methodologically trustworthy. What we have here is, indeed, a special version of Meno's paradox (cf. Plato 2005, 113), and no wonder then, that different authors have suggested different solutions and different ways of understanding what social science is all about.¹

In the long and still ongoing debate over the nature and status of social science, the idea of causality has a central place. Very simplified, one could perhaps paint the following picture of the debate (cf. Delanty 2005; Radnitzky 1970): Some, they could with a slight generalization be called positivists, have argued that causality is central to any scientific enterprise and that, consequently, causal explanations are central to social science (e.g. Hempel 1942; Sayer 1992²). Others have argued for the opposite: From an interpretive or hermeneutical point of view it might seem as if causality would belong to the sphere of natural science only, having no legitimate place or function in a social science instead centred on the understanding of (social) meaning (e.g. Winch 1958). Still others would admit an important role for causality in social science, but only within a larger, non-causal, context (e.g. Habermas 1977, 1982). Finally, from a, broadly speaking, constructivist/pragmatist perspective, doubts have been cast on *any* scientific claim about objective causal explanations (cf. Rorty 1989, 1999).³ But although important for the self-understanding of social science, causality itself has not, or so it seems, always received enough, or close enough, attention in this debate. The objective of this essay is to bring together a set of questions that are, in my view, too often asked and answered separately, namely, (a) What is the nature of causality?, (b) Where does causality fit in the realm of social life? and (c) What is the proper role of causality in social science? This essay attempts to bring together and to answer these questions by following, interpreting, defending and applying some parts of the philosophy of R. G. Collingwood.

The literature on causality is extensive and diversified, and there is no general consensus as to the definition or value of the concept as such (cf. BeeBee, Hitchcock, and Menzies 2009). But there are good reasons for focusing on Collingwood's analysis in this context. To begin with, parts of Collingwood's analysis are congenial to how the concept of causation is in fact understood or perhaps more often taken-for-granted within large areas of the social scientific field, particularly in its more quantitative corners (cf. Cook and Campbell 1979; Sobel 1995, see also Pearl 2000, 349–50). At the same time, however, other parts of his analysis are well suited for understanding and explicating causal explanations within the more humanistic/qualitative corners of social science. But most important: Collingwood offers a theoretical framework that includes or incorporates, and thus further develops our understanding of these two different kinds of causal explanations, their strengths and limitations. However, his analysis has not, so I would like to argue, as yet fully received the attention it deserves.⁴

The aim of this study is twofold: On the one hand, it is an attempt to analyse and understand the role and meaning of causality in social life and in the social sciences in particular. This, I believe, is important not only because it would contribute to a better understanding of the relation between causality and sociality, and to what we, as scientists, are already doing in our scientific praxis. It could also, as will become evident, help solve, or at least throw some new light on a specific kind of scientific and meta-scientific controversy (cf. Wide and Wide Boman 2013) and, hopefully, even stimulate new approaches to old problems (e.g. the so-called agency/structure and mind/body problems). On the other

hand, this study also attempts to contribute to the understanding of one particular aspect of the Collingwood's philosophy and its bearing on social science. Although lately there has been a growing interest in his philosophy in general as well as an interest in several specific areas of it – resulting in new editions of many of his works and the publication of many hitherto unpublished manuscripts, and in many valuable studies,⁵ a systematic analysis of his entire thinking about causality and its relation to his general philosophy is, as far as I know, still missing (but see Martin 1998), as is a thorough investigation into its relevance for social science in general. Hopefully, this study could, in a rather tentative and, of necessity, very restricted way, be of some use here.⁶

A note about the road: I shall, after introducing Collingwood's general approach to metaphysics, discuss different concepts of causation, one leading to another and then, via sections where Collingwood's analysis is defended and to some extent developed, back again. But only seemingly do we end where we started; if we succeed we shall know *better* what we already knew. In this manner, we attempt to follow the road to knowledge (*métodos*) which Socrates pointed out as an answer to Meno's paradox (cf. Collingwood 1933).

Collingwood and metaphysics

In the midst of newborn realism and positivism in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s, Collingwood appeared to many as representing an outmoded and obsolete way of thinking when he defended metaphysics against its many and loud-voiced critics (in particular A.J. Ayer, cf. Connelly 2003). And perhaps he was out of fashion, but he could not accept the thesis that the history of philosophy, and the history of metaphysics in particular, was a history of nonsense and errors; his historical insight forbade that kind of judgment (cf. Collingwood 1939, 47).⁷ The main argument of his defense of metaphysics was, simply put, this: There are things we cannot prove to be right (or wrong), things that may nevertheless be of the utmost importance. Collingwood argues that in fact every kind of thinking, including the most scientific, is built upon unprovable assumptions. These basic assumptions he calls *Absolute Presuppositions*, and they are absolute not in the sense of being eternally true, but in the sense of not being dependent upon, that is, relative to, any further assumptions. If these absolute presuppositions are banned from the realm of thought and science, the way the positivists tried to ban them, then, Collingwood argues, this realm will fall asunder like a house of cards. Thus they must be defended and saved when under attack. But what else can be done about them? As they are per definition unprovable, the metaphysician's business cannot be to find out whether they are absolutely true or not, nor can it be to tell which propositions are the best. Instead his or her task is historical; it is to find out and lay bare the absolute presuppositions of different times and to trace historical shifts (cf. Collingwood 1945, 1946). However, the work has a critical aspect as well. The metaphysician may for instance argue with his or her contemporaries by showing them which absolute presuppositions underlay their thinking and thus he or she may tell them how they actually *ought* to think in order to be consistent, or in order to save what they (we) actually find most valuable. Metaphysics is thus the science of absolute presuppositions (Collingwood 1940, 1939, ch. 9).⁸

It follows that Collingwood is not trying to tell us how to think, he is trying to tell us how we *actually* go about doing it. And this is in perfect agreement with the Hegelian and

Socratic concept of philosophy which guides much if not all of his efforts: All understanding is in the end self-understanding, and to know something new is in fact to know better what you already knew.⁹ And as regards causation, Collingwood's opinion is that natural science has moved from a conception according to which some events have causes (Newton), via the conception that all events have causes (Kant) to the twentieth century idea that no events have causes (Russell). But if causes are abandoned in theoretical natural science, where are they to find a new home?

Three senses of the word 'cause'

There are, according to Collingwood, three different ways in which the word *cause* is being used.¹⁰ The first, temporally as well as logically prior one, is being analysed under the heading *Causation in history* (sense I). 'Here that which is "caused"', Collingwood says, 'is the free and deliberate act of a conscious and responsible agent, and "causing" him to do it means affording him a motive for doing it' (Collingwood 1940, 285). It 'may be called the *historical* sense of the word "cause" because it refers to a type of case in which both C[ause] and E[ffect] are human activities such as form the subject-matter of history' (1940, 286). This 'historical' cause is made up of two components: The *causa quod*, or efficient cause, and *causa ut*, or final cause. Thus we can cause someone to act in two ways: either by changing his or her opinion of the existing state of affairs (*causa quod*), or by conveying him or her of what *ought* to be (*causa ut*). This means that it involves no necessary contradiction to understand an action as something both free and caused. As a matter of fact we all, I believe, know this from our moral experience. When someone says: 'It was not my fault. He made me do it and I would not have done it unless he told me to', the latter part of this statement may be perfectly true. But, even so, that does not free the actor from the responsibility that only belongs to a free person, and we may therefore answer him: 'Yes he made you do it and he is responsible for *that*. But you are still responsible for what *you* did' (1940, 293–4). Collingwood continues his analysis by even suggesting that if my knowledge of my situation and my intentions are really my own and made up independently, regardless of any amount of pressure brought by another, then my actions are not without cause, nay, they are self-causing (*causa sui*). We shall return to the concept of *causa sui* later on.

One may ask why this historical type of cause should be the most original. We shall not try to give the whole answer here but confine ourselves to an historical note: Collingwood's studies of the history of the concept of nature (of natural science) led him to (or confirmed) the conclusion that it was only with Christianity, that is to say with the idea that the world has been created by *one* God, that the idea of causation was transferred from the sphere of human relations to that of nature.¹¹

This remark leads us to what Collingwood calls *Causation in practical natural science* (sense II). Practical natural sciences are defined as those whose 'primary aim is not to achieve theoretical knowledge about nature but to enable man to enlarge his control of nature' (1940, 286–7). Collingwood is here thinking of fields like medicine and engineering, where the word *cause* refers

to a type of case in which natural events are considered from a human point of view, as events grouped in pairs where one member in each pair, C, is immediately under human control,

whereas the other, E, is not immediately under human control but can be indirectly controlled by man because of the relation in which it stands to C. (1940, 286)

The general definition reads as follows:

A cause is an event or state of things which it is in our power to produce or prevent, and by producing or preventing which we can produce or prevent that whose cause it is said to be. (1940, 296–7)¹²

Collingwood gives the following example: When turning the switch of a lamp, we produce an immediate ‘state of things’ – the switch being turned. This, in turn, produces another ‘state of things’ – light or darkness. But of course, this second state of things does not follow unconditionally; unless the filament is unbroken, the electricity is running in the house, etc., there will be no light. And as for darkness: there may be light coming from other lamps, from the window, etc.

Now what about this conditional ‘etc.’? According to John Stuart Mill,

it will probably be admitted without longer discussion, that no one of the conditions has more claim to that title than another, and that *the real cause of the phenomenon is the assemblage of all its conditions.* (as quoted in Collingwood 1940, 302n)¹³

This idea suggests itself quite naturally, and it does indeed have an air of common sense certainty. But Collingwood argues that Mill’s conclusion is in fact wrong, or at best incomplete: *The selection of one specific cause is not at all arbitrary; it always follows a general pattern.*

Once again, we may turn to Collingwood’s own (perhaps slightly outmoded) example: Imagine a car not managing to climb a steep hill. The driver would now probably inquire about the cause of the motor stop. Someone may then refer to geodesic facts – that the distance from the top of the hill to the earth’s centre being greater than that from the bottom of the hill, and of course he or she will be right about these facts. But would they count as ‘the cause’ of the motor stop? Only, Collingwood says, ‘[i]f I had been a person who could flatten out hills by stamping on them [...]’ (1940, 303). If someone else were to suggest that the cause might be that one cylinder cable is damaged the driver could, after opening the bonnet, immediately recognize this as the cause of the stop. And when this cause has been found there is no reason to keep searching for others; if we can make the car run we will not investigate further (conditional) causes. *Thus, we always pick, and stick to, causes (understood in sense II) for pragmatic reasons.*

Several important consequences follow from this analysis but here we will limit our attention to this: If causation in this second sense of the word is properly understood only as our ability to create or prevent a certain state of things by use of some specific means, then it is obviously true that an event may have different causes dependent on who is analysing it. When, for example, president Mbeki said that poverty is causing aids, he was by no means necessarily wrong. As a statesman, he might have had very clear indications that by fighting poverty he would at the same time fight aids. He would be wrong, however, if he said that poverty is the *only* cause of importance. Physicians will single out other causes, such as the sharing of HIV-infected blood and other body fluids and non-treatment with proper drugs. But that is because these causes are – to some extent – in reach of *their* power.¹⁴ Both Mbeki and the physicians may be right and there is no necessary contradiction between their statements (cf. Mosley 2004). Another example of the relativity of causes is the cause of mental depression. Physicians may say that it is caused by an inadequate level

of serotonin (or some other chemical imbalance) in the brain, and they may, in one sense, be perfectly right: an increase of serotonin will perhaps in many cases decrease the symptoms of depression. Psychologists, on the other hand, may be just as correct in describing the depression as being caused by, say, unresolved emotional conflicts. If their (different) treatments succeed, well then they have found the causes of (this) depression (i.e. that non-treatment causes a prolonged state of depression). This is not to say that there is no important difference between biochemistry and psychology, only that they have both found the cause of depression insofar as they can treat it successfully (cf. Cuijpers et al. 2008; Lambert and Davis 2007).¹⁵ A difficult question in this case is, of course, how we should measure this success. Is an ability to cope with everyday living enough, or should greater self-knowledge and personal maturity be taken into account as well?

These examples have been given in order to show the fruitfulness and potential of Collingwood's analysis. But they are also meant to convince the reader that in this common and fully legitimate way of using the word *cause* (sense II), there is (a) no possibility or need for the searching of *the* (only, true, etc.) cause of a given event or state or things, but (b) that this fact does not dissolve the concept in complete relativism or arbitrariness.

We now turn to the third and last way of using the word *cause*, *Causation in theoretical natural science* (sense III), where

[...] that which is 'caused' is an event or state of things, and its 'cause' is another event or state of things standing to it in a one-one relation of causal priority: i.e. a relation of such kind that (a) if the cause happens or exists the effect also must happen or exist, even if no further conditions are fulfilled, (b) the effect cannot happen or exist unless the cause happens or exists, (c) in some sense which remains to be defined, the cause is prior to the effect; for without such priority there would be no telling which is which. (Collingwood 1940, 285–6)

However, this way of understanding causation, which corresponds to, or expresses, the idea that there exists such a thing as *the* (only, true, etc.) cause of a given event or state of things, is contradictory, because the tight one-one relation between cause and effect (as opposed to the one-many and many-one relations we discussed above) bridges the distance between cause and effect in time as well as in space, and thus threatens the entire distinction made.¹⁶ Collingwood (1940, 314–5) writes:

If I set fire to one end of a time-fuse, and five minutes later the charge at its other end explodes, there is said to be a causal connexion between the first and second events, and a time-interval of five minutes between them. But this interval is occupied by the burning of the fuse at a determinate rate of feet per minute; and this process is a *conditio sine qua non* of the causal efficacy ascribed to the first event. That is to say, the connexion between the lighting of the fuse and the detonation of the charge is causal in the loose sense, not the tight one. If in the proposition 'x causes the explosion' we wish to use the word 'cause' in the tight sense, x must be so defined as to include in itself every such *conditio sine qua non*. It must include the burning of the whole fuse; not its burning until 'just before' that process reaches the detonator, for then there would still be an interval to be bridged, but its burning until the detonator is reached. Only then is the cause in sense III complete; and when it is complete it produces its effect, not afterwards (however soon afterwards) but then. Cause in sense III is simultaneous with effect.

But if we cannot clearly distinguish between *cause* and *effect*, that is, if we cannot say with confidence exactly where the cause ends and where the effect starts, then these concepts seem to bear no precise (scientific or philosophical) meaning. If we try to imagine a

world entirely made up of this kind of relations, we soon realize that ‘there would be no such thing as succession, and all objects must be coexistent’ (Hume 2000, 54). And, we may add, nothing could ever be causally explained. This is a crucial point in Collingwood’s argument. His analysis shows that we sometimes use the concept of *cause* and *effect* in a confused manner: For sure, we often *do* know what we mean when we use these words (sense I and II), but, additionally, we sometimes put them in a frame of thought where they in fact lose their unequivocal meaning and thus confuse our thinking *without us noticing it* (sense III). There is, for example, no point saying that the heat in metal causes it to expand, because the heat simply *is* the expansion.¹⁷ On the other hand, it makes perfect sense to say that our heating of it makes the metal expand. But this time, the cause is not unconditionally followed by the effect; this time we are in fact speaking of our (conditional) power to expand metal. According to Collingwood, then, causation in theoretical natural science is a contradictory concept. But this, he assures us, is not as grave as one might suppose; he cites Bertrand Russell to show that as a matter of fact, theoretical natural science (like modern physics, for example) has neither use nor place for the concept of cause. Instead it adheres to laws (or functions).¹⁸ However, one might ask whether Collingwood is right in trying to save a sphere of theoretical natural science at all. Another option would be to conclude that all natural science is practical, that it is carried out from the point of view of enlarging our power and control over nature.¹⁹

To make a difference

We have seen that there is no room for immanent causation in nature, and this not for empirical reasons (we have not investigated all causal relations in nature!), but for logical/conceptual. In David Hume’s famous analysis of causation (Hume 2000), it was made clear that cause and effect must be strictly separated. His problem was that when this separation had been made, he could not find the connection he was looking for; he could not see *how* or even *that* the cause caused the effect. But as a matter of fact, Hume could not even fulfil the first condition; by regarding causation from a strictly theoretical point of view the distinction between cause and effect was in fact, as shown above, made impossible.²⁰ Yet the distinction between the turning of a switch and the light filling our room is perfectly clear; the turning causes the light to shine. How is that? What can possibly separate the cause from the effect in this case? The answer is, it seems, human action (see the analysis of sense II above).²¹ It is not that only humans can *speak* of cause and effect; the point is that only humans can *make* causes and effects. And this is made only in action; our deliberate reshaping of the world alone has the power to, if I may thus describe it, cut off the all-too intimate bond between the cause and effect *in-spe*, so that it may be restored on a (truly) causal basis. One important consequence of this is that since causation, taken in this second, technological sense of the word, is dependent and only explicable in the light of human action, human action can never be fully explained (qua action) in terms of this kind of causation.²² Another way of expressing this is to say that causation in this sense (sense II) is not a concept that stands safely on its own feet, but a concept meaningful only within an often taken-for-granted practical approach towards reality.

Objections and alternatives

However, the analysis presented above might seem somewhat counter intuitive – it challenges some common ideas about the nature of the world and our relation to it. It would take us too far to go into a detailed discussion about these ideas here, but they have, as far as I can see, neither any scientific nor, which will appear upon closer investigation, any solid phenomenological (life world) support. For sure, we can act, and we do reason causally. But this would only mean that action as such is correlated to the world as such.²³

Turning from intuition to the literature, we meet more explicit criticism. For example, Ernst Sosa and Michael Tooley write the following about the effort to ground causation in action:

In the first place, the proper conceptual order would seem to be reversed. For the idea of bringing about one thing by doing something else would itself seem to presuppose the concept of causation, and this in at least two ways. First, even basic actions would seem to involve a causal relation between certain mental states – such as the relevant beliefs and desires – and other events, such as certain bodily movements, or certain thoughts, if the action is a mental one. Secondly, the notion of bringing about something *by* doing something else also needs to be cashed out, it would seem, in terms of the concept of causation. (Sosa and Tooley 1993, 16)

As to the first objection: There is, if we stick to the example above, in fact no point in saying that, when I turned the electric switch, I (or anyone else) *caused* my arm to raise in order to turn the switch; I simply raised it (cf. Collingwood 1940, 297). And if someone would argue that one could produce the same state of affairs (the arm being raised) by, say, a neurological or emotional manipulation, there would be no question as to how to answer that person: To force an arm to raise (even if it would be me manipulating my own brain) is most certainly not the same thing as raising my arm by myself!²⁴ It is true that we sometimes say that we had to force ourselves to do something, but this does not mean that we were the *subject* that acted, by some means, upon ourselves as *object*. Rather, we suddenly realized what we had to do and did it (cf. Collingwood 1942, ch. 17). And as a *living body*, our body is never merely an object for us. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes corporeal movement in a way rather congenial with Collingwood's approach:

I move external objects with the aid of my body, which takes hold of them in one place and shifts them to another. But my body itself I move directly, I do not find it at one point of objective space and transfer it to another, I have no need to look for it, it is already with me – I do not need to lead it towards the movement's completion, it is in contact with it from the start and propels itself towards that end. The relationship between my decision and my body are, in movement, magic ones. (Merleau-Ponty 1996, 94)

However, the limit between what we can *do* and what we may *cause*, the boundaries of *ourselves*, that is, is obviously an interesting matter: Does a blind person *cause* the stick to move across the ground or has it rather been incorporated into that person's body? Does a musician *cause* the keys to move or is he or she rather at one with the instrument (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1996, 143–53)? Of course, if we were to consider an action not as an action normally understood (i.e. qua action), but as a mere sequence of externally related non-intentional events or state of things, then we ought to (be able to) analyse it in terms of technological (sense II) causation. But this would not be possible here (possible as a

counter-argument against Collingwood's position, that is), since this kind of 'action' is not kind of action presupposed in causal analysis (a detailed argumentation can be found in von Wright (1971)).

The second objection appears perhaps more serious, but can also be met: For sure, *some* kind of relation between a given means and that which is brought about by using it must be at hand, since we cannot do everything by means of anything (but always only something by means of some other things). But this relation need not, and cannot if the above analysis is correct, be causal in the tight sense of the word (sense III). We may therefore have recourse to the fact that things really *are* usable, that our world to some extent actually is *manipulable* (which of course is something else than being tightly causal). If it were not (if it were a contingent chaos, a sheer externality, or an all-determined static whole), we would not have the power to act which we undoubtedly have.²⁵

This last riposte, and the general statement that the concept of agency is more fundamental than that of technological causation, has further been accused of being anthropocentric or anthropomorphic (cf. Menzies and Price 1993). Such an accusation is by no means in itself a valid argument,²⁶ but it might nevertheless have stimulated efforts to, while accepting (and perhaps extending) the criticism of immanent causality, analyse causation without reference to human action. To my knowledge, however, no such analysis has yet succeeded. In what follows I will, by discussing two examples, try to indicate why.

(a) John L. Mackie has, in a famous article, argued that a cause should be understood as 'an *insufficient* but *necessary* part of a condition which itself is *unnecessary* but *sufficient* for the result', abbreviated as 'an INUS condition' (Mackie 1993). When, for example, we say that a fire in a particular house was caused by an electrical short circuit, we do not mean that the short circuit was necessary nor sufficient for burning down the house, since a fire could have started other-ways (but then it would not have been the same fire, would it?) and given that it really did start with the short circuit, it certainly depended upon other factors as well (the absence of an automatic sprinkler system, for example). What we actually mean to say is, according to Mackie, that the short circuit was an INUS condition for the fire.

In order to develop and make more plausible the analysis, Mackie introduces the concept of *causal field*. We might determine the causal field, he says, as this particular house, with all its features save the proclivity to short circuit, as this particular house with all its features (including its proclivity to short circuit) save the absence of an automatic sprinkler system, or as anything we please: 'It is in general an arbitrary matter whether a particular feature is regarded as a condition (that is, as a possible causal factor) or as part of the field' (Mackie 1993, 40). And when the field has been defined, there is more arbitrariness to come: 'Nevertheless, there will not in general be any one item which has a unique claim to be regarded as the cause, even of an individual event, and even after the causal field has been determined'. Furthermore: to pick out some of these as *main* and *secondary* causes 'is quite arbitrary' (1993, 47).

Here we may simply repeat what Collingwood said in his answer to Mill: The determining of the field and the singling out of its conditions are not arbitrary at all; they are determined by our interest and power. Hence the house owner might say that the house was burnt down because he or she failed to notice the fire in time, the fire-squad might say that the conflagration was caused by their delay, the electrician might say that the electric

installation was inaccurately made, the architect that the house was dangerously built etc. Thus, Mackie's analysis is dependent upon and understandable only in relation to our power to act. In fact, one could say that the INUS analysis is a (rather formal) description of the category of *means*: a means is something that is *insufficient* (dependent upon other things) but *necessary* for this particular way of bringing something about, a way that is *unnecessary* (we do not want the means to be involved with the thing in question, having reached our goal we would like to leave it behind) but *sufficient* for the reaching of our goal. After having considered the concept of the causal field, we might perhaps conclude that to call something an INUS condition for something else is a rather complicated, unnecessary (we can do without it) and insufficient (it cannot explain how we choose between fields and conditions, etc.) way for saying that it is a means for us to achieve that very something.

(b) James Woodward argues that causation can be understood in terms of manipulation. In fact he tries to show that the (counterfactual) analysis of causation is dependent upon the notion of intervention: 'My suggestion is that the counterfactuals that matter for explanation are counterfactuals the antecedents of which are made true by a special sort of exogenous causal processes that I call an intervention' (Woodward 1997, 29). But these interventions are not to be understood as actions: 'It is *not* part of the theory I am propounding that causal and explanatory dependencies hold only when human intervention is possible' (1997, 30). The analysis 'makes no essential reference to human beings or their activities'. However, this position is only possible if one allows causal processes to be presupposed in the analysis of causality. Woodward willingly admits this, but does not think it is problematic since 'the characterization is not epistemically circular in a vicious sense: one does not already have to know whether *X* causes *Y* to determine whether *X* has been altered by an invention' (1997, 31). This might be so, but then it must be remembered that we have learnt nothing about causality as such from the analysis.²⁷

Further considerations

Having considered but finally put aside Sosa's and Tooley's objections, Mackie's alternative and (but seemingly) very different analysis and Woodward's plea for manipulation without agents, we may with strengthened confidence follow Collingwood and conclude that only two types of causation remain from the original three, causation in history and causation in practical natural science. Let us investigate these a bit further.

The first type (sense I) is strictly bound to reason. We saw that we may cause someone to act by making him change his mind about either the present or the future (that is, the ideal) state of affairs. This obviously limits its scope; there is for example no point arguing with the electric switch. On the other hand reason is universal; every attempt to delimit or divide it, to argue that there exists different and incomparable rationalities is doomed to fail because it would presuppose what it explicitly denies; any such attempt would tacitly presuppose a position from which different rationalities can be understood and compared while openly denying the possibility of such a position.

What about the second type of causation (sense II)? We saw how it was linked not to the concept of reason but to that of force and ability;²⁸ if we know how to bring about or avoid something by using something else as means to that end, then we know its cause.

What to use *how* is an empirical question for experimental science to find out. But is there a limit of principle to our ability to manipulate? As a matter of fact we may regard everything from this technological point of view, that is: everything but ourselves as thinking or acting subjects (cf. Collingwood 1942, 11).²⁹ To treat humans technologically may indeed be difficult, but state bureaucracies and corporations can certainly testify to the possibilities of manipulating people systematically. These organizations are not, one could argue, primarily interested in the truth as such; they want – perhaps partly by using scientific findings – to keep order and make money. Social scientists are, it seems, in another situation. They may detect an indefinite amount of causal relations, that is, they may perhaps learn to control their fellow humans. But this will not make them completely satisfied, because they are, taken as a whole and qua scientists, interested in the truth and know they have not as yet found (all of) it. The reason why they have not found it is of course that their knowledge of humans thus collected is not applicable to themselves as rational scientists; they know that this knowledge is actually knowledge of humans as things.³⁰ If thus social scientists are interested in the whole truth, and not confined to discovering how to best *use* people, then it seems they have to abandon even this second type of causation, continuing only with the first type of causal analysis. But things are not that simple.

Mistaken effects

Why did you fall? is a perfectly legitimate question to ask in certain circumstances. But we seldom say: *For what reason did you fall?* Or: *What did you intend to achieve with your falling?*³¹ This our way of speaking shows that we expect accidents, things that just happen, to have a cause. We recognize of course Collingwood's second type of causation here: Causal analysis can be carried out in order to understand and avoid certain kinds of trivial but yet fateful mistakes (cf. Macmurray 1957, ch. 7; Wide 2009). And we can take this to a societal level. It might in fact be that we have created a society that to some extent has taken control over us, social organizations, institutions, etc. which causally determine (parts of) our common lives (cf. Marx 1962; Habermas 1987). The effects of these causes are then, in the last analysis, to be understood as mistakes, the avoiding of which would make possible free, spontaneous and self-governing (autonomous) action. But there is more to say about causation and we shall say it by discussing further examples.

What causes terrorist attacks?

Sometimes social scientists and historians ask very broad questions, for example, *what causes terrorist attacks?* or *what causes social revolutions?* It has been argued, for example, that the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, DC 2001 should be understood in relation to US foreign policy and to global injustice (the latter often thought of as a 'structural' cause). Does this mean that imperialism and poverty causes terrorism? At first this seems too hasty a conclusion. But on the other hand, we have seen that there is never such a thing as *the* cause of an event, and that causation always must be understood in relation to our abilities. Now, which are our abilities? This we cannot know beforehand. If we find out that changing US foreign policy and the eradication of poverty and injustice

prevent terrorism, well, then we have found its causes. And: if a ‘war on terrorism’ really prevents terrorism, then its cause is found (cf. Franks 2009). This is of course an example where we use the word *cause* in its technological sense (not much is understood of terrorism as such). It is certainly also both legitimate and important to use the word differently: *Did anyone cause the terrorists, as free moral beings (i.e. as ‘agents’), to kill civilians?* Now we are asking questions about reasons, motives, worldviews, ideologies, etc. We have seen that the two types of questions are, ultimately, related. But they should nevertheless be kept apart (cf. Wide and Wide Boman 2013).³²

Causation and interpretative description

We may sometimes ask even more specific questions, such as: *What was the cause of the First World War?* The harder we try to answer this question the more evident it becomes, I think, that we are not searching for (external) causes after all, instead we are trying to *understand* the war and how it developed, what it was really about; we are trying to describe how it started and what it meant.³³ When we have listed all relevant factors we will not, it seems, have understood its causes but we will, at best, have understood *the war itself and how it developed*. Why is that so? Because, as we have seen, if we really had found out what did *cause* the First World War, we should either be able to analyse it as a ‘simple’ carrying out of pre-established goals, or be able to start or prevent another First World War. The former seems extremely unlikely and the latter is impossible. For sure, a description of the war will necessarily include causal analysis (taken in both the technological and the historical senses of the word) as well. But the point is that these cannot, if we are to talk about the war at all (or, at any rate, if we are to avoid a complete and devastating nominalism) stand alone; they can be properly understood only in a larger context, as parts of that process we call history (cf. Collingwood 1999, 4–5; Walsh 1967). And who could seriously claim to know how to draw a sharp line between its alleged causes, its beginning and the war itself (cf. Hobsbawm 1987)?³⁴

It is, in fact, not unusual that an explanation which first seemed to be *causal* in one of the two senses discussed above, upon further consideration turns out to be *descriptive*. We know for example that many soldiers, strange as it seems to us today, went to that war quite cheerfully and that an outburst of patriotism overcame anti-militaristic (often socialist) internationalism (cf. Hobsbawm 1987). Could it then be that strong nationalist feelings made soldiers volunteer for the front? Is this not a good example of a simple causal relation within a larger causal context? Here we must be cautious though. On the one hand, it seems very difficult to analyse nationalism as a possible means to achieve a specific end, because nationalism (a) is a phenomenon that seems to differ widely from time to time (cf. Hobsbawm 1990), and (b) if it nevertheless be thought of as something rather permanent, perhaps as a psychological ‘law’ or a kind of ‘mechanism’ ready to, under certain circumstances, become causally effective, nothing seems to be explained at all, since, in fact, only the ‘circumstances’ (that which may vary) should be understood as causes.³⁵ On the other (more cognitive, historical) hand, it seems to me that the soldier’s act of volunteering to some extent actually is what proves the power of, or rather: *empowers and determines* this kind of nationalism. For it is one thing writing, thinking and dreaming about (chauvinistic)

honour and glory, it is quite another to actually risk and perhaps sacrifice your own and other's lives for an idea (or ideal). And this means that the act of volunteering is not merely an effect of nationalism or nationalistic ideal, but rather, or at least also, a vital part of it. Thus, when referring to nationalism, we have not so much been explaining the soldiers' behaviour in terms of cause and effect; we have given a description of their actions and their way of 'doing nationalism'. And we touch here upon a major limitation of the explanation of human action in terms of economic calculations as well, such as propounded by *rational choice theory* (e.g. Elster 1995). Østerberg (1993) has pointed out that many explanations of this kind are best viewed as, at most, ingenious descriptions post-festum of human actions, and thus not necessarily provide good means to any predictions; only the actions themselves can show us what the persons in question were striving for, how they chose between conflicting ideals and where they really have their loyalties.³⁶ What is true for the explanation of volunteers of the First World War could thus, so it seems, be valid for many other explanations too. When we say of someone that his jealousy made him quarrel, we actually often describe his jealousy. When we say of someone that she became so angry that she smashed a window, we often do not actually mean that the anger made her smash it, but we describe how angry she was and in what way; we describe her way of expressing anger. And when we say that someone lit a cigarette because he was nervous, we are in fact often but describing his way of being nervous (Østerberg 1993, 70–1; but cf. Goffman 1974, 220–1, for a complementary, brilliant but secondary, type of interpretation of such actions).

Causa sui?

So far we have interpreted the existence of development proper as an important but inexplicable fact; *we do act, there really is such a thing as history*, etc. (Cf. Arendt 1989). But should we rest content with the analysis of transcending actions in terms of mere description (of miracles – good and bad)? Could it not be, that the part of an individual or collective action that transcends its intention, and thus making insufficient any narrowly 'intentionalist' interpretation in terms of for example economic rationality (cf. Collingwood 1938 and Gadamer 1960), somehow is turned towards both the future and its own history, thus determining its own being (cf. Bousanquet 1912, 65–6). The jealous person described above would then not only struggle with emotional reactions towards an perceived unloving social surrounding, but also, and most importantly, in his or her way partake in a general (social) exploration ('exploraction!') and determination of the meaning of jealousy, of relationships, of in- and interdependence. This, one could argue, would pave the way for the re-entering of causality into our analysis. However, a cause in this new sense would not be external to its effect, that is, it would neither be working *a tergo* (by way of manipulation) nor *a fronte* (as a pre-established goal to achieve), nor would it be immediately identical with it. It would, in fact, be a process of self-development, a development from potentiality to actuality. This might be possible to grasp on the level of the individual – in spite of sociology, it is at least comprehensible to picture the agent as a (in the last instance) self-determining being; some actions and works of art (and lives?) might, when properly understood, defy the question *why?* as a question understood as the search for external causes (cf. Mjöberg and Wide 2012).³⁷

Whether it also be possible to grasp this on a more general level, as society or history, is perhaps more difficult to determine. But as far as I can see, we should agree that the question at least still remains open. And what is at stake seems to be nothing less than the existence of society as an historical concept and of history as such. History, at the large scale as well as in the case of minor stories, cannot be, for reasons discussed above, a development governed completely by sufficient and necessary causes (Collingwood's sense III) or simply a carrying out of pre-established goals (Collingwood's sense I and II). Nor is it conceivable as a sequence of totally external moments, replacing each other in a random manner (perhaps as miracles). Not even a combination of these factors will do. If there is to be history it must have some *rationale*, a rationale that (as yet) has to make room for both contingency and technological causation (ultimately to be understood as mistakes), and for self-development.

Perhaps is it both possible and necessary to, in this or in any similar manner, rehabilitate the much decried notion of *causa sui*, that is, that which is self-causing, or has its cause within itself. Perhaps this notion is even presupposed in any attempt to understand history or anything historical. Collingwood has in fact argued along these lines in his posthumously published manuscript on cosmology:

What I want to suggest here is that history is the coincidence of logical with temporal order. I mean that the successive events of history form an order which, so far as it is genuinely historical (not all chronological sequences of events in human life are so), is a logical order as well as a temporal one. If it is temporal but not logical, the sequence is not historical but merely chronological – it is what Croce calls annals, or a mere series of events. History begins when we see these events as leading by necessary connexions one to another: and not only that – for history demands more than that – but as the *γένεσις* ['coming to be'] of something, the history of something which is coming to be in this temporal process. Now, in a mere temporal process, necessary though it is, nothing comes to be; there is only change, not development. What imparts to an historical process its character of development is that the phases of this process are the phases in the self-development of a concept [...]. (Collingwood 1999, 121)³⁸

And in this process, the act of historical thinking, including what we have called interpretative descriptions, is itself necessary:

There is not, first, a special kind of process, the historical process, and then a special way of knowing this, namely historical thought. The historical process is itself a process of thought, and it exists only in so far as the minds which are parts of it know themselves for parts of it. By historical thinking, the mind whose self-knowledge is history not only discovers within itself those powers of which historical thought reveals the possession, but actually develops those powers from a latent to an actual state, brings them into effective existence.

It would therefore be sophistical to argue that, since the historical process is a process of thought, there must be thought already present, as its presupposition, at the beginning of it, and that an account of what thought is, originally and in itself, must be a non-historical account. History does not presuppose mind; it is the life of mind itself, which is not mind except so far as it both lives in historical process and knows itself as so living. (Collingwood 1946, 226–7)

If there is any truth in this and in my tentative suggestions, we realize that in order to understand the whole nature of anything, its becoming and its being, its *causes* as I think Aristotle used that word (cf. Heidegger 1954), we must understand its history,

that is, its history as part of the thing itself. We may perhaps paraphrase Hegel: ‘The Cause is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development’. What has/is and what has not/is not such a cause/history is of course an important question to answer. *Perhaps it is one of the main questions for social science?* Of course, the concept of *causa sui*, if it be a real possibility at all, would not provide a convenient tool for the possibly circumstantial yet on principle rather simple explanation of any social subject. It might, however, serve as a kind of regulative idea, helping us to better understand the limits and purpose of other kinds of causal explanations and better understand social life as such.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to interpret and to some extent defend Collingwood’s analysis of causation and to relate it to some ongoing discussions within the social sciences. The general conclusions may be stated as follows.

(a) The analysis clearly shows that causal relations belong to the sphere of human actions. Taken for itself, without any reference to praxis, the concepts of cause and effect lose their meaning. Thus there is no reason for social scientists to stop reasoning in terms of causation. Obviously, this does not mean that every science that makes use of the notion of causality belongs to the social sciences. It means only that causality is at once a concept in and a subject for social science.

(b) Causation properly understood refers in all cases, except for those described below, to our ability to indirectly create or prevent certain events or a certain state of things by means of our immediate control over some other events or state of things. This type of causation, which is always relative, I have referred to as technological (Collingwood’s sense II) and it is of great importance not only in the practical science of nature, but also in the social sciences. However, because it presupposes the concept of action, it cannot form the basis of our self-understanding. In fact, we might use this last argument as a kind of theory test: if a social theory is founded on this kind of causality, then it must, notwithstanding its possible merits, be supplemented by another *kind* of theory.

(c) A more basic form of causation is that which occurs when someone makes someone else act in a certain way, without forcing or manipulating him or her (Collingwood’s sense I). This form of causation, which is of immense importance for the historical and social sciences, refers, ideally, to the (Habermasian) kingdom of reason in which our effort to reach the most reasonable solutions to our problems might bear fruit. And this already partly existing, yet never fully realized, kingdom presuppose a continual removal of obstacles for sincere communication and rational discourses.

(d) So far we have described causation from the perspectives of means (b) and their correlate ends (c). However, there is a lot of talk going on about causation that falls under neither of the types described above. Some causal analyses seem in fact to be *descriptions* or *interpretations* of events and actions. These descriptions constitute, one could argue, a large and very important bulk of the historical and social sciences. They try to catch the *meaning* of actions and social phenomena, and as such they are part of the partly examined, partly un-examined basis for all our (social) thinking (cf. the phenomenological argumentation in Sartre 1960). Descriptions, as opposed to mere classifications, also deal with the movement of the coming, with that which is partly new and not yet

possible to subordinate completely under the given standards of rational discourses (cf. Collingwood 1938, who, however, uses different terms). Should we then call these descriptions pseudo-causal? Have we, that is, then reached the limit for causal explanation? Perhaps. But it could also be that such interpretative descriptions in fact form an essential part of that self-causing and self-governing process we call society (cf. Collingwood 1942; Wide 2011). In this process, this essay attempts to partake and, for all its faults, contribute.

Notes

1. The solutions might also vary for what could be described as ‘extra scientific’ reasons (i.e. values, norms, etc.). Whether such reasons are inescapable or not, and desirable or not would, I suppose, in the end fall under point (a) above.
2. It might be considered controversial to side critical realism with positivism. In this context, however, I do think it is fully justified. And as to the concept ‘mechanism’ developed within the former tradition, we shall see that it does not solve the questions raised in this essay, rather it seems to presuppose precisely those things questioned and analysed here.
3. Richard Rorty’s position on this issue is not quite clear, since he, outside the universe of actual and possible explanatory vocabularies, willingly and as it seems whole-heartedly accepts an (extra-scientific) account of constant causal pressure in the world (Rorty 1989, 1999; cf. Guignon and Hiley 2003). Charles Taylor argues convincingly that Rorty’s epistemological problems are due to the fact that he, for all his efforts to overcome it, ‘[...] is still deeply enmeshed in representationalism’ (Taylor 2003, 168). What Rorty is lacking, according to Taylor, is an adequate understanding of an *In-der-Welt-sein*. It seems to me that, for all his ability to describe the domain of pure externality, Rorty also lacks a theoretical understanding of a world as such.
4. A quick look at some fairly recent introductions to the philosophy of social science and to the literature on causality tells us that Collingwood often is not discussed at all (e.g. Delanty 2005; della Porta and Keating 2008; Benton and Craib 2011), and that where he actually is discussed, or in fact more often only briefly mentioned, he is typically presented as a proponent of *either* a so-called manipulability theory of causation (e.g. Beebe, Hitchcock, and Menzies 2009) *or* a hermeneutical tradition focusing on and defending agent-specific explanations (e.g. Montuschi 2003; Manicas 2006; Rosenberg 2012). This kind of one-sidedness does not do Collingwood’s analysis full justice, not even when doubled.
5. For example, Boucher (1989); D’Oro (2002); Connelly (2003); Browning (2004); Johnson (2012, 2013); the introductions to the new ed. of Collingwood’s books (1992), (1993), (1998), (2005a), (2013) and to some of his posthumously published works (1999), (2005b), and studies published in *Collingwood and British Idealism Studies* (1994).
6. I shall in this essay draw on Collingwood’s published work only. But his unpublished manuscripts (as listed and described in Connelly, Johnson and Leach (2014) are rather well discussed in the Collingwood literature, and it is therefore not likely that a closer study of them would change the overall picture of his position. And in the end his argument are analysed not for the sake of being *his* argument, but for the sake of their possible scientific and philosophical value (cf. Collingwood 1939, 118–9). I have earlier, but less extensively, discussed Collingwood’s analysis of causation in Wide (2005) and, together with a colleague, in Wide and Wide Boman (2013).
7. Collingwood was not only a philosopher with a keen interest in history, but also a distinguished historian and archeologist (cf. Collingwood and Myres 1945; Hodder 1995; Birley 2013).
8. There has been a lot of discussion about the true nature of *Absolute Presuppositions* among Collingwood scholars, see for example D’Oro (2002) and Connelly (2003). My presentation here is rather orthodox, but compare Wide (2010) and Harris (1970, ch. 9).
9. This principle could, and should, I believe, be described as the essence of hermeneutics.

10. As a philosopher Collingwood never forgets about history. Therefore, he does not claim that he has distinguished all possible ways to use the word *cause* and he does not try to deduce the possibilities in a transcendental fashion. He simply states that these three are in use and that we should try to understand them: what they mean and how they have developed.
11. See Collingwood (1940). He does not discuss the monotheism of Judaism or Arabic science – on the latter, compare von Wright (1986). Although this is slightly beside the point, Collingwood's opinion should certainly be supplemented here by taking other historical aspects into account. See for example Habermas (1971) and Merton (1968, ch. 20) for classical discussions on this matter.
12. For similar but not identical analyses, see Gasking (1955) and von Wright (1971). This general approach to causality (i.e. that a cause is to be understood as a means, or as presupposing some kind of intervention) is in the literature often called the *agency, agent, experimental, interventionist or manipulability theory of causation*.
13. Compare Hesslow (1988), who discusses different ways of approaching this problem. Hesslow's own solution does not, however, seem to be a possible alternative to Collingwood's, since his concepts 'difference' and 'explanatory relevance' presuppose that someone makes the difference and render judgments about the relevance in question.
14. This is not, of course, to say that causality is a *subjective* phenomenon (cf. Buzzoni 2014, 381–3).
15. The question as to *why* a given cause has a certain effect is, in this context, wrongly put, and no reference to causal mechanisms (cf. Sayer 1992; Elster 1995; Hedström and Swedberg 1996) or the like would, so it seems, change that. In Wide and Wide Boman (2013, 711) the following example is given: 'The discovery of bacteria once revolutionized medicine. The cause of many diseases was discovered, and through avoiding contact with certain bacteria, one could avoid being stricken by and spreading such diseases. This is still true. But today we know that it is not the bacteria as such that make us sick, but rather the toxins they secrete. This new knowledge enables us to develop better treatments, but still no *one-to-one* link between the cause (toxins) and the effect (illness) has been established. And this must be so. In experimental science, we never know exactly why a certain cause produces its effect. The only thing we can know is that it really *does* produce it. [...] It follows that there is no difference *in principle* between establishing a causal connection and investigating causal mechanisms (between *establishing* and *explaining* causal relationships), because every mechanism has, in the end, to be understood by reference to the concept of causality.' See also Dray (1960, 97).
16. This appears to be an argument supported by the antic sceptic Sextus Empiricus (cf. Hankinson 1998). Sextus' skeptical conclusion is, however, overcome in Collingwood's analysis. The argument can also be found, and was certainly found by Collingwood, in Russell (1912–1913). Compare also Leibniz (1879, ch. 23: *die Monadologie*).
17. The words can easily, it seems, be translated into *atoms, molecules, phonons, speed, energy*, etc., without the analysis losing in validity. Cf. Gillies (2005, 830).
18. As will be explained below, it is not at all vital for the pursued argument that Russell was right in his sometimes criticized description of a modern causal free physics.
19. This is one of the arguments of the early Habermas (1971, 1977). See also Scheler (1960) and Buzzoni (2014, 390).
20. 'For a mere spectator there are no causes' (Collingwood 1940, 307). See also Macmurray (1957, ch. 7).
21. As opposed to G. H. von Wright (1971), Collingwood argues from the point of view of dialectics. He does not reduce an action to a practical syllogism, and his well-known theory of *re-enactment* (Collingwood 1946) is, I believe, best understood as an interpretation of what an agent actually did and not as an instrument of possible (post-festum) *predictions* (cf. Collingwood 1938). Reason is, from a dialectical point of view, an historical process in which every step forward seems inevitably only when looking backwards. von Wright appears to be saying just about the same thing when he explains that a practical syllogism does not logically necessitate a certain action: 'The necessity of the practical inference schema is, one could

say, a necessity conceived *ex post actu*' (1971, 117). But I do not take this to mean that there is a dialectical relation between intention and action, that is to say that an intention cannot (always) be fully known before the action that carries it out determines what it was actually about. I take it to mean that the agent might just as well not perform his action. This being the case, I cannot accept Rex Martin's analysis (1994, 1998) *in toto*. Cf. Vanheeswijck (2006) who argues that Martin's interpretation is too 'analytical' and not sensitive enough to the 'dialectical' dimensions of Collingwood's thinking.

22. Strictly speaking, other but human action is also conceivable. But compare Scheler (1919, 279).
23. For a discussion of the philosophical roots of the idea of the world as an entity separated from the sphere of human thinking an acting, cf. Heidegger (2003).
24. I suspect that if one confuses these two very different (yet to some extent similar) events one might end up, as I believe one could argue that von Wright does (1971, 81), with a notion of (un-dialectical) 'retroactive causation'. For an updated discussion of the debate on reasons/causes within the analytical philosophy of action, in which Collingwood is discussed, see D'Oro and Sandis (2013a, 2013b).
25. The comprehension of the *full* meaning of this fact, however, need not be presupposed in this context. Perhaps, but this argument would require an investigation far beyond the scope of this essay, the undeniable externality of some regions of social life – that which makes technological causation possible – should be understood in analogy to Merleau-Ponty's musician: that which at first looks and feels like foreign objects to be manipulated according to our will, will in the end turn out to be the necessary condition for discovering oneself in the other, thereby transforming and enlarging our will and ourselves. Perhaps social externality is, in the end, nothing but a potential social world to be concurred *and* obeyed – much like playing the piano. Cf. Wide (2005) and Mjöberg and Wide (2012) and also the Hegelian position developed in Collingwood (2005a, 325–55).
26. And Daniel M. Hausman's question (1997, 17) whether then agents could 'call anything they liked causes and effects' misses, it seems to me, the point. Cf. Buzzoni (2014).
27. These examples could, I think, easily be multiplied. I cannot, for example, see how the theory of 'conserved quantity' (Dowe 1992), Wesley C. Salmon's theory of 'mark transmission' (1984) or any probabilistic account of causation could avoid Collingwood's criticism of sense III causation except at the cost of being flatly circular and in need of support from Collingwood's analysis of sense II causation. Cf. Buzzoni (2014, 386). Further support can be found in Freundlich (1977), Gillies (2005) and Buzzoni (2014).
28. This my emphasis upon *either* reason *or* force, explains why I cannot follow Martin when he says that: 'In fact, if we did not restrict sense II to causes of "events in nature", then there would be no real difference between sense II causes and second-agent causes (under Collingwood's first sense)' (1994, 152). Of course, the force used in manipulation sometimes involves an alleged appeal to reason. But reason is then treated as a mere fact (cf. D'Oro and Sandis 2013b). When it comes to the first kind of causation, there is of necessity a being-on-the-same-level as regards the whole body of knowledge involved, and every party is, at least in principle, entitled and required to ask for further arguments when needed (cf. Wide and Wide Boman 2013; Habermas 1987).
29. Whether we actually *can* learn to control everything is perhaps doubtful – the unfashionableness of the once so highly regarded so-called 'law of causality' is perhaps related to the twentieth century's well-grounded mistrust in humanity. The idea that everything has a cause would then perhaps to some extent reflect the self-understanding of a most self-conscious society that only knows of progress. Perhaps, but here one has to be extremely carefully, could quantum mechanics be interpreted as indicating first and foremost a limit of our *manipulatory* power.
30. Compare Collingwood (1940), Scheler (1919) and Skjervheim (1959). The limits of technological reason are also discussed by, among many others, Parsons (1949), Heidegger (1954), Horkheimer (1974) and Habermas (1987).
31. But compare of course Goffman (1959)!

32. How a society understands terrorism and its possible causes also have consequences for, or is, at least, most certainly related to, the more general self-understanding of that society. According to Thorup (2011) terrorism is today often conceived as 'silent', lacking causes as well as rational motives, a mere outburst of an incomprehensible foreign power. This would then correlate to a more general lack of control and inability to understand.
33. The question of meaning, interpretation, etc. in social science and history is immense. We shall here only discuss what has immediate bearing on our analysis of causation.
34. According to Collingwood,

[w]ar is a state of mind. It does not consist in the actual employment of military force. It consists in believing that differences between bodies politic have to be settled by one giving way to the other and the second triumphing over the first. (1942, 229)

And '[t]he ultimate cause of war is disharmony among the rulers. Wars happen because traces of non-sociality are not completely overcome by the "dialectic of society" whereby a ruling class harmonizes itself' (1942, 236). This would make drawing the sharp line seem completely impossible. Collingwood's relation to the First World War and Second World War is analysed in detail in Johnson (2012, 2013). In his rather polemical, political, and to some extent prophetic autobiography Collingwood links the First World War to a triumph of natural science that was not accompanied by any progress in historical and political science (i.e. in the ability to understand and control oneself – individually and collectively):

It happened because a situation got out of hand. As it went on, the situation got more and more out of hand. When the peace treaty [for the preparation of which Collingwood worked at the British Admiralty] was signed, it was more out of hand than ever. Fighting ended because one side was fought to a standstill, not because the situation was under control again. (1939, 90)

35. The problem is eloquently discussed if not completely solved in Windelband (1919).
36. Collingwood writes: 'Most human action is tentative, experimental, directed not by a knowledge of what it will lead to but rather by a desire to know what will come of it' (1946, 42). It seems to me, further, that the analysis in Dray (1960) to some extent suffers from this same kind of limitation as do rational choice theory, that is, the inability to understand history as the birthplace of anything new or as a rational (i.e. understandable) development. The relation between 'causation as consequential manipulation' and rational choice theory is discussed in Goldthorpe (2001).
37. The ordinary social scientific description and explanation of any action often involves an analysis of some kind of frame (cf. Goffman 1974). A frame analysis will thus show the background, the rules of the game played, whether and to what extent these rules are followed or broken, etc. It may also show that different actors are playing different games without being fully aware of it (e.g. the 'gender game'). When so understood, the *frame analysis* is carried out on the level of historical causation discussed above. But the *act of framing*, on the other hand, is of course often used as a tool for manipulation, on the level of technological causation, that is. The possibility of any *causa sui* would limit the – still probably very great – applicability of frame analysis; it is not the concept of rules (universality) that would then be questioned, but the importance of *externally given* rules (cf. the concept 'autonomy' in Kant 1913).
38. Compare also:

History is a process. The substance of it is human activity; the process of this substance is the change which human activity undergoes, not in virtue of external causes working upon it, but in virtue of its own autonomous self-development. (Collingwood 1999, 263)

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