USE OF THESES

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DECLARATION

This thesis, except where acknowledgment is made in the text, is my own work. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have to thank my supervisors at the A.N.U., namely Professor John Passmore, Robert Brown and Gershon Weiler, for their advice and criticism, but above all for their tolerance. And I wish also to thank George Schlesinger, David Bostock and John McGechie whose critical comments have very greatly assisted me and occasionally rather embarrassed me.

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This thesis is largely a study of Collingwood's theory of metaphysics: not a scholarly study concerned with the careful exposition and explication of Collingwood's theory, but a critical study aimed at determining how much of Collingwood's theory is sound, or nearly sound, as an account of the relation of metaphysics to science.

The main theses of Collingwood's theory - which I expound in chapter two - are these:—

First, metaphysical principles are not eliminable from science, as the positivists claimed, but enter science as presuppositions of the questions which scientists ask and strive to answer.

Secondly, the metaphysical presuppositions of science are not constant, but change in the course of scientific development, though not as a result of scientific or philosophic criticism of previously accepted presuppositions.

Thirdly, the presuppositions of science cannot be ascribed a truth value, are not propositions, and cannot be justified either empirically or a priori.

Fourthly, the study of metaphysics is possible only as a historical science, concerned with the discovery of the presuppositions
operative in any scientific epoch, and with the description of the processes by which they change.

In the third and fourth chapters I try to determine in what sense it could be claimed that scientific inquiry has metaphysical 'presuppositions'. An explication of the notion of 'presupposition' leads me to the conclusion that Collingwood was mistaken in supposing that metaphysical principles are logically presupposed by scientific questions. Something is logically presupposed by a question, I suggest, only if it is logically implied by every admissable answer to that question. But Collingwood held, as I do, that metaphysical principles are not logically implied by scientific theories. I suggest, however, that metaphysical principles might be found a useful, if not indispensable, role in science as generators and co-ordinators of scientific questions—i.e., that they might function as regulative principles in science.

In order to evaluate this last suggestion I turn, in chapters five and six, to the problem of demarcation, seeking to develop a means of distinguishing between scientific statements and metaphysical statements. The criterion I defend is a modified version of Ayer's definition of verifiability. Having obtained a demarcation criterion I go on to consider, in chapter seven, whether
metaphysical statements can be sufficiently relevant to science to serve fruitfully as regulative principles. I suggest that they can, and offer an account of how it is possible for a metaphysical principle to 'generate' scientific questions. But my account leads to the rejection of Collingwood's claim that metaphysical principles are not true or false.

In the final chapter I take up the problem of the critical appraisal of metaphysical principles, and argue, as against Collingwood, that there can, to a limited extent, be both a priori and empirical arguments about the acceptability of competing metaphysical principles.
Note on References.

The following abbreviations have been used in footnotes:

A. R.G. Collingwood, An Autobiography
E.M. " " An Essay on Metaphysics
I.H. " " The Idea of History
D. Alan Donagan, The Later Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood

References to these works are given in the form E.M. p. 10

References to philosophical journals employ the following abbreviations:

A.P.Q. American Philosophical Quarterly
A.J.P. Australasian Journal of Philosophy
B.J.P.S. British Journal for the Philosophy of Science
P.Q. Philosophical Quarterly
P.R. Philosophical Review