

**All History is the History of Emotion: Reworking Collingwood's re-enactment thesis in
response to contemporary emotions history**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Introduction	7
The problem and significance of emotions for a Collingwoodian philosophy of history	7
Overview of thesis chapters.....	12
Chapter 1	12
Chapter 2	14
Chapter 3	15
Chapter 4	15
Situating the thesis within Collingwood studies and emotions history.....	17
Chapter One.....	23
How Collingwood arrived at his re-enactment thesis.....	23
Sentiments	31
Re-enactment is still our best option.....	43
Collingwood’s re-enactment poses some challenges for us.....	49
Chapter Two.....	51
Introduction.....	51
A brief overview of the development of emotions history.....	52
Johan Huizinga.....	52
Lucien Febvre and the Annales School	54
Emotions as part of all forms of historical thinking	57
Emotions considered as a possible object for historical study	62
The ‘flattening’ effect of narrative-form sources.....	63
Geographic differences	64
The role of subjectivity and the passions of historians in writing history.....	65

Emotions are an inextricable aspect of everyday life	66
The relationship between emotional experience and culture.....	66
Key approaches to emotions history	66
Emotionology.....	67
Emotional regimes and emotives	72
Emotional communities.....	74
Ahmed and emotionology	75
Emotions as performances	77
A note on Collingwood’s <i>Roman Britain</i>	82
A note on emotional context in history	83
Three case studies across time	85
Extract 1: C. de Hamel, <i>Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts</i> , (2016), pp. 527-30. ...	87
Extract 2: E.L. Woodward, <i>The Age of Reform 1815-1878</i> , pp. 254-55.	89
Extract 3: J.A.R. Marriott, <i>The Remaking of Modern Europe 1789-1878</i> , (1928), p. 82. .	91
Chapter Three	93
Introduction.....	93
Emotions are intrinsic; some philosophical arguments.....	94
William Reddy.....	95
Phenomenology, psychology, and Collingwood’s position on feelings	97
Collingwood’s <i>Essay on Metaphysics</i>	98
Maurice Merleau-Ponty	103
Franz Brentano	106
Wilhelm Dilthey	108
Hermeneutics and context in re-enactment.....	111
Bringing phenomenology and hermeneutics together.....	115
A note on re-enactment vs. repeatability	118

Chapter Four	121
Introduction.....	121
What is the Folktale Manuscript?.....	121
Why has it not yet been much written about?	121
What does this chapter do?	122
A note on terminology.....	123
Re-enactment of emotions in the Folktale MS	123
Collingwood’s treatment of emotions in the Folktale MS in comparison to <i>The Idea of History, The Principles of History</i> and <i>New Leviathan</i>	126
Re-enactment of magic <i>is</i> re-enactment of emotion.....	129
The modern condition as both a problem for, and example of, historical emotions.....	131
Modern rationalism leads to misunderstanding concerning emotions history; and Collingwood’s own mistake in this regard	134
Collingwood’s commitment to rationalism as an example of the importance of emotions history.....	137
Conditions and methodology for a Collingwoodian re-enactment which encompasses emotions history	138
History as the Re-enactment of Past Experience	143
‘Anthropological imagination’ as a condition for re-enacting emotions.....	148
Comparing anthropological imagination and historical imagination	150
The role of the logic of question and answer in re-enacting emotions.....	151
The role of Spinoza’s Maxim and Butler’s Maxim in re-enacting emotions	154
Conclusion	156
Conclusion.....	159
Research questions this thesis has addressed	159
Research outcome I: Collingwoodian re-enactment reformed	160
Research outcome II: Emotions history reconceived.....	161

Avenues for future research	164
Concluding remarks.....	169
Bibliography	170

Introduction

The problem and significance of emotions for a Collingwoodian philosophy of history

When we approach the task of assessing the value and future of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, it is useful to first consider two questions. First, what is it for? And second, does it accurately describe what historians aim to do? While this question specifies historians as practitioners of historical thinking, it is important to address a possible misconception. Historical thinking is not the sole domain of the historian. While Collingwood does argue that specifically individuals who have received adequate and effective historical training are able to undertake re-enactment, the process of historical thinking he subsequently depicts is accessible far beyond the field of academic historical scholarship. Further, I am not arguing that individuals who work with history outside of any field of scholarly history are not thinking historically. Where historical thinking, doing history, and historical work are referred to throughout this thesis, these terms are used to refer specifically to a precise and focused version of this more broadly accessible historical thinking which is undertaken in particular by historians.

The first question, what is it for?, is more easily answered. A philosophy of history aims to describe as accurately as possible how historians work, from the macro level – collecting evidence from an archive, for instance – to the micro – questions such as, what is the process by which they think about such-and-such detail in the past. This is not to say that the role of any philosophy of history is simply to describe or catalogue the process undertaken by the historian when they think historically. On the contrary, this description is attempted so that it can form a significant part of the philosophical understanding of that process. In other words, there is a process of synthesis which occurs. There is an attempt made to capture and express not just the steps involved in historical thinking but the essence of that process. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is an attempt to synthesise his whole understanding of historical thinking, from the perspective of both historian and philosopher. The purpose of this philosophical synthesis is to better understand not only what steps the historian undertakes, but what is accomplished in a more general sense by the pursuit of history. Collingwood argues that it is by historical thinking that mankind comes to know itself, and

that each historical thinker comes to know what they might themselves be capable of within their lifetime, by gaining an understanding of the past accomplishments of other humans.

Does Collingwood's re-enactment thesis accurately describe what historians aim to do? There is of course not a consensus among historians about the purpose of historical study. However, I believe the aim of history as a field of study can be summarised thus: that the aim of historical inquiry is to better understand the lived experiences of past humans and the world that those experiences resulted in, by producing interpretations which offer perspectives on the past which are increasingly nuanced and varied. The purpose of this increasing nuance is not simply to produce ever more numerous interpretations of the past. Synthesis of multiple interpretations which consider a range of aspects of human experience – emotion, thought, sensation, and so forth – will yield a far more interesting and more plausible collective historical understanding of the past. Historians do not operate in isolation, and every new perspective therefore increases historical understanding as a whole. It is by this method that historiography and historical understanding develop. Over time, from so simple a beginning as asking a question, endless interpretations most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

Collingwood's philosophy of history is one of the most illuminating and influential philosophical treatments of history of the last century. Throughout this thesis, criticism is of course made of, in particular, the philosophical commitments made by Collingwood in order to begin connecting his philosophy of history with other areas of his own philosophical work: aesthetics, for instance, and politics. This is not intended to diminish the significance of Collingwood's contribution to philosophy of history; on the contrary, it aims to make possible the continued relevance and use of his work by historians and philosophers alike. I believe that Collingwood's philosophy of history represents the most successful attempt to date to understand and express the historical thinking which produces our best understanding of past human lived experience.

If the aim of history is to develop increasingly nuanced interpretations of the past which are amenable to synthesis into a more and more plausible and in-depth collective understanding of what the world was like in past times and places, then what Collingwood's re-enactment thesis offers is an excellent doorway into understanding not only the results of that process of historical thinking, but what that process itself entails. The value in this lies in the process

by which this result is achieved. Collingwood approaches understanding historical thinking as an historian himself, and this insight allows him to present a philosophy of history grounded in actual historical practice. Where works of theory by historians are perhaps less common in history than in some other academic subjects, Collingwood therefore occupies an important position.

The history of emotions is a significant new field in historical studies. This, in itself, makes its study as an object of philosophy important. The history of emotions as a field in its own right, not assimilated into other fields on the basis of the era or location of the historical subject, has existed only for approximately 20-25 years. In terms of the development of a new field of history, this is very little time. One feature of this newness which is of particular interest is the ongoing discussion of method within the field. Historians working in the history of emotions – or emotions history, as this thesis will use these two terms interchangeably throughout – continue to discuss regularly what the historical study of emotions demands of historical method. In other words, the methodological theory of emotions history is an ongoing discussion within that field, and one to which this thesis aims to make a significant contribution.

There is a further point of importance to be made in relation to the history of emotions. Emotions are an inextricable aspect of human lived experience. Therefore, any historical attempt to understand past human lived experience must include the emotional dimension in both the process of historical thinking and in the interpretation produced as a result. This makes the recent development of emotions history as a distinct field of research particularly significant. Although historians have at times noted emotions as an important part of historical understanding, there has not been before the present a field of historical research dedicated to emotions in particular. The history of emotions is therefore a significant step forward in contemporary historiography, and should be accounted for in any successful philosophy of history going forward.

The two foci of this thesis are therefore both of great significance, both in their own right and in relation to one another. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is an impressive philosophical rendering of the process of historical thinking, and emotions history represents an important shift in modern historical practice. In some aspects, however, they are at present incompatible. Collingwood's core theory, his re-enactment thesis, is not capable of addressing

emotions historically. In his published works, in fact, Collingwood makes this argument himself on multiple occasions – in particular, in *The Principles of History* and in *The Idea of History*. Not only does Collingwood's re-enactment thesis fail to encompass emotions, it does so on purpose. Collingwood's claim that emotions are the proper subject of psychology, not of history, alongside his argument that emotions, as fleeting phenomena arising only in response to immediate stimuli and therefore incapable of being re-experienced by the historian, effectively excludes not only the re-enactment of emotions, but even the possibility of such. Collingwood argues that not only should historians not attempt to re-enact emotions, but that, should they make this attempt, they would find the task impossible.

A substantial part of this project, therefore, is to address this problem. This thesis aims to reconsider Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, with particular emphasis on the philosophical commitments which underwrite much of his methodological work. This is itself undertaken in order to discover how Collingwood arrived at his final position, and to make use of Collingwood's other works and ideas not previously linked to his re-enactment thesis to present a reworked, reinterpreted re-enactment thesis which is capable of considering historical thinking in a broader, more holistic way – including, encompassing the history of emotions.

If history aims to understand with increasing nuance and depth the experience of being human in the past, does Collingwood's re-enactment thesis accurately describe this pursuit?

For the most part, I believe that it does. Collingwood's re-enactment, setting aside for a moment the philosophical claims by which it is underwritten, is a good description of the process by which historians proceed from asking the initial question to presenting an interpretation of their findings which offers one plausible answer to that inquiry. The concepts which Collingwood presents, in particular rebuilding the past world in the mind of the historian and using this model to test plausible interpretations of the available evidence. Collingwood also argues, of course, that the historian must, within this simulation, re-think, for themselves, the thoughts of the past individual whose motivations they hope to understand. While I do not agree that this is the best description of precisely what happens when the historian tests an interpretation against their visualisation of that past world, the broad strokes of the idea do have some value. Rather, I would argue that within that ever-evolving simulation of the past which exists in the historian's mind in dialogue with their own

experience of their present world, the historian attempts to re-experience, or to see inside the experience of, existing in that simulated world as one's present.

Re-enactment, therefore, suffers primarily from the limitations imposed upon it by Collingwood's philosophical commitments. Collingwood commits both to the idea that the outcome of historical thinking must classify as empirical knowledge, and to the argument that facets of human experience such as thoughts and feelings are discrete and separable from one another by the historian. These philosophical commitments prevent Collingwood's work from encompassing all historiographic approaches, even when only those extant at the time of his writing are considered. Because Collingwood attempts to carry into his later work on re-enactment some of the philosophical ideas to which he has committed in other works – such as *The New Leviathan*, in which he details the relation between thoughts, feelings, and emotions in response to a similar presentation by Hobbes – he is unable to describe by his re-enactment thesis the full scope of historical thinking, which does not conform to these ideas.

Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is capable of extending beyond its current scope, but not without changes to its philosophical foundations. As a description of the processes of historical thinking it has great value, but the deeper philosophical structures within which it is housed do not serve the purpose which Collingwood intends; far from giving to history the value which is attached to 'knowledge', it limits history and prevents it from being understood to the fullest extent of its capabilities as a field.

The history of emotions is an important modern development in historiography; it represents a change in method, not just a new area of interest for historians. But if all history is the history of emotions, as the title of this thesis claims, then why does emotions history exist, or need to exist, as a distinct field of research, as it presently does? In part, the answer to this is simple: although emotions are intrinsic to all areas of historical research, they are not consistently acknowledged to be so. As will be shown, sometimes even historians working at the cutting edge of their own fields – pushing into equally new areas such as sense history – do not explicitly acknowledge the role emotions also play. The history of emotions is not history with a special kind of object, but rather, history with a special kind of emphasis, on an element which is present in all history. In other words, emotions history is special because it represents a new methodology, not a new object for historical study. Emotions are not taken alone; works on emotions history could all comfortably sit within any academic journal which

specialises by era or place, but they do not – these fields do not yet recognise that emotions are intrinsic to their own work. It is therefore doubly important that Collingwood’s re-enactment thesis be broadened in this way – not only to offer a philosophy of history which does accurately describe the endeavours of historical thinking, but also to demonstrate that while this thesis is focused on emotions history, its ideas apply equally to all historical work.

Finally, this inquiry is important for Collingwood himself. As is discussed in the editorial notes of his Folktale MS, Collingwood’s work beyond *The Idea of History* suggests strongly an openness to emotions as an inextricable aspect of historical thinking. If, as I will argue, the editorial hand of T.M. Knox has taken from Collingwood’s work this forward-looking and insightful perspective, then it is my hope that this thesis will go some way toward restoring perceptions of Collingwood to that which he might otherwise deserve. Bringing together both *The Idea of History* and his Folktale MS as two works on re-enactment, I will show that where Collingwood’s philosophical framework for historical thinking can fall short, his historical work provides much of the necessary material to bring his re-enactment thesis up to date.

[Overview of thesis chapters](#)

Chapter 1

The first chapter of this thesis begins by asking what is meant by re-enactment. Collingwood’s re-enactment thesis is explored in depth and the question is asked: how did Collingwood arrive at this idea, in this particular formulation? The value of re-enactment as an understanding of the method by which historians learn about the past is demonstrated by working through in detail an explicit re-enactment of Collingwood’s own process which led him to his re-enactment thesis.

The chapter identifies six key points in the development of Collingwood’s ideas over the course of two decades of publication, which led to his arrival at re-enactment in its most mature form, in *The Idea of History*. These six points, or questions, are as follows:

1. Is history an art or a science? Collingwood answers, it is neither.
2. What is history? Collingwood answers, history means thinking historically.

3. What is historical thinking? Collingwood answers, historical thinking produces knowledge about the past.
4. How does it result in historical knowledge? What qualifies this product as knowledge? Collingwood answers both, by making the past present.
5. How do historians make the past present? Collingwood answers, by reconstructing past thought; by making it thought arising from the world as perceived.
6. How is this possible, given that the past is gone? Collingwood answers, by rebuilding the past in the historian's mind.

It is easy to see, taking these questions as they are presented here, one immediately following another, that they are not only a series of questions, but a series of questions and answers, each of which results in a further series of questions and answers until a satisfactory answer is arrived at.

This is not an accident. Collingwood proposes a logic of question and answer in both his *Autobiography* and his *Essay on Metaphysics* as a means by which to understand how human inquiry results in useful answers. In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that not only has Collingwood arrived, in this, at a productive approach to thinking about human questioning, but that it is also an explanation of his own process of inquiry into historical thinking. Collingwood arrived at the particular form of re-enactment that we see expressed in *The Idea of History* through a series of re-enactable steps. At each stage, the answer he gives to the question posed is not the only answer possible, but the only answer possible for him at that time. I have tried also in Chapter 1 to show how Collingwood's influences and ambitions for his work led him to pursue the questions and answers that he did. For instance, at two key points highlighted in this chapter, there are alternative answers to the questions posed which Collingwood might conceivably have given, based on ideas he had published at that time. However, his desire to argue for historical *knowledge* in particular and his commitment to certain philosophical concepts in his other works led him down another path.

One of these key turning points is Collingwood's logic of question and answer itself. Although proposed in other works, in *The Idea of History*, Collingwood takes a different path for his re-enactment thesis. He proposes instead that re-enactment is possible due to the separability of the various component elements of mental activity; thought, feelings, emotions and so forth.

The other is that the outcome of historical thinking is knowledge. Collingwood commits to this from the very beginning of his writings on the nature of history, but does not cement the idea entirely until he considers how the outcome of historical thinking can qualify as a kind of knowledge when empirical observation of its object is unavailable to its practitioners. At this stage, Collingwood explains not only *that* it is important for historical knowledge to be a form of legitimate knowledge, but why, and how this can be so. This commitment to history as a form of knowledge – particularly, labelling it knowledge with the aim of legitimacy for historical interpretations as academically respectable work – turns Collingwood away from an alternative path he had begun to explore in works such as *The Principles of Art* and *The Philosophy of Enchantment*, in which the transmission and interpretation processes take precedence over the need for absoluteness or a claim to ‘knowledge’ as such.

Chapter 2

Where Chapter 1 begins with Collingwood, Chapter 2 looks first to practitioners of the history of emotions. Following an exploration of some early historians whose work explicitly considers emotions in their own right, but who precede the emotions history movement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the chapter engages with the works of some prominent emotions historians whose ideas about what emotions history is and what it is for have shaped the growing field.

These ideas are considered alongside Collingwood’s own position on historical thinking and emotions – not in opposition, but in order to identify areas with growth potential in Collingwood’s re-enactment thesis. Emotions historians have developed through practice a number of new and interesting approaches to thinking about emotions experienced by past humans in relation to their contexts. These ideas represent a significant development in historiography. Five key approaches to emotions history are explored, with particular attention paid both in this chapter and onward throughout the thesis to Rosenwein’s emotional communities approach. This approach is of special interest in the context of this thesis because it is able to accommodate both the historical study of past emotions and the emotions of the historian who undertakes that re-enactment process – and the dialogue between these which ultimately shapes the interpretation produced.

Chapter 3

The core philosophical argument proposed in this chapter is straightforward. . I argue that, given all history is human history, and given all human experience includes emotions, then all history must necessarily include emotions. The implication of this is that if emotions are indeed inextricable from all human experiences, then they are also inextricable from all past human experiences, and the study thereof, and any philosophy of history must work with, not against, this fact. Multiple arguments are presented in particular for the second point in the argument, that all human experience includes emotions; that emotions are always an integral aspect of human experience.

The other major argument point which is introduced at the end of this chapter is a development of earlier ideas, and deals directly with Collingwood's work. Collingwood argues that repeatability is necessary for re-enactment; in other words, that anything which is not exactly repeatable cannot be a proper object of historical thinking. Collingwood uses this argument to dismiss emotions from the pool of potential objects for historical study. This chapter introduces the argument that where Collingwood makes this implicit claim for the necessity of repeatability to re-enactment, he is incorrect. Instead, I argue, neither thought nor emotions, nor any other aspect of past lived experience, is exactly repeatable. Therefore, either Collingwood is correct and nothing at all is re-enactable, or he is incorrect and repeatability is not a qualifying criterion for the suitability of any aspect of past experience for re-enactment.

Chapter 4

The first half of Chapter 4 presents a reading Collingwood's Folktale MS as a work on re-enactment. Though Collingwood never uses the word itself, it is clear that his reflections on historical thinking in the Folktale MS are shaped by his developed re-enactment thesis. However, where *The Idea of History* takes a primarily philosophical approach, the Folktale MS is – I argue – derived predominantly from his own historical practice. This is highly significant, as it not only allows him to bypass the theoretical problems with re-enactment highlighted

earlier in the thesis, but also makes unmistakably clear the fact that when Collingwood re-enacts, he re-enacts emotions.

Collingwood's logic of question and answer is introduced in the second half of Chapter 4 as an alternative philosophical foundation for the methodology proposed in his re-enactment thesis. This process is also seen in Chapter 1, where it is used to re-enact the process by which Collingwood arrived at the re-enactment thesis that he did. This section of Chapter 1 therefore also serves as a case study or demonstration of the proposal made in Chapter 4, that Collingwood's logic of question and answer can and does more successfully offer a philosophical foundation for a re-enactment thesis than do Collingwood's ideas about 'incapsulated', discrete thoughts which can and must – he argues – be treated apart from other, less rational and therefore less repeatable, aspects of past human experience.

This question and answer process more successfully expresses the process by which historical thinking produces historical interpretations. It also carries with it none of the additional commitments which cause problems for Collingwoodian re-enactment; in particular, there is no requirement for thought to be the only subject. A question and answer approach allows us to take human experience as an holistic whole which can and must be re-enacted as such. This framework is introduced as part of a broader proposal of the reinterpreted re-enactment thesis which this thesis seeks to develop. In Chapter 1, it becomes clear that where Collingwood took one path and not another in his process of moving toward his most developed version of re-enactment as presented in *The Idea of History*, one path he did not pursue was the use of his own logic of question and answer as an alternative philosophical foundation. This chapter explores a re-enactment thesis which does take Collingwood's logic of question and answer as one philosophical commitment which underpins its methodology – which itself remains very close to the Collingwoodian original. Several new concepts are also put forward in Chapter 4 which contribute to the development of this reworked re-enactment thesis. In particular, anthropological imagination, as an extension of Collingwood's concept of historical imagination discussed in *The Idea of History*, brings together Collingwood's historical practice in the Folktale MS and his re-enactment thesis.

Chapter 4 presents a reworked re-enactment thesis which proposes a re-enactment process which is, contrary to Collingwood's conception of the process, the holistic interpretation of human lived experience with the aim of contributing to the continuous and ongoing project

of developing an increasingly nuanced collective historical understanding. By taking human lived experience as an indivisible whole, there is a distinct departure from Collingwood's claim that historical thinking may deal only with thoughts. This new approach also successfully bypasses the problems which Collingwood's commitment to thought as a discrete, rational phenomenon causes for him.

[Situating the thesis within Collingwood studies and emotions history](#)

It is appropriate at this stage to offer a review of the field and situate this thesis in relation to other works in this area. This will be presented in two parts, according to the dual focus of the thesis argument: Collingwood and emotion, and the history of emotions.

The history of emotions is a relatively young field which has seen significant growth in recent years. Many of the most important works so far published which are not only situated within the field of history of emotions but deal directly with the theoretical aspect of the development of the field remain those which helped to establish emotions history as a new area of research. Key thinkers include, notably: Reddy, Plamper, Stearns and Stearns, and Rosenwein. In particular, Reddy and Rosenwein have contributed much to the field of emotions history and have both been invaluable sources throughout the writing of this thesis.

William Reddy's *The Navigation of Feeling: A framework for the history of emotions* is discussed at length later in this thesis, but is certainly worth introducing at the outset. Reddy's unique contribution to the field is perhaps that the publication of his *Navigation of Feeling* in 2004 might be said to mark the beginning of the history of emotions as a deliberate field of research apart from other particular specialisms. In this work, Reddy sets out a clear, structured approach which historians wishing to specialise in emotions history might follow. He does this by offering an example work, which demonstrates very clearly how his writing on revolutionary France differs from that of parallel works which do not focus on the emotional dimension of that time and place.

Reddy begins by asking a critical question also posed in this thesis: namely, what are emotions? He provides four answers, and it is notable that none of these are drawn directly or exclusively from any field of historical research. Rather, he presents answers from cognitive psychology, anthropology and philosophy. He then presents several case studies in the

second half of the book, which focus on a selection of specifically emotional factors: sentimentalism, liberalism and romanticism, and early nineteenth-century 'personal destinies'. This approach centres around specifically emotional aspects of the period and culture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France. Reddy makes a special study of what could be termed emotional communities; focused in particular on shifts in permissible or encouraged forms of emotional expression.

Barbara Rosenwein is another pivotal figure in the development of emotions history from its outset to the present day. Her publications, including in particular *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages*, alongside works such as *Generations of Feeling*, *Anger: The conflicted history of an emotion*, and her excellent work, *What is the history of emotions?*, which seeks to understand not only where the field has come from but how, and why. Rosenwein's most influential contribution to the field is her proposal in *Emotional Communities in the Middle Ages* of the emotional communities framework. This framework proposes approaching the historical study of emotions from the perspective of communication between communal groups; sometimes geographical, sometimes cultural. These emotional communities, she argues, shared an emotional language or etiquette which was not identical with any other emotional community, and which was understood by members of that emotional community but not necessarily by those on the outside. This is particularly important when considering the position of the historian in relation to these emotional communities. Her argument is a highly convincing one.

With this approach, Rosenwein also opens up the historical study of emotions in a way that does not necessarily focus on explicitly emotional phenomena. Where Reddy writes on sentiment and romanticism, for instance, Rosenwein's approach demonstrates that emotions history can be undertaken wherever a form of community and shared history is present. I have selected Rosenwein and Reddy as critical figures in the field of emotions history precisely because of the span of their combined works. Both have been highly influential figures in the development of the field and each contributes something vitally important but very different to emotions history as an approach to historical research.

The other central strand of the argument presented in this thesis is relationship between Collingwood's philosophy of history and emotion. The majority of publications which deal with Collingwood and emotions focus on his philosophy of aesthetics. In *The Principles of Art*,

Collingwood does address sentiment and the communication of feeling. He does not, however, subsequently attempt to unify his work in aesthetics with his work in philosophy of history, in the way that he does with his work in political philosophy, and to some extent, his metaphysics. Whether he would have gone on to do so is unclear, and such a speculation does not guide the arguments made in this thesis. I have focused primarily therefore on identifying key works which do deal directly with Collingwood's philosophy of history and emotions. In this, some of the most significant works are published alongside edited editions of Collingwood's works. The essays of David Boucher, in particular, in the revised *Idea of History* are very illuminating on this subject. Alongside Boucher, the works of William Dray, Jan van der Dussen, James Connelly and Christopher Fear are similarly significant contributions to the field.

Boucher in particular presents a perspective on Collingwood which admits the need for growth in Collingwoodian re-enactment, and, critically, does not attempt to place Collingwood's ideas into categories with which he did not himself agree. Boucher's involvement in the posthumous publication of so many of Collingwood's manuscripts also places his ideas centre stage here; his influence is clear in the editorial notes in *The Philosophy of Enchantment* in particular, where critical and interpretative comments are made infrequently but consistently to significant effect on the reader. One such footnote, presented on p.196 of the Folktale Manuscript – as the work is also known – has implications for the earliest published version of *The Idea of History* which have shaped the latter half of this thesis. In his biography of Collingwood, Ingliss asserts that 'Boucher's own dutiful fidelity makes an indispensable link in the very survival of the social history of a philosopher's thought.'¹ It is difficult to select a particular key work by Boucher which has had the widest-reaching impact, but it is not difficult to identify that his interpretation of Collingwood has been one of the most influential, both for its content and for its presenting so many of Collingwood's works in publication for the first time.

'A truly Collingwoodian approach,' argues Boucher in his essay introducing *The Philosophy of Enchantment*, 'would entail more than bringing back in the idea of re-enactment.'² This thesis

¹ Ingliss, *History Man* (Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 232.

² R.G. Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology* (Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 108.

attempts something along these lines. Although this project does engage with both Collingwood studies and emotions history, the argument presented here is closer by far to the field of Collingwood studies. I have argued, in line with the work of Fear, Alskog and, as I will argue, to some extent, with Collingwood's own intentions, for a re-enactment thesis which retains the broad methodological approach presented in *The Idea of History* while rethinking its philosophical foundations. Where Collingwood has underwritten his re-enactment thesis with certain philosophical commitments also found elsewhere in his philosophical works, I have done the same; taking from Collingwood's own works the core philosophical ideas which underwrite my own reinterpretation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis. In this, I have tried to remain within the spirit of Collingwood's intentions for his philosophy of history, rather than imposing upon him any external categorisation. The ideas presented in Collingwood's works are taken in their own right. Where conceptual frameworks not contemporary to Collingwood are used, they are primarily drawn from modern history of emotions theory, and are used to support, not to subvert, this project.

It is difficult to overstate the significance of William Dray's works for the field of Collingwood studies. This thesis does not substantially diverge from his core ideas, but rather seeks to extend the range of re-enactment. This thesis is aligned with a transcendental reading of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis; that is, that re-enactment describes a transcendental condition of historical thinking. Where re-enactment is referred to in methodological terms, therefore, this should be taken as discussion of the impact which knowing that re-enactment is a transcendental condition of historical thinking has upon historical method.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Dray's work has transformed Collingwood studies, nor that he is in part responsible for the continuing relevance of the field. It is therefore important to consider at this point his position, and how it relates to the position put forward in this thesis.

His most influential works include *Laws and Explanation in History* (1957), *Philosophy of History* (1964), *Perspectives on History* (1980), *On History and Philosophers of History* (1989), and, critically, *History as Re-enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History* (1995). From the beginning of his published works in *Laws of Explanation in History*, Dray has been concerned with the conditions necessary for adequate historical explanation. By *History as Re-enactment*, Dray presents a developed interpretation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis

as a transcendental condition of historical thinking. He explains that re-enactment is applicable far beyond the scope to which its early critics had assigned it, in particular where arguments had been made for interpreting re-enactment as an instruction toward or description of historical methodology. He states in his Epilogue to this work that ‘the applicability of re-enactment theory to forms of human experience other than action - appetites, emotions, or beliefs, for example - was allowed [in the course of the book] to be less than straightforward, some 'reconceptualization of the re-enactive process' perhaps being called for in such cases.’³ Dray goes on to add in a footnote that:

‘This is a loose end which it is to be hoped some student of Collingwood will pick up. A useful source in this connection might be what is said about understanding in the writings on folklore, which the present author has only been able to sample.’⁴

This thesis aims, particularly in Chapter Four, to address this ‘loose end’.

Van der Dussen’s contribution to Collingwood studies is also significant. In addition to editing the revised edition of *The Idea of History* – in which he also presents a number of previously unpublished early Collingwood lectures – van der Dussen’s relevance for the particular focus of this project can also be found in his work on *The Principles of Art*. Van der Dussen’s discussion of Collingwood’s position on emotions in *The Principles of Art* and the relevance of this position for his philosophy of history has been invaluable to this project. This is discussed in depth later in this thesis, but is worth signposting here.⁵ Van der Dussen’s *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* is a significant contribution to the field of Collingwood studies, in the form of a thorough and extensive exploration of Collingwood’s works, published and unpublished. As with Dray, the influence of van der Dussen on Collingwood studies and on the development of this thesis has been significant. Where this influence is strongest it has been indicated throughout.

I have made substantial use of Rosenwein’s concept of emotional communities, as well as the work in emotionology by Stearns and Stearns. In this, the thesis sits far closer to Rosenwein, and is in agreement for the larger part with her position on emotions history and approaches

³ W.H. Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood’s Idea of History* (Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 324.

⁴ Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood’s Idea of History*, p. 324.

⁵ For this discussion of van der Dussen on Collingwood and emotion in *The Principles of Art*, see pp.45-46 of this thesis.

taken by historians of emotions to their historical thinking. The thesis argues that emotions history must encompass not only the overtly emotional aspects of past times and places, but also the inextricable, inherent layer of emotional experience which is present at all times in all human lived experience, past and present. I have also argued strongly for the emotions of the historian to be taken into account in this process. The emotional experience of the historian re-enacting past emotions forms a dialogue of sorts between the two, and the significance of this – usefully elaborated upon by use of Gadamer and Husserl – I have argued, should not be underestimated. The historian is an active participant in the interpretation which their process of re-enactment is able to produce. Likewise, the philosopher of history is an historically grounded participant in the re-enactment thesis they are able to conceive of. In both cases, this is not a weakness but a strength, and leads to significantly greater understanding than if either kind of thinking remained fixed across time. It is my hope that the version of re-enactment argued for in this thesis remains open to future change, as historiography continues to grow and evolve with human societies and experiences. In the conclusion, I have proposed just a few possible paths, the future exploration of which I believe might produce interesting and important results; as approaches to historiography change, the scope of re-enactment will need to change too.

Chapter One

How Collingwood arrived at his re-enactment thesis

Our first task is to understand how Collingwood arrived at his most mature position on re-enactment, and not at another. This inquiry is in the spirit of his own approach. Asking again the questions Collingwood asked, in order to understand the answers he gave to them, is itself re-enactment. This section therefore serves a dual purpose: primarily, to understand the train of thought which resulted in Collingwood's re-enactment thesis; in so doing, this initial section also demonstrates the practical applicability of re-enactment as an understanding of historical method.

Collingwood posed and answered a series of questions over the course of his career. Based on a survey of his work, I have distilled this inquiry of twenty years into six crucial questions. Each of these questions represents a critical stage in the development of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis. They are points in his thinking at which he either makes a claim not previously indicated in his philosophy of history, or chooses one direction of thought over another. In focusing on these six questions and their answers, it is possible to identify not only how Collingwood arrived at his final position on re-enactment and not another, but to gain some impression of what those other positions might have involved.

In particular, two points stand out, and these will be examined in greater depth later in this chapter. They are Collingwood's decision not to pursue his logic of question and answer as a foundation for his philosophy of history, and his later efforts to connect re-enactment with his other philosophical ideas, tying them together through an understanding of thought as a rational, repeatable, reflective process. In later chapters, we will consider how these turning points present problems in the context of modern historiography, and how Collingwood's unexplored alternative paths offer a solution to these problems.

In 1922, at the beginning of his career, a young Collingwood published an article in *Mind* called 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?'.⁶ This article raises the first of our six

⁶ R.G. Collingwood, 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?', in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 23–33.

key questions: **Is history an art or a science?** Collingwood's answer is simple. **In the traditional sense of the question, it is neither; history is history.**

Following the Enlightenment, it became the ultimate ambition of every intellectual discipline to be able to call itself a science. Science produced practical results and had a clear impact on the everyday lives of the population. Every discipline wanted to be a science, and receive the benefits that came with the title. This enduring influence is one reason why Collingwood committed early in his thinking about the nature of history to this desire to be able to call it a science. His primary motivation for this claim that history must be a form of science, however, is a desire to be able to afford to the interpretations produced by historians the title of 'knowledge'. For Collingwood at this stage, 'knowledge' indicates value, significance, and legitimacy for the research to which that label belongs.⁷ This belief is in part a legacy of that Enlightenment social shift, but also reflects strongly the prevailing belief of Collingwood's own time, in – as he himself describes later in his career – rationalism and utilitarianism.⁸ Collingwood's commitment to historical interpretation as a form of 'knowledge' therefore drives him toward the belief that history is a form of science.

Collingwood's early intuitions about history are echoed by modern historians, for whom history may share broad common ground with science, but no more. Historians are concerned no more today with whether they are scientists than they were in the 1930s, focusing on their own work rather than seeking identity by comparison. Even rewording the question, 'Is history a science?' to read 'Are historians scientists?' begins to reveal the mistake made in asking it at all – and it is this mistake that Collingwood began by addressing.

Whether history is an art or a science has been a question much-debated in the English language. Indeed, it makes very little sense outside of that context: in French, for instance, *histoire* denotes both the study of history, and a story. The German *Geschichte* performs in the same way; in Italian, *storia*. In English, however, the word *history* has become sufficiently separated from the concept of a fictional tale that its artistic implications have been lost. Modern works of historical theory very often continue to address the question. Only relatively

⁷ Dray argues that 'knowledge', for Collingwood, refers to the method of evidential reasoning, rather than to completeness or certainty. For a more complete exploration of this position, see *History as Re-enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History*, with focus on pp.234-36. See also the section addressing this topic on p.26 of this thesis.

⁸ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*.

recently has the question been raised of whether or not science is an appropriate ideal for history to aspire to; an ideal of which it must necessarily fall short. This is not to say that history is a lesser discipline. It cannot, for instance, subject its object of interest to repeated experimental observation – the past is gone. It can, however, uphold the ideals of evidence-based inquiry, and does produce reliable results which can be tested by any individual with sufficient training in historical thinking. To say that history is a science is not only to hold it to an inappropriate standard – often leading to the diminution of its standing – but also to overlook those aspects of historical research which are unique and valuable in their own right. Though it has shaped much philosophy of history in English, framing the question in these terms does history a disservice.

The question did, however, set Collingwood on an interesting path. Rather than taking for granted the artistic nature of history, Collingwood enquired further into the precise nature of historical study, to explain the relationship between the natural sciences and a discipline in which the subject is seldom present and practical results can be produced only once. Rather than treating history as de facto art, or allowing himself to believe (as historians often have) that it could be a pure science, he looked further.

In 1922, Collingwood began with the question of whether history is an art or a science, but his answer fell outside of this unhelpful dichotomy. It is this step which allowed him to proceed, in later works, with asking the questions about the nature of historical knowledge as its own type of knowledge that would later define his philosophy of history. He had understood, crucially, that the art-science dichotomy was not a useful position from which to advance.

This essay is therefore Collingwood's first significant step toward working out what history is. The closest thing to re-enactment at this stage is his statement that historians' task is 'the interpretation of individual fact, the reconstruction of historical narrative'.⁹

As the title suggests, Collingwood addresses the question of whether history is a science or an art in this essay. Although he has not yet resolved that history, apart from either camp, is itself a unique form of knowledge, he does make several claims about what history is. And his

⁹ 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p. 31.

conclusion, that history and science are in essence inseparable, comes not so much from a subordination of history to scientific method, as from a reassessment of the aims and interests of both history and science as forms of inquiry into the world. Collingwood argues that philosophy of science, being a far older discipline, has 'always been drawn to the concepts of principles of interpretation according to which the active work of thought proceeds, while the theory of history has contented itself with attending to the finished product of thought, the fully-compiled historical narrative.'¹⁰ In other words, the comparison is a false one. The process of doing science cannot fairly be called an equivalent to the *product of the process of doing history*. This, Collingwood argues, is the origin of the mistakenly-perceived subordination of history to science.¹¹ This is particularly significant because Collingwood here begins to introduce the idea that history, properly understood, is in fact a process of thinking; history is not the material found in history books, but the act of thinking historically. This idea is further developed in his next publication on the subject, on *The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History*.

Collingwood's perennial belief that history is simply history, and cannot be subordinated under any more general disciplinary umbrella, has its foundations in this essay. The root of his ability to enquire about the nature of historical thought is in his belief in historical research as a unique discipline, and it is this position which ultimately enabled his development of his re-enactment thesis; an attempt to understand not only that history is unique, but in what way.

Although much of the essay is given over to addressing the long-standing question of how scientific a subject with both feet in the humanities can really be, the above discussion illuminates a series of interesting claims that Collingwood makes in the latter half of the piece, which have an interesting impact on his developing ideas.

Collingwood's conception of knowledge and understanding

In addressing the relationship between knowledge and completeness, or potential for completeness, in this thesis, it is useful to consider the position put forward by Dray.

¹⁰ Collingwood, 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?', p. 32.

¹¹ Collingwood, 'Are History and Science Different Kinds of Knowledge?', p. 32.

On the basis largely of Collingwood's work of the later 1920s, Dray makes the following claim for Collingwood's position on the incompleteness of historical knowledge: that is it necessarily so. He goes on to argue that this position is "not entirely absent from the later works".¹²

For instance, Dray takes Collingwood's claim in *The Idea of History* that "nothing is 'a possible object of historical knowledge' taken 'in its entirety'", as evidence for Collingwood's continuing commitment to the idea of necessary incompleteness as the nature of historical knowledge. Certainly this is one possible reading. The context for this claim is relevant here: Collingwood is discussing the possibility that an historian might assess whether some societal change does or does not constitute progress. He argues that it is essential for the historian to consider multiple perspectives; both that of society with and without the change they are assessing. His claim, therefore, is that the historian cannot hold in their mind a re-enactment of that entire society in every detail; in other words, that this re-enactment will be in this sense, incomplete.

This is not incompatible with the central argument of this thesis. I have stated that Collingwood acknowledges and accepts the fact that absolutely or perfectly complete re-enactment is neither possible nor desirable. Rather, Collingwood's philosophical commitments in his later philosophy of history oblige him to commit to a theoretical ideal of complete re-enactment toward which the historian should strive, though he openly acknowledges that it cannot and should not ever be achieved. It is this 'striving toward an ideal completeness' – discussed elsewhere in this thesis – against which I have argued.

Collingwood's second question asks, **What is history?**

His answer, whose origin we can see in the above: **History means thinking historically.**

In establishing that history is neither entirely art nor science, but something all its own, Collingwood left himself with another question: if not art nor science, then what is history? Collingwood begins to develop the idea of 'thinking historically' in answer to this question in *Speculum Mentis*, and earlier, in his 1925 essay *The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of*

¹² Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History*, p. 234.

History. Here, he explains that established philosophies of history have developed such ‘a radical misunderstanding of the very meaning and purpose of historical work’ that they are disregarded in contempt by practising historians.¹³ This point is an important one. Part of the great value in Collingwood’s own philosophy of history is its foundation in his direct experience of historical thinking – for instance, in his lifelong work as an archaeologist of Roman Britain. In this essay, Collingwood addresses the question, ‘what is history?’ first by explaining where previous philosophers have expressed their radical misunderstandings in doing the same.

Collingwood moves on from the art-science dichotomy, and establishes four types of intellectual activity: art, science, philosophy, and history. Each, he explains, overlaps with the others, but also has its own unique focus, placing them on equal footing and making history ‘one among a number of attitudes taken up by the mind towards the objective world’.¹⁴

History is differentiated from other forms of knowledge in the following ways:

1. Art: ‘The object of art is the imaginary individual, whereas the object of history is the real individual.’¹⁵
2. Science: ‘scientific thinking is an abstract thinking, historical thinking a concrete thinking.’¹⁶
3. Philosophy: ‘From philosophy, again, history is differentiated by its objectivity’¹⁷ whereas ‘the philosopher’s object is at once himself and his world’.¹⁸

The historian must be imaginative (like the artist) and generalise (like the scientist), but these activities must be ‘contained in a form transmuted by their subordination to the historical

¹³ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p. 44.

¹⁴ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p. 44.

¹⁵ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.45

¹⁶ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.45

¹⁷ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.46

¹⁸ ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.48

end.¹⁹ In other words, it is the fact that historians think historically which differentiates historical study from any other kind of intellectual inquiry: it is the end, which shapes the approach. It is in this essay that Collingwood first presents a 'Sketch of a Philosophy of History'. Here, he argues that 'the historical consciousness in its ideal nature is the knowledge of the individual', an central concept in the development of re-enactment as Collingwood conceived of it.²⁰

This is also his first introduction of the idea that there is a world of historical fact outside of time, available to any mind trained to access it; 'a world of fact independent of the knowing mind, a world which is only revealed and in no sense constituted by the historian's thought'.²¹ The historian is able not only to view this world of facts, but to apprehend individual facts 'in their full actuality, as they really exist in the world of fact.'²² This would appear to contradict his later view that the historian's claim to knowledge depends upon their ability to think again the thoughts of historical individuals. But it may not. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis requires that the historian think again for themselves an historical thought; they must relive, showing that no other process could have been followed, the thought process which led to the thought conclusion of which they are historically aware. They must discover for themselves why their historical figure thought this thought, and no other, by understanding the context in which it was arrived at. In other words, in accessing this timeless reflective thought process, the historian does not so much think for themselves a thought original and unique to them, as relive a thought process original to them, but not uniquely experienced by them. The thought has also been arrived at by the historical individual whose setting the historian seeks to understand. Taken in this sense, Collingwood's claim in 1925 is not contradictory to, but connected with, his more developed ideas about re-enactment. He is not here explicitly denying the importance of interpretation; he is not discussing that aspect of his understanding of historical thought.

¹⁹ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.48

²⁰ R.G. Collingwood, 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History', in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (University of Texas Press, 1976), p. 45.

²¹ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), pp.46-47

²² 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.47

Over time, Collingwood's emphasis on the interpretative role of the historian does shift, but that shift would seem to be a development of, rather than incongruous with, these earlier ideas.

Collingwood's answer to the question, 'What is history?' – that it is distinguished by thinking historically, lead him to his next key question, namely: **What is historical thinking?**

His answer is that **historical thinking produces knowledge about the past.**

In his 1924 essay on 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History', Collingwood says that history 'in its fundamental and elementary form is perception.'²³ In other words, he means that if a historian wants to claim knowledge about something, they must be able to make it present; they must perceive it as if the past were happening to them, on the basis of contextual knowledge and evidence-guided imagination. In *Speculum Mentis*, Collingwood explores this point more extensively. Having established in his preceding paragraphs that historical knowledge rests upon the concreteness of its object, and that the object of historical knowledge is - rather than the world as it was – the knowing mind, Collingwood explains that 'the world of fact which is explicitly studied in history is ... implicitly nothing but the knowing mind as such.'²⁴ In the modern historian – a Gibbon, as opposed to a Thucydides – Collingwood sees 'the thinker who, defying the empirical limitations of time and place, claims for himself, in principle, the power to recount the whole infinite history of the universe'.²⁵ This is a grand statement, and places at the heart of historical knowledge the historian's way of thinking. It also introduces, importantly, the idea that the historian has at least theoretical access to the whole of history – in Collingwood's 1927 essay on Oswald Spengler, this idea reoccurs, in greater depth: 'To see the dominant characteristic and miss the recessive [as he believes Spengler guilty of] is to see history with the eye of the superficial student.'²⁶ This will be the subject of further consideration later in the present chapter, but its foreshadowing is worthy of notice here.

²³ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.49

²⁴ R.G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis* (London: Read Books Ltd., 2011), p.245

²⁵ Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis*, p. 204.

²⁶ R.G. Collingwood, 'Oswald Spengler and Historical Cycles', in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (University of Texas Press, 1976)., p.65

In *Speculum Mentis*, Collingwood focuses on the historian's perception of their object: perception as 'the ultimate form of historical thought which is the most rudimentary of all.'²⁷ In all perception, Collingwood states, there are two elements: sensation and thought. This distinction is key to understanding why his re-enactment thesis developed so as to exclude the historical study of emotion. The relationship between thought and sensation became key to Collingwood's developing sense of historical thought, with 'thought "interpreting" or reflecting upon the "data of sensation"'.²⁸ This understanding of the mind is best expressed in his much later *The New Leviathan*, where the thought-sensation dichotomy is upheld in very similar form, and the relation between them explored.²⁹

Sentiments

By *New Leviathan*, however, this becomes less clear-cut, and Collingwood's writing on sentiments in particular suggest that the dichotomy which is presented so strongly in *Speculum Mentis* has softened and become open to a degree of mediation.

It is worth considering sentiments to a greater extent. Enlightenment theories of sentiment have much to add to the understanding of emotions which will be explored in this chapter and the next. Michael Frazer's *The Enlightenment of Sympathy* is particularly useful. He argues that, rather than suggesting that Enlightenment sentimentalists believed our moral judgements to be rooted in our emotions alone, we should consider their position as one in which moral sentiments are the result of 'an entire mind in harmony with itself, the faculty of reason included.' Frazer presents a 'reflective sentimentalism' which stands in stark contrast to Collingwood's separation of thoughts and feelings as different tiers of mental processing.

Moral sentimentalists argue that human emotions play a key role in determining our sense of morality. Claims naturally vary within the school of thought, but include such ideas as morality as inherently sentimental, and emotions as the origin of concepts of morality. Clearly, this position is very far from that which Collingwood takes up.

²⁷ Collingwood, p.204

²⁸ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.50

²⁹ R.G. Collingwood, *The New Leviathan or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism* (Clarendon Press, 1942), particularly chapters I-VIII.

Collingwood's position in *New Leviathan* on feelings will be taken up later in this thesis, and as such will not be explored in detail here, where it would serve little purpose. However, it is important to note that although his position is clear on the relationship between thoughts and feelings in this work, later sections on sentiments do suggest that Collingwood recognises that there exists scope for mediation in this dichotomy.

Returning to Collingwood's answer to the question, What is history?, there is evidently perception of the independent world of fact, as discussed above. There is also, however, another view: that historical facts 'are only revealed by his [the historian's] thought in its attempt to understand the world present to his senses: a past event which has left no trace on his perceptible world is to him unknowable.'³⁰

It is in an effort to answer these questions that Collingwood begins to establish the foundation for his developing philosophy of history: a significant turning point in his journey toward re-enactment in its ultimate form. At this time, two different paths within his own work would have provided the necessary foundation to support the idea that it is possible for historians to think past thoughts again for themselves: the logic of question and answer, and the separation of elements of mental activity. Collingwood pursues the latter, and as a base upon which to build his ideas, it also shaped the direction in which those ideas could develop. From this position, Collingwood was able to argue that thoughts and feelings are two distinct and separable phenomena, that thoughts – as distinct from feelings – are arrived at as the result of a reasoning process, and that the historian can create a space in their own mind free from present thought, in which a re-production of this reasoned process can be reliably thought through again.

Collingwood therefore explains a hierarchical system of mental activity – which allows the human mind to derive feelings and thoughts from an initial sensory experience. For Collingwood, reflective thought is the ultimate product of a process of mental activity. Sensation evokes feeling, an immediate and fleeting reaction not dependent on the conscious mind; feeling evokes thought, and further, reflective thought. This reflection can, Collingwood

³⁰ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.50

tells us, be upon either thought or feeling. It is the fact that it is reflective which allows the historian, centuries or even millennia later, to think it again for themselves.³¹

These phenomena – the stimuli and subsequent layered activity of the mind – interact, as Collingwood explains, to form the mind as we perceive it. This interaction will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, and much of this representation will be reconsidered. For now, it is enough to be aware of the position Collingwood’s thinking had arrived at, so as to better understand how he himself understood his re-enactment thesis and idea that all history is the history of thought, to work.

Before a fact, such as the name of the first Roman citizen to die of natural causes in the year 1AD, ‘can become a problem to historical thought, the problem must arise within historical thought; it must, that is to say, arise somehow out of the attempt to perceive more adequately the world that exists here and now for our perception.’³² Historical research is stimulated by encounters with aspects of the past which have survived into the present. These may be physical remains, as in the instance of Hadrian’s Wall, or intangible remains, such as a system of government or a societal construct. By questioning these remains, the historian is able to better understand the world in which they were first created. The discovery of a memorial plaque which marks the arrival of a devastating plague in one of the Roman provinces might, for instance, give rise to questions such as ‘why was this commemorated?’, ‘why was it commemorated in this way?’, and ‘who was the first to succumb, and what made them so significant that their death was recorded as we see it here?’. This process will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3, when we discuss the importance of actual historical thinking in the development of an updated re-enactment thesis.

Having argued that history is distinguished from other forms of intellectual inquiry by its particular approach to thinking about its object, and that this particular approach – historical thinking – can be described as that which produces historical knowledge, Collingwood’s next key question is, naturally, **how does it result in historical knowledge?**

³¹ See thesis section on ‘Mink and Collingwood’s four levels of consciousness’ for a focused examination of this concept in detail.

³² ‘The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.53

Collingwood also asks, at this stage, **what qualifies this product as knowledge?** In earlier essays, Collingwood establishes that historical knowledge is neither a subsidiary branch of science, nor of art, but a form of knowledge in its own right. We have seen that history has sometimes been held to the standard of scientific knowledge, to which it is unsuited. What standard *is* appropriate, and how can the conjectures of historians, made on the basis of partial evidence about an object which can never be directly observed, deserve to be called 'knowledge'?

These two questions are connected, and Collingwood gives them a joint answer: **by making the past present.**

For Collingwood, the question of whether this product of historical thinking could be considered true knowledge is a simple one: historical knowledge 'must be called knowledge, because [it is] amenable to the distinction between truth and falsehood'.³³

This is an interesting claim. If the only requirement for knowledge is that it is amenable to the distinction between truth and falsehood, then Collingwood sets the bar unusually low. Considering his thoroughness in presenting and defending his philosophical claims elsewhere in his work – frequently presenting multiple potential opposition claims and taking them very seriously for several pages each – it seems more reasonable to suggest that, rather than merely presenting a poorly-considered criterion here, Collingwood intends something with greater depth by the statement he has given.

In general terms, simply to be amenable to the distinction between truth and falsehood is not enough to claim 'knowledge'; at best, it would indicate cognition only, an awareness of this distinction in relation to the claim made. What I would suggest Collingwood intends us to read here is drawn from the broader context of his work: that this claim is sufficient in the case of historical thought, because the process by which the historian attempts to *find* the truth to begin with – the process of historical thinking, of re-enactment – necessarily recreates the object, the past thought, the truth of which the inquiry is designed to discover. In other words, for historical thought, the quest for the truth recreates the object of that truth.

³³ 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History' in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.45

More generally, however, this thesis does not claim that this distinction does serve as a satisfactory metric by which 'knowledge' may be assessed, and – as will be seen – does not agree with Collingwood's view of 'knowledge' as central to the value of historical thinking.

We might also say that, for Collingwood, historical knowledge qualifies as a form of knowledge because it is subject to a standard of assessment which transcends the individual historian's judgement. With historical training, any person can assess the available evidence and consider whether the position put forward by an individual historian is satisfactory. In one sense, this is clear: if an historian asserts that the Battle of Hastings took place in 1215, or that King John's executive powers were subject to limitation after 1066, then it is easy to say that they are incorrect. Where the distinction is an easy one in the underlying facts of history (dates, names, places, discrete events), however, it is considerably less so when we come to the interpretive role the historian plays.

These facts, however, are not history. They are certainly historical facts, or facts pertaining to the past; they are not history, because they lack an element of interpretation. It would be easy to maintain that the product of historical thinking is knowledge, if these facts were that product. The real outcome of historical thinking, however, is interpretation. When Collingwood argues that historical knowledge is rightly called a form of knowledge, it is to this interpretation that he refers.

We are able to say that although chronicled facts about the past, such as the dates of the Battle of Hastings and signing of the Magna Carta, are quite clearly subject to a true-false dichotomy, aspects of historical knowledge which are produced by the historian thinking about and interpreting history (as defined above) are more dependent on the individual, and therefore more difficult to consider 'knowledge'.

Because re-enactment rests on the reconstruction of the past, so far as is possible, by the historian on the basis of surviving evidence, the discovery or re-interpretation of that evidence creates the possibility of invalidating or weakening any existing historical interpretation developed on the basis of that evidence, or lack thereof. A good current example of this can be found in the field of Holocaust studies. The functionalism-intentionalism debate, exemplified in the work of (among others) the historians Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen, remains active in part due to the absence of definitive

evidence for either side. The debate is between two arguments: the functionalists argue that there was not any grand, overarching plan behind the Holocaust, and that the impetus for the genocide came from a broader bureaucratic base; intentionalists argue that such a plan did exist, and that the genocide was driven by the highest political levels. There is, at present, insufficient evidence to definitively confirm one side or the other. It is possible there will not ever be. This example therefore illustrates the significance of evidence in constructing historical interpretations, and the extent to which a particular interpretation may be subject to external interrogation – both important factors in considering historical interpretation ‘knowledge’.

It is true to say that without interpretation by historians, the evidence of history would hold little to no meaning for us, but it is equally true to say that its material, the surviving documents and artefacts from which interpretations are drawn, do predate and determine the historiography.

Is the claim, then, that Nelson was brave to stand on the deck of the Victory in full ceremonial uniform, one which may be called knowledge – or not knowledge?

Collingwood’s formulation of his re-enactment thesis allows him to answer, ‘Yes.’

Every historical claim is, in principle, as falsifiable as the mathematical equation $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$. Both require contextual information in order to make sense. And both could be proven wrong by the provision of accurate evidence to the contrary. A single triangle in which the sides did not follow Pythagoras’ ratio would prove the theorem false.

Our initial instinct may be to assume that, rather than having disproven a fundamental mathematic observation, we have simply measured our triangle incorrectly. And it is always possible that what appears to be a startling new discovery will turn out to have been a simple misreading of the evidence. But it is also always possible that it will not.

A good example of this is the transition from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics. Before Einstein’s theories introduced the possibility of a relative physical universe, it was known with absolute certainty that phenomena such as the strength of gravity and time dilation were fixed constants. When Einstein’s ideas were first published, many scientists doubted or dismissed them entirely. It was the discovery of new evidence which led the scientific

community to accept that relativity was a more accurate description of our physical world than Newtonian physics had been.

In the same way, the discovery of new evidence can have a significant impact on our understanding of the past, derived entirely from the historical evidence that remains. A single piece of evidence which challenged the idea of Nelson's courage – for instance, a diary entry recording his hope of being struck down by a musket ball on that day – would create the possibility of proving the historical claim false. This is not to say that the existence of this single piece of hypothetical evidence would itself prove that Nelson was not brave, on the day of his death. But its existence, assuming the document is authentic, would give rise to questions which would, in turn, allow historians to challenge the interpretation of Nelson's actions – his decision to wear his highly-visible dress uniform and medals on deck during the battle – which argues for his courage. Nelson's courage is a very specific point, but the same reasoning may be applied to historical subjects of any scale.

In emphasising the significance of surviving evidence – and by implication, the survival of one piece of evidence over another – Collingwood directs our focus toward the present. It is the evidence for the past which has survived into the present, for whatever reason, which the historian takes as their starting point and the basis for constructing their interpretation of the world in which that evidence was first created. Further, it is the historian's thinking, also in the context of the present, which produces these interpretations.

Having argued that historians must have a present object to study, so as to call the outcome of their historical thinking 'knowledge', Collingwood asks, **how do historians make the past present?**

His answer to this question begins to indicate re-enactment in a form similar to its ultimate state, as expressed in *The Idea of History*. It is done **by reconstructing historical thought.**

Reconstructing historical thought, as an initial answer, immediately gives rise to a second: **by making it thought arising from the world as perceived.**³⁴

³⁴ From *'Essays in the Philosophy of History'* (1976), p.102: 'He is trying to know the past; not the past as it was in itself – for that is not only non-existent but unknowable into the bargain – but the past as it appears from its traces in this present: the past of his world, or his past, the past which is the proper object of his historical researches, specialised as all historical researches must be, and arising directly out of the world as he perceives it around him, as all historical researches must arise.'

As we have seen, historical thought can, for Collingwood, be expressed as thought which produces historical knowledge – a product justified in its claim to ‘knowledge’ – through a process of making the past present for the historian. In making the past present, it becomes available for investigation and questioning, allowing historians to claim the results of their work as knowledge.

This answer leaves Collingwood with another question. If historians are required to make the past present in order to consider the product of their interrogation of it knowledge, then what is the method by which they do so? Clearly, it is not possible to resurrect the past, as if by an act of large-scale necromancy. Lewis, in his inaugural lecture, shows us that, and it was equally obvious to Collingwood in the decades before.³⁵

In his analysis of Oswald Spengler, Collingwood finds a foil to advance his philosophy of history. Oswald Spengler, an historian (among other things) renowned for his book *The Decline of the West*, is perhaps best known for his theory of historical cycles. The idea that history follows a cyclical pattern is certainly not unique to Spengler, but the way in which he uses it to put forward a view of world-history based on historical relativism and ‘culture’.³⁶ He imagines that each civilisation in history has developed in a particular and repeating pattern of agriculture becoming urban life and science, which becomes in turn a rational civilisation, and declines, ultimately to materialism and the loss of belief.³⁷ For Collingwood, Spengler’s conception of history is ‘radically unsound’.³⁸

It is Collingwood’s expansion upon this judgement that gives us insight into the development of his philosophy of history at that time. In his 1927 essay, *Oswald Spengler and Historical Cycles*, Collingwood sets out over a single page a concise summary of the way in which history *does* work – in contrast with Spengler’s representation of it. The task of the historian is set forward in plain language:

‘When the man with historical sense reads a statement in a history book, he at once asks, is that really so? What evidence is there? How can I check the statement? and

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, *De Descriptione Temporum* (1954) <<https://archive.org/details/DeDescriptioneTemporum>> [accessed 9 October 2019].

³⁶ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932)

³⁷ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932)

³⁸ R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.181

he sets to work doing over again, for himself, the work of determining the fact. This is because the historical sense means the feeling for historical thought as living thought, a thought that goes on within one's own mind, not a dead thought that can be treated as a finished product, cut adrift from its roots in the mind that thinks it, and played with like a pebble.³⁹

The emphasis here is clearly on making the past thought present, and alive in the mind of the historian. A thought alive in the mind of the historian must be a thought in the process of being thought by the historian; not simply imitated, but re-thought.⁴⁰ This is an extremely influential aspect of Collingwood's philosophy of history. It is echoed throughout his subsequent publications. In *The Idea of History*, he asks, 'But how does the historian discern the thoughts which he is trying to discover? There is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind.'⁴¹

In reconstructing historical thought in the historian's mind, Collingwood argues that what the historian is doing is making that fraction of a past world exist in the present, insofar as it exists in the historian's mind, which is itself housed in the present. It exists in the present in this sense, but also becomes the present; the historian runs a thought experiment based on this reconstruction which treats the past world as if it were the historian's own present, thus testing the proposed hypothesis against the parameters of the mental simulation. To take a plain example, the historian might wish to test the hypothesis that medieval physicians wore plague masks in order to deter those from carrying plague bacteria from coming too close to them and passing on the infection. They reconstruct the thought of the plague doctor, and find that this cannot be: medieval medicine had not the technology to discover the existence of bacteria, which are not visible to the naked human eye. Further, there did exist a different school of medical thought, not based around germ theory but around, for instance, the theory of the four humours. When the historian attempts to think, therefore, of germ theory while applying their reconstruction of the thought and context of the medieval physician, they find

³⁹ R.G. Collingwood, 'Oswald Spengler and Historical Cycles', in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (London: University of Texas Press, 1976), p.67

⁴⁰ From *The Idea of History*: 'But how can the historian re-enact the past? What has happened has happened: it cannot be made to happen again by thinking about it. ... The answer is that, without any necromancy, the historian may re-enact a past event if that event is itself a thought.'; 'Not only is the history of thought possible, but, if thought is understood in its widest sense, it is the only thing of which there can be history.'

⁴¹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p.215

they are unable to do so. 'What the historian wants,' says Collingwood, 'is a real present. He wants a real world around him (not, of course, a world of things in themselves, unknown and unknowable, but a world of things seen and heard, felt and described); and he wants to be able to see this world as the living successor of an unreal, a dead and perished, past. He wants to reconstruct in his mind the process by which *his* world – the world in those of its aspects which at this particular moment impress themselves on *him* – has come to be what it is.'⁴² This reconstructed world in which the past thought first arose is a concept critical to Collingwood's developing understanding of historical thinking.

A note on terminology

This thesis is aligned with the transcendental reading of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis. Where I have referred to re-enactment as methodological process, therefore, this should not be taken as rejection of a transcendental reading.

This thesis agrees with a transcendental reading of re-enactment, but also further considers that this reading has direct implications for methodology. To illustrate this, we can consider 'scissors-and-paste' history.

If the transcendental reading of re-enactment is correct, then we can judge whether or not 'scissors-and-paste' history is in fact history by establishing whether it is a) not attempting re-enactment or b) poorly attempting re-enactment.

Collingwood's term 'scissors-and-paste' history describes one historical method. Therefore, as re-enactment is a transcendental condition of historical thinking, an awareness of this does have a significant impact on method. If we are aware that re-enactment is a transcendental condition of historical thinking, our methodological approach to doing history is naturally impacted by this awareness.

If 'scissors-and-paste' history is one historical method – or rather, an umbrella term used by Collingwood to refer to a range of similar historical methods – and the interpretive process is another, then it becomes clear that awareness of the transcendental nature of

⁴² R.G. Collingwood, 'The Limits of Historical Knowledge', in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (London: University of Texas Press, 1976), p.101

re-enactment has direct implications for historical method. In other words, the way in which we do history is shaped by the knowledge that re-enactment is a transcendental condition of historical thinking.

How is this possible, given that the past is gone?

By rebuilding the past in the historian's mind.

Very closely connected with the question of making the past present is the question of how the reconstruction of past thought in the mind of the historian is in the first place possible. To say that the historian must be trained in historical thinking is no longer enough. Collingwood has already arrived at the idea that if history is to be an object of perception, and if its study is to yield historical knowledge (with a good claim to the word 'knowledge'), then it must be necessary to make the past – in particular, past thought – alive in the present, so that it is available for investigation by the historian.⁴³

The question of how this reanimation is possible is Collingwood's last big problem, and he responds with the idea that turns his belief that thought must be held in the historian's mind into his re-enactment thesis. The historian, he argues, must live the past thought again, for himself, by putting himself in the place of the historical individual from whom the past thought originates. This project raises difficulties, however. How can it be possible for the historian, themselves a modern person, to extract from their understanding of the past their knowledge of the intervening time? Numerous historians and philosophers of history have found this an insuperable difficulty – for some, it has even become a positive condition of historical work. The ability of the historian to deliver their research in the context of their own time and influences may, after all, be what makes ongoing historical study worthwhile – certainly, this is a view held by many historians today.

For Collingwood, however, there is a different answer. The separation of present thought and past thought is both possible and necessary for historical knowledge. His clearest elaborations of the re-enactment thesis are found in *The Idea of History*, however there are some signs of

⁴³ This is not intended to suggest that Collingwood's re-enactment thesis instructs historians on the method by which they should pursue historical thinking; rather, it describes the transcendental conditions necessary for historical thinking. The position of the author in relation to this debate has been expressed in greater detail elsewhere in the thesis.

its development as early as his essays of the 1920s. In his analysis of Spengler, for instance, Collingwood discusses the importance of re-creating past ideas within our minds:

‘When one idea dominates in a culture, ‘the whole culture becomes brilliantly luminous with the light of this idea; luminous to itself, so far as its own human vehicles can grasp the idea consciously, luminous to us, so far as we can re-create their idea within our minds and so see what their life meant to them.’⁴⁴

The act of rebuilding the past inside the mind of the historian is difficult to understand, and crucial for Collingwood’s understanding of re-enactment – and the need to imagine a human mind capable of supporting this process seems to have been a formative influence on his later theory of mind. This will be an important discussion point in subsequent thesis chapters – in particular, Chapter Two.

As is now clear, Collingwood arrived at his re-enactment thesis via a long and considered process of twenty years’ work, during which time his attention also turned to many other subjects: aesthetics, political philosophy, and so forth. These other areas of research do have a marked impact on the development of his philosophy of history, and will be drawn upon where relevant throughout this thesis. Beginning with a long-asked question, whether history should be classified as an art or a science, Collingwood takes his first step toward his re-enactment thesis when he answers that it is neither; a science in so far as it is an organised seeking of knowledge, but not further than that. History is history. Faced with this answer, Collingwood proceeded to ask the next question, and the next, up to his final work on *The Idea of History* and the most mature answer he was able to provide in his lifetime. Collingwood’s published works do not, of course, directly propose and respond to the questions which have been presented here. A careful reading of their contents, however, makes it possible to construct this sequence of questions and answers which help to make sense of the trajectory of his thinking, and provide insight into how he arrived at the final position he did – both the re-enactment thesis as method and its philosophical underpinnings. This will be a useful foundation for the project of this thesis, which seeks to retain the method which Collingwood proposes in his re-enactment thesis, but radically rethink the philosophical

⁴⁴ ‘Oswald Spengler and the Theory of Historical Cycles’ in Collingwood, R.G., *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, (London: University of Texas Press, 1922), p.73

foundations on which that methodological understanding of historical thinking rests in order to help Collingwood's work to remain useful to contemporary historians of all fields in understanding the processes by which thinking historically occurs.

Re-enactment is still our best option

It is important at this point to highlight the value in re-enactment, before moving on to explore some of the key difficulties which arise when Collingwood's re-enactment is applied to modern historical thinking. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is the best philosophical representation of historical thinking to date. It expresses the process of thinking historically with insight gained from working as both historian and philosopher. This methodological process is, I believe, one of Collingwood's great insights into historical thinking, and is one of the most valuable aspects of his philosophy of history.

Considering the most valuable aspects of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, it is useful to divide his philosophy of history into two periods: the initial, which derives from his direct experience of thinking historically; and the latter, which attempts to incorporate his philosophy of history into a broader philosophical understanding, along with his work in political philosophy and aesthetics. Clearly, this division is a simplification, but it is a useful one. Thinking of Collingwood's philosophy of history in this way allows us to focus on the ideas developed in response to actual historical practice. One of the primary aims of this thesis is to think about philosophy of history always in relation to actual historical practice. Where Collingwood later develops his initial, experience-based, philosophy of history to cohere with his other areas of philosophical interest, his overall philosophy of history suffers. It becomes less directly applicable to the practices of historians and the work they produce.

An example illustrates this point. Collingwood's insistence that historians not simply should, but *can* study only past thoughts arises much more clearly in his later philosophy of history – following commitments made in other philosophical works which assign insuperable differences to two aspects of human experience, thoughts and feelings. He most firmly divides these two in his late work *The New Leviathan*.

Published in 1942, Collingwood offered *The New Leviathan* as a contribution to the war effort. He had begun work on the project at least as early as 1940. (Ingliss, p.294), writing on Hobbes' *Leviathan*.

That Collingwood's later and broader philosophical interests shifted the focus of his philosophy of history away from its basis in his own experience of historical thinking is made clear when we look to his publications. In his essay *The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History*, Collingwood explains historical thinking in the following terms:

History in its fundamental and elementary form is perception. Perception is the simplest case of historical thinking: it is the most elementary determination of fact. But all history, however advanced or elaborated, is an elaboration of perception, a development of elements already contained in perception: and the world as known to the historian is simply an enrichment of the world as given in perception. ... Reflexion shows in all perception two elements, sensation and thought: thought "interpreting" or reflecting upon the "data of sensation." Sensation here is a mere abstraction, the limiting case in which we are supposed to receive unreflectively a pure datum. In actual experience we never get such a pure datum: whatever we call a datum is in point of fact already interpreted by thought. The object of perception is a "given" and so *ad infinitum*. The only difference between what we ordinarily call perception and what we ordinarily call historical thinking is that the interpretative work which in the former is implicit is in the latter explicit and impossible to overlook.⁴⁵

This is a long excerpt, but worth considering in its entirety. Here, Collingwood explains that perception necessarily incorporates two inherently connected processes: sensation and thought. He tells us that in so far as historical thinking is simply a form of perception, it too must incorporate both sensation and thought: in practice, inseparable elements of the process of perception. I have chosen Collingwood's treatment of thought and sensation for this example because it bears relevance to the discussion in subsequent chapters, and will be considered in far greater depth therein.

⁴⁵ Collingwood, 'The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History', pp. 49–50.

Van der Dussen has highlighted in *History as a Science: The philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* that Collingwood's perspective on emotions is more positive in *The Principles of Art* than he seems to be in *The Idea of History*. Collingwood's position on emotions in *The Principles of Art* directly engages with the idea that emotions and thoughts are parts of one unitary mind.⁴⁶ This argument has a clear bearing on the ideas presented in this thesis, in particular the criticism I have offered of Collingwood's exclusion of emotions from historical re-enactment.⁴⁷

Collingwood argues in *The Principles of Art* that any speaker or writer who chooses to convey words to their audience does so not because those words are true, but because they feel that those words are in some way worth conveying. He further argues that "the proposition", understood as a form of words expressing thought and not emotion, and as constituting the unit of scientific discourse, is a fictitious entity.⁴⁸

Where Collingwood argues that, 'The expression of a thought in words is never a direct or immediate expression. It is mediated through the peculiar emotion which is the emotional charge on the thought', I do not think this claim sits in opposition to the argument put forward in this thesis.⁴⁹ Collingwood does not argue in *The Principles of Art* that re-enactment of emotions is possible in the way in which he argues re-enactment must work in *The Idea of History*.

When Collingwood says in *The Principles of Art* that emotion is a 'charge' attached to an expression, this is particularly problematic from the perspective of historical re-enactment, and suggests that the emotion (qua charge) cannot be re-enacted. It is for this reason that, in Chapter Four of this thesis, I have chosen to focus instead on the Folktale MS, because it is there that Collingwood most closely offers an understanding of art as historical re-enactment.

⁴⁶ J. van der Dussen, *History as a Science: The Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood* (Nijhoff, 1981), p. 248; R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 266.

⁴⁷ Van der Dussen's comments on Collingwood's approach to emotions in *The Principles of Art* are of relevance here; see in particular p.248

⁴⁸ Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, p. 266.

⁴⁹ Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, p. 267.

However, in the context of the question of the extent to which Collingwood rejects emotion from historical thinking, this thesis is primarily interested in *why*, when Collingwood is working out his own understanding of re-enactment and historical thinking over time - as shown in Chapter One - he does seem to exclude emotion from historical thinking. In Chapter One of this thesis, I have offered a re-enactment of the development of Collingwood's thinking around these problematic limitations which highlights how these may have arisen.

Mink and Collingwood's four levels of consciousness

Does Collingwood reject emotion in a behaviouristic sense only, or also in the sense of emotion as a social and cultural product? This question has been addressed by Mink in his work *Mind, History, and Dialectic*. Mink argues that re-enactment, as presented by Collingwood in *The Idea of History*, is unintelligible unless what Collingwood says about emotion is taken in light of his theory of four levels of consciousness, expressed in *The Principles of Art* and *New Leviathan*.

FIGURE 1
The Levels of Practical Consciousness

Levels of Consciousness:	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Psychic Functions:	PURE FEELING	→ APPETITE	→ DESIRE	→ WILL
Active Emotions:	Hunger, Love	[Repeated and transformed at all higher levels]		[Capricious Rational]
Passive Emotions:	Fear, Anger			Choice → Choice
Forms of Value:	Pleasure and Pain	Satisfaction and Disatisfaction	Happiness and Unhappiness	Good and Evil Utility Right Duty

Figure 1: Table from Mink's *Mind, History, and Dialectic*.

Briefly expressed, Collingwood's four levels of consciousness can be put as follows:

- First level: Feeling - for example, hunger, fear
- Second level: Appetite - for example, satisfaction
- Third level: Desire - for example, happiness
- Fourth level: Will - for example, utility, duty

These four levels could be expressed in other terms. For instance, as stimulus- or sensation-response, feeling-response, emotion-response, and reflective thought. Mink has argued for

use of Collingwood's four levels of consciousness as a means by which to better understand his re-enactment thesis:

'Critics of Collingwood who have, understandably enough, argued that historical knowledge includes far more than 're-enactments of acts of reflective thought' have simply not understood that in Collingwood's sense one is performing an 'act of reflective thought' when one orders from a menu, punishes a child, argues about politics, or climbs a mountain.' (Mink, 1972, p.167).

In this sense, emotion as a social and cultural product sits at a different place in the above scale of forms from emotion as stimulus-response. It might therefore be said to be possible, within Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, to re-enact emotions where emotions refers to a social and cultural product, rather than a stimulus-response.

This thesis is an attempt to offer one new approach to re-enactment which is able to serve all current fields of historical research, with a focus on the history of emotions. To this end, I have considered what is meant by historians of emotion when they use the term 'emotions'. The answer to this, as seen in the second chapter of this thesis, would seem to be that, as a still-young field of research, this is one of the questions that emotions historians themselves do not yet have a unified answer to.

It may be most useful, therefore, to historians of emotions to consider both the position put forward in this thesis, and that offered by Mink also. Mink argues that Collingwood intends only to exclude stimulus-response-type emotions from the possible remit of historical re-enactment. I have argued that, whether Collingwood intends to exclude some or all types of emotions, his re-enactment thesis is insufficiently broad in scope in its present form. If we argue that there remains a cutting-off point, so to speak, or limit to the aspects of human experience which historians are able to attempt to re-enact, then the concerns raised in this thesis remain: that as a description of a transcendental condition of historical thinking, Collingwoodian re-enactment should not attempt dictate the limits of historical thinking at all.

If this is Collingwood's position in 1925, he had shifted his view by the time he came to write *The Idea of History*:

Of everything other than thought, there can be no history. Thus a biography, for example, however much history it contains, is constructed on principles that are not only non-historical but anti-historical. Its limits are biological events, the birth and death of the human organism: its framework is thus a framework not of thought but of natural processes. Through this framework – the bodily life of the man ... – the tides of thought, his own and others', flow crosswise, regardless of its structure, like sea-water through a stranded wreck. Many human emotions are bound up with the spectacle of such bodily life in its vicissitudes ... but this is not history. Again, the record of immediate experience with its flow of sensations and feelings ... is not history.⁵⁰

No modern historian would argue for a primary source like a diary or memoir as an object of historical thinking either, but Collingwood clearly suggests here not only that these sources are not themselves works of history, but that their nature as records of emotion and sensation preclude their ever becoming objects of historical thinking.

This position is not the position Collingwood put forward in *The Nature and Aims of Historical Thinking* – and seems to be a step away from improving our understanding of historical thinking as it is approached by historians. Where the earlier example seeks to describe historical practice, the latter appears more prescriptive, than descriptive or explanatory. This shift can, I believe, be understood by considering Collingwood's other philosophical works: in particular, in this instance, *The New Leviathan*, which also addresses the subject of thought and feeling:

4.18. The essential *constituent* of mind is *consciousness* or thought (practical or theoretical) in its most rudimentary form. ... Forms of consciousness are the only constituents, so far as I know, possessed by any mind.

4.19. Feeling is an *apanage* of mind. ...

⁵⁰ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 304.

4.2. Man as mind *is* consciousness, practical and theoretical, both in its simplest form and also in specialized forms; he *has* feeling, both in its simplest or purely sensuous-emotional form and also in specialized forms.⁵¹

Here, we can see clearly the stark separation of thought and feeling which Collingwood also adopted into his later philosophy of history. His efforts to unify his ideas across a range of disparate philosophical areas – philosophy of history, political philosophy, aesthetics – have led to a corruption of his philosophy of history, away from its initial productive focus on actual historical practice and Collingwood’s experience of historical thinking.

With this in mind, it is possible to recognise that much of Collingwood’s philosophy of history, although sometimes led astray in later work by his other philosophical commitments, remains the best exploration of historical thinking – in so far as it describes and interprets actual and not idealised historical thinking – available to us. We can identify turning points in the above re-enactment of Collingwood’s thought process, where he chose one path or idea ahead of another, and consider at each of these turning points whether that decision was inspired by this interest, problematic for our purposes, in unifying his philosophical views.

Collingwood’s re-enactment poses some challenges for us

The example seen briefly in the previous section, illustrating Collingwood’s shift in his later philosophy of history from a focus on actual historical thinking toward unifying his diverse philosophical interests, also highlights one challenging element of re-enactment as formulated by Collingwood.

In retracing the questions and answers which led Collingwood to his understanding of re-enactment, a number of turning points have become clear; two key points, in particular, at which Collingwood chose one direction in his thinking over another. These are:

1. The outcome of historical thinking must qualify as knowledge
2. The separation of thought from other aspects of mental activity/human experience

The nature of these challenges will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 3. In this initial consideration of the process of question and answer by which Collingwood arrived at his re-

⁵¹ Collingwood, *The New Leviathan or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarism*, pp. 18–19.

enactment thesis, it is simply important to note that these turning points represent the key difficulties in applying re-enactment to understanding modern historiography.

Chapter Two

Introduction

This chapter is focused on the history of emotions as a growing field, with particular attention paid to certain key approaches to historical thinking and key contributors to the development of the field. The first section of the chapter argues that although the history of emotions as a distinct and deliberate field of research has existed for 20-25 years, historical work which not only includes but focuses on emotions has been undertaken for much longer. Beginning therefore with a review of some key figures in the history of emotions whose work significantly pre-dates the beginning of the twenty-first century, this chapter will present part of one central argument in this thesis, that emotions have always played a part in historical thinking and re-enactment.

The chapter goes on to ask a critical question: what are emotions, in the context of attempting to re-enact past emotional experience? This section of the chapter draws heavily on the American Historical Review conversation, which is analysed in the introduction to this thesis, offering remarks on how the motivations which drove some historians to attempt a new kind of historical thinking reflect their understanding of the nature of emotions, and of past emotions so far as they are accessible to historians.

Several key approaches to thinking about the history of emotions are then discussed in depth, presenting each approach and how it relates to Collingwoodian historical thinking. The aim of this section is not simply to highlight areas of weakness in Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, but to identify areas where interaction and exchange between these emotions history approaches and Collingwood's re-enactment thesis might result in a more robust and encompassing understanding of historical re-enactment. In particular, emotional regimes and emotives, emotional communities, emotions as performances, and emotionology are considered as prominent approaches to working within emotions history.

A series of case studies are presented toward the end of the chapter, in order to demonstrate that not only are emotions a significant aspect of modern historical thinking, but that they also were so at precisely the time at which Collingwood was writing *The Idea of History*, and also significantly before that date. This will give us a clear understanding of what it means to

study emotions historically in practice, and therefore make far more evident what a re-enactment thesis which is useful to this field must accommodate.

A brief overview of the development of emotions history

Before discussing the field of emotions history and its development, it will be useful to review two key moments in the evolution of historiography, which helped to pave the way for thinking specifically about historical emotions. These two key moments can be represented by two historians: Johan Huizinga, and Lucien Febvre. Both were central to bringing psychology into the study of social and cultural history.

Johan Huizinga

In his essay *The Task of Cultural History*, Huizinga argues that culture emerges from social play.⁵² In doing so, he creates an opportunity to link cultural history with the social and the emotional – play cannot be historically understood without taking into account both perspectives. More than simply opening the door to modern historians wishing to consider emotions history, Huizinga ‘used emotion to characterize the spirit of the late Middle Ages’.⁵³

Huizinga’s characterisation is not without weaknesses. The collection of essays *Men and Ideas* was published after his lifetime: Huizinga lived 1872-1945, and *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, perhaps his most influential work – was first published in Dutch in 1919.⁵⁴ Many of the conclusions he draws are to a modern reader simply untenable. His representation of the Middle Ages as childlike, underdeveloped, led by overwhelming passions, is clearly inaccurate. For us, however, it is not the conclusions he draws which are important. Huizinga’s work represents an important contribution to the development of the historical study of emotions. He expresses clearly the central importance of emotions to a number of key historical themes and events.

⁵² J. Huizinga, *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* (Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 17.

⁵³ W. Ruberg, ‘Interdisciplinarity and the History of Emotions’, *Cultural and Social History*, 6.4 (2009), pp. 507–16 (p. 507), doi:10.2752/147800409X467631.

⁵⁴ The title was previously commonly translated as *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, but is now more usually referred to as *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*.

A glance at the table of contents makes clear the importance of emotions in his *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. Chapter titles such as *The Violent Tenor of Life, Love Formalised*, and *The Aesthetic Sentiment* mark out Huizinga's priorities in delivering to his readers an understanding of both the intellectual and emotional life of the era.⁵⁵ Though factually questionable, the following extract – taken from the first paragraph of the first chapter of the book – illustrates very clearly the importance of emotions in this work:

To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us. The contrast between suffering and joy, between adversity and happiness, appeared more striking. All experience had yet to the minds of men the directness and absoluteness of the pleasure and pain of child-life. Every event, every action, was still embodied in expressive and solemn forms, which raised them to the dignity of a ritual.⁵⁶

In the early twentieth century, Huizinga was placing the historical understanding of emotions at the forefront of his work. He does this in a way which often seems inaccurate, to the modern reader: his representation of past individuals as childlike is part of a now-discredited trend in historiography to present the past as simpler and less developed than the present. That his conclusions are no longer agreeable, however, does not change the impact of his approach on later historical study. Huizinga remains influential: his titles remain in print and available at bookshops.⁵⁷ *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* was first translated into English in 1924. In the same year, Collingwood's *The Nature and Aims of a Philosophy of History* – his first clear formulation of a philosophy of history – was published.⁵⁸ These ideas, employed effectively in practice, therefore existed and were available long before Collingwood began to write *The Idea of History*. Huizinga was, and remains, an important historian. That Collingwood does not account for his approach – even to directly argue against it – is a weakness.

⁵⁵ J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Penguin, 1987).

⁵⁶ Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Based on a search of the Waterstones website

(<https://www.waterstones.com/books/search/term/huizinga>), accessed 26 April 2021.

⁵⁸ Collingwood, 'The Limits of Historical Knowledge'.

Lucien Febvre and the Annales School

Febvre 'took seriously the analysis of emotions as objects of historical enquiry'.⁵⁹

Febvre's 1941 essay 'Sensibility and History: How to reconstitute the affective life of the past' is particularly relevant. In it, Febvre encourages historians to engage with the intersection of inquiry between history and psychology. He addresses directly the argument that emotions, being entirely individual and transient, cannot be the objects of historical study. Febvre argues that 'emotions constitute a new pattern of activity which must not be confused with mere automatic responses. ... emotions, contrary to what is thought when they are confused with mere automatic responses to the external world, have a particular character which no man concerned with the social life of other men can any longer disregard.'⁶⁰ This position, expressed in brief summary in this essay, is remarkably compatible with modern historical approaches to the study of emotions – where modern historians do deliberately study past emotions. Not all modern historians consider emotions history viable. This is worth noting now, and will be addressed in full later in the present chapter. Emotions historians have developed a number of important approaches to their subject which can be usefully compared with Febvre's approach in this essay – this, too, will be revisited at points later in this chapter, during our discussion of these approaches to emotions history.

In his concluding paragraph, Febvre summarises his own argument:

Those who at the outset may have wondered what was the point of all the psychology summarized here might, I think, now conclude that the point of it all is history, the most ancient and most recent history, the history of primitive feelings already there, *in situ*, and the history of revived primitive feelings. ...

Now I will end by asking whether sensibility in history does not merit an enquiry, a wide-ranging, massive, collective enquiry. And as for psychology, is it a sick person's fantasy to claim that it is the very basis of any real work to be done by historians?⁶¹

There are elements in Febvre's approach which concur with Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, and elements which directly contradict it. Febvre emphasises the significance of

⁵⁹ Ruberg, p. 507.

⁶⁰ *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, ed. by P. Burke (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1973), p. 14.

⁶¹ Burke, p. 26.

psychology, which finds a parallel – though not a direct one – in Collingwood’s claim that ‘all history is the history of thought’. On the other hand, the indirectness of this parallel is precisely their most important difference: where Collingwood’s focus is exclusively on historical thoughts, Febvre argues that true understanding of past experiences is impossible without also attempting to recover their emotional dimension.

It may appear relevant here that Collingwood, in *The Idea of History*, directly rejects any overlap between the domains of psychological and historical research.⁶² This rejection can be considered from two angles: his rejection of contemporary psychology, and his rejection of the historical study of emotions. Collingwood objects to Freudian psychology, which was prevalent in the 1930s, when he was writing and developing the work which became *The Idea of History*. This objection appears to be specific to Freudian psychology, as it stood at that time. Collingwood’s rejection of the possibility that emotions can be the objects of historical thinking is more complex.⁶³

Thomas Dixon, author of *Weeping Britannia*, identifies three key arguments which Febvre makes about the history of mentalities. These are:

1. Criticism of historians who approached history did not involve social or cultural elements, only pure thought;
2. Warning against reading modern psychological theories into the minds of past individuals;
3. That sentiments and emotions must be treated as an important part of historical thinking.⁶⁴

The first and last points are, for the purposes of this chapter, the most significant. Febvre argued that historical thinking which attempted to excise from past experiences any social or cultural element – in other words, any non-intellectual, folk, traditional, or sentimental element – produced less valuable interpretations of the past. Following from this idea is the

⁶² Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 231.

⁶³ For a more detailed examination of Collingwood’s rejection of emotions from historical thinking, see pp.45-46 of this thesis; see also Dray and van der Dussen on this topic (citations on pp.45-46).

⁶⁴ T. Dixon, ‘Sensibility and History: The Importance of Lucien Febvre’, *The History of Emotions Blog (QMUL)* <<https://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/2011/11/sensibility-and-history-the-importance-of-lucien-febvre/>> [accessed 23 April 2021].

last in the above list, that sentiments and emotions cannot, therefore, be left out of any good attempt to understand the past. These ideas are not simply inferred from Febvre's work, but set out clearly within it, and they are in-keeping with the broader historical approaches of the Annales School.

Marc Bloch, co-founder with Febvre of the Annales School, published his *The Historian's Craft* in 1949. *The Historian's Craft* is another work which remains influential in the present. In it, Bloch directly addresses the question of how the historian should think about doing history. Indicated throughout is the idea that historical inquiry should not be restricted to one area of past experience only: for example, Bloch asks semi-rhetorically in an early chapter 'how, without preliminary distillation, can one make of phenomena, having no other common character than that of being not contemporary with us, the matter of rational knowledge?'.⁶⁵ In the final paragraph of the book, he is more explicit: 'as soon as we admit that a mental or emotional reaction is not self-explanatory, we are forced to turn, whenever such a reaction occurs, to make a real effort to discover the reasons for it.'⁶⁶ This direct inclusion of emotions into the remit of historical thinking is important. *The Historian's Craft* is affectionately dedicated to Febvre, and its arguments are consistent with his: in favour of history as a broader, more inclusive form of inquiry into the past.

Collingwood may not have been directly aware of the work produced by the Annales School. Febvre's essay 'Sensibility and history' was not published until 1941, just two years before Collingwood's death. Historians contemporary with and far before Collingwood's lifetime did address emotions in their works – and this will be discussed further in Chapter 3 – but it was not acknowledged in history theory. Whether Collingwood was directly aware of the Annales School is less important than the fact that emotions have always been a central aspect of understanding the experiences of past individuals. What is more important is an awareness that this is an area in which Collingwood's work requires adaptation. Whether he was aware of the work of other historians working with emotions when he wrote the works which later became *The Idea of History* or not, it is both relevant and important that such historical

⁶⁵ M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 19.

⁶⁶ Bloch, p. 163.

projects did at that time exist, and that Collingwood's re-enactment thesis has both need and scope to incorporate such efforts.

In this chapter, we will consider four important approaches to the historical study of emotions, and explore the extent to which a) Collingwood's re-enactment can be usefully applied to their subject matter, and b) how far these approaches to emotions history can add depth to our re-enactment of their objects.

Emotions as part of all forms of historical thinking

It has been suggested – by Collingwood, among others – that attempting historical understanding of emotions is futile.⁶⁷ Emotions are personal, individual, and fleeting. We can no more recapture them than we can calculate the precise duration of a rainbow from reports of its existence. History should, therefore, concern itself only with that evidence which survives in physical form. On the other hand, it is impossible to get away from the centrality of emotions to the human experience. Eric Hobsbawm, perhaps one of the more famous historians of the twentieth century, gives us 'the historian, whose major task is not to judge but to understand even what we can least comprehend.'⁶⁸

In a respected article, historian Carlo Ginzburg argues that:

It must be stressed that historians-whether they deal with distant, recent, or even ongoing phenomena-never take a direct approach to reality. Their work is necessarily inferential. A piece of historical evidence can be either involuntary (a skull, a footprint, a food relic) or voluntary (a chronicle, a notarial act, a fork). But in both cases a specific interpretive framework is needed, which must be related (in the latter case) to the specific code according to which the evidence has been constructed.⁶⁹

This is an important and relevant perspective. Collingwood's primary argument for the impossibility of thinking historically about emotions is their inherent transience. As we have seen, Collingwood argues that emotions cannot be re-enacted because they cannot be

⁶⁷ N. Eustace and others, 'AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions', *American Historical Review*, 117.5 (2012), pp. 1487–1531 (p. 1495).

⁶⁸ E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes, 1914-1991* (Abacus, 2013), p. 5.

⁶⁹ C. Ginzburg, 'Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian', *Critical Inquiry*, 18.1 (1991), pp. 79–92 (p. 84).

'reasoned into' by the present-day historian, in the way that thoughts can. Thoughts, arising as the result of a series of questions and answers given by the historical individual in response to their circumstances, can be thought again by the historian by gathering knowledge about those circumstances, and by establishing for themselves the questions and answers which must have been given, if the end thought – which is known by the record or impact it has left – is the only conclusion at which the historical individual could have arrived. Emotions, which, Collingwood argues, arise in direct response to sensory stimulus and precede reasoned – and therefore, re-enactable – thought, do not, therefore, fulfil the necessary criteria for becoming a viable subject for re-enactment.

Ginzburg's argument here, and the argument I intend to pursue in depth in Chapter 3 of this thesis, suggests an alternative perspective. Collingwood over-estimates the extent to which: a) thoughts are entirely recoverable by historians; b) the extent to which thoughts and feelings can be separated.

If, as I will argue, historical thoughts are *not more* recoverable than historical emotions, then Collingwood's argument against the inclusion of emotions as an object of historical thinking cannot stand.

Rather than arguing that emotions are just as recoverable as Collingwood suggests that thoughts are recoverable, I will argue that thoughts are *not* as recoverable as Collingwood suggests. It is possible to gather sufficient contextual information to plausibly reconstruct a series of questions and answers which do not contradict the available evidence and which make sense of the historical individual's actions to the present-day historian. This, I would argue, is successful re-enactment. It is not the same as thinking again for oneself, in the way that Collingwood describes it; Collingwood does not argue that perfect re-enactment is possible – a rethinking of every detail, every aspect of minutiae – but he does argue that the product of re-enactment constitutes reliable knowledge, until such a time as the available evidence changes.

I would argue that the product of re-enactment certainly constitutes historical *understanding*, but that the variation between historians in their scope for re-enacting various perspectives cannot be understated. In other words, there is greater variation in the re-enactment of historical thoughts than Collingwood allows for. There is not only one series of questions and

answers which can be said to represent the 'accurate' thought process of the historical individual.

Marc Bloch makes the interesting and important claim that 'historical facts are, in essence, psychological facts.'⁷⁰ Collingwood would not himself argue with the claim that 'no text can be understood without a reference to extratextual realities' insofar as this refers to contextual information. But Ginzburg's claim must, to produce good historical research, include not only realities beyond the direct experience of the historical individual, but also within it.⁷¹ Extratextual realities may refer to circumstances beyond the artefact's direct record – in Ginzburg's example, the attempt by Hartog to reconstruct Herodotus' view of the Scythians on the basis of his written work alone proves ineffective without contextual information not contained within the *Histories* – but must also consider what in the mind of the author is not contained directly within the words of the text.

Collingwood himself goes a step further, in *The Philosophy of Enchantment*. Here he gives us Spinoza's rule, that the historian must set aside the idea that types of thought apparently no longer present in the world are in any way different from the historian's own types of thought. The historical individual, in, for instance, their belief in magic, is not practising some arcane and inaccessible type of thought which the modern historian must consider beyond their own experience. If the thought is truly 'other', then the historian can have no hope of recapturing it. Collingwood argues in *The Philosophy of Enchantment* that not only should the historian attempt to recapture historical thought which at first appears 'other', but that she should acknowledge those thoughts as entirely akin to her own, demolishing within her own mind the arbitrary distinction between 'primitive' types of thought and modern.⁷² Collingwood's work in *The Philosophy of Enchantment* will be of further use in the following chapters, and in particular Chapter 4, and will be considered in depth there.

Whether we can accomplish *total* understanding of historical emotions is the wrong question to ask. Of course, we cannot. No historian has ever accomplished total understanding of her

⁷⁰ Bloch, p. 160.

⁷¹ Ginzburg, p. 84.

⁷² Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktales, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, pp. 193–94.

subject. It is possible and productive to attempt, however, to understand so far as we can, the emotional lives of historical individuals and communities.

It could be argued that although conceptions of emotion have a clear history, the immediate emotional experience is shared across space and time, an unchanging phenomenon. This certainly agrees with James' view of emotions as bodily symptoms.⁷³ For instance, according to James (?), the emotional experience of fear has a basis in a consistent set of bodily experiences, which remain constant irrespective of the external trigger. In this sense, there is no history of emotions, because there is no change. But to maintain this view misses a crucial point: that the ways in which emotions are experienced are also influenced by the individual experiencing them, and their expectations, beliefs, and so forth. It is too simplistic to dismiss the historical study of emotions on the basis that they have no history; in other words, to dismiss the historical study of emotions on the basis of the idea that the psychological mechanisms remain unchanged over time. This thesis will not engage in depth with the psychology of emotions, as this would not support the arguments presented. Neither is the psychology of emotions as important to emotions history as the philosophy of emotions. Therefore, throughout this thesis, emotions are discussed and philosophical and emotional phenomena. Emotions have changed over time because their perception has changed over time; the experience is influenced by the 'self-perception of the feeling subject'.⁷⁴ A useful example of this is given in Plamper's introduction to the history of emotions: the fear experienced before battle. The physical experience of fear is the same in each case: raised pulse, pounding heart, cold sweat. That there are physical commonalities between the experiences of fear in disparate cultures does not mean that fear is perceived in the same way in each of those cultures alike.

There are also records of warriors who went into battle without fear. Some, such as the Viking Berserker, may have done so with the aid of natural stimulants, but others, such as the Māori warrior, may have another explanation. The conception of emotion in the instance of the Māori warrior may have impacted on his actual experience of fear before battle.⁷⁵ The two phenomena, the immediate emotional experience and the social conception of emotion, are

⁷³ W. James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Dover Publications, 2012), Vol. 2, p. 272.

⁷⁴ J. Plamper, *The History of Emotions* (Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 32.

⁷⁵ Plamper, p. 32.

not distinct. They cannot be reasonably abstracted from one another. This means that although there are bound to be some universal features common to all human experiences of fear – for instance, fear is never associated with a slowing heart rate – there is a boundless sea of cultural differences making real impact on experienced emotion which can be explored through historical study.

So for historians, emotions do have a definite history. This means that emotions are seen to change over time; human emotional experience is not, in other words, consistent across cultures. The experience of emotions, as well as their conception, varies across time and cultures.

In this section of the chapter, I will explore what the concept of ‘emotions’ includes, for historians. There will be a focus on historians of emotion, but as it is my belief that all areas of historical research necessarily engage with historical emotions to a greater or lesser extent, historians working in other areas will also be considered. This initial exploration of what emotions are will help us to explore later in the chapter how these emotions can be studied historically, and how the approaches taken by historians to the historical study of emotions compare with Collingwood’s position on the re-enactment of emotions.

A great deal of overlapping terminology exists across a number of academic fields in relation to the study of emotions, emotional experience, and cultural conceptions of emotion. It will be useful, before focusing on historians in particular, to discuss some of the most influential of these terms, and consider their relevance for historians of emotion. This is a project also undertaken at the beginning of a number of monographs on the history of emotions, by historians themselves. I am undertaking the same exercise here for two reasons. Firstly, because the treatment by each historian of this question results in a different answer. Although there are definite areas of overlap between studies, there is not yet an agreed-upon answer to the question of what emotions can be to the historian. Establishing at this stage what we mean by historical emotions is therefore an indispensable step. It will also be useful in the following chapters to have considered this question in depth as the outcomes will inform the development of an updated re-enactment thesis in the remaining chapters.

Emotions considered as a possible object for historical study

Emotions can be referred to in a number of ways: are they the same as or distinct from moods, feelings, sentiments, and affects? Some of these terms are less relevant in a historical context: to ask whether Elizabeth Device, hanged as a witch in August 1612 on the evidence of a nine-year-old, would have characterised her distress as a feeling or an emotion is a straightforward anachronism; the distinction is not one she would have used, and it does not further our understanding of her experience to apply it in retrospect.⁷⁶ Affect presents a slightly different case. Though initially used interchangeably with emotion, modern affect studies seeks to separate affect from emotion, emphasising the irrational essence of the former as cognitivist theories of emotion rationalise the latter.⁷⁷ The debate does not impact significantly on this project, but in surveying associated literature, it is an important distinction to be aware of.

There are, however, a number of theories and ideas concerning emotions which do inform emotions history. One advantage in surveying the historical study of emotions is the extent to which practitioners engage in self-reflection: over the last two decades, a number of works have emerged by historians of emotions, asking specifically methodological and theoretical questions of their own work. Across these publications and discussions, a number of primary approaches to emotions emerge.

In a 2012 conversation facilitated by and published in the *American Historical Review*, several prominent figures in the history of emotions discussed their respective and interrelated approaches to their work.⁷⁸ I am going to consider this in some detail, as it provides us with a vital understanding of the perspectives which have informed the development of the field of emotions history.

I have identified, below, five primary methodological and theoretical motivations for the historical study of emotions, on the basis of statements made in this article. These five motivations appear to me to represent the most central reasons for the development of the historical study of emotions. They are:

1. Interest in the relationship between emotional experience and culture.
2. Concern regarding the 'flattening' effect of narrative-form sources.

⁷⁶ R. Poole, *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (Manchester University Press, 2002).

⁷⁷ B.H. Rosenwein and R. Cristiani, *What Is the History of Emotions?* (Polity Press, 2018), p. 11.

⁷⁸ Eustace and others.

3. Questioning the emotion-reason, public-private dichotomy prevalent in Western scholarship.
4. Interest in the role of subjectivity and the passions of historians in writing history.
5. The understanding that emotions are inextricably involved in every aspect of life.

These five motivations can themselves be placed within three broad areas of interest: the past itself, source materials, and historical thinking. In considering how we might include the historical study of emotions in re-enactment, it will be important to address each of these motivations. However, for our purposes, those motivations belonging to the latter area of interest, that of historical thinking, will be the most important and useful. This group will therefore be considered at greater length.

What follows is a brief treatment of the motivations belonging to the categories the past itself, and source materials. These will still be important to bear in mind when creating an amended re-enactment thesis in Chapter 3.

The ‘flattening’ effect of narrative-form sources, though perhaps more immediately problematic for historians of emotions, is a consideration in all historical research, and will be more usefully discussed in relation to the development of a modified re-enactment thesis. We will consider the problem briefly below, and explore its implications for this project in greater detail in Chapter 3. The role of subjectivity on the part of the historian has been increasingly acknowledged following the advent of postmodernism. Growing emphasis on the lives and everyday experiences of ordinary individuals has helped to turn attention toward the centrality of emotions in everyday life.

The ‘flattening’ effect of narrative-form sources

Collingwood’s conclusion that emotions cannot be re-enacted because they cannot be fully and accurately reconstructed relies on the belief that in contrast, thoughts can be fully and accurately reconstructed by the historian. This is not the case – complete re-enactment is never available to the historian. They can and should aspire to it, but they cannot actually achieve it. The written source, for example, no more gives us access to a complete thought process than it gives us full access to the emotions of its author. What we should take from this motivation is not just that narrative-form sources have limitations for historians

interested in emotions – although, the methodological questions this raises are in themselves very interesting. We should also be aware that as a lot of historical work relies on narrative-form sources, this is a concern for *all* use of those sources, not just emotions history. This is therefore a significant consideration for the project of this thesis.

Geographic differences

New and exciting works in emotions history, Lean says, remained primarily Western-centric, but provided nonetheless an important conceptual framework for exploring otherwise underexamined aspects of Chinese history. With an interest in ‘gender, categories of self/family, imported ideas of “private” and “public,” and collective identity and social organization were subject to intense scrutiny in this period when China’s political cosmology was in tremendous flux’, Lean explains that ‘emotions proved a compelling entryway into these issues.’⁷⁹ In this instance, the drive toward the field of emotions history is clear – that concepts which were central to the development of Chinese culture over time were inadequately understood through existing historiographic approaches. Lean focuses in this interview on the importance of understanding how concepts such as ‘rationality’ and ‘public vs. private’ arise in a societal group, and the emotional aspect of this change – particularly when it is driven by the arrival of external forces and ideas. This focus is an important one. Simply drawing divisions between rational thought and irrational emotion is not the best way to approach thinking about history. This may seem evident, but is worth stating plainly before we go on. These distinctions have been observed to varying degrees in the past – and present – but this influence is not one the historian should embrace in their own thinking.

One critical weakness in this approach, drawing lines between emotion and reason and the suggestion that they can and do exist entirely independently, that there might be a society which has no concept of reason or which never acts primarily on feeling, carries concerning patriarchal and colonial undertones. The historical misuse of rationality as a mark of superiority is one of which we must of course be aware, and which we must be careful not to carry into our own ideas of historical thinking. Lean identifies that these concepts had existed at the core of early emotions history work, which was primarily Western-centric. This division

⁷⁹ Eustace and others, p. 149.

also arises in Collingwood – whether for the same reasons is not the subject of this thesis, but it is important that the distinction does assume a central position in his work, and forms part of the theoretical foundation – as we saw in Chapter 1 – for his re-enactment thesis.

When we think about human experience as modern historians, we need to acknowledge both that particular past individuals may have subscribed to such concepts as a reason-emotion or public-private dichotomy, and that subscribing to these ideas is very likely to have influenced not only their behaviour – their performance, in other words – of emotions, but also their internal emotional experience. We will consider this in greater detail later in this chapter. Following Lean, we must also take care to remember that these concepts are far from being fixed or uniform phenomena across time and space; they are better understood as aspects of changing cultural influence on lived experience.

The role of subjectivity and the passions of historians in writing history

Further commentary on Collingwood's position: in addition to the impossibility of fully recovering thought processes, it is also important to consider his position on the 'encapsulated spaces' in which, for him, re-enactment takes place. In places, Collingwood acknowledges that it is impossible and unhelpful for the historian to cease entirely to be a present thinker, but on the whole, his re-enactment thesis treats it as if it were really possible. It is not, and historians should not – unlike as above – aspire to it. If I immerse myself fully in the world of the Roman centurion, I am not longer an historian, and everything I have to say about the life of the Roman centurion is, at best, equal to a primary source. It is not historical thinking. Some forms of subjectivity and passion on the part of the historian are therefore both desirable and necessary to the writing of good history. What constitutes good history is of course not a uniform value among historians in the present or across history, but there are some commonalities. In this thesis, I will argue that good history is history which attempts to contribute greater depth and nuance to the collective historical understanding of possible perspectives on past human lived experience. This definition becomes more relevant and is discussed in greater detail later in this thesis.

Emotions are an inextricable aspect of everyday life

This argument connects with a point highlighted in Chapter One, which is central to Collingwood's philosophical foundations for his re-enactment thesis and the method by which it is pursued; his claims regarding encapsulated spaces. Further, more generally, it is worth remembering again that all kinds of history need to consider emotions, not just specifically the history of emotions. Looking at the history of emotions is the best way to approach this project, but the results should be applicable to all kinds of historical study.

The relationship between emotional experience and culture

Though keen to avoid the pitfalls of universalism in historiography, in his significant book *The Navigation of Feeling* Reddy gives us the following statement: 'Emotion and emotional expression interact in a dynamic way ... [and] ... this one aspect of emotional expression is universal'.⁸⁰

Of these motivations, the relationship between emotional experience and culture most clearly underlines the connection between conventional historiography and the work done in emotions history. We can usefully bring together our thoughts about this and about the emotion-reason, personal-private dichotomy. Both of these motivations for the historical study of emotions ask us to think about not only the information in front of us, and not only our own position in relation to it, but also the position of the historical individual in relation to the information we have about them.

Key approaches to emotions history

We will now consider four of the most important distinct existing approaches to the historical study of emotions. These are presented in order of their emergence. Alongside a definition of each approach, we will consider how it can be usefully applied. Each approach is applied to Collingwood's own example in his demonstration of re-enactment: Caesar's decision to lead his troops across the Rubicon. Using Collingwood's example makes clear the significant contribution that each approach to the historical study of emotions makes to our

⁸⁰ W.M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. xii.

understanding of the same historical incident. Emotions history adds a depth of understanding that re-enacting thought alone cannot give us.

The purpose of these worked examples is to make clear where the results produced by strictly Collingwoodian re-enactment overlaps with, exceeds, or falls short of the results produced when re-enactment is undertaken with each of the following four primary approaches to emotions history in mind.⁸¹ In what ways, for instance, does Collingwoodian re-enactment produce a different interpretation of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon than we might arrive at by incorporating emotionology into the re-enactment process? Each respective approach is not here intended to replace Collingwoodian re-enactment, but to work in conjunction with it to produce deeper and more nuanced historical interpretations. Re-enacting the same historical event in each instance will make comparison of the results of each experiment much simpler.

We will, primarily in later chapters, find it useful not only to compare Collingwoodian re-enactment and its results with the results produced when these emotions history approaches are incorporated, but also to compare the results delivered by each respective emotions history approach. This will be important when we begin to develop a new understanding of re-enactment in chapters 3 and 4. We will then need to decide not only how to include emotions as an appropriate subject for historical re-enactment, but also the extent of 'historical emotions' as an object for historical study.

Emotionology

The first approach to the study of emotions history which we will consider here – and one of the earliest developed which identified particularly with the 'history of emotions' as a distinct field of research – is emotionology. The crucial paper in the development of emotionology is Carol and Peter Stearns' *Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards*. First published in 1985, it defines emotions as

⁸¹ Here, 'Collingwoodian re-enactment' refers not to re-enactment as method, but is used to refer to the idea of what kind of historical thinking might be described by an unmodified form of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis.

a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated through neural and/or hormonal systems, which gives rise to feelings (affective experiences of pleasure or displeasure) and also general cognitive processes toward appraising the experience; emotions in this sense lead to physiological adjustments to the conditions that aroused response, and often to expressive and adaptive behaviour.⁸²

It also gives a clear definition of emotionology, as an approach to thinking about history:

Emotionology: the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct, e.g., courtship practices as expressing the valuation of affect in marriage, or personnel workshops as reflecting the valuation of anger in job relationships.⁸³

In other words, emotionology makes a distinction between the emotional experiences of the individual, and the emotional codes of conduct which apply to the society in which they live. Emotionology begins by arguing that emotions, as physiological experiences, may not change over time –that they do not, in this sense, have a history – but that the standards according to which societies are held do. This change over time in the standards to which societies have been held, specifically in terms of emotional experience and expression does have a history, and can therefore be studied by historians.

This change over time in emotional standards is important in its own right, as a central aspect of the experiences of past humans, but also because it deepens our understanding of other social movements. It is therefore not only important for historians of emotions, but for historians in every field. I will focus in this project on historians of emotions, as this is where my argument can be made most clearly, but it applies equally across all areas of historical research.

Emotionology makes a clear distinction between emotional standards, and emotions as they are experienced. This is not to artificially separate the two entirely; one impacts on the other.

⁸² P.N. Stearns and C.Z. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *The American Historical Review*, 90.4 (1985), pp. 813–36 (p. 813), doi:10.2307/1858841.

⁸³ Stearns and Stearns, p. 813.

The Stearns' article gives an example from the field of anthropology: the socialised repression of anger among the First Nations Utku tribe. This takes the form of 'a distinctive value system and the set of informal institutions meant to express that system.'⁸⁴ This systematised, collective social repression of anger is a good example of an instance of emotionology – as the modification of expressed, and therefore perhaps also experienced, emotions, through changes in social expectations of that form of emotional expression – but it does not necessarily mean that members of the tribe simply never experience the emotion of anger.⁸⁵ The emotionology involved designates which instances of 'anger' should be considered anger, and therefore should be repressed. Understanding the existence of these varying value systems is also useful to historians who seek to understand the experiences of past individuals, whose value systems and the informal institutions which maintained them differed from the historian's own. For instance, it is not difficult to imagine a particular emotionology in which anger refers predominantly to violent action, caused by anger, taken against other humans.

Febvre's 'Sensibility and history', discussed at length above, also discusses ideas which correlate very closely with emotionology. In a discussion on intellectual activity presupposing social life, Febvre writes that 'evolving civilizations were able to take part in that long-drawn-out drama, the gradual suppression of emotional activity through intellectual activity'.⁸⁶ This idea, of a society collectively controlling the expression and experience of emotions by its participating members, is very similar to the ideas later expressed by Stearns and Stearns. The idea progresses throughout the 'Sensibility and history' essay, and develops to also encompass the concept – discussed below – of emotional regimes. We will consider this development in the next section of this chapter, which deals with emotional regimes and emotives.

What can emotionology add to Collingwood's example of Caesar crossing the Rubicon? Emotionology brings a focus on the emotional codes of conduct by which the target historical society lived. We can immediately identify the usefulness of this approach by looking to a more recent historical work: Tom Holland's *Rubicon*.

⁸⁴ Stearns and Stearns, p. 814.

⁸⁵ J. Briggs, *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁸⁶ Burke, pp. 15–16.

The Romans had a word for such a moment. '*Discrimen*', they called it – an instant of perilous and excruciating tension, when the achievements of an entire lifetime might hang in the balance. The career of Caesar, like that of any Roman who aspired to greatness, had been a succession of such crisis points.⁸⁷

Discrimen, as a discrete concept, is an example of the Roman understanding of emotional experience, codified and preserved for historical study in the language they used. Emotionology reminds us, as historians, to take notice of these codes of conduct as significant shaping factors in the series of questions and answers any historical individual was able to go through to reach the conclusion we would like to re-enact. The full extract from *Rubicon* is provided below, both as an excellent example of modern historiography which engages with emotions history, and for ease of reference moving forward.

Holland explicitly re-enacts the moment of Caesar's decision to cross the stream, and he does so in an explicitly emotions-centred way. The following is an extract from this more modern re-enactment, in which it is possible to observe the impact of emotions history in a work which does not set out specifically to deal with historical emotions:

As they [the legionaries] stamped their feet against the cold, they waited for the trumpeters to summon them to action. To shoulder arms, to advance – to cross the Rubicon.

But when would the summons come? Faint in the night, its waters swollen by mountain snows, the stream could be heard, but still no blast of the trumpets. They soldiers of the 13th strained their ears. They were not used to being kept waiting. ... Their general, the governor of Gaul, was a man celebrated for his qualities of dash, surprise and speed. Not only that, but he had issued them with the order to cross the Rubicon that very afternoon. So why, now they had finally arrived at the border, had they been brought to a sudden halt? Few could see their general in the darkness, but to his staff officers, gathered around him, he appeared in a torment of irresolution. Rather than gesture his men onwards, Gaius Julius Caesar instead gazed into the turbid waters of the Rubicon, and said nothing. And his mind moved upon silence.

⁸⁷ T. Holland, *Rubicon* (Abacus, 2004), pp. 1–2.

The Romans had a word for such a moment. '*Discrimen*', they called it – an instant of perilous and excruciating tension, when the achievements of an entire lifetime might hang in the balance. The career of Caesar, like that of any Roman who aspired to greatness, had been a succession of such crisis points. ... Yet the dilemma which confronted Caesar on the banks of the Rubicon was uniquely agonising – and all the more so for being the consequence of his previous successes. ... Caesar's enemies, envious and fearful, had long been manoeuvring to deprive him of his command. Now, at last, in the winter of 49, they had succeeded in backing him into a corner. For Caesar, the moment of truth had finally arrived. Either he could submit to the law, surrender his command, and face the ruin of his career – or he could cross the Rubicon. 'The die is cast.' Only as a gambler, in a gambler's fit of passion, was Caesar finally able to bring himself to order his legionaries to advance. The stakes had proved too high for rational calculation. Too imponderable as well. Sweeping into Italy, Caesar knew that he was risking world war, for he had confessed as much to his companions, and shuddered at the prospect. Clear-sighted as he was, however, not even Caesar could anticipate the full consequences of his decision.⁸⁸

This extract begins to illustrate some of the advantages we will discover in the application of emotions history approaches to Collingwood's example. Holland is not an historian of emotions, but the language used in his work make frequent reference to the emotional states of its subjects: Caesar's 'torment of irresolution'; his 'uniquely agonising' dilemma; Caesar's enemies, 'envious and fearful'; his 'gambler's fit of passion' and his shudders at the prospect of what might result from it. There is no part of this extract which does not take account of the emotions of the participating historical individuals. *Rubicon* is therefore an example of a work of modern historiography in which the importance of including emotions in historical thinking is openly acknowledged. It is not unique in this, or in including emotions – although emotions have only recently begun to be recognised as integral to historical thinking, they have always been so – but it is a good and clear example of this development in modern historiography.

⁸⁸ TOM HOLLAND'S *RUBICON*, PP.1-2.

Emotional regimes and emotives

If emotionology opened the way for historians to begin thinking seriously about emotions as an appropriate subject for historical study, the anthropologist and historian William Reddy took the next steps. Reddy's most important contribution to the development of emotions history is *The Navigation of Feeling*, which addresses the need for a framework for conducting historical research around emotions. The book presents first, an understanding of what emotions are, and more importantly, a worked example. Reddy presents France 1700-1850 as a case study for how emotions can be approached historically. His focus is sentimentalism: Reddy argues that the French Revolution was, in effect, an overthrow of the existing repressive emotional regime of the court in favour of sentimentalism, which encourages passionate emotional expression and treats emotions as equal in value to reason in the quest for a virtuous society.⁸⁹ Reddy sought to understand 'whether these performances [of sentimentalism] reflected real changes in emotional experience, and if so, how such changes could be understood historically.'⁹⁰

The idea of emotional regimes and emotives is not incompatible with the emotionology approach to thinking about emotions history, but it does differ from it. Where Stearns attributes social change as an agent of emotional change, Reddy argues that emotions are themselves such conditioning factors.⁹¹ All emotions are sufficient, he argues, to bring about change simply by being expressed. For Reddy, emotions are not simply performances – or 'performatives', as they have been characterised by J.L. Austin – but are themselves 'emotives'.⁹² Reddy defines emotives – his own term – as follows:

A type of speech act different from both performative and constative utterances, which both describes (like constative utterances) and changes (like performatives) the world, because emotional expression has an exploratory and a self-altering effect on the activated thought material of emotion.⁹³

⁸⁹ Reddy; Rosenwein and Cristiani, pp. 36–37.

⁹⁰ Eustace and others, p. 1488.

⁹¹ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 34.

⁹² J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁹³ Reddy, p. 128.

Emotives, in other words, are ‘emotions enacted in speech’.⁹⁴ They effect change in two ways: they change the person expressing their emotions, and they change the person or people to whom those emotions are expressed.⁹⁵ This connects interestingly with Collingwood’s own position on emotions: it is possible to read Collingwood’s objection to the historical study of emotions as an objection to the historical study of emotions *as they are experienced in the moment*. This experience per se is not preserved by any artefacts or evidence. Emotives, however, may be acceptable objects for historical study even by Collingwood’s standards.

Any and every emotion expressed in speech, according to this definition, is an emotive. These emotives are, and have been across history, subject to emotional regimes. Emotional regimes, as defined by Reddy, are:

The set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime.⁹⁶

Once again, Febvre’s essay ‘Sensibility and history’ also makes an interesting contribution to this approach. Febvre offers us, for instance, a sociological description of a gentleman: ‘A gentleman is not proud. If he were proud of anything at all it would be of the fact that he always kept his composure and never betrayed his emotions.’⁹⁷ This example seems to engage directly with the later emotional regimes approach to emotions history – a historical individual bound and driven by a set of normative emotions and accepted forms for their expression. Febvre goes on to ask whether we can refer to ‘a particular and distinct period in the emotional history of humanity’.⁹⁸ ‘Is there any reason,’ Febvre asks his reader, ‘to think that at certain periods of history tendencies towards one pattern predominated in frequency and violence over tendencies toward the opposite pattern – more cruelty than pity, more than love?’⁹⁹ These latter questions are directed at Huizinga’s work, which Febvre argues is lazy in ascribing a uniqueness to the emotionalism of the Middle Ages. On the contrary –

⁹⁴ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 35.

⁹⁵ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 35.

⁹⁶ Reddy, p. 129.

⁹⁷ Burke, p. 16.

⁹⁸ Burke, p. 17.

⁹⁹ Burke, p. 18.

emotions and emotional life have been essential to and inextricable from every time and place in human history.¹⁰⁰

Emotional communities

The concept of the emotional community was pioneered by Barbara Rosenwein, who defined emotional communities as

precisely the same as social communities – families, neighborhoods, parliaments, guilds, monasteries, parish church memberships – but the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the evaluations that they make about others’ emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.¹⁰¹

Rosenwein’s emotional communities approach sets out ‘to uncover systems of feeling from words and word usage’.¹⁰²

This connects with the two chronologically earlier approaches we have already discussed, highlighting a key point in the historical study of emotions. Stearns, Reddy, and Rosenwein all acknowledge that the primary interest of emotions history is the study of emotion as it is expressed and subsequently recorded. This may appear self-evident and true of all historical study, but it is not so. For example: archaeologists may speculate about the emotional experience of crawling inside a tomb shrine. Hutton does precisely this, in fact, in a discussion of the declining popularity of the ‘ancestor worship’ interpretation of tomb shrines in Britain:

Access to the interior of the barrows to make new burials, or (perhaps) to take out bones, must have been a ghoulish business, because the entrances to most needed a crawls, the chambers within were not large and many would have contained decaying corpses. We cannot tell at this distance whether it would have been regarded as an

¹⁰⁰ Burke, p. 18.

¹⁰¹ B.H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying about Emotions in History’, *American Historical Review*, 107, 2002, pp. 821–45 (p. 842).

¹⁰² Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 41.

honour or an ordeal, and whether it was confined to special persons or taken in turn by all in the group.¹⁰³

Here, Hutton begins to explore the possible emotional significance of the tomb shrine within prehistoric societies, and is limited in the attempt by distance, and by an absence of written testimony. Emotions history, as it is expressed by prominent historians of emotions, is not possible without written testimony. The interpretation of changing emotional mores across history, always grounded in the society in which each set of rules and behaviours originated, leans heavily on written records of those customs.

This is not to say, of course, that non-literary evidence is not useful to historians of emotions. This would conflict significantly with the important work being done by historians whose focus is past sensory experience. Sense history interacts, but is not synonymous with, emotions history. Historians of sense history are not limited to literary sources, and offer important new ways of thinking about physical artefacts.¹⁰⁴

Emotions history primarily makes use of written material, and Rosenwein's approach explores the impact of this limitation. This approach was intended to address four key problems in the study of history: the idea of a civilising process; emotionology, as limited by evidence such as etiquette guides to the middle classes; the limiting parameters of emotional regimes centred around politics; and so forth. These problems are all underwritten by a reliance on literary evidence. This point must not be overstated – it is true, to some extent, for all historians – but it is worth exploring briefly here because it directly impacted on the way in which emotions history has been able to develop.

Ahmed and emotionology

It is worth considering here also the work of Sara Ahmed – in particular, at this stage, her work on queering perspectives, which in some ways is reflective of the sedimented histories of Husserl presented in the next chapter. In the context of emotionology, however, her work in queer phenomenology offers an interesting perspective. For instance, minority groups like

¹⁰³ R. Hutton, *Pagan Britain* (Yale University Press, 2014), p. 50.

¹⁰⁴ For a good recent example of sense history, see E. Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2020).

European Jews present emotional communities that are in clear contrast with the emotional communities of the dominant demographic group, i.e. cultural Christians; in other words, each emotional community has its own emotionology. In considering different emotional communities to which we don't belong, is this an act of queering our perspective? For instance, if a culturally Christian historian studies the life of Leon Modena, a noted Venetian rabbi, are they engaging in an act of queering their perspective by actively interpreting the historical experiences of an emotional community to which they do not belong, and which occupied a different position in society to their own – a minority, not the dominant demographic group. What if a Jewish historian studies the life of Leon Modena? Are they also queering their perspective?

Is temporal distance sufficient, in other words, to require the historian to queer their perspective? If a culturally Christian historian studies the life of Leon Modena, they will, in the course of their studies, be confronted by their own assumptions – to take an obvious example, that Christmas is an important date and should be a holiday for all. This belief may be the default position for the majority of individuals in a culturally Christian country, but it must be identified and set aside by historians hoping to re-enact the experiences of Leon Modena. This is worth noting because it is an assumption which may not often, for historians of early modern European history, be challenged.

When we talk about queering perspectives, we cannot go on without considering the contributions of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* of 2006. In this work, Ahmed highlights the fact that while those who live within the cultural mainstream must actively work to disorient themselves from this position – and benefit from doing so – those who exist within the margins already have a queer perspective. For them, it is an act of reorientation to conform to the expectations of the cultural mainstream. Ahmed argues that this disorientation that occurs when we queer our perspectives is what allows us to learn about aspects of our lived experience which we otherwise take for granted. Whether or not Ahmed says anything new will not be discussed here in any depth – for our purposes, it is the language she uses which may prove useful in allowing us to access another perspective on understanding emotional communities historically.

Clearly, Ahmed's exploration of this topic bears close relation to the question we are considering: that of the impact of the historian's emotional distance from their historical

subject, and in particular, the impact when their cultural baselines are different. Naturally, when historians are thinking about the experiences of past individuals, there are always significant differences between their own lives and the lives of their subjects. Modern historians do not, as a rule, measure their year by the crops that are due to be planted, for instance, or work a six-day week in a cotton factory. They are living in a time when the fight for civil rights is ongoing and extremely dangerous, but they are not living in a time when this fight has just begun. Even when there are similarities, they are not the same. But there are often some cultural baselines which modern historians are able to take for granted. A medieval peasant looked forward to Easter and Christmas. Nineteenth-century factory workers did not work on Sundays.

For historians for whom this is not the default, their perspective is already different, coming as it does from what we might call the social margins. Historians for whom these things are a shared experience must queer their perspectives, to understand historical individuals for whom these defaults were not the default. Leon Modena did not mark his year by Easter, Christmas and Sundays off. Ahmed argues that every act of perception links with the orientation of the person doing the perceiving – and people in the margins are oriented differently. This includes historians. ‘Perception ... involves orientation; what is perceived depends on where we are located, which gives us a certain take on things.’¹⁰⁵ Where we are located need not only mean a physical location – it can also include our place in time, and our cultural norms; our place in relation to the rest of the human world. Disorientation is what allows us to reorient ourselves. This is what historians do when they confront their deep-rooted cultural assumptions and default positions.

Emotions as performances

Emotions as performances refers not to the individual, personal experience of emotions, but to emotional expression. It is, very briefly, the idea that emotional display is a type of performance, conducted according to societally-shared codes and rules.

¹⁰⁵ S. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology : Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006), p. 27.

One of the first historians to significantly engage with the idea of social performances which began to flourish in the 1950s was Gerd Althoff.¹⁰⁶ Like Huizinga, Althoff's focus is medieval Europe – in particular, the medieval court. *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, memory, historiography* is a collection of essays edited by Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary. It emphasises the ways in which the history of the medieval period in Europe is 'being reshaped ... in light of cultural and social-scientific investigations into ritual, language, and memory.'¹⁰⁷ This remit connects interestingly with the scope of Collingwood's most recently published work, *The Philosophy of Enchantment*, as well as engaging with his ideas for the proper subjects for historical thinking. We will consider the latter first, before moving on to a discussion of the former.

Althoff argues that, in the medieval period, emotions served to express messages about future behaviour and fulfilled the function of promises. In this way, the performance of emotions was a kind of stage play, binding the actors by the emotions they had shown. The staged emotion had a binding force like a treaty or oath. For instance, the king's anger was used as a threatening gesture; the opponent's tears and expressions of desperation witnessed their change of mind. For Althoff, therefore, it makes no sense to distinguish between 'true' and 'false' emotions.¹⁰⁸

It is worth remembering here that the emotions as performances approach to emotions history is focused not on the personal experience of emotion, but on the public expression of emotion. In particular, Althoff's rejection of the idea that emotions cannot be true or false refers to emotions as the performance of promises: the sincerity of feeling behind the expression is less relevant here than the intention behind the decision to express it. Similarly, the recent *Emotional Bodies: The Historical Performativity of Emotions*, edited by Dolores Martin-Moruno and Beatriz Pichel, reminds its readers of Roland Barthes' idea that 'Performative utterances are ... not true and false, but happy or infelicitous, depending on the success of the action.'¹⁰⁹ In particular, Barthes is discussing a declaration of love: it may be received in a range of ways, and the success of the emotional performance – in this instance

¹⁰⁶ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 45.

¹⁰⁷ *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. by G. Althoff, J. Fried, and P.J. Geary (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ This paragraph is based on an email exchange with Althoff, 21st-22nd June 2021.

¹⁰⁹ D. Martín-Moruno and B. Pichel, *Emotional Bodies: The Historical Performativity of Emotions* (University of Illinois Press, 2019), p. 2.

a verbal performance – is unknown until a response is received, and an outcome brought about. *Emotional Bodies* focuses largely on the physical aspects of emotions – both the personal physiological experience of emotions, and the external physical expression of emotions. The pursuit of this latter subject interacts with the idea of thinking historically about emotions as performances, as advanced by historians such as Althoff – and others, discussed below.¹¹⁰

Althoff argued that expressions of intention in the Middle Ages often took the form of a physical display – such as kneeling to express fealty, or bowing in prayer.¹¹¹ He proposed that emotional expression at that time might be treated in the same way – a way of expressing intention through collectively-recognised forms of behaviour; public outbursts of emotion were ‘rituals that signalled messages to their audience.’¹¹² The idea of emotions as performances focuses on publicly visible emotions. However, there is no reason why this approach cannot also be useful in considering private emotional expression – a performance made for the benefit of the performer – where private emotional expression is known or plausible to the historian.

Althoff’s ideas have been taken further in recent years by Laurent Smagghe, who argues that both deliberately, carefully chosen, and unfortunate and accidental expressions of emotion on the part of the ruler can be considered part of the unwritten but widely-known code of emotional conduct at court.¹¹³ Some expressions of emotion served the medieval prince, and some did not – but all can be considered as performances, either good or bad. A good performance would involve the successful use of emotional expression to, for instance, assure the prince’s subjects of his fitness to rule. A bad performance might make public his disproportionate or impulsive anger, and reveal a weakness in his leadership.¹¹⁴

Once again, it is fruitful to consider the impact of applying this approach to Collingwood’s own worked example of re-enactment presented in *The Idea of History*: Caesar crossing the Rubicon. Collingwood tells us that the historian ‘is interested in the crossing of the Rubicon

¹¹⁰ Martín-Moruno and Pichel.

¹¹¹ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 46.

¹¹² Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 46.

¹¹³ Rosenwein and Cristiani, pp. 46–48.

¹¹⁴ Rosenwein and Cristiani, p. 48.

only in its relation to Republican law'.¹¹⁵ While he does acknowledge in preceding paragraphs that the historian is interested in both the inside and the outside of the historical event, this later stipulation reinforces his emphasis on thought – reasoned, reflective thought – as the only appropriate subject for historical thinking: 'his [the historian's] main task is to think himself into this action [visible from the outside], to discern the thought of its agent.'¹¹⁶

Collingwood describes those aspects of the event itself in which he is interested, the 'outside' of the event: 'the passage of Caesar, accompanied by certain men, across a river called the Rubicon at one date'.¹¹⁷ And also the aspect of the 'inside' of the event which the historian must explore through re-enactment: 'Caesar's defiance of Republican law'.¹¹⁸ He establishes here that the historian is interested in the former only insofar as it relates to the latter. We are encouraged to place ourselves into the mindset of Caesar, as he stood between crossing and not crossing the river and committing himself to action.

Collingwood does not offer a fully worked example in *The Idea of History*. His example of Caesar is preferable, however, for our purposes, than the fully worked example of Nelson which he presents in his *Autobiography*. Collingwood's discussion of the theory behind his example, the details of the re-enactment process, is presented with greater depth and nuance in *The Idea of History*.

For a fully worked example of Collingwood's re-enactment process applied to a specific historical moment, however, I will include here his account of Nelson's decision to wear his medals on the day he was killed. This will be useful as we re-enact Caesar's thoughts, following the process of re-enactment as Collingwood presents it to us.

When I understand what Nelson meant by saying, 'in honour I won them, in honour I will die with them', what I am doing is to think myself into the position of being all covered with decorations and exposed at short range to the musketeers in the enemy's tops, and being advised to make myself a less conspicuous target. I ask myself the question, shall I change my coat? and I reply in those words. Understanding the words means thinking for myself what Nelson thought when he spoke them: that this

¹¹⁵ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 213.

¹¹⁶ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 213.

¹¹⁷ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 213.

¹¹⁸ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 213.

is not a time to take off my ornaments of honour for the sake of saving my life. Unless I were capable – perhaps only transiently – of thinking that for myself, Nelson’s words would remain meaningless to me; and I could only weave a net of verbiage round them like a psychologist, and talk about masochism and guilt-sense, or introversion and extraversion, or some such foolery.¹¹⁹

This last sentence, though clearly rooted in its time of writing, is of interest for its strong suggestion that re-enactment, done well, should not include a consideration of the feelings of the historical individual, or their psychology. We will discuss the implications of this commitment further in the following chapters.

In the Nelson example, Collingwood’s process of asking questions of himself and answering those questions – and then questioning those answers – is clear. He asks himself, ‘Why do I not take another course of action than the one I am currently set upon?’ and finds, in his own answer, Nelson’s reasons for the same. This method can be applied equally well to Collingwood’s example of Caesar. We will now work through the example of Caesar’s decision to cross the Rubicon, closely following the re-enactment process as set out in *The Idea of History*.

Suetonius presents Caesar’s crossing in the following terms:

Caesar overtook his advanced guard at the river Rubicon, which formed the boundary of his province. Well aware how critical a decision confronted him, he turned to his staff, remarking, ‘We may still draw back but, once across that little bridge, we shall have to fight it out.’

32. As he stood, in two minds, an apparition of superhuman size and beauty was seen sitting on the riverbank playing a reed pipe. A party of shepherds gathered around to listen, and, when some of Caesar’s men broke ranks to do the same, the apparition snatched a trumpet from one of them, ran down to the river, blew a thunderous blast, and crossed over. Caesar exclaimed, ‘Let us accept this as a sign from the gods and

¹¹⁹ R.G. Collingwood, *R.G. Collingwood: An Autobiography and Other Writings* (Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 112.

follow where they beckon, in vengeance on our double-dealing enemies. The die is cast.'

33. He led his army to the further bank, where he welcomed the tribunes of the people who had fled to him from Rome. Then he tearfully addressed the troops and, ripping open his tunic to expose his breast, begged them to stand faithfully by him. ... He had accompanied his pleas with the gesture of pointing to his left hand, as he declared that he would gladly reward those who championed his honour with the very ring on his finger¹²⁰

Suetonius is not a contemporary of Caesar – *The Twelve Caesars* was written in 121 CE, one hundred and seventy years after Caesar's crossing in 49 BCE. Clearly, not all of this account is strictly accurate, but it is all useful. It tells us that Suetonius, the first known historian to take account of the event, recorded that Caesar was undecided, when he reached the river. We are therefore given some insight into Caesar's thought process, as perceived and represented by Suetonius.

[A note on Collingwood's *Roman Britain*](#)

Although Collingwood does not give an in-depth historical assessment of Caesar's thought processes at the moment of crossing the Rubicon in *The Idea of History*, he does write at length on Caesar elsewhere. In *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, Collingwood dedicates a chapter to 'Caesar's invasion' – including significant discussion of the thoughts and influences behind Caesar's actions.¹²¹ We will consider this account now, as an aid to conducting a strictly Collingwoodian re-enactment of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon.

That Collingwood's account in *Roman Britain* is an explicit re-enactment can be in no doubt, following this introductory paragraph:

What motives induced Caesar to attack Britain, what he intended to bring about there by his invasion, and how long the project had been shaping itself in his mind before he set about executing it, are questions to which he has given us no answer. Yet we

¹²⁰ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (Penguin, 2003), p. 17.

¹²¹ R.G. Collingwood and J.N.L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* (Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 32–53.

cannot help asking them; and unless we can find some sort of answer, at least to the first and second, the mere narrative of his campaigns must remain unintelligible.¹²²

That ‘the mere narrative of his campaigns must remain unintelligible’ without a deeper understanding on the part of the historian of the context and conditions under which that campaign arose makes clear that Collingwood is both re-enacting the circumstances of Caesar’s arrival in Britain, and that he is aware of doing so.

A note on emotional context in history

What is meant by emotional context? Two key approaches to emotions history are worth considering here: emotional communities, and emotionology.

Shaul Bassi’s 2021 article on the subject of Jewish anger, both in the early modern period and in the present day, raises some useful questions. Bassi explicitly compares the central role of emotions in our understanding and interpretation of the modern world, and the central role of emotions in past communities – both within those communities and in the interactions between them. Bassi’s article is focused around *The Merchant of Venice*, but is not primarily concerned with literary analysis – rather, the play is taken as a primary source, as a document which presents to a sixteenth century audience the interaction of two distinct emotional communities: Jewish and Christian. As Schülting argues, *The Merchant of Venice* ‘attributes central importance to the negotiations of the emotions’.¹²³ We are not going to discuss here the significance of *Merchant* being a work of fiction. It is enough that as a product of the sixteenth century, intended for a contemporary audience, it offers us a window into the ways in which emotions and emotional communities were perceived by ordinary people at that time.

Schülting argues that ‘*Merchant* establishes two emotional communities, one Christian and the other Jewish, with two different emotional scripts: sociable merriment versus solitary soberness’.¹²⁴ It is possible to read *Merchant* without taking this into consideration, but to do so would significantly impoverish our understanding of the text. Likewise, as historians, it is

¹²² Collingwood and Myres, p. 32.

¹²³ S. Bassi, ‘Angry Jewish Resistance. Interpreting Shylock’s Rage’, *Shakespeare*, 18.1 (2021), pp. 8–23 (p. 10).

¹²⁴ Bassi, p. 10.

vital that we read other historical texts (where texts may mean any primary evidence for past human experience) in the same way, with emotional community in mind.

In his work *Reckless Jews*, Elliot Horowitz touches on the same subject of Jewish anger, from another angle: that of real world interactions between Christian and Jewish emotional communities, with particular interest in the common early modern characterisation of Jews as incapable of anger.¹²⁵ In 1610, George Sandys travelled in Europe. He wrote of the Jewish communities and individuals he encountered that ‘Many of them I have seen abused, some of them beaten; yet never saw I [a] Jew with an angry countenance.’¹²⁶ It is interesting that Sandys points specifically to ‘angry countenance’ - in other words, he has not recognised any outward expression that would, in the context of his own emotional community, indicate overt anger. Sandys travelled at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Leon Modena, a Venetian rabbi and author – among other roles – was active in the same period, and has left an autobiography which offers a unique window into life in the Jewish ghetto of Venice. Sandys did not recognise anger – perhaps because he expected not to find it, perhaps because he did not know how to read the emotionology of an emotional community to which he did not belong – but anger was certainly present.

Modena records vividly in his autobiography an anger he does not give voice to in other published works.¹²⁷ At the end of a long fight to see the killers of his second son punished, Modena writes that ‘I give thanks to God the living God for having allowed me to hear while still alive about the dog’s deaths of the murderers Shabbetai and Moses da Hindelina, may their bones be ground to dust in hell. ... Blessed is he who has granted me revenge.’¹²⁸ ‘May their bones be ground to dust in hell’ here replaces the customary phrase following the name of a deceased individual, ‘of blessed memory’, or, ‘may their memory be a blessing’. There is clear anger in Modena’s words – not simply internalised, because he pursued public, legal justice over a number of months, but visible – to other members of his emotional community. Early in the account, he asks, ‘For why did I go out [of the womb] to witness toil, anger, strife, and trouble – only evil continually?’¹²⁹ Modena clearly expresses anger, and witnesses the

¹²⁵ Bassi, p. 12.

¹²⁶ Bassi, p. 12.

¹²⁷ Bassi.

¹²⁸ M. Cohen, *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena’s Life of Judah* (Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 122.

¹²⁹ Cohen, p. 82.

expression of anger in others – other residents in the Venetian ghetto, for instance. It is reported absent by Sandys, but by those within the emotional community about which Sandys makes his observations, anger is clearly both felt and expressed.

This leads us to an important point, to which we will return later in the chapter: as an outsider to the emotional community about which he writes, Sandys is likely also to have seen only the public face of that community, rather than its inner life.

This is a useful illustration of what it can mean, in practical terms, to not exist within the emotional community in which one is interested – both in the case of travellers like Sandys, and for historians in the present, whose aim is to access emotional communities of the past.

Three case studies across time

As we have now seen, Collingwood argues that thought – in contrast with any other form of mental process – is a self-reflective and repeatable process. That he maintains this point despite its role in limiting the scope of his re-enactment thesis is the result of his commitment to the claim that the outcomes of historical thinking should be considered a form of knowledge – a word which suggests that the interpretations of historians carry a level of certainty or truth which, as we have discussed throughout this thesis, they do not. This is not a weakness on the part of historiographic work, but Collingwood considers it one. For this reason, Collingwood argues that the proper object of historical study is thought; that although the past is gone, the thought processes of past individuals can be made alive again in the present mind of the historian. This approach is able to be considered reliable as a form of recovering historical knowledge precisely because the process of arriving at a particular thought (such as ‘in honour I won them, in honour I will die with them’) can be undertaken by different historians, under different conditions, and provided they each have access to enough data, they will – according to Collingwood – arrive at the same result, the actual series of questions and answers that resulted in the original thought arising in the mind of the historical individual.

It is important to clarify here that I am not arguing that Collingwood believes only thoughts of a scientific nature are appropriate for the historian to study. I have included the above point here because when he argues that only thought is suitable for historical study,

Collingwood argues that it is, in some way, an entirely repeatable process that the historian can reason their way into. This motif of repeatability will form a central argument in this chapter.

One piece of evidence against conceiving of thought as a contained rational process in this way is the history we actually see being written.¹³⁰ If historians only ever considered thoughts they could show were the outcomes of clear rational processes, the history written would be extremely limited. That this is not the case can be easily demonstrated by examining a selection of passages from well-known historical works. In order to demonstrate that historians have not studied only rational thought processes since before Collingwood was writing, we will consider works taken from disparate areas of historical research, which predate, are contemporary with, and postdate Collingwood.

It is important to clarify at this stage what is meant by 'rational', here. Rather than suggesting that any thought original to the historian is organised or disorganised, we are considering here the thoughts of the historical individual. Collingwood claims that the thoughts of the historical individual (as opposed to their other mental processes) are in a way logical – in that they can be reasoned into by someone who isn't the original thinker. Henceforth I will use the term 'repeatable' to refer to this concept. Collingwood uses terms such as rational and reasoned in an interchangeable way in his expression of re-enactment, however, and so it is necessary here to clarify the meaning of the term we will use in relation to the language used in his work.

It is not enough to re-enact the repeatable thoughts of the historical individual. Although it is theoretically possible, the 'thoughts' we end up studying as historians according to Collingwood's definition of thoughts would be taken out of their mental context, and much less useful than if we are willing to sacrifice our sense of certainty about the repeatability of the thought process in order to allow a more nuanced interpretation. The life of an ordinary sixteenth-century woman can be adequately expressed without referring to her emotional experiences, but including her emotional experiences in our re-enactment has the effect of

¹³⁰ In relation to this concept, see Dray, who argues that 'thought', for Collingwood, is not private but common property; also Dray's 'Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge', discussed on pp.128-29 of this thesis. See also Walsh's distinction between having thought in mind and having thought before one's mind. This is presented well in Dray's 'Historical Understanding as Re-thinking', p.205.

broadening our interpretation – and this is more than worth the cost, which is admitting that thought processes cannot be straightforwardly re-thought in a way that is the same for every historian; or, as I will argue later in this thesis, straightforwardly re-thought at all.

Extract 1: C. de Hamel, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts*, (2016), pp. 527-30.

‘For a minute, try to put yourself into the state of mind of a devout woman in early sixteenth-century Europe. She would have been taught to regard the historical event of Gabriel appearing to Mary in her house in Nazareth as the most awe-inspiring and sacred event in the entire history of creation (Luke 1:28). At that holy instant, a mere human being – like you – found ultimate favour with God himself, blessed among women, and she conceived his Son. Implicitly, every pious Christian since then has aspired towards a state of such absolute acceptance by God. A female owner of a medieval Book of Hours might gaze at a picture of the Annunciation and try to imagine what it was actually like to have been that woman chosen above all others. The image focused her thought. She would try to concentrate on and replicate what Mary herself might have been thinking and experiencing. Similarly, a religious man of the late Middle Ages was encouraged to envisage participating personally in the horrors and pain of the Passion and Crucifixion of Christ. The Annunciation and the Crucifixion are by far the most common subjects in all of late-medieval art.

‘At the most holy moment of the Annunciation, as the picture in this manuscript shows, the Virgin Mary was by convention kneeling at her prayerbook. We cannot see the words she has been reading. Everyone knew, however, that Nazareth was in the Roman Empire, for it is explicit at the beginning of Luke’s Gospel, and that the Romans spoke Latin. People would reason, quite logically, that any Scriptural texts that the Virgin could have known would have been from the Old Testament, most appropriately psalms and prophecies. Without studying the question too deeply, most people in the Middle Ages would doubtless have supposed that she did so in Latin. By reading and meditating on suitable Latin psalms and prophetic extracts in the Hours of the Virgin, therefore, an owner of a Book of Hours might be reading the same actual words which the Virgin herself had been reciting and thinking about. The user knelt at home with her Book of Hours laid open on a prayer desk, exactly as the Virgin is shown doing, recreating for herself the historical conditions of that absolute pinnacle of all religious experiences. Across the picture in the Spinola Hours are the famous words of the angel, “Ave”

(with no name of the person being greeted), “*gratia plena dominus tecum*”, in golden gothic letters, ‘Hail, full of grace, the Lord [is] with you.’ That sentence might also be addressing the reader.’

This extract demonstrates very clearly that for the modern historian, re-enactment in a way which includes emotions is essential to understanding the experiences of past individuals. The image to which the extract refers can be found in Appendix 1, at the end of this chapter. There are two important points to draw from this work: that it could not have existed without including emotions in the process of re-enactment; and that it does make clear and effective use of re-enactment. Although Collingwood’s explanation of the process of re-enactment does not account for the need to include emotions, it is based on an understanding of historical thinking that is essentially correct.

In this extract it is possible to see very clearly the process of re-enactment, in many ways precisely in line with Collingwood’s formulation of it, in action. The author directly encourages his readers to ‘put yourself into the state of mind’ of the individual they wish to understand historically. He brings together source analysis and imaginative re-enactment to produce a convincing interpretation of the past. This is a well-regarded work which would simply not have been possible in its present form if the author were not using re-enactment to think historically.

This extract also makes clear that the process of re-enactment used to arrive at this understanding of the past necessarily includes emotions. It would not be possible to approach understanding the sixteenth-century woman’s experience of reading the Spinola Hours without also understanding the emotional aspects of that experience. If we are re-enacting the experience of this woman, who would herself ‘try to concentrate on and replicate what Mary herself might have been thinking and experiencing’, we cannot simply leave out the ‘experiencing’ in order to give ourselves the right to claim that our re-enacted understanding may be considered knowledge. Nor, clearly, have historians done so. The process of re-enactment, in practice, does necessarily include re-enactment of emotions, and any re-enactment thesis must therefore reflect this.

It is useful to clarify here that in considering the interconnectedness of thought and emotion in human lived experience, I am not arguing for a disorganisation in the thoughts of the

historian. My interest in this section is in considering the extent to which studying the thoughts – as opposed to any other mental process – of the historical individual, which may, in a way, be logical, can be enough to claim that the historian has adequately done their job. Even if past thoughts can be reasoned into by someone who is not the original thinker, does this represent historical thinking? Although it is theoretically possible – as Collingwood argues, and as we will discuss in some depth in the second half of this chapter – the ‘thoughts’ we would end up studying as historians, according to Collingwood’s definition of thoughts, would be taken out of their mental context and would as such be far less useful to the process of historical interpretation than if the sense of certainty is sacrificed in order to allow a more nuanced interpretation. The life of an ordinary sixteenth-century woman may be adequately expressed without referring to her emotional experiences, but including her emotional experiences has the effect of broadening interpretation and making the resulting re-enacted person significantly more recognisably human. This is worth the cost of admitting that thought processes cannot be straightforwardly re-thought in a way that is the same for every historian; that the outcomes of historical thinking are not knowledge, but understanding and interpretation.

As we will see, this is no loss to historiography. Understanding and interpretation are far preferable to the illusion of certainty.

Extract 2: E.L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform 1815-1878*, pp. 254-55.

‘There was, however, one new feature about the Crimean war; for the first time in British history public opinion was deeply stirred by the sufferings of the troops. The lives of British soldiers had been cheap enough in the past, but their fellow citizens had been only by fits and starts over the waste of men. The anger felt during the first Crimean winter was due to several causes. The British public knew more about the horrors of the Crimea than they had known about previous wars. For the first time newspaper correspondents followed the campaign. ...

‘There was another reason for disquiet and indignation. The attitude of educated men towards war and fighting was changing. The mood of truculence and anger which preceded the outbreak of the Crimean war was not lasting, and did not represent the state of public feeling over a long period of time; the reaction was likely to be as sudden and as extravagant.

For forty years there had been no great war in Europe; hence, after hostilities had begun, and the significance of the Crimean campaign, in terms of death and misery, could no longer be evaded, the speeches of those who had denounced war, apparently for sordid reasons, took on a different and more sombre aspect. It would be a mistake to read into the speeches and writings of a small minority in the middle years of the nineteenth century an attitude towards war which is the result of the experience of a later generation; but there was a greater sense of the value of human life, and of the rights of the individual, than in the wars of earlier times. The decline of religious belief had a similar effect; death on the battlefield was even more terrible, if death were not the prelude to immortality.'

E.L. Woodward's *The Age of Reform*, from which the above extract is taken, was first published in 1938, with revisions made in 1946. It belongs to a series intended to cover the history of England; Collingwood himself wrote the majority of the first volume in the series, titled *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* and first published in 1936. *The Age of Reform* is therefore a direct contemporary of Collingwood's work in the philosophy of history, as well as with his work as an historian. While the de Hamel extract above may raise the response that he is an historian working well beyond Collingwood's lifetime, Woodward cannot be dismissed in the same way. His work is also, situated as it is in modern diplomatic history, in interesting contrast with de Hamel's medieval social history. This contrast serves to remind us that emotions are a necessary part of the process of re-enactment in every area of historical research, and not only those areas which appear more immediately oriented toward the consideration of emotions.

In this extract, which addresses an aspect of public opinion during the Crimean War, emotions are considered in a way which is notably different from the more recent *Remarkable Manuscripts* excerpt above, and in this, it is typical of mid-twentieth century historiography.

That Woodward includes emotions in his re-enactment of the period 1854-54 is less immediately evident in this passage, but it can be made clearer by considering how much of what is said would be possible to say if emotions were not a part of the process by which these ideas were arrived at. The emotions of the British public are not represented in terms which force us to think of them in terms of rational thought only: the 'truculence and anger' which erupted in response to the revelations made by war correspondents – most notably by *The Times*' William Howard Russell – are not abstract intellectual commitments made by the

Victorian public. They do not, in this extract, reason their way to anger; they simply feel it. The historian must therefore approach an understanding of the public response to the first war correspondents allowing for this fact.

This is not a radical point of view. But it does illustrate the fact that while Collingwood claims the proper subject matter for historical thinking is reflective thought only, historians contemporary with and following his work have behaved differently. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that rather than basing this aspect of his re-enactment thesis on the actual practices of historical researchers, Collingwood introduces it in order to maintain a connection between his philosophy of history and other areas of his philosophical work. In particular, we have seen that the understanding of thought and feeling put forward in his *New Leviathan*, a late publication, is in-keeping with such a requirement. In reformulating Collingwood's re-enactment thesis later in this chapter, I will seek to retain the earlier aspects of his philosophy of history which do originate in the study of actual historical thinking, and to move away from these aspects which appear to have been introduced on a different basis.

Extract 3: J.A.R. Marriott, *The Remaking of Modern Europe 1789-1878*, (1928), p. 82.

'Austerlitz had indeed avenged Trafalgar. It had done more: it had hastened the end of William Pitt. The great English statesman died on 23rd January, 1806. The historians of the last generation, notably Lord Macaulay, were wont to deride Pitt as an incompetent war minister. The juster view is now beginning to prevail that Pitt did more than any other single man, Nelson and Wellington hardly excepted, to save England and to save Europe from the domination of the Corsican adventurer. He died indeed at a moment of gloom, so deep as hardly to be relieved by Nelson's great victory, but his primary task was already implicitly accomplished. Napoleon had made himself master of the Continent, but that was only half his task. He had yet to face the mistress of the sea. Austerlitz might dazzle contemporaries, but Napoleon's ultimate defeat, unless he was prepared to abandon the dearest ambition of his heart, had already been assured by the seamanship of Nelson and the tenacity of Pitt.'

This extract, taken from a work of political and diplomatic history published in its first edition in 1911, also demonstrates that emotions, although not explicitly acknowledged by Marriott, play an important role in this historical interpretation. The work predates Collingwood's

earliest publications in philosophy of history, but not by so far that the standards for what qualified as a successful work of history had changed beyond recognition. It would not, for instance, necessarily be helpful to consider the works of seventeenth-century antiquarians in comparison with Collingwood's own ideas of historical thinking, because the definition of history was something significantly different. Here, though Marriott predates Collingwood's publications, he remains a comparable historian whose work does effectively demonstrate that emotions were an important part of historical work before Collingwood began his decades-long effort to understand the nature of historical thinking and historical knowledge.

Marriott directly mentions, for instance, that Pitt died at 'a moment of gloom, so deep as hardly to be relieved by Nelson's great victory'. The information this conveys could, perhaps, have been expressed without mention of this sentiment. For instance, had Marriott said that 'Pitt died while political opinion still believed lasting victory against Napoleon to be unlikely,' then the bleak outlook would still have been conveyed to his reader. What would have been missing, however, is emotions. I believe that Marriott includes emotions because, whether he was ever consciously aware of the fact or not, he understood as an historian that a good historical interpretation must include an emotional dimension. A history without emotions would not be a history at all, because it would fail to communicate the human past; a human past which certainly contained and was frequently guided by a vast array of emotional experiences. Throughout this extract, Marriott chooses emotional descriptors to add depth to his interpretation, and it is certainly no accident that he does so.

Chapter Three

Introduction

This chapter will undertake two central discussions: that re-enactment is not equal to repetition; and how we might begin to address Collingwood's unhelpful ideas around feelings and emotions, which otherwise hinder the project of developing an understanding of re-enactment which can comfortably accommodate the re-enactment of emotions. This discussion will be continued into Chapter 4, where we will progress from this examination of what Collingwood *says*, into an exploration of what he *does*.

The content of the present chapter is presented thematically, progressing from an analysis of Collingwood's position to considering the useful contributions that first a phenomenological and then a hermeneutical approach can offer to our reconsideration of Collingwoodian re-enactment. The chapter will begin with analysis of Collingwood's position, considering in particular the disparity between these two phenomena: Collingwood's expressed denial of any possibility of thinking historically about emotions, and the existence in modern historiography of a field of study devoted solely to thinking historically about emotions. In this, the first section of this chapter represents a synthesis of Chapters 1 and 2. It is useful to note here that I will not be arguing that past emotions can be treated in the same way Collingwood claims we can treat past thoughts, but rather that neither past thoughts nor past emotions can or should be considered in this way. This argument rests on the proposition that re-enactment is not, as it may seem in Collingwood's work, mere repetition, and that repeatability cannot therefore function as the qualifying criterion for the re-enactability of any aspect of past human experience by the historian.

The focus of the chapter will then turn to a further question which forms the core of this part of the project. We will consider the fact that not only have historians demonstrably included past emotions in their historical thinking over time – as we have seen in Chapter 2 – but that historical thinking is not possible at all without the inclusion of past emotions. Clearly, it is not possible to demonstrate that no work of historiography ever has, or could ever have, excluded emotions entirely. Where Chapter 2 has demonstrated the presence of emotions in historical works across time through case studies, therefore, in this chapter I will offer some

philosophical arguments for my claim that past emotions are not only a possibly part of historical thinking, but also a necessary one.

Emotions are intrinsic; some philosophical arguments

All history necessarily includes emotions

1. All history is the history of human experience
2. All human experience includes emotions
3. All history includes emotions

It is impossible to think about history without including emotions because it is impossible to think generally without including emotions – where human experience is the object or cause of the thoughts.

In the study of history, the object is always human history – this is a little tautological, as history is defined by its object, but it is nonetheless helpful to state outright first of all. Study of the past is of course possible beyond the scope of human experience, but as discussed in the above pages, this is not history in the sense in which the term is used in this thesis; the academic study of past lived experience and the perception by past individuals of those experiences, on the basis of records – deliberate and incidental – left behind as a result. And what human lived experience does not inextricably include feeling emotions?

The question is, in a sense, rhetorical, but it is also worth approaching seriously. The answer is at the heart of many questions explored in this thesis: that there is no human experience which does not possess some emotional element.

Below I have presented a selection of relevant philosophical arguments for the inextricability of emotions from human experience. They are chosen primarily for their relevance to either emotions history or to Collingwood's own work. These arguments attempt to establish as certainly as is reasonable that so far as can be known, there is no human experience which does not encompass some emotional aspect. The arguments are presented first according to their chief proponent and then according to the school of thought to which they belong.

William Reddy

In his important and influential work *The Navigation of Feeling*, Reddy – as we saw in Chapter 2, a founder of the field of emotions history as it exists in the present – presents a perspective in which emotions are a constant presence across all human societies.¹³¹ For Reddy, the question is not whether emotions are always a part of human experience – that is taken as read – but how the ways in which emotions are managed varies between different communities. Reddy argues that emotions provide ‘unity of purpose or ethos in social life’.¹³²

Reddy further claims explicitly a measure of universality for his ideas. On the basis of his survey of developments in the fields of psychology and anthropology, he offers two universal features of human societies: 1) communities construe emotions as an important domain of effort, and 2) they provide guidance to individuals about how to pursue emotional learning and the end point or ideal of emotional equilibrium.¹³³

Reddy offers examples, which we will consider briefly in order to lend clarity to the argument he makes. In particular, the example of ghinnāwas – a short lyric poems produced by nomadic Bedouin communities in Egypt. Within these communities, it is often inappropriate to be seen to act on one’s own emotions – Reddy offers the example of a man who exhibited ‘undue affection for his new, adolescent wife’, and lost social standing as a consequence. He had allowed himself to be ruled by his emotions, as was seen to be unfit for a man of his age and status. It is clear that emotion is seen in this instance as a domain of effort, requiring individual work to exert control over one’s own emotional impulses. But emotional expression is not rejected entirely; under specific circumstances, the same community prizes the ability to respond to emotion. Ghinnāwas are recited for ‘strategically chosen intimates, [and] by their artful and expressive character, showed not a failure of control, but “the profundity of that which had been overcome”’.¹³⁴

¹³¹ B. McEwen, ‘Emotional Expression and the Construction of Heterosexuality: Hugo Bettauer’s Viennese Advice Columns’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 25.1 (2016), pp. 114–36; J. Hillman, ‘Appetite for Discovery: Sense and Sentiment in the Early Modern World’, *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 41.2 (2015), pp. 1–5; E. Sullivan, ‘The History of the Emotions: Past, Present, Future’, *Cultural History*, 2.1 (2013), pp. 93–102, doi:<https://doi.org/10.3366/cult.2013.0034>.

¹³² Reddy, p. 55.

¹³³ Reddy, p. 55.

¹³⁴ Reddy, p. 56.

This example can be interestingly compared with the use of courtly poetry, as reported in the writings of Murasaki Shikibu, author of *The Tale of Genji* and *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*. Murasaki is undoubtedly a penname, and little is therefore known about the individual who authored these works, but they do offer insights into the general position of emotional expression in the Japanese court of that time. In *The Written World*, Martin Puchner explains that poems were used as a form of emotional expression, to give voice in a socially permissible way to emotions which could not otherwise be outwardly expressed. In *Genji*, Genji overhears, for example, the composition of a poem about a young woman, and composes a short poem himself in response. Poetry was not reserved for romantic subjects, however; ‘everyday business was sometimes conducted through these short poetic exchanges, which allowed people to hint at their true intentions without having to spell them out.’¹³⁵ These poems were more than entertainment; every poem sent ‘demanded a response.’¹³⁶ In other words, in an emotional community in which direct physical performance of emotions was not often permissible, a ritual developed which allowed individuals to both express their emotions and demonstrate their emotional control by following the social codes; the emotionology of their community.

That examples of this kind can be found in every human society is not something I can prove here; it would take more pages than there are trees in the world, and as societies constantly evolve, the task would never end. But these two examples do serve to illustrate Reddy’s claim, that human societies not only necessarily have an emotional dimension, but also consistently develop social rules by which emotions can be expressed or controlled – and the ability to follow these rules affords the individual status. Not only positive status rewards, but ‘fear of physical or magical consequences provides an added incentive to bring one’s emotions (not merely one’s emotional expressions) into line with social norms.’¹³⁷ It is important to remember that although the historian can only directly witness surviving evidence for outward emotional expression – even the contents of a personal diary have been externalised, on the page – these acts of expression are not separate from the emotions experienced by the historical individual.

¹³⁵ M. Puchner, *The Written World: How Literature Shaped History* (Granta Books, 2017), p. 128.

¹³⁶ Puchner, p. 128.

¹³⁷ Reddy, p. 61.

In looking for universals of emotion in human societies, Reddy argues that 'high goal relevance and uncertain mental control are universal features of emotion and universally a focus of local theories of the person and of local norms, customs, religious beliefs, and political institutions.'¹³⁸ Emotion as a means by which to define the person within a social context is an interesting concept, worth briefly exploring further. It is not the aim of this project to define emotions. Nor do I intend to make substantial use of the work currently being done in the psychology of emotions; this project focuses on emotions as engaged with by historians, and to some extent anthropologists, whose research frequently contributes significantly to the works of historians. Reddy's claim that emotions are universally a focus of theories of the person is of interest not because it offers any definition of emotion – or of the person – but because it claims a universality for emotion in human society. Reddy argues that 'emotions are closely associated with the dense network of goals which give coherence to the self, the unity of a community ... depends in part on its ability to provide a coherent set of prescriptions about emotions.'¹³⁹

The most important idea here, for our purposes, is the understanding of emotion as a domain of effort. If emotion is understood in this way, as something over which individuals not only can and do exert control, but something over which individuals may gain or lose social standing as a direct result of their success or failure in the exercise of that emotional control, then Collingwood's conception of emotion as something fleeting and unexamined is immediately called into question. We will return to this concept later. More important to our present purpose is the foundational concept which runs throughout Reddy's argument: that emotions are inextricable from human experience in all its aspects, and that any study thereof must necessarily take this into account.

Phenomenology, psychology, and Collingwood's position on feelings

Phenomenology is important because it brings the perspective of beginning with lived experience and is grounded in the world – and therefore, offers valuable perspectives on including emotions in a process of historical thinking. As we will further discuss in this chapter,

¹³⁸ Reddy, p. 61.

¹³⁹ Reddy, p. 61.

phenomenology is also a useful approach when we consider the centrality of emotions to all human lived experience. In this section of Chapter Three, I have selected several key phenomenologists whose ideas offer a new perspective on the problems faced by Collingwood's philosophy of history in the present day. This section begins below with a review of Collingwood's *Essay on Metaphysics*, which deals directly with Collingwood's position on psychology and which contains within it arguments which it will be useful to view in comparison with the contrasting approach offered by phenomenology. Following this, the works of Merleau-Ponty, Brentano, Husserl and Dilthey are considered, specifically in relation to their arguments concerning emotions as intrinsic to human experience, and emotions as intrinsic to historical thinking about past human experience.

Collingwood's *Essay on Metaphysics*

There are two important problems with this exclusively thought-centred approach. In the first instance, let us imagine we have faithfully followed Collingwood's guidelines, and our re-enactment process has not considered the emotions of our historical subject. Returning once more to Collingwood's Nelson example, what might we consider? Collingwood offers several thoughts, or questions-and-answers, which he considers to be thoughts separate from feeling.¹⁴⁰ In this context, this is expressed in his rejection of any psychological consideration: unless he is capable of thinking the thoughts again for himself, he says, 'I could only weave a net of verbiage around them like a psychologist, and talk about masochism and guilt-sense, or introversion and extraversion, or some such foolery.'¹⁴¹

Elsewhere, as we have seen, Collingwood correlates psychology with the study of emotions. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Collingwood believes that the thoughts he re-enacts, as opposed to the subject matter of psychologists, do not include emotions.

In his *Essay on Metaphysics*, Collingwood begins with the claim that metaphysics should primarily interest itself in the study of absolute presuppositions; an historical study, by which the field of metaphysics might set the standard for its own methods of inquiry. In contrast with this, the second section of the work, beginning with Chapter 8, offers in-depth

¹⁴⁰ For the author's position on this issue, see sections of this thesis on Mink and van der Dussen, pp.45-47.

¹⁴¹ Collingwood, R.G. *Collingwood: An Autobiography and Other Writings*, p. 112.

consideration on what Collingwood terms 'anti-metaphysics'. Several chapters in this section are devoted to discussion of psychology in particular. This is primarily of interest here in as far as it offers insight into Collingwood's position on emotions, as opposed to thoughts.

In the *Essay on Metaphysics*, Collingwood describes psychology as 'the pseudo-science of thought'. In this, it is perhaps best to first allow his criticism of psychology to speak for itself:

Misunderstandings apart, the only difference of principle between a logical and a psychological science of thought is that a logic of thought faces the fact that thought is self-critical and consequently attempts to give some account of the criteria used in this self-criticism, while a psychological science does not. It was, and is, mere bluff to protest that psychology, being a science and therefore having no aim but the discovery of the truth, approaches the study of thought with a determination to get at the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the subject with which it deals. No science has an aim so vague as this. ... Psychology has always approached the study of thought with a perfectly clear and conscious determination to ignore one whole department of the truth, namely to ignore the self-critical function of thought and the criteria which that function implied. From this determination it cannot depart. It stands committed to it, not in its character as science, but in its character as psychology, a science which ever since the sixteenth century has been working out with a good deal of success methods appropriate to the study of feeling.¹⁴²

This section gives us three important points: that Collingwood considers thought inherently self-critical; that he considers psychology to be the study of feeling; and that psychology is unable to recognise the self-critical nature of thought. For Collingwood, particularly in the context of his re-enactment thesis, this third point is a vital failure. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, as we have seen, relies in part on his claim that it is the self-reflective nature of thought which allows it to be re-enacted by historians. This is also the reasoning he gives for excluding emotions from the pool of potential objects for re-enactment; emotions, unlike thoughts, are not, he claims, reasoned or reflective, and historians cannot therefore re-enact any rational process by which they were arrived at. The unreflective and immediate nature of emotional experience renders it, for Collingwood, unsuitable for re-enactment. This he

¹⁴² R.G. Collingwood, *An Essay on Metaphysics* (Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 115–16.

consigns to the domain of psychology and, in doing so, draws a clear line between that which is suitable for study by historians and by psychologists.

It is precisely because psychology focuses on emotions above other aspects of the mind – because it does not recognise the self-critical nature of thought – that Collingwood dismisses it so briefly in his other works on history; in particular, in *The Idea of History*. Because the method by which his process of re-enactment operates relies on the real possibility that thought processes may be reconstructed by working out, as historians, which reasoned steps led to the final, concluding thought – which has left some surviving mark on the historical record – Collingwood cannot afford to also consider any possible relevance which psychology might have in the re-enactment of past experience.

Far from being a weakness of psychology, however, this inflexibility – clearly demonstrated in *The Idea of History* – in his philosophy of history weakens Collingwood's re-enactment thesis significantly. In theoretically excluding a central aspect of human experience – namely, emotional experience, feelings – and nonetheless claiming that re-enactment can offer not only an interpretation or perspective or understanding but historical knowledge, Collingwood creates a weakness in his argument. This weakness is also, however, an opportunity for growth. This will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter. Although Collingwood writes that emotions are not the domain of the historian, his practice does leave room for re-enactment to grow into a form which might comfortably accommodate such research. The weaknesses as identified in this chapter are primarily highlighted as areas where Collingwood's re-enactment thesis has room for growth.

Collingwood's commitment to claiming that the outcomes of historical thinking must qualify as a form of knowledge is discussed in greater length in the previous chapter of this thesis, and we will not cover that ground again here. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Collingwood's dismissal of psychology also rests on his claims of rational thought processes and repeatability.

In order that thoughts might be suitable objects of historical study, Collingwood argues that being thoughts is not itself enough: 'it must be an act not only of thought but of reflective

thought. ... Reflective acts may be roughly described as the acts which we do on purpose'.¹⁴³ Collingwood is drawing here a clear distinction between natural order intelligibility and conscious, rational, purposive behaviour.¹⁴⁴ Examples given by Collingwood of the latter rational and purposive behaviour include 'warfare, economic activity, moral action, art, science, religion, and philosophy.'¹⁴⁵ Robert Stover's work on the nature of historical thinking, in which Collingwood is considered in some depth as a key figure in twentieth-century philosophy of history, offers a valuable contribution to this argument. In the chapter 'The Deterministic Intelligibility of Rational Action', Stover does not address the question of whether rational activity is the only subject matter appropriate for historical thinking, but this list raises an interesting point with regard to that inquiry. It is difficult to imagine how any of the items in the list – warfare, art, religion, and so on – can really be considered as solely rational and purposive behaviour. This point will also feature more centrally in the following chapter but is worth introducing here; that not only are the objects of historical thinking recognisably not without or separable from emotion, but that no part of historical thinking is solely rational.

On the basis of the distinction given, we can say that emotions would fall under the category of natural order experiences; not reflective, deliberate or rational. What might these thoughts be? Nelson arrives on deck, wearing his ceremonial uniform. He is asked, does he not consider this risky? A mistake, perhaps? And he replies, 'In honour I won them; in honour I will die with them.'. We are fortunate in having both the first question and the final answer in the sequence. However, 'in honour I won them; in honour I will die with them' is not itself satisfactorily understood simply as the answer to whether or not to wear the medals. There are other considerations weighing on his statement.

There are an almost limitless number of possible influences on Nelson's decision, many of which are not accessible to historians due to gaps in surviving evidence. Some possibilities, however, can be inferred. For instance, honour. What was honour, in 1805, to a man in Nelson's social and professional position? He was a public figurehead, almost a proto-celebrity, a famous leader; perhaps he chose to continue wearing his medals because each

¹⁴³ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 215; Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, pp. 307–9.

¹⁴⁴ R. Stover, *The Nature of Historical Thinking* (University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 77.

¹⁴⁵ Stover, p. 78.

one represented a victory, a previous occasion on which he had gone into battle and succeeded. Perhaps wearing these on his coat was intended to inspire the men who served on his ship, who might take them as evidence that they were more likely to survive the coming battle under his command. Perhaps, also, it was a consideration of appearances that led him to continue wearing the medals. To return and change after he had been seen dressed in his medals and ceremonial uniform might have indicated fear or indecision. It is also possible that he had seen battle so often that the prospect of death in battle either did not cross his mind, after surviving so many, or did not intimidate him enough to make him take action to prevent it. There are many other possibilities, but I have suggested here a few which represent a good cross-section of these potential causes.

It is noticeable that none of these points makes sense without some emotional context. Honour without feeling is simply an instruction or rule. Not only is honour not a thought free from emotion but it is also a thought guided by the expectations and norms of the time – what is considered honourable in the present differs from that which was honourable in 1815; in other words, Nelson’s thought was not simply a free, independent thought at all. It cannot be separated from his own emotions or the emotionology of the time. A figurehead without emotion may be nothing at all. Indecision and fear, and the impact they would evoke in the men, are clearly emotions. Even an absence of fear depends on emotional context for its meaning. What this means is that any emotional response, what emotions do and do not form part of a person’s emotional response to any given experience, is not fixed across time and cultures. In other words, emotions and the experience or non-experience of particular emotions under various circumstances are historical phenomena; they have changed over time and therefore have a history.

Subjective rationality in relation to Collingwood

It is my belief that Collingwood argues for subjective, not objective, rationality – though of course, not in such terms. This distinction, as presented by Dray, lends clarity to the use of the term ‘rational’ in relation to Collingwood’s work throughout this thesis.¹⁴⁶ Where Collingwood refers to historical agents as rational, or to historical thought as rational, he does

¹⁴⁶ Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood’s Idea of History*, pp. 116–19.

not mean to suggest that these may be considered objectively logical or rational according to some external or timeless standard. Rather, Collingwood's position is far closer to Dray's concept of subjective rationality; the idea that historical agents act based on the information available to them, their beliefs, their cultural context, their specific position at that point in time, and so forth. In other words, the decisions of historical agents may be called rational insofar as they respond in a reasonable and understandable manner to the circumstances before them.¹⁴⁷

This position does not go far enough for Donagan, however, who argues that an agent's actions become 'intelligible' simply when reasons can be ascribed to them, whether or not those reasons are the most rational given that agent's context.¹⁴⁸ In other words, as Dray writes, for Donagan, the historical agent's actions are understandable to the historian so long as they are arrived at in response to that agent's context, whether or not the action was arrived at through 'good' reason.¹⁴⁹

A bridge begins to form across this gap when emotions are brought to the fore. What Dray terms the occasional 'subjective irrationality' of agents can be otherwise understood as an extension of subjective rationality which accounts for these additional, contextually intelligible, influences on the historical individual.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty also has interesting things to say about the intrinsic place of emotions in human experience.¹⁵⁰ In *Phenomenology of Perception*, he argues that not only are emotions inextricable from any other aspect of human experience, but further, that 'another consciousness can only be deduced if the other person's emotional expressions can be

¹⁴⁷ See also on the discussion regarding whether Collingwood should be considered a rationalist or intellectualist, van der Dussen, *History as a Science*, beginning p.75

¹⁴⁸ Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁹ Dray, *History as Re-Enactment: R.G. Collingwood's Idea of History*, p. 117.

¹⁵⁰ E. Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty* (Routledge, 2014); R. Vallier, W.J. Froman, and B. Flynn, *Merleau-Ponty and the Possibilities of Philosophy: Transforming the Tradition* (State University of New York Press, 2009); S.H. Watson, *Phenomenology, Institution and History: Writings after Merleau-Ponty II* (Continuum, 2009).

compared and identified'.¹⁵¹ This idea has important implications for the emotional communities approach to emotions history which is discussed in the previous chapter.

In the context of our present argument, however, we must note that in making this claim, Merleau-Ponty makes emotions an absolute necessity in any attempt to understand another person – past or present – because, without emotions, that person cannot be recognised as such. Our understanding of other humans is not one of a world filled with automata, and ourselves the only feeling consciousness. If we do recognise other people as people by recognising their emotional experiences and expression, the historian must also do so in their historical thinking about past individuals. Further, if this is so, recognising that fact must form a central aspect of any attempted philosophy of history. All history is the history of human experience, and therefore, according to Merleau-Ponty, also the history of human emotional experience.

Merleau-Ponty also speaks specifically about history. He proposes that the residue of each human life forms, over time, sedimentary layers which must be navigated – whether they are recognised and understood or not – by all people living among them. These sediments are the external outcomes of human activity, and 'are deposited there [in the world] in the form of a cultural world.'¹⁵² This approach connects interestingly with two other key thinkers: Husserl, who also addresses this concept of sedimented histories, and Gadamer, whose layers of interpretation bear some resemblance to the concept of sedimentation in phenomenology. Sedimented history, in the context of emotions history, is an important idea.

Johan Blomberg summarises the concept thus: that 'similar to how individual experience becomes sedimented into habitualized patterns, there is a culturally inherited constitution of historical sedimentations in the life world.'¹⁵³ In other words, sedimentation of history is an approach to historical thinking which embraces the layers of human past which exist between the present and the past the historian is working to better understand. A city is a good example of this process of sedimentation in action. In a city, there are pathways which are more frequently traversed by locals and visitors alike. This is likely to be because the city was

¹⁵¹ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2013), p. 368.

¹⁵² Merleau-Ponty, p. 363.

¹⁵³ J. Blomberg, 'Interpreting the Concept of Sedimentation in Husserl's "Origin of Geometry"', *Public Journal of Semiotics*, 9.1, pp. 78–94 (p. 81).

structured, during the medieval period, to funnel visitors who entered by any gate through the centre of the city via the marketplace. The benefits of this strategy are obvious: the city revenue increases as a direct result. Placing the exchequer or tax collection building in the same location also allow tariffs to be more efficiently collected through the same road system, which funnels traders past the appropriate building. Over time, social dynamics change and this system is no longer needed – but the major roadways of the city remain designed to funnel visitors along a very particular route. Along this route, shops are more common – because people walk by more often than on other roads in the city. This in turn enforces the importance of these routes, and on, through decades and centuries. In the present day, tourists are more likely to walk these routes in order to see the most expensive and impressive historical buildings – precisely because these routes are where investment in building frontages was made over time, because this was where they would be most widely seen and admired. These layers of use are what Husserl and Merleau-Ponty mean when they refer to sedimentation, or sedimented histories. The concept therefore links interestingly with Gadamer’s layers of interpretation, which is explored in greater depth below.

Sedimented histories do not select certain aspects of human experience to form the layers which shape the relationship between people and their built environment. Any attempt to take only thoughts, without emotions, as sedimentary layers, would be immediately unsuccessful. There is no historical understanding of the human relationship to a human environment, and no historical understanding of the use of these environments, without an emotional dimension to the process of historical thinking.

Emotions are intrinsic to human experience. Not only is it not possible to attempt a sedimented approach to historical understanding which excludes emotions, but this approach could not have come to exist without the emphasis which phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Husserl place on the whole human lived experience, including emotions. Their argument, therefore, for this approach to historical thinking is also an argument for the intrinsic nature of emotions to human experience, and to the quest to understand that experience, both historically and in the present day.

This perspective helps to illuminate certain aspects of Collingwood’s philosophy of history. Placing emphasis on the living body and avoiding in particular any artificial separation between the mind and bodily experience presents a philosophy in direct contrast with the

philosophical commitments with which Collingwood underwrites his re-enactment thesis. Collingwood's argument for a separation of thought on the one hand and feelings, emotions, and sensation on the other as immediate, fleeting phenomena which cannot be re-experienced and therefore, according to Collingwood, cannot be re-enacted, creates clear problems for his re-enactment thesis in the present day. This phenomenological approach suggests a more useful approach, which allows for a process of historical thinking which is able to encompass all aspects of human lived experience – including emotions.

Franz Brentano

Emotions are a core part of what makes us human. They are essential and necessary to the experience of being human in a world of other humans.

The early phenomenologist Franz Brentano makes a useful distinction between genetic and descriptive psychology. We will focus here only on descriptive psychology. Brentano expresses the aim of descriptive psychology thus:²

[it] is nothing other than to provide us with a general conception of the entire realm of human consciousness. It does this by listing fully the basic components out of which everything internally perceived by humans is composed, and by enumerating the ways in which these components can be connected. [Brentano, 1887, 4, quoted from the Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion, 'Franz Brentano', chapter by Michelle Montague – [link](#)]

In this, Brentano's descriptive psychology bears striking resemblance to Collingwood's re-enactment; in particular, their common quest to understand human experience of the world, past or present.

Brentano argues that every mental phenomenon – or act of consciousness – is focused on an object. This is not to say that emotions are merely – to borrow Collingwood's framework – by nature of being an act of consciousness, a sub-category of thought; they are mental phenomena in their own right, '*sui generis* intentional phenomena', for Brentano.¹⁵⁴ The term mental phenomena here includes emotions; in fact, 'Brentano's main consideration in favour

¹⁵⁴ M. Montague, 'The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion' (Routledge, 2020), p. 45.

of the intentionality of emotions seems to be the simple phenomenological observation that all emotions appear to be object-directed'.¹⁵⁵ He also argues that only these mental phenomena are directed in this way, toward an object. It is interesting to consider this concept in relation to Collingwood's framework for re-enactment. For Collingwood, thoughts are useful to the historian because they are reflective of the experiences of the individual in response to the world as it then was. According to Brentano, emotions might be said to do the same. For Brentano, emotions are not the involuntary and fleeting phenomena that Collingwood describes in *The Idea of History*; they are rather 'disclosive of' and 'responsive to' the world and to others. In other words, for Brentano and his proto-phenomenological approach, emotions are a direct window onto a person's perception and experience of their environment, both physical and human.

This perspective also correlates with the work of modern historians of emotions. Emotionology, for instance, as shown in Chapter 2, demonstrates that the emotional conduct of past individuals can be studied to reveal codes of behaviour based on the social expectations and beliefs of the time. Brentano argues that 'emotions are intrinsically evaluative phenomena', and they may therefore be used by historians to access that process of evaluation.¹⁵⁶ For example, studies of the emotionology of the 1940s US show that as written materials such as advice columns began to recommend releasing rather than suppressing anger, instances of domestic violence significantly increased. Other contextual factors – chiefly the Second World War – must of course also be considered, though I do not intend to get into this here as it does not significantly impact on the present argument. Whether people experienced anger more frequently, or simply expressed it more freely, is a question we do not need to explore here. It is enough to say that noticing an upturn in instances of anger – noticing that this upturn in anger is disclosive of a changing experience or perception of the world, and that it is directly responsive to shifting attitudes toward visible emotional expression – is clearly vital to developing an historical understanding of the experiences of, for instance, homemakers in the US in the 1940s.

¹⁵⁵ Montague, p. 45.

¹⁵⁶ Montague, p. 46.

Wilhelm Dilthey

It is worth pausing here to consider Collingwood's position on Dilthey in both a general sense and in relation to hermeneutics. We have touched upon Dilthey's ideas above, in passing, but Collingwood's engagement with Dilthey's work specifically also offers us valuable insight into his own position on key aspects of the process of re-enactment. In arguing against Dilthey, Collingwood expresses a perspective on re-enactment which is not detailed in the same way elsewhere in his writing. This is valuable in two senses: because it makes clear his position, and because, as we will see below, in doing so, Collingwood engages in historical thinking about emotions. As previously discussed in this project, it is often more practical to do as Collingwood does – not as he says. His example about emotions here demonstrates that for all his dismissal of the possibility of re-enacting emotions, emotions are nonetheless a part of his own historical thinking. Collingwood's *Philosophy of Enchantment* also makes this very clear, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood devotes a section of his chapter on scientific history to Dilthey's philosophy of history. He describes Dilthey as a 'lonely and neglected genius', whose published works, though few, were 'always interesting and important'.¹⁵⁷ He writes with clear regard for Dilthey's work, though he disagrees with his conclusions.

Dilthey interestingly also argues for re-enactment as the foundation of historical thinking but approaches it from a different angle; he argues that the historian must create the thoughts of the historical individual in their own mind, and then employ the techniques of psychology to achieve self-knowledge of the historical individual. Dilthey does not see the historical process. He sees past individuals as isolated historical facts, not part of the process of historical development.¹⁵⁸ This is not a useful approach to historical thinking, in some ways – it assumes that complete re-enactment is possible, in order to become the historical individual to such a full extent that knowledge of them becomes knowledge of oneself. This reduces the historian to an unreflective primary source, whose thoughts on the historical individual would be no more a work of history than would a diary written by the individual themselves. Collingwood identifies this problem:

¹⁵⁷ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 171.

¹⁵⁸ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 172.

I may now be experiencing an immediate feeling of discomfort, and I may ask myself why I have this feeling. I may answer that question by reflecting that this morning I received a letter criticizing my conduct in what seems to me a valid and unanswerable manner. Here I am not making psychological generalizations; I am recognizing in its detail a certain individual event or series of events, which are already present to my consciousness as a feeling of discomfort or dissatisfaction with myself. To understand that feeling is to recognize it as the outcome of a certain historical process. Here the self-understanding of my mind is nothing else than historical knowledge. Push the case a step farther. When, as an historian, I relive in my own mind a certain experience of Julius Caesar, I am not simply being Julius Caesar; on the contrary, I am myself, and I know that I am myself ... The living past of history lives in the present; but it lives not in the immediate experience of the present, but only in the self-knowledge of the present.¹⁵⁹

I have included the above extract in full, in part because we will return to it later in this thesis and in part because it demonstrates very clearly Collingwood's position on Dilthey's philosophy of history. He agrees that it is necessary for the historian to work to re-experience the experiences of past individuals but disagrees that it is the immediacy of that experience which makes it intelligible to the historian. This is also interesting as it relates to Collingwood's position on emotions in history – that they are not suitable for re-enactment precisely because of the immediacy of their experience. It is noteworthy – and we will not explore this further here but will return to it later – that Collingwood's example here is a feeling.

'This conception of the historian as living in his object, or rather making his object live in him, is a great advance on anything achieved by any of Dilthey's German contemporaries.'¹⁶⁰ In this, Dilthey and Collingwood are in concurrence. The historian's access to history depends upon their making history alive within themselves. Dilthey's understanding of what this means, however, does differ significantly from Collingwood's conception of re-enactment – and from the approach to re-enactment argued for in this thesis. It is nonetheless valuable to explore his understanding of making history alive in oneself, as we approach the project of formulating a more historically wide-reaching and inclusive re-enactment thesis in the next

¹⁵⁹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 174.

¹⁶⁰ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 172.

chapter. For Dilthey, the historical process is not the object of historical study. His primary interest is in historical individuals. This goes some way toward explaining his interest in a psychological approach. If the historian can make alive again within themselves an historical person, they might approach understanding that person as they would approach understanding any person alive in the present: through psychological analysis. That Dilthey sees these historical individuals as separate or isolated historical facts, apart from the process of historical development, is a weakness in his work which Collingwood readily identifies.¹⁶¹

Dilthey argues that history is little more than life itself, and the immediate experience of living. The historian infuses evidence with life 'by virtue of his own spiritual life'.¹⁶² The historian lives in his object, not vice versa.

In aiming to re-enact or, in a way, reanimate historical individuals within his own mind, Dilthey is attempting to give to the external information left to the historical record, 'an inside'. In other words, he is looking for the inner world of the human life which was the direct cause of the surviving evidence coming to exist at all. For instance, a written document is a solely material object until the historian begins to try to understand the person responsible for its creation. As Dilthey phrases this:

Others cannot be assumed to be mere extensions of myself. They are accessible to me only from the outside. It is the task of understanding to confer 'an inside' to what is first given as 'a complex of external sensory signs'.¹⁶³

What does this mean, exactly? Collingwood describes Dilthey's approach as 'recourse to psychology', but there is greater value in his version of re-enactment than this implies.¹⁶⁴ In particular, for this project, Dilthey's approach permits the study of all aspects of human experience – not only reflective or reasoned thoughts. It is not the aim of this project to produce a psychological re-enactment thesis. Nonetheless, there is value in studying this version of re-enactment which does comfortably accommodate consideration of historical emotions in this way. Dilthey's emphasis on a re-enactment which comfortably describes

¹⁶¹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 172.

¹⁶² Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 172.

¹⁶³ R.A. Makkreel and F. Rodi, *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Volume IV: Hermeneutics and the Study of History* (Princeton University Press, 2018), p. 236.

¹⁶⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 172.

historical thinking about all aspects of human experience gives useful insight into how this project might be approached. His more holistic approach to history as the history of human lived experience in all its aspects also reinforces what this chapter has so far argued: that emotions are intrinsic to human experience, both past and present.¹⁶⁵

Hermeneutics and context in re-enactment

Collingwood claims that the only proper object for historical study is historical thoughts. Although he says thought 'in the broadest sense of that word', he does elsewhere directly exclude emotions. This is because he wants to be able to call the outcome of historical thinking 'knowledge' – see below. This is a problem because it precludes the historical study of emotions. If only studying historical thoughts limits historical research, why does Collingwood argue for it? Because if thought is reflective and repeatable, then multiple historians can check an interpretation – history can be called 'knowledge'. What is the solution? History doesn't need to be knowledge – it is about understanding, and ideally from as many reasonable angles as possible on the basis of all available evidence. Multiple interpretations are not a weakness, they are a strength.

It is interesting to compare this position with Gadamer's and the hermeneutic tradition. Hermeneutics can be described as a branch of knowledge in which the process of interpretation is both the object and the aim of its practitioners. In some respects, this is not very different from the work of the historian. This form of history, explicitly self-declared comparative history, has only arisen since Collingwood's death. He could not therefore have known to consider it. Realising that multiple interpretations are desirable allows modern historians to step away from trying to call the outcome of historical research 'knowledge', and allows us to say that we don't need thought to be repeatable in the way Collingwood suggests.

We need to acknowledge that studying historical thoughts is not just a matter of identifying the process an individual thought through to reach their conclusion.

¹⁶⁵ R.A. Makkreel, 'Husserl, Dilthey and the Relation of the Life-World to History', *Research in Phenomenology*, 12 (1982), pp. 39–58.

Contextual understanding is vital; without context, the re-enacted thought is a) impossible and b) would tell us nothing even if it were possible

The end goal of re-enactment is not just to be able to say 'and that is definitely why Nelson acted as he did'; the exercise is not the end point. Re-enacting past thoughts provides us with a window into the past, it helps us to understand one of many perspectives that existed at that time, and allows us to understand why things were done as they were – whether battle tactics or timing a loaf of bread. It isn't only that historians have included emotions in their historical thinking – although they have, from Herodotus to the present. Historians have to include emotions in their historical thinking.

Is it theoretically possible to think historically without including emotions? On the surface, it may appear so – but the product of this process is not historical knowledge or understanding. It is more like imaginative chronicling. The historian may ask, as Collingwood does: why did Nelson choose to wear his medals, on the day he was killed? Why did he think, 'in honour I won them, in honour I will die with them' – and not any other thought? It is possible, as Collingwood shows us, to rebuild a sequence of thoughts, of questions and answers, which result in this conclusion.

Process is an important word here; Dilthey, for example, argues that 'it is not just that sources are texts, but historical reality itself is a text that has to be understood.'¹⁶⁶ This is very similar to the perspective on historical study offered by Ranke, who famously said that it is the job of the historian to tell history 'as it really was'. Both imply an object which has ceased to change, and which is therefore available to the historian to study as something static – and something which can, at the last, be described with objectivity. There is however something to sympathise with in this perspective; history itself as the text to be understood is a representation of historical work which seems in concord with Collingwood's own exhortation to avoid what he calls in *The Idea of History* 'scissors and paste history'. It returns the historical gaze to the past as it was; or as it was experienced, and the direct study of what evidence remains from that time.

¹⁶⁶ H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 203.

We, as historians who are inextricably a part of the process of history, cannot view it from the outside. We cannot ever claim to possess a complete understanding of the past.¹⁶⁷ The task of historians will never be at an end. But as in Pirkei Avot, we may not be able to complete the work, but neither are we free to abandon it.

But history is not static, and historical interpretation will not ever be 'finished'; objectivity is not a possible outcome of historical thinking, nor is it a desirable one. In opposition to Dilthey, Gadamer argues that we, as historians, are part of history. We exist within it and are conditioned by it; by our present position within it, and by our understanding of what has come before us. As in hermeneutics, where the process of interpretation is central, so in history the process of interpretation is a two-way process; the thinking of the historian shapes history, and history (as it is contemporarily understood) shapes the historian's interpretation of it. Couched in these terms, we can say that history is understood by historical work; by the study of itself, by itself. Carl Sagan once said that we are all star-stuff; we are the universe knowing itself.¹⁶⁸ Historians are all history-stuff; they are the process of history knowing itself.

In other words, history is not only shaped by interpretation; the act of interpretation, the process of interpretation, is history. We will return to Gadamer and the intersection of his and Collingwood's ideas later in this thesis, particularly in relation to Collingwood's logic of question and answer and Gadamer's hermeneutical *Urphänomen*. [Gadamer and Collingwood on Temporal Distance and U... (ebSCOhost.com)]

In broad terms, Gadamer agrees with Collingwood's logic of question and answer but stands in disagreement with his re-enactment thesis, as it is expressed in *The Idea of History*. This is because he sees in re-enactment a contradiction with his own ideas about historical interpretation; I will argue that the distance between their two positions is not so great as he imagines.

For Gadamer, the many and ever-increasing number of layers in the tradition of interpretation of past events which stand between the modern historian and their subject are a positive

¹⁶⁷ Nor does Collingwood think that this is really possible; this is discussed in greater depth on pp.26-27, in the section on 'Collingwood's conception of knowledge and understanding'.

¹⁶⁸ C. Sagan, *The Cosmic Connection: An Extraterrestrial Perspective* (Anchor Press, 1973), pp. 189–90.

thing, a conduit between the present and the studied past.¹⁶⁹ This position is an interesting one, and worth spending some time considering in relation to the aim of this project to reconsider re-enactment in the light of the growing study of emotions history.

Gadamer argues that it is not enough to simply re-think the thoughts of the historical individual for ourselves, because this process appears to discount the long tradition of interpretation which stands between the historian's mind and the mind of the historical individual: 'the meaning of the text [always] goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but a productive activity as well.'¹⁷⁰ The implication here is that Collingwood, in striving for a re-enactment of past thoughts directly, has failed to understand a key aspect of historical thinking: that prejudices – both positive and negative – transmitted through this tradition of interpretation make up the historian's historical reality. This is another way of saying that the historian is a product of their own times, but from Gadamer's perspective, this statement takes on some greater significance, to explain why it is so important that, in fact, the historian can never fully separate themselves from their own life experiences. This fact is, of course, actually acknowledged by Collingwood in *The Idea of History*, and he does also recognise it as an indispensable aspect of historical thinking.

This is important to remember when we consider what Kobayashi and Marion have called 'the problem of transposition'. The problem of transposition will sound familiar: either the historian successfully inhabits the experiences of the historical individual to such an extent that they become themselves no better than another primary source, or the past is no more than thoughts within the mind of each historian. Where Kobayashi and Marion devote much space to this discussion, I believe that in this project, it may be addressed more briefly. Gadamer misrepresents Collingwood when he claims that re-enactment aims to sidestep the layers of interpretation which stand between the historian and past. Re-enactment in that sense may be presented by Collingwood as one aim but is not upheld as the goal at which any historian should expect – or want, in reality, to arrive.

¹⁶⁹ C. Kobayashi and M. Marion, 'Gadamer and Collingwood on Temporal Distance and Understanding', *History and Theory*, 50.4 (2011), pp. 81–103 (p. 90).

¹⁷⁰ Kobayashi and Marion, p. 86.

In fact, Collingwood and Gadamer are largely complementary on this point, and Gadamer's perspective on the subject will be useful in reshaping re-enactment in Chapter 4. Where he argues that 'the important thing is to recognize temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding', and that 'every interpretation of a text is 'productive'', an opportunity is offered to begin to open up re-enactment as a process by which the long tradition of interpretation is examined and contributed to, bringing each generation of historians to a new level of historical understanding which may not need to exclude any aspect of past human experience.¹⁷¹

Bringing phenomenology and hermeneutics together

In her 2014 work *The Cultural History of Emotion*, Ahmed addresses emotions directly. An anecdote quoted from Audre Lorde is relevant to this chapter. In the anecdote, Lorde describes an incident of racism she experienced as a child. Presented without its emotional depth, the historical conclusion of this might look as follows: 'The historical individual, Lorde, became aware of the racist perspective of the white woman'. But the fact that she became aware of it does not tell even half the story. In Lorde's own words: 'And suddenly I realize there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn't want her coat to touch'.¹⁷²

The woman communicated 'horror' with her facial expression and actions (pulling her coat away from Lorde) before the object of her horror was even aware that this behaviour was directed at her. To understand this incident simply in terms of what happened is impossible. Lorde writes 'I realise', but it is not an unemotional statement of discovery. It is the moment in which a child realised that she was the object at which the woman had looked with such disgust; the object she had herself previously assumed to be 'probably a roach'. The experience of a child discovering that she is perceived by that woman in the way she herself would perceive a cockroach is only understandable in any terms, but in the scope of this thesis, in historical terms, as an emotional interaction.

¹⁷¹ Gadamer, p. 297; Kobayashi and Marion, p. 89.

¹⁷² E.S. Casey, *Turning Emotion Inside Out: Affective Life Beyond the Subject*, Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Northwestern University Press, 2021), p. 110.

In his chapter on Ahmed's contributions to the study of emotions, Casey argues that 'it is precisely because "emotions are relational" that they can become cultural and political; or rather, they are already cultural and political, thanks to the "power" that gives to relationality its force.'¹⁷³ Before considering this perspective in greater detail, it is important to mark that fact that although here, emotions are considered solely relational phenomena which exist in the spaces of interaction between humans, I am not arguing in this thesis that emotions may only be studied historically where they are externally expressed. The inner emotional life of any historical subject is also necessarily of great interest and impact. Ahmed describes 'the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds' in a way which reminds one of the ideas, if not the language, used by current practitioners of emotions history.¹⁷⁴ Where she perhaps differs is in placing explicit emphasis on the role of inter-human interaction – for historians, this is often implicit and unspoken, because history is itself a field of study which seeks to understand specifically past human experiences.

This power that gives relationality its force can be understood in terms of social hierarchy; the power is in systemic differentiation between groups of people as those who have more or less political, social, cultural, or economic currency within that society. This is important, because it demonstrates the significance of emotions in understanding any aspect of the past. Emotional relationships are given force by the background of relationships against which they occur, both personal and societal – and those relationships, personal and societal, are shaped by emotions: lust for power, possessions, and recognition, for instance, has shaped the course of many social histories. Did Caesar cross the Rubicon for purely logical reasons? Were Elizabethan Poor Laws written on a strictly rational, unemotional basis, designating some poor 'undeserving'? Of course not – the word itself is emotionally weighted, in religious, social, and interpersonal terms. 'Ahmed conceives emotion as a function of how the surfaces and boundaries of bodies – and thus their edges – are thrust together in emotionally charged encounters. This is to think of emotion as a pervasive medium that acts to connect widely diverse histories, psychologies, and thoughts across shared spaces and times. For this reason, Ahmed insists that what matters are not so much discrete emotions, objects, bodies, and

¹⁷³ Casey, p. 111.

¹⁷⁴ S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 191.

people – each taken by itself on its own terms – but the circulation by which emotions serve to link objects, bodies, and people’.¹⁷⁵

Writing on the politics of grief and the role of emotions in public and personal responses to injustice, Ahmed says that ‘emotions work to differentiate between others precisely by identifying those that can be loved, those that can be grieved, that is, by constituting some others as the legitimate objects of emotion.’¹⁷⁶ Ahmed uses Judith Butler’s example of the ‘war on terrorism’ to illustrate the point, but it applies equally clearly in an historical context. In 1144, a boy named William was murdered in Norwich. His death was publicly mourned – following his death, miracles were attributed to him, and he was called a saint. The death of this child was, very clearly, one that could be grieved. His death led to many others, however – the Jewish population of Norwich was blamed for the death, in the first recorded instance of blood libel. In 1190, all members of the Norwich Jewish community who had not taken refuge in the castle in time were murdered in their homes, in response to rising antisemitic sentiment – and, in response to the accusation of blood libel, some years earlier. These deaths were not, in the eyes of the Christian population of Norwich, deaths which could be grieved. This emotional differentiation both served and was served by the social status quo, in which Jews were perceived as unwelcome outsiders. As in Butler’s example of the war on terror, in which violence perpetuated against those whose deaths have been presented as ‘cannot be grieved’ in order to give legitimacy to the attacks against them – marking Western violence as justifiable, and Middle Eastern violence as unacceptable – so in the case of the blood libel accusation, the death of William was presented as an act of unacceptable violence, and the deaths of countless Jews was presented as a legitimate response.

More recently, media representation in the US of deaths as a result of the AIDS crisis, as compared with representation of deaths in the Vietnam War, also supports Ahmed’s interpretation. Lives lost to the AIDS crisis reached an order of magnitude more than those lost in Vietnam – but US media representation certainly did not reflect this. Military deaths were perceived as possible to grieve, and those whose lives were lost as a consequence of the AIDS crisis were not.

¹⁷⁵ Casey, p. 112.

¹⁷⁶ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, p. 191.

This work is particularly important in the context of this chapter. This approach combines the concept of layered historical experience and interpretation which defines Gadamer's hermeneutics with the experience-centred approach found in phenomenology. The acknowledgement throughout Ahmed's work of the significance of the layers of interpretation which are deposited over time and which directly influence not only perceptions of the past but also, as a consequence, understandings of the present day, makes it an excellent example of one way in which this synthesis between phenomenology and hermeneutics may be approached. This approach is able to account for multiple aspects of human experience – not simply thought, or documentary evidence, but oral histories, emotions, even sensory experience. Ahmed also clearly discusses emotions as a significant aspect of historical interpretation. Her discussion of emotions in the example of Audre Lorde's experience, for instance, is central and indispensable. While Ahmed's aims are clearly not identical with those of emotions historians – her work is more comfortably categorised as philosophy than history – it is useful to explore her approach and consider how decisions taken in her work may be relevant to the project of rethinking re-enactment and the process of historical interpretation.

[A note on re-enactment vs. repeatability](#)

We have already touched upon the subject of repeatability elsewhere in this chapter. In brief: Collingwood uses the term 'rational' to indicate the repeatability of a thought. If a sequence of questions and answers leading up to the thought can be reconstructed by multiple historians, Collingwood sees this as equivalent to multiple scientists conducting the same experiment and achieving the same results – in other words, repeatability, for Collingwood, is the key to conferring upon the results of historical thinking the status of 'knowledge'.¹⁷⁷ However, this affords undue preference to 'knowledge' as a value indicator. Multiple interpretations which yield a richer and more nuanced understanding of the past are far more valuable in the quest to understand past human experiences than is the ability to call that understanding 'knowledge' or 'scientific'. Even if historians did try to re-enact only the

¹⁷⁷ This comparison may seem to suggest a methodological reading of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, but should not be taken as such. Rather it is intended to highlight the impact on method of re-enactment as a known transcendental condition of historical thinking. This subject is discussed in greater depth in the Introduction and subsequently throughout this thesis.

‘repeatable’ – which they do not – requiring repeatability in our historical thinking significantly and detrimentally limits the range of possible objects for historical study. Insisting upon repeatability leaves historians with little that is useful. It is therefore better to aim for understanding than for knowledge in historical thinking. Collingwood’s commitment to repeatability prevents him from recognising this. Repeatability is nonetheless unattainable. Nuanced understanding is made *more* attainable when we stop reaching for repeatability. This therefore better fulfils the aim to gain better understanding of past lived experience; better fulfils what this thesis argues is the primary aim of history.

It is worth considering at this point the distinction we are drawing between re-enactment and repeatability. For Collingwood, these concepts are inseparable; repeatability is necessary for re-enactment. Collingwood writes: ‘But how does the historian discern the thoughts which he is trying to discover? There is only one way in which it can be done: by re-thinking them in his own mind.’¹⁷⁸ This is very clear – an approximation of the original thought, with broadly the same meaning and the same outcomes, is not enough. For Collingwood, the historian may not approximate or copy the thought had by their historical subject; they must, for themselves, think that precise thought over again. We have discussed this in depth elsewhere in this thesis, but it is worth re-emphasising the point here. Re-thinking the thought must be exact and accurate, if it is to yield historical knowledge. Collingwood does not distinguish, here, between re-enactable and repeatable thoughts. Repeatability is a necessary prerequisite for his process of historical re-enactment.

This conflation of the two concepts is a significant problem for Collingwood’s re-enactment thesis. He acknowledges this, though does not move away from his claim that repeatability is nonetheless necessary; Collingwood is clear that perfect repetition of the thought and its circumstances is not attainable or desirable for any historian but does continue to argue that repeatability is necessary. One exception to this is in his *Folktales Manuscript*, which we will examine in depth in the next chapter. In this work, Collingwood turns more to archaeology, anthropology and ethnography, and his focus shifts from the repeatability of past thoughts to seeking to understand and recognition of the phenomena and concepts to which those

¹⁷⁸ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 239.

thoughts relate. Re-enactment and repeatability are separable, and indeed must be considered separate if a new and more useful formulation of the thesis is to be developed.

Collingwood's three Rs – rational, repeatable, and reasoned – form the core of the difficulties he faces. For Collingwood, the rational and reasoned nature of thought – specifically thought, set apart from other surrounding or related mental processes – is precisely what makes it accurately repeatable. To be able to think a thought again for themselves, the historian must be able to replicate the questions and answers, the logical steps in the thought process which led to the final and articulated thought, the surviving, acted-upon thought conclusion from which the process of re-enactment begins.

If this sequence of questions and answers can be replicated by various historians at different points in time under different circumstances, then, Collingwood reasons that there is a process at work comparable with the scientific process. It is therefore this repeatability which affords, in Collingwood's eyes, the outcomes of historical thinking the accolade knowledge.

Chapter Four

Introduction

What is the Folktale Manuscript?

In this work, Collingwood applies his philosophy of history to the field of folklore and magic studies – but also to the value and use of oral histories to the work of historians. For the purposes of this thesis, Part II of the published work, the part which deals most directly with historical thinking, is most relevant. In this work, Collingwood introduces ideas about historical thinking which, I will argue, derive from his practice as an historian and archaeologist, and thereby sidestep the difficulties presented by his re-enactment thesis in *The Idea of History* for modern historiography. Throughout this thesis, we have seen that Collingwood's work is at its best when he approaches his philosophy of history as a practitioner of historical thinking first and a philosopher second; in the Folktale MS, he does this perhaps more successfully than anywhere else in his published works.

Why has it not yet been much written about?

Collingwood's *The Philosophy of Enchantment* was published in 2005, several decades posthumously, due to the dismissal of its value by his student and editor of *The Idea of History*, T.M. Knox. When his papers became available to the public in 1979, his unpublished writings proved to have far greater interest value than Knox had acknowledged – including his so-called Folktale Manuscript.

One PhD thesis, *Folklore and History: An analysis of an unpublished manuscript by R.G. Collingwood* by M.E. Rudzik, was submitted in 1990 and does directly deal with the contents of the then-unpublished Folktale MS. The arguments put forward in this thesis will be discussed later in this chapter. Academic attention to the Folktale MS has been limited, however, and its very recent publication date means that it has been relatively little studied – particularly in comparison with other of Collingwood's works, such as *The Idea of History*.

What does this chapter do?

This chapter sets out to do two important things: to read Collingwood's Folktale MS through the lens of re-enactment, and to offer a reworking of re-enactment based on this reading.

What does this mean? This chapter will explore sections of the Folktale MS from Part II in particular, 'Tales of Enchantment'. Sections 3 and 4 – covering 'The Historical Method' and 'Magic' – will form the core of this analysis, with attention also paid to sections 5 and 6 – 'Excavating King Lear and Cinderella' and 'The Authorship of Fairy Tales' – as well as the 'Addenda to the Folktale Manuscript' which follow.

The discussion of these sections of the Folktale MS is guided by a question: what does this work have to contribute to our understanding of re-enactment?

The Folktale MS has not previously been read as a work on re-enactment. It does, however, have much to contribute to our understanding of re-enactment, and in particular, demonstrates that Collingwood's approach to historical thinking can be adapted to accommodate changes in historical thinking that have taken place since the publication of *The Idea of History*; in particular, the growing historical study of emotions.

The chapter on magic immediately follows a chapter on historical methods; although Collingwood nowhere mentions re-enactment in either chapter, therefore, it is clear that he *was* thinking about historical application in the developing of these ideas.

Nowhere in this book is the word 're-enactment' mentioned – nor does it appear anywhere in the index. Despite Collingwood's discussion of historical thinking being clearly reflective of his more mature position on re-enactment – certain phrases might have easily been lifted directly from *The Idea of History* – this work is clearly something different.

In his review of the development of historiography in *The Idea of History*, it is notable that Collingwood mentions very few historians who are not also theorists of historiography. Given that shifts in historiographic practice are primarily driven by the historical work of historians, this is likely a conscious choice on Collingwood's part, to maintain a philosophical focus.

It is not clear whether even Collingwood intended this work, *The Philosophy of Enchantment*, as a counterweight to the philosophically-oriented *The Idea of History*, but it seems clear that

while he approached theorising historical thinking primarily as a philosopher in *The Idea of History*, in the Folktale MS, he approaches the same task primarily as a practitioner of history.

A note on terminology

Collingwood's position, for the 1930s, is a progressive one – his assertion in the Folktale MS, for instance, that the concept of civilisation exists only, in essence, to furnish the egos of those whom it benefits, demonstrates this. He does, however, use language which was in common usage at the time of his writing and which is now not used; for instance, the term 'savage'. In this chapter, where this occurs, I will quote Collingwood directly to preserve clarity, but will not use this language in any discussion of the quoted material or ideas. I hope it will be clear to which ideas I refer without direct use beyond this point of terminology which in the present, we acknowledge causes real harm to those to whom it refers.

The quotations and excerpts examined in this first section of the chapter can be divided into two types: instances where Collingwood directly discusses emotions; and instances where Collingwood re-enacts emotions. These are presented in approximately the order in which they arise in the text, in order to preserve the development of Collingwood's argument in the chapter itself. However, where it is more useful to this chapter to change their order slightly, I have done so.

Re-enactment of emotions in the Folktale MS

In this section I have presented a selection of particularly important instances in which Collingwood directly re-enacts emotions in the Folktale MS. I set out reading this chapter ready to scour each page for examples that might illustrate my belief: that this is, though not expresses directly as such, a work about re-enactment. What I have found is that on every page, Collingwood clearly expresses bold, engaged ideas that do, in all but the actual use of the word itself, very directly engage with re-enactment.

It is possible that this has not been written about for a few reasons – though lack of actual applicability of this work to Collingwood's broader work on re-enactment cannot be one of them. The prevailing – and very understandable – tradition in Collingwood studies has been

to accept that Collingwood simply did not give us re-enactment in a form that could engage to any meaningful extent with emotions. The editing of Knox, the fact that the Folktale MS was not published until the early 2000s, and the trajectory of Collingwood's development of his ideas about re-enactment all appear to support the idea that he did not intend his final position on re-enactment to accommodate the re-enactment of emotions. For instance, in the following, it is difficult to imagine that a sustainable argument could be made that Collingwood does not intend to say that emotions are an appropriate object for anthropological – and by extension, in this case, historical – thinking:

'suppose ... an anthropologist, suffering from a strong utility-obsession, ... had asked me why I washed my hands. For him, the word 'why?' has one meaning and only one: namely, 'as a means to what end?' The only appropriate meaning, 'as an expression of what feeling?', is thus ruled out, and he stands committed to misunderstanding me.'¹⁷⁹

This is very like the defaults we need to watch out for when studying emotional communities to which we do not belong – again, Collingwood is here showing us *how* we can approach the process of thinking historically about emotions. This extract is again a demonstration of re-enactment, presented in this work in other terms. Collingwood is arguing for remembering that the default assumptions of one time and place are not necessarily applicable to any other, and that these must be identified and questioned by the anthropologist – or by the historian – before asking the question, why is – or was – this thing such-and-such way? This process is also discussed in *The Idea of History*, and it is notable that here, Collingwood clearly applies it to the study of emotions. There is no reason that the ideas applied in this extract to the pursuit of anthropology cannot also be true of historical thinking; the primary difference, that the anthropologist may be in a position to directly converse with the peoples whom they seek to understand, is not in this instance relevant. It is the act of questioning which is under consideration, and this is very similar between both disciplines.

When Collingwood says that 'the feeling and the custom are not two separate things which can be related as cause and effect ... there is only one thing', he presents an important idea;

¹⁷⁹ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, pp. 209–10.

that emotions (although Collingwood distinguishes between feelings and emotions in *New Leviathan*, in this work they are used more interchangeably) and behaviour are not only not separate, but that they are not separable, even in principle. These two phenomena are indivisible; it is not possible to deal only with one or the other.

In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood presents re-enactment as the exploration of past thoughts through the access point of the impact which the terminal action of any train of thought had upon the external world; the writing of a diary, the giving of an order or the making of an object, for instance. This approach implies that customs can, and must, be taken separately from emotions in the study of history. Human behaviour, it suggests, can be understood without recourse to looking beyond the reasoned sequence of thoughts – questions and answers – to any other aspect of the inner life of the historical individual. Sense history contradicts this idea in the present, as does emotions history. As, in this extract, does Collingwood himself.

Customs can be re-enacted, but not without emotions; Collingwood argues here that the attempt even to propose doing so is not reasonable, because the two are not two at all, but facets of a single experience. ‘The custom,’ Collingwood explains, ‘is the outward side of it, the feeling the inward side.’¹⁸⁰ If this is so – and I believe that it is – then an adjusted re-enactment thesis cannot talk about thoughts or emotions as separate aspects of human experience; even if they are acknowledged to both be necessary for good historical thinking. Thoughts and emotions are instead better represented as two inextricable and essential facets of one human experience.

This makes sense of a concept we began to consider in the previous chapter. I have argued that Collingwood’s claim that emotions cannot be re-enacted because they are immediate, not reflective, and therefore cannot be re-felt, is not applicable when one realises that thoughts are also not capable of being fully re-thought – even in theory. If thought cannot be thought again in the way Collingwood suggests, then his argument against re-enacting emotions no longer stands. Now we can see more clearly why this should be. Thoughts and emotions are two aspects of a single thing; they are not separate at all. Thought, taken as if it

¹⁸⁰ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 211.

were separable from all other parts of human experience, cannot be re-enacted in the way Collingwood describes because what we are dealing with when we attempt this is not, in actuality, just thought. Either we try to sever this fraction of human experience from the rest, and attempt to re-enact something incomplete – resulting in something which is certainly not a good historical interpretation – or we attempt to re-enact only thoughts but are unable to do so because they are inextricably part of a broader experience of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and so forth.

However, if we recognise these as facets of a whole, re-enactment can be reconceived as the attempt to further our understanding of a nuanced and varied human lived experience within the context of a particular time and place. This process is not intended to yield a complete historical interpretation, but to contribute to an ever-evolving collective understanding of past human experience.

*Collingwood's treatment of emotions in the Folktale MS in comparison to *The Idea of History*, *The Principles of History* and *New Leviathan**

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In his review of the development of historiography in *The Idea of History*, it is notable that Collingwood mentions very few historians who are not also theorists of historiography. Given that shifts in historiographic practice are primarily driven by the historical work of historians, this is likely a conscious choice on Collingwood's part, to maintain a philosophical focus.

It is not clear whether even Collingwood intended this work, *The Philosophy of Enchantment*, as a counterweight to the philosophically-oriented *The Idea of History*, but it seems clear that while he approached theorising historical thinking primarily as a philosopher in *The Idea of History*, in the Folktale MS, he approaches the same task primarily as a practitioner of history.

‘Perhaps we shall do better if we seek the source of the ideas not in [his] intellect, but in his emotions. And ... we can understand what goes on in [his] mind only in so far as we can experience the same thing in our own’.¹⁸¹

The footnote on p.196 of the Folktale MS is of great interest to this project, and is considered in depth elsewhere in this chapter. That footnote, while important, does not however treat the Folktale MS itself as a work on re-enactment.

In *The Principles of History*, the content of which was largely written – though not published – before *The Idea of History*, Collingwood says that ‘all history is the history of thought. This includes the history of emotions so far as these emotions are essentially related to the thoughts in question.’¹⁸² All thoughts and emotions are essentially interconnected; they are inextricable aspects of a broader category, that of human lived experience.

In *New Leviathan*, published in 1942 shortly before his death, Collingwood ‘treats the interconnection of thought and emotion as fundamental to human action and thus to history’.¹⁸³ He does this, however, by explaining thought as the more reflective outcome of immediate sensation, feeling, and emotions. While I do want to restore to re-enactment the capacity for incorporating emotions into all historical thinking, this is not *how* I will do so. It is valuable to recognise Collingwood’s steps toward a more wide-reaching re-enactment thesis, and equally valuable to rethink the mechanisms by which this is made possible: this is what examination of the Folktale manuscript will allow us to do.

Thoughts and emotions are not, in reality and in our own lived experience, distinct and separable phenomena. This is a vitally important point. Collingwood’s re-enactment thesis as presented in *The Idea of History* depends on the idea that it is theoretically possible – even if no individual human historian could ever truly achieve it – to perfectly re-enact any thought lifted from the history of humanity. In other words, in order for Collingwood’s method of re-enactment to represent an accurate description of the way in which historians re-enact, it must be true that thoughts can be taken as discrete mental objects, connected to but

¹⁸¹ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 196.

¹⁸² R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History and Other Writings in Philosophy of History* (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 77.

¹⁸³ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 16.

separate from sensation, feeling, and emotions. This is not so. Collingwood's *The Idea of History* criticises emotions as unsuitable as an object for re-enactment in their own right because, due to their immediate nature, they cannot be perfectly re-experienced, even in theory. This point is overturned when we recognise that while emotions cannot be fully re-experienced, neither can thoughts be fully thought again.

Complete and accurate re-enactability cannot, therefore, be considered qualifying criteria for re-enactability. All human lived experience is intrinsically interconnected – sensations, feelings, emotions, and thoughts. A re-enactment thesis, rather than expressing historical thinking as the effort to re-experience that which is, at least in theory, possible to perfectly relive, should seek to describe the work of historians as an effort to interpret the whole human experience under particular historical circumstances. Later in this chapter, I will therefore build on Collingwood's work to offer an interpretation of re-enactment which is able to describe a more holistic, interpretative process of historical thinking.

Consistently throughout this thesis, thought is conceived of and represented as a process. It is my belief that Collingwood similarly conceives of thought as a process, although one which can to some extent be isolated from its associated experiences, such as sensation and feeling.

Where Collingwood represents thought as a discrete mental object in his work, therefore, he does so in the context of isolating a process of thought initially undertaken by an historical agent, for study by the historian. In Collingwood's own words, 'the historian's thought is, or rather contains as one of its elements, that object itself, namely the act of thought which the historian is trying to understand, re-thought in the present by himself.'¹⁸⁴ It is in this sense that thought is referred to throughout this thesis as both object and process, dependent on context. This is not to say that thought as discrete mental object is in any way static or 'private property' inaccessible to the historian. Insofar as the past, as Collingwood argues, exists only in the re-enactment of it in the historian's mind, the past, and therefore past thought, is common property, accessible for study by any interested historian.

Whether the historical agent experienced a thought process consciously or otherwise has little bearing here. It is the task of the historian to attempt to access the thought process as their object of study by thinking it again for themselves, so far as they are able. This

¹⁸⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 450.

interestingly connects with W.H. Walsh's distinction between acting with something *before* one's mind and acting with something *in* mind. Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is able, I believe, to accommodate both; the thought process of which the historical actor is consciously aware, and that which they are not. In both cases, it is possible to attempt on the basis of available evidence to re-enact the process which led the historical individual to behave as they did under those particular conditions.

In his 1957 article 'Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge', Dray argues that Collingwood conceives of thought as a term which refers to activities of mind, which may be acted again by the historian by use of reasoning on the basis of the available evidence for that historical actor's context and circumstances.¹⁸⁵ Of particular interest here is the argument that, for Collingwood, it is the 'rational force' which forms the repeatable part of the thought process.¹⁸⁶ In other words, that the process of subjective reasoning discussed elsewhere in this thesis is precisely what allows historians to claim, by undertaking a process of re-enactment, knowledge of the past, and not the repeatability – or copiability – of thought content.

Re-enactment of magic *is* re-enactment of emotion

In the Folktale MS, Collingwood frequently considers magic in a sociological, anthropological, and historical way. This is itself exceptionally important. Collingwood argues that magic is, in essence, the power of emotions in a social context,

'Such practices need rest on no theory of placating the dead in their anger or furnishing them in their penury; they have a direct emotional basis independent of any such doctrine, though if we fail to understand this basis we may easily foist upon them a rationalization in terms of this or that theory concerning ghosts and the ghost-world.'¹⁸⁷

Again, Collingwood argues for re-enactment with emotions.

¹⁸⁵ W.H. Dray, 'Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 11.42 (1957), pp. 420–32.

¹⁸⁶ Dray, 'Collingwood and the Acquaintance Theory of Knowledge', p. 431.

¹⁸⁷ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 198.

First of all, the connection here emphasised between ourselves and the objects we value or identify with is worth noting. Although a separation exists between the fields of sense or object history and emotions history among practitioners of historical research, I believe it is clear that the study of history through objects – as a distinct field from archaeology – and our engagement with these objects cannot function without considering the emotional connection between the owner or user and the object. This is neatly illustrated in one 2020 publication, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled, and Refused to Let Go*, by historian Emily Cockayne. Cockayne’s work explicitly finds its focus in the material aspect of human lives, and seeks to re-enact the relationships that have existed between people and their material environment.

In the conclusion of her book *Rummage*, Cockayne writes that ‘Economic, military, industrial, urban, environmental and demographic pressure on material resources did not always elicit consistent responses. Patterns of consumption, the availability of raw materials and commercial products, and the costs of transport and labour all affected the quality and quantity of material reutilisation.’¹⁸⁸ ‘Historic recycling,’ Cockayne argues, ‘was generally ad hoc. It made more use of private networks of material redistribution and was less focused on moral or global judgements than on economic or resourcing concerns.’¹⁸⁹ Even looking to the present, Cockayne describes present-day recycling as ‘organised by local authorities, and geared towards specific cultural values.’¹⁹⁰ Discussing recycling in Britain more generally, she argues that ‘Most British people have only recycled when they have had to’.¹⁹¹

In other words, although emotions almost find a place in this narrative – through cultural values and moral judgements – they are clearly not central to Cockayne’s interpretation of historical attitudes toward object reuse. Geography, class, economics, politics – these are all considered, and rightly so. I am of course not arguing that these familiar historical causes are to be replaced by the study of emotions; but emotions should certainly be on the list. Collingwood argues – though not in the language of emotions history – that part of the process of re-enactment is knowing ourselves, to identify influences on the historical

¹⁸⁸ E. Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go* (Profile Books, 2021), p. 270.

¹⁸⁹ Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go*, p. 270.

¹⁹⁰ Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go*, p. 270.

¹⁹¹ Cockayne, *Rummage: A History of the Things We Have Reused, Recycled and Refused to Let Go*, p. 272.

interpretations we are each able to produce. If we do not recognise our own emotions – and, crucially, the emotionology of our times, so far as this is possible – we are at risk of committing two sins: imposing the emotionology of our own times onto the past; and failing to realise the role of emotions in the past experiences we study. This mistake, of imposing the emotionology of one community onto another, produces a profoundly misleading interpretation – This is the point Collingwood makes in the first paragraph of p.208 – without, of course, access to the specialised vocabulary developed by historians of emotions. It is not that emotions form no part of Cockayne’s book, or others of its kind. It is simply that their role is not sufficiently acknowledged. In other words – in Collingwood’s words – ‘if we fail to understand this [emotional] basis [of past behaviours] we may easily foist upon them a rationalization’.¹⁹²

The modern condition as both a problem for, and example of, historical emotions

Attempting to let go of a modern world view is an essential but extremely difficult aspect of the re-enactment process. While it is easy to remember that Ice Age nomadic groups did not have access to the internet, or that the Spanish Armada was not able to tune in to the shipping forecast, it is more difficult to identify the transient nature of not only one’s own social and material conditions but also one’s approach to problem-solving, for instance, or the priority given to different facets of our own lived experience in comparison to our approach to understanding the experiences of past individuals and societies. The priorities of our own times dominate our attempts to understand and interpret the past.

This point connects with another made by Collingwood in his Magic chapter. He argues that in modern Western society, there is a profound failure to recognise that emotions do continue to pervade our behaviour, customs, and reasoning. This failure is underwritten by a collective, cultural commitment to utilitarianism – to the point of denying that such extreme commitment necessarily has an emotional aspect to it.

As Collingwood writes:

¹⁹² Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 198.

‘To live within the scheme of modern European-American civilization involves doing a certain violence to one’s emotional nature, treating emotion as a thing that must be repressed, a hostile force within us whose outbreaks are feared as destructive of civilized life.’¹⁹³

Here, Collingwood argues that our emotional nature is never truly separated or suppressed – even in the circumstances of modern “utilitarian” society.

If this is so, Collingwood has illuminated in the Folktale MS an important point considered in Chapter One of this thesis: why he commits to re-enactment as the re-enactment of thought only. When Collingwood argues that if we fail to understand the emotional basis of human behaviour, we are indeed at risk of imposing some rationalisation upon our subject, he made a claim applicable also to his own work. As Collingwood himself says:

‘If we are to understand the ‘savage’ mind, we must dispel our rationalistic conception not only of savage culture but of our own’.¹⁹⁴

Collingwood goes on to demonstrate how we can begin to address this problem and to correct it. He makes the following statement in relation to the question, has our rationalism really done away with magic in our society, or do we just want to believe that it has? This question, he argues, is important in two respects: we must try to understand our own societies and that which guides our own behaviour – and we have considered the implications of this idea in relation to re-enactment above – and we must be able to recognise in ourselves the experience of magic (that is, the systematic and organised expression of emotion) in order to understand the experiences of those living in societies which do acknowledge the prevalence of magic therein. In Collingwood’s words:

‘We are concerned to understand the mind of the ‘savage’, with its furniture of magical ideas; and we have already seen that unless we can sympathize with these

¹⁹³ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, pp. 206–7.

¹⁹⁴ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 208.

ideas, by recognizing their kinship with certain elements in our own experience, we cannot hope to understand them.¹⁹⁵

This claim is, clearly, applicable to re-enactment. If we cannot sympathise with, recognise without judgement, or see paralleled in our own experience, the systematic and organised expression of emotion in other societies, we cannot understand that aspect of another culture. Although Collingwood here intends this as a statement about anthropology, it takes very little to see it in the context of historical thinking.

We cannot understand past societies either without an emotional element. Collingwood very clearly acknowledges here that any understanding of other cultures – either geographically or temporally distant from us – must be achieved by first letting go of our modern Western commitment to the idea that rationalism is in some way universal or superior as a worldview. Given this, and knowing that Knox's editing emphasised rationalism at the expense of Collingwood's intentions in *The Idea of History*, and that he certainly included emotions to a limited extent in *The Principles of History*, we can reconsider firstly what Collingwood intended for his re-enactment thesis, and secondly what we might do with it. If we cannot impose, as Collingwood tells us here, 'our rationalistic conception' on other cultures, then insisting that only rational, reasoned thoughts are available to historians for re-enactment would seem directly contradictory.

But how, exactly, do we go about applying this perspective to re-enactment? If re-enactment does not operate in quite the way that Collingwood suggests – and as we have established in previous chapters, it does not – then how *does* it work? This question is the focus of the second half of this chapter, and Collingwood's practice in the Folktale MS will certainly help us to answer it. For now, it is enough to note that Collingwood clearly recognises the importance of emotions in understanding the experiences of other humans, and that this approach will be useful when we come to offer a reformulation of re-enactment later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁵ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 208.

Modern rationalism leads to misunderstanding concerning emotions history; and Collingwood's own mistake in this regard

The prevalence of rationalism in Collingwood's attempts to understand an emotional past is symptomatic of the existence of a broader societal commitment to rationalism as a world view or emotionology.¹⁹⁶ I believe that this emotionology directly leads to the limitation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis; despite his identification of precisely this difficulty in the Folktale MS.

'The suggestion that our elaborate clothing is a mechanism to achieve self-confidence is borne out by examining certain other characteristics of our culture.'¹⁹⁷

Collingwood then goes through this process, giving examples of the other aspects of our culture which support this theory: 'our passion for tools and machinery'; and for sport.¹⁹⁸ He focuses primarily on tools. Over several pages, Collingwood undertakes what can surely only be described as an in-depth re-enactment of the role of tools in a particular society.

First, he considers that society's own understanding of their relationship to tools and machinery. As seen above, Collingwood argues that his own society is preoccupied with rationality and logic; here, again, he argues that the society itself rationalises its investment in tools and machinery by saying that 'we want these things in order to save labour and to increase wealth'.¹⁹⁹ In other words, Collingwood is beginning by discovering what primary materials suggest about the majority opinion held by that society.

Next, he questions it. Although his examples here have clearly aged badly ('Why does a woman want a vacuum cleaner?', his argument is nonetheless interesting.²⁰⁰ Is it true, Collingwood asks, that increased possession and use of tools and machinery does save labour

¹⁹⁶ For a more detailed consideration of scholarship surrounding Collingwood and his relationship to rationalism versus idealism, see the discussion of Dray's work on Collingwood and subjective rationality on pp.102-3 of this thesis.

¹⁹⁷ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 214.

¹⁹⁸ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 214.

¹⁹⁹ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 214.

²⁰⁰ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 214.

and increase wealth? And are those aims actually behind the observable increase in tool and machinery ownership in mid-twentieth century Britain?

‘On the contrary,’ Collingwood argues, ‘... modern machinery ... creates large quantities of leisure which no one knows how to use, and produces goods in excess of what can be distributed and consumed.’²⁰¹ Collingwood’s own position within society visibly influences his re-enactment here – for many, an increase in leisure time would have been in contrast not with an already largely unstructured and comfortable occupation, but with difficult and unpleasant work. It is hard to imagine a car factory worker feeling at a loss for how to spend their new free time, for example, and a quick study of the 1930s and 40s bears this out – advertisements for sports, cinema, books, fashion, holidays, and so forth, arise in magazines aimed at all classes.²⁰² Options were plentiful and varied for all social classes, as a direct result of mechanisation. A possible challenge is suggested here: do not these profuse advertisements suggest that Collingwood is right, and that people required guidance about how to spend their newly-acquired free time? Perhaps, but I do not believe so. The need to first discover what possibilities existed for their leisure time is not the same as having no idea what to do with it at all. Rather than the culture industry stepping in to instruct people on how to spend their free time, this large number of advertisements indicates that the culture industry had recognised a new and growing market for leisure activities which were already available to and enjoyed by a smaller number of individuals whose position in society allowed them the freedom to do so; individuals, in fact, such as Collingwood. One might argue that attempting to re-enact one’s own time is not necessarily a good idea, as it is impossible to achieve the necessary critical distance from one’s subject matter. Whether or not Collingwood’s attempted re-enactment of his own society is accurate, however, is less relevant here than the simple fact that what he is attempting *is* re-enactment.

Having answered that no, the society’s interest in tools and machinery does not derive from logic alone – in other words, that the emotionology of the time does not accurately describe the underlying motivations behind the behaviour of the people to whom it belongs – Collingwood asks why, then, tools and machinery were really in increasing use. ‘The

²⁰¹ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, pp. 214–15.

²⁰² Rosenwein and Cristiani.

satisfaction we get from using a tool or a machine is due to the consciousness that we are making something else, which is stronger and cleverer than ourselves, do it for us. ... [The] feeling that the tool is alive with a power and intelligence of its own, and that what it does is not his own doing, but is 'done by magic'.²⁰³ This is Collingwood's interpretation: that it is pursuit of the emotional experience of tool use which drove increasing tool ownership and production in the 1930s.

Having put forward this hypothesis, Collingwood tests it. He offers several challenges to the idea, through the mouthpiece of a hypothetical objector. This format is of course not necessary, but is typical of Collingwood.

At the end of a thorough process of questioning, Collingwood concludes that 'magical practice has its basis in emotions which are universally human and can be verified as existing, and even sometimes as giving rise to definite customs, in and among ourselves. We have found that such customs depend on no pseudo-scientific theory; that is an illusion which arises from an attempt to understand them in utilitarian terms; their emotional basis sufficiently accounts for them by itself.'²⁰⁴ We can break down this concluding statement into smaller pieces and offering a reinterpretation or broadening of the implications of the claim:

'magical practice', the systematic and organised expression of emotion

'has its basis in emotions which are universally human', is apparent and important in all human societies

'and can be verified as existing, and even sometimes giving rise to definite customs', and has had a significant, undeniable impact on the development of social customs

'in and among ourselves.', both when we consider the inner life and the social behaviours of individuals.

'We have found that such customs depend on no pseudo-scientific theory; that is an illusion which arises from an attempt to understand them in utilitarian terms', This

²⁰³ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 215.

²⁰⁴ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, pp. 221–22.

fact is only overlooked when the present-day thinker lives by an emotionology which leads them to believe that logic and utility can explain all behaviours

‘their emotional basis sufficiently accounts for them by itself.’ and in fact, this is not at all so; there is no need to look further than emotions for an explanation.

The systematic and organised expression of emotion is apparent and important in all human societies, and has had a significant, undeniable impact on the development of social customs, both when we consider the inner life and the social behaviours of individuals. This fact is only overlooked when the present-day thinker lives by an emotionology which leads them to believe that logic and utility can explain all behaviours, and in fact, this is not at all so; there is no need to look further than emotions for an explanation. In this way, Collingwood’s claim can be reinterpreted to make it more applicable in the context of emotions history, and modern historiography in general. Where Collingwood’s original claim argues for the universality of particular emotional experiences, my interpretation argues that, rather than specific emotions, it is the existence and experience of living with systematic expression of emotion which is a universal human experience.

Interpreting Collingwood’s statement in this way also makes clear that this process of re-enactment which, as is demonstrated above, he uses to understand the relationship between objects and humans – in this instance, between tools and machinery and their owners and operators – involves the re-enactment of emotions as the fundamental basis on which this relationship between tools and people is based, and from which tool-related customs are directly derived. In other words, it is impossible to answer the question Collingwood has posed about why people in 1930s Britain embraced increasing tool and machinery ownership without re-enacting emotions.

[Collingwood’s commitment to rationalism as an example of the importance of emotions history](#)

Collingwood’s argument that the suppression or rejection of emotions that are nonetheless experienced is to do ‘a certain violence’ to an essential part of oneself, is very revealing. If our failure to acknowledge that striving to live in a purely utilitarian society is not at all the same as *actually* living in a utilitarian society, and that in fact, this devotion to explanations of social

and cultural phenomena by means of logic and utility is itself proof that our society is not purely utilitarian; that this devotion is in actuality what emotions historians might call the emotionology of this particular time and place, then perhaps Collingwood's own stipulation in *The Idea of History* that re-enactment may only be undertaken with past thoughts, or even his claim in *The Principles of History* that all history is the history of thought, and of emotions only where those emotions directly relate to thoughts, is also a result of this emotionology. In other words, Collingwood's commitment to thought as the sole appropriate object for re-enactment might have arisen, at least in part, due to the devotion of his emotional community to finding rationalisations, logic and utility behind phenomena which do, clearly, have an emotional aspect.

Conditions and methodology for a Collingwoodian re-enactment which encompasses emotions history

In Chapter 3, we considered two important difficulties with Collingwood's re-enactment: that it treats the re-enactment of only thoughts as both necessary and sufficient; in other words, that historians both can and must do so. One aim of this project is to demonstrate that this is not so, and that re-enactment is in fact denied its main purpose – to understand as fully as possible past human experience under certain historical conditions – when it is artificially restricted in the aspects of human experience which it is permitted to deal with.

In offering this new approach to re-enactment, this section of the chapter addresses both of these ideas. To do so, I have first reviewed a line of argument which has threaded through this project from the beginning. When re-enacting Collingwood's thought process, in Chapter One, by which he ultimately arrived at his re-enactment thesis, I highlighted two turning points in his work, at which he could have taken another path – but did not. In Chapter Two, we saw the problems that these choices now create for re-enactment, when we try to apply the theory to modern historiography. In Chapter Three, these problems were explored in depth, considering the ways in which, although re-enactment as a whole remains valuable, certain aspects of it no longer serve historians – particularly historians of emotions.

Now it is time to offer an alternative.

That alternative is based in Collingwood's own thoughts. It is helpful to consider a counter-historical thought experiment of sorts: what if, at each of the two critical turning points highlighted in Chapter One, Collingwood had taken another path? We have seen in this chapter that in the Folktale MS, Collingwood approaches re-enactment – though he does not call it such – from the perspective of a practitioner of history first and foremost. It is from this model that I will proceed. Although Collingwood deviated in *The Idea of History* from a practice-first approach, it is evident in the Folktale MS that he had continued to think along these lines, and it is this practice-first approach which my reworking of re-enactment follows.

Collingwood's mistake is to imagine that thought is a discrete process, and to subsequently attempt to recapture only that.

This is doubly problematic: it excludes critical aspects of human experience, and, as it is actually impossible to separate the inseparable, Collingwood's failure to recognise this means that where he claims to re-enact thought, what he actually does is re-enact all aspects of human experience, without knowing it. Because thought and emotion cannot be separated, it is inherent in every attempt to re-enact by the Collingwoodian method that emotions will also be involved. Failure to recognise this is a significant weakness.

When we acknowledge that all these aspects of human experience are intrinsically connected, we are able to pursue a re-enactment which offers an interpretation of the past far closer to the past as it was. Aspects of Collingwood's own approach, as we have discussed at length elsewhere in this thesis, are clearly a good representation of historical thinking, and worth retaining. The foundational concept of re-enactment itself, for instance, falls into this category. Other aspects, such as the focus on thought, are less helpful. Collingwood does consider, to some extent, the impact of the emotions of the historian toward their historical subject, but much less does he consider the emotions of the historical subject themselves.

All this we already know. Now, what does re-enactment look like when we broaden the focus? And when this is done, how can we express what it now means to re-enact? Wide-angle re-enactment does not begin with a single aspect of human experience – be it thought, emotion, or sensation. It begins with the question, 'What was the experience of being alive under these particular historical circumstances?', where particular historical circumstances might refer to a city, a decade, or a single moment – such as Caesar, leading his men across the Rubicon.

What aspect of Caesar's experience in that moment takes precedence? There are two answers to this question. First, that no aspect of his experience is more important than any other.

Second, that in practice, this also depends upon the aims of the historian. All historical thinking necessarily involves all aspects of human lived experience, but the weight given to a particular perspective will depend on what the historian has set out to better understand. This is true whether or not the historian knows it. For instance, Collingwood strongly privileges thought in his historical thinking. But all aspects of experience in that moment are involved, or all we are left with is exactly the kind of scissors-and-paste history which Collingwood rightly rejects – and the presence of all aspects of experience, not only thought, are evident for instance in his work *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*. In practice, Collingwood again does not do as he claims in his theoretical work.

Cockayne, in *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England, 1600-1770*, gives greatest weight to the sensory experiences of past historical individuals and societies, but her work, as shown, necessarily also takes into account the thoughts and emotions of her subjects. To write solely about the sensory input present would not be to write a human history at all – and therefore, not to write history at all, but an unusual natural history of objects and chemicals present at different places in different times, without considering the inner life, to use Collingwood's term, of the circumstances which led to the existence of that sensory environment. *Hubbub* is a sublime work of sense history, and of course, does present a nuanced account which considers multiple aspects of the experience of living in the times and places with which it engages.

Likewise, in *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Reddy does not present a history of emotions in Revolutionary France at the expense of other aspects of history. Although his account privileges emotions, thoughts and sensations are again necessarily present in his re-enactment of the past – because to leave them out would mean doing something that is not re-enactment at all, and producing something which is not really history.

In this way, the aspects of past experience which are foregrounded by the historian can depend upon the question the historian seeks to answer in their work. But all aspects are

nonetheless present, and there is no beginning point – thought, emotion, sensation – which is objectively preferable to any other. Indeed, they cannot really be separated in this way; they are all facets of one experience.

‘How, or on what conditions, can the historian know the past?’²⁰⁵ This introductory line to the section titled ‘History as Re-enactment of Past Experience’ is very nearly the question I want to answer, too, in this thesis. It is now more accurate to ask, however, ‘How or on what conditions, can the historian understand the past?’. As we have discussed, the difference is a vital one. This re-enactment does not centre around a claim to ‘knowledge’. Increased nuance of understanding is enough.

I agree that the historian must re-enact the past in their own mind, and that this process begins with the collection of surviving evidence, critically examined.

‘When a man thinks historically, he has before him certain documents or relics of the past. His business is to discover what the past was which has left these relics behind it. For example, the relics are certain written words; and in that case he has to discover what the person who wrote those words meant by them. This means discovering the thought ... which he expressed by them. To discover what this thought was, the historian must think it again for himself.’²⁰⁶

This succinct summary of the process of Collingwoodian re-enactment might be rephrased thus:

When a person thinks historically, they have before them certain documents or relics of the past. Their business is to discover what the past was which has left these relics behind it. For example, the relics are certain written words; and in that case they have to discover what the person who wrote those words meant by writing them. This means discovering under what circumstances they did so and what experience they expressed by the act of writing them. To discover what this experience was, the historian must try to re-create it for themselves, in their own mind.

²⁰⁵ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 282.

²⁰⁶ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, pp. 282–83.

And although Collingwood has chosen as an example a written source, this process applies equally well to material artefacts, the results of past decisions acted upon, and so forth. There is no necessity to work through this process with only idea-based examples. The making of a table leg is equally re-enactable as is the Theodosian Code or Euclidean geometry.

Historians think about the past – but do not perfectly rethink past thoughts. They feel about the past – but do not perfectly re-feel past emotions. The fact that past emotions cannot be felt again is not a stumbling block, it is in the nature of historical study. Historians do feel about the past, and these feelings, both their own present feelings and feelings which arise in the process of re-enactment, are valuable to the project of answering whatever question they have about the past.²⁰⁷

What this thesis offers, then, is not a unique and unprecedented perspective on historical thinking. Rather, it is an attempt to restore Collingwood's re-enactment thesis to reflect the broader historical understanding that Collingwood's wider work – in particular his *Folktale MS* – shows that he clearly possessed; and to then move beyond this, to push re-enactment further so that it becomes able to accommodate not only all approaches to historiography contemporary with Collingwood – such as the *Annales School* we discussed in Chapter 2 – but also all approaches to historiography since, up to and including, most recently, emotions history. It is my hope that this formulation of re-enactment will also remain open enough that in time, it is more easily able than its forebear to adapt to changing conceptions of what it means to think historically.

As throughout this thesis, I intend to begin with Collingwood. In *The Idea of History*, he offers a very clear and succinct expression of 'History as the Re-enactment of Past Experience'. I believe there is value here in doing the same.

²⁰⁷ The value of emotions to historical thinking is twofold; although no knowledge 'as such' about the past is derived, emotions are valuable in adding depth to historians' understanding of possible interpretations of the past. This is true both for how historians feel about past events, and how historians interpret feeling about past events in the attempt to re-enact this experience for themselves.

History as the Re-enactment of Past Experience

‘How, or on what conditions, can the historian know the past?’²⁰⁸. Collingwood himself tells us that ‘the past is never a given fact which [the historian] can apprehend empirically by perception’.²⁰⁹ This is indeed so – for thought and all aspects of past experience alike. That is what history is *not*; what, then, does it entail?

Suppose – as Collingwood does – that the historian is reading the work of an ancient thinker. First of all, what prerequisites are necessary before they can approach the task? The historian must thoroughly understand the language in which the work is written. They must be able to access a reliable transcript of the work. They must have the time to read it, without substantial detriment to their standard of living. They must have the intention to read it; and a reason for doing so.

If the historian wishes to read the work *as an historian*, there are further prerequisites which must be fulfilled. They must have an enquiry which they hope the work will help them to answer. They must also have a developed contextual knowledge of the work as a source artefact. This must precede their accessing the thinker’s work for the reason that the source can speak only to the historian’s level of understanding. This requirement might suggest a risk of infinite regress – for must these prerequisites not be fulfilled before every source, and therefore before any knowledge *can* be acquired? But of course, this is not so, for primary material is not the only way in which historians may begin at first to build the foundation on which they will rest future knowledge. Further infinite regress may be suggested – if historians learn from one another, how does the first historian acquire knowledge? Or is it simply historians all the way down? The answer to this is of course that the nature of historical study has changed over time, and that these prerequisites are not eternal, but derived from what their author believes history to entail. The body of *The Idea of History*, on which this project has touched only occasionally, expresses this development in some considerable detail, and should therefore be consulted independently of this project for more information on this process. The historian must also, of course, have been able to access and have received

²⁰⁸ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 306.

²⁰⁹ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 306.

effective training in historical research methods and be able to apply this knowledge in practice.

If all of these conditions are met, then the historian is in a position to read the work by the ancient thinker, as an historian. But how are these met? Some are self-evident; others less so. We will consider two here in detail, for they are central to the aims of this project.

First, the enquiry. The historian must have a question they are working – or are going to work – to answer. In this instance, let us imagine that the historian's question is about Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon. To this end, they intend to read the work of the ancient thinker Suetonius, whose account of the event is the oldest yet discovered to still be in existence. The historian approaches this task specifically to gather evidence which will help them to answer the question with which they began. What is this question? For ease of comparison with Collingwood's own work, we will here take the same enquiry question as he did: why did Caesar decide to act as he did?

A modern historian might begin, if they have no knowledge of the subject whatever when they approach this question, by reading for instance an online encyclopaedia, but they will quickly move on to secondary source material. The works of other historians – popular books, monographs, journal articles – will give them not only a good grounding in the context of the question they wish to answer, but also to the current position of other historians on that same question.

Having discovered this, and having now a reliable foundation of knowledge with which to approach their enquiry, the historian can proceed.

It should be said at this stage that the historian, having read and considered the views of their colleagues on the question they wish to answer, begins to form a mental picture of what form the answer might take; at the very least, they have begun to form a picture of what the world in which the action took place might have been like. Reading, for instance, Suetonius, Holland, and Fezzi, gives the historian a picture of the context these historians each envision as the setting for Caesar's decision.²¹⁰ This mental picture will continue to shift with time and is never fixed. This process is ongoing throughout the examination of available source material,

²¹⁰ Luca Fezzi, *Crossing the Rubicon: Caesar's Decision and the Fate of Rome* (2019), Tom Holland, *Rubicon* (2004), Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars* (121).

until the historian is confident that they have constructed a plausible image of that past context for themselves.

Why, then, did Caesar act as he did?

When we ask this question, what we are really asking is, what is the process by which Caesar arrived at the conclusion for which we have surviving evidence; in this case, the decision to lead his troops across the Rubicon?

The second consideration, following the historian's enquiry question, is the method by which they approach answering it.

Elsewhere in this chapter, Collingwood's logic of question and answer is argued for directly as a viable and essential foundation for the re-interpretation of re-enactment developed in this thesis. Question and answer is able to take the place of the philosophical foundation given by Collingwood to re-enactment, and this change makes a substantial difference, doing away with several problems which Collingwood's approach generates.

Collingwood gives the illustrative example of a car which will not start. His overall question is, of course, 'why will the car not start?'. But he does not go about answering this as a whole question at once; rather, he breaks it down into smaller, specific questions, such as, 'is it because number one plug is not sparking that the car will not start?', and begins by testing that first smaller, specific question. Upon testing number one plug, he discovers that it is in fact sparking; he finds the answer, 'number one plug is fine'. This is not, he emphasises, the answer to his primary question, 'why will the car not start?', but to the specific question, 'is it because of number one plug?'. The answers to these many particular questions together will provide a response to the overarching inquiry.²¹¹

Likewise, the answer to the question, 'why did Caesar act as he did?' is not simply a case of collecting contextual evidence and giving one response. There follows upon asking the question a series of smaller, related inquiries which seek to answer not the overall question but various aspects of it. For instance, we might ask the question, 'did Caesar begin by desiring war with Pompey?'. On review of the evidence, we find that Caesar made two separate offers – one openly and one directly to Pompey – of mutual disarmament. Both of these were

²¹¹ Collingwood, R.G. *Collingwood: An Autobiography and Other Writings*, p. 32.

rejected on the insistence of a certain section of the Senate. On the other hand, Caesar did march his army to the edge of Italy, clearly threatening by his actions that he would not, as the law demanded, disband his troops before entering Italy.

It should be noted at this point that this chapter will not include an in-depth analysis of why Caesar may have crossed the Rubicon, as this would not serve the needs of the argument. Where the question is explored, the primary aim in doing so is to demonstrate the method of questioning employed.

Where Collingwood employed his logic of question and answer in response to an historical inquiry, as we have seen in places throughout this thesis, he does so by attempting to discover the series of thoughts which resulted in the outcome for which there is surviving evidence. This has been discussed at length above and we will not explore unnecessarily his reasons for this again here.

This is not what I mean by employing a question and answer approach to historical inquiry. To return to the question, 'did Caesar begin by desiring war with Pompey?', we must of course conduct a review of the evidence, but we are not doing so with an eye to subsequently discovering Caesar's thought process. What, then, are we hoping to discover?

The aim of this process of questioning is to develop not knowledge of the answer, but an understanding of Caesar's position by considering all aspects of his experience at that time, approaching that experience as a holistic whole. Asking these specific inquiry questions remains useful as a way to direct our investigation, but their scope is much wider.

Did Caesar begin by desiring war with Pompey? In attempting to answer this question, we might consider the following:

- What was their relationship prior to Caesar's departure for Gaul?
- How frequently did they communicate?
- How did Caesar feel about Rome?
- Was Pompey threatened by Caesar?
- Did Caesar want more power?
- Was the power Caesar had under threat?
- How often did Caesar fight when it was not necessary to do so?

- Was Caesar vengeful?
- Did he tend toward a violent or overblown response to perceived threats?
- Did Caesar know that the Senate had considered removing his power?
- How easy was it for Caesar to think of going to war with Rome?

Each of these might form their own specific line of questioning in turn, and the question, 'did Caesar begin by desiring war with Pompey?', cannot be answered without addressing each of them. In doing this, we are able to build a nuanced understanding of how we might respond to that question. None of these questions answers outright our overarching inquiry, but they offer a necessary contribution to its being answered.

It is also important to observe here that this inquiry is not like many of those used as examples at various stages of this thesis. Rather than being straightforwardly an outcome or decision to be re-enacted, the question 'why did Caesar act as he did?' is more complex in nature.²¹²

Some of the listed questions posed above are overtly emotional in nature; but all do possess an emotional aspect. Some appear to conform entirely with Collingwood's requirement of historical questioning, but this is not so, and the fact that it appears to be so once again demonstrates that though Collingwood argues for historical thinking without emotions, he is not ever able to demonstrate such a thing.

For instance, the following question: How frequently did they communicate?

This would seem to be a very straightforwardly empirical query. But let us look more closely. What does communication entail, during a campaign? Letters, carried through the territory of Gaul, which has been occupied but not yet entirely subdued by Caesar and his invading army. Whether roads, which facilitated much of the high-speed communication occurring across the empire, had yet been built in Gaul would also make a difference. The letter-carrier in occupied Gaul may have been risking their own life to transport it. This may have concerned Caesar, but it may not. There is also the nature of letter writing to consider; how frequently were letters exchanged in civilian life within Rome, among men of Caesar and Pompey's social

²¹² Collingwood issues the challenge to this end in his *Autobiography*: 'I will not offer to help a reader who replies, 'ah, you are making it easy for yourself by taking an example where history really is the history of thought; you couldn't explain the history of a battle or a political campaign in that way.' I could, and so could you, Reader, if you tried.' [*Autobiography*, pp.111-112]. I have, in these pages, tried to take up this challenge.

positions? Each of these questions does of course have a strictly utilitarian answer, but they each also possess an emotional dimension. If communication was difficult, what did it mean, to remain in contact nonetheless? Was it a gesture of good faith? An act of desperation? A political move, to put intentions in writing? Did the receipt of a letter from Caesar bring dread or hope for Pompey, and did a letter from Rome give rise to scorn or respect in Caesar? The frequency of communication between Pompey, Caesar and their various representatives and allies is therefore of the utmost relevance, and it is the emotional aspect of this experience which makes it so.

To take another example from the above list: Did Caesar know that the Senate had considered removing him from his position of power?

Of course, this question can be given a simple yes-or-no answer, but that is not why it is included here. A yes or no would tell us very little, by itself. What was the role of the Senate in the political life of Rome? How respected was it as a governing body, and what precedent existed for defying its rulings? Was it usual for the Senate to treat somebody of Caesar's standing as they had discussed treating Caesar? Did this indicate to him that his power was such that it represented a threat to the Senate? How did it feel, to be the recipient of such attention? This may help us to answer further questions, such as, is it likely that Caesar would have hoped to come to the attention of the Senate in this way?, and were his actions intended to highlight the power he held as a potential opponent of the Roman Republic?

Considering these examples in greater detail shows us that re-enactment of this kind need not have emotions artificially added to it; they are an inherent aspect of the questioning process. It would be impossible to undertake any form of historical questioning in which they were not present, and as we have seen, to argue that it can be done is to offer a choice between a process which does not yield history, and a process which simply ignores that it has an emotional dimension.

[‘Anthropological imagination’ as a condition for re-enacting emotions](#)

Evident in Collingwood's re-enactment of emotions in the Folktale MS is a variation on a concept to which he devotes some attention in *The Idea of History*, namely, historical imagination. In the case of the Folktale MS, however, what is demonstrated throughout is

better described as anthropological imagination. This anthropological imagination is evident not only in the Folktale MS but throughout this thesis, where it is employed in the process of re-enacting the anthropology of Collingwood's own time and place.

What is meant by anthropological imagination? In the Folktale MS, Collingwood's work mediates between historical methodology – expounded upon in some detail in certain sections of the work – and practice, using a background understanding of re-enactment and imaginative anthropology to demonstrate the viability of such a mediation.

This process is a two-way street: through imaginative anthropology to practice, and back through practice to look at the underlying process. Where Collingwood describes historical imagination as a necessary aspect of historical thinking which allows the historian to construct plausible interpretations of the past which work as part of his thought-centred re-enactment process, anthropological imagination, as a central part of the process by which Collingwood presents the re-enactment of emotions in the Folktale MS, performs a similar role, albeit with fewer object-specific limitations. Anthropological imagination bridges a gap between Collingwood's re-enactment of history in *The Idea of History* and his re-enactment of anthropology in the Folktale MS. Collingwood in effect attempts to re-enact his own time; experiences from which he is separated not by time but by distance. In other words, anthropological imagination – and, in parallel with his concept of historical imagination, it is a form of re-enactment, but one which necessarily includes emotions.

This concept, of anthropological imagination, effectively forms a connection between two critical ideas central to this chapter: that Collingwood is not explicitly doing history in the Folktale MS, and that what he is doing does qualify as re-enactment. Re-enactment is the transcendental condition necessary for doing history, and as such, Collingwood's re-enactment in the Folktale MS, although never explicitly referred to as such, based on this process of anthropological imagination which allows Collingwood to re-enact a far wider scope of human experience than his thought-centred re-enactment is able to accommodate, offers useful insights into the process of re-enacting with emotions described in this chapter.

Comparing anthropological imagination and historical imagination

One critical respect in which anthropological imagination differs from historical imagination is its object or focus. Collingwoodian re-enactment, and historical imagination with it, focuses on comprehending the actions of individuals. Anthropological imagination, as seen in the Folktale MS, focuses on understanding more general, broader cultural customs. This is a crucial difference, and one which means that anthropological imagination lends itself far more comfortably to the wide-angle approach to re-enactment presented in this chapter.

In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood describes the significance of the historical imagination in historical thinking. He argues that, as all historical thinking is to some extent a matter of interpretation, it is the responsibility of the re-enacted interpretation to justify the historian's position, not simply that of the evidence they have used to develop it.²¹³ In other words, the plausibility and consistency of the interpretation is a significant determining factor in its value, and the responsibility rests with the historian to construct as complete and detailed mental picture of that past world as they possibly can. As this mental picture is at least as important as the source materials used, Collingwood argues, 'the historian's picture of the past is thus in every detail an imaginary picture, and its necessity is at every point the necessity of the *a priori* imagination. Whatever goes into it, goes into it not because his imagination passively accepts it, but because it actively demands it.'²¹⁴ This last point, that what the historian imagines into their picture of the past is included not out of idle imagination but because, if all other parts of the picture are to remain, that part must also be included in order for the simulation to remain plausible, applies also in the case of anthropological imagination.

This can be seen clearly in Collingwood's analysis of magic in the Folktale MS. He begins by deconstructing and dismissing the idea that magic is simply an uncritical explanation given by those unable to construct a scientific one. This done, Collingwood builds a picture of a world in which all the things he knows about magic in a particular society are true – and then, crucially, imagines what else must be true, in order for the picture he has thus far constructed to make sense.

²¹³ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 245.

²¹⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History (Revised Edition)*, p. 245.

The role of the logic of question and answer in re-enacting emotions

I have said elsewhere in this chapter that it is by use of Collingwood's question and answer method, which he does not himself adopt into his historical thinking in this way, that a re-enactment thesis which is able to accommodate emotions history is best supported. How does this concept perform that function? Collingwood's own re-enactment of emotions in the Folktale MS once again offers an excellent illustration of precisely how this can work:

'It is not that there is magic in the hat as a separate thing. It is rather that he feels himself-hatted and himself-uncovered as two different states of himself, like himself smiling and himself frowning.

'These feelings are to some extent observable in all human beings. But they are developed in different ways by different peoples. Frenchmen, I have observed, feel no need to take their hats off in the house. One might infer that Frenchmen have no manners, but that would be a false inference. We should infer rather that to some extent they feel differently about hats from ourselves. The question might then be raised: do they wear their hats in the house because of this different feeling, or do they feel differently because of their different customs? There is no answer to this question. The feeling and the custom are not two separate things which can be related as cause and effect. There is only one thing. The custom is the outward side of it, the feeling the inward side.'²¹⁵

The above section is included in full because it is, among all Collingwood's various mentions and applications of emotions in this chapter, one of the most important for this section of the argument proposed in this chapter.

First, Collingwood's point that these feelings are observable in all humans, but are developed in different ways by different peoples. This once again very reminiscent of arguments put forward by historians of emotions. Indeed, the idea that emotions can be studied as historical phenomena relies upon this fact. Emotions must have a history, in order to be studied historically; they must have a human, inner life, which changes over time and according to circumstances.

²¹⁵ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 211.

Second: 'do they wear their hats in the house because of this different feeling, or do they feel differently because of their different customs?'. Collingwood answers this immediately: there is, he says, no answer to this question. It does not make sense, in the context of seeking to understand the behaviour of people within another culture, to ask it. But the fact that Collingwood poses this question here at all is interesting. It is very close to questions posed by emotions historians, particularly those interested in emotionology.

It is also interesting for another reason. Collingwood, in asking this question and answering it, giving rise to another question – namely, why is there no answer to this question? – is, in effect, re-enacting, and using a question-and-answer approach to do so. The process, broken down, might look something like this:

Question: If these feelings are to some extent observable in all human beings, then to what extent?

Answer: They are developed in different ways by different peoples.

Question: For example?

Answer: Frenchmen do not take off their hats inside the house.

Question: Doesn't that simply mean that they have no manners, as it would in our society?

Answer: No – that would be a false inference.

Question: Why?

Answer: *Because* these feelings are developed in different ways by different peoples; we should infer that they feel differently about hats than we do.

Question: Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? The different feeling, or the different custom?

Answer: Neither – they are not two separate things.

Question: Then what are they?

Answer: The custom is the outward side of it, the feeling the inward side.

Worked through like this, it is clear that Collingwood's method of question and answer both describes the process he is using here in practice, and does provide a functional basis for a theoretical framework for re-enactment. This method is one we have discussed earlier in this thesis, and one to which we will return in the second half of this chapter.

Though this use of question and answer is evidently not consistent with the philosophical commitments Collingwood makes in *The Idea of History* in order to support his own position on re-enactment, it does not pose any challenges for the methodological aspects of his re-enactment thesis. Question and answer adequately fulfils the function of Collingwood's problematic philosophical commitments, discussed at length elsewhere in this thesis, and does not generate insurmountable new problems of its own. Collingwood's commitment to the idea, for instance, that thought is the only aspect of human experience fit for re-enactment appears to persist at least in part because he sees this as giving legitimacy to historical 'knowledge', but this argument seems to possess limited value at best – a philosophy of history need not also justify the study of history as a discipline. This question and answer approach makes no such claims. Question and answer offers an approach to understanding what the historian is doing inside their head when they think historically. It makes no claims regarding the value of historical thinking, because it simply does not need to do so.

I have argued that the value of history lies in the quest for an increasingly nuanced range of interpretations from many perspectives, seeking to deepen our understanding of what it meant for different people to be alive at different places and times in the human past.²¹⁶ Given this, there seems little call to justify the value of historical inquiry in this form – I have no need to prove that the outcome of historical thinking is a form of knowledge, because that is not what I am arguing for. Historical interpretation is valuable by merit of being what it is – for every historian who produces their own interpretation of the available evidence and the work of other scholars, our collective historical understanding becomes a little more nuanced, and therefore a little closer to reflecting the infinite variety in its infinite combinations which made up the past as it was. And while, of course, the aim of history isn't simply to know exactly what happened or to replicate the past precisely in the present, the attempt to

²¹⁶ See thesis section below on 'nuanced interpretation'; see also pp.35-36 of this thesis for detailed discussion of the distinction between fact and interpretation in history.

improve our understanding of lived experience of the past from many perspectives is integral to it.

Therefore, while question and answer is vitally important to this reworking of re-enactment, it is there as a philosophical foundation, not in any way as a theoretical justification for re-enacting in the first place. Re-enactment serves best as a philosophical description of historical thinking – historians are far better placed to express the significance of their own pursuits than are philosophers of history.

A note on ‘nuanced interpretation’

The process by which nuanced interpretation is achieved inherently includes argumentative methods. We achieve nuance through argumentation and comparing interpretations. In other words, in the notion of nuance as I have used it, there is an intrinsic evaluative element.

Nuance of interpretation is on the basis of a nuanced process of historical reasoning. This is not to say that nuanced interpretation simply contains a greater level of detail than other interpretations offered by historians. Interpretation is an inherently argumentative and evaluative process. Where I have referred to nuanced interpretation, therefore, this should be taken to refer to the interpretive process, which is inherently argumentative and evaluative.

An interpretation as such is simply a summary or expression of the state of this process at a particular point in time. It is not possible to separate interpretation as process from interpretation as product.

The role of Spinoza’s Maxim and Butler’s Maxim in re-enacting emotions

What role do the two maxims of the Folktale MS have to play in the re-enactment of emotions? Spinoza’s maxim, briefly touched upon in Chapter 2, is summarised by Collingwood thus: ‘neither to condemn nor to deride the feelings and actions of men, but to understand them.’²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 184.

This is clearly a beneficial approach to take toward re-enacting emotion. To insist that the role of the historian is not to judge the emotional norms or experiences of any other time or place ensures that interpretations are not influenced by the historian's own feelings. It may seem easier, perhaps, to remove personal judgements from a Collingwoodian re-enactment process which focuses on rational and repeatable thoughts, but this perception would be a symptom of the emotionology of our time and place, which favours rationalism and utility in explanations of the world around us. In fact, it is impossible to erase the historian's feelings from any form of re-enactment. Spinoza's maxim helps to ensure that the presence and acknowledgement of these emotions can be beneficial, not detrimental, to the process of understanding the past.

Butler's maxim, taken from the work of Bishop Joseph Butler, states that 'every thing is what it is, and not another thing.'²¹⁸ Collingwood highlights in the Folktale MS one particularly valuable outcome of this maxim: a reduction in generalisation in historical study.²¹⁹ Where there are differences between instances of something we might wish to call the same phenomenon, it is vital that these differences are recognised. Collingwood gives the example of wars, but this also applies to the historical study of emotions. Anger in one time and place does not equate to anger at any other point in history. Likewise, the emotional experiences of one community do not necessarily parallel the emotional experiences of another community whose social circumstances are similar to those of the first. There are no homogenous groups in history; medieval peasants, for instance, cannot truly be generalised as such, if the aim is to develop valuable historical understanding of their lived experiences. Where Reddy's analysis of emotions prior to the French Revolution is particularly successful is in his treatment of the emotional behaviours of ordinary people, taking each case and each new piece of evidence as it is, rather than simply fitting it into an already-formed interpretation.

²¹⁸ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 186.

²¹⁹ Collingwood, *The Philosophy of Enchantment: Studies in Folktale, Cultural Criticism, and Anthropology*, p. 187.

Conclusion

Does Collingwood's re-enactment practise in the Folktale MS, as set out in this chapter, offer a satisfactory account of the conditions and methods necessary for the re-enactment of not thoughts alone, which we now know to be impossible, but for the re-enactment of emotions as part of a broader, more inclusive re-enactment of past lived experience? I believe that it does. The necessary conditions for historical thinking are not so limited as *The Idea of History* suggests; on the contrary, what is required is, in essence, the ability and the will of the historian to begin the attempt to understand so far as possible the experience of being alive under different circumstances than their own, at whatever point in the human past their particular enquiry is located.

The methodology remains much as Collingwood himself expressed it: the historian undertakes to understand, for themselves, the experiences of past humans, based on the surviving evidence which results from their responses to emotions, thoughts, sensations – in fact, from the whole lived experience of those past individuals at the time and place in question. All history is not the history of thought, but historians do attempt to understand the past by building up a picture in their minds of a possible version of that past world, and using that picture to test their hypotheses about it.

The philosophical foundations on which this process rests, as shown, have changed significantly from the ideas presented in *The Idea of History*. I have offered a re-working of these philosophical foundations for re-enactment which, where Collingwood took one path in his development of his re-enactment thesis, takes another. Instead of the dual claim that historians first, can, and second, must, think historically about thoughts alone, I have argued that a stronger, more practical answer lies elsewhere in Collingwood's works. His logic of question and answer better expresses the process by which historians are able to construct imaginative interpretations of the past; anthropological imagination, as demonstrated in his practise in the Folktale MS, is better able to describe a process of re-enacting customs, beliefs, and other shared cultural ideas and etiquette – including, the phenomenon of magic, which Collingwood shows in the Folktale MS to occur in all human societies and the re-enactment of which is, as I have shown, the re-enactment of emotions. Collingwood does re-enact in a way that includes emotions, throughout the Folktale MS. This chapter has used his practise in the Folktale MS to rework his theoretical work in *The Idea of History* in order to address

particular problems which arise as a result of his philosophical commitments in the latter work.

This idea of re-enacting customs and shared cultural phenomena links back to an important point earlier in this chapter: that, according to Collingwood in the Folktale MS, customs can only be re-enacted when their emotional dimension is acknowledged and knowingly incorporated into the re-enactment process. There is a distinction implicitly drawn here which bears closer consideration. In *The Idea of History*, Collingwood denies the possibility of any kind of re-enactment of any kind of emotions. His theoretical work leaves no room for emotions, whether personal or social, in historical thinking. In the Folktale MS, however, Collingwood does re-enact, as shown above, the latter category: social, collective, or shared emotions. In other words, Collingwood implicitly suggests that emotions which can be studied as external phenomena, that is, which manifest in customs, traditions, rites, etiquette, and so forth, are viable objects for historical thinking. This makes sense; the broadly anthropological approach which dominates in the Folktale MS, along with Collingwood's substantial use of his own practical archaeological experience, guides him toward thinking about these broader cultural customs, behaviours, and experiences. What he does not in any of his works suggest is that personal, individual, inner emotional experiences can be re-enacted, under any circumstances. A key innovation of this thesis, therefore, is identifying that emotions history can refer to both or either cultural perceptions of emotions or the individual experience of emotions under particular social and historical conditions.

One aim of this thesis has been to first restore to Collingwood's re-enactment thesis the capacity which his Folktale MS suggests he may have intended for it, before the editorial influence of T.M. Knox; that is, the capacity for re-enacting in a way which does not dismiss the possibility entirely of re-enacting with an emotional dimension, and then, to move beyond the limits of Collingwood's understanding of the role of emotions in historical thinking to develop a new interpretation of re-enactment which is able to account for all aspects of human lived experience; not only thoughts.

I therefore argue that this chapter presents a convincing alternative interpretation of re-enactment which is capable of encompassing modern emotions history without challenges to its theoretical foundations. There is, of course, always room for further growth, with regard particularly to other fields of historical research. I believe that this approach to re-enactment

is more than capable, however, of also applying to, for instance, the work of sensory historians, and that a further project exploring the implications of this would be as important an undertaking for that historical field as this thesis intends to be for emotions history. In the conclusion following are suggested some avenues for future research which extend the accomplishments of this thesis and test the central ideas I have argued for by applying them to historical thinking of various other kinds and approaches.

Conclusion

Research questions this thesis has addressed

This project began with the question, how can Collingwood's re-enactment thesis be made more useful to present-day historians? This, naturally, led to a second important question: why is Collingwood's re-enactment thesis not currently as useful or applicable as it could be to present-day historians? Reading *The Idea of History* as a present-day practitioner of historical thinking reveals a very clear deficit: Collingwoodian re-enactment is unable to accommodate the full extent of modern historiographic thinking. In particular, Collingwood's explicit exclusion of emotions from the process of historical thinking generates a range of problems for his work. This thesis therefore set out primarily to answer the question of whether, and how, Collingwood's re-enactment thesis could be made more viable as a philosophical description of the modern historical research process.

This has been worth undertaking for a very clear reason: that Collingwood's re-enactment thesis remains one of the best contributions to philosophy of history of the last century. In particular, the process of re-enactment as Collingwood describes it, grounded in his own experience as an historian and archaeologist, is the best description of the process of building an interpretation of the past so far in existence. The methodological description offered in Collingwood's work is excellent, and offers both philosophers and historians a greater understanding of the process of historical thinking which results in the research produced by historians. Collingwood's philosophical foundation for this excellent methodological description, however, presents significant problems, which are more evident in the context of modern historiography than ever before. In part, this is because this history of emotions has become in the last 20-25 years a growing area of historical focus. As such, although emotions have always been an intrinsic part of historical thinking, this has largely been unspoken. With the growth of emotions history as a specific historical approach since approximately 2003, it has been very clear that Collingwood's re-enactment thesis needed to be adapted if it was to be able to remain a useful and accurate description of all forms of historical thinking.

The key research question addressed in this thesis is therefore: how can the philosophical foundation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis be adapted in a way which allows it to retain

that which makes it so valuable while also allowing it to encompass all aspects of modern historical thinking, with a particular focus on the history of emotions? Over the course of four chapters, this question has been explored and answered. In Chapter 4, I presented a reformulation of Collingwoodian re-enactment which retains the practice-based methodological description of historical thinking while introducing a new philosophical foundation for this methodology. This new foundation is developed using aspects of Collingwood's own works; in particular, his logic of question and answer and his Folktale MS. This new formulation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is capable, as I have demonstrated, of expressing and explaining the process of historical thinking which is undertaken by historians of all kinds in order to develop increasingly nuanced interpretations of the past, which combined, contribute to continuing to develop a collective historical understanding of what it was like to be alive under a past historical conditions.

Research outcome I: Collingwoodian re-enactment reformed

This project has sought to rework our understanding of Collingwood's re-enactment in order to discover how his ideas, as the best description we have of historical thinking, can live alongside the fact that in the past two decades, historians have increasingly recognised that emotions can and should be studied historically. What we have discovered in the process is that far from being a problem for re-enactment as an approach to understanding historical thinking, the inclusion of emotions strengthens it. While some aspects of Collingwood's philosophical foundation for his re-enactment thesis have necessarily been lost, they have been replaced by other ideas in his own works which better support a re-enactment thesis which can comfortably describe all of historical thinking.

All history is the history of emotions – not exclusively, but consistently so. Beginning with Collingwood's own process by which he arrived at his re-enactment thesis, it became clear that there were two critical turning points at which he took one fork in the road where the other might more easily have allowed him to broaden the scope of re-enactment beyond thought without compromising his quest for the recognition of the value of historical work and its outcomes.

What does this reworking of the transcendental conditions necessary for historical thinking mean for our understanding of how the history of emotions can be approached? It is important to remember that, in reworking Collingwood's re-enactment thesis, this project does not intend to offer new instructions in historical thinking. Rather, it aims to present a new approach to understanding historical thinking as it is practiced by historians. In particular, this thesis aims to understand how historians of emotions think about history. As I have argued, however, the conclusions here drawn do apply by extension to all forms of historical thinking. And while it is not the intention of this thesis to instruct historians in how to do history, it is my hope that it may be of use to historians – and in particular, historians of emotions – to consider historical thinking through the philosophical framework it presents.

Collingwood's re-enactment thesis is less a guide for historians hoping to learn their craft and more a philosophical description of the transcendental conditions by which historical thinking is made possible. As I have argued, this is a very close parallel with emotions history in the present day, which is, rather than a field of historical research with some special object, a special approach to understanding the process by which historical thinking is made possible.

Research outcome II: Emotions history reconceived

What makes emotions history possible and necessary is simple: as long as emotions are accepted as an intrinsic aspect of human experience – across all times and places – and as long as history is accepted as the quest for understanding of past human experience, then it is not possible to accurately conceive of any philosophy of history which does not also accept that emotions are an intrinsic and essential part of historical thinking. The transcendental conditions for emotions history are therefore always met in all historical thinking, because it is impossible to undertake historical thinking which is not also historical thinking about emotions. In other words, it is not possible to do history which is not emotions history.

If all history is the history of emotions, why do we have history of emotions as a special field?

Emotions, it is now clear, are an intrinsic aspect of all forms of historical inquiry. This raises a new question: if all history is the history of emotions, to what extent is it necessary for the history of emotions to exist as a discrete field of its own? What, in other words, does emotions history as a special field add to the overall field of historical research?

This question does, however, contain an important misconception, which must be addressed in order to avoid perpetuating it. Emotions history is not history which takes emotions as its subject. The work of William Reddy, for instance, shows this clearly. His *Framework for the Navigation of Feelings* is a study of the spread of behaviours and ideas at the time of the French Revolution. The research topic therefore sits very comfortably within existing fields of study – social history, for instance. What, then, distinguishes Reddy’s work from that of a social historian writing on the circumstances preceding the French Revolution? The answer, clearly, cannot be his historical topic.

What distinguishes the work of Reddy from that of historians such as [EXAMPLES]? It is not his subject, but his particular emphasis. Any historian who works on the French Revolution will, of necessity, include emotions in their work. Reddy, likewise, considers a range of socio-economic and political phenomena; emotions are not taken in abstract, outside of their context. What distinguishes Reddy’s work as a work of emotions history is his emphasis on emotions. Emotions history is not a field of study in the way that French history is a field of study; it is a methodological approach in the way that Marxist or feminist histories are such.

This explains a point raised in Chapter 2, that the history of emotions is a field of inquiry in which discussions of method are still underway, and always close to the surface of works by emotions historians. Methodology, far from being peripheral to works of emotions history, is their reason for existing.

In the introduction was presented an analysis of a conversation between key figures in emotions history, facilitated by the AHR. Returning now to those reasons which were therein given for making a shift into emotions-focused history will help to make clear the methodological nature of emotions history. Each reason I identified at the beginning of the thesis, it is now clear, has a methodological basis. These reasons are: the flattening effect of narrative-form sources; the emotion-reason, public-private dichotomy; the role of subjectivity and the passions of historians in writing history; the fact that emotions are an inextricable aspect of everyday life; and, the relationship between emotional experience and culture.

In the interview published in the *American Historical Review*, several of the foundational thinkers who helped to develop the field of emotions history in the early 2000s, as shown in

Chapter 2, gave the reasons which convinced each of them of the need for another, different field of historical research which was intended to focus on the history of emotions. I would argue that over the course of this interview, one point in particular which has not thus far been discussed in any depth, becomes increasingly clear: that these historians found that there was not room for emotions history within the existing fields into which their research might also have fallen; in the case of Reddy, for instance, Revolutionary French history. This reflects an argument made throughout this thesis: that, although emotions are a critical and inextricable aspect of all forms of historical thinking, they are not and have not always been recognised by historians as such. This highlights a central problem which the work of this thesis aims to address; namely, that there *should* be room for emotions history within every field of historical research. Further, that if there is not, then either there is a failure to recognise the centrality of emotions in understanding past human experience, or the historical field into which the work of emotions historians might otherwise fall is poorly conducted, and may not be history at all.

This is chiefly because emotions history is, as I have argued, not a field of historical research with a special object, but an approach to historical thinking with a special emphasis. Re-enactment as presented in this thesis answers the problems raised in the introduction by emotions historians who started the field.

As the history of emotions is still a relatively young approach to historical research, and as it continues to attract the interest of historians and continues to grow, practitioners of emotions history remain aware of and engaged in discussion about the theoretical basis for the work they undertake. It is not a coincidence that works of emotions history frequently address not only the historical interpretation they set out to present, but also the approach taken by the historian to arrive at that interpretation. This fact makes the arguments presented in this thesis particularly apposite. It is intended that this reworking of re-enactment will prove useful to emotions historians, for whom it is important to be able to access a philosophy of history which not only does not struggle to encompass their approach to historical thinking, but which argues that emotions history is, and has been, a core aspect of all historical research. Not only is it possible to study emotions history – a debate ongoing among historians – but, if any historical study is to be done, emotions history is a necessary aspect of it. It is my hope that one outcome of this thesis will be that emotions historians are

able to access a philosophical framework which explains the relationship between the history of emotions and other aspects or fields of historical research.

Avenues for future research

In Chapter 4, the claim is made that this reworked re-enactment thesis should remain able to accommodate not only the history of emotions in the present, but other extant fields of historical research. One area in particular which has been touched upon elsewhere in this thesis, though not in significant depth, is sensory history. Sensory history necessarily requires an approach to historical thinking which prioritises or emphasises sensation as part of a whole past experience. I am not suggesting that sensory experience can be treated by itself, apart from any other aspect of human lived experience – thoughts or emotions, for instance – just as neither do sense historians.

As Chapter 4 began to suggest, this thesis represents only one step in the process of developing these ideas further. This new re-enactment thesis has much to offer to a number of fields of study. Below, we will consider those which I believe are the most logical next steps to be taken.

Following the examination of emotions history in this thesis and the argument I have made that emotions history is, rather than a field of historical research with a particular object, an approach to historical research with a particular emphasis, it would be interesting to continue by asking, likewise, whether sense history is defined by its object or its method. In some ways unlike the case of emotions history, the answer to this question is less than clear. In some ways, what sense history appears to represent is a blending of archaeological and historical research; historical thinking which focuses on the material and object dimension of human experience. William Tullett argues that rising interest in sense history is having significant methodological impact across historical research, with many historians now considering a sensory lens through which to interpret past behaviours. The field itself, however, is defined not by its methodology but by its interest in a particular aspect of historical experience. It argues that sensory experience and perception has changed over time; that it is not biologically determined and immutable, but has a history.

Although it is not precisely the same, there are clear parallels here with the development of the field of emotions history. It would be fruitful in future research to consider how successfully this presentation of re-enactment is able to express the historical thinking of sensory historians.

Sensory or sense history has been discussed variously across this project and in Chapter 4, the idea was introduced that sense history also might benefit from a greater awareness of the emotions with which it also deals. There are two further points to be made here: first, whether sense history is itself defined by its object or its method; and second – and most importantly, for the continuation of the work begun in this project – how this presentation of re-enactment might continue to develop in response to other recent fields of historical research such as sense history.

It would therefore be a good test of the wider applicability of this reworked re-enactment thesis to pursue a similar project which assesses whether it is able to adequately describe and explain historical thinking about past sensory experience, as I have argued that it does emotions history. This would offer an opportunity not only to develop a greater philosophical understanding of sense history, but to better understand the processes by which sense history is undertaken. In particular, in response to this thesis, it would be interesting and useful to consider the extent to which the logic of question and answer which I have argued for as a successful philosophical foundation for re-enactment also successfully describes historical thinking about sensory experience.

How this might be done is best illustrated with an example. Re-enactment of a sensory environment is beneficial for historians for a number of reasons – for one, in order to improve the picture built up in the historian's mind of the world in which their subject lived. For another, the historical individual's response to their environment might be particularly revealing not only of their perception of particular sensations, but also of the intersection between, for instance, emotions and sense history. For example: the day-to-day experience of living within the walls of a pre-Reformation monastery. Naturally, such a re-enactment would usually be undertaken in response to some historical enquiry question which the historian is attempting to answer. For instance, questions about monastic life, trade links, communication with the outside world, monastic material culture, and so forth.

How, according to the version of re-enactment presented in this thesis, might the historian begin their re-enactment of pre-Reformation monastic sensory experience in the everyday life of a monk? Let us imagine that the question posed is, 'What differences exist between the experience of entering a monastic building in the present day and that of a pre-Reformation monastic resident?'. As discussed in Chapter 4, the historian would not begin by attempting to answer this question as a whole. They might ask, however, 'what was the experience of existing inside a monastic building?'. Further questions naturally follow: what was the sensory experience of standing inside that space? How might a monk have felt about existing inside the physical space of a monastery?

These questions, according to a question and answer approach to re-enactment, would each lead to various lines of enquiry by the historian, who would then combine the answers to each of these smaller questions in order to develop and augment a picture in their mind of the most plausible interpretation of the world in which the monk might have stood.

That the questions include a sensory element does not appear, at least on this cursory inspection, to pose any major difficulties for this version of re-enactment. Answers to the questions - for instance, 'what was the sensory experience of standing inside a monastic building?' can be answered using the same question and answer process which successfully supports the re-enactment of emotions. The sensory experience of standing inside a monastic building prior to the Reformation in England would have included, unlike today, rushlights and tallow candles, as well as beeswax candles burning; depending on the area of the monastery, many housed extensive herb gardens; livestock resources such as sheep fields and eel ponds; substantial brewing facilities which allowed monks to prepare their own beer; the bells tolling; in the library or scriptorium, the sound of writing with quills or illuminating manuscripts; outside, the preparation of vellum for later use in such manuscripts. Clearly, this process of asking questions and seeking answers in order to build up an increasingly complex and plausible mental picture of a past world is equally viable when a sensory perspective is considered.

This raises a further important question: Is all history also the history of sensation? I have argued throughout this thesis that emotions are an inherent and inextricable aspect of human lived experience which are, whether acknowledged or not, always a crucial element of historical thinking. Future research could fruitfully argue the same for sensory experience.

This may seem self-evident; humans have always had bodies, and therefore, always experienced their world through sensory input. The same argument may be made for emotions, however; humans have always experienced emotions in response to the world around them. That this phenomenon occurs is not enough; it is also necessary to explain, historically and philosophically, both that and how we can think about the sensory experiences of past historical individuals.

In fact, it may be possible to argue that both emotional experience and sensory experience are themselves inextricably linked to one another as part of a wider human lived experience which also includes thoughts.

If this is so, then the impact of this reworked re-enactment thesis also extends beyond text-based history into fields such as archaeology. I would argue that this formulation of re-enactment is more comfortably able to account for historical thinking about parts of history for which the surviving evidence is so limited that there may not be any clear thoughts discernible in relation to a particular piece of evidence at all. For instance, surviving remnants of stone constructions. It is not always clear what purpose a stone which was moved during prehistory into a new position served to the people who undertook the significant labour of moving it into that position. Approached from a purely Collingwoodian perspective, this act is not re-enactable. Using this new version of re-enactment, however, I believe that it is – and that, therefore, further research into the relationship between re-enactment and archaeology might yield fruitful results.

How might this re-enactment be done? It would begin, as ever, with a question which the historian sought to answer; in this case, perhaps simply the question, ‘To what end was the stone moved into this new position?’. This initial question sparks several other, smaller inquiries – for instance, how common was this act of stone relocation at this date and time?; has the stone also been shaped or decorated, or simply moved?; what type of stone is it, and is this consistent with other similar finds?; what other finds have been discovered close by in connection with the moving of the stone?; what other finds have been discovered close by which might indicate its use after it was moved?; is its current position the one to which it was first moved; and, how many people would have been needed to accomplish its relocation to this position? The approach taken to answering these questions would of course differ in archaeology from the approach taken in history – however, I do not believe that this

difference is so great that this version of re-enactment is unable to philosophically describe it. The aim of these questions, and the best way to begin answering them, remains the same: to build up a picture in the mind of the historian or archaeologist a picture of the world, and therefore, the context, in which the historical experience they are attempting to understand, occurred.

The difference in materials used to supply evidence for the historian's mental picture of that past world does not impact significantly on whether or not the process of interpreting them can be considered re-enactment. The fact that archaeology is material-based, therefore, and does not make direct use of textual sources, does not represent any difficulty for this reworked re-enactment thesis. Archaeologists attempt to answer questions about past human lived experience, and therefore, the method of historical thinking they apply to this task is encompassed within re-enactment. It is a mark of the success of this version of re-enactment that the philosophical description of historical thinking which is proposed is equally able to be applied to the work of archaeologists as to the work of historians. Where Collingwood draws sharp and definite lines between the proper domain of historical thinking and other kinds of research, I have argued that, on the contrary, it is the breadth of this re-enactment thesis which makes it so successful.

Also in reference to material history, there is potential to continue this work in the direction of exploring the possibility of links between Collingwood's material practice as an archaeologist – as characterised in his work in the *Folktale MS* – and sensory history. The *Folktale MS* contains within it, as I have shown, a practice-based approach to re-enactment, not shaped by Collingwood's attempts to synthesise his various philosophies as in *The Idea of History*. Throughout the *Folktale MS*, Collingwood proposes various research scenarios – either anthropological or archaeological in nature – which have a clear sensory dimension. It would be interesting and fruitful to explore this relationship, between Collingwood's practice and approaches to modern sensory history. While sense history is not explored in depth in this thesis, it seems a natural next step to consider those aspects of Collingwood's work which have proven compatible with emotions history, with a sensory history approach. The overlap between emotions and sensory histories produced by modern historians is far from total, and the differences in emphasis and approach between these two types of historical thinking would prove an interesting subject for further research.

Concluding remarks

On review of the arguments put forward in this thesis, their outcomes and far-reaching implications across various fields of historical research, it is clear that this reinterpretation of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis represents a significant contribution to the fields of both philosophy of history and the history of emotions.

Perhaps Collingwood's great achievement in the philosophy of history is to have created an enduring philosophical explanation of historical thinking which continues to be the best description of the process by which historians think about the past.

This thesis aligns itself with a transcendental reading of Collingwood's re-enactment thesis. Throughout the thesis, there has been a focus on the direct implications of a transcendental reading for method.²²⁰

This framework endures into the present and remains both relevant and worth updating precisely because it is amenable to such changes. Collingwood has provided a strong foundation on which present and future philosophy of history can be built. This thesis takes one step toward continuing that process. I believe that the work presented in this thesis, the adaptations made to Collingwood's re-enactment thesis and the development of a new, question and answer based re-enactment thesis, represents a significant and original contribution to the field of Collingwood studies.

²²⁰ For more detailed discussion of this point, see sections on Dray and van der Dussen throughout the thesis.

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