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CANADIAN IDEALISM: FORGOTTEN, NOT LOST

by

Robert A. S. Meynell

**Dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial Fulfillment of the requirement for the
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Abstract

What does it mean to be free? How have Canadians tried to answer this question? Where does Canada's political culture stand today? These are the themes of this dissertation, and at its heart we will find the abundance of G.W.F. Hegel's political philosophy. The road to answering these questions begins with recognizing that there is a distinctive tradition of Canadian political philosophy which offers an original formulation of the question of freedom, community, and history. The tradition is Canadian Idealism, and its members share central elements of a common vision that is strongly informed by Hegel's thought. This dissertation identifies this tradition and its central tenets, traces the influences and makes a general critical assessment of its political prescriptions.

The case is made through an analysis of the importance of Hegel's philosophy to the works of three leading Canadian thinkers: C.B. Macpherson (1911-1987), George Parkin Grant(1918-1988), and Charles Taylor(1931-). These three political philosophers are excellent representatives of the continuance of the Hegelian tradition since the 1950s. They have had an enormous influence on Canadian scholarship and they each embody very different strains of the theoretical approach, thus giving us a good sample of the various forms that a Canadian idealist can adopt. Hegel's philosophy has served as the foundation for their arguments regarding multiculturalism, nationalism, human agency, and the crisis in values of the modern age. While many people have argued for and against the culturalist and nationalist politics of Grant and Taylor or the form of socialism articulated by Macpherson, the significance of their Hegelianism has been underemphasized, and in the cases of Grant and Macpherson it has been almost universally unrecognized. I see them not as isolated political philosophers who share an interest in Hegel, but rather as members of a scarcely acknowledged Canadian intellectual tradition that has been recorded by a few intellectual historians, but virtually ignored in the literature on Canadian political thought.

Not only does this dissertation refine our understanding of these three prominent Canadian thinkers and their conceptions of freedom and community, but it also outlines the main tenets of an intellectual tradition that has played a major role in defining Canada's political culture.

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There are those who doubt that people live in relationships with others informed by love and guided by a faith in higher principles. While writing this dissertation, I came across a great deal of experiential evidence that confirms that such doubt is ill-founded, and I wish to express my gratitude to those who were the most prominent.

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Chapter One: Introduction

What does it mean to be free? How have Canadians tried to answer this question? Where does Canada's political culture stand today? These are the themes of this dissertation, and at its heart we will find the abundance of G.W.F. Hegel's political philosophy. The road to answering these questions begins with recognizing that there is a distinctive tradition of Canadian political philosophy which offers an original formulation of the question of freedom, community, and history. The tradition is Canadian Idealism, and its members share central elements of a common vision that is strongly informed by Hegel's thought. This dissertation identifies this tradition and its central tenets, traces the influences, and makes a general critical assessment of its political prescriptions.

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has been recorded by a few intellectual historians, but virtually ignored in the literature on Canadian political thought.

This investigation of the influence of classical German Idealism on Canadian political culture applies to Canadian political thought the most recent research on German idealism, which has considerably modified the prevailing images of Hegel, Fichte, and Kant. This approach offers a double advantage: to assess the varying appreciations of German idealism that have marked Canadian political thinking, and to develop a critical perspective on this thinking from the standpoint of more recent discoveries.

Contending Interpretations of Canada's Political Culture

Over the past fifteen years there has been an increasing interest in the study of Canadian political thought. The 1995 publication of *Canada's Origins*,¹ a collection of essays dedicated to the topic, marked an important step in the maturation of this field. Unfortunately, this early step was also a pronounced misstep. As Jeremy Rayner has argued, the methodology employed by the authors of those essays failed to use the best techniques available for the study of philosophy and instead made the mistake of imposing contemporary debates on the political elite of nineteenth century Canada.² He argues that such present-centeredness can be overcome or at least minimized by attempting to understand the assumption and systems of meaning, or the "concepts and categories" that were "indispensable" to the politics of the day.³ This is the approach Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott adopted in their book on the foremost English-speaking Canadian

1 Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith, *Canada's Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997).

2 Jeremy Rayner, "The Very Idea of Canadian Political Thought: In Defence of Historicism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26.2 (summer 1991): 7-24.

3 *Ibid.*, 22.

philosophers from 1850-1950, entitled *The Faces of Reason*.⁴ The contribution of Armour and Trott has scarcely been acknowledged in this new enthusiasm for Canadian political thought.⁵ Canadian theorists have overlooked them almost entirely in favour of building upon Bernard Bailyn's and J.G.A. Pocock's studies of the United States and Britain.⁶

Bailyn and Pocock refute what had briefly been the standard interpretation of US political culture as infused, through its constitution, with the principles of John Locke. This theory had been argued by Louis Hartz, and it offered an excellent explanation for what distinguished Canada from the US, which was further developed by Gad Horowitz.⁷ It focused primarily on why Canada was more open to socialism as a mainstream approach to politics. The key lay in Canada's tory tradition which had an organic view of society, which provided Canada's elite with a point of agreement and understanding with more progressive minded socialists. In contrast, Bailyn argues that the US political culture is not Lockean, but fundamentally civic republican. When Azjenstat accepts this argument and adopts it for Canada as well to explain Canada's cooperative ethos, she effectively erases any distinction on these grounds. Not only is she mistakenly reading the story of the US into Canada's tale, she is drawing on a study that was itself highly flawed.⁸

4 Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason: An Essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada 1850-1950*. (Toronto: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1981).

5 Azjenstat and Smith only recommend looking at it in the final footnote of their introduction to *Canada's Origins*.

6 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1992).

7 Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955). Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism: An Interpretation," Hugh G. Thorburn, ed., *Party Politics in Canada* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada, Inc., 1996).

8 For arguments refuting the Bailyn-Pocock thesis, see Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). John Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University

A Brief History of Canadian Idealism

Despite the renown achieved by the German idealists, their work did not slow the engine of Enlightenment realism which adopted various guises in the social sciences, such as economics, sociology, and psychoanalysis. However, idealism did find a receptive audience among a number of British philosophers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The leading figures of this movement were F.H. Bradley, T.H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet. And it was the students of these British scholars who infused Canadian universities with a form of idealism that was strongly linked to Christianity. Of course, idealism did not take hold in Canada by the sheer force of will of a few new professors. The situation of Canada made it extremely receptive to the vision of the idealists.

Until the close of the nineteenth century, Canada had steadfastly resisted the rupture that the Enlightenment had caused in most of Europe and in other British North American colonies. As Leslie Armour explains, the French and British inhabitants of Canada,

came from societies which had escaped the full force of the dissolution of traditional societies in Europe. The French were in Canada before the revolution; the British managed to maintain a kind of continuity which differed vastly from the persistent strands in post-revolutionary America and France. They thus saw community as natural and individuals as attaining merit in the context of some communal good.⁹

Canada's traditionalism was reinforced by its primarily rural social environment. According to Doug Owram, this rural agrarian setting emphasized the spiritual inner strength of the individual. The nature of the work rendered this form of individualism essential to success.

Press, 1990. Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995). Isaac Kramnik, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁹ Armour, *Faces*, 20.

Of course, it also required at times selfless support from the community to help with larger tasks. The foundation of social stability was considered to lie in the individual's moral training and awareness of being a part of a group. Thus Canadian individualism was firmly linked to the unity and morals of Christian communitarianism.¹⁰

The rural communitarian sensibility was well represented among Canadian intellectuals. At that time, there were only a very few fledgling universities and all were governed by religious and denominational forces.¹¹ The works of Adam Smith, Marx, Comte and other empirically oriented social scientists had very little impact. The administration and teachers were generally clergymen and their role as they understood it was "to direct the moral development of a student and to encourage the development of his faculties toward moral improvement."¹² This is not to say that the philosophy departments ignored Europe's leading economic and philosophic doctrines. They did find their place on some curricula,¹³ however, religion and morality were of central importance, and philosophers consistently sought a metaphysical foundation for their arguments while also seeking a rational¹⁴ foundation for their faith.¹⁵

Idealism fit naturally in this intellectual environment. The first Canadian idealist was George Paxton Young (1818-1889) who began teaching at Knox College in 1851. The crux of his idealism lay in his conviction that reason is not merely a tool for ordering bits and pieces of

10 Doug Owsam, *The Government Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 13.

11 Ibid., 8.

12 Ibid., 10.

13 Armour, *Faces*, 40.

14 Here rational refers to the properly human way of living, not the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment. For the distinction, see Charles Taylor, "Alternative Futures: Legitimacy, Identity, and Alienation in Late-Twentieth-Century Canada," *Reconciling the Solitudes* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 70.

15 Ibid., 58.

experience and knowledge, it is “the development of the inner structure of man.”¹⁶ Reason brings together concept and concrete experience and leads us to an insight about the order in which we live. Although Young was influential, idealism did not truly flourish in Canada until John Watson (1847-1939) arrived. When Watson began teaching at Queen’s University in 1872 he introduced a form of Hegelian idealism that was widely adopted by philosophy departments and lay intellectuals. His views were enthusiastically received because of the challenges confronting traditional views with the popular success of Darwin’s theories and the flourishing intellectual scepticism. People needed a system that could reconcile science and faith. Watson provided it.

In the literature on the history of Canadian philosophy, there are two main theories that identify the central quality of Canada’s culture that makes it peculiarly well-suited for idealism. The proponents of these theories are A.B. McKillop and Leslie Armour. In *A Disciplined Intelligence*, A.B. McKillop argues that Canada’s intellectual culture has been rooted in the notion of a “moral imperative” and this sustained the traditionalism against modernity’s many criticisms.¹⁷ McKillop argues that this has united Canadian thought beginning with Canada’s first philosopher, Thomas McCulloch (1777-1843), up to recent thinkers such as George P. Grant, Robertson Davies and W.L. Morton.¹⁸ Owram is among those who agree with this point of view. This is apparent when he explains that idealism succeeded in Canada in part because of its synthetic role, but “most importantly, it preserved the so-called *moral imperative* that shaped

16 Ibid., 104.

17 A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979), 3-4.

18 A.B. McKillop, “The Idealist Legacy,” in A.B. McKillop, *Contours of Canadian Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 97.

so much of the Canadian ethical system while facilitating at the same time an abandonment of literal acceptance of the Bible.”¹⁹

In contrast, Leslie Armour contends that Canada’s central quality is a particular conception of reason. He explains that Canadian thinkers of the late nineteenth century viewed reason far differently than their American or European cousins. For Canadian philosophers, reason was not “a formal foundation out of which knowledge may be spun [or] a kind of force for determining and showing what ought to be taken seriously and what derided [or] a device, arbitrary in its nature, by which one may generate rules of one’s own making for one’s own pleasure.”²⁰ Rather, for them reason was a dialectical process through which we build upon our society’s deposit of knowledge. We do this by constantly evaluating prevailing ideas and values, especially when there is a conflict. Through reason we improve our understanding of the working of things. It is important to note that with this idea of reason views are never considered to be entirely disproved because no conclusion is ever considered final. Knowledge is cumulative. Old ideas are not cast away; they are a part of the evolving edifice. In this sense, reason is something that develops historically through society. It is a process by which we expand our understanding of our experiences.²¹ According to Armour, this concept of reason is a valuable source of intellectual unity and tolerance. He maintains that this explains Canada’s capacity for federalism and resolving the crises that arise in a pluralistic society.

To summarize the two views, Armour situates the heart of Canadian thought in the open-mindedness that comes with seeing reason as an on-going process, whereas McKillop locates it in Canada’s moral conservatism. In this thesis I will side with Armour’s reading, although I do

19 Owram, 14, my emphasis.

20 Armour, *Faces*, 26.

21 *Ibid.*, 26.

believe that McKillop's argument has a secondary relevance. Moral conservatism is a part of appreciating the cumulative nature of knowledge - that is to say, so long as it is conserving culture and not dogmatically suppressing opposing views and debate. This is not the place to evaluate or determine which view is more accurate. Both are based on interpretations of actual writings, therefore they both give us an idea of the forces at play in the intellectual community of the day. Hence, for the purposes of this dissertation, we can accept both assessments of what makes Canada uniquely suited for idealism.

Idealism permitted Canadians to cross the threshold of modernity warmly cloaked in a philosophical system that included Christian morality and a notion of reason that encouraged independent reflection. This differs significantly from the radical and often violent breaks with the past that characterized the modernization of Europe and the US. By adopting idealism, Canadians skipped the harsh schisms that plagued the Enlightenment for a century, and they landed softly on the rich conciliatory ground cultivated by Hegel. They skipped the social problems that arose from an age of materialism, the atomistic ontology of contract theory, and its attendant conception of negative freedom that at times unleashed a destructive furore (as witnessed when the words of the *philosophes* were manifested in a state church of reason and swelled up to fuel the infamous Reign of Terror). Moreover, they reached this new terrain prior to being forced into modernity by the material conversion of Canada from an agrarian to an industrial economy.

A Political Dimension: Idealists as Reformers

By following Watson, Canada's intellectual community, and hence Canada as a whole, avoided many of the pitfalls of the Enlightenment and profited from a system that reconciled the many ideological conflicts. McKillop describes this synthetic role as follows:

[Idealism could] maintain the existence of the <moral nature' of man while asserting the active powers of mind. It constituted a new conception of design and purpose operating in the universe, one that could encompass rather than capitulate to evolutionary science. It offered a critique of empiricism and put empiricists on the defensive by revealing the limitations of scientific enterprise without attacking science *ad hominem*. It cultivated a pious disposition, yet did not belittle intellectual inquiry. It showed the essential <rationality' of the universe and placed everything within the perspective of a new and modern interpretation of the Christian experience, even while defending the essentials of the faith as it conceived them.²²

This synthesis also had a political dimension. Idealism provided an approach to political reform and social progress that combined the primacy of individual freedom with communitarianism. It was understood that individual freedom was enhanced, not hindered, by social order and personal sacrifice for the common good. The community educates individuals, thus making the world intelligible and enabling them to make decisions about their lives, and it also furnishes them with a context in which to act. The children of a society inherit a cultural perspective that is the product of a particular history, and this culture plays a fundamental role in defining their identities. Therefore their desires are largely determined by their cultural inheritance, and the institutions of their society are likely the best possible settings to fulfil their desires. Thus it follows that the people's interests are tied to those of their community, and rational individuals will willingly choose to support and improve the institutions of their society. In this way, idealism equates reason and freedom.

²² McKillop, "Idealist," 98.

However, this must not be mistaken for a justification for tyranny or fascism. Freedom is fundamental. Individuals are considered to have free wills. They are able to reflect upon what they have learned in an original way. They are able to evaluate their society's institutions and devise ways of improving them. As Armour explains:

Though the individual depends both upon history and upon specific social arrangements which can be chosen, and although he ought not to display the arrogance of supposing that he could be himself without the other, the individual nevertheless has, in his community, a measure of freedom to construct or reconstruct his society.²³

Moreover, this form of freedom requires a tolerant and flexible society:

For any freedom of action to occur, the culture has to be malleable enough to accommodate a change of ideas, the technology has to be able to make the new ideas feasible, and the community has to be rich enough in its power of making distinction to be able to provide new ones.²⁴

Idealism on Liberty

Idealism is highly critical of the negative conception of freedom that was defended by contract theorists. Contractarians depict freedom as freedom from external obstacles. One is most free when one can fulfill desires without restrictions. Idealism argues that this leaves individuals with no more than their appetites to refer to for decision making. They become slaves to the appetite that is the strongest at the moment. In contrast, truly free individuals are those who first rationally evaluate their desires in light of the greater social good because they realize that their freedom is dependent upon it. They recognize that society provides them with the knowledge for discerning their best interest and the context for realizing those interests. Thus the truly free person is the moral person. Watson states:

23 Armour, *The Idea of Canada and the Crisis of Community* (Ottawa: Steel Rail Publishing, 1981), 71.

24 Ibid., 73.

I have tried to show that knowledge implies freedom because it lifts man above the flux of immediate impression and so liberates him from the tyranny of the sensible. Similarly, it may be shown that in his action, as properly understood, man is free because he is not under the dominion of immediate impulses.²⁵

This conception of freedom and its link to history and intersubjectivity becomes a rationalization of religion when one includes a somewhat pantheistic notion of God. The knowledge we acquire about the order of things is knowledge of God. By choosing to act according to that knowledge we match our wills with that of God. In addition, history is the progressive realization of God's will in the world. He wills that we know Him and therefore history is simultaneously the progression of human knowledge, reason, and freedom. The state, its culture, and its laws are the product of this progress and the tools for taking it further (recall Armour's thesis about reason as process). By promoting the interests of our society, we are uniting our wills with God's. Ultimately, after an argument more complex than this sketch can hope to do justice to, idealism shows how the rational desires of the individual, the interests of the state, and the will of God are in harmony. Watson says, "...the subject becomes conscious of himself as that which is to overcome nature and subordinate it to moral ends. God is thus revealed, not as indifferent to the purposes of men, but as involved in them."²⁶ Finally, this is how idealism reconciles the modern opposition of individual freedom versus morality, and reason versus faith:

Here the Kantian dichotomy of morality and science vanishes. Here, the hope of religion lies in the union of man and nature and in understanding the proposition that, since reality is a rational order, the irrationalities of limited experience can be overcome. But they can be overcome not by mysticism, not by a return to superstition, but only by the application of reason.²⁷

25 Quoted in Armour, *Faces*, 228.

26 Quoted in *ibid.*, 314.

27 *Ibid.*, 316.

The Decline of Canadian Idealism: Tipping the Balance from Theory to Practice

Idealism's reign did not last. Canada experienced an economic boom and with it came industrialization and new challenges to traditional spiritual values. This transition is reflected in an essay by one of idealism's strongest proponents, the highly regarded principal of Queen's University, George Monroe Grant. He anticipated by 60 years his equally renowned grandson's famous text by lamenting Canada's transformation into a "city of pigs," Plato's description of a society guided exclusively by appetites (negative freedom). G.M. Grant dreamed of "a land of high-souled men and women" and instead he saw the rise of "vulgar and insolent materialism."²⁸ This sentiment was echoed by clergy, journalists and academics across English- and French-speaking Canada.

There are those who argue that the Canadian idealists sewed the seeds of their own demise.²⁹ It is argued that by synthesizing religion and social science they ushered in the transition from theology to philosophy, which in turn would be replaced by "hard" social science. However, a better understanding is to view idealism in Canada as a buffer that prevented the inevitable break with tradition from being too violent, thus allowing traditional customs and mores to survive in various forms and serve to restrain the moral decline and the triumph of the will.

According to Owram, the break occurred because the agrarian values were no longer sufficient in the emerging industrial economy. An industrial society required more expertise from its future economic, intellectual and particularly political leaders than was offered by a university training that emphasized hard work and a strong moral sense. The government's role

²⁸ Quoted in Owram, *Government*, 15.

²⁹ McKillop, *Aldealist*, 102.

in managing the economy and providing an infrastructure for industry grew. With these new responsibilities came a demand for civil servants who were capable of promoting economic development while regulating industry to protect citizens from the ruthlessness of the capitalist system.

The cruelties of capitalism challenged traditional morality on the personal level as well as the political. The notion of the autonomous individual within a Christian community may have served people well in a rural setting, but industriousness was no guarantee of success in a realm subject to the tumult of market trends, competition, and management competence or incompetence. Urbanization meant a loss of independence and a vulnerability to a new set of social problems: slum life, poor working conditions, disease, and class antagonisms.

Concerned intellectuals turned from moral instruction to social reform. For instance, the social gospel movement emerged. This movement sought to quell the brewing crises with a form of socialism which was quite different from the more common socialist movements of the day. This was primarily a moral campaign rather than a program of economic management.³⁰ “It sought to preserve the dictates of the moral imperative and the idealistic notion of an organic and improving civilization by jettisoning the other nineteenth-century ideals of autonomous individualism and, not incidentally, the constitutional and political systems this implied.”³¹

There were also a number of idealist reformers, and they accused the social gospel movement of undermining the organic community. Adam Shortt, an economist and a student of Watson, argued that, despite its apparent rejection of individualism, “The really practical aspect of socialism and its real danger to modern society lies not in its sentimental or strictly socialistic

30 Owram, *Government*, 25.

31 *Ibid.*, 23.

feature, but in its individualistic basis. The strength of that basis is the appeal to personal and material self-interest of men who, in their ignorance, have been led to believe that they are being unjustly deprived of a great part of the wealth which properly belongs to them by a tyrannous and selfish upper class.”³²

Shortt’s combination of political economics and idealism represented the next stage in the development of social science in Canada. His peers, among whom were Stephen Leacock, W.L. Grant, and O.D. Skelton, led the academic community from the ethereal heights of the ivory tower into the nuts and bolts of governing. They struggled to have their views influence government either as consultants or full fledged bureaucrats. For instance, Shortt was a pioneer in transforming the civil service from an ineffective government organ choked by the practice of patronage to a meritocracy staffed by trained experts. In 1908, Shortt was appointed as one of two civil service commissioners charged with the administration of the new Civil Service Act. While his efforts in this position did not have the impact he had hoped, his appointment and his project marked a significant change in the role of the academic. Not only did he himself exemplify the transition, but by seeking advice and assistance from other academics he established links between universities and government. And, of course, his suggestions as commissioner emphasized hiring experts from academia to the civil service.³³

The generation of academics who followed them were more interested in studying and/or managing institutions than interpreting the Bible, but nevertheless they approached economic reform guided by the principles of Watson and his devotees. They taught political economy, or brought that expertise to government, but they were not technocrats. In their pursuit of social

32 Quoted in *ibid.*, 25.

33 *Ibid.*, 69-70.

change “efficiency was a means rather than an end, and the goal was the spiritual and moral improvement of society.”³⁴ Through this new generation, a somewhat altered or diluted idealism infused both the universities and the government institutions.³⁵ Of course, as the focus shifted from contemplating the metaphysical questions, the idealist principles eventual grew stale and lost their claim on people’s hearts.

Shortt’s generation was the last to hold idealist principles and understand them. Their students inherited some sense of the ethic that fuelled reform, but *en mass* relatively few were philosophically oriented.³⁶ Most of the subsequent generation, which Owram has called the “government generation,” had fully converted to the ethic of technocracy. They came of age in the 1940s with an expertise in economics and a sense that they had a right to govern. They were reformists who had inherited an agenda from Shortt, Skelton and the social gospel movement, but had mostly dropped the Christian foundation. Like Shortt and others they believed merit not patronage should determine bureaucratic employment, and the state should provide social programs, such as health care, unemployment insurance and minimum wage. However, they no longer maintained the same ontological justification for these principles. For instance, the state ceased to represent an organic whole. It became separate from the people, a service agency of the individual, and the good of the individual replaced any notion of a common good. They took an instrumental view of society, and for them efficiency became the end rather than the means.³⁷

For this generation, liberalism, capitalism and pragmatism were the ideologies that suited their project. Thus policy making ceased to have a higher moral end. The liberal morality was the

34 Ibid., 90.

35 McKillop, “Idealists,” 104.

36 In *Faces*, Armour and Trott discuss some of the more prominent idealists of this generation, including Rupert Lodge and Henry Wright.

37 Owram, *Government*, 120.

right of the individual to negative liberty, limited only by the harm principle. There was not a sacred historical eidos to be realized. “The process of governing well became, in a sense, an end in itself,” explains Owrham. “It was a managerial concept of the state that fitted well into the idea that the state was analogous to a business.”³⁸ The emerging social scientists styled themselves as business managers rather than moral leaders, and many of them entered the civil service. The ideology of this flourishing breed of technocrats was a “marriage of the utilitarian and liberal ideals of individual happiness with a perception of the state as a mechanistic agency that should be freely used to provide the services the community found desirable.”³⁹

These experts in efficiency became Canada’s leaders and policy formers. They also became the objects of criticism of those few intellectuals who took up the idealist torch. Since then idealists have mostly cried out from the periphery, either lamenting the decline of metaphysics or promoting a renewal of our idealist legacy. A few have achieved a degree of prominence, including C.B. Macpherson, trying to revive common purpose and the historical study of ideas;⁴⁰ George Parkin Grant, echoing his ancestors’ laments;⁴¹ and Charles Taylor, hopeful that Hegelianism will help to reconcile our cultural fragmentation.

38 Ibid., 120.

39 Ibid., 189-90. It is interesting to note George P. Grant’s observations regarding the civil service some time later. Here he argues that liberalism effectively usurps the concept of Canada as a nation: “The officials of the Department of Finance had mostly learnt their economics at Queen’s University in Ontario, where the glories of the free market were the first dogma. But nationalism was negated by the policies that proceeded from such a dogma. The officials of External Affairs had mostly been educated in the twilight of scepticism of Oxford liberalism. This kind of culture does not give one the stamina to be a nationalist in the twentieth century.” *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1965), 49.

40 William Leiss, *C.B. Macpherson: Dilemmas of Liberalism and Socialism* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1988), 48.

41 In his lament for Canada, George P. Grant writes: “Western civilization was committed in its heart to the religion of progress and the emancipated passions.” *Lament for a Nation*, 59.

Elements of Idealism: Idealism and Actuality

For many who are familiar with Macpherson, Grant and Taylor, this will seem like an unlikely trio to be cast as philosophical brethren. Macpherson's work was strongly informed by his training as a political economist, and he is normally considered to have been a Marxist. William Christian's authoritative work on Grant portrays him as a Christian Platonist who only briefly flirted with Hegelianism. As for Taylor, this may be less surprising as his interest in Hegel and Herder is quite open; however, it is not generally considered to outweigh so entirely his other influences. Despite their various leanings - Marxism, Christianity, philosophy of language - I believe that the fundamentally definitive framework is Hegelianism and that their discussions of Marx, Simone Weil, and Wittgenstein are secondary colourations that lend up-to-date spin to their work, or, at times, help to emphasize or refine certain areas of interest. Also, these more recent thinkers enable them to make sense of their Hegelianism in their current environment.

Idealism is often mistaken for the antonym of realism and hence the source of impractical propositions. It is understood in the Platonic sense which affirms the priority of ideal, mind-independent prototypes, or the Berkeleyian and Kantian theory that we cannot know things in themselves, only the appearances of things. Those who place more significance in things empirical consider this line of thought highly problematic. It certainly does not gel with Macpherson's methodology which considers both ideas and concrete "facts" to be of equal importance.⁴² Political economy, which Grant too indulges in from time to time,⁴³ could not be confused with this type of idealism. It does, however, make a nice fit with the idealism

42 William Leiss, *C.B. Macpherson: Dilemmas of Liberalism and Socialism* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1988), 17.

43 See for instance *Lament for a Nation.: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1965)

developed by Hegel. He does not give preference to the idea over the empirical. And yet, nor does he support John Locke's prioritization of things over our conceptualization of them. He weighs them both in equally. For Hegel, we cannot know a thing until we have conceptualized it, and our conceptions are only valid when they have actuality.⁴⁴ According to Hegel, mere concepts are one-sided and lack truth.⁴⁵ Hotho's notes in Allen Wood's edition of the *Philosophy of Right* provides a helpful explanation of this:

The concept and its existence are two aspects of the same thing, separate and united, like body and soul.... The unity of existence and the concept, of body and soul, is the Idea. It is not just a harmony, but a complete interpenetration.⁴⁶

Hegel's intention was to eliminate the Kantian dualism between concepts and sensory material.⁴⁷ He rejected the depiction of material objects as dependent upon the human being.⁴⁸ He sought to surpass this subjective idealism and develop a holistic absolute idealism. The thesis begins with a chapter devoted to clarifying what this means.

History of Philosophy

There is an interdependence between idealism, the methodology and the conclusions, hence a discussion of one aspect reinforces the validity of my claims about the other two. The methodology that was refined by Hegel and inherited by the Canadian Idealists is a historicist analysis of past philosophers. It was developed in response to the Cartesian approach of beginning philosophical study from the point of one's individual reason abstracted from the

44 G.W.H. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Allen Wood, ed., H.B. Nisbit, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25.

45 Ibid., 25. As Michael Inwood points out "one-sided" means dogmatic for Hegel, thus idealism as well as realism can be dogmatic. See his *A Hegel Dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 128.

46 Hegel, *Elements*, 25-6.

47 Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 128.

48 Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality," in Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104.

past.⁴⁹ Hegel thought it essential to acknowledge the degree to which philosophy and institutions are a product of their history. He was not alone in this appeal to history, but he did develop it into a “self-conscious and general method of philosophy,” one which is self-critical, aware of its own methods, presuppositions, and limits, and therefore a method that could be a “weapon to be wielded against its own pretences and illusions.”⁵⁰

For Hegel there is not a distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy. However, Hegel developed a different approach to history that avoided the error that Rayner criticized Janet Ajzenstat for making. Reflective history “applies general ideas or conceptions to history and attempts to make sense of it.”⁵¹ By imposing a particular view upon the past, the historian does not bridge the gap between herself (subject) and the past (object). Hegel also aims to overcome the flaw of original history where the writer narrates events in which he or she has participated.⁵² The problem with this type of historical account is that it lacks universal perspective because it only takes account of the events witnessed by the author.⁵³

Hegel’s system builds upon or stems from his idealism, according to which we can know the thing-in-itself, though imperfectly because our knowledge of it will always be partly coloured by our cultural perspective. This is not to say that he makes the error of the reflective historian. There is an effort to surrender all preconceptions, while realizing that there is always necessarily an a priori inner dialectic. Hegel accepts that we cannot hope to understand fully a past culture as it would have understood itself, but nonetheless if we adopt his method we can at least approach the goal by reconstructing the past sympathetically on the basis of rigorous investigation. The

49 Frederick C. Beiser, “Hegel’s Historicism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 270.

50 *Ibid.*, 272.

51 *Ibid.*, 283.

52 *Ibid.*, 283.

53 *Ibid.*, 283.

philosopher of history strives to examine the cultures of the past in terms of *their own* beliefs, values, and ideals.⁵⁴ In particular, Hegel asserts that the subject matter of history is the dialectic of a nation's culture in which the participants realize that their goals and ideals are in conflict with their experience. This self-consciousness leads them to seek a resolution by adopting higher ideals.

The Politics of Idealism

Hegel's politics is the third element I wish to show has been adopted by the Canadian idealists. Political issues are normally rather particular to a time and place, but the broader issues of western politics have changed very little in the past one hundred and seventy years. Indeed, aside from the pressing issue of the planet's environmental health, what Hegel considered to be the central political issue continues to have priority, namely, individual freedom versus civic unity. For Hegel, this conflict took many forms, and he articulated views on several - economic equality, property rights, the family, nationalism, war, constitutionalism, citizen political participation, morality, and alienation.

The Canadian idealists each have a different focus, but the Hegelian perspective is always apparent as is Hegel's unique method of finding a solution. I wish to state clearly that I do not mean to suggest or imply that they were turning to Hegel's writings directly when considering an issue. Especially for Macpherson and Grant, the influence was far less direct than this. It was the phenomenology and methodology that they had learned as undergraduate students that led them invariably to political positions similar to Hegel's.⁵⁵ For instance, the approach to history leads to the reverence of national culture as a source of one's identity and moral framework within which

54 Ibid., 284.

55 The phenomenology and methodology were not taught to them as Hegelian, but as matters of fact.

we can evaluate our beliefs and assumptions. This historic-ontological view informs Taylor's position on multiculturalism and Grant's lament for Canadian nationalism. Another example is the conviction that the intersubjective nature of freedom (recognition) is dependent upon an exchange of ideas and general discourse leads to an enmity toward negative conceptions of liberty, politics as proceduralism and the precepts now associated with neo-liberalism. Macpherson, Grant and Taylor have each addressed Berlin's argument for negative liberty. Moreover, the organic conception of the state which Hegel's hermeneutic-historical thought necessitates making a social obligation to offset the harsh effects of unbridled capitalism with progressive state social programs. All three subjects of my study have strong socialist leanings. Finally, Hegel's philosophy leads to the politics of the progressive moderate, neither radical nor reactionary. He respects the importance of inherited institutions and the value of historical continuity and tradition.⁵⁶ In this way he is much like Burke. However, unlike Burke, he learns from history's telos - history is the progression of the self-consciousness of freedom - that constitutional reform is also desirable.

To show the presence of Hegel's idealism, hermeneutic-historical thought, and politics, I will rely principally on a textual analysis of the oeuvres of Macpherson, Grant and Taylor. Secondly, I will use biographical information to explain how they came to be influenced by Hegel's thought. This will include a look at their families and their professors, as well as an overview of the history of the social sciences in Canada, and the economic and political circumstances of the time of their formative years. This overview will provide clues as to why they addressed the issues they did.

⁵⁶ Beiser, 297.

The Outline

Chapter Two is an overview of the predominant interpretations of Hegel's work, with a strong emphasis on bringing the insights of the most recent scholarship to bear on the major criticisms of his politics. This chapter begins with Isaiah Berlin's criticism of Hegel's theory of positive liberty. This criticism becomes the touchstone for each of the three subjects treated in the dissertation, as each has addressed Berlin's renowned essay directly. The chapter on Hegel will explore the various interpretations of Hegel's philosophy and come out in favour of the non-mystical reading. This will serve to establish the core elements of the philosophical idealism - its conception of human nature, and its political vision - that runs through the works of Canada's Idealists.

Having thus given an introductory explanation of Hegel's idealism, its political significance, and indicated how it can be rescued from its former pariah status, we can turn to Macpherson, Grant and Taylor. There are two chapters on each thinker. The first establishes their Hegelian roots. The second puts the theory to work. That is, it employs new insight to clarify some other aspect of their work. The first chapters will start with their biographies, thus establishing the feasibility of the argument. This will be followed by their responses to Isaiah Berlin's defence of negative liberty against the positive liberty of Idealists, which will help to verify their accordance with the precepts of absolute idealism. I will then identify the influence of Hegel on their hermeneutic-historical methodology, and their conclusions about the history of western thought, the essence of modernity, the nature of agency and the socio-political structure that is best suited for the fulfilment of the modern self.

The structure of the second chapter will vary according to the thinker. For Macpherson, it will be devoted to responding to common misinterpretations of the source of his views. For Grant, it will unveil where Hegel's influence shines through in other essays that have never been considered in this light. It will also explore the impact of Leo Strauss' work on Grant's confidence in Hegel's notion of progress and his disposition in general. With Taylor, the second chapter will measure whether his Catholicism really distinguishes him from Hegel as much as he supposes.

Further Dimensions of the Contribution

To some extent this dissertation picks up where Armour and Trott left off, the 1950s English-speaking Canada. However, my approach differs from theirs in an important way. They locate the common thread that binds this tradition in a conception of reason that was articulated by the classical German Idealists, whereas I place greater emphasis on Hegelianism in particular. I believe Armour and Trott were being unnecessarily cautious because they adhere to an unfavourable reading of Hegel which has been successfully challenged in recent literature. With this new interpretation of Hegel, it might be worthwhile for other scholars to revisit this analysis of John Watson and others. Yet, regardless of whether or not these early Canadian philosophers were strictly Hegelian has no bearing on my argument. It is sufficient that they were predominantly Idealists and the progeny of classical German Idealism via British Idealism. This is enough to warrant my claim that Macpherson, Grant, and Taylor are following in a tradition.

In addition to identifying an intellectual tradition and its central tenets, this study provides a more thorough comprehension of the works of the three principal political philosophers, and develops a perspective that will facilitate an understanding of their peers and

their students. From this point of lucidity, we will have a view of many of their otherwise hidden assumptions, some of which they were not aware of themselves. Once we can look past the debris of common erroneous interpretations of their work, we will be in better position to analyze and criticize their arguments.

Finally, by announcing the survival of this tradition, this essay will serve as a window to viewing other works which belong to the same landscape, either through influences similar to those experienced by Macpherson, Grant and Taylor, or through the influence of these three on their students. This could prove to be a far reaching awakening to a fuller consciousness of the forces that drive Canada's thinkers and, consequently, its politics.

The focal point of this study will be the concept of freedom. Macpherson, Grant and Taylor have written on a great number of topics that concern political theorists, but the central theme throughout their respective careers has been the struggle to reconcile individual freedom and civic unity. This can be discussed in various terms - positive versus negative liberty, freedom versus law, individualism versus communitarianism, possessive individualism versus a theory of political obligation, caprice versus morality. But whatever its form it is the dilemma that has confronted modern theorists since Hobbes and it is the issue that lies at the heart of most contemporary political conflicts from the great to the petty. In order to begin to address the issues one must first develop one's own idea of what it means to be free. Is it the absence of external obstacle? Is it merely freedom from the fear of violent death? Is it grounded in property rights, beginning with the rights to ownership of one's self? Or does true freedom require more, such as meaningful labour, a thriving religious community, or recognition of our worth? The truth about freedom is the Holy Grail of political philosophy, and in the quest for it, Macpherson, Grant and Taylor cover an extensive and varied terrain.

Chapter Two Hegel's Idealism Regained

Introduction

A mystical *Geist* is bound to be intolerable to those interested in a truly rational approach to the study of politics, history and philosophy, and it is this understanding of Hegel's project that cause Grant and Taylor explicitly to reject his system. We may safely assume this is the same reason that Macpherson never would have entertained the idea that he was an Hegelian. However, what if they followed Hegel right up until the leap of faith? Would they not still be predominantly Hegelians? I argue that this is so. And what if Hegel had been misinterpreted all along and that this leap of faith was unnecessary to follow his system? Would they not then be running headlong into his arms just as they believed they were freeing themselves of him? I contend that this is exactly what happened.

In Defence of Geist: Intersubjectivity, not God

There has been a great deal of work in the last twenty years reconsidering the common assumptions about Hegel as mystic and reactionary. A new Hegel has emerged that Macpherson and Grant were unlikely to have seen, and Taylor does not accept. The predominant interpretations can be divided into three schools. The first two have already been mentioned: those who see Hegel as a mystic reactionary to be shunned, and those who admire his political philosophy if only we exempt his notion of Geist and replace it with something more practical (for Taylor this is the philosophy of language). The third school has only recently emerged, and for them Geist has more rational forms. For instance, it is reinterpreted as the name for the thoughts of human beings intertwined through physical and intellectual interaction - not God's spirit. According to scholars such as G.H.R. Parkinson, Robert Pippin, Robert R. Williams and

Paul Redding, Geist is Hegel's term for the activity in which ideas, reason and action blend in a logical and dialectical fashion. It is the principle in Hegel's system where metaphysics and politics meet. It is the metaphysical account of the very political concept of freedom, and it is the overarching unification of his system which has no fundamental principles, no beginning as such, only the dialectical interaction of the various facets of human existence that attain their rational culmination in their organic and harmonious interaction.

Hegel considered the pivotal dilemma of modernity to be the conflict between social unity and individual freedom. He saw it as the problem of enjoying the social coherence he believed existed in ancient Greece without the blind deference to tradition, and the liberty of the post-Enlightenment rational individual without the social fragmentation, spiritual anomy, and atomism. Hegel found his solution in the intersubjectivity of *Geist*. This is not to be understood as a synthesis of individualism and collectivism,¹ but the introduction of a distinct third alternative. It may be anathema as a mystical concept, but read as a scientific project it becomes far more attractive. This chapter sets out the more current interpretation of Hegel's political philosophy, with particular emphasis on his conception of freedom and its associate *Geist*. The intention is to make a case for Hegel's politics as an advanced form of liberalism that brings us a more complete understanding of human fulfilment and liberty than we find in Hobbes and Locke or Rousseau and Herder, rather than a hypocritical formula for oppression that marks a regression to authoritarianism, as is commonly believed. The ideas introduced here will be taken up again when analysing the oeuvres of Macpherson, Grant and Taylor.

¹ This reading is adopted by, for instance, Charles Taylor and Karl-Heinz Ilting. I follow Robert Williams' refutation of this view that Hegel never accepts individualism as anything but an abstraction, nor does he accept the individualist-collectivist dualism and hence can not be said to synthesize them. See Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, (University of California Press, 1997), 114.

Hegel's dialectical logic renders it impossible to choose the correct starting point in explaining his system. There is no foundational premise, so instead we have begun in the introduction with an explanation of his version of idealism. Now we can consider this in light of the common criticism of his notion of *Geist* and freedom. Then we will draw upon several contemporary scholars to mount a defence against this criticism, and thereby develop a more thorough account of this philosophical and political stance.

Criticism: Geist is a Recipe for Tyranny

The holistic aspect of his system brings us to the second common criticism of his work, which asserts that his monologic vision of the cosmos guided by God's will or spirit (*Geist*) negates the possibility of individual freedom and hence, as a political theory, translates into a justification of totalitarianism.² In *Reason in History*, Hegel suggests that human reason as a whole is in fact God as subject, or "Idea," whereas the material world as a whole, or "Nature," is God as object. These two dimensions of God are brought together in *Geist* - God's will or spirit acting in the world in order to unify Idea and Nature through humanity's consciousness of freedom. Hegel's historicism then is the progression of the consciousness of human freedom through history, which is the manifestation of *Geist*. The logical conclusion of this holistic system is to argue that any given political structure of any given society is as it ought to be, it is sanctioned by *Geist* and hence above reproach. Worse still, individual freedom seems to be to conform to this *Geist*. This line of argument maintains that *Geist* requires a leap of faith, thus making Hegel's system a reversion to pre-Kantian metaphysics rather than the rational social science it claims to be. Those who subscribe to this interpretation conclude that on a practical

² See, for instance, Michael Inwood, *Hegel*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983); and William Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

level *Geist* is the justification for the suppression of political dissent and that Hegel was in fact a reactionary apologist for Prussia's government under Friedrich Wilhelm III. Isaiah Berlin is among them.

Berlin's Perspective: Two Concepts of Liberty

The individualist conception of freedom that is most common in contemporary liberal culture is well articulated by Isaiah Berlin in his renowned 1958 essay "Two Concepts of Liberty." This essay was a catalyst for the revival of the individualist-collectivist debate and provides an excellent example of the general consensus about Hegel among those with an introductory knowledge of his work. Berlin assesses the individualist-collectivist debate in terms of "negative" and "positive liberty."³ These terms delineate seemingly antithetical accounts of the nature of freedom and how the state ought to protect it. For Berlin, negative liberty, simply put, is liberty from. It refers to the absence of external physical or legal obstacles to the choices and actions of individuals. Berlin associates negative liberty with the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith, and to some extent John Stuart Mill. Regardless of their differences on other questions, they all shared the belief that liberty meant maintaining the independence of some portion of human existence from the sphere of social control.⁴ In summarizing Mill's arguments, Berlin explains:

The defence of liberty consists in the 'negative' goal of warding off interference. To threaten a man with persecution unless he submits to a life in which he exercise no choices of his goals; to block before him every door but one, no matter how noble the prospect upon which it opens, or how benevolent the

3 Immanuel Kant, *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans., Lewis White Beck (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1959), 64.

4 Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, (Cambridge, MASS: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), 395.

motives of those who arrange this, is to sin against the truth that he is a man, a being with a life of his own to live.⁵

In contrast, Berlin explains that positive liberty is derived from “the wish of the individual to be his own master.”⁶ According to Berlin, proponents of positive liberty, such as Hegel, argue that mere choice is not sufficient for true freedom because in some circumstances liberty might be limited, not by external forces, but rather by our own ignorance of what is in our best interests, or by a lack of options provided by the state. An example of the latter might be a free market economy wherein state involvement is limited to the maintenance of law and order and does not provide social services such as public education, health care, or financial support for the poor. In these circumstances, while the state may not be actively obstructing people’s liberty, citizens lack the essential elements that make liberty meaningful. The relationship between self-mastery and liberty is most pertinent to our discussion of Hegel. Berlin asserts that Hegel’s conception of liberty entails a distinction between a ‘higher’ and a ‘lower nature.’ This distinction sets the stage for an internal liberation. Here human agency entails the capacity to evaluate our interests rationally, and to be able to act in accordance with those interests and override the pull of other desires.⁷ Now, not only does liberty refer to the freedom from external obstacles, but it also involves freedom from intellectual, emotional, or spiritual limitations. We may not consider ourselves to be truly free until we can rise above our passions, uncontrolled desires, irrational impulses, or in other words, our lower nature.

Berlin further explains that the notion of a higher nature can include more than the rational determination of interests; it can also involve a profound link to a social whole wherein

5 Ibid., 395.

6 Ibid., 397.

7 The interpretation of Hegel which I follow does not see reason and the appetite in a Platonic manner, that is, as conflicting forces competing for governance of the will, but rather as aspects of a complete person that are to be harmonized. Contrary to common readings, appetite is for Hegel a source of inspiration, not distraction.

individuals realize their “true” selves. Examples of such social bodies include tribes, church, state, or “the great society of the living and the dead and the yet unborn.”⁸ Berlin argues that such circumstances invite the imposition of a “collective, or ‘organic’, single will upon its recalcitrant members,” to achieve its and their higher freedom.⁹ He explains that this form of coercion is plausible because people understand that there are instances where it may be justifiable to coerce people in the name of some goal, such as public health, on the grounds that they would pursue this goal if they were more enlightened.¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite these acceptable examples of higher goods upheld by the state, he argues that conceptualizing freedom in this way creates fertile soil for the emergence of state oppression:

This renders it easy for me to conceive of myself as coercing others for their own sake, in their, not my, interests. I am then claiming that I know what they truly need better than they know it themselves... Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and on behalf, of their ‘real’ selves.¹¹

Berlin argues that this involves a dangerous sleight of hand where the idea that people may be coerced for their own good is transformed into the claim that they are not being coerced at all, and that because it is in their own interests, it is in fact in accordance with their wills. Hence, an act of coercion becomes an act of true freedom. And it remains freedom despite the desperate resistance of a person’s “poor earthly body and foolish mind.”¹²

8 Ibid., 397.

9 Ibid., 397.

10 Ibid., 397.

11 Ibid., 398.

12 Ibid., 398.

Berlin's Argument for Negative Liberty

Ultimately, Berlin favours negative liberty because it is the only conception of freedom that accommodates the truth he considers to be self-evident, namely, that the goals of human beings are many, and cannot be brought under “a unified system of thought with a single fixed conception of the good.”¹³ He contends that “these systems can only be held together by force and distortion of truth.”¹⁴ Not only does he consider negative liberty and its accompanying value pluralism to be more realistic, but he also maintains that it is more humane. He contends that the right to choose between ultimate values is essential to people's status as human beings. He bases this argument on an ontology of the self that he mentions only briefly. In this conception of the self the influence of Kant's notion of autonomy is made evident. He states that people's “life and thought are determined by fundamental moral categories and concepts that are, at any rate over large stretches of time and space, a part of their being and thought and sense of their own identity.”¹⁵ Hegel, too, derives this notion from Kant, but Hegel gives it content in *Sittlichkeit*.

William Connolly:

Berlin's criticism of Hegel is reinforced by William Connolly who engages in a more direct attack of the metaphysical system within which Hegel situates his conception of freedom. Connolly understands what Berlin would call Hegel's “unified system of thought” to be a project to reunite reason and faith within a system of thought that will have the best of both worlds: the certainty of proof offered by reason and the moral strength and direction offered by faith.¹⁶

13 Ibid., 413.

14 Ibid., 412.

15 Ibid., 414. It is noteworthy that Berlin lumps Kant in among the rationalists he criticizes. Where he actually stands with regard to human agency is quite vague. See footnote 21 of “Two Concepts.”

16 Robert Meynell, “Idealism and Identity: George Grant and Charles Taylor Confront the Modern Dilemma.” M.A. Thesis, Acadia University, 1998, 15.

Hegel believed that this was necessary because the Enlightenment's confidence in pure reason, and its rejection of the moral code that had been principally housed in the Christian faith, modern societies in the West would invariably decline into so many tyrannies.

It cannot generate an ethic, or realize freedom or establish knowledge out of itself alone. In defeating faith, it lost what faith had known darkly and defended weakly: without a work invested with intrinsic significance which transcends the resources of the pure self alone, the ethic, freedom and knowledge it seeks cannot be created; pure insight on its own is only capable of destruction.¹⁷

Connolly explains that Hegel developed a system in which God is "Reason," and human thought is the manifestation of God in the world. When human beings engage in rational thought, they are in fact gaining some comprehension of God. The key to this system is Hegel's assertion that the history of humanity is in fact guided by God's will or spirit (*Geist*). History therefore is the progressive development of that which God wills, and what He wills is the unification of his subjective form, "Idea," with his objective form, "Nature." The forum for this development is human thought. Human beings exist in Nature, therefore we act as a bridge between God as subject (Idea) and object (Nature). As human reason advances we become more cognizant of God (Reason), and this knowledge is reflected in the organization of our societies.

In this system of thought, to be free is to act in accordance with what we would will if we were not ignorant, which is the perfection found in the will of God. Thus freedom is equated with the knowledge of God (development of human reason), and acting in accordance with His will. Therefore, if history is the progressive unification of Idea and Nature through human

¹⁷ Ibid., 110.

thought, so too is it the progression of freedom. It is due to this that Hegel maintains that the most fruitful study is the study of the development of freedom in history, because it is there that we can trace God's will (*Geist*), and perhaps discern what our contribution to that progression should be. Also, it is in this philosophy of history, Connolly explains, that Hegel's ontology "unites revelation and knowledge by giving the former the shape of conceptual understanding and the latter the inner experience of fulfillment."¹⁸

The conception of freedom that emerges from this ontology is highly collectivist. If we can rationally discern our role in the progression of history, then it follows that we can know how best to structure our society. Therefore, making our society fit its historical role becomes a common cause which all rational citizens engage in enthusiastically. They realize that in adopting this project as their own aligns them with to the perfection of God's will. One can thus conclude that conforming to the common goal is the true realization of freedom. This sketch of Connolly's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy is somewhat rough but it is sufficient for our purposes.

Connolly's criticism is that Hegel's project to unify faith and reason fails because it ultimately relies on a faith in *Geist*. He argues that there is no rational support for this belief. One could only be certain that history is moving toward the realization of Idea in Nature by witnessing its completion. Otherwise, it remains contestable, as does the attendant conception of freedom.¹⁹ Connolly accuses Hegel of depoliticising the ideals of social life.²⁰ He argues that Hegel "invests too much ontological significance in the artifices through which common

18 Ibid., 111.

19 Ibid., 114.

20 Ibid., 129.

purposes are defined and the common standards by which conduct is governed.”²¹ According to Connolly, there are too many factors in the realm of government which necessitate contentious politics to hope that the administrative representatives of the state could be unrivalled conveyers of self-consciousness and identity. To support his case that politics requires conflicting positions, Connolly points out “that the resources of social knowledge are perpetually insufficient to select a single decision with confidence from the array of possibilities; ... That a case typically can be made for some of the choices ignored or foreclosed by any decision actually taken.”²²

Hence Hegel’s expectations for the state administration are merely “mad dreams.” The state cannot be relied upon to attain higher self-consciousness through philosophy and history, and pass this on in an effective and honest manner to the members of the state. Nor can it be expected that the citizens will realize that their freedom rests in linking their identity with the identity of the whole. The only possible result of such a theory, asserts Connolly, is that it will become “a vehicle through which politics is contained, disruptive and contestable elements in the common life are suppressed, and the bureaucratization of the common life is legitimized.”²³

Michael Inwood

The argument against Hegel’s positive liberty is reinforced by Michael Inwood’s criticisms of Hegel’s philosophy of history and freedom in his *Hegel*. Inwood argues that Hegel is a conservative thinker whose views on freedom, morality and the end of history are conceited definitive statements about the reality of the world, which prohibit criticism and doubt.²⁴ He

21 Ibid., 130.

22 Ibid., 130.

23 Ibid., 130. Much of this presentation of Connolly’s argument has been taken from my M.A. Thesis, “Idealism and Identity.”

24 Michael Inwood, *Hegel*, 518.

argues that by claiming that individual freedom entails conforming to the common aim of one's society in order to fully realize that society's role in history, Hegel leaves no room for the individual to act independently, or make subjective choices.²⁵ Inwood is defending an explicitly Kantian position according to which human autonomy is the capacity to make independent subjective choices about one's ends and maxims. For Inwood, there is no freedom where choices are constrained by an external source such as the state.

Hegel opposed the Kantian notion that individuals could abstract from their social context to evaluate their choices and determine their own ends. He argued that by attempting to abstract oneself from the objective world, one only succeeds in abandoning any potential power over it.²⁶ The abstract reasoning promoted by Kant would leave the agent adrift and rudderless, and at the mercy of the tides of internal desires and the external social structures which the Kantian aspires to transcend. As Marcuse explains, "thought becomes estranged from reality and the truth becomes an impotent ideal preserved in thought while the actual world is calmly left outside its influence. Unless man succeeds in reuniting the separated parts of his world and in bringing nature and society within the scope of his reason, he is forever doomed to frustration."²⁷

According to Inwood, Hegel achieves this unity by equating practical freedom with participation in the life of one's society.²⁸ Not only are our perceptions of the world constituted by our society through our education, but the social order provides a rational frame of reference within which we can make rational choices. We know that the social order is rational, Hegel says, because it has a concrete existence, and all that actually exists must be rational:

25 Ibid., 488.

26 Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 23.

27 Ibid., 23-4.

28 Inwood, *Hegel*, 486.

The laws of society are rational in a way that a person's desires and impulses are not. They are, for example, universal in form and, if they are properly instituted, they are the same for everybody. One's desires and impulses, moreover, do not stand in stark contrast to laws and institutions, but are similarly purified and imbued with thought.²⁹

Inwood's first point of contention is that Hegel's philosophy cannot truly accommodate tolerance, as he claims. Inwood argues that given the conception of positive liberty he presents, Hegel cannot subsequently claim that a) it is logical to permit some degree of subjective freedom,³⁰ and b) the state should accommodate various subcultures because in a strong rational society, the superiority of the dominant culture is guaranteed.³¹

Inwood explains that according to Hegel some decisions are matters of contingency and must be based on subjective freedom - for example, the choice of a profession or of a spouse. These choices must remain subjective because they cannot be determined by logic or, in other words, the laws and customs of the state. Inwood acknowledges that subjective freedom on this level is in line with common sense, but he argues that in allowing it Hegel is contradicting himself. Inwood asserts that whether or not one could logically determine the proper job and spouse for people, it would still be better to make such decisions based on general rules rather than sheer caprice. "Even if the rational support for such rules were flimsy, they would still be, in virtue of their universality, more thought-ridden than our personal whims."³²

Furthermore, Inwood contends that Hegel's tolerance of different religious beliefs is another instance where Hegel contradicts his philosophy and bows to common sense. Inwood explains that Hegel argues in favour of religious tolerance, not because other religions are all

29 Ibid., 486.

30 Ibid., 488.

31 Ibid., 489.

32 Ibid., 489.

equally true or because they deal with issues that cannot be either verified or disputed, but rather because a strong state can afford to be tolerant without fearing that the superiority of its principal culture will be threatened. In this way, Hegel hopes to counter potential conflict within the state by embracing all possible points of view. However, Inwood asserts that this would “commit us to assigning a special place to arbitrary tyranny, as well as to subjective freedom.”³³

Inwood’s principal argument with regard to both of the above allowances is that Hegel has defined freedom and human fulfilment as “action in accordance with intersubjective rules” rather than “action on the basis of one’s own desires.”³⁴ “If this is so,” argues Inwood, “then we should presumably eliminate subjective freedom in favour of law-governed behaviour wherever this is possible.”³⁵ Inwood accuses Hegel of adopting a novel definition of freedom only to retreat from that position under the pressure of common sense.

Like Connolly, Inwood addresses the implications Hegel’s philosophy of history has for his conception of freedom. Inwood argues that by portraying history as the embodiment of the logical Idea, he places it above reproach. The subsequent philosophers are forbidden to question the worth of history’s current manifestation, such as their own society. And matters within society that are not determined by the logic of history are considered to be contingent and too trivial for philosophy:

Philosophers should not criticize any aspect of their own society or make proposals for altering it. What is actual could not have been otherwise and is not open to criticism; what is not actual may be criticized, but it is not the philosopher’s job to do so.³⁶

33 Ibid., 489.

34 Ibid., 489.

35 Ibid., 489.

36 Ibid., 502.

Inwood's response is two-fold. First, he points out that Hegel fails to provide a criterion for distinguishing what is actual from what is not.³⁷ And yet, even with such criteria the philosopher would still be without a role. For Hegel, institutions which are not actual are abstract and above reproach, and those that are concrete are contingent and hence not worth philosophical scrutiny. Inwood counters that institutions are often contingent without being trivial with regard to human welfare, and these should be subject to criticism and reform. Second, Inwood asserts that Hegel's dismissal of existing institutions as neither rational nor actual means that he believes institutions which are actual are also permanent. "If the actual were permanent," Inwood replies, "then it would, on this view, be necessarily permanent, and, if that were so, it would be inappropriate to criticize it. The fundamental institutions of a society, however, are not in general permanent."³⁸ Therefore it is difficult to imagine which institutions Hegel imagines are above criticism.

Inwood asserts that Hegel's system of logic renders his philosophy irretrievably oppressive. According to Inwood, Hegel claims to have reached a scientific perfection that no subsequent philosophers need alter or modify. Of course, this binds subsequent philosophers to Hegel's method and its set of assumptions, and so constrained they will inevitably arrive at the same conclusions as Hegel. The implication is that the progressive development of history and the human consciousness of freedom has reached its conclusion in Hegel's thought.³⁹ Inwood charges that, despite his modest claims that he is merely the mouthpiece of the deposit of knowledge his age inherited, Hegel's egotism is monumental. Inwood protests that "it is not modest to claim to be a mere mouthpiece for one's subject-matter, particularly if one's subject-

37 Ibid., 502.

38 Ibid., 502-3.

39 Ibid., 516.

matter is God.”⁴⁰ If Hegel’s system were true, Inwood points out, “Christ would be no more than his lisping precursor.”⁴¹

Berlin, Connolly and Inwood agree that either Hegel’s conception of positive freedom is politically oppressive, or it logically leads to oppression. The central criticism they share is that Hegel’s unifying system of thought, and its ontological foundation are false, and in advocating these ideas, Hegel invites the violent imposition of an artificial common purpose that can trump the will of the individual, and do so in the name of freedom.

Responding to Berlin: Berlin’s Methodology: An Awkward Melange of Ideas and Data

The principle flaw in Isaiah Berlin’s critique of positive liberty, including Hegel’s version, lies in the confusion and incoherence of his methodology, which can be summed up as an idealist hermeneuticism that selectively resorts to empiricism. Berlin opens his argument with the assertion that “political theory is a branch of moral philosophy, which starts from the discovery, or application, of moral notions in the sphere of political relations.”⁴² This is a standard and acceptable account of political theory. He combines explorations of moral concepts with the concrete sphere of politics. He clearly asserts an interest in the concrete rather than the merely conceptual. He does not wish to reduce all historical events to movements or conflicts of ideas or spiritual forces (a tendency he associates with the Idealists he is preparing to attack), though he maintains that it is essential to understand the ideas and attitudes to life that are

40 Ibid., 518.

41 Ibid., 519.

42 Berlin, “Two Concepts,” 393.

involved in such movements and conflicts.⁴³ These ideas are what distinguishes human history from natural events.

Berlin then proceeds to engage in an hermeneutic analysis of modern conceptions of freedom. Included in this analysis is a strong condemnation of idealism for proposing that true freedom is realized by conforming to the world view that arises from a particular idea of what is rational. This “rationality” compels idealists to define freedom as something that is realized by conforming to the laws of the “rational” state. He finally accuses idealists of promoting a conception of reason that fails to live up to the standards of empiricism.⁴⁴ The logic of his argument is that if Hegel is an idealist, then his principles have no empirical foundation, thus they are not real and cannot be the foundation for society. He attacks Hegel for promoting “non-empirical” rationality at the expense of the independently determined ends of individuals. According to Berlin, Hegel believes the characters of human beings are constituted by the laws of the institutions and the state therefore they cannot think independently of the state. Berlin sees this as the pinnacle of idealist folly, though he never explains how his own assertions of the constitution of individual will can be defended empirically. It would seem that Hegel is advocating an oppressive ideological homogenization, whereas Berlin is a grounded empiricist defending liberty as radical pluralism. When in fact Berlin is the dreamy idealist criticizing Hegel for not being an empiricist. What Berlin overlooks is that, unlike his own opportunistic lip service, Hegel does in fact have an empirical element to his method. This confusion ends with Berlin holding a weak, one-sided conception of freedom because he succumbs to those failings he attributes to Hegel. If we were to play out Berlin’s freedom as a governing principle, where would we be?

43 Ibid., 393.

44 Ibid.

Hegel's Idealism: A Commitment to the Actual

Idealism is often mistaken for the antonym of realism and hence the source of impractical propositions. It is understood in the Platonic sense which affirms the priority of ideal, mind-independent prototypes, or the Berkeleyian and Kantian theory that we cannot know things in themselves, only the appearances of things. Those who place more significance in things empirical, the “value-neutral facts”, consider this line of thought highly problematic. It certainly does not gel with Macpherson’s methodology which considers both ideas and concrete “facts” to be of equal importance.⁴⁵ His political economy, which Grant too indulges in from time to time,⁴⁶ could not be confused with this type of idealism. It does, however, make a nice fit with the idealism developed by Hegel. Hegel does not give preference to the idea over the empirical. And yet nor does he support John Locke’s prioritization of things over our conceptualization of them. He weighs both equally. For Hegel, we cannot know a thing until we have conceptualized it, and our conceptions are only valid when they have actuality.⁴⁷ According to Hegel, mere concepts (like those found in Plato’s realm of forms) are one-sided and lack truth.⁴⁸ Hotho’s notes in *Philosophy of Right* provide a helpful explanation of this:

The concept and its existence are two aspects of the same thing, separate and united, like body and soul.... The unity of existence and the concept, of body and soul, is the Idea. It is not just a harmony, but a complete interpenetration.⁴⁹

45 William Leiss, *C.B. Macpherson: Dilemmas of Liberalism and Socialism* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1988), 17.

46 See for instance, Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1965).

47 G.W.H. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Allen Wood, ed., H.B. Nisbit, trans., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25.

48 Ibid., 25. As Michael Inwood points out “one-sided” means dogmatic for Hegel, thus idealism as well as realism can be dogmatic. See his *A Hegel Dictionary*, (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 128.

49 Hegel, *Elements*, 25-6.

Hegel's intention was to eliminate the Kantian dualism between concepts and sensory material.⁵⁰ He rejected the depiction of material objects as dependent upon the human being.⁵¹ He sought to surpass this subjective idealism and develop a holistic absolute idealism.

Hegel's scientific project and his political philosophy will remain obscure until we realize that his approach and articulations are distinctly new. His science is committed to illuminating aspects of being that have actuality. As Robert Williams explains, neither individualism nor collectivism can make that claim. Both are stuck in the realm of the abstract. Individualism ignores the importance of recognition and collectivism ignores the role of the will. Individualism fails to appreciate that to be recognized by an other in order to be conscious of ourselves as bearers of free will. "My freedom remains a subjective certainty and not yet a right in the full sense, until it is recognized and acknowledged by others."⁵²

To be fair, let us first ask the same question of Hegel's idea of freedom. Does he explore the social implications? What are his results? Berlin's mistake is to assume that Hegel's idealism abandons empiricism altogether. What he fails to understand is that not only does Hegel not shun natural science, but his stated purpose in his methodology is to overcome the errors of the Romantic idealists by grounding the study of ideas in the actual. Ideas, for Hegel must have natural actuality. This is what he calls the necessary unity of form and content: "For form in its most concrete significance is reason as conceptual cognition, and content is reason as the

50 Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 128.

51 Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Hegel's Idealism: The Logic of Conceptuality," in Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 104.

52 Williams, 116.

substantial essence of the ethical and natural actuality; the conscious identity of the two is the philosophical Idea.”⁵³

This formula lies at the heart of Hegel’s new science of politics, and it is with this that he introduces his argument: “The subject-matter of the philosophical science of right is the Idea of right - the concept of right and its actualization.”⁵⁴ Not until the concept takes a concrete form in society can it be said to be actual or rational. Only then does it graduate to the status of Idea. Until this step has been made, the concept remains abstract and its rationality suspect.

Robert Pippin defends Hegel’s method and asserts that his study of freedom is concerned with the concrete actuality of things and not mere concepts that cannot be shown to exist⁵⁵. The idea of freedom for Hegel is not merely an unachievable perfection that we can only imagine and strive for.⁵⁶ And yet nor is it something that can be reduced to the pure positivity which is the subject matter of natural science. In fact, it is the inability to explain human action in terms of external causality that necessitates Hegel’s branch of science. The motivations of human beings cannot be reduced to a simple principle like the Hobbesian *summum malum*:

In other words, some organic beings are self-maintaining and self-directing (and so outside the realm appropriate for a philosophy of nature) not only by being a kind of organic whole or by requiring purposive explanations, but because those purposes provide reasons for such beings and they provide such reasons by being believed to be right.⁵⁷

53 Hegel, Elements, 22.

54 Ibid., Section 1, p.25.

55 Robert Pippin, “Hegel, Freedom, The Will,” in Ludwig Siep, ed., *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (Akademie Verlag, 1997).

56 Pippin here is distinguishing himself from Peter Singer who argues that Hegel was overconfident about the rationality of his own state, and that one could not have found freedom by conforming to its norms. Singer maintains that the value of Hegel’s view does not lie in what it says about existing conditions, but in establishing an excellent ideal to strive for, though we can only hope to get closer to the ideal, never achieve it. See his *Hegel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 44.

57 Pippin, 46.

Thus, contrary to Berlin's initial rebuff of idealism, in Hegel's case idealism does not reduce all human relations to a conceptual or spiritual realm. Hegel's philosophy is committed to an analysis of the actual, concepts as they are given substance in the institutions of the state. This is the logic behind Hegel's positive freedom. Freedom has substance only in the state. Institutions, such as marriage, unions or the legislature, provide a context in which thought can be translated into determinate action, and hence free will can be made concrete:

The *right of individuals* to their *subjective determination to freedom* is fulfilled in so far as they belong to ethical actuality; for their *certainty* of their own freedom has its *truth* in such objectivity, and it is in the ethical realm that they *actually* possess their *own* essence and their *inner* universality.⁵⁸

G.H.R. Parkinson: Society Provides Context, not Answers

Parkinson explains that for Hegel the path to universal truth first passes through the "substantial aim" of one's own nation:

The free man must as it were surpass the state; he must work through it, he must go beyond it. He gets the principles of conduct from the state in which he lives, but if he always thinks as a member of this state then his thinking is not universal and he is not free.⁵⁹

This notion of working through the state also provides an answer to those critics who consider Hegel's emphasis on the state to be the foundation for an oppressive politics. They argue that "Hegel stresses society at the expense of the individual."⁶⁰ They maintain that Hegel does not make room in his theory for dissent. However, Parkinson explains that society merely

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Elements*, Section 153, p.106.

⁵⁹ Parkinson, "Hegel's Conception of Freedom," in Michael Inwood, ed., *Hegel*, (cit. above), 168.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

provides the context within which an individual can develop principles of conduct that are universal and concrete. This does not deter people from adopting variations of the existing moral order. It does, however, mean that there are limits to people's ability to break from their social context. For instance, Socrates could contemplate the just ordering of the city-state, but "he could not produce ideas which presuppose (e.g.) a nation-state."⁶¹

Parkinson responds to Berlin's argument that Hegel's positive freedom and self-determination entails identifying oneself with a specific ideal. Berlin contends that this is not true freedom because the source of the principles, the culture of one's society, is external to the subject. But Parkinson explains that "we do not merely assimilate the rules, the laws, as they are laid down by others. If this were so no one would advance beyond the laws of society."⁶² Moreover, we know from Hegel's conception of the historical dialectic that human beings must be able to question and change their social order. Society's rules are our rules; they are determined by the individual wills that compose the state.

It is worth remembering Peter Singer's point that the institutions Hegel considers to be essential to a rational modern state are hardly the elements of a totalitarian regime: constitutional monarchy, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and trial by jury.⁶³ In Hegel's conception of a rational state, the emphasis is placed on freedom, not the state as such. A rational state is one "individuals really did choose to obey and support, because they genuinely agreed with its principles and truly found their individual satisfaction in being part of it. For Hegel, no rational

61 Ibid., 169.

62 Ibid., 171.

63 Peter Singer, *Hegel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 43. Singer's support is not unequivocal. He admires the conception of positive freedom, but doubts whether there can ever be a truly rational state. While his criticism does not add anything new to those of Berlin, Connolly, and Inwood, his reminder regarding the rational state is illuminating.

state could ever deal with its citizens as the Nazi and Stalinist states dealt with theirs. The idea is a contradiction in terms.”⁶⁴

According to Richard Schacht, the laws and institutions of the state provide a concrete context for the rational thought of a self-consciously determined agent.⁶⁵ He explains that according to Hegel anything that exists on earth, including human society, must be based on the rational laws of nature. Therefore, by grounding one’s abstract reasoning about one’s ends and maxims in the context of the state’s laws, one may be confident that one’s conclusions are rational. That is not to say that one’s conclusions will be the pinnacle of truth. One can arrive at a rational conclusion that is less than perfectly true when one only has access to a limited amount of knowledge. Thus, as human knowledge develops, and these developments are reflected in the institutions and laws, then it follows that this form of reasoning will bring us closer to the truth. Whereas, if one remains entirely in the abstract realm of the mind, then one is vulnerable to being seduced by arguments that contradict the concrete realm of nature, and there is little hope of approaching truth.

Hegel’s approach remains empirical because he does not design a utopia and ask us to follow it, but rather he studies what already exists and seeks a deeper, more complete articulation of it, thereby revealing our misconceptions and giving us a more advantageous position from which to reconsider and reform the internal contradictions that plague our system. This means that if we wish to test the validity of his conception of freedom, we only need to ask whether it is a more accurate account of our current social beliefs and workings.

64 Ibid., 43.

65 Richard L. Schacht, “Hegel on Freedom,” in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed., *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972), 326.

Hegel on Berlin: Negative Liberty is “Freedom of the Void”

Thus it is Hegel who blends the lessons of the Enlightenment’s scientific method with idealism, and, if we turn the tables, we find that Berlin’s idealism does not meet the rigorous scientific standards set by Hegel. Berlin ignores the logical steps of Hegel’s argument, including whether his assessment of the relationship between the individual and society reflects actuality. Instead he skips to asking whether Hegel is justified in judging the ends people choose and how they choose them, and he does this from the perspective that one’s freedom to choose is sacrosanct and should not be subject to the limitations imposed by others.⁶⁶ He does not seek to ground his own conception of negative liberty in the actuality of the institutions found in the state and, indeed, it is difficult to believe there exists an example of a society that exhibits the radical value-pluralism he proposes. He merely asserts his argument’s validity negatively, that is, in opposition to what he portrays to be the totalitarian threats of positive freedom. In effect, he adopts a position that Hegel would dismiss as purely abstract subjectivity. This is the empty form of freedom that Hegel acknowledges in section 5 as the first stage of his own more refined conception of freedom:

The will contains (a) the element of pure indeterminacy or of the ‘I’'s pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires, and drives, or given and determined in some other way, is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thinking of oneself.⁶⁷

It is a valid and significant moment in the consciousness of freedom, but to stop here is to be stuck in “the freedom of the void.” As Berlin professes to be a moral philosopher, it is interesting to note Hegel’s perception of the morality that arises from this negative freedom:

⁶⁶ Berlin, 402.

⁶⁷ Hegel, *Elements*, p. 37.

Conscience, as formal subjectivity, consists simply in the possibility of turning at any moment to evil; for both morality and evil have their common root in that self-certainty which has being for itself and knows and resolves for itself.⁶⁸

Allen Wood applies this criticism when he argues that Berlin commits himself to the absurd view that every action is good so long as it is free. According to the Hegelian system, the ability to slide into evil is the principal danger of a moral philosophy that is without substance. It is Berlin's reliance on pure form when he contemplates ideas that lead him to side with negative liberty theorists, and, if we follow Hegel's argument, it is this same reliance that could potentially lead him to a form of moral subjectivism where morality as such is meaningless. Negative liberty is pure subjectivity where the will is severed from the ethical content of society, history and culture, like a body afloat in the primal chaos, with no order providing gravity, propulsion or direction. Ethics seem alien and without claim on us. We can take them or leave them, though why they should be adopted and deferred to is inconceivable in these circumstances, and though they may be taken up with a sense of irony and curiosity, we would easily abandon them when the pleasure fades or another ignites our curiosity. The subject is the absolute. We as individuals are the beginning and end of our own universe:

In this shape, subjectivity is not only empty of all ethical content in the way of rights, duties, and laws, and is accordingly evil ...; in addition, its form is that of subjective emptiness, in that it knows itself as this emptiness of all content and, in this knowledge, knows itself as the absolute.⁶⁹

Thus, not until freedom has content is it real or rational. The awareness of our capacity to choose is only the first stage of freedom (though that is not meant to suggest it comes first in any hierarchical sense). Berlin's political philosophy based on the individual will is faulty not because subjective freedom is itself flawed, but because it is incomplete.

68 Ibid., Section 139, p.167.

69 Ibid., Section 140, p.182.

To illustrate the point further, we can look to Ronald Dworkin's essay "Do Liberal Values Conflict?" Here Dworkin points out that Berlin's conception of liberty fails because it calls any restriction on a person's will a violation of his or her liberty, no matter how heinous the act. Berlin keeps from mayhem by invoking a version of the harm principle. Nevertheless, Dworkin explains, even if he has not been wronged when he is prohibited from murdering his critics (his example), Berlin still calls it a restriction of his liberty. "A conception of liberty is an interpretive theory that aims to show us why it is bad when liberty is denied, and a conception of liberty is therefore unsuccessful when it forces us to describe some event as an invasion of liberty when nothing bad has happened."⁷⁰ Dworkin is not trying to portray Berlin as an advocate of immorality, or even moral relativism. His point is simply that Berlin's conception of liberty does not go deep enough. Dworkin proposes an alternative contractual conception of freedom that improves on Berlin's conception of freedom but does not approach the fullness of Hegel's.

Hegel's Idea of Freedom: Franco's Version

So, can we conclude that Hegel is a collectivist from the above account of the distinction between the two concepts of freedom? That is, does he put the community's stated ends ahead of the will of the individual? Indeed, does he acknowledge the individual will at all? The answer is that he does not give priority to either the community or the individual. He does not see them as being in conflict. They are facets of the whole, both invaluable, though incomplete abstractions when taken on their own. For Hegel, collectivism is also an abstraction. It focuses on the community at the expense of the rational individual. Williams distinguishes Hegel's freedom from the classical freedom of Plato:

⁷⁰ Ronald Dworkin, "Do Liberal Values Conflict?" in Mark Lilla, Ronald Dworkin, and Robert B. Silvers, eds., *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin*, (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2001), 89.

Hegel believes that modernity requires the recognition and inclusion of subjective freedom. This means that for Hegel, contrary to Plato, the good is the good will (Kant), and as such, the good is not actual apart from the agency of subjective freedom: “the universal does not attain validity or fulfilment without the interest, knowledge and volition of the particular.” Apart from freedom, the good remains in the abstract.⁷¹

The emphasis is firmly on subjective freedom, but subjective freedom fully understood involves an intersubjectivity. Individual freedom involves a deep seeded connection with the community and its success, which means that social unity is a part of this notion of freedom, not at odds with it.

Three Moments of the Will

Paul Franco explains Hegel’s philosophy of freedom in terms of his dialectical logic. It develops in three moments: abstract universality, particularity, and singularity.⁷² Subjective freedom is abstract universality. It is the point in the human consciousness where we are first aware of the will: “Only one aspect of the will is defined here - namely this absolute possibility of abstracting from every determination in which I find myself or which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as a limitation.”⁷³ This is Hegel’s idea of negative liberty and, unlike Berlin’s, it refers to the ultimate source of human action and not to something external, that is, the absence of obstacles to human action. Berlin’s idea of negative liberty is borrowed from Hobbes and Bentham, who discerned the human will from the tangible things people desire, and measured liberty by the degree to which those desires were satisfied. As Franco explains,

71 Williams, 117.

72 Paul Franco, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 159.

73 Hegel, *Elements*, Section 5, p.38.

Hegel's negative liberty "has nothing to do with the unfettered pursuit of our empirical desires and inclinations but precisely abstracts from all such determinacy and particularity."⁷⁴

The second moment of the will is that of determination and particularization. Simply put, this is the awareness that for the will to exist it must will something. It is able to abstract from what is given, but until it has attached itself it does not exist. Hegel is critical of the will which prefers its undetermined state of not committing to anything and thus maintaining infinite options. By not choosing, the will does not achieve actuality. It remains abstract and conceptual:

A will which resolves on nothing is not an actual will; the characterless man can never resolve on anything. The reason for such indecision may also lie in an over-refined sensibility which knows that, in determining something, it enters the realm of finitude, imposing a limit on itself and relinquishing infinity....Such a disposition is dead, even if its aspiration is to be beautiful. "Whoever aspires to great things," says Goethe, "must be able to limit himself." Only by making resolutions can the human being enter actuality, however painful the process may be; for inertia would rather not emerge from that inward brooding in which it reserves a universal possibility for itself. But possibility is not yet actuality. The will which is sure of itself does not therefore lose itself in what it determines.⁷⁵

But the content of the will is found in the third moment, which is "the unity of the preceding moments of abstract universality and particularity."⁷⁶

The third moment brings the concrete understanding of the freedom of the will. Here the universal "I" determines itself without ceasing to be universal. It does so by choosing a particularity that is not against itself, but remains for itself. In section 7 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel sets out what Franco calls his definitive formula for freedom: "Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself in this determinacy and to return once more to the

74 Franco, 160.

75 Hegel, *Elements*, Section 13, p.47.

76 *Ibid.*, 161.

universal.”⁷⁷ But how do we willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other and remain for ourselves? How does an external purpose become our own? How can we be with ourselves in an other? One answer to this found in feelings, such as love and friendship. These sentiments enable us to overcome “the abstract opposition between self-dependence and otherness or determinacy.”⁷⁸ In Hegel’s words: “The freedom of spirit is not merely an absence of dependence on the other won outside of the other but won in the other; it attains actuality not by fleeing from the other but by overcoming it.”⁷⁹ What this entails exactly can take various forms.

Hegel’s Criterion for Authentic Freedom

The three moments of the will describe Hegel’s conception of freedom and the will, but its actualization has three stages of its own. Prior to setting these out, however, it helps to be familiar with Hegel’s criterion for authentic freedom. He measures the determination of the will in terms of its form and content. In essence, he argues that since the form of will is freedom its content must also be freedom. If the content of the will is merely immediate, consisting of natural drives, desires and inclinations, then the content of the will is for itself (satisfying its own desires), but it does not correspond to what it is in itself (it does not serve its telos, which is freedom).⁸⁰ “It is only when the will has freedom as its object instead of merely immediate or natural, when it is for itself what it is in itself, that this self-contradiction is surmounted and the will is genuinely free.”⁸¹

77 Quoted in Franco, 162.

78 Ibid., 162.

79 Quoted in *ibid.*, 162.

80 Ibid., 163.

81 Ibid., 163.

The First of Three Types of Willing: Natural Will

Hegel conceives of three possible variations in the dynamic between the form and content of the will. There is natural will, reflective will, and rational will. Natural will is not to be confused with animal will, which is compelled to obey natural drives. With natural will we stand above our drives and can elect to pursue the satisfaction any of a number of desires in a variety of ways. For example, we can satisfy our hunger by selecting a particular food. Of course, the capacity to choose is not yet will; only in making the choice and acting on it is the will given content, thus passing into actuality. We must eat our choice of food for our will to be actualized.

Hegel argues that the natural will is not truly self-determination because one's drives and inclinations are given by nature. The appetites serve only themselves and they are arbitrary.⁸² They are arbitrary in that they are bound to contradict one another, and so satisfying one will necessitate the subordination of another, but there will remain no reason to give priority to any. This arbitrariness is what characterizes the understanding of freedom most common in modern liberal society, including that of Isaiah Berlin.

Second: Reflective Will

One might argue, along epicurean lines, that the arbitrariness is resolved by basing one's choices on the level of pleasure derived, or take Aristotle's conception of happiness as the measure. This is precisely the factor that characterizes the second variation of form/content dynamic of will. The "reflective will" considers the options presented and commits to one for the sake of happiness. Here our drives and desires are subordinated to a universal aim, or so it seems. Hegel contends that happiness ultimately fails to escape the arbitrariness of the natural drives and

⁸² Ibid., 164-5.

inclinations. Pleasure is neither an objective nor universal principle. Choices must always defer to one's subjective feeling, to one's drives, which are external and foreign to the will. The will's content does not correspond to its form.

However, Hegel does not entirely reject happiness as a factor in the determination of the will. Unlike Kant who argues that nature and desire are in irreconcilable conflict with reason and freedom (heteronomy versus autonomy), Hegel considers happiness to be an important aspect of freedom as it is emotion that motivates, but it can only be a part of the picture in which thought is a central feature.⁸³ For Hegel, the fulfilment Aristotle and others believed was achieved when happiness was our end is in fact best realized in freedom.⁸⁴ When freedom replaces happiness as one's end the contingency of subjective feeling is replaced by a true universality. Freedom is "a more complete expression of the final human good."⁸⁵

Third: Rational Will

Form and content are united in the third stage of freedom, when the will wills itself, which is freedom. It then becomes free in itself and for itself. "The will in its truth is such that what it wills, ie., its content, is identical with the will itself, so that freedom is willed by freedom."⁸⁶ By making freedom its content, the will achieves absolute self-dependence. It is no longer dependent upon an other. Those external things it chooses to commit itself to are part of its freedom, not limitations on it. The other is thus brought into the self. This is the rational will: "the will that knows itself as free and makes freedom its content."⁸⁷ We have now arrived at the

83 Ibid., 168.

84 Ibid., 167.

85 Ibid., 168.

86 Hegel, *Elements*, Section 21.

87 Franco, 172.

“complete definition of the concept of free will.”⁸⁸ But for the concept to become “Idea” it must have actuality. “The rational will must develop itself into objectivity and give itself the form of external thereness or existence.”⁸⁹ What are the concrete choices that a free, rational will makes when willing its own freedom?

For Hegel, the great achievement of modernity has been to come to see the human being as inherently free, and this realization reached a new pinnacle in Rousseau’s theory of the general will. Although Hegel criticizes Rousseau’s theory of general will for losing sight of the individual, he overcomes this weakness by unifying the common purpose with the purpose of the individual will, namely, individual freedom. In a state which is committed to universal individual freedom, the state laws and ethics would not conflict with our commitment to our own freedom, not because all the laws would fit each individual’s particular desires and values, but because the institutions that define the laws would be genuinely dedicated to making that fit, especially on matters of the greatest importance to people, such as religious freedom and political participation. Hegel delivers the pluralism that Berlin sought, but within a positive liberty model that provides concrete principles (moral and ethical) that we can commit to, rather than flee from. Furthermore, because this project would function in actuality - its principles being in the constitution of modern states, though arguable they are not yet fully realized (especially in Hegel’s day) - it shows itself to be a rational project rather than an utopian fantasy. Thus the concept of freedom becomes the Idea of freedom. “The Idea is what is true in and for itself, the absolute unity of concept and objectivity. Its ideal content is nothing but the concept in its determinations; its real content is only the presentation that the concept gives itself in the form of

88 Ibid., 172.

89 Ibid., 172.

external thereness.”⁹⁰ (We have here our response to Inwood’s criticism that Hegel’s system has no room for tolerance.)

Responding to Connolly: What is Geist?

What of *Geist*? Surely Hegel’s rational freedom is nonsense if we are to suppose that the state is granted divine sanction, as Connolly has argued. There is then more faith than reason, and with it comes a sacrosanct political unity that negates individual choice, that is, if *Geist* is God’s will acting in history.

For those who read *Geist* as God, such as William Connolly, the claim that modernity is the culmination of the progressive logic of history is a hubristic presumption of knowing God’s will. But for those, like G.H.R. Parkinson who read *Geist* as a term for the activity in which ideas, reason, and action blend in a logical and dialectical fashion, it is the principle in Hegel’s system where metaphysics and politics meet.⁹¹ Here *Geist* is the manifestation of the logic that governs history, not as the will of some mystical foreign entity, but as the mind of humanity itself. According to Hegel, *Geist* is “the mind of the world as it explicates itself in human consciousness.”⁹² *Geist* is the collective consciousness of human beings, consisting of the thoughts of all individuals as they move together through time. For Hegel, these thoughts are harmonized by the logic that governs the universe, just as the form of one’s body is held in place by gravity. The harmonizing influence of logic is not an oppressive metaphysical force. To continue the gravity analogy, one might claim that true freedom would be to have no gravity at all, but this freedom would merely result in a formless dispersion of atoms in a disordered

90 Quoted in *ibid.*, 172.

91 G.H.R. Parkinson, “Hegel’s Conception of Freedom,” in Michael Inwood, ed, *Hegel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

92 Quoted in *ibid.*, 167.

universe. Just as gravity facilitates action and life, so does logic facilitate thought and the will. Thus the harmonization of thoughts in the unity of *Geist* “is not something wholly outside me, pushing me about; rather, in so far as I think, in so far as I really think, I am a part of it.”⁹³

Note that Parkinson groups thought and will together. This is vital to understanding Hegel’s conception of freedom. Hegel does not believe there is a will in the sense of a separate faculty existing between thought and action, as it is normally understood. It is what Hegel calls “practical mind in general.”⁹⁴ When we refer to will we are referring to planned action. We might draw a parallel here between the will of the individual and the will that is *Geist*: *Geist* is to the thoughts of humanity what will is to the thought of the individual.

Part of the real thought that Parkinson refers to involves the contemplation of *Geist* itself. When we know something of *Geist* we can then act to direct it in our small way. Moreover, we can better understand the implication of our choices. In both of these senses, knowledge of *Geist* gives us a greater degree of freedom. According to Hegel, philosophy is the practice of striving to comprehend this greater unity which takes shape like the myriad of lines and colours in a map. Just as a map of our terrain liberates us from the contingency of wandering lost in the wilderness, or the London Underground,⁹⁵ so too does knowledge of *Geist* enable us to make informed decisions about our ends.

93 Ibid., 168.

94 Quoted in *ibid.*, 158.

95 The Underground is the preferred analogy because it is an entity that consists not only of its material structure (which is a synthesis of human will, imagination, physics and matter), but also of the system of relationships and shared understandings among the train drivers, ticket takers, security, maintenance, managers, and patrons.

Robert Williams: Reciprocal Recognition as Intersubjectivity

Robert Williams' account of *Geist* and its relationship to freedom revolves around Hegel's insights about the importance of recognition. To understand recognition is to begin to see the outline of *Geist*: "Hegel believes that the result of recognition is spirit, the I that is a We. Spirit is a determinate objective social world, an objective rational structure, or ethical substance. Consequently, for Hegel, right cannot be fully present at the level of the abstraction of individual subjectivity, but only at the level of recognition and spirit."⁹⁶ Thus it is recognition that lies at the heart of the intersubjectivity of *Geist*.

Intersubjective recognition is for Hegel the universal shape and pattern of freedom, including all the virtues, and of social institutions from family through civil society and state... Recognition transforms the modern concept of the subject into an ethical intersubjectivity and transforms classical political structures into a historical and social ontology of the conditions of freedom's actualization in the world. Recognition is the medium in which Hegel reconciles Kant with Aristotle and Plato."⁹⁷

Recognition of other and by other is vital to knowing oneself as an ethical being and hence essential to our freedom to make choices about right. Clearly the freedom discussed here is not merely concerned with mundane choices about consumer preferences; it is freedom of those decisions and actions that are vital to our sense of self, or identity. Though our style choices might be important to us, they hold little weight when measured against moral or ethical questions. And Williams' thesis about the importance of recognition speaks to this form of freedom and identity. Our identity acquires existence when our rights are recognized by an other whom we also recognize to have rights.⁹⁸ "My freedom remains a subjective certainty and not

96 Ibid., 118.

97 Williams, 3.

98 Hegel, *Elements*, 70.

yet a right in the full sense, until it is recognized and acknowledged by others.”⁹⁹ Williams argues that Hegel’s ethical theory revolves around this awareness and that this intersubjectivity through reciprocal recognition enables him to reconcile law and freedom because it provides a foundation for social unity without relying on the oppressive civic virtue of the Romans which portrayed the whole as greater than its parts. This social unity is freely acknowledged with the self-transcendence and universal consciousness that comes with understanding the link between our freedom and reciprocal recognition within an ethical community.

The universal consciousness of which Hegel speaks is a union, not in the sense of abstract undifferentiated identity or of fusion, but a union of individuals in reciprocal mediation, and for which reciprocity is crucial. Thus this universal is not an abstract ego, or I am I, but a determinate social totality that does not suppress but rather justifies its constituent individuals. Reciprocal recognition forms a union, a ‘We’ in which individual selves not only preserve their freedom and independence, but their freedom and independence are conditions of that very union.¹⁰⁰

Williams interprets Hegel’s *Geist* as the concrete universal facilitated by recognition. The subject is not lost or absorbed in *Geist*, but rather the interrelation of subjects is duly acknowledged. The union that *Geist* represents is conditional on the separation of subjects who mutually and freely affirm the other.¹⁰¹ We are invited to see not only the individual or only *Geist*, but both simultaneously without the negation of either. Ultimately, *Geist*’s telos is thoroughgoing reciprocal recognition that culminates in a nonparochial universal-social consciousness. From here it is possible to appropriate critically and transform the structures of classical ethical substance into social institutions necessary for freedom.¹⁰²

99 Williams, 116.

100 Ibid., 88.

101 Ibid., 379-80.

102 Ibid., 113-4.

Connolly's assumption that Hegel depoliticizes the ideals of political life rests entirely on his argument that Hegel's method is an effort to synthesize faith and reason in order to establish a "rational" moral theory. He argues that Hegel tries to accomplish this by rendering God's will a logical, knowable entity. However, understood properly, Hegel's science is concerned with actuality, not faith. We need only look to Hegel's Philosophy of Right to see that faith is not a factor in his politics. Hegel explicitly argues in favour of the division between church and state for precisely the reasons raised by Connolly.

First, regarding the issue of faith, it should be clear by this point that Hegel is dedicated to constructing a logical science based in freedom. Morality is meaningless for Hegel unless it is a product of the individual's evaluation taking into account his or her own particularity. Nevertheless, Connolly suggests that Hegel advocates a morality that is dictated by the state and rendered sacrosanct by its link to God's will. He could not be more wrong. This is clear from the Hegel's introductory section on morality. The individual will, not God, is the foundation:

The moral point of view is the point of view of the will in so far as the latter is infinite not only in itself but also for itself. This reflection of the will into itself and its identity for itself, as opposed to its being-in-itself and immediacy and the determinacies which develop within the latter, determine the person as subject.¹⁰³

Connolly may respond by pointing out that morality is not really a serious consideration for Hegel; until it is concretized in the ethical life, it is merely abstract. Connolly might therefore reiterate that for Hegel ethical life is infused with *Geist*, and hence the will of God. This brings us to the second point: Hegel explicitly advocates the division of church and state:

That the unity of Church and state which has so often been wished for is to be found in oriental despotism - but in this case, there is no state in the sense of that

103 Ibid., Section 106, 135.

self-conscious configuration of right, of free ethical life, and of organic development which is alone worthy of the spirit.¹⁰⁴

Note here that Hegel distinguishes religion from the same spirit that Connolly interprets to represent God's will. In fact, Hegel subsequently presents spirit in opposition to faith and dogma: "Furthermore, if the state is to attain existence as the self-knowing ethical actuality of spirit, its form must become distinct from that of authority and faith."¹⁰⁵ That Hegel distinguishes both *Geist* and state from religion is perhaps most clearly articulated in Hotho's notes:

The state remains essentially different from religion, for what it requires has the shape of a legal duty, and it is indifferent to the emotional attitude with which this duty is performed. The field of religion, on the other hand, is inwardness; and just as the state would prejudice the right of inwardness if it imposed its requirements in a religious manner, so also does the Church, if it acts like a state and imposes penalties, degenerate into a tyrannical religion.¹⁰⁶

Thus it can be safely concluded that if Hegel's system does entail any depoliticization, it is not as a consequence of a conception of the state infused with God's will.

Like Berlin, Michael Inwood's perspective falls under what Hegel calls abstract individualism, and also like Berlin, he seeks to protect individual freedom against the imposition of the "community's" conception of the common good. In particular, Inwood wants to protect our right to challenge the institutions and ethical assumptions of society, and he disputes Hegel's claim that his rational state would tolerate difference.

At the heart of Inwood's argument is his defense of the philosopher's role as social critic. He accuses Hegel of being an apologist for authoritarianism, and of relegating the philosopher to the undignified role of a state propagandist. We have already established that Hegel is not an

104 Ibid., Section 270, 301.

105 Ibid., Section 270, 301.

106 Ibid., 303.

authoritarian, so I will limit my rejoinder to suggesting the sources of Inwood's error, namely, his ontology and methodology.

Ontologically, Inwood is blinded by his own abstract individualism and consequently he is caught in a Jacobin stance of perpetual, sterilizing criticism in the name of liberty. Regarding methodology, he fails to understand the nature of Hegel's dialectic.

It is little wonder that he is concerned with defending the philosopher's role as critic; his ontology of absolute individualism confines him to imagine little else for the philosopher to do. The following quotation from *Philosophy of Right* to illustrate the character of the absolute individualist as philosopher:

Only in destroying something does this negative will have a feeling of its won existence. It may well believe that it wills some positive condition, for instance the condition of universal equality or of universal religious life, but it does not in fact will the positive actuality of this condition, for this at once gives rise to some kind of order, a particularization both of institutions and of individuals; but it is precisely through the annihilation of particularity and of objective determination that the self-consciousness of this negative freedom arises. Thus, whatever such freedom believes that it wills can in itself be no more than an abstract representation, and its actualization can only be the fury of destruction.¹⁰⁷

Inwood is trapped in the immature condition of abstract freedom. Though it contains some truth, it is unaware of the importance of intersubjectivity and recognition that is essential to rational freedom. I offer this as a possible explanation of why so close a reader of Hegel as Inwood seems blind to the manner in which Hegel can think community and individual freedom together.

Regarding methodology, Hegel's project of positive dialectics goes beyond Inwood's negative critique. Just as Hegel appreciates the truth that exists in abstract individualism and then

107 Ibid., Section 5, 38.

proceeds to draw out that truth to us to a deeper, more complete comprehension of freedom, so too does he seek a deeper understanding of the state and its institutions. He does not criticize except inadvertently, insofar as he identifies the nature of a thing, though his view may contradict that of others, and, indeed, might pose a threat to their interests.

The higher dialectic of the concept consists not merely in producing and apprehending the determination as an opposite and limiting factor, but in producing and apprehending the positive content and result which it contain; and it is this alone which makes it a development and immanent progression. This dialectic, then is not an external activity of subjective thought, but the very soul of the content which puts forth its branches and fruit organically.¹⁰⁸

Hegel distinguishes this from the negative mode of the Platonic dialectic which also characterizes Inwood's approach:

I consequently do not mean that kind of dialectic which takes an object, proposition, etc. Given to feeling or to the immediate consciousness in general and dissolves it, confuses it, develops it this way and that, and is solely concerned with deducing its opposite.¹⁰⁹

Inwood seeks to defend this negative dialectic because he fails to appreciate that, like the soft spoken sage guiding the anguished wanderer, Hegel's dialectic can be progressive without being negative. We need not fight the object to know it. As an actuality it has rationality, and the philosopher is an interpreter or miner of its rationality:

To consider something rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from outside in order to work upon it, for the object is itself rational for itself; it is the spirit in its freedom the highest apex of self-conscious reason, which here gives itself actuality and engenders itself as an existing world; and the sole business of science is to make conscious this work which is accomplished by the reason of the thing itself.¹¹⁰

108 Ibid., Section 31, 60.

109 Ibid., Section 5, 60.

110 Ibid., 60.

Thus Hegel seeks not to impose notions or rationality on a thing, but to draw out the rationality from the thing. “Negative fault-finding is all too easy,” explains Franco, “philosophy needs to concern itself with the more difficult task of detecting and understanding the affirmative aspect that lies beneath the motley surface of existing arrangements.”¹¹¹ Because, as has been said repeatedly here, if it exists then it has actuality, and if it has actuality it is part of the intersubjectivity of the ethical life, and as such it has freedom in it.

This does not mean that we are compelled to accept everything inherited from history, as Inwood suggests. While Hegel states that what is actual is rational, not all things existent are actual in Hegel’s sense of the term.¹¹² It is the philosopher’s role to distinguish between the contingencies that are mere concept and those that are actual. The test is history. If a concept exists in practice without contradiction, it has actuality. This means, of course, that the philosopher is only ever able to see a thing after it has become established. Hence his famous statement, the owl of Minerva only flies at dusk. Any attempt to study the world beyond what is present, or to oppose historical-political actuality, leads to self-contradictory subjectivism, a “subjectivism in which the imagination can construct anything it pleases.”¹¹³

Robert Pippin: Personal Inclinations Count

Furthermore, Hegel does not believe there is a fixed predetermined solution to all problems, as Inwood contends. The philosopher is not an oracle; each individual’s road to self-fulfilment is unique to their own identity and situation. Ultimately, his philosophy of freedom cannot help but to accommodate diversity of each particularity because the ultimate determinate

111 Franco, 137.

112 Franco, 139.

113 Ibid., 131, 139.

is self-determination. Pippin reminds us that according to Hegel freedom, “is to be understood in terms of the way I take up and attempt to execute my inclinations.”¹¹⁴ This is not a matter of suppressing one’s desires for the sake of the good, or the good of the community.¹¹⁵ One of the key features that distinguishes Hegel’s form of positive freedom is the importance it gives to personal inclinations. Freedom must entail making choices based on my desires, and not to conform to some external force. To do otherwise is to be unjust to my individuality.¹¹⁶ Desires are not to be shunned; they are a part of our determinations. Reason and desire can be united. The agent’s choice is not based on alien criteria, but on the particularities of the individual.

The goal of a free life should be understood as a wholly self-sufficient life, one in which nothing from outside, nothing not-me, determines my actions. This can sound like he means that this is a question of self-causation rather than outside causation ..., but again, he is not treating the question of *Geist* and freedom as a question of causation. He explicitly explains that something becomes part of me by virtue of the way it is taken up and understood, and even internally causal factors motivating my behaviour are not part of me just because internal, if they cannot be fit into an overall understanding of who I am.¹¹⁷

For Hegel, “who I am” involves others, and this is something negative liberty theorists do not account for. The recognition of other and being recognized by other as a free agent is vital to Hegel’s idea of freedom. Pippin explains that recognition plays a dual role here. First, the agent’s status as a rational free being is confirmed through the other’s recognition of this status. “Self-consciousness finds satisfaction in another self-consciousness.”¹¹⁸ Second, recognition promotes the realization that the representation of ourselves as free agents must be thought

114 Pippin, 50.

115 Ibid., 48.

116 Ibid., 49.

117 Ibid., 49.

118 Pippin, “You Can’t Get There from Here,” in Federick C. Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 68.

simultaneously with the consideration of the influence of our social origins.¹¹⁹ “Hegel is suggesting that how we come to understand or make judgements about anything must be function of some sort of mutually sanctioning process among such subjects, and that this process can be understood only by considering such subjects as practical, purposive, or living beings.”¹²⁰

Distinguished from Kant’s Formalism and “Divided Self”: Liberalism that Accommodates Individual Particularity

Having responded to the negative liberty theorists and by extension classical liberalism, we can examine more closely the distinction between Hegel and Kant, whose work has inspired so many contemporary liberal theorist seeking to answer the attacks of the left. The central precept we are concerned with here is the extent to which the subject can know the object, and the key lies in Hegel’s concern for actuality. It is this that saves him from presuming to have access to some transcendent plateau from which the wise can hurl lightening bolts at the ignorant, and hence from the “divided self” problem that plagues Kant’s theory of freedom. Kant argued that the unification of freedom and moral law can be conceived when we realize that as bearers of reason we can all independently access the truth - that is, the same conclusions - about what is right. Through this independent reasoning process, which he describes,¹²¹ we are bound to agree upon a set of categorical imperatives from which we can develop society’s laws. The unfortunate consequence, however, is what Steven Smith calls a “divided self.”¹²² There is a clash between the human being as a moral creature and as a natural one. We can rationally determine laws that might function as universal imperatives by tapping into some transcendental

119 Ibid., 70.

120 Ibid., 71.

121 This includes the assertion that one’s maxims must be conceivable and desirable as universal principles.

122 Steven B. Smith, *Hegel’s Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 7.

natural law, but we do so by temporarily ignoring our drives and desires which are forever embedded in Nature.

Incorporating Desire and Culture: e-Motion

Hegel condemns this for being too formal. He seeks a more practical route by incorporating desire and the vagaries of the social life by working out moral law from social interaction rather than something transcendent. By uniting people's wills through a "universal law" Kant's definition of right is strictly negative - limits imposed by reason. Hegel rejects this for two reasons. First, he argues that this leaves the arbitrary wills of people unaffected and hence intact, though perhaps oppressed.¹²³ Thus the individual is left to struggle perpetually with an inner conflict in which desire, the very foundation of human motivation, is cast as the foe to reason and justice. In contrast, Hegel seeks to incorporate the subject's natural desires, to have reason and drives work together, such as love and friendship. Second, Hegel criticizes Kant for imagining the impossible situation where we contemplate moral questions in a vacuum, as though our moral will were self-subsisting. Hegel recognizes that when individuals contemplate moral questions, they bring their own set of beliefs, experiences and assumptions (their own history) to the process and will inevitably arrive at very different ideas, which they will then have to sacrifice to some extent when they conform to the laws they were able to negotiate with others. As Smith explains, "moral will is a specific historical accomplishment, something with a more pronounced developmental component to it ... The will is always embedded in the real life in an objective world of political and legal institutions which reach their fruition in the idea of the state."¹²⁴ Whereas Kant presupposes that we have some a priori principles concerning how to

123 Franco, 175.

124 Smith, 111.

act, Hegel argues that for such principles we must look to the ethical sphere of society. These provide us with practical ends which we can evaluate and possibly adopt. Hegel explains the necessity of the cultural background in the process when he states that for there to be a wrong, an act must contradict a right, and “a contradiction must be a contradiction with something, that is with a content which is already fundamentally present as an established principle. Only to a principle of this kind does an action stand in a relation of agreement or contradiction. But if a duty is to be willed merely as a duty and not because of its content, it is a formal identity which necessarily excludes every content and determination.”¹²⁵

Defining Right:

Hegel has a unique conception of right that is in keeping with the unity of *Geist* and his overall system. Clarifying this brings in another dimension of his idea of freedom and how he reconciles, indeed, links it with duty.¹²⁶ Hegel’s *The Philosophy of Right* is a study of his philosophy of freedom as Idea. In it, he identifies freedom with right and right with duty. It is no surprise that he identifies freedom with right given that it conforms to the common English liberal view that right refers to the individual’s claim to conditions that cannot be intruded on by legal obligations or duties; however, the connection between freedom and right with duty is more puzzling. He is not making the familiar case that if a person justly claims a right, then others have a duty to respect the rights of the individual if they hope to make rights claims themselves. For Hegel, the terms are more tightly bound than this. He combines the English conception of right with the German understanding of *recht*: a law to which the subjective will is obliged to conform. Hegel seeks to bring the two definitions together by redefining right as the entire

125 Hegel, *Elements*, Section 135.

126 This is not a matter of changing the language to fit the philosophy. For Hegel, the analysis of our fundamental terms is the very stuff of philosophy.

system of laws, as opposed to actual statutes or positive law, which encompasses the conditions of freedom, including civil rights, morality, and ethics. Thus “right refers both to a subjective claim and to legal obligation and duty.”¹²⁷ The will of a free person has a duty to his/her rights, and a right to his/her duties insofar as they promote individual freedom.¹²⁸

Obviously, proponents of negative liberty find this aspect of Hegel’s philosophy difficult to swallow. When it is summarized in a brief practical form, it grates upon the modern reader who is unfamiliar with his system. His assertion that freedom is found in duty strikes us as a recipe for oppression. But the freedom he is advocating is the freedom from our natural drives and the indeterminate subjectivity which does not attain existence.¹²⁹ And the duty we subscribe to is our own. For Hegel, the system of laws, what he calls “right”, does not place a negative limitation on the individual’s will; rather, it is the positive realization of the will. This is a portentous break from the contract theorist’s perspective in which they imagine fully autonomous individuals meeting at the bargaining table with their independently developed notion of the good and trading in rights and privileges, accepting certain limitations on their range of choices for overall personal advantage. Hegel attributes this divergence to epistemology. The empiricism ascribed to by contract theorists results in a stunted understanding of the human being where what counts is the external, observable, and verifiable. Thus they must conceive human relations in terms of property relations and natural right can only be a legal doctrine devoid of moral weight. From this perspective, the subject’s will exists in things external to it, what it possesses. In contrast, morality understands that right also lies in the intention of the subject, what they will. This is one aspect of Kant’s work that Hegel admired and

127 Franco, 173.

128 Ibid., 174.

129 Ibid., 175.

developed. For Kant, questions of right and wrong are concerned with the internal. When judging actions what matters is the nature of the subject's intentions rather than the outcome, because so much in the world is beyond our control we can never be certain of the consequences of our actions. For an act to be truly good, the subject must will the good. But it does not stop there for Hegel as it does with Kant.

With right in the strict sense, it made no difference what my principle or intention was. This question of the self-determination and motive of the will and of its purpose now arises in connection with morality. Human beings expect to be judged in accordance with their self-determination, and are in this respect freed, whatever external determinants may be at work. It is impossible to break into this inner conviction of human beings; it is inviolable, and the moral will is therefore inaccessible. The worth of a human being is measured by his inward actions, and hence the point of view of morality is that of freedom which has being for itself.¹³⁰

The moral position marks the transition from a will in itself to a will for itself. But not until the subject has the content provided by the ethical realm does it become fully realized.

Without morality, empiricists must base the laws on natural necessity, for example, survival. Not only does this provide a very weak justification for the universality of rights (what is it that makes rights or freedom inalienable?),¹³¹ but it is blind to the role of history and culture in the formation of conceptions of the good and risks accepting those notions uncritically.¹³² Hegel tries to overcome this as well as Kant's transcendental formalism. Indeed, Hegel saw Kant as a type of contractarian who attempted to provide a moral and rational justification for universal rights, but could not get past seeing free will as particular and arbitrary.¹³³ In contrast,

130 Hegel, *Elements*, Section 106.

131 This is the standard, and I believe valid, criticism of utilitarianism. The greatest happiness for the greatest number leaves the individual or minority vulnerable to the majority's whims and vices.

132 Smith, 68.

133 Franco., 177. Although it is not the standard interpretation of Kant and therefore not addressed here, it is interesting to note Leslie Mulholland's convincing case that Kant was a general will theorist rather than a contract

Hegel redefines right as virtually synonymous with freedom and inseparable from the fully actualized individual will. Only the rational will, that which recognizes the link between right and freedom, is free from the arbitrariness of non-actualization that is typical of the natural will, and the contingency of appetites that governs the reflective will. Only the rational will is fully actualized, both for itself and in itself, because it has itself, its freedom, as its content.¹³⁴ Ultimately, Hegel does not view either right or the state as external to human freedom. Right and the state are in fact “produced by the logic of freedom” and consist “in the immanent development of freedom.”¹³⁵

theorist. See his *Kant's System of Rights*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). He thus blurs the distinction that Hegel maintained existed between himself and Kant.

134 Ibid., 178.

135 Ibid., 181.

Chapter Three: Making Sense of Macpherson's Liberal Marxism

Introduction

C.B. Macpherson's highly influential critique of the ontology of possessive individualism continues to shed light on the source of social inequalities that are nurtured by capitalism and neo-liberalism. And yet the ideological identity of Macpherson remains a source of confusion for his critics and admirers alike. This has led to misinterpretations of his work by commentators on either side of the liberal-communitarian divide. The clearest account portrays his work as a blend of T.H. Green's ethical liberalism and Marx's political economy.¹ He looked to Green for his ontology, the notion of human fulfillment, and to Marx for his empirical analysis of the relationship between the property theory of classical liberalism and class oppression. What is being overlooked in this interpretation of Macpherson, however, is that Green and Marx both looked to Hegel for inspiration, one for his theory of an overarching unifying spirit, the other for his political economy. I intend to show that, by bringing the two together, Macpherson unwittingly engages in the restoration of the original and much maligned Hegel.

This chapter begins with a brief biographical sketch to account for how Macpherson might have picked up his Hegelian idealism and then proceeds to draw parallels between Macpherson's and Hegel's work. For my interpretation of Hegel, I adopt what Allan Patten calls the civic humanist reading of Hegel promoted by such scholars as Robert Pippin and Robert Williams.² Patten, Pippin and Williams hold that Hegel's infamous *Geist* is not the omnipotent

¹ Peter Lindsay, *Creative Individualism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

² Allan Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (University of California Press, 1997); Robert Pippin, "Hegel, Freedom, The Will," in Ludwig

spirit that negates individual will, but rather a term for the activity in which ideas, reason and action blend in a logical and dialectical fashion. Of course, Macpherson and others of his generation would not have been aware of this interpretation of Hegel, so I do not claim that he had this understanding of Hegel's work or understood his own work in these terms, only that this was the source of Macpherson's approach, though he received it second hand. Recognizing this clarifies much of the confusion about his liberal-Marxist critique of liberal democracy.

As Peter Lindsay has rightly noted, Macpherson openly embraced certain metaphysical assumptions which underlay his critique of possessive individualism, but "metaphysics was neither his passion nor his strong suit." I contend that had he delved deeper into those waters he would have found himself drawn to the civic humanist Hegel. By understanding Macpherson's work in this way we can get a more complete grasp of his perspective and where it might lead us. In Lindsay's superb book *Creative Individualism*, he often employs Hegel's formulations to clarify ambiguities in Macpherson's work.³ Now we need to recognize Macpherson's similarity to Hegel for what it is, the extension of a tradition that has been a major force in defining Canada's political culture.

Macpherson's status as an inadvertent Hegelian can be gleaned somewhat from his biography. By identifying his direct and acknowledged influences, we can establish the plausibility that Hegel somehow sneaked in under the wire without Macpherson knowing. Of course, the biographical element is secondary to the interpretation of his writings from which we can discern his position on certain critical philosophical and political points. The touchstones of

Siep, ed., *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Akademie Verlag, 1997); Paul Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

³ Lindsay, *Creative*, 12, 24, 26, 34.

this study are freedom, ontology, methodology and the philosophy of history. The focus here will be freedom, ontology, and political economy, though the philosophy of history will be implicit in the historical approach to philosophy.

After a brief biographical sketch to establish the plausibility of this project, I will set out Macpherson's conception of freedom as he articulates it in his criticism of Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty." This will show the similarities between the positive liberty of Macpherson and that of Hegel, *despite* Macpherson's passing references to Hegel's idealism as an oppressive doctrine. This is followed by an account of his neo-Aristotelian ontology which he derived from the British Idealists. Here, too, the origins of this will be traced to Hegel. Finally, I will give an account of Macpherson's use of Marx and show that the economic theories he borrows from Marx had been learned from Hegel, and where Marx adapts Hegel's work, Macpherson does not follow.

Biography of a Budding Idealist

Crawford Brough Macpherson (1911-1987) was born, raised and spent the greater part of his life in Toronto, with the exception of three years of graduate work in England, one year teaching at the University of New Brunswick and a few years sabbatical abroad. He took his B.A. in political economy at University of Toronto (1929-32) where he also won scholarships in the Classics. The stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, which exhibited the potential ruthlessness of *laissez-faire* capitalism, doubtless had an impact on the young scholar's perspective on the important link between economics and social justice. But to discern the roots of his mature conceptualization and articulation of political and philosophical issues,

we can look to his teachers at U of T. He studied Plato under Fulton Anderson, and economics from retired London School of Economics professor E.J. Urwick. He learned that his greatest intellectual interest was political theory, which he studied under the tutelage of professor Otto B. van der Sprenkel, a left-wing European academic who had himself been a student of Harold Laski at L.S.E. after fleeing fascism on the continent. Sprenkel was Macpherson's professor during a two year sojourn in Toronto before leaving to teach in Australia. Sprenkel introduced Macpherson to Marx's thought, which Macpherson claims he did not quite take to, and, more importantly, to the work of Harold Laski, under whom Macpherson would later write his M.A. at L.S.E.⁴

Whether or not Macpherson claims to identify with Marx, it is clear he had been exposed to Marxist thought and adopted much of Marx's insights regarding class domination and labour. There might be some mild temptation to say that Marx's status as a left-Hegelian alone is sufficient to claim that his students are neo-Hegelian. Yet, this could only serve to blur the picture rather than clarify it. Besides, that Hegel's influence on Western political thought was widespread has never been in question, and thus, attributing a touch of Hegel to a thinker would hardly be enlightening. What is being argued here is that Hegel's importance to Macpherson has been far greater than previously appreciated. That said, the influence of Marx does give us a hint that a neo-Hegelian might be lurking. Marx's conceptions of historical dialectics and the importance of labour to personal fulfillment are ideas picked up from Hegel and are also vital to Macpherson. But Macpherson was not a materialist. Rather, his reading of history was in tune with an Hegelian blend of the concept and the concrete that had infused much of the Canadian

⁴ Leiss, *C.B. Macpherson*, 25.

school system in Macpherson's time through the British Idealists, and at U of T these ideas would have been reinforced by the likes of Fulton Anderson.⁵ In other words, Macpherson was closer to Hegel's thought than the left-Hegelian Marx, and what he found attractive in Marx were the Hegelian ideas Marx had kept.

Anderson had been a key member of The Toronto School of Intellectual History, founded by George Brett, which the philosopher and Brett's biographer John Irving called "the first indigenous philosophical movement to develop in Canada."⁶ Anderson represents a link in the tradition that brings Hegel to Macpherson via British Idealism. It was Brett who brought the views of the British Idealists to U of T.⁷ He had been a student of the British Idealists Bosanquet, Bradley, and Green at Oxford, and much of his philosophical education was overseen by a scholar of German philosophy, Herbert W. Blunt. Blunt had warned him away from system-building, which may explain his aversion to the study of Hegel as such. Blunt's distinctly Hegelian perspective could be found in that his priority was a conception of freedom that involves immanent critique from which individuals could develop their own ends.⁸ For instance, unlike Plato's view of reason as a means to transcend the contingencies of human experience, Hegel's immanent critique critically engages various systems of thought and life on their own terms.⁹ Thus freedom is the consciousness of freedom. The historical dialectic of philosophical ideas facilitated the development of human consciousness and, by extension, human freedom,

5 For an account of the history of idealism in Canada see, Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981).

6 *Ibid.*, 457.

7 The philosophy department at U of T had already been infused with British Idealism in the 1880's by the tremendously influential Paxton Young. See A.B. McKillop, *A Disciplined Intelligence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 200.

8 Armour and Trott, *Faces*, 443.

9 Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 22-28.

and so freedom involves gaining an understanding of this development. Under Brett's influence, philosophy at U of T became the history of philosophy.¹⁰ The greater understanding we derive from history "creates in us a greater capacity for experience, literally a richer inner life within which we can move more freely."¹¹ All but his rejection of formal systems of thought mark Brett as an Hegelian.¹² He was an objective idealist who admired Hegel's philosophy of history for the idea of continuity as well as the idea of the organic totality of life.¹³ It is likely that Anderson taught this approach to philosophy and history to his students, including Macpherson.

Sprenkel's influence can be subsumed in a discussion of Macpherson's lessons from Laski. At L.S.E., Laski introduced Macpherson to a left-wing political economy that was highly infused with idealist principles. Along with the Marxist critique of capitalism, the roots of which can be found in Hegel's critique of the one-sidedness of viewing society solely in terms of market relations,¹⁴ he taught Macpherson an Aristotelian humanist approach to synthesizing otherwise contending forces of the Enlightenment: socialism and liberalism.¹⁵ Whether or not Laski was aware of it, this was precisely Hegel's political project. Like Aristotle, Hegel had a conception of human essence which fulfilled itself in human society, but whereas for Aristotle the human *telos* was the good, for Hegel it was freedom. Jules Townshend attributes this to

10 Armour and Trott, *Faces*, 433.

11 *Ibid.*, 442.

12 *Ibid.*, 445.

13 *Ibid.*, 446-7.

14 In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel asserts that the good of property rights is abstract; it lacks moral content as well as concrete institutions to keep it from vacuity and negativity. G.W.H. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Ed. Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 186.

15 Jules Townshend, *C.B. Macpherson and the Problem of Liberal Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 7. Townshend tells us of the synthesis and the importance of Aristotle without realizing that he is describing Hegel's project. This is also the case with Peter Lamb and David Morrice, "Ideological Reconciliation in the Thought of Harold Laski and C.B. Macpherson," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 35:4 (December 2002), 803.

Macpherson's exposure, through Laski, to J.S. Mill and the British Idealists.¹⁶ Laski, like Macpherson and his undergraduate political economy professor E.J. Urwick, was a Classics scholar. Both Urwick and Laski read their classics, including Aristotle, through the lens of British Idealists. Townshend points out that Laski had originally intended to open his *Grammar of Politics* with "a discussion of the bearing of philosophy on politics and discuss the idealistic canon of T.H. Green and Bosanquet."¹⁷ But Townshend also distinguishes Laski and Macpherson from the Idealists by their willingness to adopt elements of Marx's political economy. If Townshend were acquainted with the argument being made in this thesis he surely would recognize the composite of these intellectual positions is Hegel's system.

Macpherson's final mentor from his early academic career remained his mentor into his maturity. Harold Innis was a tremendous force in the Department of Political Economy. He had been Macpherson's political economy professor at the U of T, and he was head of the department in 1943 when Macpherson returned as a young professor. As a student of Innis, Macpherson had found tedious his strict adherence to the empirical aspects of political economy on history and society.¹⁸ Nevertheless, they worked closely together and enjoyed informal discussion, so it seems reasonable that Macpherson would have picked up some of Innis' ideological disposition. Although Innis' attempt to make a hard science of history bored Macpherson, the underlying

16 Townshend, *Macpherson*, 7.

17 Quoted in *ibid.*, 10.

18 Leiss, *Macpherson*, 29.

Hegelian influence likely reinforced what Macpherson had learned and made them intellectual allies.¹⁹

This account of Macpherson's early academic influences is not presented as definitive evidence that he was a neo-Hegelian. Students do not always follow their teachers. Indeed, they often rebel against them. Nevertheless, it is evident that Macpherson had a great deal of exposure to Hegel's ideas without necessarily being aware of their source. Hegel's system was largely out of favour at this time, so his ideas were only partially adopted by those who found any value in his work. But what of Macpherson's mature thought and how does it fit with current interpretations of Hegel?

Response to Isaiah Berlin: Macpherson's Positive Liberty

Hegel has long been dismissed for his theory that history is directed by God's will, thereby legitimating any existing regime, however oppressive, as well as emptying the notion of individual freedom, effectively asserting that we are all rendered mere pawns of God's spirit. The civic humanist reading of Hegel provides a far more appealing version of Hegel's conception of freedom, and it is found in a less sophisticated form in Macpherson's work. Macpherson shares Hegel's project of synthesizing individual autonomy with political unity by

19 The influence of Hegel on Innis is briefly mentioned in, though it is implied throughout, Judith Stamps' *Unthinking Modernity: Innis, McLuhan, and the Frankfurt School* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 8. Stamps' book shows the parallels between the thought of Innis and Marshal McLuhan and that of the Frankfurt School. This is a fascinating comparison that does much to fill out our comprehension of Innis and McLuhan, and, unintentionally, does much to identify the idealism of two more of Canada's prominent accidental Hegelians.

subscribing to a notion of freedom that entails an intersubjectivity²⁰ that, rather than constraining individual fulfillment, enables its actualization when combined with rational social institutions. This is neither the atomistic individualism of classical liberalism that emerged from the mechanistic ontology of the Enlightenment, nor an oppressive collectivism wherein the individual is subordinate to rules dictated by an external authority, be it tradition or tyrant. It is rather an intersubjective freedom in which reason plays a vital role. As free agents, we engage in rational evaluations of our choices in light of our higher ends, and this evaluation involves recognition of others as autonomous beings, and their importance to the constitution of our own identities, as well as the importance of our emotions and drives in our deliberations.²¹

Macpherson's conception of freedom further fits Hegel's rational authentic freedom in that, for both, form must be in harmony with content: the overarching goal of the free act is to fulfill one's freedom. The primary motive of the rational will is not satisfying hunger, or chasing the fleeting phantom of pleasure, though such drives are not to be ignored or suppressed; it is to will itself, its essence, which is freedom. Part of this willing is the creation and protection of institutions that facilitate freedom for oneself and for the other members of the community. We do this by trying to determine which aspects of our inherited society are rational or "actual", and which are self-contradictory. Macpherson begins with an analysis of capitalism's *laissez-faire* conception of freedom where some are denied freedom as a result of the whims of a market economy. Macpherson follows Hegel in maintaining that there cannot be freedom for any unless

20 "Intersubjectivity" is not an expression that Macpherson uses, but it does capture the essence of his position on the importance others play in the development and enjoyment of our human capacities in contrast to the atomistic ontologies of classical liberals.

21 This interpretation of Hegel's conception of freedom can be found in Patten, *Hegel's Idea of Freedom*; Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*; Pippin, "Hegel, Freedom, The Will"; and Franco, *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*.

all are free, because just as the *telos* of the individual is his or her freedom, so is the *telos* of the society as a whole (*Geist*) the freedom of all. Thus, Macpherson follows Hegel in criticizing the negative liberty of classical liberalism for being too abstract and failing to accommodate aspects of human fulfillment that are essential to a complete realization of freedom. The competitive atomistic environment of contract theorists ignores our inherent intersubjectivity that is a consequence of our history, culture, and need for recognition.

It is evident in Macpherson's critical essay, "Berlin's Division of Liberty," that his conception of freedom conforms to the civic humanist Hegel. He defends positive liberty, though he seeks to distinguish himself from the oppressive positive freedom he attributes to Hegel and others. Macpherson argues that Berlin is wrong to believe that positive liberty invariably degrades into state oppression through the enforcement of a particular notion of the good. Macpherson contends that Berlin's error is a consequence of his overly abstract conception of freedom which, because it is removed from the socio-historical context, is too narrow and misses the extent to which a brute market society restricts access to the means of leading a fulfilling life. It seems to Macpherson that Berlin is unaware that the enjoyment of negative liberty requires first the satisfaction of certain fundamental human needs. In other words, negative liberty cannot exist in a society that does not also have positive liberty, or what Macpherson calls PL1.²²

PL1 is "the desire of the individual to be his own master, to be self-directed, to be moved by his own conscious purposes, to act and decide rather than be acted upon and decided for by others."²³ He quotes with admiration Berlin's account of this idea of freedom, "I wish, above all,

22 C.B. Macpherson, "Berlin's Division of Liberty," *Democratic Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

23 *Ibid.*, 108.

to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realize that it is not.”²⁴ This is an especially effective articulation of the importance of the agent’s rational determination and unhindered pursuit of her own ends. PL1 is distinguished from positive liberty’s oppressive form, PL2, which both Berlin and Macpherson associate with Idealists such as Hegel. Here, “liberty is coercion, by the fully rational or by those who have attained self-mastery, of all the rest; coercion, by those who say they know the truth, of all those who do not (yet) know it.”²⁵ The third form of positive liberty described by Macpherson, PL3, “is the democratic concept of liberty as a share in the controlling authority.”²⁶ Macpherson and Berlin agree that this form of positive liberty can exist with or without negative liberty, so it is not pertinent to the core of the debate and can be put aside for now. The key questions are, does PL1 necessarily lead to PL2 and should we be content with protecting only negative liberty?

The heart of the disagreement between Macpherson and Berlin lies in the position of liberty in their respective ontologies and the notion of human fulfillment. For Berlin, freedom plays a secondary role, namely, it is the political condition that enables agents to pursue their higher ends. As a sporadic empiricist, he attempts to ground his theory in an irrefutable natural law and so argues that, as bearers of reason, human beings are by nature free, and therefore, the state should provide a space in which freedom (understood as the capacity to make rational choices) can be exercised with the least possible interference from other agents. In contrast, like

24 Ibid., 105.

25 Ibid., 109.

26 Ibid., 109.

Hegel, Macpherson sees liberty as integral to our natural ends; whatever else our goals might be, freedom is our highest end. It is something to be achieved through development of ourselves and our society, both mutually reinforcing the project of authentic autonomy from drives that have not been made our own, whether internal or external. The particular way that freedom is expressed can only be determined by the individual. Both Hegel and Macpherson believe that the correct choices are partly contingent on the individual's identity, culture, and socio-historical context, and therefore beyond the dominion of political philosophers. For this freedom to flourish the state must do more than limit interference; it must also ensure access to institutions and materials that are essential to the realization of that freedom. Otherwise, Macpherson argues, individuals are exposed to the often cruel capriciousness of market relations and while they may have choices, they don't have the ability to rationally evaluate their ends and hone their own particular conception of the good, and they do not have the material means to manifest or express that good.

Macpherson maintains that understanding the link between history and human agency enables us to see that combining negative liberty and PL1 need not result in the rise of oppressive PL2. In part, he bases this on the repulsion we feel at the harsh realities the poor and working class face in a pure market society.²⁷ Any somewhat compassionate person will feel the truth that there must be room for more than the brutality of a society lacking PL1. He also bases the need for PL2 on ontological grounds. This Aristotelian teleological view of the human essence justifies his contention that the means of life and labour are vital to human fulfillment and therefore fundamental and inalienable.

²⁷ This point will be developed in the discussion of Macpherson's economy theory.

Macpherson's Ontological Support for Positive Liberty: Aristotelian Teleology and British Idealism

According to the ontology that underpins Macpherson's conception of liberty, our highest end is true human fulfillment and the attainment of rational autonomy, but he provides no means of measuring this. Instead, the lever he uses to topple each opposing view is the idea that an atomistic, capitalist market economy suffers from an inherent tendency to an unequal distribution of wealth and the means to life and labour. The inaccessibility of the means of life and labour to the poor and working class restricts their powers to develop as human beings, leaving them vulnerable to class domination. He considers this to be essential to human freedom and claims that it is generally not given its due by liberal thinkers from Hobbes, through Mill, to Friedman, Rawls and Berlin. But Macpherson does not always make it clear why freedom is so important.

One of his clearest articulations of what positive freedom entails (aside from having access to a level of material wealth that is greater than is currently attained by the poor in capitalist societies) is found in his critique of Berlin's defense of negative liberty. He quotes with approval Berlin's description of positive liberty:

The 'positive' sense of the word 'liberty' derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other men's, acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside. I wish to be somebody, not nobody; a doer - deciding, not being decided for, self-directed and not acted upon by external nature or by other men as if I were a thing, or an animal, or a slave incapable of playing a human role, that is, of conceiving goals and policies of my own and realizing them. This is at least part of what I mean when I say that I am rational, and that it is my reason that distinguishes me as a human being from the rest of the world. I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by

references to my own ideas and purposes. I feel free to the degree that I believe this to be true, and enslaved to the degree that I am made to realize that it is not.²⁸

I quote this lengthy paragraph in full, as Macpherson did, because it is perhaps as complete an account of Macpherson's own conception of positive liberty as we might expect to find. This is indicated in his comments following the quotation: "There could scarcely be a more eloquent statement: positive liberty is liberty to act as a fully human being. A man's positive liberty is virtually the same as what I have called a man's power in the developmental sense."²⁹ Though he uses the qualifier "virtually" he nowhere attempts to distinguish his idea of positive liberty from Berlin's definition. We might suppose that his use of "virtually" is meant to avoid explaining why he has not said it himself earlier.

He quotes Berlin again, once more admiring his sound articulation of liberty: "all men have one true purpose, and one only, that of rational self-direction."³⁰ Here, he is cautious about proposing a human *telos*, but he does not contradict it. It is a truth that can be abused by oppressive political forces: "There is perhaps no logical fault in attributing to the doctrine of positive liberty the assumption that something as broad as this is 'the one and only true purpose of man' but it can be dangerously misleading, for already it suggests a monism which in fact is not there." He does not consider the monism to be there, and despite some hint of discomfort, he ultimately agrees with the logic that positive liberty is the one and only true purpose of man. Elsewhere he more explicitly accepts the teleological perspective:

Whether that Western tradition is traced back to Plato or Aristotle or to Christian natural law, it is based on the proposition that the end or purpose of man is to use

28 Ibid., 105

29 Ibid., 105.

30 Ibid., 111.

and develop his uniquely human attributes or capacities. His potential use and development of these may be called his human powers. A good life is one which maximizes these powers. A good society is one which maximizes (or permits and facilitates the maximization of) these powers, and thus enables men to make the best of themselves.³¹

The human *telos* is to maximize one's powers to develop worthwhile human attributes.

He refers to this concept of powers as ethical not descriptive.

A man's powers, in this view, are his potential for realizing the essential human attributes said to have been implanted in him by Nature or God, not (as with Hobbes) his present means, however acquired, to ensure future gratification of his appetites.... The ethical concept of man's powers ... necessarily includes in a man's powers not only his natural capacities (his energy and skill) but also his ability to exert them. It therefore includes access to whatever things outside himself are requisite to that exertion.³²

Macpherson does not venture into describing what some of these attributes might be or which are the most worthy. He considers the determination of this to be the domain of the individuals. He only goes so far as to reassert his aspiration for a society which is directed by "a concept of man as exorter and developer of *his own* powers."³³ Like Hegel, Macpherson admires Hobbes for deriving "the bond which holds the state together and the nature of state-power from principles which lie within us and which we recognize as our own."³⁴ However, they both look to Aristotle for a conception of human nature that is not Hobbes's ontology of sheer limitless appetite.³⁵ Aristotle provides a conception of human fulfillment that involves the willing self-restriction of want in favour of a higher good. This good is partly determined by its ability to

31 Macpherson, "The Maximization of Democracy," in *Democratic Theory*, 8-9.

32 *Ibid.*, 9.

33 *Ibid.*, 21.

34 Quoted in Franco, *Hegel's*, p. 4; Macpherson maintains this interpretation of Hobbes' contribution in his *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 15.

35 Hegel criticizes the modern conception of freedom represented by Hobbes and others for being one-sided. He argues that freedom must entail a reconciliation of the particular good and the universal good. See Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 57.

bolster the social order. One's ends are never thought apart from their impact on the community and their worth is measured in terms of their contribution to the improvement of the community.

Macpherson writes,

From Aristotle until the seventeenth century it was more usual to see the essence of man as purposeful activity, as exercise of one's energies in accordance with some rational purpose, than as the consumption of satisfactions. It was only with the emergence of the modern market society, which we may put as early as the seventeenth century in England, that this concept of man was narrowed and turned into almost its opposite.³⁶

Macpherson agrees with Aristotle that the human essence is bound to community. He argues that society is to be viewed not as an impeding agent, but as a positive agent in the development of capacities. Every individual's capacities are socially derived, and their development must also be social. "Human society is the medium through which human capacities are developed. A society of some kind is a necessary condition of the development of human capacities."³⁷ This is precisely the case that Hegel makes in *Philosophy of Right*; one's subjectivity and morality are only affirmed when they are made objective in social institutions and practices.³⁸

Macpherson thus combines negative liberty and PL1. There is a conflict between making one's own decisions independently of another's will and being a member of society. He writes,

It is rather to say that the rules by which he is bound should be only those that can be rationally demonstrated to be necessary to society, and so to his humanity. Or

36 Macpherson, "Maximization," 5.

37 Macpherson, "Problems of a Non-Market Theory of Democracy," in *Democratic Theory*, 57.

38 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 185.

it may be put that the rules society imposes should not infringe the principles that he should be treated not as a means to other's ends but as an end in himself.³⁹

As we find in Hegel, the rational society is one in which the institutions facilitate rather than impede individual autonomy, thus allowing for a harmonious dialectic between individual freedom and the common good. But Macpherson's stated reference point is Aristotle, not Hegel, for this conception of human essence, so what makes Macpherson more Hegelian than Aristotelian? It is that Macpherson, like Hegel, retrieves Aristotle without abandoning the modern conception of universal equality.⁴⁰ The principal difference between antiquity and modernity is that for the latter, the freedom of the subjective will to evaluate and determine her own ends is a *right*.⁴¹ Equality for Aristotle, on the other hand, was reserved for those male citizens with a capacity for theoretical and practical reasoning. Because this capacity was not considered universal, society was necessarily hierarchical. With the liberal thought of the 17th century came a new conception of freedom: "The preference for individual freedom of choice of work and reward rather than authoritative allocation of work and reward: without this value judgement men would be content with a hierarchical customary society."⁴² But such a hierarchy would no longer be acceptable in principle. By reducing humanity to sheer appetite, liberal theory leveled the playing field. Without theorizing about the higher good, instrumental reason defined for Aristotle the character of a slave, whereas Hobbes took it to be the new measure of

39 Ibid., 56.

40 In "The Maximization of Democracy," Macpherson explains, "When this ethical concept was reintroduced in the nineteenth century it contained a more specific egalitarian assumption than it had contained in its ancient and medieval forms. It assumed not only that each individual was equally entitled to the opportunity to realize his human essence, but also (as against the Greeks) that men's capacities were substantially equal, and (as against the medieval tradition) that they were entitled to equal opportunity in this world." 10.

41 Kenneth Westphal, "The Basic Context and Structure of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 250.

42 Macpherson, "Maximization," 17.

humanity. Neither Macpherson nor Hegel admires this facet of liberal ontology, but they embrace the universal equality it promotes. The question then is how to maintain the equality and yet revive the high intellectual expectations Aristotle had for the fully developed human being. And how is it possible in a capitalist market society that “by its very nature compels a continual net transfer of part of the power of some men to other, thus diminishing rather than maximizing the equal individual freedom to use and develop one’s natural capacities.”⁴³ The solution proposed by both Macpherson and Hegel is the rational society that secures universal access to the fundamental elements that facilitate human reason, including a basic standard of material wealth and education, as well as institutions that give a political voice to citizens.

Macpherson attributes his liberalization of Aristotle’s moral theory to John Stuart Mill⁴⁴ and T.H. Green, not Hegel. The ontology of 17th century liberals was drawn from and helped to perpetuate a society that could entirely disregard the suffering and oppression of the poor and labouring classes and do so in the name of freedom.⁴⁵ Freedom as a descriptive rather than an ethical concept meant fewer moral restrictions on choices, but more real material restrictions for those without capital. The aspiration may have been the greater good, but the result was bleak. Mill and Green responded with “repugnance ... to the crass materialism of the market society, which had by then had time to show what it could do.”⁴⁶ Liberal thinkers from Hobbes to Locke had conceived a notion of human essence as infinite consumer. This was ideal for the flourishing

43 Ibid., 10-11.

44 It is interesting to note that it is believed that Mill’s ideal of individual self-development was borrowed from German Romantics such as Humbolt. See Townshend, *C.B. Macpherson*, 139, 156.

45 Macpherson argues that Hobbes’ conception of man in the state of nature was in fact a description of contemporary bourgeois man and all his beliefs and assumptions in a state of lawlessness. See his *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 27.

46 Macpherson, “Maximization,” 6.

of a capitalist society, but the general disregard for humanity beyond respect for security and private property left many without the means to life and labour and thus forced them to surrender their powers to the capitalist class in labour arrangements where the greater portion of the fruits of their labour would go to the owners of capital, leaving them merely sustained. Late 19th century liberals not only felt repugnance but recognized that the resulting discontent could not be ignored. The demand for democratic franchise was growing; hence, it was vital that a more ethical liberalism be cultivated. If not, those with the power to vote would be motivated by self-interest rather than a concern for the common good, and democracy would become a ruthless tyranny of the majority. There was a need for “an image of liberal-democratic society which could be justified by something more morally appealing (to the liberal thinker and, hopefully, to the new democratic mass) than the old utilitarianism.” Utilitarianism had based society on its ability to facilitate the individual’s power to maximize utilities for satisfying desires. Green’s ontology was quite different. He was concerned with what Macpherson calls our developmental powers. “The end or purpose of man was to use and develop his uniquely human attributes. A life so directed might be thought of as a life of reason or a life of sensibilities, but it was not a life a of acquisition.”⁴⁷ Green’s liberalism would be based on,

... a view of man’s essence not as a consumer of utilities but as a doer, a creator, an enjoyer of his human attributes. These attributes may be variously listed and assessed: they may be taken to include the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgement and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for religious experience. Whatever the uniquely human attributes are taken to be, in this view of man their exertion and development are seen as ends in themselves, a satisfaction in themselves, not simply a means to consumer satisfactions. It is

47 Macpherson, “Ontology and Technology,” *Democratic Theory*, 32.

better to travel than to arrive. Man is not a bundle of appetites seeking satisfaction but a bundle of conscious energies seeking to be exerted.⁴⁸

Green sought to restore the classical ontology of humanity's inherent moral dimension, while maintaining universal equality. "It assumed not only that each individual was equally entitled to the opportunity to realize his human essence, but also (as against the Greeks) that men's capacities were substantially equal, and (as against the medieval tradition) that they were entitled to equal opportunity in this world."⁴⁹ They would thus combine the pre-liberal moral ontology of self-development with liberal democracy's right to freedom and equality.⁵⁰

Macpherson's Economic Theory: Reaching Hegel through Marx's Critique of Capitalism

Macpherson argues that despite their good intentions, Green and other 19th century liberal thinkers did not succeed. With Mill and Green neither the freedom to maximize utilities nor the freedom to maximize one's own powers was achieved.⁵¹ Both descriptive and ethical liberals failed to appreciate the impact of class interests. Macpherson believes that we must acknowledge class division in order to refine liberal democracy and make it an environment where our developmental powers are truly accommodated. For this he dons his political economist hat and determines whether the liberal ideals of freedom and equality are empirically realized in the current system, or whether the system suffers from an inherent contradiction that must be overcome either by reforming the predominant ontology so that it better suits the concrete

48 Macpherson, "Maximization," 4-5.

49 Ibid., 10.

50 Macpherson, "Ontology and Technology," 32.

51. Macpherson, "Maximization," p. 6. A. J. M. Milne agrees that Green underestimates the need for state intervention, but clarifies that he does not maintain a laissez-faire approach and is primarily concerned with ensuring the needs are met for the moral agent to "achieve the highest level of rationality," and private property is vital component of this. *The Social Philosophy of English Idealism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962), 154-7.

reality, or by reforming the institutional structure to fit the liberal-democratic conception of a just society. Macpherson is satisfied that Green's ontology provides the moral compass, but he looks to Marx to guide us through the turbulent empirical matters.

To argue that liberal democracy fails in its professed goal of freedom and equality, Macpherson has employed Marx's class-based analysis of the oppressive effects of the capitalist system. The predominant conception of private property results in profound social, political and economic inequality that is enforced by the state. In effect, the state serves the interests of the capitalist class. Whereas Macpherson learned about the importance of developmental powers from Green, he learned from Marx of the potency of extractive powers and the transfer of power.⁵² He argues that the capitalist class owns the means of life and the means of production and is therefore able to harness the labour of the working class so that after the initial costs of production, the value added is the property of the capitalist. This is effectively a transfer of powers, that is, the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description.⁵³ Twentieth-century economists are blind to this transfer of power because they subscribe to the Hobbes-to-Bentham market man ontology which holds that power is having the means to procure satisfactions, including previously amassed wealth, earned or inherited.⁵⁴ Macpherson argues that this transfer

52. Macpherson, "Maximization," 10-11.

53. Karl Marx, "Capital, Volume One," in *The Marx-Engles Reader, Second Edition*, Ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 336.

54 Macpherson, "Maximization," 11.

of powers, which is enforced by the state as the coercive force upholding existing property laws, contradicts the liberal democratic claim to maximize each individual's powers.⁵⁵

Mill had hoped that with democracy people would get involved in government, take an interest and counteract the inhumanity of the economic structure of his time. He found abhorrent a system in which those who worked hardest at the most punishing jobs received the least remuneration while those who did little to nothing held the larger portion of wealth. His solution was the principle of "proportion between remuneration and exertion."⁵⁶ In his defense of property, he included a defense of capital on the grounds that it was the product of previous labour and abstinence. In other words, he opposed the disparity in wealth but he did not attribute it to the rules of capitalism. Macpherson challenges this:

What [Mill] failed to see was that the capitalist market relation enhances or replaces any original inequitable distribution, in that it gives to capital part of the value added by current labour, thus steadily increasing the mass of capital. Had Mill seen this he could not have judged the capitalist principle consistent with his equitable principle. Failing to see this, he found no fundamental inconsistency, and was not troubled by it.⁵⁷

According to Macpherson, capitalism inevitably leads to the gross disparity witnessed by Mill and requires more than democracy to counterbalance it. Macpherson argues not only that democracy fails to curb the ills of capitalism but that the party system serves to blur class lines and keeps universal franchise from benefitting the working class. In a two party system, the parties end up fighting for the middle in order to win the most votes, and in a multi-party system it is rare that a party wins a majority so coalitions are usually the result, effectively diluting any

55 Ibid., 12.

56 Quoted in Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 53.

57 Ibid., 55-6.

clear agenda such as class interests.⁵⁸ Macpherson argues further that the rise of the welfare state transformed much of the working class into petty bourgeoisie thereby weakening their common voice. The latter point does not suggest to Macpherson that perhaps democracy did have a softening affect on capitalism. It does not negate his core argument that capitalism facilitates a large scale transfer of powers from the working class to the capital owning class and thus restricts the ability for the working class to freely use their powers for their own development. As a consequence of the failing of the party system the working class did not exercise their vote to promote their interests as a group but instead followed the lead of the middle class. Ultimately, the systematic blurring of class lines and the social imbalance in education and wealth subverts the working class' capacity to participate and promote their interests. Money and education are not equal in society; therefore neither is the political weight of the individuals. The sense of powerlessness results in apathy. After all, in a society where "the maximization of wealth is the maximization of happiness,"⁵⁹ a person's worth is measured in terms of what the market will give them for their labour.

The trap of market society is that its ontology of the infinite consumer not only serves as an enormously effective motivator for ceaseless productivity, but it also creates the illusion of infinite scarcity. The combination of these renders the perpetual pursuit to overcome scarcity a valid and rational purpose, even long after society has reached a level of productivity sufficient to satisfy the needs of all citizens to achieve personal fulfillment. There is an artificial creation of

58 Ibid., 66. This argument had also been anticipated by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 340-341. While holding this view certainly does not make one Hegelian, it is worth noting that Macpherson's thought on the party system fit naturally with Hegel's political thought.

59 Macpherson, "Ontology and Technology," 27.

needs that emerges from this liberal ontology and is nourished by advertising which “creates desires which otherwise would not exist.”⁶⁰

Macpherson does not believe this equality can be offset by the welfare state because it is grounded in certain misconceptions of human essence and property. Macpherson describes market man as an infinite consumer whose overriding motivation is to maximize the flow of satisfactions, or utilities, to himself from society, and that a rational society is simply a collection of such individuals.⁶¹ Market man views himself in terms of property; he owns himself, his labour, and the product of his labour; further, his relationship with others is a contractual exchange of property. The capitalist society that nurtures market man invariably cannot provide universal access to the means of life and the means of labour, and thus leads to exploitation of the worker by the capitalist class. Where the workers’ labour ought to be a source of self-fulfillment as the concrete realization of themselves in the world, it only serves to widen the gap of autonomy that exists between themselves and the owners of capital. As Bhikhu Parekh has pointed out, Macpherson is suggesting there is an “inequality of men’s humanity. In capitalist society some men are human, while the rest are ‘reduced to a commodity’.”⁶²

Macpherson finds that Marx alone recognized that universal freedom for individuals to actualize themselves will not be achieved until we overcome the alienation of the worker from his labour by ensuring the right to own the means of life and the means of labour.⁶³ According to

60 Macpherson, “Ontology and Technology,” 33. This quotation is of particular interest because it introduces a link between Macpherson and other Canadian communication theorists who could also be counted among Canada’s accidental Hegelians: Innis and McLuhan.

61 Macpherson, *Life and Times*, 43.

62 Bhikhu Parekh, *Contemporary Political Thinkers* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), 57.

63 C.B. Macpherson, “Needs and Wants: an Ontological or Historical Problem?” in *Human Needs and Politics*, ed., Ross Fitzgerald (New York: Pergamon Press, 1977), 34.

Macpherson, one of Marx's main strengths is his ability to situate liberal democracy in a history of ontologies, against which the contradictions of capitalism could be exposed. In contrast, political theorists who do not consider the historical context of ideas end up universalizing the basic features of contemporary man and society and turning "an historically valid relationship into a necessary and universal principle."⁶⁴

There are divergent views on the degree to which Macpherson was a Marxist, a liberal, or some combination of both. Depending upon their persuasion, his critics fault him for being insufficiently Marxist, liberal, or either.⁶⁵ They find in his work the errors of either side. For instance, Parekh criticizes him for holding fast to the possessive individual by proposing merely to extend property rights to include guaranteed access to the means of life and the means of labour.⁶⁶ Parekh argues that Macpherson's focus on the material dimension of human development ignores the importance of social relations. But I contend that if we view them dialectically rather than in isolation, it becomes apparent that there is a distinct position here that does succeed in transcending liberal atomism and Marxist totalitarian tendencies.

Seeing Macpherson's work as more thoroughly rooted in Hegel than any other helps us to conceive how this dialectic works. But to address the natural response, it would seem that Macpherson's evident debt to Marx would immediately discount any affiliation with Hegel. Following Feuerbach, Marx defined his work in terms of a radical break from Hegel's supernatural philosophy, wherein the state's authority seemed sanctioned by God's will acting in

64 Parekh, *Contemporary*, 50. This, of course, is the historical philosophical method Marx learned from Hegel.

65 David Morrice contends that he neither has enough faith in liberalism's gradual progress nor marxism's revolutionary change, "C.B. Macpherson's Critique of Liberal Democracy and Capitalism," *Political Studies* (1994), XLII, 659.

66 Parekh, *Contemporary*, 72.

history. Marx claims to invert Hegel. Where Hegel begins with cosmic unity and asserts that what is ought to be, Marx begins with what is to get an idea of the whole, from which point of understanding he seeks to change society to make it as it ought to be.⁶⁷ This antagonism of philosophical idealism versus scientific materialism is commonly considered to be irreconcilable. Where Hegel is the ethereal philosopher of passive accounting of what has occurred, Marx is the scientific philosopher of action with a prescription for the future.⁶⁸

K.-H. Ilting argues that the perception of Hegel as a passive apologist for the status quo can largely be traced back to Marx's commentary on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, in which Marx breaks from his mentor. Ilting maintains that the break was achieved only by consistently ignoring Hegel's intentions.⁶⁹ "Marx seems almost obsessively determined to push the obvious intentions of Hegel into the background."⁷⁰ Despite Marx's contention that Hegel subordinates the individual to the state, Ilting observes that Hegel's fundamental assertion in the philosophy of right is the obligation of the modern state to assure the citizen's freedom to actualize the right to self-determination.⁷¹

The modern state is first and foremost distinguished from the political communities of antiquity by the fact that its citizens have the right to a private sphere. But in *Hegel's* work these liberal civil rights are expanded into fundamental social rights: individuals are to be guaranteed not only the 'recognition of their rights' to a private sphere, but over and above that they are to have assured 'the full development' of their personal individuality and

67 Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 29.

68 *Ibid.*, 25.

69 K.-H. Ilting, "Hegel's Concept of the State and Marx's Early Critique," in Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 104.

70 *Ibid.*, 105.

71 *Ibid.*, 95.

particularity. But according to Hegel's conception, these private civil rights must be complemented by political rights.⁷²

Hegel's express goal in *Philosophy of Right* is to bring together classical social unity and modern autonomy. Ilting does concede that there are weaknesses in Hegel's text which can be attributed to Hegel's effort to avoid censorship imposed by the Karlsbad Decrees passed by the Prussian government in 1819; however, Marx overlooks these failings entirely in his effort to put an end to philosophical reflection about human *telos*, and to "turn his attention primarily to the analysis of social and economic processes."⁷³ He thus narrows the range of philosophical reflection and instigates a strong tendency toward dogmatism. Ilting's interpretation is in keeping with what Alan Patten calls the civic humanist reading of Hegel.⁷⁴ According to this reading, Hegel believes that the modern ethical life which places great importance on self-actualization means that, in a state that adheres to this as its primary agenda, the individual can attain objective freedom. That is, agents can realize their subjective desires in participation with the state.⁷⁵

The true distinction between Marx and Hegel lies not in the materialist-idealist distinction. Marx shared Hegel's conception of human history progressively moving toward fuller human freedom. His emphasis on the productive life of human beings does not negate the important philosophical assumptions regarding human ends and ideology. The economic element was not the only determining factor of history for Marx. He simply muted the importance of culture in reaction to what he believed was Hegel's religious promotion of *Geist*.⁷⁶ The real distinctions are found in Marx's neglect of philosophical reflection in favour of economic

72 Ibid., 95.

73 Ibid., 113.

74 Patten, *Hegel's*, 34.

75 Ibid., 35.

76 Peter Singer, *Marx* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 38.

consideration; his rejection of the state as a device of bourgeois oppression (rather than a concrete facilitator of the modern ethic of freedom); and his commitment to revolutionary deposing of the state in favour of communism. From a Hegelian perspective, Marx's work is a regressive step that is one-sided in its emphasis and naive in its aspiration for prescriptive philosophy. For Hegel, the philosopher cannot transcend his or her historical context, only identify its contradictions and seek to reconcile between the culture's principles and the institutional structures. Moreover, the state is the institutional structure that gives form to the social agenda. Without it, there is only the tyranny of the stronger. In short, those points on which Marx does indeed break from Hegel are the same elements that distinguish Macpherson from Marx. Macpherson hopes to work out the contradictions he finds in liberal democracy without revolution and without ignoring the importance of ontology.⁷⁷ Macpherson seeks reforms, but reforms achieved through a state that represents the people and extends the domain of private property to include the right to own the means of life and the means of production.

Nevertheless, reading Hegel's *Geist* as non-mystical and his commitment to individual freedom does not mean there is a link between Macpherson's economic theories and Hegel. For this we look to H.S. Harris. He provides an excellent account of Hegel's anticipation of the "Marxian analysis of the economic dialectic of factory capitalism."⁷⁸ For Harris, the difference between Hegel's and Marx's criticisms of the alienation of the worker in an age of mass production is, "while both Hegel and Marx are Christian socialists, Hegel is less of a *believer* and

⁷⁷ Lamb and Morrice, "Ideological Reconciliation," 802.

⁷⁸ H.S. Harris, "The Social Ideal of Hegel's Economic Theory," in Lawrence Stepelevich and David Lamb, eds., *Hegel's Philosophy of Action* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press,), 49. This has also been discussed in Shlomo Avineri's *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

for that very reason, a better philosopher.”⁷⁹ Like Marx, Hegel was critical of the classical liberal economics of Adam Smith. For instance, similarly to Macpherson who argues that the solution lies in overcoming scarcity through a combination of efficient production provided by technology and the end of the view of human essence as insatiable desire, Hegel rejects Smith’s conception of the ideal economic scenario being continual growth. Instead he follows Steuart for whom the ideal was stability with full employment.⁸⁰ This approach leaves room for accommodating deeper human needs whereas Smith’s wealth-centered theory gives free reign to a rich elite rather than general prosperity.⁸¹

The key distinction between Hegel and Marx is that Hegel held that the state played a vital function in ensuring that the market place was serving the ethic of individual self-actualization, and Marx maintained that the market could be transformed to uphold this ethic without the state and that so long as the market was permitted to be anything but inherently ethical itself, the state would only serve to enforce the inequalities. Hegel comments on the ideal of communism, claiming that the principle of denying property has no truth for us. “The fate of property has become too powerful for us to tolerate reflections on it, as if its abolition were thinkable for us.”⁸² He acknowledges that it can be an impediment to the freedom of the spirit,

79 Harris, “Social Ideal,” 52.

80 Ibid., 59.

81 Ibid., 62.

82 Quoted in Harris, “Social Ideal,” 53.

but it is unavoidable.⁸³ “The economic sphere is the one in which personal freedom and initiative must be allowed to display itself.”⁸⁴

Hegel’s solution to the amoral market is the representation of estates in government that will direct the economy to ensure the common good. This amalgam of private interests comes together to form a general will that is quite different from Rousseau’s. Rousseau’s general will does not accommodate the expression of particular interests and is bound to be authoritarian and repressive.⁸⁵ For Hegel, the state must balance the wills of the various estates within the constraints of a system of constitutional rights.⁸⁶ This holds remarkable similarities to the form of participatory democracy that Macpherson proposes in *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, in which he advocates for a combination of the existing party system and estates representing different economic interests.⁸⁷ Macpherson’s commitment to universal ownership of the means of life and the means of production is also found in Hegel’s economic theory. Harris describes Hegel’s position as follows:

Only a society in which men *own* the means of their subsistence can be a community of moral agents. They must own that means neither as a political community, nor as an assembly of stockholders, but rather in the way in which the artisan is accorded absolute ownership of his tools of trade in Magna Carta. In other words, in a factory economy there must be factory cooperatives.⁸⁸

83 Ibid., 53.

84 Ibid., 66. Both Marx and T.H. shared this ethical view of property. For Marx property is essential to have in order to ensure that one’s labour is not alienating. For Green private property “is a power which a man must have if he is to be a moral agent and make a rational life for himself.” Milne, 156.

85 Harris, “Social Ideal,” 57.

86 Ibid., 64.

87 This line of argument is also found in C.B. Macpherson, “The Meaning of Economic Democracy,” *The University of Toronto Quarterly* 11 (1942): 403-20.

88 Harris, “Social Ideal,” 69.

There are slight differences here, however. Hegel rejects the idea that property ownership should be held by the political community, whereas Macpherson supports it. Macpherson argues that the current welfare state model does not accommodate this and that it was necessary to have “democratic political control over the uses to which the amassed capital and the remaining natural resources of the society are put.”⁸⁹ Macpherson does not say how this would be managed, yet given that the goal is to assure a certain degree of private property with which individuals can exert and enjoy their capacities, this does not contradict Hegel’s defense of private property. It is more a matter of emphasis. Macpherson is calling for a restriction on extractive power to be managed by a fully engaged citizenry. “Property is a right, not a thing. It is an enforceable claim created by the state.”⁹⁰ He wishes to render property more intersubjective, that is, as a right to individual development rather than exclusion,⁹¹ and the way to do this is have both greater government control over how it is used and greater citizen involvement in government policy formation.

The property that would then be most important to the individual would no longer be the right of access to the means of labour; it would be instead, the right to a share in the control of the massed productive resources. That right would presumably have to be exercised politically. Political power then becomes the most important kind of property. Property, as an individual right, becomes essentially the individual’s share in political power.⁹²

This fits with Hegel’s participatory model. It simply differs in emphasis. Macpherson asserts that property is a relationship determined by the state, and it must come second to individual freedom. Hegel shares this view, only he would not call the state power over the use

89 Macpherson, *Life and Times*, 111.

90 Macpherson, *Property* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 202.

91 *Ibid.*, 201.

92 Macpherson, “A Political Theory of Property,” *Democratic Theory*, 137.

of property a form of ownership. For Hegel, the individuals own the property and the government ensures that the right to property is not used to deny the liberty of others.

Conclusion

Macpherson's Hegelianism can be found in his conception of positive liberty, his neo-Aristotelian ontology, and his economic theory. Though not fleshed out here, his historical hermeneutic method also has its roots in Hegel's work. Macpherson's critique of liberal democracy and his proposal for alternative forms of participatory democracy and property relations were also anticipated by Hegel. While Macpherson's direct sources are Mill, Green, and Marx, closer study shows that the ideas he borrows from them are found in the civic humanist Hegel, and those ideas he rejects are precisely the elements that distinguish them from Hegel. We know that Macpherson regarded Hegel as an apologist for an oppressive regime, according to the standard interpretation of his contemporaries, so we must conclude that his Hegelianism is purely accidental. By reading Macpherson this way we free ourselves from the debate about whether he was sufficiently liberal or Marxist. We see instead how he can hold the two aloft in a dialectic, where one balances out the excesses of the other. Moreover, we can use the great wealth of insights being generated in Hegel studies to shed light on Macpherson's highly influential analysis of liberal democracy.

Chapter Four: Macpherson's Third Way Stumps His Critics

Introduction

Bikhu Parekh claims Macpherson fails to transcend the liberal framework he criticizes. Parekh maintains that his Marxist socialism is only applied at the institutional and not the ontological level, thus the greater balance of Macpherson's position is liberal. On this I would strongly agree with Parekh. He is correct in asserting, "Macpherson seems to wish to create a *socialist* society in order to realize *liberal* man."¹ His mistake is to think that Macpherson's idealism is meant to transcend liberalism. For Macpherson, as for Hegel, state intervention is meant to offset the vagaries of the market, and its governing principle of self-interest. The state must assume the responsibility of assuring, as much as possible, the liberal ethical ideals of freedom and equality. In other words, the aim is to assure individual freedom, not transcend it. Macpherson's debt to liberalism and his refusal to follow Marx's abolition of the state and private property does not betray his critical stance in relation to the form of liberalism he calls "possessive." He is not obliged to choose a side, either liberal or socialist, when the dialectics of idealism offer a third way, a non-atomistic form of liberalism that can think, indeed must think, simultaneously in terms of individual freedom and the common good. Macpherson's property argument for individual freedom indicates agreement with classical liberalism on one facet of liberty, but does not confine him to Lockean contract theory or utilitarianism.

Parekh believes Macpherson's effort to surpass possessive individualism is negated by his possessive account of our natural right to exert, develop and enjoy our human capacities. If

¹ Parekh, 72.

we follow Parekh, it would seem Macpherson's core justification for our right to fulfillment involves extending property rights established by earlier liberals to include the right to have sufficient property to maximize our developmental powers.

By defining property too widely and turning every right into a property right, Macpherson seems to fall victim to the bourgeois virus of possessive individualism that he so strongly attacks. He does not transcend the basic categories of bourgeois society; he merely universalizes them and invests them with a new content that they seem hardly capable of accommodating.²

Parekh argues that Macpherson's ontological support for the right to developmental powers is far too ambiguous about the nature of the capacities he believes we have a right to exert and enjoy, and he allows too much flexibility on substantive content of human desires and motives.³ Our essential human capacities - rational understanding, moral judgment, and love - are mentioned almost in passing with little explanation of what they entail and how to accommodate them. Additionally, it is not evident how to harmonize these potentially competing capacities. And Macpherson presents substantive content as contingent upon historical setting, then fails to account for how such content can be correctly determined. Consequently, he provides no method for discovering what it means to maximize human capacities and powers. All we are left with is Macpherson extending property rights beyond Locke's prescription to include the right to the means of production. There is no weight given to community and culture in relation to our developmental powers and personal fulfillment.⁴ Thus his vision of liberty remains rooted in the proprietary logic of classical liberals and shares its exclusivist individualism. And if this were not enough to neutralize Macpherson, in a coup de grace Parekh

2 Ibid., 60.

3 Ibid., 70.

4 Ibid., 71.

adds that Macpherson's concern with the maximization of capacities and powers is no different from the logic of maximizing utilities. In effect, he has not broken from the instrumental reason of the utilitarians, and this instrumental reason lies at the heart of atomism.

Robert Babe has pursued a similar line of criticism, arguing that Macpherson's ontology never reaches a level that could be called morality. Instead, Macpherson regards human essence to be an unverifiable value postulate, and morality itself to be historically contingent. His defense of the right to exert, enjoy and develop our capacities is based on it being a more "pleasing" moral stance.⁵ The implication here is that reason, instrumental or otherwise, has little to do with Macpherson's position on equality. Indeed, its ultimate source is deference to liberal individualism. Where Parekh referred to the constitutive affect of society, Babe asserts that Macpherson's concern for extending property rights ultimately comes down to ensuring the equality of the individual. Common property provided for the sake of the individual's maximizing their potential seems no less atomist than the liberal's maximizing utility. By restricting himself to *individual* equality and freedom, Macpherson overlooks vital aspects of the human condition that may provide a richer account of human economic cooperation, such as love or empathy. These are human experiences that are manifested in the giving of gifts and the bonds people feel for one another that exist beyond self-interest driven rights discourse.⁶

Steven Lukes, too, accuses Macpherson of failing to break with the atomistic conception of the individual he claims to be refuting. The internal dimension of our powers, or "capacities," is regarded as existing independently of social relations which Lukes argues contribute to our

⁵ Robert Babe, *Canadian Communication Thought: Ten Foundational Writers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 154-5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 156-7.

identities.⁷ Lukes gives Macpherson credit for “one lonely paragraph” in which he acknowledges the impact of society on the individual, but he does not go far enough. Predominantly, Macpherson presents the developmental powers and human capacities as existing and being exercised independently from the social context. He challenges Macpherson on three counts. First, Macpherson’s emphasis on the importance of the human capacity for “rational understanding” is ambiguous insofar as it is not evident which of the many possible conceptions of reason Macpherson subscribes to or why. Second, Macpherson offers no compelling explanation of why he considers his particular list of human capacities - which includes reason, morality, aesthetics emotions, and productivity - to be “essentially human.”⁸ Third, Macpherson imagines that in a fully democratic society people’s respective pursuit of fulfilling their capacities will not conflict. Lukes sees no reason in Macpherson’s work why we should think this would be so. In sum, Lukes maintains that Macpherson’s theory of essential human capacities presupposes an unarticulated transcendental, perfectionist moral theory that is questionable both because there are alternative conceptions of human nature that might challenge it and because Macpherson gives no clear statement of what constitutes the proper development of these capacities or how society could be arranged to accommodate their flourishing.⁹ Lukes craves more from Macpherson, both in terms of providing an explicit statement of his metaphysical position, and a commitment to a concrete political agenda to accommodate it.

7 Steven Lukes, “The Real and Ideal Worlds of Democracy,” in Alkis Kontos, ed., *Powers, Possessions and Freedom: Essays in Honour of C.B. Macpherson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 146.

8 Ibid., 146-7 The short answer is, he got it from Hegel. The long answer would require an extensive study of Hegel’s account of each of these qualities. Throughout this dissertation many of the qualities listed by Macpherson’s have been accounted for in the discussion of Hegel’s thought.

9 Ibid., 149

Jules Townshend's Weak Defence of C.B. Macpherson and the Problem of Liberal Democracy

A decent though ultimately unsatisfactory effort to respond to this line of criticism is given by Jules Townshend. It is decent because it reaches toward the answers provided when we understand Macpherson's debt to Hegel, but it falls short because Townshend does not have that understanding. He concedes that Macpherson held firmly to the principle of individual freedom, but Macpherson does so in the manner of J.S. Mill who borrowed his conception of individual self-development from the German Romantic tradition.¹⁰ This ideal was shared by Marx, who criticized capitalism for not enabling the development of this form of individualism, "the free development of human powers."¹¹ In discussing this, Townshend emphasizes the role of capitalism and industrialization in initiating an atomistic social deterioration, implying that Marx's criticism of capitalism and Marx's influence on Macpherson is sufficient to show that Macpherson was not the sort of classical liberal individualist Lukes portrays him to be. But indeed, it is Parekh's contention that regardless of Macpherson's concern with atomism and the decay of community, the sort of freedom he advocates does not acknowledge the important role of culture in constituting one's identity. Developmental powers discussed in terms of employment, rather than, for instance, the spiritual and intellectual development found in religious education, does not answer this. Nor does Mill's interest in the Romantics. Perhaps Macpherson reworked Mill to fit an atomist view.

Townshend attempts to turn the tables by taking Parekh to task for proposing the absolute annihilation of the individual in a socialist society in favour of the satisfaction found in living

¹⁰ Townshend, 139.

¹¹ Ibid., 139.

through the community.¹² He then quite rightly points out the need for a, “dialectic of recognition ... between the individual and the collective.”¹³ With this point he foreshadows his strongest argument, but unless he gives credit for it to Macpherson, the criticism that Macpherson is an atomist is not resolved by the showing that Parekh goes too far in the opposite direction.

In response to Lukes on the question of the essential human capacities, Townshend supposes Macpherson came to this list by restricting himself to those capacities that would not lead to conflict among individuals in a post-scarcity socialist society. It was also a list drawn up from his immanent critique of Mill and Green, whose liberalism was unable to accommodate these capacities that *they* held to be essential. Finally, the list emerged from Macpherson’s own moral framework. Townshend avoids accounting for that moral framework and its metaphysical premises. Instead he defends Macpherson’s decision to not provide too comprehensive and definitive a list in order “to avoid the charge of ‘moral perfectionism’ and indeed totalitarianism.”¹⁴ This response is not a complete diversion, but it most certainly can be said to skim the surface, and thus failing to answer the questions raised. He most nearly approaches a compelling response in his assertion that, “Macpherson’s ethical starting point was the principle of reciprocal freedom, which recognized the equal right of all to exercise and develop their human potentials in ways that do not prevent others from doing the same.”¹⁵ The principle of reciprocity marks the outset of comprehending the dialectic of individual freedom and the common good. Had he known to look for the source in Hegel’s work, Townshend would also

12 Ibid., 140.

13 Ibid., 140.

14 Ibid., 142.

15 Ibid., 142.

have uncovered the moral framework that he could only mention in passing. It is here that we find the response to Lukes, Parekh and Babe.

What a Hegelian Lens Reveals

A more complete defense of Macpherson's ontological position against his communitarian critics is offered by Peter Lindsay. Lindsay is better able to account for Macpherson's work because he draws upon Hegel, but he does so without realizing that the similarities are more than coincidence. For instance, he uses Hegel's theory of labour and history to account for Macpherson's ontology. He explains that labour is more than the creation of objects, it is the creation of the self, and because the social relations that determine the sort of labour one does are historically contingent, there is a correlation between one's particular historical context and the constitution of one's self.¹⁶ Whereas Marx saw this in materialistic terms where the self is entirely subject to the material relations of production, Hegel made room for the ontological dimension as well.¹⁷ Lindsay argues that Macpherson's position is similar to this. He is willing to discuss both human essence and historical/material context. Thus, Lindsay refutes Lukes' argument that Macpherson's atomism rests in the account of capacities as internal in nature and thus existing independently of the community. Capacities are inherently linked to labour which in turn is socially constituted. Indeed, according to Lindsay, energy and skill are

16 Lindsay, 24-6. As may be evident in my use of Lindsay's work, I generally agree with his interpretation of Macpherson. He has managed to interpret Macpherson using an Hegelian lens without realizing why it fits so well. Lindsay's only criticism of Macpherson's work is that it lacked a clear account of the social relations that would facilitate true democracy. Lindsay goes some way toward ironing out some of the finer points of how we can both have public control of resources and the means of production while giving individuals the exclusive property rights that enable them to exercise and enjoy their capacities. He does this without contradicting Macpherson. It is more of a refinement that rescues Macpherson from some being dismissed as impractical and overconfident that technology could liberate us from scarcity and so allow us to pursue our essential natures without being enslaved by the struggle for basic needs.

17 Ibid., 26.

our “natural capacity” which, when combined with our ability to exert them, equal our powers. By inference then, we see that labor *is* our natural capacities.¹⁸ He points out also that by including moral judgment, action, friendship and love among his list of capacities, Macpherson, “demonstrates that natural is not to be thought of in contradistinction to the terms *acquired* or *social*.”¹⁹ Thus Lukes’ argument is based upon a misreading of Macpherson’s capacities as purely internal when, if he had Hegel in mind, as Lindsay does, he might have understood the holistic nature of Macpherson’s ontology in terms of its dialectic between universal human essence and historical particularity.

In *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, Allen Wood calls Hegel’s conception of self-actualization a historicized naturalism.²⁰ The naturalism comes from the classical naturalism of Plato and Aristotle and strongly resembles Macpherson’s notion of capacities:

Plato’s theory says that the human soul actualizes itself when each part fulfills its proper function. Aristotle’s ethical theory holds that the human good consists in the actualization of the rational capacities, especially the capacities for practical reason and philosophical contemplation, and it provides a theory about other things (such as external goods and friends) that people need in order to lead the good life.²¹

Hegel introduces the historical element in his view that human nature is actualized as, “a result of a dialectical process of experience involving the acquisition of self-knowledge, the struggle to actualize the self, and an interaction between these activities, which modifies the self that is known and actualized.”²² Lindsay chose to illustrate the link between ontology and history

18 Ibid., 27.

19 Ibid., 28.

20 Allen Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, 33.

21 Ibid., 33.

22 Ibid., 33.

by looking at labour and economic relations, but he might just as well have focused on Macpherson's study of the history of ideas. Macpherson's work is predominantly concerned with the historical development of our understanding of individual self-actualization as a means to engage in an immanent critique of our current cultural setting. Like Hegel, he does this to enable further self-actualization by providing the tools to rationally evaluate our ends.

If a concerted examination of our culture and its history is fundamental to Macpherson's conception of individual fulfillment, as his methodology would indicate, then Parekh's contention that he ignores the constitutive role of culture is not valid. Macpherson's self-actualization and self-determination is not at all abstracted from the social. Moreover, he follows Hegel in acknowledging that there is limit on the philosopher or the rational individual. Not only do we need to understand the constitutive role of history and culture to achieve autonomy and determine our proper ends, we cannot rationalize outside of the rational standard developed among other equally self-actualizing human beings.²³ We are social animals, and Macpherson is clear that our capacities, including reason, cannot be developed outside of society.²⁴ We are involved in a perpetual dialogue with our society, and it is through this dialogue that we develop meaning and make sense of our experience of the world, including such immeasurables as love and empathy. This is at the heart of the Hegel-Macpherson philosophy of history/history of philosophy. As Robert Pippin explains, for Hegel "how we come to understand or make judgements about anything must be a function of some sort of mutually sanctioning process among such subjects, and that this process can be understood only by considering such subjects

23 Robert Pippin, "You Can't Get There From Here," 73.

24 Macpherson, "Theory of Democracy," 57.

as practical, purposive, or living beings.”²⁵ Pippin’s emphasis on subjectivity is an assertion that individual free will and the constitutive importance of history are not contradictory, but rather mutually supporting.

This dynamic is plainly set out in Macpherson’s approach to political theory. He is concerned with analyzing the current understanding of human freedom by studying its modern development beginning with Hobbes. Only through analyzing the assumptions and arguments of such formative thinkers as Hobbes and Locke can we hope to grasp the nature of our own society and our particular views. By gaining a comprehension of how we got here, we can discern what repairs must be made in our thoughts on freedom.²⁶ Macpherson’s aim in *Possessive Individualism* is to revive “a sense of the moral value of community ... to get back to what seemed the desirable values of individualism while discarding its excesses.”²⁷ In other words, he is telling us that we are socially embedded, our ideas and actions, are products of our society’s history and in order to attain some level of autonomy we must rationally evaluate those ideas, their assumptions,²⁸ and check their coherence, either with the actual relations of the market or internal logical consistency.²⁹

But we need not limit ourselves to reading between the lines. In *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* Macpherson asserts that political philosophy must be concerned with beliefs, not just the workings of the institutions.

25 Pippin, 71.

26 Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, 2.

27 Ibid., 2-3.

28 Ibid., 4.

29 Ibid., 6-8.

To examine models of liberal democracy is to examine what the people who want it, or want more of it, or want some variant of the present form of it, believe it is, and also what they believe it might be or should be... For people's beliefs about a political system are not something outside it, they are part of it. Those beliefs, however they are formed or determined, do determine the limits and possible development of the system; they determine what people will put up with, and what they will demand.³⁰

Macpherson's analysis of liberal democracy takes into account the beliefs about equality, freedom and our proper ends, as well as the degree to which existing institutions of government and the market are able to accommodate the stated objectives. While liberalism might claim its aim is the realization of universal freedom and equality, the inherent tendency of capitalism to establish a class system in which the powers of the workers are extracted by the owners of capital would seem to contradict that aim.

Like Hegel's immanent critique, this methodology is grounded in particular conceptions of reason, self-actualization and autonomy. Note that Macpherson's oeuvre is a persistent quest to attain a clear understanding of human freedom that is coherent both theoretically and practically. That is to say, his idea of reason does not fall under Hegel's account of *reflective* freedom in which the agent evaluates ends in light of some other end, such as Aristotle's happiness, which would subvert true autonomy because it is subject to the arbitrariness of natural drives and inclinations.³¹ Instead he follows what Hegel regarded as *rational* freedom, where there is a coherence of form and content. Here the proper task of the free will is to understand and achieve authentic freedom. "Only the rational will is genuinely freed because only the rational will has itself, its freedom and its universality, for its content; only the rational will is for

30 Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*, 6.

31 This is discussed in Hegel Chapter Two above

itself what it is in itself.”³² Macpherson’s project is based upon the premise that if we do not analyze and improve upon our understanding of freedom, no one will be free, in part because of class oppression, but also because the isolating effect whereby possessive individualism denies the fulfillment that arises from being a part of community: “a possessive market society is a series of competitive and invasive relations between all men, regardless of class: it puts every man on his own.”³³ To be rational is to engage in philosophical evaluations of our ends, and philosophy must be historicized to avoid mistaking concepts that are peculiar to one’s cultural context and the product of human activity as eternal and universal.³⁴ For instance, Kant’s effort to develop an ahistorical critique of reason meant that transcendental illusions could not be seen for what they are, products of our culture. Kant’s method would result in an amnesic concealment of the source of our ideas.

Not only does this establish a link between historicized naturalism and self-determination, it provides a partial response to Lukes’ complaint that Macpherson’s defense of the importance of human reason as an essential human capacity lacks meaning because he does not tell us what he means by reason. Surely Macpherson’s methodology is explanation by example.

Macpherson’s methodology, and thus his idea of reason, is in keeping with Hegel’s struggle against the empiricism of the Enlightenment. The success of empiricist efforts to make the social sciences fit the fact-oriented natural sciences was possibly more pervasive in the twentieth century than it had been in the eighteenth century. The faith in positivism had

32 Franco, 178.

33 Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, 271.

34 Frederick C. Beiser, “Hegel’s Historicism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 272.

permeated the popular culture to the point that it was the mark of sophistication to replace religion with Freudian psychoanalysis, and moral questions about guilt, for instance, could be accounted for with an “objective” analysis of one’s childhood. The social sciences were supposed to attain the same level of accuracy as the natural sciences and questions of value, metaphysical or moral questions, were illusory. Only matters that could be tested by scientific method had relevance. In other words, theoretical relevance was subordinated to method.³⁵ Macpherson learned his antipathy for this approach from his idealist predecessors.

T.H. Green participated in this struggle when he argued against Hume’s contention that human beings are essentially bundles of perceptions. Hume’s position was that our knowledge was collection of distinct impressions and ideas. He lost the sense of organic unity that comes when one recognizes that our awareness is not only of objects but of the relations of objects to one another (e.g. the shovel is *in* the hole).³⁶ For Green, knowledge, and by extension the human self, develops over time with the growing consciousness of relations, including its relations to its own desires.³⁷ This ties into his theory of positive freedom in so far as freedom requires knowing one’s best interests and this knowledge comes over time with the rational study of relations. As Armour explains, “Self-realization is not a matter of accumulating pleasures. It is a matter of developing an inner coherence in the course of matching the rational order of the world.”³⁸

Hegel was responding to Kant who had agreed with Hume that we cannot know things-in-themselves. Kant added that we *can* know a priori categories of our perception, such as space

35 Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 4.

36 Armour and Trott, *Faces*, 220.

37 Ibid., 221.

38 Ibid., 222.

and time. This became the foundation for the moral philosophy he developed. As discussed in the Hegel chapter, Hegel's rationality involves finding the unity of the concept and the concrete. He criticized Kant's position as subjective because it abstracted the individual from the concrete, leaving her pondering an internal set of categories of perception. Our a priori categories render us the source of the facts we analyze rather than the external world.³⁹ Hegel believed Kant to be blind to the importance of human relations.

Macpherson's method does not eschew value judgments. He accepts that people act on their morals and that these morals are based on ontological claims. As Lindsay explains, for Macpherson, "ontology, like morality, is a conviction, not a fact."⁴⁰ The significance of both, in other words, does not rest on their empirical or logical verification. Macpherson, like Green and Hegel, is aware that the empirical approach to the social sciences laid the foundation for the liberal utilitarian view of human beings as maximizers of utility, and as infinite desirers, and as appropriators.⁴¹ Macpherson argues that liberal theorists from Hobbes to Bentham had sought to model the social order to fit empirically verifiable human traits. Based upon what they witnessed in the market place they induced that, "every man's actions are determined by his appetites and aversion, or rather by his calculation of the probable effects on the satisfaction of his appetites, of any action he might take."⁴² For Hobbes this culminated in the desire for power to satisfy these appetites. For Bentham the end was happiness, and in his words, "the maximization of wealth is the maximization of happiness."⁴³ The social inequality that results from this ontological position

39 Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), 22-3.

40 Lindsay, 18.

41 Macpherson, "Ontology and Technology," 23-6.

42 Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism*, 32.

43 Macpherson, "Ontology and Technology," 27.

reveals its weakness when compared to the view that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, namely, the “concept of man as an enjoyer and exerter of his uniquely human attributes or capacities.” This is the ethical concept of human powers that has been discussed in the preceding chapter. For Macpherson, reason is the process of finding coherence, both in the internal logic of a statement and between the concept and the concrete. This cannot be achieved by disregarding moral and ontological questions, nor can it be achieved by overlooking the relations between things and the relations between people.

Love is one such relation included in Macpherson’s list of capacities. Macpherson has been taken to task for this by both Lukes and Babe. Lukes regards Macpherson’s entire list of capacities to be too ambiguous, potentially contradictory, and insufficient to link the individual to culture and community. Presumably including love in his list would go some way towards responding to the latter, but we can presume that it is “insufficient” due to its ambiguity. Babe mentions Macpherson’s inclusion of love in his list, but he seems to consider it irrelevant to Macpherson’s ontology.⁴⁴ He focuses instead on the individualistic justification for greater economic equality and contrasts it to love as it is manifested in gifts, suggesting that were we to see large scale economic redistribution of wealth as love driven rather than equality driven we would have a richer social theory.

Babe follows Lukes and Parekh in arguing that Macpherson’s theory of property fails to break from the individualism he attempts to refute. Babe argues that Macpherson’s “analysis in fact remained in the rhetoric of individualism and individual rights.”⁴⁵ Macpherson’s plea for

44 Babe, 148.

45 Ibid., 156.

common property is argued in terms of the individual's right to certain basic material needs that exceed what is currently thought to be an essential right of all. He faults Macpherson for maintaining the competitive tone of rights discourse instead of including a form of property relations that are directed by love. He believes gift-giving offers an alternative economic structure in which property rights are suspended and love reigns. The social implications of this are that were we to see certain social institutions such as health care, public education, public housing and so on in terms of heart-felt empathy rather than the state conceding to the demands of individuals asserting their rights, then there would be a greater bond between people and greater social unity.

Even before we consider the implication of this argument for Macpherson, we find it is marred by several significant problems. The most notable is the shell game Babe is playing. This realm of gift-giving wherein property rights are absent is achieved by redirecting our attention at the moment of exchange. Babe claims that unlike a commodity exchange, "gifts consist neither of a right to exclude nor of a right not to be excluded."⁴⁶ It is true that the recipient has no right to the property prior to its transfer; however, after the transfer she certainly does, otherwise it would hardly count as a gift. More importantly, prior to the transfer the giver has exclusive rights to the property, otherwise she would not be in a position to surrender that exclusive right. Moreover, Babe tries to establish that gifts are truly forms of love by pointing out that they are not market exchanges because the recipient is not obliged to offer anything in return. But while there is a difference between gifts and standard exchanges, surely the lack of obligation on the part of the recipient is not it. As Hegel explains, a contract of exchange differs from a contract of

46 Ibid., 157.

gift in so far as, “the negative moment of the alienation of a thing and the positive moment of its acceptance,” is experienced by both parties.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, in a contract of gift, is not the recipient obliged to be grateful, and to express that gratitude according to a culturally determined protocol? Is it not this feeling of obligation that compels people to return gifts or at least feel uncomfortable when gifts are received from those we do not wish to feel obliged to?

The notion that gift giving is purely an act of love or empathy is surely misguided. This is a far more subtle matter. Take the family Christmas for instance. Sometimes these affairs can be overflowing with warm wishes all around, while at other times family members are merely meeting their formal obligations so that they do not fall out of favour. After an extremely trying year of family conflict, gifts may be laden with bitter messages either by being too inexpensive or blatantly unappealing to the receiver, like a fur hat for an animal rights activist. While gift-giving can be done out of love with no expectations on the part of the giver, perhaps best achieved when the recipient is led to believe there was no giver at all, more often than not gifts come with strings attached. They may be given as a reward to motivate someone to act in a certain way, also known as a bribe in its least noble form. In business a gift might also be designed to promote business products or services, and enhance the image and reputation of the business. At times gift-giving can be a competitive show of wealth. Thus, even here the competition Babe seeks to avoid might come into play. Commonly, gifts are used to express gratitude, respect, regrets, or congratulations. Protocol demands any number of responses, but the most common is to give in return a gift of equal or greater value. At the very least we are obliged to express our gratitude.

⁴⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 107

Would Babe have those in need be in a debt of gratitude to the rich for our health care and education? Or should we instead see these things as ours, owned commonly, that all may live fulfilling lives, as Macpherson proposes? Love need not be absent from the latter. Doctors and nurses are free to feel genuine concern for their patients. Teachers can be driven by a sincere will to edify their students. And patients and students can feel gratitude to their doctors and teachers as well as to the institutions that facilitated the aid given. Indeed, they might turn around and make donations to a hospital or school. Equally, doctors and teachers might be entirely emotionally disconnected and view their jobs in terms of career ambition and remuneration. In which case, Macpherson's common property would be preferable to Babe's gifts because regardless of incommensurable sentiment the patients and students can expect that their basic needs will be met; indeed, if pressed, it would be legitimate for them to insist that they be met. One cannot say the same about a gift. If a restaurant patron does not pay the server for the meal, the police can be called, whereas, if a parsimonious patron were to withhold the tip, the server must simply stew in stinging silence. Love and kindness are encouraged, but not enforced.

Hegel's Politics of Love

And yet Babe's emphasis on love and social unity remains important, as does his criticism of common property as being primarily competitive. In Hegel's earlier writings he, too, looked to love as a potential source of civic unity but he ultimately saw that more was required. His formulation of the solution is more sophisticated than Babe's and brings us closer to where Macpherson was heading. Hegel's treatment of love in politics has been explored by Alice Ormiston in her "Reconsideration of the Role of Love in Hegel," which addresses Hegel's

invocation of love to resolve a political dilemma. She argues that Hegel, in early work, is committed to preserving the intuition-based knowledge of love in the face of the modern move toward instrumental reason, and she contends that this continued to underlie his mature work.⁴⁸ Influenced by Hölderlin and Schelling in his youth, he saw in love the means to autonomy where the individual is reconciled with the community without resorting to an externally imposed moral law. It provided the means to overcome the modern sense of alienation that the reflective rationality of the Enlightenment invoked. Instead, one's sensuous desires are incorporated in the commitment to virtuous acts. In this phase of his academic career, love is "the fusion of law and inclination."⁴⁹ He believed love was a form of knowing and that it could only be conceptualized in religious symbolism.

According to Ormiston, the theory of civic unity based on the rational will that Hegel developed later does not entirely replace his early thoughts on love, but rather gives love a structure so that it may weather the challenges to love posed by the disconnections experienced in large communities and the threat of petty differences transforming love into hatred.⁵⁰ Babe's hopes for love are blind to love's unreliability in the face of the tempest of human sentiment. The mature Hegel, on the other hand, rightly looks to control compassion using the rudder of human reason. It is not that rationality enables us to understand love and so keep it alive; rather, it engages the will in the project of the common good, a good understood not as a social contract but as a sincere interest in the fulfillment of every individual. Reason can succeed in the modern *ethos* of the autonomous self where the sheer experience of love, or the doctrinal religious

48 Alice Ormiston, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate: Towards a Reconsideration of the Role of Love in Hegel," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 35 (2002), 503.

49 Ibid., 511

50 Ibid., 519.

command to love, cannot. However, Ormiston argues that Hegel does not forget his early commitment to love as such. In his mature work it becomes the underlying force, unconsciously present for the individual in the civic unity that emerges. As Ormiston explains, “love is precisely the knowledge of the unity of self and other, of self and world and of self with an infinite principle.”⁵¹ Love is the “source” and the “drive” of the modern will, but rationality gives the will a rudder to avoid being blown off course into hatred. From this perspective, property, market relations and the laws and institutions that sustain them are not inherently antagonistic and atomizing; they are the objectification of love. When we determine that property relations must be governed by laws that assure a certain level of human dignity, we are giving love an objective form in the ownership and exchange of goods. In contrast, a Darwinian or laissez-faire approach to property would undermine the intuitive knowledge of love, and by extension subvert civic unity. Thus Hegel’s civic republicanism is infused with an unconscious love. It is then unnecessary to surpass property as Babe suggests; property gives a concrete form to love, at times even in the form of gifts.

The distinction Ormiston makes between atomistic, alienating modern society and Hegel’s civic unity can be looked at in terms of three divergent concepts of property. From the perspective of reflective rationality associated with the abstract right of the Romans or the Enlightenment thinkers, property breeds divisiveness among individuals and between the individual and the community. For someone whose ethics are based on their own rational evaluation of their interests rather than the need to conform to some higher moral order, ownership is an exclusionary and hence isolating concept, and rights are the regulation of

51 Ibid., 522.

competitive, hostile struggles for the acquisition of property.⁵² The Christian, on the other hand, accepts this conception of property, but views it as a socially corrosive, to be avoided through ascetic retreat into a community of people who love one another.⁵³ In a sense, this is the perspective Babe assumes. Finally, the mature Hegel's perspective rejects the Christian stance because in retreating from the world, one never truly overcomes the divisiveness of reflective reason. He holds that within a *rational* state, property can be an ethical expression of love.

It is clear that Macpherson shares Hegel's view of the moral dimension of property; however, his justification for this position is not as sophisticated. Still, he shares its main principles. He shares the contention that no one is free unless all are free, which he takes from Marx. He also believes that some basic level of property is everyone's due. He also seeks to resolve the inherent contradiction of the current system, thus rendering the order of the state more rational. That is, if the fundamental principles of liberal democracy are freedom and equality, and the capitalist market system with its alienating extractive power undermines these principles, then it is incumbent upon us to eradicate this exploitative relationship. Only then can it be said that our institutions truly reflect the principles they are based on and hence attain rationality. By looking to Hegel, this argument can be enhanced with the theory of recognition.

Macpherson's Democratic Sittlichkeit as a Spirit of Love: Universal Developmental Powers Over Competitive Extractive Powers

Hegel's theory of recognition fits comfortably with Macpherson's theory of democracy. Macpherson understands democracy to be a moral or normative rather as well as a description of

52 Ibid., 504-6.

53 Ibid., 515.

a procedure of governance. It is what Hegel would call an account of the ethical life. It refers to both the structure of the social order and the attitude individuals assume in relation to their social life and its institutions.⁵⁴ It is the community spirit that simultaneously has a formative effect on the individual's identity and perception of society while being affected by the individual's contributions to the cultural discourse in either words or deeds. Macpherson employs both the descriptive and ethical distinction that Hegel uses to describe the different facets of ethical life by looking at the concept of power. Human power in an ethical sense refers to one's access to the means of exerting one's capacities,⁵⁵ and in a descriptive sense, it is the "ability to procure satisfactions by whatever means."⁵⁶ Ethical power and descriptive power together comprise what Macpherson calls "developmental power." He distinguishes this from "extractive power", which refers to the ability to use not only one's own capacities, but also those of other people.⁵⁷ Macpherson argues that if we overlook the ethical dimension of power in favour of the descriptive, we will be unable to curb the intrusion of extractive power on ethical power. In other words, power, as the ability to procure satisfactions, might provide a defense against the intrusion on basic material needs for survival, but it does not ensure the individual's ability to enjoy her capacities. He maintains that in order to fully represent the ethical life, modern democratic theory must account for both facets of the ethical life, the descriptive and the ethical.

What is essential in modern democratic theory? As soon as democracy is seen as a kind of society, not merely a mechanism of choosing and authorizing governments, the egalitarian principle inherent in democracy requires not only

54 Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, 196.

55 Macpherson, *Democratic Theory*, 41.

56 *Ibid.*, 40.

57 *Ibid.*, 42.

“one man, one vote” but also ‘one man, one equal effective right to live as fully humanly as he may wish’.⁵⁸

Macpherson is committed to ensuring universal equality of opportunity and he understands this in ethical terms. To repeat Ormiston, “love is precisely the knowledge of the unity of self and other, of self and world and of self with an infinite principle.” Macpherson is seeking to overcome the competitiveness of capitalism and classical liberalism. He is explicitly rejecting the notion of equality of opportunity understood as, “an equal right to get into the competitive race for more for oneself,” in favour of, “an equal right to a fully human life for all who will exert themselves.”⁵⁹ He is refusing to accept a society in which there is no sense of unity and commitment to one another’s fulfillment. Democracy as he understands it is an ethical concept that embodies that reciprocal commitment to one another. The word “love” may only come up in Macpherson’s list of capacities, but his project is an on-going struggle for a social structure that is based on that concern for the other. It is as much a structure designed to reconcile the individual and society as that set out by Hegel, and it is meant to do so in a manner that enhances reciprocal recognition rather than antagonistic competition. Surely the mere definition of human fulfillment as the ability to exercise and enjoy one’s capacities does not compel us to ensure that everyone be fulfilled. To be committed to universal human fulfillment is a leap that presumes, on some level, the compassion that comes with love. As with Hegel, underlying Macpherson’s theory of democracy, the ethical life of the community, is this love that bridges the gap between individuals and their interests.

58 Ibid., 51.

59 Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*, 47.

Hegel's Politics of Recognition: a Rationale for Economic Inclusion

Macpherson offers an extensive criticism of those forms of democracy, or ethical life, that harbour the use of extractive power and thus restrain universal human fulfillment, but he does not describe the rudder with which he will guide the ship through the storms of human emotion, maintaining the course of civic unity. Hegel's theory of recognition, on the other hand, is such a rudder. Robert Williams explains the centrality of recognition to Hegel's conception of freedom.⁶⁰ That is, the modern autonomous self is realized through recognition of and by the other within the state. Subjectivity is reconceptualized as intersubjective. The realization of one's freedom requires the recognition of that freedom by another rational agent. This recognition takes three forms: love between individuals, institutional recognition of the individual, and state recognition of individual and institutional particularities. In the case of love, it is familial love that is the source of union, a union achieved not by negating differentiation and opposition, but by "the suspension of objectification, domination, and enmity that imply distance, separation, and alienation between self and other. Love renounces coercion and domination, for the sake of its object."⁶¹ This intersubjective overcoming of separation is the core of the ethical life, family, faith, patriotism and honour.⁶² But while it is at the core, it is incomplete.

The second form of recognition is "between individuals and institutions, for example, family, property."⁶³ Here the various institutions of civil society recognize the individual in all her facets, as a totality, and serve to bridge the recognition of love among individuals and the

60 Robert Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1997), 2.

61 Ibid., 209.

62 Ibid., 209.

63 Ibid., 3.

third level of recognition, the state. The various institutions of civil society are able to recognize and give a concrete social form to all elements of an individual's identity. In contrast, Hegel criticizes the reference to the collectivity of individuals as "the people" because it denies their will, their reason, and their capacity not only to make choices, but to make choices for themselves.⁶⁴ The term, "the people," according to Hegel, "refers to that category of citizens *who do not know their own will.*"⁶⁵ One can see how this might serve to criticize populist movements that claim to speak for the people against "special interests." Hegel would have us acknowledge that every autonomous individual has "special interests" and this must not be overwhelmed or denied by some ill-defined mass, but should have form in civil society. We are more than our citizenship or economic class; we have manifold interests whether they are political, religious, artistic or other. At this level of recognition, these various interests "coexist in an unstable, uneasy relationship."⁶⁶ Civil society both atomizes people in terms of their particular and often competing interests, and enables them to bridge the divide of subjectivity by introducing communities in which people share common purposes. To hold it all together we need the recognition of the state.

The state must promote the ethical life of the community at large by encouraging the form of concern for one another that is found in the family. The state is responsible for holding together the diverse identities as they are expressed individually and institutionally. For example, when Hegel addresses the issue of poverty he argues that Smith's 'invisible hand' cannot maintain stability. We need the state to recognize the liberty of every individual and to do so by

64 Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 349.

65 Ibid., 349.

66 Williams., 230.

upholding human rights. It is not enough that the “state extends to all the possibility and opportunity of satisfaction of their needs.”⁶⁷ To truly have rights, one must have the means to enjoy them. To have rights one must have the “right to property, assets and capital.”⁶⁸ The state is not to control all aspects of people’s lives, but it must protect those who are harmed by its *ethos*, those who civil society knocks out of the capacity to enjoy rights. Hegel is here defending a highly progressive view of state responsibility. The design of our society is based on the belief that it is the best means to assure human fulfillment. When it fails, that is, when some find themselves being excluded by the system from the benefits it reaps, then we are to acknowledge that it was this system, this product of our wills, which led to that exclusion. And if the system is to meet its mandate of human fulfillment, we must compensate for its failings by stepping in via the state to aid those who have been cast aside. According to Hegel, it is vital that the individual is given due honour in the form of recognition. This recognition is achieved through an identity that is bestowed by some branch, or “corporation,” of civil society. Those who are excluded from holding a distinguished identity, the poor, are not recognized by society as autonomous beings and so feel no obligation to recognize the legitimacy of the society that has, in effect, ostracized them. For Hegel, poverty is more than an inevitable hazard of life in modern society; it is an ethical wrong that is experienced as a consequence of the social order that has been designed.⁶⁹

By incorporating Hegel’s theory of recognition, we can augment the sophistication of Macpherson’s bold, rough hewn assertion that the state obligated to offset the vagaries of the market. Not only can freedom not be realized when one lacks the means to exert and enjoy one’s

67 Ibid., 239.

68 Ibid., 240.

69 Ibid., 248.

capacities, but freedom requires that we are recognized by others, institutions and the state to have a right to this form of realization. This reinforces the intersubjectivity that Macpherson tries to establish and that Lukes, Parekh and Babe fault him for lacking. This is the sort of benefit that scholars can derive from acknowledging the link between Macpherson and Hegel. Not only does it help us to understand his work and its historical context, but it gives us a wealth of material to draw on in order to add to the ground won for us by Macpherson in the struggle for political clarity. Babe points out that when pushed to explain how he defends his account of human essence he responded by asserting that it, “‘is more morally pleasing’ than, and ‘is morally preferable’ to, the conception of people as infinite acquirers and appropriators.”⁷⁰ Effectively, Macpherson is saying that reason can take us so far, after that we simply have to accept the view that seems preferable. Undoubtedly, any honest thinker will come to a similar conclusion; however, Hegel’s theory of recognition helps us to postpone that moment a little longer.

It must be understood that while recognition gives a rational account of the intersubjective nature of authentic freedom and thus an anchor for social cohesion, it is not to be confused with the denial of difference that often comes with theories for social unity. Lukes, Parekh and Babe fault Macpherson for his excessive individualism, but others have criticized his oppression of the individual through a state-managed economy. Included among these is William Connolly. Connolly argues that while the argument about doctors and teachers individually feeling love and empathy goes some way in responding to this, how does Macpherson’s work answer the criticism? By looking at Hegel’s considerations of love we can appreciate why Macpherson would have included it in his list, thereby clearing up some of the ambiguity that

70 Babe,155.

bothered Lukes,⁷¹ It will also show us how Macpherson's individualism on some matters does not mean his work must exclude love as Babe surmises. Indeed, Hegel's conclusions about love and the social sciences might provide an excellent refutation of Babe's enthusiasm for it as a standpoint for analysis and show how reciprocal recognition is a preferable alternative.

71 Clearly this only partially resolves the ambiguity as it addresses only one in the list, but this combined with the account of reason establishes that the answers to Lukes' questions lie in Hegel's work.

Chapter Five: Grant's "Hegelian Book" and Dreams on the Cusp

Go back. Look at the baby in his mother's arms; see how the outside world first reflected in the still hazy mirror of his mind; consider the first examples that strike his attention; listen to the first words which awaken his dormant powers of thought; and finally take notice of the first struggles he has to endure. Only then will you understand the origin of the prejudices, habits and passion which are to dominate his life. The whole man is already there in the cradle.⁷²

- Alexis de Tocqueville

Introduction

The renewed interest in George Grant has often been accompanied by a misreading of his intellectual development that has also obscured the core elements of his arguments. This chapter aims to establish that, contrary to the depiction of Grant as a Christian Platonist who briefly flirted with Hegelianism, Hegelian principles provided the foundation for his arguments from the beginning of his career. Grant is known as a provocative critic of modern technological society, and there is little confusion about what he was against. His strong polemic against the atomizing and homogenizing effect of liberalism, the triumph of empiricism over moral philosophy, and the instrumental view of the relationship between the individual and the state clearly establish him as a critic of aspects of the Enlightenment and of positivism. It is safe to say that his political thought is communitarian and conservative in the Burkean sense. And yet he is also at times more socialist and progressive than one might expect from a defender of tradition. Perhaps it is simply the *noblese oblige* of Toryism, the duty of the privileged to assist the common citizen. And yet, Grant writes on many topics from epistemology to the nature of history, and the ideas that link his positions on these various issues cannot be accounted for by his conservatism alone.

⁷²Quoted in Larry Sieddntop, *Tocqueville* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2.

In truth, very few scholars familiar with his work can actually explain what he was for. I argue that above all the answer lies in his Hegelianism.

Among those who hold the prevailing view are Joan O'Donovan, William Christian, Donald Forbes, Sheila Grant and George Grant himself.⁷³ They maintain that his Hegelianism was a brief phase which he abandoned when he was introduced to the thought of Leo Strauss, who dispelled Grant's misguided faith in the modern notion of progress. In the next chapter I will argue that while it is true that Strauss' influence on Grant was important, and it did lead him to distance himself from ideas he attributed to Hegel, the changes ultimately brought Grant closer to Hegel's intended meaning as it is understood by current scholars.⁷⁴

The present chapter examines two important examples of Grant's oeuvre prior to his Hegelian "phase." Unveiling the inchoate Hegelianism of Grant's early writing serves to establish how deeply this world view is ingrained. This must be considered both in terms of Grant's own intellectual history and the theoretical system that comes through in his writings. Connecting Grant to the Hegel-inspired Canadian Idealists establishes the source of his views and contributes to our understanding of their form prior to his studying Hegel's work directly. The theoretical dimension entails exhibiting the distinctly Hegelian elements that are central to

⁷³Joan E. O'Donovan, *George Grant and the Twilight of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 44. H.D. Forbes, "George Grant and Leo Strauss," in Arthur Davis (ed.) *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 190. William Christian, and Sheila Grant (eds.), *George Grant Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 6.

⁷⁴I would like to acknowledge (with a nod to the wisdom of Jacques Derrida) that there are limits to how beneficial this form of labeling is to scholarship. While speaking of a "Grantian philosophy" or "Grant's Hegelianism" can be extremely helpful in opening up his work and gaining a deeper comprehension of it (which is what I am arguing here), this form of logocentrism can also be taken too literally. I do not aspire to replace the Christian Platonist reading of Grant with the Hegelian, but rather to argue that the Hegelian voice in Grant's work must not be excised in favour of one authoritative abstract simplification. However, nor do I mean to imply that the idealist element of Grant's work is merely one among a myriad of equally semi-significant facets; rather, it serves as the framework of his thought.

his thought. In keeping with the dominant theme of this thesis, as well as the interests that lay at the heart of Grant's writings, the focus is on his conception of freedom and modernity, particularly his advocacy for a notion of liberty that mediates the two poles, excessive individualism and excessive unity.

Hegel's reconciliation of these competing claims involves acknowledging and developing an understanding of Geist.⁷⁵ Geist is the spirit of humanity that is made up of the rationally structured dialectic of physical and intellectual human interaction. These interactions spawn a set of values and which define a community's cultural identity, and in which the individual can find fulfillment. Modernity, in Hegel's view, is defined by the struggle between divergent conceptions of individual freedom, and thus divergent notions of fulfillment. History, according to Hegel, is made up of these sorts of struggles, and optimally, they can be resolved and lead to a higher level of community. In our age, resolution requires acknowledging our embeddedness in Geist as well as the importance of our individual contributions to its formation. We thus understand the interplay of the greater unity and our own choices, acknowledging the inherent rationality of Geist, as well as our own capacity to employ our reason to further enhance the rational structure of our community. In a free and rational community, values are based upon the awareness of our shared belonging to, and influence on, Geist, and thus we must recognize each other as possessing rational capacities and having the same at stake in terms of fulfillment. Moreover, this reciprocal recognition among subjects is essential for our respective fulfillment. We derive a profound satisfaction by having our right to autonomy recognized by others whom we recognize to be equally deserving of this right.

⁷⁵ The following is brief recapitulation of an explanation provided in chapter three.

Does Grant articulate the need for reciprocal recognition? Not as such, and this is to be expected as this was not part of the standard interpretation of Hegel until recently. Does Grant articulate the need to acknowledge Geist, or God (as Hegel was understood to mean in Grant's day), the unity that signifies, the moral obligation it asserts, and the conception of freedom it entails? Yes, and we will see in the following pages a few of the forms the argument takes, including the distinctly Hegelian conception of modernity that sets the stage of the dilemma, that is, the nature of human fulfillment in our age, and how we should structure society to accommodate it? It will be evident from the start that Grant adheres to the metaphysical reading of Hegel, which "sees a story about the self-realization of God as playing a pivotal role in accounting for this intersection of freedom and modern *Sittlichkeit*."⁷⁶ According to this reading, by enjoying freedom through modern *Sittlichkeit* we help to further God's self-realization.⁷⁷ We will see how this view comes through in Grant's early work. But first, as we did with Macpherson, we must establish the feasibility of the argument with a brief intellectual biography of Grant.

What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh

The Lesser Zadkiel, the Angel of Biography, asserts that a person "must be seen against his background, and if we are not to start at the very beginning of all things, we must not neglect [his grandfather]."⁷⁸ We shall follow this advice doubly by looking at the lives of both grandfathers. In many ways, George Parkin Grant carried on the work of his grandfathers; it was his inheritance, in the Burkean sense. George Monroe Grant was the outspoken principal of

⁷⁶ Patten, 17.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁸ Robertson Davies, *What's Bred in the Bone* (Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1985), 23.

Queen's University from 1877 to 1902, and George Parkin was an educator and later a highly successful lecturer promoting English imperialism, eventually becoming the secretary for the Rhodes Scholarship Trust in 1902. They were both prominent advocates of the British Empire which they regarded as the vehicle for the Idealist mission.⁷⁹ G.M. Grant had been highly impressed by John Caird under whom he studied at Glasgow University, and was later to ally himself with the enormously influential and highly respected Hegelian John Watson who began teaching philosophy at Queen's in 1872. Watson, too, had been influenced by the idealism of the Caird brothers, especially Edward who had been his mentor during six years of study at Glasgow.⁸⁰ G.M. Grant's idealism was the sort Patten calls metaphysical. He held that the material and spiritual world are inseparable, and that history is the progression of God's will working toward paradise on earth and in his speeches and sermons he called upon people to facilitate that purpose.⁸¹

G.M. Grant and George Parkin believed Canada was a central force in this Christian mission, and Grant hoped that the mission would include reuniting the Christian faith under one new amalgamation of Christian churches. The material body of this spiritual union would not only be the church, it would be the success of the British Empire. The Empire had a moral mission to bring the British ideal of civilization to the world, and with it peace, freedom and justice. Both Grant and Parkin objected to the business imperialism that sought to exploit foreign

⁷⁹ Parkin's Idealism has been discussed in Terry Cook, "George R. Parkin and the Concept of Britannic Idealism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* x (August 1975), 25.

⁸⁰ McKillop, 183. Edward Caird had been close friends of T.H. Green when they studied together at Oxford.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

nations; instead, they regarded the empire as a cooperative enterprise of independent states that would not be subordinate to the Great Britain.⁸²

G.M. Grant's son William married Parkin's daughter Maude. They had first met while William Grant was teaching at Upper Canada College where Parkin was the principal at the time.⁸³ They became a power couple in their promotion of imperialism as their fathers had understood it.⁸⁴ The impact of such an extraordinary background was only enhanced when George Parkin Grant went to Queen's for a Bachelor's in history and Oxford for graduate work in law and philosophy. At the time, the academic culture at Queen's was infused with the Idealism of his grandfather Principal Grant, and his philosophical comrade, Watson.⁸⁵ This is particularly true about the method of studying history and the underlying values, but not philosophy. By G.P. Grant's time, the general bent of scholarship in Canada and Queen's had already made the transition to a more empirical approach to philosophy and the social sciences. Watson's metaphysics had lost favour after World War I and people turned away from high ideals that might call for human sacrifice, and turned instead the more flexible moral philosophy of pragmatism. Government came to be seen less as engine for a spiritual mission and more as business in need of political economists and lawyers, and Queen's led the way in producing this sort of technocrat for Ottawa.⁸⁶

82 Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 31-33.

83 William Christian, 3,4.

84 Berger, 196.

85 It is interesting to note, that before he left Queen's he was chosen to be one of the pall bearers at Watson's funeral in 1939.

86 See Owsram, *The Government Generation*.

Grant was very much a product of this when he arrived to study law at Balliol College, Oxford with a Rhodes Scholarship and dreams of being a civil servant in “well oiled machine.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the Idealist values were in him to be stirred when professors and peers challenged him to consider the “language of transcendence.”⁸⁸ It was A.D. Lindsay who began the stirring. Lindsay was the professor at Balliol who had picked up the Idealist mantle from T.H. Green, and he directed his students to read Kant closely and to understand the criticism of Kant that had been first made by Hegel. His influence on Grant was tremendous both in Grant’s first few years at Oxford, as well as upon Grant’s return when he suggested that Grant write his doctoral dissertation in philosophy on John Oman’s critique of empiricism. Grant had also been influenced by other idealists such as Austen Farrer and, through reading *Christianity and Classical Culture*, Charles Cochrane, whom Grant calls his teacher.⁸⁹ The most explicit and profound introduction to Hegel’s thought came while he was teaching at Dalhousie before writing his D.Phil. His grounding in philosophy was not sufficient to the task, so he relied heavily on the help of his friend and colleague, the Hegelian James Doull.⁹⁰ Doull was effectively Grant’s graduate seminar in philosophy, a seminar that continued throughout his

87 Christian, 57.

88 Ibid., 62. Note here that Grant had admired the pragmatism of William James, whose work was introduced to him by his mother, Maude Parkin. James is considered to be one of America’s neo-Hegelians and as we will see in a later Chapter, is of great interest to Charles Taylor.

89 Christian, 114, 169. The reference to Cochrane as Grant’s “teacher” is found in the editors endnotes of his doctoral thesis, Davis, *Collected Works, Vol. 1*, 411.

90 Though he is not nearly as well known as Grant, James Doull’s influence in Canada has been extensive. He would certainly count as an important member of the school being treated in this thesis. While at the University of Toronto his graduate supervisor was Charles Cochrane. See David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson, eds., *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

career.⁹¹ It was here, in 1947, that the budding Idealist began his most explicit and rigorous study of German Idealism.

“Grant’s Hegelian Book”

Grant took a sabbatical year in England to study Hegel’s conception of freedom. He believed at the time that Hegel had articulated the most advanced conception of freedom. The fruit of this year abroad was a text that was later to provide the basis for his first major publication, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. He later described *PMA* as an attempt “to write down in non-professional language the substance of the vision that the age of reason was beginning to dawn and [dawn] first in North America.”⁹² In other words, he took the metaphysical reading of Hegel and ran with it, updating the historical dialectic with later nineteenth and twentieth century intellectual movements, and showing how the market materialism of the mass age was in fact the ideal conditions for the universal emergence of a higher consciousness of freedom and reason. He believed he was witnessing a major historical transition, the dawning of an age.

At the time of Grant’s sabbatical, the metaphysical interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of history was standard.⁹³ According to this view, Hegel comes across as the prophet of the end of history, where God as object, Nature, and God as subject, Idea, are united in humanity, physically rooted in Nature, but intellectually participating in the divine Spirit of God. The dialectic of human history is the progression of God’s will in the consciousness of humanity made explicit in articulations and concrete in the political institutions that reflect the refined

⁹¹ Ibid., 139. Doull was later to help Grant with his doctoral thesis and eventually to help him get a post again at Dalhousie when his career was waning in the 1970s.

⁹² Grant, *Philosophy*, 121.

⁹³ This is the interpretation that Connolly condemned so effectively. See Chapter Two.

reason of the ages and provide the ideal context for true human fulfillment, universally enjoyed authentic liberty. The ethical life of modern society is on the cusp of attaining a complete awareness of the nature of freedom and therefore an understanding of God's will. Grant's new age was, then, the realization of the unity of God as Idea and Nature.

The equally standard criticism of Hegel's philosophy of history was that it emasculates the notion of individual freedom because it tells us that history has in fact been directed by God from the beginning. Also, Hegel's critics accuse him of an outrageous act of hubris for presuming to be so familiar with God's will. This presumptuousness is often dismissed as an obvious attempt to defend any existing or emerging political regime, however oppressive, on the grounds that history is taking its proper course. Finally, in order to verify Hegel's prediction we must see the fruition of the end of history he describes. The fact that we are far from universal equality, reason and liberty either tells us that he was wrong or that the Promised Land is immanent. One could only accept the latter out of blind faith, and the general consensus has been to err on the side of doubt and to reject Hegel as a very crafty thinker whose distortions have had horrendous consequences, including, it is believed, laying the groundwork for Germany's National Socialism.

Grant, who had such high hopes for the British Empire, who craved a reconciliation of theology and philosophy, who, like his father and grandfathers before, yearned to see the promise of Christianity realized, and see the Kingdom come, thought he found all he sought in the works of Hegel. In a sense, he was correct. He found the fullest articulation of the ideas he had been expounding because he found the source of those ideas. And yet, having always known these ideas and their authors by other names, he, like Oedipus, did not realize that he had come

home. And also like Oedipus, the result of this homecoming would ultimately be a brutal, mistaken, intellectual patricide, and tragic despair.

Response to Isaiah Berlin: Grant's Idealism

Before his optimism was derailed by Leo Strauss, Grant was ready to defend Hegel against the line of argument outlined above. And he, like Macpherson, chose Isaiah Berlin as the representative of Hegel's contemporary liberal critics.⁹⁴ Grant's defense of Hegel's philosophy of history is begun in the text written during the sabbatical year, "Acceptance and Rebellion," and completed in *Philosophy in the Mass Age*. While Berlin is not mentioned by name in PMA, it is quite clearly the position he attributes to Berlin that is being answered.

Berlin, as has been noted previously, takes an empiricist approach, criticizing Hegel's philosophy of history for granting a meaning, or *eidos*, to history that cannot be empirically verified. He also shares the common concern that attributing a metaphysical goal of history can legitimize whatever practical agenda is held by history's interpreter and it is all the more dangerous when this sort of interpretation is done by those in power. When empiricism ceases to be our measure, then mad dreams can take hold:

At the worst he may end by seeing himself as the instrument of the divine purpose (it makes little odds if he calls it the party or the church or the race). Those who do not accept his view of 'the course of history' must be made ineffective or forced to see the light. This may involve wiping the opposition off the face of the earth so that its continuing existence is not a living reminder of the failure of the theory.⁹⁵

94 Grant, "Acceptance and Rebellion," Arthur Davis, ed., *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. 2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 272. Grant is responding to Berlin's essay, "Historical Inevitability."

95 Ibid., 276.

The chief concern here is not so much the mad dreams of megalomaniacs, which undoubtedly arise with or without the philosophy of history, but rather acceptance of these dreams by citizens who have been taught to believe in the inevitability of history, and who believe that they are most free when conforming to the directions given to them by world historical individuals. Hegel's philosophy of history undermines the meaning of freedom and thus the capacity to challenge oppressive regimes. Against this, Berlin attempts to furnish us with the freedom to uphold the humanist commitment to defend the "general interest and care about the ordinary wants of ordinary men."⁹⁶ Grant explains that for Berlin, freedom means regarding human reason not as a tool to discern the direction of history's flow and follow it, but rather as a means to redirect its flow. We are history's makers, not its subjects.⁹⁷ The difficulty people have with this, according to Berlin, is that it places a heavy burden of responsibility on us, and it leaves us uncertain about the right course of action. Those who cling to metaphysics are those who are too weak to bear the responsibility and the uncertainty. Berlin challenges us to find the strength to take on this responsibility.

Empirical Freedom, Absolute Subjectivity, and Moral Permissiveness

As an idealist, Grant takes issue with the argument that positive liberty is invalid because the metaphysical truths it is said to be tied to are unverifiable. Grant's idealism is evident from the outset of PMA where he asserts that, contra the realist school which would have us as

96 Ibid., 283.

97 "We must make history because there is not theodicy; there is no theodicy because we must make history." Ibid., 280. This is the position on history that he tackles in PMA, "We no longer consider ourselves as part of a natural order and as subordinate to a divine law. We see ourselves rather as the makers of history, the makers of our own laws. We are authentically free since nothing beyond us limits what we should do." PMA, 38.

animals driven exclusively by instincts and appetites, especially the appetite for power,⁹⁸ human beings are moral creatures, bearers of free will, and our actions involve choices that are based on what we *believe* we ought to do, and those beliefs are informed by our culture and our history.⁹⁹ This is not the idealism of Plato or Berkeley. Like Hegel, Grant sees the unity of concepts and the concrete. The material world we build turns around and builds us, our beliefs about ourselves and the world we live in: “Ours is the world of mass production and its techniques, of standardized consumption and standardized education, of wholesale entertainment and almost wholesale medicine. We are formed by this new environment at all the moments of our work and leisure – that is, in our total lives.”¹⁰⁰ It is, for him, as much material conditions as it is beliefs: “Individual beliefs as to the nature and destiny of man make, and are made by, the forms of society.”¹⁰¹ In light of this idealism, it follows that for Berlin to challenge positive liberty on the basis that it is not verifiable, in a sense that few cultural beliefs can be,¹⁰² is bound to be unacceptable to Grant. Thus Grant’s begins his response by pointing out that however one wishes to explain negative liberty, whether because it is common sense, or because without it justice is meaningless, or because it is essential to the notion of democracy, it remains as empirically unverifiable as metaphysically grounded positive liberty.¹⁰³

98 Realism and its power centric approach to political analysis is contested more completely later in the text where he accuses it of being “one-sided and short-sighted” because power can only be understood in terms of the social and ideological context. *Philosophy*, 50.

99 PMA, 3. “Because human beings are agents as well as intelligences, theory and practice can never be independent of each other.” PMA, 86.

100 PMA, 5.

101 *Ibid.*, 14.

102 We recall that Hegel’s idealism is very much concerned with ideas having actuality, and hence being a concrete manifestation. What is being refuted is the sort of empiricism that seeks to reduce all knowledge to that which can be observed and measured, and dismisses all other notions, such as love and justice, as meaningless language games.

103 “Acceptance,” 279.

Grant finds that at the heart of this liberal pseudo-empiricist conception of liberty is a subjectivity that has had its clearest articulation in the existentialist philosophy of Sartre. It is the pure subjectivity that Hegel attributes to abstract right in the *Philosophy of Right*. Grant appreciates that Berlin's account of liberty is like that of Hobbes and Bentham for whom liberty is measured by the ability to satisfy desires, but his justification for it that the human essence is freedom and that freedom resides in the capacity to abstract from external purposes. Grant says that for Sartre, "man is his freedom."¹⁰⁴ And freedom for Sartre is always at the level of being 'in itself,' never 'for itself'. Once freedom is made to consider the object upon which the will acts, it loses its essence and becomes something governed by an external, be it social or natural law. Freedom exists only insofar as the subject negates other and thus attains self-consciousness, which allows one to transcend any condition, including oneself as object. Freedom is therefore unlimited and absolute.¹⁰⁵ For Sartre, the purpose of the world remains unknowable and hence absurd. He maintains that Hegel's attempt to unify one's being 'in oneself' and 'for oneself' is a sad effort to make oneself divine and it is bound to fail because any worldly purpose one tries to identify with effectively negates one's consciousness of oneself as free.

In the Hegel chapter above, this was called the first stage of the human will – the awareness of the absolute possibility of abstracting from every possible determination. It is the ultimate source of human action, but, as it stands, it is also entirely at odds with the concrete world, which brings us to the problem of the 'divided self'. We live a dual existence as simultaneously moral and natural creatures, where one contradicts the other. Part of Hegel's solution to this contradiction is to recognize that we are not purely subjective, but rather

104 Ibid., 285.

105 Ibid., 286-7.

intersubjective, because our morality is derived from our social and cultural context, which has both conceptual and concrete dimensions. We are, in this sense, historical beings. Our self-consciousness is formed in part by the culture we have inherited. In contrast, for Sartre the movements of history remain external to us. Even when we act in the world, those actions are tainted by its structures, such as inertia,¹⁰⁶ to the point that the result of our actions holds little in common with the intent of the agent. Like a beam of light through a prism, the will must pass through these elements so that before it can be actualized it is redirected and fundamentally altered. This will is similar to a first mover, but is the prism that actually determines how the will is manifested. In effect the will and the material reality are at odds. The best that we can aspire to is to find an institution that somewhat resembles our image of what we wish to achieve, and align ourselves with it. The philosophy of history does not then yield metaphysical truths, but rather a vague idea of what a given social force is working toward. Sartre concludes from this that one's best alternative is to support the Communist Party which, despite its flaws, is committed to overcoming inequality and social discontent.

At first glance, it seems odd that the ontology at the heart of Berlin's liberal argument should lead Sartre, who has a deeper grasp of it, to the other end of the political spectrum. However, they share a conception of reason as merely instrumental with limited applicability to discerning the good. This compels them to take exclusive stands for either private interests or public. For Berlin, we can only be responsible for our private sphere on matters of morality, and while we try to act humanely and can hope to affect the public sphere, it is ultimately beyond our

106 The elements that Sartre believes divide subject from object are what he calls praxis and counter-praxis, the practico-intert and reification. For more on these, see Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Trans., Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 1982)

control. Aside from the right to freedom, the emphasis on humaneness is not in any sense integral to his ontology; it is more of a remnant from religion which we accept without question or come to individually. On an ontological level, Berlin's freedom need not be used responsibly to be a good. Unhindered choices are valued even when they are used for evil.¹⁰⁷ Thus the moral direction of the social order is to be determined by the self-interested, instrumentalist individuals competing to influence institutions and legislation. It cannot be derived from philosophy.

Sartre believes that philosophy of history provides us with *some* understanding of the genesis and aim of the social groups and movements. Nevertheless, from an ontological perspective, our reasons for committing to a group or cause are never fully transparent. We value freedom, therefore we join the group that is closest to promoting that vaguely conceived, abstract freedom. It matters little that the group may fail in the most horrific ways, because failure is inevitable in a world governed by 'counterfinality'.¹⁰⁸ Freedom has more to do with inner engagement than concrete results.

Hegel criticizes this sort of radical subjectivity for not understanding that freedom must always be frustrated as long as the subject and object are at odds, but this need not happen when we engage our reason to discern, via our cultural context, the rationality of the world. For Berlinian liberals, no one can be sure they are correct about moral questions and they fear that the abuse of social structures will usurp our autonomy and therefore they are justified in their skepticism about getting involved in more serving their own private ends. That assumes, of

107 See Dworkin's response to Berlin.

108 For instance, people move out of the city into the surrounding countryside to get away from the stresses of urban life, only to find that many others have had the same idea thereby only serving to extend the boundaries of the city and increase their commuting time.

course, that they are not purists and therefore trapped in the abstract moment of pure subjectivity without having their will realized by giving it content in action. On the other hand, Sartrean existentialists maintain an interest in the larger movements of society and thus end up sacrificing their freedom to the positivity or dogma of an external force. Either way, objectivity usurps subjectivity, whether it is shunned or embraced. Hegel is not resigned to this condition of 'divided self.' He unites subject and object, arguing that freedom is not actual until it has been given content in action and made objective, and for that concrete action to have the desired result one must will only what is rational, which leads in turn to universal morality.

According to Grant, liberal morality thus understood is ultimately amoral. Utilitarianism is often used as an example where the rights of the few might be sacrificed to serve the utility of the greatest number. Even Kant's categorical imperative leaves it up to the individual to decide what might be universally satisfactory.¹⁰⁹ One might, for instance, decide that if everyone were thinking clearly they would cease to recognize the right to private property. Grant, like Hegel, recognizes that abstract liberty is without ethical content, for which it would have to identify in some way with the ethical life of the community. It is the freedom of the void, and it accepts no limits on the ability to choose. The students of pragmatism, the philosophy of liberal thought, have been taught "to have an unlimited sense of their own freedom but have learned in their education no intellectual interest or discipline to give content to that freedom ... [Pragmatism] is the language that has almost no place for the idea of spiritual law, namely, that there is a right order to our way of doing and thinking."¹¹⁰

109 PMA, 86.

110 Ibid., 88-9.

Keepers

Nevertheless, both Hegel and Grant derive valuable insights from this radical abstract subjectivity, not least of which being the assertion that human beings have free will.¹¹¹ The notion that the human will can, at one stage, abstract from all determinations is an idea that transforms the way we relate to society and rules it enforces. Freedom thus understood has been a relatively recent advancement and it is one neither Hegel nor Grant wish to relinquish. It teaches us to appreciate, for instance, that the transcendent morality that is characteristic of religion results in a different form of atomism, and lacks intersubjectivity. One might wish to treat others virtuously, but only in order to achieve goodness according to the mystical source, not because the people are ends in themselves. The strong commitment to the spiritual realm results in a half-hearted interest in overcoming the evils of the concrete political realm.¹¹² Hegel and Grant also admire liberal thought for Kant's insight that, while an act need not be moral to be free, the agent must will the good for the good action to be moral. That is, Kant argues that a good act where the agent has evil intent is not good, and an act that has bad consequences though the agent had good intentions is good. While Hegel and Grant do not share Kant's view that the consequences are unimportant, the emphasis on the will being united with the action is vital.

111 The nature of Hegel's dialectic is that philosophy is not exclusively critical. It draws from each cultural phase or philosophical position the elements that are valuable and discards that which does not hold up to reason. Grant has clearly adopted this approach. This positive approach to philosophy is discussed in the Hegel chapter above.

112 "Acceptance", 292.

Grant's Ontological Support for Positive Liberty: Natural Law and History as the Increasing Consciousness of Freedom

The essential ingredient missing from the liberal ontology, according to Hegel and Grant, is that freedom must be grounded in a concrete purpose. It must acknowledge that the world has an order and this order places restrictions on our options. Freedom is not unlimited license; it is realized when we understand our place in the larger order and work toward our proper end. For Hegel this means gaining an understanding of Geist. For Grant, it is to gain some understanding of God: "In speaking of morality, I speak from the idea of God ultimately regulates moral philosophy. To do so is to affirm that the idea of God ultimately regulates moral philosophy; that the moral law is an unconditional authority of which we do not take the measure, but by which we ourselves are measured and defined."¹¹³ Although Grant clearly adopts a metaphysical position here, and he does confess that he does not have the philosophical wherewithal to defend his position and must leave this to greater philosophers while he himself finally relies on faith, his conception of freedom is far closer to Hegel's than the pre-Kantian metaphysics that Berlin finds oppressive. The key lies in how one attains this understanding of Geist or God's will. As we know, for Hegel this involves employing our reason to unlock the truths from our history, identify and reconcile the contradictions in the principles that define our culture, and realize that freedom itself is our proper end. This entails replacing atomism with intersubjectivity, instrumental reason with idealism, and history as the progress of capitalism with history as the progress of our consciousness of freedom.

113 PMA, 93.

How we got here: historical narrative of freedom

Grant thinks Berlin is correct to insist on individual liberty and personal responsibility to confront and work to overcome evil. He agrees that there is little room to maneuver in the positive liberty purported in classical metaphysics and early Christianity. According to the natural law tradition, it is always better to choose to conform to the natural law than to transgress it in favour of our personal interests; at our best we would have no choice but to exist in a state of grace or wisdom where we are unable to violate the law:

Freedom is, therefore, the gift of truth [derived from rational thought or divine grace]. It is the recognition, affirmation, and acceptance of the sovereign authority of universal rational law. Human beings are free in so far as they live in these universal self-authenticating principles. A man is free when he recognises that his true self is universal reason and puts aside the passing illusions of egocentricity. In the language of metaphysics freedom is the acceptance of rational necessity; in the language of religion it is the acceptance of the grace of God.¹¹⁴

Grant agrees with Berlin that freedom is lost when it is entirely conceived of as deference to law. However, negative liberty on its own has no moral direction. There may be a notion of evil, but there is no way to identify it. Grant asserts that the central question of PMA is: “are we truly and finally responsible for shaping what happens in the world, or do we live in an order for which we are not ultimately responsible, so that the purpose of our lives is to discover and serve that order?”¹¹⁵ His answer is that both are true,¹¹⁶ and the way to reconcile them is through Hegel’s philosophy of history is the place to look for a means to achieve it. Natural law may be fixed, but our understanding of it varies from culture to culture and epoch to epoch, each variation containing within it some valid insight the rationality of which can be evaluated and, if

114 Ibid., 277-8.

115 PMA 36.

116 Ibid., 70.

it is found to be an improvement on our current understanding, adopted. When freedom is conceived to be our proper end, then the insights will be measured according to the degree to which they facilitate our freedom. Thus law is neither intransigent tradition, though our insights are taken from an analysis of 'traditional' concepts, nor is it a new formula for morality that denies our particular liberty and fulfillment.

In Grant's account of the condition of modern society in the West, we face the pervasive contradiction that while never before in history has there been a culture more committed to the principle of individual freedom, nor has there been an era more devoid of the type of philosophical reflection that makes that liberty meaningful. This is precisely Hegel's criticism of post-Enlightenment thought that, in his time, found its purest and most brutal expression in the French Revolution. And Grant's answer for how we got here is also taken from Hegel. History has shaped us. He accepts Hegel's account of history as a series of transitions from one system of meaning to another, each transition marked by a heightened philosophical awareness and discourse, as people attempt to make sense of the contradictory ideological strains that have come to a head.

The most remarkable of modern philosophers, Hegel, expressed this by saying, 'The owl of Minerva only takes its flight at twilight.' What he means is that human beings only pursue philosophy, a rigorous and consistent attempt to think the meaning of existence, when an old system of meaning is coming to the end of its day... It is certain that in Canada our old systems of meaning ... have disappeared with the world they suited. And the more that people live in the new mass society, the more they are aware that the old systems of meaning no longer hold them.¹¹⁷

117 Ibid., 7.

We are historical beings. We do not simply repeat archetypal patterns of behaviour, caught in a cycle of triumph and failure, never to improve. We can learn and reform our social structures. Most importantly, we can learn what it means to be free. Following Hegel, Grant interprets history as the progression of the human consciousness of freedom. His story begins with the challenge Socrates and Plato posed to the passive acceptance of traditional morality. They argued that morality must be able to stand up under the scrutiny of reason and thus, once rational people agree with it, they have made the moral law their own. No longer are they bound by the unchanging myths and ritual; they are freely following the law with their rational consciousness engaged.¹¹⁸

It is not necessary for our purposes to retrace each historical stage mentioned by Grant, whether in the development of our consciousness of freedom or in how we came to conceive of time as moving progressively (human will changing the state of the world) rather than cyclically. What is important is to understand that history for Grant is the progression of the consciousness of freedom, or the awareness of subjectivity.

Conscious of themselves as free, men came to believe that history could be shaped to their own ends. This consciousness of freedom appears first in the modern world in the religious freedom of the life and thought of the Reformation. As against the medieval theology of nature and supernature, in terms of which men could so marvelously take their place in an ordered cosmos, Luther insists that no man should find his proper rest in any natural images... It protests against the idols that stand between man and God and in this sense the term Protestant is apposite. But it is more than simply protest, because it asserts that the principle of freedom must be regulative of any future theory of practice.¹¹⁹

We are becoming increasingly rational with every historical stage,¹²⁰ and this rationality entails a greater awareness of human freedom. Freedom becomes the measure of a well ordered society, and it is the contribution to the fuller understanding of freedom that gives purpose to the Age of Enlightenment. In many regards, Grant believes this is a positive development, as we

118 PMA, 19-21.

119 Ibid., 44-45.

120 In a preface written for the 1966 edition, Grant explains that the book is "permeated with the faith that human history for all its pain and ambiguities is somehow to be seen as the progressive incarnation of reason." PMA, 120.

have seen, but it has also resulted in a break from moral law. We are not subordinate to the laws of nature or divine law; we control nature and make the laws.¹²¹ And yet , for Grant, this seeming control is in fact utter powerlessness. Instead of formulating our own ends we are left at the mercy of the machinations of the engines of capitalism and empty progress. The means to escape from the oppression of the mass age is found in the philosophy of history, the sort of philosophy exemplified in Philosophy in the Mass Age, the sort of philosophy that Grant learned from Hegel.

Medicine for our ailing culture: philosophy of history

“It must be insisted that the true relation of freedom to law can only be thought by those who have immersed themselves in the history of philosophy”¹²²

As stated above, Grant wants us to make the deposit of history our own. This will enable us to see our own culture in contrast to that of our past and through reason discern which elements of the past are worth retrieving and which can be left behind. Only by studying history can we hope to understand the proper form of philosophy, the importance of natural law, and what makes our contemporary conception of time unique.

An aid in understanding our assumptions is to compare them with those that men have held in other cultures. I therefore will compare modern man’s conception of his existence with the vision of the traditional religious cultures. There is a radical gulf between these two visions, and as we define that gulf, we come to understand what modern man does assume, and how these assumptions have not always been necessary.¹²³

121 Ibid., 38.

122 Ibid., 99.

123 Ibid., 15.

While Grant's work is only an introduction and he does not claim to engage in a rigorous philosophy of history, he explains that such a study must uncover the unity of what happens in every field of human life from politics to religion. Invoking Hegel's phrase "the cunning of reason,"¹²⁴ he explains that our interpretation of historical events and their overall contributions may seem entirely foreign to the historical actors involved should they have heard it. What they intended and what they accomplished are not always the same. The essence of their contribution can only be seen in relation to the larger arch of history.

Using Marx to Explain Hegel's Philosophy of History

Grant, like Hegel, is most concerned with reconciling individual freedom with law, and he agrees that modernity poses a unique set of challenges to this problem, as well as a number of opportunities to resolve it in an entirely new way. If the means to identify and take advantage of those opportunities is the philosophy of history,¹²⁵ then the end goal is Hegel's formula for positive liberty, and this goal is attained by covering familiar terrain. We have already seen how he uses American pragmatism to illustrate the one-sidedness of negative freedom and procedural liberalism, thereby reproducing an argument he made early in his career.¹²⁶ Now we will look at his use of Marxism to explain the Hegelian philosophy of history and political economy.

Grant is quite open about using Marx as a means to explain Hegel's thought in a way that will be accessible to the general audience. He states: "I write about Marx in these essays because his thought is the most influential way that German philosophy has gone out into the world, but

124 Ibid., 39.

125 Ibid., 99.

126 Grant's early works will be addressed in the following chapter.

under this thought at every point lies the much profounder genius of Hegel.”¹²⁷ Marx is useful to Grant as much for his philosophy of history as his concept of the general will and the ability to overcome evil, but in this case it is the evil of economic oppression. History is integral to the notion that we can overcome evil. In the “Acceptance” essay he credits Berlin and Sartre with arguing for this against the stagnation of traditionalism. In PMA, Grant uses Marx to make this point. It is only by viewing history as a series of positive changes that have been implemented through acts of will, and that further positive changes require we develop an appreciation for the spirit of history, that we can come to understand our abilities and responsibilities to make further advances.

Thus Marx provides Grant with a means to explain an aspect of Hegel’s concept of positive liberty without getting directly immersed into the complex terrain of Hegel’s work. We are to become philosophers of history in order to discern the proper ends of humanity and means to overcome the failings of our current social order, and we are to understand that this project must entail a commitment to elevate everyone equally to the status of free, fulfilled human beings. He explains that “Marx is essentially a philosopher of history, that is, one who believes he knows the meaning of the historical process as a whole and derives his view of right action therefrom.”¹²⁸ The notion that the meaning of history is knowable is implicit in the idea of time as history which began, according to Grant, with Jewish thought, and was taken up by Christianity and, later, secularized by Enlightenment thinkers. The idea of history is “the idea

127 Ibid., 126. It would seem that Grant still did not realize that Hegel had been reaching out into the world through the work of Canadian and British Idealists as well.

128 Ibid., 51.

that the events of human society have a meaning in their totality, as directed towards an end.”¹²⁹ Whereas for the Jews and Christians the final purpose is redemption, either for a people or the individual, and history is the unfolding of God’s purpose in the world, for Marx the purpose and salvation is understood in strictly material terms. Marx combines Hegel’s philosophy of history with Enlightenment materialism, and infuses these with the Christian principles of equality and the need to overcome evil. The unity and purpose of history resides in the historical progression toward freedom from economic inequality:

To Marx, therefore, the way that men have organized their economic relations is the key to history. In the economic organization that expresses our relation to nature, he sees the cause of human evil in the past; in the creation of a new relation he sees the overcoming of that evil.¹³⁰

Marx shares the modern conception of human beings as history makers, but unlike liberalism which seems to lack a clear goal towards which to steer a course, Marxism combines freedom and natural law by interpreting history as governed by a material dialectic that moves toward liberating humanity from economic inequality, social hierarchy, and oppression. Modern science has given us the means to overcome the evil of the world, economic injustice, because it enables us to develop the technologies to overcome material scarcity which is the source of that evil.

Grant makes a point of clearing Marx of some of the standard misconceptions of his philosophy. He admires Marx’s philosophy because, unlike capitalism which accepts economic disparity and domination, it maintains that the evils of the world can be overcome through reason and acts of free will. Of course, it conceives evil solely in terms of economic oppression and

129 Ibid., 39.

130 Grant, *Philosophy*, 54.

poverty, which has its limits for Grant. Nevertheless, Marx offers a means to conceive at once both natural law, scientifically understood, and history making humanity. Science enables us to overcome the dominance of natural law, and to do so in a manner that serves the common good.¹³¹ The progress of the material dialectic of history has brought us to the point where people can be freed from oppressive, alienating work to pursue higher purposes such as love and thought.¹³² Grant also accepts Marxism's core tenet that overcoming evil requires an acknowledgement that no one is free unless all are free. Marxism, unlike liberal individualism, is concerned with what Rousseau called the general will, where the structure of society reflects the interests of everyone within it.

That said, Marx's work has its limitations. Some of these are compensated for by the lessons drawn from liberalism. Grant is trying to draw these two together under Hegel's philosophy of history, but he must first clarify the limitations of Marxism. Grant follows the idealists who fault Marxism for ignoring the role of the autonomous individual to reason about her own ends independently, instead determining that material want is always the main concern and this can be dealt with through economic social engineering and technological advances. Thus in the effort to reconcile freedom with the social order, Marxism reduces freedom to the freedom from want, and he considers it the highest purpose of the social order to balance economic inequality. Marxism misses the spiritual dimension of humanity, history and freedom, and this is why Hegel is preferable to Marx.

131 PMA, 60.

132 Ibid., 56.

The main Hegelian principles that Grant conveys through his discussion of Marx are his criticism of the supremacy of the market ethic over authentic human fulfillment, and the notion that history progresses in a dialectical fashion. However, Hegel and Marx differ in that Marx looks at history in terms of the impact of human beings on nature rather than the Hegelian notion of spirit realizing itself in the world.¹³³ Not only does Marxism place far greater emphasis on things material, it also has a greater sense of inevitability than we find in Hegel's history.¹³⁴ In this sense it is far more utopian. As a result, "in Marx's thought, the subject is finally subordinated to the object."¹³⁵ Thus the reconciliation is purely in terms of the concrete and overlooks the realm of spirit, or our beliefs about the world. We remain at odds with Geist or God.

Grant explains that Marxism never flourished in the West because the culture of individual subjectivity has so thoroughly ingrained itself in Western culture.¹³⁶ That is, Marxism regards people as objects to be manipulated in an economic structure rather than as self-directed ends in themselves. It fails to recognize the spiritual dimension of humanity:

What is meant here may easily be confused by the varying uses of the word freedom. The word is often used to express the ability to get what we want when we want it... This is a perfectly proper use of the word, but it is not what is meant by the freedom of the spirit. What is meant by that phrase is that man is more than simply an object in the world, he is a subject.¹³⁷

133 Ibid., 54. Grant discusses this in terms of Marx's debt to Hegel.

134 This deterministic quality of Marx's philosophy of history is why, despite his atheism, he is said to be more of a Christian than Hegel. His secularization of the concept of history is a material form of providence.

135 PMA, 64.

136 Ibid., 66.

137 Ibid., 63.

Freedom for Grant entails the ability to reflect on what we should want and not only the ability to get what we want.¹³⁸ He quotes Hegel's anticipation of the Marxist concept of freedom: "It is a false principle," he wrote, "that the fetters which bind right and freedom can be broken without the emancipation of conscience – that there can be a Revolution without a Reformation."¹³⁹ The freedom of the spirit Grant writes about is another way of saying freedom is being "for itself" as well as "in itself." Grant explains that subjectivity must involve more than being aware of ourselves as capable of thinking and choosing, it must include thinking about our proper ends and being a project for ourselves.

We are always a project to ourselves, in that in any given situation we can negate what we are in the name of what we ought to be. We cannot therefore be explained or explain ourselves adequately in objective terms. It is this ability to transcend any worldly situation that we call the freedom of the spirit.¹⁴⁰

Grant puts this within a Christian framework, interpreting it as a need not only to reflect on morality, but to reflect on the infinite and the purpose bestowed by God. Nevertheless, as we will find in his "Two Theological Languages" essay, he is committed to reviving morality by ensuring it is grounded in reason, "a moral code, the authority for which is based solely on faith and that makes no attempt to define itself rigorously, is a dying code."¹⁴¹ He continues to believe we have an urgent need to formulate a moral law that is not solely a matter of faith, and he looks to Kant to give an account of why morality must be linked to freedom: "if the law is to be moral it must be a law that is freely obeyed. It is not a moral act to obey the law, except in freedom.

138 Ibid., 64.

139 Quoted in *ibid.*, 65.

140 Ibid., 64.

141 Ibid., 94.

Thereby good acts are distinguished from right acts and it is shown that morality is first and foremost concerned with right acts.”¹⁴²

Grant adheres to Kant’s credo in the same way Hegel does, that is, up to a point. He criticizes it for being too malleable to the tastes of a given society. Kant’s moral contemplation abstracts from the concrete particularities of society as well as its unique culture. His maxim of universality might be interpreted by an anarchist thief to regard the violation of property rights as categorical imperative. Grant cites *Maclean’s* articles that would have moral law “suit the convenience of suburbia and the supposed facts of popular psychology.”¹⁴³ They lack the notion of an absolute that challenges our independent reflections on morality. Grant credits Hegel with accounting for this by insisting that the absolute be thought of as subject rather than mere substance. And this is really as far as Grant is willing to go into these dense woods.¹⁴⁴ He has set us with the task to work out the problem of freedom and law, and the problem of thinking in terms of progress without losing sight of a more meaningful agenda. He has depicted a world in which the best are being driven from the status quo of utilitarian pragmatism to think more deeply about their proper ends.¹⁴⁵ We are ripe for a new age of reason and freedom properly

142 Ibid, 96.

143 Ibid., 98.

144 He does not explore Kant’s split of the noumenal and phenomenal world, which lay at the heart of Hegel’s opposition to Kant, and was also opposed by the British Idealists and John Watson. Hegel and his followers insisted on a greater intersubjectivity that is partly accounted for by the culture and ethical life of the community. Recognition is another aspect of intersubjectivity, but this is not addressed by Grant at all. Grant is aware that culture and history are vital to refining Marxist and Lockean-Kantian one-sidedness, but he refuses to present this systematically.

145 It is no accident that there are many references throughout PMA to the importance of education in the development of our consciousness of freedom, especially against the utilitarian education of the pragmatists. The cultivation of the individual was integral to Hegel’s own concept of freedom. It is only through cultivation that the individual can surpass the pure subjectivity of being driven by immediate desires and inclinations, and yet the historical progression of the spirit of emancipation has resulted in reason itself taking on infinite value without having any substantive content. See György Markus, “The Hegelian Concept of Culture,” *Praxis International* 2 (1986), 113-123. It is clear that in writing PMA Grant has borrowed extensively from Hegel’s *Introduction to the*

conceived. The way to this new age is through the philosophy of history and through the works of G.W. Hegel. To learn about the philosophy of history, “there are no more remarkable books on human history than Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* and his *Phenomenology of Mind*.”¹⁴⁶ To work out a justification of moral law that complements individual freedom, “the most brilliant modern attempts at such a justification are Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*.”¹⁴⁷

Political Economy

The spur to action is not only the moral emptiness of our era, but also the economic injustice that Hegel, via Marx, makes vivid to us. Throughout Grant’s work there is an interest in political economy,¹⁴⁸ that is, he is concerned about the production and distribution of societal resources and the mechanisms that determine the rise of those resources: the state and the market. This is an essential area of consideration to anyone wishing to promote equality and freedom, because whereas government is determined by elections that are decided by the majority, especially the working classes, the interests that hold the balance of power in the market place are the relatively few owners of capital.¹⁴⁹ Thus, when Grant is criticizing the moral and spiritual decline of North America as it becomes increasingly defined by the principles of the market place, it fits that he should also mention the extent to which the market structure confines

Philosophy of History, so the connections to be made are manifold. The effort here has been to focus on the most important.

146 PMA, 126.

147 Ibid., 127.

148 Grant’s political economy is perhaps most pronounced in his *Lament for a Nation*.

149 See Michale Howlett and M. Ramesh, *The Political Economy of Canada: An Introduction* (McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1992) 10.

workers to forms of labour that do not engage their creativity,¹⁵⁰ restricts them from having any significant role in the formation of their society,¹⁵¹ compels them to conform to the practices of the capitalist system,¹⁵² and subjects them to the dominance of the capitalist class.¹⁵³ He speaks of alienation and economic exploitation as the elements that define our times: “Our society is above all the expression that the dominance of the large-scale capitalist exerts over all other persons.”¹⁵⁴ As we found in Macpherson, there is a distinctly Marxist tone here, though in Grant’s case the literature hardly mentions it. The prominence of religious based morality and the history of ideas in his work means he will not be misinterpreted as a Marxist materialist. So then how do we account for his class analysis and his criticism of modern alienation and the curtailment of our freedom to enjoy our human faculties of love, art and thought? Does he have a touch of Marx? The answer lies once more in recognizing Marx’s debt to Hegel. Grant’s seemingly Marx inspired political economy does not dilute the significance of Hegel’s influence on his worldview and the degree to which his work is rooted in Hegel’s thought; it reinforces this argument. Just as the structure of history and the conception of freedom Grant borrows from Marx is meant to give us Hegel indirectly, so too does the modern pervasiveness of bourgeois market culture, and the power imbalance of classes hark back to Hegel, though in this case it is not clear that this was Grant’s intention. Thus, while we are more accustomed to associating these arguments with Marx, they in fact had their first articulation in Hegel’s work.¹⁵⁵ In short,

150 PMA, 56.

151 Ibid., 57.

152 Ibid., 9.

153 Ibid., 6.

154 Ibid., 6.

155 Allen W. Wood, “Hegel and Marxism”, *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 433-435. According to Wood, the most important difference between Hegel and Marx was that Hegel believed the rabble, what Marx would call the proletariat, were incapable of developing a shared class consciousness and engaging in a purposeful political

Philosophy in the Mass Age is a thoroughly Hegelian book, and as we will find in the next chapter, it is neither the beginning nor the end of Grant's Hegelian idealism.

movement because they were deprived of the sense of self and the connection to the ethical life that makes possible anything but destructive atomized action. Shlomo Aveneri also provides many examples of Hegel's work anticipating Marx's thought in *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

Chapter Six: Grant's Idealist Oeuvre; From Youthful Nationalist Dreams to Weary Conservative Retreat

Introduction

The previous chapter examines Grant's only openly Hegelian book, but contrary to the standard interpretation of Grant's work, this was neither the beginning nor the end of Grant's drawing from the well of Hegelian idealism. This chapter identifies the continuing presence of idealism in Grant's work from his earliest publications to after his own renunciation of Hegel.

Grant's Imperialism

From his earliest writings in the 1940s, Grant was critical of certain prominent strains of the modern era. Like Hegel, he saw in modernity a tension between two competing conceptions of community that were grounded in distinct accounts of reason, both of which were at fault for attempting to determine their ends without invoking the whole, or Geist. For Grant this whole was the Christian conception of God and the moral community that comes with Christian faith, and we have argued that for Hegel Geist is an intersubjective reciprocal recognition grounded in an ethical consciousness that communities develop through history.¹⁵⁶ For both Grant and Hegel the spirit of the community, its ethical life and its guiding principle of equality (both for the Christian morality and the theory of recognition), is required to bridge the divide between an atomistic community of competing, self-serving agents, and society where the unity is imposed from a powerful central authority. The ethical life is both a spiritual (i.e. grounded in

¹⁵⁶ Please see Chapter Five for a more detailed explanation.

philosophical assumptions about our proper ends) and concrete (i.e. supported by an institutional structure) force that renders a higher notion of freedom possible.

In his 1945 essay "Empire: Yes or No?"¹⁵⁷ Grant uses this interpretation of modernity to analyse Canada's role in the British Commonwealth. He recasts the theological-political problem of faith versus reason and the role of religion in politics to fit an international relations topic. Whereas for Hegel the players were Rousseau, Kant and Herder's idea of *Volksgeist*, for Grant they are the Marxism of the Soviet Union, the liberal individualism of the United States, and the moral unity found in the traditions and mission of the British Empire.¹⁵⁸ As Hegel hopes to use *Sittlichkeit* to blend the strengths of Rousseau, Kant and Herder, Grant hopes Canada can embody the ideal synthesis of the three imperial forces of the mid-twentieth century. Grant finds in the institutional structures of these empires the embodiment of concepts Hegel works with, and he arrives at the same conclusions.

There is also a realist justification for Canada's membership in the Commonwealth. Grant argues that it is in Canada's economic and political self-interest because it will serve to defend and promote global peace and freedom, as well as Canada's sovereignty. The post-war world, he says, remains an age of empires, one defined by the hegemonies of the US and the USSR. The regional polarization of these thriving empires threatens the world's stability. A third empire that is characterized not by the imposition of power, but by the cooperation of independent states within a commonwealth, and one that is not bound to particular regional interests, could serve to balance the global distribution of power and create a means to promote

157 George Grant, "Empire - Yes or No?"

158 We find these distinctions repeated in subsequent writings. *Lament for Nation*, 65. "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," *Technology and Empire*, 64-73.

dialogue and cooperation.¹⁵⁹ In this depiction of world politics, Canada is confronted with a choice: either be stuck between two empires “caught like a nut in a nut cracker,”¹⁶⁰ or serve a leading role in a third empire as the “linchpin of peace and world progress.”¹⁶¹ Grant maintains that Canada would remain sovereign, help to facilitate cooperation with the US, and aid in a global program to promote peace, security and economic development.

The question of sovereignty is of central importance to Grant. Not only does he disagree that membership in the British Commonwealth restricts Canadian independence, but in political and cultural ways, this membership assures it. Canada’s connection to Britain, he argues, has been in the interest of both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians because it has nurtured certain political values that distinguish us from the United States and thus prevent us from being absorbed into an American state. “It is the blending of the best of the ancient civilization of Western Europe with its maturity and integrity, with the best of North American life. That is what gives us our particular colour and our particular quality.”¹⁶²

We now come to his philosophical defense of the British Empire. Though Grant makes a weak effort to deny that he believes the British-Canadian political culture is superior to that of the US, he subsequently contradicts this with his assertion that it is the last political institution to protect the survival of “Christian man, of ethical man, of man the reasonable, moral being who stands before God and history,” against the new man ruled by Marxian economics (read Soviet

159 Grant, *Empire*, 101.

160 *Ibid.*, 102.

161 *Ibid.*, Quoting Winston Churchill on Canada. 103.

162 *Ibid.*, 120. This is a theme he picks up again over twenty years later in his *Lament for a Nation*.

oppression) or Freudian sex (read American permissiveness).¹⁶³ According to Grant, Canada's decision to stick with Britain rather than join the thirteen colonies meant that we were able to continue to learn from Western European culture and draw on the best that it had to offer. Moreover, immigrants from Britain who valued British constitutional traditions chose Canada over the US, thus infusing our population with those cultural influences (we might think of Watson here), and we continued to send our young men and women to study there (as with Grant, his father, and his grandfathers).

But what is it that makes Canada better suited to reasonable, ethical and moral beings? It is that Canada has been founded on the effort to discover "how free each individual can be and yet live in an ordered society where that freedom is not so abused that it infringes on the freedom of others," and our efforts have resulted in a superior compromise to the subordination of the individual to the common good and social order, as represented by the Soviet empire, and placing the balance on the freedom of individual choice at the expense of society as a whole, as we find in the American empire.¹⁶⁴ We reject totalitarianism, and we reject the economic oppression that comes from either too much state intervention in the economy or too little. We will fight state oppression, capitalist oppression,¹⁶⁵ and the oppression of excessive individualism where reason and morality are subordinated to our appetites.¹⁶⁶

Just as Hegel was deeply affected in his youth by the destructive consequences of unrestrained will as manifest in the disaster of the Jacobin Terror, Grant was appalled by the

163 Ibid., 124.

164 Ibid., 121.

165 Grant attributes the crash of 1929 to the political culture of the US, 122.

166 Ibid., 124.

horrors of war and the atrocities of the Third Reich when he served as an air raid precautions warden in London during the Bombing of Britain.¹⁶⁷ In “Empire: Yes or No?”, Grant hopes to find in the Commonwealth a bulwark against further horrors, a third world power that would be the manifestation of a synthesis of the principles of community responsibility and individual freedom. In this, he is carrying on the work he was bred for, “to continue his grandfather’s dream of creating a world-wide political unit out of the British Empire.”¹⁶⁸ This dream had its philosophical underpinnings in idealism. Parkin and George Monroe Grant were strongly influenced by the conception of liberty and morality set out by John Watson, and they employed it in their political analyses. Watson’s argument linking freedom with duty was adapted to the imperialists’ advocacy for people’s duty to the British Empire, and his philosophy of religion was no less important. As stated above, the imperialists considered Christianity to be integral to the Empire, and so its flourishing had a tremendous spiritual significance. This, too, was linked to idealism in Grant via Watson

The world can be mapped out into ideological camps, very much as Hegel had mapped out modernity: the Soviet Union as the Rousseauian communitarian yearning for the classical *polis* where individual fulfillment is realized through adherence to the general will, this time determined by an economic formula for absolute equality; the United States as the Kantian¹⁶⁹ deontological liberal state that separates morality from politics leaving it to individual discretion;

167 Christian and Grant, *Reader*, 4.

168 Christian, George Grant, 17.

169 Using Kant rather than Locke to represent the political culture of the United States not only fits better with Hegel’s own synthesis, but it better suits the US which was founded on higher principles than an amoral social contract of self-serving capitalists, which is how Locke is normally read. Kant’s theory argued that a strong adherence to moral duty is essential to autonomy, however this can only be internally motivated. Because the state’s realm is one of external coercion, it must restrict itself to the protection of negative liberty only.

and the British traditionalism where Christian morality and the constitution have not been so decisively pulled asunder. The Soviet Union represents what Macpherson calls PL2, the oppressive form of positive liberty that imposes the good and presumably freedom on individuals even if they do not understand that it is in their interests. The asserted purpose of the state might be to embody freedom by being representative of the good, but it remains an abstraction because it disregards the particularity of the individual.¹⁷⁰ The whole, or *Geist*, is never conceived because on one level they are still engaging the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment, breaking society down into atomistic parts. In an effort to make a substantive assertion about the general will based on instrumental reason they avoid the pitfall of pure negation that the French Revolution fell into, and instead impose an economic formula for realizing equality. But this approach fails to engender a strong society because no true unity is attained when there is a rift between the particularities of the individual and the proclaimed general will. There is no wholeness, only parts.

The United States represents the Berlin-Kant conception of the state as the defender of negative liberty, not because freedom can be separated from morality, but because the state cannot be relied upon to know what is morally correct and promote it without slipping into PL2. Hegel's criticism of this is that freedom and morality remain abstracted from the concrete, and the state is solely instrumental, rather than an embodiment of freedom. Enlightenment reason ignores the whole, breaks things down into their parts, and considers how to arrange them to suit the ends of individuals. People, government, the state, not to mention the natural world, are regarded as objects to be manipulated to satisfy human wants. In a society where the political

170 Franco, 10.

institutions are organized on the principle of self-interest it is unlikely that its members will approach freedom as anything but arbitrary pursuit of appetite satisfaction.¹⁷¹

Grant hopes that these three political-philosophical empires can be synthesized in Canada whose unique history can house the best elements of all three. In Hegelian terms, Britain can be seen as providing a means to think in terms of the *Sittlichkeit* of the state because it houses a firmly rooted tradition of public spirit defined by Christian morality of human equality. This is a principle Hegel had adopted from Herder, where people's identities are derived from their *volksgeist*, or the cultural history. This sort of spirit, ethical life, provides a means to reconcile competing individual wills to a common project without succumbing either to state oppression or tyranny of individual appetites. Like Herder's *volksgeist*, Britain's traditionalism may not sufficiently accommodate the modern individual's need to explore particular modes of self-expression, and for this we can accept some degree of influence from the United States, but not to the extent that there is a complete spiritual diremption between the private and public sphere, the individual's interests and those of the state. The individual must see the state as consisting of *rational* institutions that embody freedom. Grant argues that the Commonwealth is a logical part of a rational state, and as a member Canada can become the "linchpin of peace and world progress." Rather than government institutions representing the imposition of the powerful on the weak, whether a lot (*polis*-Rousseau-Marx) or as little as possible (Locke-Kant)¹⁷², laws of

171 Ibid., 19.

172 Note here that the tendency of states that claim to be mere arbiters of competing wills in the market place end up as oligarchies at best.

the British Empire would exist as a voluntarily accepted trust. Ultimately, Grant says of Canada and the Empire, “human freedom is, in fact, our goal.”¹⁷³

The international synthesis of Grant’s Canada echoes Hegel’s synthesis of abstract right and morality, or the particular and the universal, in the ethical life of the concrete rational state. The abstract right accounts for the *person* as a free agent owed recognition of the right to enjoy this quality: “The commandment of right is therefore: be a person and respect others as person.”¹⁷⁴ This is the basis for contract right. Morality, on the other hand, marks a transition to the internalization of the good through conscience where the agent achieves *subjectivity*. Whereas abstract right is primarily concerned with an externality of respecting agreements about property, thus leaving us to our particular choices about the uses of property, essentially isolated atoms defining ourselves by our use of external property, morality, on the other hand, is concerned with an internal matter of acknowledging oneself and the other as *subjects*, agents with our own ends, against whom we can commit a wrong. Not only is the agent a being *in itself*, a being due certain rights, she is also an agent *for herself*. As subjects we come to understand ourselves and others as internal beings with higher ends that we take to be our own and integral to our identity.¹⁷⁵ Morality provides a universality that helps to overcome the divisiveness of abstract right. If we have a set of higher ends that motivate our choices and conscience, and those ends are shared by others, then we can pursue our respective interests in harmony.¹⁷⁶ But we cannot expect to have shared higher ends unless we develop them within the same historical tradition and social institutions. In other words, our social context is vital to the development of

173 Grant, “Empire: Yes or No?”, 105.

174 Hegel, *PR*, 69.

175 *Ibid.*, 135-7.

176 Patten, 184.

our ends. Conscience on its own can convince itself that anything is morally sound, Hegel argues: “Even the lowest degree of understanding is enough to discover, like those learned theologians, a positive aspect in every action and hence a good reason and intention underlying it.”¹⁷⁷ This means we need ethical life to ground both abstract right and morality:

The unity of the subjective with the objective good which has being in and for itself is ethical life, and the reconciliation which takes place in it is in accord with the concept. For whereas morality is the form of the will in general in its subjective aspect, ethical life is not just the subjective form and self-determination of the will: it also has its own concept, namely freedom, as its content. The sphere of right and that of morality cannot exist independently; they must have the ethical as their support and foundation. For right lacks the moment of subjectivity, which in turn belongs solely to morality, so that neither of the two moments has any independent actuality.¹⁷⁸

Freedom is the content of the ethical life because it is the essence of self-consciousness.¹⁷⁹ It is the goal, and it is realized as the agent becomes not only *person* and *subject*, but also a *member* of the community. Membership entails duties, our introduction to which begins with our role in the family. The fundamental feeling that establishes a sense of social unity, and the consciousness of oneself as a part of this unity, is love. Love is “the ethical life in its natural form.”¹⁸⁰ It is an attitude of trust, and at the political level it takes the form of patriotism.¹⁸¹ However, this is not sufficient, because love on its own is a sentiment, and is thus not an entirely reliable source of social bond. Unity and love rely on trust, and this must be buttressed by law at the level of the state, and this law, in order to claim our commitment to it

177 Hegel, PR, 175.

178 Ibid., 186.

179 Ibid., 189.

180 Ibid., 199.

181 Ibid., section 268.

and thus to the community, must be known by us to be rational. In a rational state, members can know that by complying with the laws we are fulfilling our own ends, and therefore we are free.

This is not the place to set out the institutional structures that Hegel considers necessary to a rational state; however, by comparing Grant's empires with Hegel's account of the three part composition of the rational state, we find the three dimensions of the *Philosophy of Right*: abstract right, morality and ethical life. This is particularly true of the conclusion. Grant's blend of Soviet Marxism, US liberalism, and British Christian traditionalism into a Canada that embodies the strengths of each with its bow pointed toward freedom is a match with Hegel's rational state. The source of unity is the conviction that the laws reinforce freedom, and thus can claim our allegiance. The subsequent trust mends the rift between competing individuals or between individuals and the state, laying the foundation for the sentiment of sharing a common cause, and love. Does this interpretation determine decisively that Grant's Hegelianism had set in by 1945? If his other writings and influences contradicted this, then the case made here might not be conclusive; however, his other writings corroborate this interpretation.

The Linguistic Trinity

The dream of Canadian imperialists like Grant's grandfathers was to create the Kingdom of God on earth, to put Christian values into practice. In "Empire: Yes or No?", Grant adopts this dream, but how does he understand Christianity, what form does it take, and what is the process by which he determines which values are authoritative? He has been called a Christian Neo-Platonist which puts him in a tradition of the Church that goes back to Augustine and experienced a great revival during the Renaissance, and it also found many followers among

religious thinkers in late 18th century Germany; Hegel was said to be among them. Christian Neo-Platonism places greater emphasis on engaging human reason than we find in orthodox theist Christianity which regards the faith as primarily a normative religion that provides divinely inspired rules of conduct. The Neo-Platonists maintain that the Incarnation gives humanity, through love, the ability to live an ethical life rather than exist as sinful beings adhering to law in action only. They also believed that this ethical life involved a voluntary commitment to fulfill one's moral duty.¹⁸² The Christian Neo-Platonists have at times been decried as atheists who rob Christianity of its normative force. Grant follows Hegel in trying to resolve this conflict.

Grant's exposure to Hegel's philosophy of religion began indirectly through his upbringing in the United Church of Canada, a church that was founded on the principles of rational religion set out by the Canadian Idealists, most especially John Watson. "His rational religion almost became the creed of the United Church," explain Armour and Trott.¹⁸³ Freedom and reason are central to Watson and the United Church, and the symbolism of formal ritual may aid our understanding, but religion must not be fixed. Following Hegel, Watson puts human consciousness as the foundation of religion, as opposed to the Kantian view which proposes that the need for morality makes God necessarily real. Reason is the divine touch in humanity that brings us closer to God without separating us from Nature. Faith is not superstition, but rather the factor that converts belief into action.¹⁸⁴ Free, independent, reasoning is essential to this philosophy of religion, because it is reason that makes us aware of reality, and enables us to transform feelings into knowledge. This confidence in reason does not put us above God, but

182 Dickey, 313.

183 *Faces of Reason*, 217.

184 *Ibid.*, 318.

leads us to an understanding of our unity with God. In politics today, it is to regard Christianity in this light.

Among many progressive liberals and the political left, Christianity, or any religion for that matter, is frequently regarded as an oppressive reactionary dogma, an illegitimate external authority that prevents political progress. Humanism and the individual's power to reason are thought to be the foundation for conceiving the just society. It is this belief that informed the French Revolution, and it is this that underlies the arguments for positivism in philosophy, as well as the attempt to rely exclusively on empirical, value-neutral data in the other sciences, including social science. Yet the Neo-Platonist, Christian Grant was often found battling on the side of the left as well as the right. How does one reconcile this straddling of the political spectrum among Grant and other like-minded Red Tories? He frequently railed against the establishment in favour of the politically disenfranchised. In a sense, this seems less surprising when we consider that it is often the charity of organized religion that aids those in need. Religion teaches a disinterested love and compassion that is alien to the market place. The concept of a compassionate, just God combined with the notion of an eternal human soul that contains some touch of God's divine goodness compels us to accept some responsibility for the well-being of others. In terms of specific practical obligations, this alone does not ask much of us, but it does tell us we do have a responsibility beyond satiating our sensual desires. This is the basis of a moral duty that reason alone cannot command of us. What degree of sacrifice is justified by enlightened self-interest? However one answers, it cannot possibly exceed that of love, particularly the love that is informed by a sense of the divine. In the end, therefore,

Christianity correctly understood may not be the source of oppression, but rather the greatest impetus to social progress.

At least this is the perspective shared by Hegel, Watson, grandfather Parkin, and Grant. For this section we will slightly realign our understanding of Hegel without actually changing it. For the moment, having already dispelled the metaphysical reading of Hegel above, we will call him a Christian regardless. Only, his conception of Christianity is entirely unlike any we are familiar with. It is a synthesis, and it only makes sense to call him a Christian because he lived in a world so universally infused with Christianity. He was Christian because the *Sittlichkeit* of Europe was, and in some senses remains, thoroughly grounded in Christianity, not because he believed in the historical veracity of the story of Christ.¹⁸⁵ Christianity was the source of ethics for his historical context. In effect, Christianity was integral to Hegel's conception of *Sittlichkeit*. It gives concrete social institutions an ethical dimension that is vital to social cohesion and the principles of justice. It allowed for a view of human nature that is greater, more deserving of mutual recognition, less purely self-serving than the competitive negative liberty ethos of the market without withdrawing into the utterly abstract otherworldliness of absolute moral duty, which can too easily overlook concrete reality and the well-being of the individual. Christianity was the account of the spirit that best articulated his synthesis of individual freedom and the common good, and had informed the establishment of both religious and political institutions that reflected those values.

¹⁸⁵ For instance, he did not believe the resurrection was a historical event, though he thought it held a tremendous spiritual message.

He claimed to be a Lutheran, though it is doubtful whether many Lutherans would think they found in him one of their own.¹⁸⁶ Aside from his acceptance of the existence of a just God and an eternal soul, there is little Hegel would put above philosophical analysis.¹⁸⁷ Even these might be reconsidered were they not so loosely defined that it is impossible to imagine how they might be altered. He believed that the task of philosophy is to make other more specific religious concepts philosophically understandable.¹⁸⁸ The role of the philosopher is to understand what our values are, what makes them logically sound, and how can we improve the capacity of the institutions to facilitate the ethical life. That is not to say that Hegel thought it possible to compose clear philosophical articulations of all aspects of the human spirit. To suggest that any historical context could perfectly describe *Geist* would be to deny its very essence. His intention was to restore the dignity of philosophical consciousness while also resisting the Enlightenment effort to suppress the religious or spiritual dimension of human existence by reducing us to our natural or physical qualities. For Hegel, God is a logical concept - the Idea in the highest sense. God is not captured by a historically contingent representation. Christianity might give us the most advanced account of *Geist* among the known religions, but this does not mean that it cannot be surpassed. Even so, he had no desire to do so himself. His “cause” was to develop a speculative philosophy that would incorporate the insights of Christianity while steering a middle course between the two predominant theological languages.

186 Dickey, 312. It is interesting to note that Harris Athanasiadis has argued in his recent book, *George Grant and the Theology of the Cross: The Christian Foundation of His Thought*, that the root of Grant’s thought is Luther’s theology, which by Athanasiadis’s account seems to repudiate the role or reason in theology and favour revelation. This argument overlooks too much to be worth considering here, though we might wonder whether any tinge of Lutheranism in Grant may have reached him via Hegel.

187 Hegel did not believe Biblical miracles such as the resurrection were historical happenings, and because their value lay in their spiritual significance, speculations about their actuality only serve to diminish the importance of the “event.” See Bernard Reardon, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1977), 18.

188 Dickey, 302.

This is the same course Grant charts in his early essay “Two Theological Languages”, and for the same reasons, though judging from Grant’s account of his Christian epiphany,¹⁸⁹ he is more of a believer than the philosophically disposed Hegel. Both Hegel and Grant have two primary goals in their studies of religion: they want to bring reason to Christianity, as understood in this broad progressive sense, and to bring Christianity to everyday practice.¹⁹⁰ The first depends upon freeing God from the finite by acknowledging that no particular representation of Him can hope to be conclusive. God thus becomes a logical concept that can be discussed philosophically. The second entails making rational arguments for right ethical behavior and ordering society accordingly.¹⁹¹ In other words, they want to study the relationship between humanity and God, refine their understanding of the moral and spiritual dimension of human beings, and apply that understanding to the practical workings of society.

Both understand that Christianity *can* assume a dogmatic, restrictive form, but they also believe its core message of morality rooted in some divine source is the best challenge to the other dogma that hides in sheer empiricism. Hegel seeks, and to some extent finds, a route between the two. Grant inherits the drive to seek and the formulation of the problem, but he does not find it because he lacks a thorough familiarity with the work of his intellectual forebear. Still, to establish a link, it is enough to show that there were a number of significant parallels in their respective positions on the philosophy of religion: the philosophical value of religion, the preferred form of theology, the historical place of Christianity, and, most importantly, the

189 Christian, *George Grant*, 86.

190 Laurence Dickey, “Hegel on Religion and Philosophy,” *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 301. See also Harris who emphasizes making religion alive for people in their own time, H.S. Harris, “The Young Hegel and the Postulate of Practical Reason,” in Darrel E. Christensen, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 62.

191 *Ibid.*, 316. These points are taken from Dickey, but we will find they emerge in Grant as well.

correlation between liberty and the conception of religion. The latter is the most important because it is the emphasis on liberty that distinguishes these modern Christian Neo-Platonists from their predecessors.

Grant's 1947 essay, "Two Theological Languages," follows the pattern of his essay on empires except that here, in place of empires, modernity itself is divided into two modes of consciousness which are applied to religious questions. He argues that the two contending theological languages, "traditional rational theology" and the language of the Bible, are one-sided. Once again he is contending with the duality of freedom and authority, choice and law, or reason and faith. His struggle to reconcile the languages mirrors Hegel's effort "to steer a *via media* between the subjectivity of an anti-philosophical dogmatism and the sterile abstractions of theological rationalism."¹⁹² Hegel's early writings on religion were mostly critical of what he called "positivity" in organized religion, that is, having laws grounded in authority rather than an individual's capacity for reason.¹⁹³ Here he was persuaded by Kant's conception of self-realization and believed that Christ's message was in fact one promoting autonomy, though it had been distorted by the Church. Eventually Hegel found that reason, too, could crumble into its own positivity, and thus, not able to determine how to put Kant's theories into practice, he was compelled to study the question further.¹⁹⁴ He believed he had found the way between the two toward the end of his life.¹⁹⁵

192 Dickey, 311.

193 Pinkard, 63.

194 Ibid., 68.

195 Dickey, 311.

For both Hegel and Grant, religion means contemplating the most fundamental issues, the relationship between humanity and God, and our proper ends, which includes discerning moral truth.¹⁹⁶ Their essays are both efforts to revive the flagging connection that more individualistic moderns have to Christianity by aligning it with reason. For Grant, “theology is that study which teaches us of the final purpose and unity of our existence. Therefore, theology must be thought in such a way that it can show its ultimate relevance to all specialties - medicine, science ... etc.”¹⁹⁷ Hegel, too, concentrated on making religion more rational, believing this would also serve to make it more alive, powerful and real for people.¹⁹⁸ Hegel thought religion fell within the parameters of philosophy and its symbolism could be studied, not as a dead myth, but as a living insight into the spiritual dimension of the human experience. For Hegel, “spiritual” refers not to another world beyond ours, physically separated from us either by space or death, but to this world, and it is infinite. It is the realm or aspect of experience that connects us with our history and each other, and it makes itself apparent in myriad ways, including acts of charity and self-sacrifice.¹⁹⁹ To do this, they had to understand and overcome the positivity of the dominant forms of theology. Grant’s essay addresses what he calls “one of the great theological questions which confronts our Reformed tradition.” That is, “what is the relation between the language of traditional rational theology and the language of the Bible?”²⁰⁰

196 Grant, “Two Theological Languages,” in Wayne Whillier, *Two Theological Languages by George Grant and Other Essays in Honour of his Work* (Queenston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 7. Dickey, 309.

197 Ibid., 7.

198 H.S. Harris, “The Young Hegel and the Postulate of Practical Reason,” in Darrel E. Christensen, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 62.

199 Emile Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension of Hegel’s Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 44-47. Also see H.S. Harris, “The Young Hegel and the Postulates of Practical Reason,” in Darrel E. Christensen, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 74-5.

200 Grant, 51. Fackenheim asserts that this question lies at the heart of Hegel’s philosophy of religion: “How can Hegel’s philosophy need the Christian religion and yet have the autonomy of a rational system?” Fackenheim, *The*

Grant discusses the two theological languages of “traditional rational theology” and “Biblical language” in terms of their conceptions of freedom. The first theological language, originates from Plato’s and Aristotle’s contemplations of the good, or God. This language invokes the idea of freedom as self-cultivation, or positive freedom; it is positive freedom, the *liberty to* discover the good through reason and act virtuously by overcoming the drives of our passions in light of our knowledge of the good: “Reason is not merely the slave of the particular passions, but gives us the idea of the highest good, or God, wherein not only this or that particular desire will be satisfied, but that very unity which is ourselves will find felicity.”²⁰¹ Reason, according to this view, is a touch of the divine in humanity as well as a bridge to the divine that enables us to desire the good.

“Biblical language,” on the other hand, is the side of authority or faith, and it asserts the unknowability of God. This is the language of “guilt,” “sin,” “responsibility,” “temptation,” “remorse” and “rebellion.” Here laws are not discerned by the use of reason, but rather in literal readings of the Bible which derives its authority from divine revelations. God is distant and inactive. Thus humanity is more completely severed from God, and freedom is merely the capacity to choose our actions and has little to do with reason, or living according to the good. In a sense, this freedom is absolute because it does not require the disciplined use of reason found in Kantian autonomy, or an effort to live according to our proper ends as with Aristotle. This is

Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought, 9. Fackenheim ultimately concludes that it cannot and so it fails, but his argument is based on the false assumption that Hegel’s system relied on the emergence of a perfectly rational modern state and this clearly did not happen when we consider the atrocities experienced in Europe in the twentieth century. Of course, this line of argument has been answered elsewhere. It is enough to say here that Hegel never claimed that the evolution of a rational state was inevitable or would necessarily emerge in the near future. For a good response to Fackenheim, see James Doull, “Would Hegel Today Be a Hegelian?” in David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson, eds., *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

²⁰¹ Grant, “Two Theological Languages,” 8.

the negative liberty that Kant calls *Willkühr* or the capacity of choice, as distinct from *Wille* which is will constrained by moral duty which has been determined by practical reason. With *Willkühr* to act is to act freely. God has given a free will to all people, therefore no further effort is required to be free. Whether or not one decides to conform to the moral laws as they are set out in the Bible establishes whether one is wicked or good, but either way one is equally free.

Kant describes the distinction as follows:

But freedom of choice cannot be defined - as some have tried to define it - as the capacity to make a choice for or against the law, [which would be] only a negative property in us, namely that of not being necessitated to act through any sensible determining grounds ... Only freedom in relation to the internal lawgiving of reason is really a capacity; the possibility of deviating from it is an incapacity.²⁰²

Just as Grant argued the imperial ideologies of the Soviet Union and the USA, and the pure Christian authority of the Commonwealth were incomplete on their own, so too does he assert that it is problematic when both of these theological languages exist independently of one another. The first he considers to be “petty about sin” because by claiming to act according to God’s will as our reason has deciphered it, we make “God a tame confederate for our petty adventurings.”²⁰³ In other words, without a notion of an authoritative God beyond rational comprehension, we mistake our own ideas for ultimate truth, and thus act according to our pure will, while claiming to do so in God’s name. This corresponds with both Hegel’s criticism of the Deism that emerged from the Enlightenment and preceded Rousseau and Kant, and his later criticism of Kant’s transcendental idealism. Hegel had criticized Enlightenment Deism for being as spiritually empty as materialism. He argued that this empty spirituality stemmed from the fact

202 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Trans. Mary Gregor, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 52.

203 Grant, “Two Theological Languages,” p.14

that the Enlightenment thinkers could not accommodate a subjective and active God: “for there is only room for human subjects and law-governed nature. God thus must be reduced to the impersonal and colourless ‘supreme being’ of Deism.”²⁰⁴ In regard to Kant, he admired Kant’s theory of autonomy for avoiding two kinds of heteronomy “the heteronomy of determining how to act on the basis of naturally given inclinations, and the heteronomy of determining how to act on the basis of external authority,”²⁰⁵ but Kant’s metaphysics missed the importance of community *membership* and the *Sittlichkeit* to the development of the individuals proper ends. Without *Sittlichkeit* morality is adrift in an empty sea, lacking purposes which help us to determine how to act.²⁰⁶

Grant’s focus is the notion of responsibility. The first language maintains that to know the good is to desire it, therefore there is no sin, there is only ignorance. Grant insists that the first language can learn from the second in at least being agnostic about evil. “Without this agnosticism we try to answer the problem of evil, and when we do that, don’t we in fact say that good is evil and evil is good - rather than the very different affirmation that the thing is as it is?”²⁰⁷

On the other hand, Grant criticizes the second language for being too “close to sheer irrationalism.”²⁰⁸ He argues that Biblical language suffers from a misconception of human freedom because it does not include the idea that free agents must rationally develop their own

204 Taylor, *Hegel*, 401.

205 Kenneth Westphal, “The Basic Context and Structure of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” in *Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 244-5.

206 *Ibid.*, 251-2.

207 Grant, 57.

208 Grant, “Two Theological Languages,” 14.

principles. The importance of subjectivity to the modern individual cannot abide this. He faults

Biblical theologians for relying on faith without reason:

Indeed, the modern Biblical theologians are quite useless as positive theologians because they leave one with an inevitable split between Christianity and reason. They simply rest on the authority of the book - no longer, indeed, in a literal sense - but in a way which is quite impossible for modern technological man.²⁰⁹

Grant argues, in a very Hegelian manner, that currently Christians of all stripes draw on both of these mutually contradictory languages, even when criticizing one or the other. As he did in "The Empire: Yes or No?", he argues that it is the role of Canadian Christians to try to bring together both languages:

Members of the Reformed Churches in Canada must rethink their theological tradition. We cannot rest in unthought and unrelated biblical metaphors of evangelical neo-orthodox theology. Even less can we rest in any theology cut off from the basic insights of the Bible. Neither can we accept the Roman Catholic attempt to unite Biblical and rational thought as found in St. Thomas Aquinas. We must go forward to think an authentic theology of our own. Theoretically facing the deepest problems of reason, practically facing the dilemmas of contemporary technological society.²¹⁰

Once again Grant advocates the Hegelian synthesis. His invocation of Aquinas in contrast to technological society, reflects the Hegelian historical concept that modernity is a unique historical period for creating an entirely new synthesis of faith and reason. This issue as presented in these two early articles continued to be the central theme of Grant's work throughout his life. We see this confirmed in the 1988 addendum in which he reasserts the need to synthesize freedom and authority, reason and faith, Socrates and Christ, thought and revelation:

209 Ibid., 12.

210 Ibid., 15.

Anyone who wishes to partake in philosophy, and also hopes that he or she is made with the sign of Christ, must be aware of some tension in the relation between thought and revelation, though at the same time knowing that finally they must be at one.²¹¹

At the heart of this essay on theology, as with his essay on international relations, is the notion that modernity is defined by a tension between two competing conceptions of liberty, that neither is satisfactory on its own, and both have invaluable contributions to make to our ability to realize authentic freedom and our proper ends. Grant's presentation of the modern dilemma in both his study of international relations and his philosophy of religion, as well as his proposed synthesis, strongly resembles the central features of Hegel's philosophy. The same analytic perspective was applied in subsequent papers, always arguing for this Hegelian notion of positive freedom against the emptiness of sheer negative liberty, as found either in the market place, empiricism, or existentialism. His abiding interest in adult education, for instance, was never concerned with economic growth, but always the realization of this higher end: "Education is not to make us happy or secure or adjusted or properly related to our total community patterns, as the boys say today - but free."²¹² He wrote this in 1954. In 1955, the same agenda is evident in his criticism of mass culture and the devotion to short term economic gain.²¹³ In 1956, nearly a decade after writing "Two Theological Languages," his interest in the concept of freedom takes flight in his essay "The Uses of Freedom - A Word and Our World," in which he examines the many faces of negative liberty and their failings.²¹⁴ This all comes to head in his letter to President Alex Kerr in which he requests leave to research "what is meant by freedom of the

211 Ibid., 18.

212 Grant, "Adult Education in the Expanding Economy," in Davis, *Collected Works of George Grant, Vol. 2*, 108.

213 "The Minds of Men in the Atomic Age," in Davis, *Collected Works*.

214 In Davis, *Collected Works*.

will” in England with a particular focus on Hegel’s work.²¹⁵ The result of this sabbatical year was a manuscript that would provide lumber for his first book, *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, in which his Hegelianism crests. Thus in the period from 1941 to 1956, Grant’s Hegelianism evolves from an inchoate world view that unintentionally informs his analysis of international relations, to an explicitly Hegelian analysis of modernity and the history of philosophy in which he proposes that our age could well be the dawning of a new, more complete, consciousness of freedom.

Hegel’s Philosophy of History Refuted: Strauss’ Dark Take on History and Humanity

Leo Strauss puts an end to Grant’s hope. For Strauss modernity is not the dawning of the age of reason; it is a highly flawed product of two fundamental mistakes, both of which are present in Grant’s PMA: the attempt to synthesize theology and philosophy, and Hegelian historicism, which Strauss claims is a byproduct of Enlightenment rationalism. Strauss’ argument against Hegelian synthesis is contained in his depiction of proper philosophy and criticism of historicism.

Strauss on Positivism

Let us first look at Strauss’ understanding of political philosophy. Like Grant, Strauss firmly opposes the value neutral rationalism that dominates the social sciences. He also shares Grant’s interest in retrieving a better model for the practice of philosophy from classical Greek philosophy. However, Strauss does not look to ancient Greece to find the rough and immature

215 Davis, 222-3.

beginnings of progressive development of Western thought. For him, it does not simply set the stage for the modern synthesis; the principles of classical thought are a-historical and universal. The first priority of the classical philosopher is the quest for wisdom, universal knowledge, and thus the knowledge of the whole.²¹⁶ Political philosophy is the application of philosophical analysis to the essential aim of all political action, namely, “knowledge of the good: the good life, or the good of society.”²¹⁷ It is the attempt to use reason to move from opinion about the good in politics to some knowledge of it.²¹⁸ And yet, in speaking of “knowledge of the good,” Strauss would not have us confuse the insights derived through philosophy with actual knowledge of the whole. “Philosophy is essentially not possession of the truth, but quest for truth. The distinctive trait of the philosopher is that ‘he knows that he knows nothing,’ and that his insight into our ignorance concerning the most important things induces him to strive with all his power for knowledge.”²¹⁹

It is precisely this form of uncertainty (or doubt) that modern methods try to overcome. But, according to Strauss, rather than claiming to attain knowledge about the unknowable - i.e. the whole, God, the good - modern political scientists dismiss these as meaningless, and redirect their study to empirically proven facts. Following the example set by Machiavelli, they make political science more effective by lowering its goal. Rather than contemplating the proper order of the soul or the cosmos or the nature of justice, they redefine moral virtue to be a matter of meeting the needs of society. Machiavelli dims the lights and depicts humanity as infinitely

216 Leo Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?” in Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy and Other Essays* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1959), 11.

217 Ibid., 10.

218 Ibid., 11.

219 Ibid., 11.

malleable and shallow.²²⁰ “Positivistic social science claims to be ‘value-neutral’ or ‘ethically-neutral’: it is neutral in the conflict between good and evil, however good and evil may be understood.”²²¹ Strauss is not gentle with these misguided scientists. He accuses them of “moral obtuseness” and believes that, in its purest form, positivism is something rather grim:

The habit of looking at social or human phenomenon without making value judgements has a corroding influence on any preferences. The more serious we are as social scientists, the more completely we develop within ourselves a state of indifference to any goal, or of aimlessness and drifting, a state which may be called nihilism.²²²

However, he refuses to grant positivism even the dignity of the name nihilism, which might at least involve emotional and intellectual depth. Instead he argues that anyone wishing to disregard democracy and truth as mere “values” that are therefore not worth studying, must then silently accept and respect whatever systems and morals a given society adopts. According to Strauss, this type of social scientist is not a nihilist, but rather a conformist and a philistine!²²³ With some hostility, he points out the implications of this form of suspended judgement. Strauss argues that such philistinism is dangerous. Unless they can address the fundamental questions about the good, it will be impossible for them to distinguish between democracy and authoritarianism.²²⁴ This conception of philosophy leads to his criticism of historicism.

220 Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Seattle: University of Washington Press,), 294-8.

221 “What is Political Philosophy?”, 18.

222 Ibid., 19.

223 Ibid., 20.

224 Ibid., 24.

Strauss Links Historicism to Positivism

As Thomas Altizer states, “nothing so determines Strauss’ mature thinking as his opposition to historicism, a historicism he believed to be the spirit of our time, and a historicism he identified as the forgetting of eternity.”²²⁵ Strauss criticized the historicist self-understanding of his contemporaries by subjecting it to the judgement of classical thought.²²⁶ The central thesis of Strauss’ criticism of historicism is that it is positivism looking at the past. In other words, historicists try to acquire a value-free knowledge of the past. They hope to tell the story of the past as “factually” as possible by respecting the historical context of the society being studied, untainted by contemporary biases. The trouble is that historicism relinquishes its capacity, and *responsibility* to judge what constitutes a good or just society. Strauss asserts that we cannot afford to be so open-minded, and he points to the Nazi Germany as an example of where this sort of thinking might lead.

While Grant’s philosophy of history did not entail a value-neutral historicism, he was persuaded by Strauss that following Hegel would lead to it. Strauss taught Grant that the very notion of history is unique to modernity and it involves an inherent rejection of the philosophical principle that truth is absolute, eternal and universal. Strauss discussed this principle in terms of natural right. In *Natural Right and History*, Strauss explains that “historicism is not itself a comprehensive world view but an analysis of all comprehensive world views, an exposition of

225 Thomas J.J. Altizer, “The Theological Conflict Between Strauss and Voegelin,” in Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper, *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 268.

226 O'Donovan, *Twilight*, 51.

the essential character of all such views.”²²⁷ In contrast, Strauss argues that “philosophy is essentially non-historical.”²²⁸

According to his “non-historical history of historicism”,²²⁹ Strauss says that Machiavelli attempted to construct a science of society that would overcome the power of chance - an enterprise that required overcoming the Christian conceptions of providence and charity as well as the classical Greek conception of science and virtue.”²³⁰ Machiavelli sought to achieve this by eliminating both the unknowable of philosophy and the transcendence of religion from the equation, leaving only reason devoid of proper ends, and free will without absolute law. Subsequently, thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke tried to fill the gap left by Machiavelli and replace the abandoned teleological notion of virtue as our proper end with a pre-political foundation for the concepts of social right and justice. The result was the idea of a state of nature where independent, free individuals had first agreed on a social contract designed to protect their interests, such as the right to private property. There was then an intellectual backlash against these contractarian thinkers, and the modern idea of history was born.

Strauss argues that Kant and Hegel were trying to revive classical virtue without returning to the idea of an absolute unknowable transcendent truth. They saw history as the intellectual progress of humanity which, through reason and over time, would bring knowledge of truth, virtue and the good to the consciousness of humanity. History was seen as the evolution of human knowledge that leads to the realization of the right political order. In constructing this

227 Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1950), 25.

228 Leo Strauss, “The Mutual Influences of Theology and Philosophy,” *The Independent Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1979), 111.

229 Joan E. O’Donovan, *George Grant and the Twilight of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 58.

230 *Ibid.*, 57.

new conception of time and knowledge, they consequently replaced classical virtue as humanity's essence and proper end with "freedom."²³¹ The result is that the notion of a conception of the good coming from above, it is recast as horizontal, stemming from law and rights that are made by humanity. This more "realistic" juridical form of morality would eventually be unable to distinguish between liberty and license.²³² Once the essence of history was seen for what it is by Nietzsche, there was no longer a pretence of history's inherent rationality, and so the state could only be regarded as a prison for the many and something to transcend for the extraordinary few.²³³

Grant's Straussian Pessimism: He Accepts that Historicism is Positivist

This account of the birth of the contemporary idea of history woke Grant from his dogmatic modernist slumber. In his introduction to the 1966 edition of PMA, Grant reflects on his transition:

At the practical level, I had seen many of the limitations of the technological society. Nevertheless, I was still held by the progressive dogma. It is hard indeed to overrate the importance of faith in progress through technology to those brought up in the main stream of North American life. It is the very ground of their being. The loss of this faith for a North American is equivalent to the loss of himself and the knowledge of how to live.²³⁴

Grant thus learns from Strauss that the progressive view of history he had borrowed from Hegel was not an effective response to the technological age, but rather a variant of the corruption against which he struggled. He realizes that he had fallen prey to what Strauss

231 Ibid., 58.

232 Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?", 51-2.

233 Ibid., 53.

234 Grant, *Philosophy*, 119.

understands as the modern effort to lower the aspiration of the human quest for truth, which in Hegel's case involves bringing God within the grasp of human reason by immanentizing the spirit of God in History. In Hegel's phenomenology, God is made incarnate. Strauss convinced Grant that Hegel's method of synthesis is achieved at the expense of the notion of transcendence.²³⁵ This, of course, would not be a synthesis of faith and reason, it would be the annihilation of faith and God in favour of reason and human will.²³⁶ Grant credits Nietzsche with understanding the next step after "the height of optimism is reached" with the secularization of the arrival of the Kingdom of God: "The masses blink and say: 'We are all equal. – Man is but man, before God – we are all equal.' Before God! But now this God has died."²³⁷

Reading Strauss extinguished Grant's optimism that the synthesis would be achieved in the modern epoch. He attributes his initial delusion to his thorough indoctrination into the technological culture, and its commitment to progress. In his subsequent work he ceases to view technology as a slightly misguided though necessary step to a more developed consciousness of freedom. Instead, he sees it as an end in itself, an end "that inhibits the pursuit of other ends in the society it controls."²³⁸ O'Donovan describes this transition as follows:

235 George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, Ltd., 1969), 104.

236 Larry Schmidt, "George Grant and the Problem of History," in Larry Schmidt, ed., *George Grant in Process: Essay and Conversations* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, Ltd., 1978), 136. Philosophy that dismisses theology and revelation is itself a matter of faith, according to Strauss, for how can we logically refute the validity of a revelation? To say that revelation is false is a matter of choice to have faith in philosophy alone. See Strauss, "The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy," in Peter Emberly and Barry Cooper, eds., *Faith and Political Philosophy*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). Grant asserts outright that he accepts Strauss's account of Western history of ideas from the ancient Greeks to Nietzsche. He only begs to differ on the question of the significance of Christianity. "In Defence of North America," in *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1969), 19.

237 George Grant, *Time as History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 43.

238 Grant, *Philosophy*, 121.

The modern public is tragic, in his view, because its regulative ideas and practices are destructive of human excellence, of human good. They are thus destructive because they contradict what man has been given to know of his highest good, that for which he is truly fitted. Justice is man's highest good, Grant holds; justice is what man as man is fitted for.²³⁹

"Tyranny and Wisdom" is the essay in which Grant renounces his intellectual forefathers and begins to take his cue from Strauss, though not without a few reservations. Grant drops what was effectively a typical British Idealist metaphysical interpretation of Hegel, Kingdom come and all, in exchange for Alexandre Kojève's atheist Hegel, the brilliant prophet of the new age of a universal homogeneous state that upholds freedom and equality and marks the end the histories dialectical striving.²⁴⁰ Grant is persuaded by Strauss that instead of a Christian kingdom on earth, Hegel's modernity would deliver a universal tyranny where contemplation of the good would be strictly forbidden, and the satisfaction of base passions would become our highest end. Kojève and Hegel, it seems, have been tainted with the evil of modern social science and historicism.

Although Grant faults pragmatism (or existentialism) and Marxism for being one-sided, he also admires them for harnessing certain truths about the essential elements of a free and just society, and in PMA he credits Hegel with bringing together both of those truths under one system and synthesizing those rational truths with faith and the contemplation of the infinite. He thought that Hegel understood that the consciousness of freedom had to come as a "religious

239 O'Donovan, *Twilight*, 59.

240 Grant says that he is uncertain whether Kojève is correct that Hegel is an atheist, but is confident that he is a different creature than the "gentlemanly idealists" such as Caird and Bosanquet took him to be. "Tyranny and Wisdom", *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), 84. Kojève's account of the end of history and the end of ideology set the stage for the likes of Francis Fukuyama and the new right. See Zdravko Planinc, "Paradox and Polyphony in Grant's Critique of Modernity," *George Grant and the Future of Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1992), 18.

affirmation in the light of the infinite.”²⁴¹ This infinite meant firstly that there was a source of moral law higher than human will to which we must conform. To not acknowledge it is to deny limits on human will. It also meant that human beings must strive to approach the divine’s excellence, and never be content with wallowing in the muck.

Kojève’s Hegel has no sense of the infinite. Geist is immanent and the Christian ethic of universal freedom and equality is entirely secularized: “Only in the radical negation of theism is it possible to assert that there is progress – that is, that there is any sense or over-all direction to history.”²⁴² Humanity creates the world, and history is the process of that creation. Hegel-Kojève, a single position for Grant, argues that modern technological society is the result of modern political philosophy overcoming Christian theism. Hegel-Kojève contends that the objective of the modern experience is to synthesize the universal Church and the universal state in the “universal homogeneous state.”²⁴³ According to Kojève, once this is achieved the ancient love of wisdom will be replaced by wisdom universally realized. Finally, for Hegel-Kojève the glue of society that keeps people working together with a sense of common cause is recognition. However, this is not the mutual recognition that comes out in the *Philosophy of Right* and is described by the contemporary Hegel scholars. It is the asymmetrical recognition of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in which there is a constant striving to be recognized as superior by others. Society is valued for providing a forum in which we can assert our dominance over others and have it recognized. Thus what is universalized is the unequal treatment of equals.²⁴⁴

241 PMA, 65.

242 “Tyranny”, 90.

243 O’Donovan, *Twilight*, 76.

244 *Ibid.*, 93.

Once Grant chooses²⁴⁵ to accept this interpretation of Hegel he is stuck in the unhappy position of fighting to escape his own shadow. Hegel provides the best articulation of Grant's own position, but now, having accepted a poor interpretation, he turns his back on Hegel and looks elsewhere for inspiration, or at least he thinks he does.

The End of Grant's Hegelianism?

“my mind has changed. In the practical realm, I am much less optimistic...”

In contrast to O'Donovan interpretation of Grant's transition, H.D. Forbes depicts Strauss as a bearer of gifts rather than a destroyer of dreams. “Strauss evidently provided something close to what Grant was seeking ... Strauss succeeded in restoring the respectability of the ancients for hard headed modern thinkers. He did not patronize them as children of their times, after the fashion of easygoing historians, but instead he defended a tough interpretation of their teaching.”²⁴⁶

Both Forbes and O'Donovan illuminate important aspects of Strauss' influence. However, they are also among those who overstate the degree to which this marked the end of Hegel's influence on Grant. They both maintain that this silenced Grant's Hegelian voice. Undoubtedly there is some sort of break from Hegel, but what does Grant discard and what does he keep? Grant asserts that what had appealed to him most about Hegel's progressive philosophy of

245 It is evidently a matter of choice because Grant makes no effort to engage Hegel's work directly in light of this line of argument. If he had, things may have been different. Instead he chose to defer to the “authority.” He asserts outright that he does not wish to delve into the finer points of Hegel's metaphysics, so chooses instead to see how an Hegelian fares against the classical thinkers, represented by Strauss, on being able to identify the character of a modern tyranny. “Tyranny and Wisdom,” *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1969), 86.

246 H.D. Forbes, “George Grant and Leo Strauss,” in Arthur Davis, ed., *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 1996), 178.

history was the synthesis of the competing, seemingly contradictory strains of our intellectual tradition, as well as reason and faith:

At the theoretical level, I had considered Hegel the greatest of all philosophers. He had partaken of all that was true and beautiful and good in the Greek world and was able to synthesize it with Christianity and with the freedom the enlightenment and modern science. It cannot be insisted too often how hard it is for anyone who believes the Western Christian doctrine of providence to avoid reaching the conclusion that Hegel has understood the implications of that doctrine better than any other thinker.²⁴⁷

Although Grant loses confidence in the notion of historical progress, he does not abandon Hegel's general interpretation of history and approach to the philosophy of history; nor does he abandon the Hegelian notion of freedom, or Hegel's depiction of the synthesis of three main ideologies. Grant rejects only what Eric Voegelin would call the "gnostic" quality of Hegel's thought, that is, the achievement of perfect actual knowledge as legitimized by a claim to having knowledge of the nature of the absolute.²⁴⁸ This does not make Grant less Hegelian. Indeed, it brings him closer to recent scholarship that interprets Hegel's work as less mystical than has previously been thought.²⁴⁹

Recognition, the divine, and the homogeneous and universal state

Before addressing the slightly more complex question of the philosophy of history, it must first be clarified that Kojève's interpretation of Hegel is incorrect on three counts. Hegel never advocated displacing the particularities of smaller communities in favour of a

²⁴⁷ Grant, *Philosophy*, 120.

²⁴⁸ Eric Voegelin, *Science Politics and Gnosticism* (Washington, DC: Regency Gateway, Inc., 1968), 11.

²⁴⁹ See for instance, G.H.R. Parkinson, "Hegel's Concept of Freedom," in Michael Inwood (ed.), *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), Robert Pippin "Hegel, Freedom, The Will," in Ludwig Siep (ed.), *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Recht* (akademie Verlag, 1997), and Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (University of California Press, 1997).

homogeneous and universal state, but rather quite the opposite. Hegel's *Geist* is not immanent and entirely subject to human will. And his theory of recognition in its mature form is not the asymmetrical recognition of the master-slave dialectic; it is the recognition that occurs between equals.

Grant had initially hoped that the new age of freedom and equality would bridge the divide between the cultures of the world, drawing on their strengths and discarding their weaknesses. Through Strauss he came to realize that this universalized positive liberty through philosophy asked too much of humanity and any attempt to iron out all ideological differences would be to iron out philosophy, and thus freedom, altogether. And yet this dream of a universal state can hardly be attributed to Hegel. Grant argues that we come to loving the good through loving our own – our own bodies, our family, our friends, our part of the world, our country - and that while loving our own may consist of prejudices and narrow mindedness, it is a necessary stage in the development from narcissistic self-love to love of humanity as a whole.²⁵⁰ For this reason he laments the passing of Canadian nationalism and considers it to be a sad loss on a practical level, though in terms of the greater movements of the world it may serve a greater good that is not immediately apparent.²⁵¹ This notion that we come to our awareness of a higher unity, one that has moral claims on us, through the love of the particular is precisely the development that Hegel discusses in his *Philosophy of Right*. Love of one's family is the first stage in our development toward the higher unity that is found in the state. The family is what enables the *Sittlichkeit* by making us aware of our connection to others beyond our own interests:

250 "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," 73.

251 *Lament*, 97.

The family, as the immediate substantiality of spirit, has as its determination the spirit's feeling of its own unity, which is love. Thus, the disposition appropriate to the family is to have self-consciousness of one's individuality within this unity as essentiality which has being in and for itself, so that one is present in it not as an independent person but as a member.²⁵²

And it is also clear from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* that the higher unity experienced by human beings does not exceed the level of the state in terms of actuality, that is, concept and concrete brought together in social structures. While we might feel concern for the well-being of those beyond our own borders, states might have agreements and adhere to international law, people may be aware of Geist, the universal world spirit that is represented in art, religion and philosophy, the particular state remains essential. The particular will of the people finds its highest articulation in the constitution of a state. There can be contracts between those wills, but a state never submits its own welfare to that of others.²⁵³ "The nation state is the spirit in its substantial rationality and immediate actuality, and is therefore the absolute power on earth; each state is consequently a sovereign and independent entity in relation to others."²⁵⁴

We need to actualize our freedom through action and recognition, and we therefore require a social context in which we can do this. The social context thus becomes integral to our identity and our freedom, thus our individual freedom and interests are bound up with a universal. But this interplay between the individual freedom and the interests of the universal cannot exceed the level of the state: "The principle of modern states has enormous strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to attain fulfillment in the self-sufficient

252 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Section 158.

253 Ibid., sections 330-340.

254 Ibid., subsection 331.

extreme of personal particularity, while at the same time bringing it back to substantial unity and so preserving this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.”²⁵⁵

Clearly Hegel is not an advocate of the homogeneous and universal state. The larger unity of Geist relies on the particularities of sovereign states. It is through these states that the universal spirit achieves actuality and works through its ideational and ethical development. Hegel opposed Kant’s idea of perpetual peace, arguing instead that because sovereignty ends with the nation state, the state must be the final arbiter when agreements fail. Peace, according to Hegel, is the great deadener. Only in negating other do we become fully alive to our state’s ethical life.²⁵⁶

A significant element of Grant’s refutation rested on Kojève’s assertion that he was an atheist. The issue at hand was that if there is no source of law beyond humanity, if Geist is immanent rather than transcendent, then there can be no morality at all. But as we have established above, Geist is neither the usurper of free will nor subject to our arbitrary will; it is the collective consciousness of human beings and it is harmonized by the logic that governs the universe. Grant’s argument centred on the importance of acknowledging that there is a natural law that we must discern and follow, and he criticized modern thinkers for losing sight of this. He also had trouble determining how this could be reconciled with individual freedom and left us with the puzzle. Hegel’s *Geist* offers a response to his challenge. Natural law can be found in *Geist* in the form of logic and reason, though it also supports the exercise of free will because it is a consciousness that we contribute to.

255 Ibid., subsection 260.

256 Ibid., subsection 224.

Finally, on the question of asymmetrical recognition, Kojève seems to miss the *reciprocal* element of Hegel's theory of reciprocal recognition.²⁵⁷ Kojève rejected the idea of social unity through the intersubjectivity of the state. This struck him as fanciful dreaming. Instead he viewed the state as something external and instrumental to the individual.²⁵⁸ Freedom for Kojève is purely negation of other. In effect, Kojève discards one of the main tenets of Hegel's political and ethical philosophy. For, as has been explained above, if freedom is to attain actuality in the form of right, it must be recognized and acknowledged by others. This is the very heart of his argument for a social unity of equals. Whether or not one believes it is feasible, it is certain that Kojève misrepresents Hegel and, therefore, Grant's reasons for rejecting Hegel are invalid. His assertion, following Strauss, that Hegel's theory of recognition is Hobbesian in so far as it replaces the aspiration for virtue with a base desire for recognition is equally false.²⁵⁹

Recognition is not the basis for a social contract; it is the principle that transforms abstract subjectivity into the actuality of the ethical life. The difference is that this is not a coming together of arbitrary wills who are free to defy any moral law so long as enough of them agree to it. Morality and the ethical life are drawn from the rationality of the idea that has substance in the state.²⁶⁰ This is another way of appealing to tradition, as the institutional structure of the state is the consequence of a historical development, and for Hegel this tradition is the marching through time of Geist. In short, it is quite similar to the tradition and religion Grant would have us look to for guidance when determining our proper means and ends.

257 "Tyranny and Wisdom," 93.

258 Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 367-8.

Grant's commitment to this idea in a slightly different form is evident in PMA, "There can be no perfected freedom in a world where others have not found it. What kind of heaven can be enjoyed while others are in hell?" PMA, 58.

259 "Tyranny and Wisdom," 104-5.

260 *Philosophy of Right*, section 258.

We might note here also that one of Grant's central concerns is that without faith in a transcendent authority the core liberal principle of equality will not be able to hold up to the pressures of utilitarian arguments to sacrifice the interests of the few for the benefit of the many.²⁶¹ Meanwhile he is also aware of the ways Protestant theology devoid of philosophy can serve virtually any master. His yearning for a synthesis of faith and reason is based in the conviction that faith, for all its deference to a higher power, may not come to the right conclusions about moral law. His final appeal is to a particular tradition reflected upon in light of reason, and socially progressive steps made in with a commitment to the good rather than the meaninglessness of progress for its own sake. How is this different from Hegel's political philosophy? One might suggest that Grant's Christian Platonism inspires in him a greater reverence for "the good." However, what distinguishes Hegel on "the good" is that he gives it a face – it is the good will that was first described by Kant and fleshed out by Hegel who seeks to make it more intersubjective, and less abstract and contractual. This Kantian notion of the good will is raised favourably by Grant in PMA and much later in *English-Speaking Justice* to challenge contractual liberalism.²⁶² Therefore it seems Grant can at times sound rather Platonic when lamenting modernity's lost reverence for the good, but when he attempts to explain what he means by this he quickly drops classical Greek philosophy in favour of classical German idealism.

It is perhaps worthwhile to point out one glaring weakness in Grant's central defence of Christianity. Grant often states that without God, or some transcendent source of limit on human action, there is no reason to uphold the liberal principles of freedom and equality. But it is not at

261 *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, 72-3, 85. *Time as History*, 43.

262 *English-Speaking Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1985), 26-29.

all obvious, taking a quick glance at our history, that Christianity or any other religious faith has been especially effective bulwark against the trampling of human rights. How many creative ways has the West skirted the principle that we are all equal before the Lord to maintain a hierarchy, and even slavery?

Hegelian Elements that Remained: Drawing a Blind on Enlightenment

Agreeing with Strauss did not entail a radical conversion for Grant because they had shared very similar perspectives prior to Grant's introduction to Strauss' thought. They both belonged to a school of modern philosophers who have reacted against the social science of the Enlightenment, among whom were the German idealists, including J.G. Fichte. We can hear the same passionate condemnations of the impact of technology on community in Fichte's "First Address to the German Nation":

The enlightenment of understanding, with its purely material calculations, was the force which destroyed the connection established by religion between some future life and the present, and which at the same time conceived that such substitutes and supplements of the moral sense as love of fame and national honour were but illusory phantoms.²⁶³

Strauss' Philosophy of History Only Differs from Hegel's in its Pessimism about Freedom

The conservative reaction to the Enlightenment's instrumental rationalism is as old as the Enlightenment itself, and the idealists produced the most influential and definitive response to this conflict by bringing together the organic view of the Romantics, with its egalitarian

263 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed., George Armstrong Kelly (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 9.

traditionalism, and the analytic approach of the Enlightenment. Grant and Strauss are two conservatives who draw from this philosophical pool to develop their critical stance toward modernity, unaware that this stance amounts to another strain of thought that is peculiar to modernity. Their very criticism is itself a modern position, and it is one that finds its fullest articulation in Hegel's work.

When Strauss pits the ancients against the moderns he is in fact drawing upon Hegel's philosophy of history.²⁶⁴ Like Hegel, Strauss interprets history as a progression of stages in which the Occident advanced (though it did not improve) as a result of the ideas proposed by philosophers. He shares Hegel's belief that societies are closed systems of meaning and that philosophical reflection, in part by studying the history of ideas, is required to free oneself from these systems. Finally, while Strauss does not accept the Hegelian idea of the universalization of philosophic knowledge, he does believe modernity provides the greatest liberty for many philosophers to attain wisdom.²⁶⁵ Wayne Whillier highlights this point well when he states that despite Strauss' role as critic of modern liberalism, he also celebrates it for providing the only sanctuary from which he may examine the foundations of the liberal society. Whillier borrows one of Strauss' own phrases in suggesting that Strauss "may adhere in his thoughts to a religion to which he does not adhere in his speeches."²⁶⁶

264 This has been noted by Planinc, but in a terribly convoluted manner that concludes with depicting Grant as defined by his confusion. Grant is characterized by his polyphony of influences, and the unity of his analysis is due to his *daimon* ("Paradox," 28) Planinc credits Hegel with providing Grant with his philosophy of history, even after reading Strauss ("Paradox", 32).

265 Ibid., 32.

266 Quoted in Whillier, "Two Theological Languages," 80. Although it strays somewhat from the topic of this essay, an interesting line of inquiry might be to ask whether there is not an Hegelian synthesis of modernity and the ancients for Strauss as well? He seeks to retrieve the lessons of the ancients while recognizing that we can never completely liberate ourselves from the influence of the historical events separating us from the ancients.

Thus it would seem that Grant's supposed mentor of anti-Hegelianism is himself committed to Hegel's philosophy of history. Certainly Grant does not relinquish the philosophy of history, the criticism of atomistic conceptions of freedom, the role of philosophic thought in history, and the philosophy of history as the route to liberation from the closed (and corrupt) system of modern society. All these are present throughout Grant's subsequent writings. Moreover, despite his lost high optimism regarding the realization of a new age of universal freedom, he does continue to believe modernity can resolve its contradictions. He believes that while Nietzsche was correct about modernity, he was wrong about there not being a good.²⁶⁷ He also has confidence in fate. Fate is the idea that there is an order larger than and beyond the control of humanity that guides our lives without denying our free will.²⁶⁸ Fate replaces his attachment to progress. Thus goodness, fate and his continued certainty that philosophy is a liberating force, combine to mean that modernity might still bring us to new heights, only now he is far less certain than he had been in PMA.²⁶⁹ It now begins to seem unlikely that Strauss' influence marks the end of Grant's Hegelianism.

Strauss' Actual Purpose: To Get Back to Ancient Greece

In so far as Grant has some lingering belief that Western history has brought new truths to light and there is hope for modernity, Grant's philosophy of history is in this more Hegelian than Strauss. The difference is a matter of faith. Strauss' opposition to more extreme forms of historicism might be better understood as an effort to construct a springboard with which to jump clear of modernity, and back to the pristine pastures of classical thought where it was understood

267 Grant bases this assertion on the sentiments of a dying friend. *Time as History*, 65.

268 "Canadian Fate and Imperialism," *Technology and Empire*, 63.

269 *Time as History*, 69.

that reason and faith were eternally at odds. It is an effort to discredit the work of philosophers such as Grant who seek a synthetic solution to the theological-political problem. By revealing the weaknesses of historicism using his non-historical history of historicism, he justifies his attempt at an unfettered return to ancient Greece.

After his exposure to Strauss, Grant too can be (and should be) understood as being an idealist philosopher of history without the immanentization of God. However, while Grant criticizes extreme forms of historicism, he does not wish to discredit synthesis. Instead, he aims to preserve an important aspect of the synthesis, faith in the transcendent. Grant, Strauss and Kojève all agree that history brought us to our current technological society which will engender a universal homogeneous state, but Strauss contends that rather than bearing universal wisdom, it brings universal tyranny.²⁷⁰ Grant shares Strauss' concern, but he also believes that Kojève is correct to understand the Christian conceptions of free will and universal equality as contributing to the solution to the modern dilemma, and not something for philosophers to ignore as they try to get back to the pure philosophy of ancient Greece. According to Planinc, Strauss contends that, "traditions are not the embodiments of truth; they are closed systems of opinion from which philosophers escape in pursuit of truth."²⁷¹ Clearly he and Grant are at odds on this point.

For Strauss, the problematic nature of historicism exemplified the impossibility of synthesis. It represents one of the many modern ailments that try to prove that synthesis is the

270 That said, Strauss agrees that modernity has till now allowed for the greatest dissemination of learning to the truly wise than any other epoch, only he would have these exceptional minds capable of benefiting from this communicate to each other in an esoteric way in order to avoid persecution by the emerging tyranny or the abuse of their knowledge by the unwise.

271 Planinc, "Paradox," 33.

only solution to the theological-political problem. Strauss argues that it is fundamentally impossible to merge religion with the philosophy of the ancients, Jerusalem with Athens:

We see at once that each of the two claims to be true wisdom, thus denying to the other its claim to be wisdom in the strict and highest sense. According to the Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord; according to the Greek philosophers, the beginning of wisdom is wonder. We are thus compelled from the very beginning to make a choice, to take a stand.²⁷²

Grant never hesitated to admit to the importance of faith, nor did he attempt to develop an airtight logical system to support his position.²⁷³ Grant was a philosopher who had himself experienced what he believed was a revelation. Therefore, accepting Strauss' position would mean a radical exorcism of a profound aspect of his identity. It is from this perspective that he began to look at Strauss' philosophy as an indirect attack on Christianity:

I find it impossible to know whether he thinks there is in the Bible an authority of revelation which has a claim over the philosopher as much as over other men. Nor can I tell, on the other hand, whether he thinks that such an assumption of authority must be for obvious reasons inimical to the claims of philosophy. Indeed there are in his writings occasional passages where he shows contempt for certain forms of Biblical religion.²⁷⁴

Why Grant finds it "impossible" to know that Strauss does indeed advocate complete separation of philosophy and religious authority is difficult to determine, as it is a point on which Strauss seems very clear.²⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the above passage does reveal Grant's concern that Strauss might have "contempt" for Christianity.

272 Quoted in Kenneth L. Deutsch and Walter Nicgorski, *Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994), 10.

273 Grant, *Philosophy*, 93.

274 Grant, *Technology*, 108.

275 Grant might be taking into account Strauss' qualifier that people cannot break entirely from their religious identity,[See Leo Strauss, "Why we Remain Jews: Can Jewish Faith and History Still Speak to Us?" in Kenneth L,

For Strauss, Religion and Philosophy are at Odds: God is not to be belittled by philosophical analysis: The Exclusivity of Truth

In agreement with Hegel and Grant,²⁷⁶ Strauss states that the attempt to achieve a synthesis began with Augustinian and Thomist medieval theology,²⁷⁷ and this movement enabled the subversion of the transcendent notion of God, which in turn led to contemporary positivism. Unlike Hegel and Grant, however, Strauss thought that there was no redeeming feature to this attempt at synthesis; it only teaches us what not to do. It did not bring reason and faith together, but rather transformed philosophy from being “the right way of life” to “just a very important compartment.”²⁷⁸ This has two negative effects according to Strauss. First, strict laws of doctrine are permitted to limit the pursuit of truth. Second, the classical idea that only a select few are fit for philosophy is challenged by the Christian principle of universal equality. In Strauss’ words, it puts philosophy “in the service of the many rather than merely the capable.”²⁷⁹

The implications of the first point are clear. With philosophy as the servant of the Church, philosophers are obliged to accept doctrine about the fundamental questions they are meant to be investigating. Because Biblical law is based on revelation and the authority of God, it cannot be doubted by anyone committed to Christian faith. This conflict explains in part why

Deutsch, and Walter Nicgorski, *Leo Strauss: Political Philosopher and Jewish Thinker* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1994)] in which case Grant is correct to wonder. Despite Strauss’ clearly asserted position that there is an “irresolvable antagonism” between philosophy and revelation, he does seem to suggest a third way of being other than a Christian synthesis. He presents this as someone who practices philosophy, lives according to Jewish law, and does not believe in revelation (Deutsch and Nicgorski, *Leo Strauss*, 14). This is an extremely obscure area of his thought and beyond the scope of this essay.

276 Grant, *Philosophy*, 43. Taylor, *Hegel*, 397.

277 This interpretation of history was first developed by the German idealists.

278 Leo Strauss, “The Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy”, *Independent Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 3 (1979), p.113.

279 Wayne Whillier, “George Grant and Leo Strauss: A Parting of the Way”, in Wayne Whillier, ed., *Two Theological Languages by George Grant and Other Essays in Honour of His Work* (Lewiston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 74.

Strauss considers philosophy and theology to stand in necessary and permanent opposition. “The philosophers transcend the dimension of divine codes altogether, the whole dimension of piety and pious obedience to a pre-given doctrine. Instead they embark on free quest for the beginnings, for the first things, for the principles.”²⁸⁰ In contrast, theology relies on faith in an omnipotent God who is the cause of all things because, for theology, everything that is not made intelligible in nature belongs in the domain of a mysterious God. According to Strauss, this conflict must not be resolved through the mastery of one over the other. They can and must coexist in opposition. He explains that they are unable to work together because both ultimately rely on sheer will. Religion cannot refute philosophy because any refutation would be based on a faith in revelation. In contrast, philosophy cannot refute religion because revelation is by definition beyond rational contemplation. Therefore the philosopher’s choice to doubt is based on an act of will. Strauss states:

Philosophy and the Bible are the alternatives or the antagonists in the drama of the human soul. Each of the two antagonists claims to know or to hold the truth, the decisive truth, the truth regarding the right way of life. But there can be only one truth: hence, conflict between these claims and necessarily conflict [sic] among thinking beings; and that means inevitably argument.²⁸¹

Grant’s Christian Principle of Equality Rejects the Elite of the Wise

Grant’s Christian faith compels him to oppose Strauss’ elitist view of philosophy - the Christian principles of love, compassion, and communication can not accommodate the exclusion of others from the rational inquiry into the good. Nor can Grant’s faith permit him to distinguish between philosophy and the moral authority of religion. Are philosophers not morally

280 Strauss, “Mutual”, 111-2.

281 Leo Strauss, “Mutual,” 114, his italics.

responsible? Was Christianity simply a philosophical proposition? For Grant, to speak of the existence of a limit on the human will, such as natural law, is to speak of God:

But the idea of limit is unavoidably the idea of God. If we say there is something that should never be done under any circumstances, we have said that something is absolutely wrong. We have said that the history-making spirit has come upon that which it has no right to manipulate. The standard we have come upon is a reality we must accept, not a value we create. God is that which we cannot manipulate. He is the limit of our right to change the world.²⁸²

Freedom and Philosophy are for the Chosen

Explaining Strauss' reaction to this form of argument brings us to his second criticism of synthesis. He agrees with Grant that reason without God is dangerous, but for him this only confirms his argument that only the wise are suited for philosophy. Philosophy is for those who can bear the tension of always knowing that they know nothing. These few will not lose all sense of morality, but rather their awareness of their ignorance will make them conservatives who, in their statements, support not only the laws of the state, but religion as well. They do not advocate unharnessed freedom: "The classics understood the moral-political phenomenon in light of man's highest virtue or perfection, the life of the philosopher or contemplative life²⁸³ ... The transition or jump from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom will be an inglorious death of the very possibility of human excellence."²⁸⁴

Strauss maintains that the general citizen is better served by religion because philosophy is by nature subversive and is dangerous if it is made the tool of the majority. "Philosophy seeks to replace opinions by knowledge, whereas the citizen seeks to preserve the opinions of the city.

282 Grant, *Philosophy*, 73.

283 Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1972), 295.

284 *Ibid.*, 298.

The philosopher is motivated by a desire for truth; the citizen is motivated, in the highest instance, by the love of honor.”²⁸⁵ For Strauss, this is the lesson of Socrates’s execution. Philosophy is necessarily in conflict with the stability of the state, because it by nature must question law. Thus, true philosophers learn to separate their actual thoughts from those they make public by exoterically supporting the dominant beliefs of society, while discussing the fundamental questions esoterically.²⁸⁶ According to Strauss, medieval theologians were inadvertently subverting religion when they universalized the right to question fundamental principles. Strauss claims that medieval theology paved the way for what has become the liberal notion of individual freedom, a freedom without God or the limit of natural law.²⁸⁷

Now the general public has philosophy without religion, but it is a positivistic corruption of philosophy. In short, where there is a synthesis of faith and reason, neither religion nor philosophy can survive.

Christian Love Teaches that None are to be Excluded

As a Christian and a Hegelian, Grant is unable to discard the role of Christianity in the development of the human consciousness. He believes that the advantages of its contributions to our knowledge of freedom are immeasurable. One of the most important lessons it teaches is that faith is “the experience that the intellect is illuminated by love.”²⁸⁸ Christianity teaches the love

285 Stanley Rosen, “Leo Strauss and the Quarrel Between the Ancients and the Moderns,” in Alan Udoff, ed., *Leo Strauss’s Thought: Toward a Critical Engagement* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1991), 163.

286 I.G. Weeks, “Two Uses of Secrecy: Leo Strauss and George Grant,” in Whillier, 87.

287 According to Dury, Strauss restrains his discussion of the role of Christianity in the modern crisis because it remains the most viable religion at the disposal of Western civilization. *Ibid.*, 56.

288 Quoted in Whillier, “Two Theological Languages,” 70.

of God and, through God, the love of man.²⁸⁹ This idea binds love and contemplation, so that understanding of other cannot be thought separately from love of other. The thing or person known must not be perceived as mere object or means, but must be regarded in the light of love that is made possible through faith. This Christian teaching presents a conception of the individual that is distinct from that offered by classical philosophy. As Whillier explains, “Christianity affirms both the individual and the communal because it demands a commitment of the individual before God, although individuality is defined within the broad context of the historical and metaphysical Church; that is, in the social context.”²⁹⁰ This unity of individuality and duty stems from the Christian conception of autonomy based on equality and free will, combined with the accountability that is demanded in the political reality of a community of believers.²⁹¹

Grant’s attachment to these ideas keeps him closer to Hegel’s conception of history than Strauss. The Christian formulation of the notion of love is an essential feature of Hegel’s moral and political philosophy. William Christian argues that regarding moral philosophy, Kant was more important to Grant than Hegel. But it would seem more likely that Grant was following Hegel when merging Christian love and Kantian morality. As Alice Ormiston explains of Hegel’s notion of Christian love:

It humanizes the morality of Kant, without compromising the moral seriousness of his project, the seriousness of what he expected from us as rational being. The moral law is fulfilled, not out of mere obedience, but willingly, with one’s whole being. This, says Hegel, is the most genuine “fulfilment” of the moral law. The

289 Ibid., 72.

290 Ibid., 71.

291 Ibid., 73.

rational content of law is no longer set over against being. Rather it now exists as the real harmony of reason and being that love represents.²⁹²

His Christianity also necessitates his continued agreement with Hegel's interpretation of the modern dilemma and the need for synthesis. In contrast, Strauss can free himself from the difficult task of synthesis by denying the validity of one of its main premises, Christianity. Strauss is at liberty to accept eternal opposition of reason and faith, whereas Grant is stuck seeking a way to reconcile a history that has brought both greatness and horror. This may go some way in explaining the pessimism that is often attributed to Grant's work. To this extent, perhaps it is fair to draw a parallel between Grant and Thomas Altizer's assessment of Eric Voegelin:

There is a violence in Voegelin's opposition to modernity that is absent in Strauss, and absent not only because of Strauss' realism but also perhaps because Strauss never made the absolute commitment to history that is so manifest in Voegelin, a commitment that can neither tolerate nor understand any kind of opacity to revelation.²⁹³

Grant is committed to history because he cannot ignore Christianity's lessons of equality and thought illuminated by love. He is bound to the dream of universal freedom. And yet, as a consequence of Strauss' insights about historicism, he no longer has any reason to believe this dream will be realized. It is Strauss' influence that turned Grant's story of Canada from a comedy to a tragedy. He begins by announcing its great potential to lead the world to the ultimate synthesis of the world's empires and ideologies, and he concludes with a lament that

292 Alice Ormiston, "Hegel on Love," presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Ottawa 1998, 28.

293 Altizer, "Theological", 273.

Canada has been subsumed by one of those empires, and stuck with a one sided notion of freedom and a truncated conception of the human soul.²⁹⁴

Conclusion

While Grant's many commentators are correct to emphasize the importance of Christianity for Grant, I contend that in its ideological form as opposed to its experiential form, his Christianity is strongly informed by Hegelian idealism. Those who claim that his Hegelianism is merely a passing phase are missing a crucial dimension of Grant's thought. He is indeed a Christian Platonist, but a Christian Platonist who understands that identity in Hegelian terms. Hegel's work provided Grant with a system in which he could conceive Christianity and Platonism together both historically and philosophically. It is true that his introduction to Strauss had a radical impact on his thought. It led him to reject the immanentizing element of Hegel's thought, and he lost hope that modernity would achieve the desired synthesis. However, this did not put an end to the Hegelian idealism that defined his thought throughout his life. While he only explicitly admitted to wearing a Hegelian hat, so to speak, when he renounced the deterministic element of PMA, he never removed it or exchanged it for another. He merely qualified it, with a reaffirmation of his faith in God as a transcendent being. After his introduction to Strauss' thought, he continued to make Hegelian criticisms of modernity without further acknowledgement to the master, as though Hegelianism is a truth that cannot be attributed to one philosopher, or philosophic school, but belongs to everyone and is eternal.

294 See George Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1965).

Chapter Seven: Charles Taylor Promotes Hegelian Solution to Modern Malaise

Introduction

Those familiar with Charles Taylor's work will not be surprised to find that he was influenced by Hegel. Taylor's highly regarded tome *Hegel* and his subsequent application of Hegel's insights to current issues in *Hegel and Modern Society* put him on the map as a world class philosopher. In the preface to *Hegel and Modern Society* he states Hegel's importance outright:

I try, in other words, not just to expound Hegel, but also to show how he still provides the terms in which we reflect on some contemporary problems. Perhaps I should state this aim more modestly, and say I wanted to show how Hegel has helped shape the terms in which I think. But such modesty, although seemingly, would be insincere. In fact I believe that Hegel has contributed to the formation of concepts and modes of thought which are indispensable if we are to see our way clear through certain modern problems and dilemmas.¹

Taylor is thus a step beyond being merely influenced by Hegel, he is an advocate of studying Hegel in order to understand the dilemmas we face and bringing us closer to the solutions. He retains throughout his career the same sort of enthusiasm for Hegel that flashed up only once in Grant's work with *Philosophy in the Mass Age* and was never present in Macpherson's writings, so our treatment of Taylor will be somewhat different. Clearly it is not necessary to argue that Hegel's philosophy is pivotal to his work. Instead our task is to set out what exactly the influence was. That is, which distinctively Hegelian ideas did he adopt, and how have these ideas informed his conclusions about contemporary political issues? To answer these questions, we examine his conception of liberty, its philosophical justification, and his position

¹ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), xi.

on the multiculturalism debate. In keeping with the established format, this first chapter will provide an intellectual biography, though not, in this case, to establish feasibility of the Hegelian influence, but to establish that the influence was not haphazard, but rather was a consequence of his early exposure to the teachings and tradition of Canadian idealism. This supports my claim that Taylor and, by extension, those of his students who follow him are part of the same intellectual tradition that guided Macpherson and Grant. The biography is then followed by Taylor's defense of Hegel's positive liberty against Isaiah Berlin's argument in "Two Concepts of Liberty." We will then look at the three pillars of Taylor's Hegelianism: his retrieval of Rousseau's general will, Kant's radical autonomy, and Herder's Romantic expressionism.

Biography

Charles Taylor, like George Grant, graduated from a leading Canadian university, McGill instead of Queen's, with a BA in history, and then went to Balliol College, Oxford with a Rhodes scholarship to study philosophy, staying on there to complete a doctorate. Taylor's sojourn at Balliol was not interrupted by WWII; however, he was highly engaged in the issues of the Cold War. He was a founder and the first president of the very influential Oxford University Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and spent six months in Vienna aiding refugees from the Soviet occupation of Hungary. He returned to his native Montreal as a lecturer in politics and philosophy at McGill and at the Université de Montréal. He joined the fight to preserve a united Canada, but where Grant was primarily concerned with British Canada, Taylor was a twelfth-generation Quebecker with a French-speaking mother and English-speaking father. So it is fitting that Taylor's focus was on healing the widening rift between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Through the 1960s Taylor was busy both writing academic articles in philosophy and politics and working as an editor and correspondent for independent journals. He was active in the newly formed New Democratic Party as a candidate in four federal elections in the riding of Mont Royal, developing the party's platform on constitutional issues, and eventually serving as vice-president of the party in Quebec. It is interesting and not unimportant to note that in his 1963 run for parliament, Taylor had the support of his friend Pierre Trudeau, who two years later ran against Taylor, and won as a candidate for the Liberal party. Trudeau beat Taylor again in 1968, this time as the party's leader. This was a fateful crossroads as Trudeau's conception of liberty, equality and the constitutional accommodation of Quebec was radically at odds with Taylor's. So with Trudeau going to the hill to put his vision in practice, Taylor turned away from party politics to give his vision a voice in political theory.

The 1968 federal election was a crippling defeat for the NDP and led to Tommy Douglas's resignation as party leader in 1971. Taylor declined overtures to run for the leadership of the federal party, withdrew from party politics, and concentrated his efforts on teaching full time at McGill and writing his six hundred page tome on Hegel, that was published in 1975. He gained great acclaim for this extensive study and was given the prestigious Chichele chair of social and political theory at Oxford where he stayed until 1979, when he felt compelled to return to Quebec and engage in the debates around the referendum campaign. His reputation and profile continues to grow from his prolific publications that built upon his exploration of themes set out in *Hegel*. He also applies these themes to various specific issues both in public forums and in the esoteric realm of philosophy.

Project of Synthesis: The Modern Malaise

Hegel's influence is first evident in how Taylor frames the principal dilemmas he confronts. His work can be read as an updated version of Hegel's critique of both the Enlightenment's atomism, or possessive individualism, and Romanticism's excessive enmity for reason. The solution is to iron out the contradictions and pull together what is worthwhile in each.

There is a pervasive discontent with the fundamental direction our society seems to be taking us. While many are satisfied to be over entertained and under informed, plodding through the maze of malls, freeways, and cubicles, there are those, especially among the young on the threshold of choosing their own life path and looking out at the options the world presents, who despair at the meaninglessness and struggle to find the will to participate. Those who question the validity of the modern project do so from a variety of perspectives: religious conservatism, environmentalism, New Age spirituality, and those who are simply paralyzed by anomy. Some say we live in a period of moral decline, that liberalism is just a word for moral permissiveness, and capitalism provides us with a license to put selfish greed above some higher purpose. Whether they are the evangelical Christian right or the ecological New Age left or any of the variations in between, there is a concern that technology and commercial efficiency have replaced a notion of a moral source greater than our selves. Charles Taylor is sympathetic to this line of thinking, and puts stock in the critique from the perspective of moral philosophy, traditional religion, Romantic holism, and environmentalism. He shares the distaste for extreme forms of individualism, capitalism and the reduction of morality to "values;" however, while Taylor is sympathetic, he does not condemn modernity *tout court* or wish to undo the changes

that have brought us here. He aims to protect the progress made in our conception of human freedom against the despair that characterized the later work of George Grant, while retrieving the moral foundations being eroded by distortions of the modern project. He sees that there are aspects of the modern identity that enhance our freedom, and while they may have dreadful consequences in isolation, when they are conducted in harmony within the larger narrative of Western thought² they contribute greatly to our self-understanding and the moral richness of our lives. He contends that freedom, fully understood, must incorporate these lessons.

Like Hegel, Macpherson, and Grant, Taylor is engaged in a project of retrieval. He seeks to refine our conception of human liberty by showing how both who condemn modernity's moral decline, the "knockers", and who praise the progress brought on by modern science and social justice and dismiss morality as superstition that hinders the progress of human reason, the "boosters", both add critical ingredients to the historical stew.³ By combining these positions with earlier ideas that have been largely forgotten, he hopes to revitalize our concept of freedom and put some flesh on the bones of the predominant forms of liberalism. For Taylor, studying the history of ideas and tracing the origins of current debates, helps us to determine those principles we may readily discard, those we should retain or restore. Grant had held this view until Strauss drained him of his hope that the hand of God is directing history. Taylor was not so easily shaken because he never accepted the activist link between Geist and history that Grant had committed to, so neither his hope nor, indeed, his Christian faith are affected by the most familiar arguments: a) the savagery of the wars in twentieth century and the dominance of the capitalist

2 Taylor is primarily concerned with Western history because he looks at history as the progression that has formed our current ideas, not because he doubts the worth of other philosophical or theological traditions.

3 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1991), 11.

elite is evidence that progress is an illusion, or b) that if God directs history then there is no space for free will. We will return to this in the discussion of Taylor's critique of Hegel.

His celebrated *Sources of the Self*, that is in many ways the culmination of all of his previous work, is a historical analysis of the modern identity. He defines identity as, "the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose."⁴ According to Taylor, the modern identity has lost a framework for contemplating and evaluating moral questions about the good. It has been severed from morality. He argues that this is the consequence of a misguided effort to apply the epistemology of the natural sciences, with its proven track record in the fields of technology and natural science, to every aspect of human experience.⁵ One familiar contemporary example might be the realist school of international relations, where moral matters, such as the desire to help others, are reduced to empirically quantifiable criteria constructed around the principle that survival is preeminent. This sort of thinking has been used to argue in favour of America's global dominance and against multilateral global cooperation.⁶ In domestic policy it feeds the neo-liberal agenda of giving the competitive culture of the market place priority over the government's role of upholding the interests of the common good: environmental protection, minimum wage, universal health care, education, and so on.

4 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 27.

5 *Ibid.*, 5.

6 See the writings of former White House foreign policy advisor Robert Kagan, including his essay "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review* 113 (2004). Kagan reduces global politics to a survivalist power struggle where questions of morality or justice are irrelevant except as ploys to usurp power when one lacks the means to coerce.

In keeping with Hegel's idealist synthesis of the concept and the concrete, Taylor refutes this truncated view of morality by reintroducing the importance of our concept of things. He begins by identifying a moral principle widely accepted in the modern age, namely, the obligation to respect others. He uses this principle as a lever to pry open the modern imagination just enough to introduce the appreciation that there is more to morality than instinct. He adds that respect entails permitting people to pursue their idea of a fulfilling life. This begs the question, what makes life fulfilling? The moment we accept that this is a valid question, we have stepped out of the realm of natural science, we have emerged from Plato's allegorical cave, and we are now in a position to begin the search for a form of reason that can reflect upon the nature of a fulfilling life.

He asks, if respect is our starting point, how is our contemporary demand for respect distinct from its previous forms? Taylor argues that in exchange for the virtue and nobility of the few, the Enlightenment taught us to esteem the more attainable climes of the ordinary life. As an example, Taylor explains that "someone in a warrior society might ask whether his tale of courageous deeds lives up to the promise of his lineage and the demands of his station."⁷ In contrast, moderns typically do not have a moral framework from which they can evaluate the meaning of their lives. Instead, according to Taylor, we are left with affirming the significance of the "ordinary life." We have rejected hierarchical conceptions of the good that are based on unverifiable beliefs that favour either an aristocracy or a clergy. Virtue now lies in the quotidian tasks of the pragmatic homemaker. Right behaviour is no longer the exclusive domain of those who fit the externally imposed code determined by the aristocrats and clergy; it is universally

7 Ibid., 16.

accessible thanks to our scientific world-view. Our identity is that of the “disengaged self, capable of objectifying not only the surrounding world but also [our] own emotions and inclinations, fears and compulsions, and achieving thereby a kind of distance and self-possession which allow [us] to act ‘rationally.’”⁸

Taylor argues that this transition is grounded in a new form of reason which is no longer “defined in terms of a vision of order in the cosmos,” but rather is “defined procedurally, in terms of instrumental efficacy, or maximization of the value sought, or self-consistency.”⁹ This is a break from the Aristotelean tradition where the highest form of reason was theoretical reason, or directive reason, which was the contemplation of the good and our proper ends, and instrumental reason was regarded as a lesser form of reason devoted to making things and accomplishing tasks. For Aristotle, the capacity for instrumental reason makes a good slave, but it is insufficient for citizens. The naturalism of modern empiricism would have us dismiss the higher pleasure of living virtuously and regard all problems, including those concerning our higher purposes, as instrumental problems of desire satisfaction.

The identity of the disengaged self is inherently tied to the idea of negative liberty. Just as the scientist is unencumbered in her explorations by anything other than the laws of physics, so too is the free agent capable of making choices about ends independently of externally determined laws. Neither the scientist’s solution nor the agent’s ends are constrained by either tradition or faith based assumptions. The world is the agent’s value-free laboratory. She stands independent of her social context when making decisions about ends. In politics, therefore, this

8 Ibid., 21.

9 Ibid., 21.

means the agent requires a state and government that is neutral about the good, and is only responsible for providing a context with the least possible interference to individual choice. This contrasts sharply with the classical or Christian measures of the political world and marks the eschatological shift that distinguishes modernity. For the citizens of Ancient Greece the polis was the cosmos writ small; they did not make an ontological distinction between themselves and the state. They were of the state and could not exist without it. With the Augustinian view, the state was the forum for action where one sought to lead a moral life and to create a society that best reflected the Christian ideal. It was contrasted with the spiritual community where Christians were united under God's law and measure by it. This was the duality of the city of man versus the city of God. Taylor contends that, with modernity, the state has been recast as entirely external to the individual, an instrument established to fulfill the desires of its citizens.¹⁰ The individual is seen as an autonomous entity apart from any form of community. Taylor contends that this view of the self has resulted in a widespread sense of alienation from the state.

Under the subjectivity paradigm, the state loses its spiritual meaning and eventually people withdraw their allegiance which in turn undermines the legitimacy of the state's authority. In a large and diverse community of people, it is inevitable that the state will be required to enforce rules contrary to the interests of nearly everyone at one time or another. On these occasions, people will resent its use of coercion unless they have a meaningful connection to the state and the community, and they will feel alienated by an authority with which they no longer identify. To cope with this increasing sense of alienation, states have developed systems for greater political participation by the populace.

¹⁰ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 112.

Any yet, regardless of increasing opportunities to participate, the “value neutral” governing practice of modern states does not alleviate the sense of lost belonging, so people instead seek out communities that reflect their interests, and they transfer their allegiance from the national community to various subcommunities. “As the traditional limits fade with the grounds for accepting them, society tends to fragment; partial groups become increasingly truculent in their demands, as they see less reason to compromise with the ‘system’”¹¹ So for all of the evidence of social and technological progress, modernity leaves us alienated by a) the lost meaning that comes with atomist or possessive individualism, b) the lost sight of our personal ends that comes with instrumental reason, and c) the sense of having no significant impact on or importance to the large scale, highly bureaucratic, social machinery that is necessary to manage a massive industrial society. These are what Taylor has called the three malaises of modernity. Under their weight, with sunken spirits we clamor to realize a sense of freedom from the enormous institutional framework that directs our lives towards ends with which we do not identify, we yearn for meaning and lack the tools of reflection necessary to find it, and we seek communities where such vital treasures are shared and we can flourish.¹²

The trouble is, according to Taylor, the makeshift modern communities people construct tend to be based on a narrow minded dogmatism. They are usually grounded either in myth or passion, rather than reason.¹³ Taylor follows Kant in arguing that to be free people must use reason to determine their ends, otherwise they are subject to the pressures of their social and physical environment. This suppression of freedom is not only unappealing for its own sake, but

11 Ibid., 115.

12 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 10.

13 *Hegel and Modern Society*, 112

also because of its social consequences. Inevitably, social stability will be disrupted by the discontent of citizens who are frustrated with their lack of authentic freedom. This slide into social fragmentation and discontent is eventual outcome of what Taylor calls the Hobbes-Bentham view of liberty, which he confronts in his response to Isaiah Berlin.¹⁴

Responding to Berlin: A Defense of Hegel's Positive Liberty

Berlin wished to defend individual liberty from the abuses of totalitarian political regimes by distinguishing negative liberty from the positive liberty that has been abused to justify the imposition of the state's conception of the good life on the individuals by paternalistically claiming to understand their best interests. For Berlin, negative liberty provides a safe standard for state intervention. As we know, Hegel regarded negative liberty on its own as an entirely abstract and empty concept and hence a flimsy guideline for state intervention. Taylor takes the same position in his essay "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?", where he argues that Berlin does not appreciate that there must be some background assumptions about higher purposes if freedom is to mean anything. Thus Taylor begins his criticism of Berlin's argument by reformulating Berlin's description of the doctrine of positive freedom. He redirects our attention from "who or what controls," to the qualities necessary for self-control. "On this view, one is free only to the extent that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life."¹⁵ We are to focus on the centrality of individual autonomy or the internal aspects of human agency instead of the external obstacles imposed by an outside party.

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty?", *Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2*, 212.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 213.

Taylor argues that the fear of the Totalitarian Menace has caused negative liberty theorists to shy away from any notions that would lead us to conclude that “the subject himself can’t be the final authority on the question of whether he is free.”¹⁶ Taylor contends that they have consequently omitted three essential elements of freedom. First, freedom involves self-realization and our capacity for self-realization can be hindered by internal obstacles unless we develop the ability to evaluate our motivations.¹⁷ An example of an internal obstacle might be an irrational fear of flying might keep us from fulfilling our dream of world travel. Second, freedom is not measured by the sheer absence of obstacles, but rather people make qualitative distinctions about which facets of their lives are critical to their self-fulfillment and hence warrant state protection from external obstacles. Sometimes state enforced restrictions are serious infringements on our freedom, and sometimes they are a necessary source of order, though perhaps a bit of nuisance at first glance. For example, we consider the restriction to our freedom of religious worship to be more significant than the imposition of traffic laws.¹⁸ Third, he combines the principle that internal fetters on our liberty with the idea that we qualitatively discriminate between the seriousness of external restrictions, and he argues therefore that freedom involves having the tools for rational reflection to make qualitative evaluations of our internal motivations.¹⁹ This final point is how he justifies the concept that we can be mistaken about our “true” freedom, and might benefit from having our motives second guessed. For instance, one might base a decision on a motive that has been qualitatively evaluated, but we

16 Ibid., 216.

17 Ibid., 216.

18 Ibid., 218.

19 Ibid., 223-225.

might be suffering from some sort of confusion or error. In which case, we would benefit from the guidance of another party.

Taylor further argues that when negative liberty theorists finally acknowledge the role of internal obstacles they turn to the reductive-empiricist view that assumes that even if we were to evaluate our internal motives, this would merely entail a quantitative evaluation of which feelings and desires are the strongest. This view construes feelings as brute data. Berlin pursues this line of argument when he states that even if we accepted Hegel's system we would remain unsatisfied because we would still have to "fall back on the ordinary resources of empirical observation and ordinary human knowledge."²⁰ According to Taylor, Berlin fails to appreciate the Herder's lesson that evaluating our motives also means evaluating our cultural context and the values we place on different ideas that are represented by words, such as honour, shame, or revenge. Depending on our culture these can have different levels of importance to us, or in the case of revenge, we might evaluate this desire as either positive or negative. Thus, our desires and feelings are not always merely brute, they can have meaning for us that is more significant than their immediate physical sensation.

By failing to understand this form of rational evaluation, Berlin mistakenly groups Hegel together with Marx, and seems to assume that Hegel's notion of freedom would have the same totalitarian results as the Bolshevik Revolution. However, Taylor points out that Marxism was based on empirical, materialist assumptions rather than Herder's expressivism. Marx sought to

20 Berlin, 413. This also made clear in his 21st footnote where he admits he is perplexed by what the idealists mean when they use the word reason: "I have never, I must own, understood what 'reason' means in this context; and here merely wish to point out that the a priori assumption of this philosophical psychology are not compatible with empiricism; that is to say, with any doctrine founded on knowledge derived from experience of what men are and seek."

synthesize the Enlightenment and Romanticism through the scientific objectification of humanity and society, and by claiming that they could be manipulated by ‘scientific socialism.’²¹ Taylor explains that this form of social engineering places all the power in the hands of the engineers, and “allows no place for the growth of freedom.”²² It is not surprising that Berlin, who equates reason with empiricism, would fail to comprehend this distinction between Hegel and Marx.²³

When Taylor combines the notion of internal obstacles with the capacity to reflect upon our proper ends and the need for the instruments – social context, institutions, education – to engage in this form of reflection, he leaves us with the basis for determining what sort of society is required to facilitate our self-realization. This progression from the idea that we can indeed be mistaken about our purposes to a formula for society is much like the three types of willing found in Hegel’s work: natural will, where we are acting according to our drives; reflective will, where we curb our drives for the sake of happiness; rational will, where we work toward creating a society that facilitates positive liberty.²⁴ The transition takes us from the state of an atomized individual with an unrealized capacity for willing to a purpose broader than the immediacy of the individual’s interests while still being for the individual, the proper structure of society.

The difference between negative and positive liberty, Taylor explains, is captured by the distinction between viewing it as merely an opportunity concept or an exercise concept. In other words, freedom for Taylor is not only the absence of restrictions on our choices; it is the act of

21 Taylor, *Hegel*, 147.

22 *Ibid.*, 152.

23 It is noteworthy that while Berlin is critical of the rationalism of Kant and Hegel, and claims that all reason comes down to empiricism, he himself engages in an expressivist evaluation of the concept of freedom, and moreover, he makes the very non-empirical assertion that “political theory is a branch of moral philosophy” (392). It would seem he is something of an idealist in denial.

24 See above. Chapter Two, p. 55.

self-realization. If freedom is an action, then a free individual is one who chooses to work to create a society that facilitates this sort of action.

As we have found with Berlin's other critics, such as in Allen Wood's application of Hegel's argument against negative liberty,²⁵ Taylor recognizes that the value-neutral framework of the Bentham-Hobbes-Berlin account of freedom would have it that whatever our choice, if it is ours, then it is free. Any second-guessing on the part of others infringes on our freedom. The presumption is that one is never wrong about what one wants. "And how can he never, in principle, be wrong," asks Taylor, "unless there is nothing to be right or wrong about in this matter?"²⁶ Taylor contends that we can indeed be mistaken about our "true" freedom, and we may well benefit from having our motives questioned by an observer who possesses information that could clarify some sort of confusion or error.

This idea of external guidance as an element of freedom – either in the form of interlocutors with whom we discuss moral issues, or our community as a whole which provides a horizon of meaning – is set aside by liberals who seek a procedure for governing choices in light of the principle of equality but otherwise without an articulated notion of the good. In their effort to avoid violating the sanctity of individual freedom with a notion of intersubjectivity or common conception of the good, the sought after procedure needs a fundamental universal human motive to explain everyone's decision process, but not their decisions:

Moral philosophies so understood are philosophies of obligatory action. The central task of moral philosophy is to account for what generates the obligations that hold for us. A satisfactory moral theory is generally thought to be one that

²⁵ See above. Chapter Two, p. 49

²⁶ Taylor, *Hegel*, 223.

defines some criterion or procedure which will allow us to derive all and only the things we are obliged to do.²⁷

This proceduralism is meant to be a means to retain the hard line of negative liberty while allowing for the subject to develop and adhere to purposes greater than mere appetite satisfaction. Taylor argues that this hybrid position, which negative liberty theorists generally retreat to, crosses the line into positive liberty without wishing to address the complex implications that arise from it, namely, how to draw the line between authentic self-realization and the totalitarian imposition of “the good.” Stephen Mulhall has interpreted Taylor as being a moderate voice of reconciliation.²⁸ While it is fair to say that Taylor shows that Berlin is more attached to positive liberty than he knows, and therefore is not entirely incorrect, there is no question that Taylor condemns Berlin’s effort to dismiss positive liberty and the ontological foundation it stems from. Ultimately, Taylor is arguing that Berlin’s position is wrong insofar as it rests on an oversimplified understanding of the distinction between negative and positive liberty, and that it stems from an untenable Hobbesian materialist reduction of human fulfillment to brute elements.

Taylor thus retraces the steps taken by Hegel in his own critique of the Hobbes-Bentham concept of freedom. Also like Hegel, Taylor’s solution involves combining Kant’s conception of radical rational autonomy with Herder’s Romantic expressive unity.

²⁷ *Sources of the Self*, 79.

²⁸ Stephen Mulhall, “Articulating the Horizons of Liberalism,” *Charles Taylor*, 2004

Positive Liberty: Step One: Kantian Radical Autonomy

Taylor explains that the concept of moral autonomy that challenged the atomist individualism of the Enlightenment was introduced by Rousseau. In the process of liberating us from the state's enforcement of an externally given conception of the good, Bentham dropped the means to reflect on the good or embed the individual in a commitment to the common good. Rousseau attempted to rescue individual freedom from the realm of amorality and purposelessness by combining true freedom with morality, or the good life. He argued that virtue is achieved with self-determination, when the agent is being authentic to his true inner purposes.²⁹ This line of thinking introduced the opportunity for adopting an extreme subjectivism that Rousseau himself did not pursue. While others were later to adapt his language to redefine good as one's own arbitrary inclinations, Rousseau argued that our true inner purposes are defined by our natural disposition for compassion. In effect, he retained traditional values by resituating their source in the self.³⁰ The political significance of this is that the self becomes the heart of social unity. For Rousseau, an important dimension of this was that the individual should be esteemed by others in society as an equal and that this esteem should be reciprocal. With this comes a sense of dignity that does not involve social hierarchy, and it is this argument that inspired Hegel's theory of reciprocal recognition where it is understood that the impression others have of me has an impact in forming my identity.³¹ Individualism is thus recast as the core of social cohesion rather than atomistic competition and social fragmentation. Taylor explains

29 Taylor, "Kant's Theory of Freedom," 320. This essay is reworked to fit in *Sources of the Self*, chapter 20.

30 *Sources*, 362.

31 Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," *Philosophical Arguments*, 232, 240-1. Hegel's concept of reciprocal recognition plays an important role in Taylor's political theory of deep diversity, where he argues that cultural groups as well as individuals can legitimately request recognition.

that this inspired Kant to develop his theory of radical autonomy, and it is Kant who gives the Rouseauian concept of liberty a clear philosophical doctrine.³²

Kant's formula for autonomy begins by replacing the instrumentalist view of reason with reflection on our proper ends, what he calls practical reason. It is reasoning about which actions one ought to do. Though in some ways this is a restoration of Aristotle's distinction of theoretical reason and practical reason, as well as the Christian natural law tradition, Kant is binding morality and reason in a distinctly modern manner. Instead of using reason to uncover God's will or natural law, we begin with certain things we know about ourselves and our awareness. He accepts Hume's refutation of the Enlightenment notion of our knowing things in themselves, but rather than concluding that we therefore can know nothing, Kant takes our internal experiences as the starting point, such as our way of conceiving the world in terms of time and space. He builds upon these types of categories to argue for a general will that is accessed through the proper evaluation of our inner experience. "The aim of Kant was to cut loose altogether from this reliance on nature, and to draw the content of obligation purely from the will."³³ How he works his way from the basic categories of experience to a set of universal laws is less important for us than the associated political principle that our shared capacity for reason gives us a right to be treated as ends in ourselves. As much as Kant is an Enlightenment thinker refuting traditional sources of moral law, Kant is responding in part to the modern utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number when he argues that no one's freedom is to be trampled on the way to achieving some externally determined conception of happiness for the greatest number. No one is to be treated as a means to an end.

32 "Kant's Theory of Freedom," 321.

33 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 75.

In addition to protecting the individual from the tyranny of the majority, Kant's theory defends against the tyranny of our own fleeting pleasures. To be governed by the pleasures of our ever changing tastes and appetites is a form of dependency for Kant. Only in choosing to act according to our rationally determined ends, those which we have determined to be morally good, can we claim to be autonomous. "Moral freedom must mean being able to decide against all inclination for the sake of the morally right."³⁴

For Kant, a moral law is rational when it is consistent and without contradiction. It must be something everyone would understand, from a disinterested stance, to be the action that we would wish to apply universally.³⁵ When we come to a conclusion about the moral soundness of an action and adhere to it, then we are truly free. "A moral will is thus autonomous in a radical sense. He obeys only the dictates of his own will."³⁶ That which is rational is moral, and an act is only truly moral when we choose to do what is rational. Even if, as Kant believes, we cannot control the effects of our actions, we can control our will. Thus, moral virtue is to adopt as one's highest purpose that one's own will conforms to reason. Kant's method to establish which laws or maxims are rational and are therefore to be followed is based on logical principles of non-contradiction. For instance, a moral act is one we would have everyone do in the same situation.³⁷

Freedom, or authentic self-determination, is thus to conform to self generated rational laws. Choosing to conform to these rational and moral laws is our proper end because the

34 Ibid., 3.

35 Ibid., 75.

36 Ibid., 76.

37 "Kant's Theory of Freedom," 322-3.

capacity to be rational is what distinguishes us from other animals. Reason is our essence and hence our purpose. “This amounts to freedom, because acting morally is acting according to what we truly are, moral/rational agents.”³⁸ Kant’s theory of freedom is in keeping with Rousseau’s principle that we must remain true to our inner self. As rational beings we are true to ourselves, we are autonomous and authentically free when we act according to rationally determined ends, and we are being oppressed when we act to satisfy an external authority or even our internal desires to which Bentham defers.³⁹ Reason is our proper end because it is exclusively ours and because rational agency has absolute worth. According to Kant, it must be regarded as an end in itself. This also means that the bearers of rational agency must be treated as ends in themselves and they and their purposes must never be exploited to serve as the means for a purpose that is not their own.⁴⁰

Beings of absolute worth ... have their own intrinsic ends, and they lay the demand on us that we treat them with these ends in view, and not just in the light of extraneous ends that they might serve. Or as Kant puts it later, other things have a price, but only rational agents have dignity.⁴¹

We see here the origin of the argument for human dignity that Taylor invokes in the introduction to *Sources of the Self* to explain that contra naturalist thought there is a moral dimension to reason. Kant’s account of human autonomy is undeniably a cornerstone of Taylor’s political philosophy. Taylor explains the importance of Kant’s contribution in the conclusion of “Kant’s Theory of Freedom.” He asserts that Kant’s theory of freedom is both “the most powerful formulation of the liberal ideal” and the ferment for work that breaks the bounds of

38 *Sources*, 363.

39 *Ibid.*, 363.

40 “Kant’s Theory of Freedom,” 324.

41 *Ibid.*, 324.

liberalism.⁴² Kant achieves this by “grounding politics on freedom, on respect for the agent as the originator of his own life-plan,” and with the “ideal of total rational self-determination” which provided a framework for further explorations of what that involves.⁴³ In *Hegel*, Taylor calls Kant “the third great seminal figure for Hegel’s thought,” and credits him with discovering a means to conceive of autonomy independent of either metaphysics or the moral void of naturalist thinkers like Hume. He gives moral content to the Enlightenment project to make individual freedom the basis for social order.⁴⁴

And yet, like Hegel, Taylor finds Kant’s theory wanting. For instance he is unable to give a sufficient resolution to the inevitable rift between society’s laws and the moral laws of an autonomous agent. Kant argues that while society’s laws may not yet be rational/moral, we need society as a step toward exercising moral laws. Kant’s theory still suffers from the divided self syndrome that infects Enlightenment thought. The individual remains apart from the world, isolated in rational contemplation of worthy ends, and regarding the external world as purely objective. His political principles remain highly formal in that rational subjects should be treated as ends in themselves and that the state’s laws should apply to everyone equally, and they give us insufficient direction about how to shape society as it actually is.⁴⁵ Kant’s theory has the agent contemplating a universal morality abstracted from the concrete of a particular history and *Sittlichkeit* of the community. “For he presents an abstract, formal notion of moral obligation, which holds of man as an individual, and which being defined in contrast to nature is in endless

42 “Kant’s Theory of Freedom,” 337.

43 *Ibid.*, 337.

44 *Hegel*, 628.

45 *Hegel and Modern Society*, 82

opposition to what is.”⁴⁶ The result, according to Hegel and Taylor, is moral emptiness. The sheer abstraction leaves one without any clear guidelines for action, and because they lack grounding in anything to which people feel any social loyalty they have a very weak hold on us:

But Kant attempted to avoid any appeal to the way things are, either to an order of ideas or a constellation of de facto desires. The criterion of the right is to be purely formal. Kant believed that this gave him a viable theory because he thought that the formal criterion would actually rule some actions in and others out. But the arguments to this effect are very shaky, and once one loses faith in them, one is left with a criterion which has no bite at all, which can allow anything as a morally possible action. Moral autonomy has been purchased at the price of a vacuity.⁴⁷

Kant’s theory is the basis for many contemporary arguments for a procedural liberalism. If we work from a set of value-neutral principles, and design procedures for disinterested rational decisions, then we can ensure that our legislation will properly reflect the principles of equality and freedom.⁴⁸ Hegel’s critique of Kant, which Taylor accepts, is that it is overly formal in its effort to avoid relying on either culturally situated ideas or concrete desires. When one gets past the questionable set of fundamental criteria, one is left with a vacuum where anything might be moral so long as it is consistent. From this vacuity no substantive goods can be derived, and Kant is left with the abstract emptiness characteristic of negative liberty:

Thus although Kant starts with a radically new conception of morality, his political theory is disappointingly familiar. It does not take us very far beyond utilitarianism, in that its main problem remains that of harmonizing individual wills.⁴⁹

46 Ibid., 83

47 Ibid., 77.

48 See Ronald Dworkin, “Liberalism,” in Stuart Hampshire, ed., *Public and Private Morality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978). Perhaps the best known contemporary argument for a form of procedural liberalism is found in John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1971).

49 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 78.

In order to rescue Kant's theory from this vacuity, one must find a way to connect the individual to the social context in a manner that does not suppress this newly won understanding of autonomy. Following Hegel, Taylor looks to Herder's Romantic expressivism to provide a modern form of social embeddedness.

Positive Liberty: Part Two: Expressivism, Language and Meaning

Herder's contribution made it clear that the rational consideration of moral matters must be understood in light of the philosophy of language. This is what Richard Rorty has called the "linguistic turn."

Like Hegel, Taylor attempts to draw upon the insights of Rousseau, Kant and Herder without indulging in their excesses. Herder's Romantic expressivist thesis balances out the Enlightenment atomism by binding the people's identity to their cultural context, both contemporary and historical. Herder's work provides a solution to the problem of the disengaged self that characterizes Kant's transcendental reason, and he does so without losing sight of the person's distinct identity as occurs with Rousseau's general will. Herder is able to transform modern subjectivity into intersubjectivity. He proposes that our understanding of the world is embedded in our way of expressing our experience of it. We are not merely quantifying the world as value neutral data; we qualify it in terms of its significance to us, just as we qualify our lives in terms of some higher meaning. So if freedom is to act morally, and morality is to some extent culturally contextual, then freedom must take into account culture, which is clearly a communal endeavour. He thus gives us a way to conceive of social unity without sacrificing the

individual freedom either in favour of a transcendently derived law, or a general will.⁵⁰ This is not a Straussian retreat from modernity. Unlike Plato, who was concerned with the transcendent, or Aristotle, whose focus was on the realm of political action, Herder's Romantic expressivism has an internal source, an inner voice – we tap into the truths of nature via our sentiments.⁵¹ We realize ourselves when we express - through art, language, or gesture – an inner power that is unique to the individual.⁵² And this does not mean we spin out into a meaningless subjectivism, because, as Herder explains, modes of expression are constrained by the guidelines of culture.⁵³ Like the individual, the community has its own guiding theme that must be given an external articulation to be fulfilled. The spirit of the community, or the *Volksgeist*, needs to express its inner voice and this puts some constraints on the individual who draws her power of expression from the culture. There is a symbiotic relationship between the individual who strives for unique expression and the community doing the same on a larger scale.⁵⁴

Taylor describes Herder as a hinge figure who stands out for providing the best articulation of Romanticism. In the philosophy of language, Herder's work marked the shift away from empiricist epistemology and it is here where the story of expressivism begins. Descartes argued that in order to make a claim about what we know we must have an understanding of how we know, and once we have a grip on the nature of knowledge we can then go on to make claims about the existence of God, the structure of the world, and the essence

50 Taylor calls Herder a hinge figure in retrieving the linguistic background for our actions that is missing from empirical epistemology, though he does not believe Herder went far enough, "The Importance of Herder," *Philosophical Arguments*, 89-90.

51 *Sources of the Self*, 372.

52 *Ibid.*, 374-5.

53 *Sources of the Self*, 376.

54 *Hegel and Modern Society*, 3.

of humanity. Taylor calls this “a terrible and fateful illusion.”⁵⁵ He thinks it a mistake to hope to reduce knowledge to a clearly defined fact, and he doubts it is something that can be so completely understood. He sums up the empiricist account of knowledge “as correct representation of an independent reality. In its original form, it saw knowledge as the inner depiction of an outer reality.”⁵⁶ John Locke picked up on the interdependence of language and thought that began to reveal itself in Descartes’s work. Descartes had noted that language is not a perfect representation of the thing known, but it is really Locke who concentrated on language and the importance of refining its accuracy to improve our understanding. He develops a “designative” theory of language where the meaning of words is derived from how they are used to designate objects.⁵⁷

The designative theory of language challenged Christianity’s expressive theory where language was considered to be a system of symbols representing the word of God.⁵⁸ The expressivist theories of Christianity as well as the Platonists before them, maintained that language was developed through a process of discourse in which the entire community was involved and it represented their shared interpretation of the cosmos. With the Enlightenment and the philosophy of John Locke, language came to be thought of as symbols of things; a word designated something. Accompanying this perspective was the idea that words were created by individuals, like solitary discoveries made independent of the community. As with the natural world, Enlightenment thinkers isolated the component elements of language so that it could be

55 *Philosophical Arguments*, vii.

56 *Ibid.*, 3.

57 *Ibid.*, 80.

58 “Language and Human Nature,” *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 223.

ordered and objectified. Because we know the world through language, they were concerned that if they did not control language it would build “castles of illusion.”⁵⁹

In response to this designative theory of language, Herder and other Romantic philosophers revived expressivism, but rather than arguing that language expressed the order of the cosmos, Herder argued that language expresses the way the speaker perceives the world. “Human communication was held to embody what we are essentially, the expression of which is the making manifest of these embodiments.”⁶⁰ The important difference between expressive theory and designative theory is that with the designative theory language seems to exist apart from the speaker; it is an objective tool which can be picked up by anyone and will say the same thing: “a rose is a rose is a rose.” In expressive theory it is argued that first comes the perceiver who has a thought or feeling about the object or emotion perceived. Then it is made manifest in some language expression, and it is only then, when we have articulated it, that we are fully aware of it. The perception, experience and articulation is largely constituted by the speech community we draw from. In this case, the word “rose” is not simply the word we all commonly accept as designating a particular flower, it is an expression of our awareness of the rose. The distinction here is that expressivists believe that the designation of the word “rose” is preceded by the perceiver’s experience of the plant. This experience might be informed by some cultural narrative, such as the rose as a symbol of romance. And our awareness of this experience is heightened when we articulate it. Taylor calls this the unique human capacity for reflective consciousness. He contends that the use of language gives humanity a superior awareness of

59 Ibid., 226.

60 Richard Nutbrown, “The Self, Language, and Community: Taylor’s Hermeneutic Project,” *Eidos*, V, 1 (June, 1986), 19. The transition from the strict designative theory to the Romantics had some more gradations than Taylor acknowledges, but these broad brush strokes give us a fair diagram of Taylor’s argument.

things perceived, as compared to the action-reaction relationship to the world experienced by animals. Thus the important point set out by expressive theorists is that the existence of language precedes a word like rose, and furthermore, “rose” can only be given meaning within the context of language:

Language is no longer an assemblage of words, but the capacity to speak (express/realize) the reflective awareness implicit in using words to say something. Learning to use any single word presupposes this general capacity as background. But to have the general capacity is to possess a language. So that it seems that we need the whole of language as the background for the introduction of any of its parts, that is, individual words.⁶¹

According to expressivist theory, words rely on the existence of other words to have meaning. The word “rose” only makes sense if we can contrast it with other words in the lexicon. Otherwise, even if one were to point at a rose while saying the word “rose,” any number of things could be understood from the gesture, such as: plant, freshness, obstacle, red, thorn, and so on. Outside of a lexicon, the gesture would be meaningless. This may seem like an obvious observation, but it has fairly radical repercussions on how we understand language and hence ourselves.

If we accept that every part of language, even as it develops, is formed by the preexisting structures of language, and if we accept that our articulation of a thing shapes the way we reflect upon it, then it follows that language is integral to our understanding of the world. We can actively recreate speech, but the background structures of language give sense to and hence direct the formulation of our new usages. Thus we can have some influence on our new awareness of the world, but we can never entirely control language as the designative theorists

61 “Language,” 230.

attempt to do. This places an entirely new significance on the importance of our language community in defining who we are. While there is room for actively coining new articulations of reality and thereby developing new understandings about ourselves and the world, we are never separate from the background language. Moreover, because language is developed through speech and the “primary locus of speech is in conversation,” language can be said to grow out of a speech community⁶²:

Language is shaped by speech, and so can only grow up in a speech community. The language I speak, the web which I can never fully dominate and oversee, and never be just my language, it is always largely our language.⁶³

Herder’s expressivist theory thus brings us to the conclusion that we can only develop our authentic identities in the context of our culture and the horizon of meaning it provides. In contrast to the atomistic view of the self which holds that freedom means being severed from the values of our community, the holistic view contends that “we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression.”⁶⁴ As we engage in rational evaluations of our ends and maxims, we cannot pretend to do so in isolation from our community. We must first understand as much as possible the implicit assumptions that underlie the values of our community, and hence our own values. Only from this perspective can we hope to engage in a worth while investigation of proper ends. Otherwise we will remain blindly subject to the ideational forces that have formed our conception of the world. Once this is understood, our horizon of meaning is not then a restriction on our will, but, rather, it gives us the context and the hierarchy of

62 Ibid., 234.

63 Ibid., 234, Taylor’s italics.

64 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 33.

significance that serves as a basis for choice. The ethical life of the community provides us with a hierarchy of ethical values from which we develop a moral self-understanding and begin political theorizing. Without a hierarchy of importances, we are left to be guided either by our appetites or stumble around in some incoherent and random way. But, as Kant has shown, this would not be a realization of the moral ideal of autonomous choice:

I can define my identity only against the background of things that matter. But to bracket out history, nature, society, the demands of solidarity, everything but what I find in myself, would be to eliminate all candidates for what matters. Only if I exist in a world in which history, or the demands of nature, or the needs of my fellow human beings, or the duties of citizenship, or the call of God, or something else of this order matters crucially, and I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands.⁶⁵

Taylor asserts that Herder's unification of culture and language is the point of origin for modern nationalism: "Herder thought that each people had its own peculiar guiding theme or manner of expression, unique and irreplaceable, which should never be suppressed and which could never simply be replaced by any attempt to ape the manners of others."⁶⁶ But this unity also challenges nationalism in its uglier forms because it includes a form of embedded individualism. Personal expression is integral to self-realization, and one must be allowed to explore one's own unique voice. Herder's nationalism is shaped by belief that only within their own culture can a people cultivate their authentic, *individual* identities. Thus, explains Taylor, "Herder is in this way not just the founder of modern nationalism, but also of one of the main bulwarks against its excesses, modern expressive individualism."

65 Ibid., 41.

66 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 2.

Conclusion

We can begin to imagine from this where Taylor might stand on questions relating to the state's responsibility either to accommodate and encourage cultural diversity or to treat all citizens in a difference blind manner. His conception of justice is grounded in the form of positive liberty that he borrows from Hegel: a synthesis of Rousseauian common purpose and recognition, Kantian radical autonomy, and Herderian holistic expressivism. And yet, he adopts a metaphysical reading of Hegel and faults Hegel for achieving the synthesis using a faulty argument for *Geist* and at the expense of free will. How does Taylor manage to bring these competing ideas together in a coherent political philosophy without using Hegel? What is the political programme that emerges from it? These are the questions that will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Taylor's Dissent; Free Will, Recognition, and Faith

Introduction

Taylor wishes to reignite our interest in Hegel's work because it offers an extraordinarily revealing perspective on the social dilemmas facing our age. Hegel helps us to understand the alienating social consequences of instrumental reason and its homogenizing, and reifying conception of humanity. It provides the tools to isolate the characteristics that comprise freedom properly understood, and thus serves as a bulwark against its corrosion by forces that would have us scrambling blindly, governed by our basest desires. Hegel's work takes us beyond the prominent criticisms of the modernity and the Enlightenment which often dismiss the entire project for its reductivist empirical account of human nature, and he draws our attention to more subtle, yet highly pervasive, streams of thought that are themselves reactions to the failings of the Enlightenment. There is the Romantic holism that seeks to reclaim our bond with nature by casting it as the source of our true selves, accessible through intuition and imagination rather than reason. And there is Kant's radical autonomy that attempts to restore morality without losing sight of the Enlightenment's contribution of taking up reason as a means of liberating the individual from an external authority. Taylor shares Hegel's interest in trying to combine the strengths of these two streams, and he thinks Hegel is right that this is the principal task of our age. Where Taylor claims to diverge from Hegel is in his explanation of how that synthesis can be achieved.

Taylor's Critique of Hegel's Geist

The difficulty lies in the problem of the disengaged self. Kant's transcendent morality put the agent at odds with her nature within and without.¹ Kant thought that for our choices to really be our own they must be arrived at rationally and independently. He meant to rescue morality as a guide for our higher ends from the heteronomy of instinct, and in the course of doing so he built an insurmountable divide between 'ought' and 'is,' negating life in favour of some disconnected, abstract universal morality. And it is in his effort to make morality universal, based on some irrefutable logically dialectic, that he severed it from the community and made it utterly individual. The guiding principle is that one must will only what one would wish everyone to do in similar circumstances, but this assumes that the agent is somehow already a bearer of a conscience and a sense of the good. Those who are more martially disposed might consider it perfectly suitable to live in a thoroughly violent and lawless society, for instance. Life may be short and full of dread, but it would never be dull. Because its failure to appreciate the cultural embeddedness that Herder identifies, Kant's theory of positive liberty falls back into the sort of abstraction that renders negative liberty meaningless.

Not only does it result in a form of abstract individualism, but the individual is left in a perpetual state of self-denial in order to be self-directing. These purely transcendently derived moral laws separate us from human sensibility. To be autonomous we must constantly suppress our own appetites and must regard them as a source of oppression.

The thinking rational subject can only exist embodied. In this sense we can truly say that the subject is his embodiment, that for example I as a thinking being am

¹ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 20. Also in *Sources*, 385.

my living body. And yet at the same time this embodiment in life has a tendency to carry us along the stream of inclination, of impulse towards unreflecting unity within ourselves and with nature. Reason has to struggle against this in order to realize itself. And in this sense his embodiment is not only other than the thinking rational subject, but in a sense his opposite, his limit, his opponent.²

This is the profile of the divided self, but it is also the natural precursor in Hegel's dialect to the reconciliation and unity that is true of all things that exist – existence is process of becoming. That which is being denied is articulated by the Romantics who celebrate nature and internal inclinations that enable us to tap into its sublime truth, and vilify reason for its oppressive objectification of nature and its denial of our intuitive connection with it.

According to Taylor's interpretation, Hegel's effort to reconcile Romantic holism and rational autonomy led him to recast nature as the embodiment of a cosmic spirit. We are stuck with either sacrificing reason, and hence autonomy, to achieve oneness with nature, or lose our connection to nature and the notion of freedom as self-expression to enjoy the blessings of reason. Hegel's solution was to infuse nature with a spirit whose essence is reason and whose telos is freedom. Then, if nature is rational, we are being rational if we conform to its laws. Of course, this on its own would leave us a pre-Kantian natural law tradition where subjective freedom is meaningless. Thus nature must not only be rational, but it must will its own freedom. Nature must be the embodiment of a cosmic spirit that is working towards its own fulfillment, and the vehicle for the fulfillment, the means of reconciling *Geist's* spirit and body, must be humanity. Ultimately, nature and spirit are to be reconciled in the ethical life of human society. It will be in the formation of a rational society in which everyone is free that we will someday find that *Geist's* mind is given a concrete form and hence is realized. In Patten's words, "Hegel's

² Ibid., 21.

solution is to escape the threatened vacuity of radical freedom by attributing freedom not to the human will alone but to the will of 'the cosmic spirit which posits the universe'.³ Now rather than nature negating our rational autonomy, it is through nature that our autonomy is gained. In recognizing that we are the vehicles of Geist, we reconcile ourselves with nature:

We see that what is most fundamental about us is that we are the vehicles of *Geist*. Hence in achieving full insight our science of the universe is transformed; from being knowledge that we as finite spirits have about a world which is other than us it become the self-knowledge of universal spirit of which we are the vehicles.

And in coming to full self-awareness *Geist* has also come to his fullest self-expression, hence freedom. It has shaped its vehicle to a perfect expression of itself. And since the essence of that vehicle, man, is to be the vehicle of *Geist*, he too is and knows himself as fully self-expressed, that is, free.⁴

According to Hegel's idealism, reality must combine both the concept and the concrete.

A thing has no reality unless it is given a finite form. The essence of this spirit is reason, and its embodiment is nature, and like human beings it is a subject striving towards self-fulfillment. This cosmic spirit's self-fulfillment is achieved when its embodiment, nature, is structured according to its essence, reason. This formation is achieved through the actions of humanity as we work back and forth through the historical dialectic toward a *Sittlichkeit* that truly reflects our essence, freedom. Humanity serves as a bridge between nature and spirit, and through the establishment of a rational society, humanity is able to realize the fulfillment of *Geist*. Thus by pursuing the expressivist goal of being true to our inner selves as creatures of nature and culture, we are tapping into the rational spirit that directs nature and the history of human civilizations.

3 Patten, 18.

4 Ibid., 28.

We have already established that Hegel's conception of freedom requires that the will be made actual through action in the finite realm of nature. What is added with the metaphysical reading of *Geist* is that nature is not only the setting for the expression of our subjectivity, it is also itself a subjectivity seeking expression.⁵ Where the Enlightenment drains the spiritual or moral meaning out of the natural world, leaving it disenchanted and therefore a thing apart from our moral fulfillment, Hegel restores meaning to nature by recasting it as the embodiment of the cosmic spirit that realizes itself in the freedom of the human subject.⁶ Thus the individual is able to pursue self-realization while remaining in unity with nature.

Hegel [...] believed himself to have shown that man reaches his basic identity in seeing himself as a vehicle of *Geist*. If the substance of the will is thought or reason, and if the will is only free when it follows nothing else but its own thought, the thought or reason in question turns out not to be that of man alone, but rather that of the cosmic spirit which posits of the universe.⁷

The difference between Hegel's unity and Romantic unity is that reason, rather than intuition or imagination, is the means to tap into nature's truths and purposes.⁸ With dialectical reason we can build on basic principles toward a clearer picture of ourselves and *Geist*. The path to awareness of *Geist* is in part an interpretative exercise which involves working through contradictions present in our culturally inherited understanding of things. According to Taylor, Hegel contends that it is inevitable that we come to *Geist* because all things on their own embody a contradiction that is only resolved when we come to understand them as being part of a greater whole. "Hegel's point is that all descriptions of things as immediate turn out on closer examination to be inadequate; that all things show their necessary relation to something else, and

5 Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 64.

6 *Ibid.*, 66.

7 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*, 79.

8 *Ibid.*, 72.

ultimately to the whole.”⁹ Taylor’s criticism, however, is that the chain of logic leading from one premise to this grand spiritual conclusion is not without chinks. Taylor shares Hegel’s view of reason as an exercise of interpretation, but he does not agree that it can lead to any certainty on ontological questions. One can have more or less persuasive interpretations, but nothing stands beyond dispute. While Hegel’s theory of *Geist* might provide a tidy resolution to the modern dilemma, it can not claim to be irrefutably demonstrated, and therefore Hegel cannot retain his conception of *Geist* as total rationality.¹⁰

Taylor contends that Hegel’s argument fails because it presupposes the existence of *Geist*. To show this he turns to the Hegel’s logic rather than his philosophy of history. Hegel had not meant his reading of history to be proof that Reason rules the world. Hegel’s history is based on what he already knows about the cosmos.¹¹ Despite Hegel’s confidence in his logic, Taylor finds the first step of Hegel’s dialectic unconvincing and likely to be rejected by most contemporary philosophers. He explains that Hegel begins with the concept of ‘being,’ and argues that because it is not determinate, has no concrete form, it necessarily suffers from a contradiction, that is, ‘being’ without an embodiment is nothing. This can only be reconciled by giving being a concrete form, but any form it might take is finite and therefore entails its own contradiction.¹² Each contradiction leads us to a further imperfect reconciliation until we conclude that there must be an absolute unity that entails all things. This unity is Geist. But

9 Ibid., 43.

10 Ibid., 64.

11 Ibid., 65.

12 Ibid., 62.

Taylor argues that this does not hold up against three possible objections: a) there is no human essence, b) there is no cosmic spirit, or c) human essence is unrelated to cosmic spirit.¹³

Not only does Taylor disagree with the logic of this argument, he thinks it fails simply in terms of an interpretive dialectic because it does not offer a very compelling account of certain critical aspects of our experience. Two important points for Taylor are what this theory would lead us to understand about art and religion. Art was given central importance by the Romantics as a source of unity in which the artist can access and communicate the sublime of nature – the awesome cosmic harmony in which we participate. For the Romantics, art was elevated as the best medium for articulating this. According to Taylor, Hegel agrees that art is concerned with articulating the absolute truth of *Geist*, but its efficacy as a mode of expression is less than that of religion, which in turn is second to philosophy which provides greater conceptual clarity in its descriptions. What the artist understands on an intuitive level and can only vaguely gesture at, the philosopher can give a clear and rational description. Once an idea has been described by the philosopher, the artwork that attempts to express it becomes superfluous.¹⁴ But even without the philosophical description, art remains weak because the message of an artwork is eclipsed by the “sensuous” medium which cannot say anything in a straightforward sense.¹⁵ Taylor disagrees with Hegel’s understanding of art. He maintains that art is able to articulate things that philosophy simply cannot and hence it is neither subordinate nor superfluous. If we consider the importance of art to contemporary culture, we find that it stands on its own now more than ever.

13 Patten, 25.

14 Taylor, *Hegel*, 473.

15 *Ibid.*, 471-2.

This suggests to Taylor that Hegel's farewell to art is premature, and his historical interpretation is missing something.

Taylor explains that for Hegel religion sits between art and philosophy because it uses modes of expression from both. However, religion is primarily distinguished from philosophy for its use of images in representing *Geist*, rather than clear concepts.¹⁶ For Hegel, Biblical stories are image representations of the dialectic of self-realization. For instance, in the case of the Fall of man in Genesis, the expulsion from Eden represents the transition from the abstract universal to the particular, and the first step in the realization of the will.¹⁷ This is not meant to refute their historical actuality, but it does indicate why Christian theology is so heavily indebted to philosophy. Religion needs the clarifications offered by philosophy to avoid either distortions of the truth or conceding that God is unknowable. According to Taylor, Hegel does not conclude from this that religion is unnecessary or irrelevant and that everyone should devote themselves to philosophy in order to be fulfilled. Not only does the modern rational state facilitate the self-realization of all who participate in it, but the need for technical specialization means that not everyone can be a philosopher. For those who choose other careers, religion provides a more readily accessible account of the spiritual unity that is also the source of individual freedom. Moreover, even those with the leisure or employment to pursue philosophical inquiry benefit from the sort of full engagement in the knowledge of *Geist* that religion offers and is denied in the rationalistic tenor of philosophy. Philosophers, as much as anyone, need the heart and fantasy

16 Ibid., 467.

17 Ibid., 467, 490.

of religion to enjoy a sense of unity with *Geist*.¹⁸ Furthermore, the truth of *Geist* found in *Sittlichkeit* is bound to the parochial *Volksgeist*, whereas religion is committed to the universal.¹⁹

At first it seems that Hegel puts religion on even footing with philosophy in so far as they are really addressing the same subject, only they have different strengths in their means of articulating it. Taylor concludes, however, that Hegel's version of Christian doctrine cannot abide some of the fundamental elements of the faith. According to Taylor, Hegel's theory is a sort of pantheism²⁰ in which humanity is mere vehicle of *Geist*, though we are to take some satisfaction that this status is also the means to our own individual liberty. His theory portrays nature and the state as directed by divine purpose, so we have divinely sanctioned natural and political orders, while trying to retain some sense of individual subjectivity. Not only does this strike Taylor as being a highly constrained environment for individual spirituality, it also places a major restriction on God. Just as humanity is tied to this historical dialectic in which God is working toward self-realization, so too is God bound to nature and the historical process as a necessity to be liberated from his or her own condition of personal diremption. God is bound by the necessity of nature, not outside of it as an independent force and creator. God needs humanity for His or Her own self-realization and is not, as Christianity doctrine maintains, the one who gives us the world out of love and helps us to become aware of God through grace.²¹ Taylor contends that this portrayal of God would render prayers meaningless because God would be entirely caught up in the machination of nature and society. The role of Christ as redeemer and the source of salvation is not a gift of love, but of necessity. Taylor believes that Hegel

18 *Ibid.*, 486-7.

19 *Ibid.*, 488.

20 *Sources*, 371.

21 *Hegel*, 491.

ultimately surrenders his Romanticism to sheer rationalism, and he falls back into the radical subjectivity and empty formalism that plagued Kant as well as the Jacobins.²² The notion of the good that defines the rational state is thus made arbitrary, and people are fated, in what is supposed to be their highest freedom, to be chained to the oars of the divinely directed ship of state, where the course is set by the will of whoever happens to be at the helm. We are vehicles of the universal reason that guides our history and we are to accept our fate as part of the larger plan. Taylor cannot accept this:

Even if we accept the general plan of history, and are reconciled to the death of civilization, how do we understand as meaningful the premature death of quite non-world-historical individuals, of children, for instance? One doesn't have to go to the lengths of Ivan Karamazov and give a weight greater than world history to the tears of an innocent child in order to feel that Hegel has not met the difficulty.²³

Taylor appreciates that Hegel's metaphysical political philosophy was meant to accommodate rather than extinguish a conception of positive liberty, and he thinks that, despite the retreat into pantheism, much of what Hegel pieces together is worth retrieving. Taylor believes that in addition to giving us the clearest account of the modern dilemma, Hegel's philosophy of language sets us on the right path toward a reconciliation of individual freedom and civil unity. Influenced by Herder, Hegel raises language from a mere descriptive tool to a vehicle through which we become aware of the greater unity. "Language is no longer just an assemblage of signs, but the vehicle of this consciousness."²⁴ Unfortunately, by claiming to attain knowledge of the Absolute, he also closes the Herderian exploration of the tacit dimension

22 Ibid., 507.

23 *Hegel*, 121.

24 *Hegel and Modern Society*, 164.

of our experience. Consequently, he returns us to where we began with the empiricist epistemology – there is no further debate about the deepest drives in our lives and the path to self-realization.²⁵ But if we put aside his stifling ontology of Geist and take instead the notion that the way to reconcile radical autonomy and holistic expression is to conceive of our personal embodied subjectivity that unites us with nature, then we have filtrated what is most valuable in Hegel's work. Taylor believes that as long as we appreciate the final and complete knowledge is not attainable then we can use Hegel's philosophy to help us to develop an awareness of a larger subjectivity that binds our self-realization with that of a disenchanted nature. What Taylor is hinting at in his writings on Hegel is made more explicit in other writings. He is making a case for a religious faith that does not presume to have complete knowledge of God, nor does it conceive of God as constrained by nature.

It is interesting to note that Taylor believes that through faith we can be reunified with nature and therefore we will be better situated to stave off the emerging ecological crisis. He seems to suggest that this crisis adds to the urgency of finding a solution to the modern malaise. Indeed, one gets a sense from Taylor that he is satisfied with his combination of Hegelianism and Christianity. Though there is always more to discover, the reconciliation has largely been achieved for him. The task before him is to spread the word and bring the insights to bear on particular issues

²⁵ Ibid., 166.

Taylor's Alternative Source of Unity: Reason, Interpretation, Agency and our Best Account

Reason, for Taylor, is an interpretive exercise in which we sift through the horizons of meaning that are framed in language to draw out what is real. Language is effectively a deposit of knowledge we have inherited that contains certain truths, some of which are more significant than others. "Through language, a world is disclosed; a world in which features are located, which is also a locus of strong goods, of objects of the specifically human emotions, and of human relations."²⁶ If we are concerned with discerning how to organize society to meet people's needs, then we must interpret what makes their lives meaningful. A quantitative analysis of the pleasure derived from physical gratification will not suffice. We must look at what terms are used to describe their moral purposes. While this will never give us a final irrefutable answer to our question, it can produce a "best account we can give at any given time."²⁷ While the "best account" may not be absolute truth, it is the truth that we must work with. Taylor calls this the BA principle. In response to the naturalists or realists, Taylor argues that regardless of any effort to reduce human life to any one physiological need, we "cannot help having recourse to these strongly valued goods for the purposes of life: deliberating, judging situation, deciding how you feel about people, and the like."²⁸ He argues that this is reality insofar as "what is real is what you have to deal with, what won't go away just because it doesn't fit with your prejudices."²⁹

26 "Heidegger, Language, and Ecology," *Philosophical Arguments*, 120.

27 *Sources*, 58.

28 *Ibid.*, 59.

29 *Ibid.*, 59.

To better understand how this conception of reason works, and how he combines the notion of a linguistic community with individual freedom, we should consider his theory of human agency. Taylor's theory begins with the claim that desire can be divided into two orders, first and second. The first-order desires are on the level of appetite, and the second-order desires are determined through rational reflection. The first-order desires are regulated by the second. Taylor uses the example of a people who refrain "from acting on a given motive – say, spite or envy – because (they) consider it base or unworthy. In this case our desires are classified into such categories as higher and lower, virtuous and vicious, more and less fulfilling, more and less refined, profound and superficial, noble and base."³⁰ In this case, acting out of spite would be a first-order desire, whereas curbing that desire because of a will to be virtuous would constitute a strong second-order desire.³¹ Taylor distinguishes this from a weak second-order desire, such as refraining from eating ice cream in order to maintain an attractive physique.

This hierarchy of desires is similar to Hegel's distinction between three forms of will as discussed above: natural will, reflective will and rational will. In this account of agency, Taylor seems to settle on the level reflective will and does not address the question of the will willing itself, its own freedom, which Hegel calls 'rational will.' It may be argued that the overarching theme of Taylor's work is liberty, and so he has left it unsaid in this distinction between two types of desire. Indeed, at the close of *Sources of the Self* he states:

30 Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 16.

31 In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor renames second-order desires "hypergoods," "goods which not only are incomparably more important than others but provide the stand point from which these must be weighted, judged, decide about" (63).

The kind of study I have embarked on here can be a work, we might say, of liberation. The intuition which inspired it, which I have recurred to, is simply that we tend in our culture to stifle the spirit. [...] We have read so many goods out of our official story, we have buried their power so deep beneath layers of philosophical rationale, that they are in danger of stifling. Or rather, since they are our goods, human goods, *we* are stifling.³²

Taylor's entire project is to give sense to the concept of freedom, so we can safely conclude that though he does not mention Hegel's three types of willing, he is nevertheless working from the Hegelian template. When he is retrieving these moral horizons, he is also giving the material that makes freedom meaningful and actual. We need the vocabulary to make meaningful choices, and the concept of two orders of desire is integral to this.

For Taylor, strong second-order desire relies upon the human ability to develop a refined evaluative vocabulary which articulates the superiority of one choice over another.³³ In the case of whether or not to eat ice cream, the choice is based on a decision of whether to sacrifice one desire, the pleasure of eating ice cream, for another, the benefits derived from being attractive. In this case, agents decide according to which option they feel they prefer, the immediate pleasure of ice cream, or the long term benefits of a good physique. There is no question of superiority, only preference.

In contrast, the decision of whether or not to act out of spite is predicated on an idea of virtue or nobleness. According to Taylor, this stems from a richer language. It goes beyond deciding whether option A or option B is more appealing; it is a vocabulary of worth. He argues that the ability to articulate how one choice is superior (not simply what the agent feels is more desirable) is to have reached a greater depth:

³² *Sources*, 520.

³³ "What is Human Agency?", 24.

This additional dimension can be said to add depth, because now we are reflecting about our desires in terms of the kind of being we are in having them or carrying them out. Whereas a reflection about what we feel like more, which is all a simple weigher can do in assessing motivations, keeps us as it were at the periphery; a reflection on the kind of beings we are takes us to the centre of our existence as agents. Strong evaluation is not just a condition of articulacy about preference, but also about the quality of life, the kind of beings we are or want to be. It is in this sense deeper.³⁴

According to Taylor, the “depth” that we gain from reflection on our higher purposes is a consequence of self-interpretation. By questioning the motives of our desires, we gain a truer, more complex and more complete understanding of ourselves, and, presumably, we become better equipped to make fulfilling choices.³⁵

For Taylor, agency rests on making choices based on a personal set of preferences which are informed by a set of values. Even when we confront a collision of two equally important though contradictory values, we still rely on our personal preferences, except we are now compelled to reflect more deeply on our values to determine where the right choice lies.³⁶

Taylor argues that these fundamental evaluations define our identity. This means that if we fail to act according to our set of values, then we are not acting in a manner which is true to ourselves. “The notion of identity refers us to certain evaluations which are essential because they are the indispensable horizon or foundation out of which we reflect and evaluate as person.”³⁷ This is why Taylor calls people self-interpreting animals; it is thus that we define ourselves and determine our actions.

34 Ibid., 26.

35 Ibid., 27.

36 Ibid., 33.

37 Ibid., 35.

The interconnectedness of articulation and self is the basis for Taylor's explanation of free will. He discusses it in terms of responsibility, not only for the choices made by the agent, but also for the degree of self-interpretation agents have engaged in to refine their second-order values. Life is constantly putting forth obstacles and experiences which challenge us to investigate our motives and values. Once we meet those challenges and articulate the new dimensions of our motives, we effectively redefine a facet of our identity. While Taylor recognizes that according to this explanation a person's identity is partly formed by the influences of the external world, he contends that individuals are responsible for determining the extent to which they will strive to formulate their own independent articulates of values. He argues that we can never rest confident that our presently articulated values are not erroneous and distorted.³⁸ The self is too complex for us to expect to overcome all self-deluding interpretations:

In any case, our evaluations would always be open to challenge. Because of the character of depth which we saw in the self, our evaluations are articulations of insights which are frequently partial, clouded and uncertain. But they are all the more open to challenge when we reflect that these insights are often distorted by our imperfections of character. For these two reasons evaluation is such that there is always room for reevaluation.³⁹

Thus as agents we are always capable of posing the most fundamental questions: "have I really understood what is essential to my identity? Have I truly determined what sense to be the highest mode of life?"⁴⁰ In asking these questions agents are exploring terrain to which no set yardstick may serve as measure. This is not to say that in this investigation anything goes. We

38 Ibid., 38.

39 Ibid, 39.

40 Ibid., 40

have deep within us an inchoate sense of what is important, and it is this that we try to define.⁴¹ By accessing this internal measure and using it to guide our choices, we are being true to ourselves and hence realizing the autonomy that evaded Kant and Herder. Whether or not we act according to these reflections, we are still endowed with the capacity for free will, which means that we are also responsible for ourselves.⁴²

Taylor's conception of human agency, and the expressivist philosophy of language which supports it, is a reconciliation of the modern dilemma. Freedom can be realized if given the proper conditions, and so we should seek to order the state to facilitate the self-interpretation required for autonomy and self-fulfillment. In effect, we need our linguistic and cultural community, along with its institutions, to provide us with the means for reflection on our proper ends. To understand this is to turn against the modern malaise that leads to alienation and the decline in political participation. If people see their duty and their freedom as one and the same, then the democratic process will be reinvigorated. But how is such a society structured?

Taylor's Political Vision: Deep Diversity and Recognition

In fact, his philosophy of language and agency leads him to a very specific vision of the proper ordering of society. If he is correct, then we can have more or less moral lives, and to a large extent this is a question of personal reflection on our ends and making our choices accordingly. However, it is also a question of the institutional structures in place to become moral and autonomous beings. For instance, we need education, freedom of speech, fora for discourse, religious communities, and access to knowledge about the history of the cultures we

41 Ibid., 41.

42 Ibid., 42.

inhabit. We need the means of self-interpretation as well as the opportunity to act according to the values that guide us. Taylor has taken this political philosophy and applied it to the problems that arise from cultural pluralism. The issue that he has devoted the majority of his attention to has been the Quebec crisis in Canada. He has used his Hegelian speculum to distinguish the philosophical forces that underlie the competing visions of Canada, and he has recast the debate between Quebecers and the rest of Canada (ROC) as a manifestation of the debate between Rousseau's autonomy through the general will, and Kant's procedural liberalism.⁴³ One with a substantive conception of the good to which the entire community is devoted even to the detriment of their own particular self-expression, and the other with an emphasis on our own particular wills which puts the community at a very distant second.⁴⁴

His solution, which is grounded in his conception of agency, is his "deep diversity" thesis.⁴⁵ According to this position, society should accommodate various forms of government within Canada to meet the particular needs of different groups. We cannot impose a single system on all groups regardless of their history and culture. Instead, we must strive to understand the ideas and political aspirations of different cultural groups in Canada. Then, from such a point of understanding, we establish an arrangement in which all parties are satisfied to the greatest extent possible.

43 Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," *Philosophical Arguments*, 240, 246.

44 The distinction between two forms of liberalism as substantive and procedural is borrowed from Ronald Dworkin's essay, "Liberalism," in Stuart Hampshire, ed., *Public and Private Morality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

45 Taylor, "Impediments to A Canadian Future," *Reconciling the Solitudes* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 183.

Taylor distinguishes deep diversity from “first-level diversity,” which is the acceptance of cultural diversity within the state combined with uniform treatment of all groups. Taylor argues that this form of blanket equality is, in fact, not equal because it does not treat different cultures with equal dignity. Indeed, he argues that it is disrespectful to force a culture to accept a form of governing which conflicts with the very elements which make them different:

To build a country for everyone, Canada would have to allow for second-level or “deep” diversity, in which a plurality of ways of belonging should also be acknowledged and accepted. Someone of, say, Italian extraction in Toronto or Ukrainian extraction in Edmonton might indeed feel Canadian as a bearer of individual rights in a multicultural mosaic. His or her belonging would not “pass through” some other community, although the ethnic identity might be important to him or her in various ways. But this person might nevertheless accept that a Québécois or Cree or a Déné might belong in a very different way, that these persons were Canadian through being members of their national communities. Reciprocally, the Québécois, Cree, or Déné would accept the perfect legitimacy of the “mosaic” identity.⁴⁶

Taylor clearly states here that he does not think some form of cultural community affiliation should be obligatory, nor is he advocating the fragmentation or tribalization of Canada. Instead, he is proposing that we accept having more than one formula for citizenship. He emphasizes that this has long been Canada’s way of keeping its Confederation together, and it has only become news as we confront strong pressures to adopt the American-style procedural liberalism. Taylor argues that Canada should permit groups to maintain and develop substantive societal structures for themselves in order to combat the rising sense of alienation. He does not believe that this threatens the rights and liberties of those who are without a hyphenated citizenship, as many Canadians fear.

46 Ibid., 182-3.

At first glance, Taylor's argument is similar to Michael Walzer's defense of cultural groups. In his book *Spheres of Justice*, Walzer advocates that "different social goods ought to be distributed for different reasons, in accordance with different procedures, by different agents; and [that] all these derive from different understanding of the social good themselves – the inevitable product of historical and cultural pluralism."⁴⁷ Like Taylor, Walzer claims that the community plays an important role in forming the values of the individual and hence in order for a theory of justice to work, it must be based on the social goods of the particular community. However, this is where the similarities end.

For Walzer, the primary significance of the link between the cultural community and the individual is that it refutes the aspirations of theorists such as John Rawls to apply their theories of justice universally. Taylor, on the other hand, goes much farther in developing the importance of the unity between the individual and the community. For Taylor, accepting the notion of the agent as embedded in the community has profound implications for our conceptions of morality and freedom.⁴⁸ We need to be able to reflect on our role in the community as it moves through dialectic of history, and from that understanding develop our identities and our ends. Unlike Walzer's theory, Taylor's deep diversity thesis provides us with the tools necessary for the rational evaluation of our priorities, or in other words, freedom.

A further dimension of Taylor's solution to the Quebec crisis is also drawn from Hegel – the importance of recognition. Equality in modern society means having "a regime of reciprocal

⁴⁷ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 6.

⁴⁸ For a thorough assessment of the different forms of communitarianism, see Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).

recognition among equals.”⁴⁹ This is not the homogenizing recognition of Rousseau where any differentiation is perceived as conflicting with the social unity. Nor is it the difference blindness and equal respect championed by procedural liberalism. And it must go beyond the ambitious demand for the institutional structures that will ensure culture survival or even growth. Recognition is the demand to acknowledge the *worth* of the different cultures.⁵⁰ It is part of the identity forging process and it is required in order to prevent assimilation into the culture of the dominant group. When we consider that the identities of human beings are largely formed by the linguistic communities, it follows that equal recognition is more than a matter of good manners. Withholding recognition could inflict damage.⁵¹ Moreover, it cannot simply be an arbitrary recognition on demand. It must be based on a sincere judgment that the culture being considered is deserving of recognition.⁵² Aside from being condescending, any arbitrary recognition would swiftly result in a cultural homogenization because it assumes that whichever fleeting standard for evaluating worth that *au current* is the correct one.⁵³

The difficulty that arises is in determining whether all cultures are equally deserving of recognition and being treated with dignity. Taylor does not wish to make liberalism the measure, as he argues that it is far from value-neutral, and is in many ways a secularized Christianity that cannot be adopted by other religious communities.⁵⁴ That said, certain principles, for instance habeas corpus or the prohibition on incitement to assassination, are non-negotiable. But even with this qualifier, we are still left with a great many issues that are not so evidently beyond

49 “Politics of Recognition,” 241.

50 *Ibid.*, 250.

51 *Ethics of Authenticity*, 49.

52 “Politics,” 254.

53 *Ibid.*, 255.

54 *Ibid.*, 249.

dispute. Taylor argues that we must have a “fusion of horizons” from which we can develop a vocabulary of comparison.⁵⁵

Taylor is not at all clear about what this new vocabulary of comparison will look like. Nor does he explain why exactly we should go to the trouble of granting other cultural groups recognition. Like Grant, when Taylor is pressed to explain why we should treat people with dignity and respect, he falls back on faith. Until quite recently he has been relatively quiet about the Christian underpinnings of his political philosophy, but it has nevertheless been given a subtle mention in several works. Moreover, it shares some qualities of Hegel’s justification for the phases of history all being valuable contributors in the progressive march of human society. In “The Politics of Recognition” he writes: “How can this presumption [of equal worth] be grounded? One ground that has been proposed is religious. Herder, for instance, had a view of divine providence, according to which all this variety of culture was no mere accident but meant to bring about a greater harmony. *I can’t rule out such a view.*”⁵⁶ Is the history of philosophy a study of God’s divine plan? On the last page of *Hegel* he suggests that the call to realizing our freedom comes from God.⁵⁷ If God will that we strive for freedom, then freedom is unity with God. At the close of *Sources of the Self*, his great retrieval of the moral horizons with which we can exercise our agency and form our identities, is ultimately justified as worthwhile not because such horizons are simply the best account, but because “There is a large element of hope. It is a hope that I see implicit in Judaeo-Christian theism (however terrible the record of its adherents in history), and in its central promise of a divine affirmation of the human, more total than humans

55 Ibid., 252.

56 Ibid., 256. My italics.

57 *Hegel*, 571. The same is written on the last page of *Hegel and Modern Society*.

can ever attain unaided.”⁵⁸ Though he does not expand on this, he makes an effort to explain his faith once he takes on the status of professor emeritus.

Taylor Moral Source: A Catholic Modernity

In his *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*, Taylor employs the BA principle to make a philosophical case for faith in God. The existence of God is for Taylor the best explanation for some experience he has had. To make his case, he combines his own idealist criticism of empiricist epistemology with William James’ arguments in *Varieties of Religion*. Previously, Taylor has drawn on the articulations of artists and poets to indicate that there are significant human experiences that are imperceptible to instrumental reason. Here, in addition to Rilke, he discusses James’s account of “religious geniuses” who have experienced a spiritual rebirth out of overwhelming meaninglessness into the more authentic reality of religion. Both James and Taylor argue that rationality is the best account of an experience, and that all forms of knowledge must begin with a horizon of meaning that is accepted on faith. As there is no empirical evidence to confirm or refute God’s existence, they argue that faith in religious feelings is more rational than faith in skepticism because it supports our sanity and our character, and it opens us up to a vast realm of spiritual truths.⁵⁹

In some ways, writing *Varieties* was a religious act in which Taylor rearticulates and re-sanctifies religion for modern believers and those on the cusp. But it is also a political polemic for the right to believe. Our shared uncertainty means that faith is more a matter of choice than a

58 Sources, 521.

59 Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 33-60

question of who is right. Indeed, the liberty to explore religious faith is integral to authentic freedom because we are self-interpreting animals with a history where religion has been paramount. Not only do we need the right to independent spiritual reflection, but we also need institutionalized religion, even though it is often censured for its corrupting effect on spirituality. Here Taylor differs from James who contends that true religious experience is a solitary feeling and institutionalized religion leads to mindless external conformity. Reaffirming his holistic thesis in a different context, Taylor asserts that certain experiences can only be had through a collective expression and this need not involve a surrender of one's will.⁶⁰

But how does Taylor marry his Catholic faith with his argument for autonomy and deep diversity? The history of the church has known many periods of horrendous oppression and persecution, and the rigidity and positivism of its doctrine seems to allow little room for religious tolerance. Is he taking back with one hand what he gave with another? What can deep diversity mean when the measure for determining who deserves recognition is one very particular religious doctrine? These are the queries he responds to in his recently published *A Catholic Modernity?* Taylor is not retreating to a pre-Kantian metaphysics, at least not entirely. He believes that the Enlightenment's humanist ethos and the challenge it posed to the norm of blind deference to traditional religious hierarchies marked a strengthening of Christianity. In a somewhat Lutheran vein, Taylor argues that the new found religious tolerance and pluralism was made possible by the Enlightenment and has resulted in a more refined Christianity that is ultimately more in keeping with Christ's message. The principles of liberalism are an extension

60 Ibid., 20-9.

of Christianity and have been given greater, unqualified expression because they have been reframed as independent of Christianity:

Modern liberal political culture is characterized by an affirmation of universal human rights – to life, freedom, citizenship, self-realization - which are seen as radically unconditional; that is, they are not dependent on such things as gender, cultural belonging, civilizational development, or religious allegiance, which always limited them in the past. As long as we were living within the terms of Christendom – that is, of a civilization where the structures, institutions, and culture were all supposed to reflect the Christian nature of the society (even in nondenominational form in which this was understood in the early United States) – we could never have attained this radical unconditionality. It is difficult for a “Christian” society, in this sense, to accept full equality of rights for atheists, for people of quite alien religion, or for those who violate what seems to be the Christian moral code (e.g. homosexuals).⁶¹

Taylor is seeking here, as he does throughout his writings, to arouse our sense of the good and retrieve a moral horizon that has been somewhat stifled by the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment. But in this piece he is primarily addressing a Christian audience, and so while he points out how humanism can go off course and lead to oppression in the name of high ideals, as it did with the Jacobins and Marxism, and he acknowledges the intolerance and, at times, violence that characterized Christendom, he is really trying to highlight the need to access a facet of our spirituality that can be suppressed by atheists and Christians alike. He contends that, in general, both have assumed an affirmation of the ordinary life against the elitism and pride that comes with the notion of a higher good that some are more devoted to and better understand than others. They tend to be content with the primacy of life – protecting it, and promoting its flourishing. This is the good by which moderns judge behaviour, whether they are atheist

61 Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16-7.

humanists or religious. Taylor argues that morality and the good require a re-centering of our focus from the primacy of life to the transcendent.

Taylor's transcendent is not an ascetic negation of life, but rather a "beyond life." He contrasts it with John Stuart Mill's assertion that "a full life must involve striving for the benefit of humankind."⁶² The transcendent is a point beyond that. There is an inclusive quality to Taylor's argument. His message is presented as one that fits with most of the world's major religions, and he takes Buddhism as his prime example. The point is that there is more to the story than life and by aiming toward it you do not deny life, but rather return to it with a fuller perspective, a perspective that is informed by the fullness of a higher love. For Christians it is known as agape and Buddhists call it *karuna* (compassion).⁶³

When society turns to violent oppression, whether driven by humanist or religious perfectionism, Taylor contends that it is due to the lost sight of the beyond.⁶⁴ In both cases people's sense of self-worth is gauged by the degree to which they are committed to helping others. For Christians this might involve a tendency to help them find faith and result in frustration with those who fail to be perfect Christians as their denomination understands that to be. And for humanists who believe in the perfectibility of human nature and human society, there is often a resentment of those who fail to improve from the help that is given.

Philanthropy and solidarity driven by a lofty humanism, just as that which was driven often by high religious ideals, has a Janus face. On one side, in the abstract, one is inspired to act. On the other, faced with the immense disappointments of actual human performance and with the myriad ways in which

62 Ibid., 20.

63 Ibid., 22.

64 Ibid., 28.

real, concrete human beings fall short of, ignore, parody, and betray this magnificent potential, one experiences a growing sense of anger and futility. Are these people really worthy objects of all these efforts? Perhaps in the face of all this stupid recalcitrance, it would not be a betrayal of human worth, or one's self-worth, to abandon them – or perhaps the best that can be done for them is to force them to shape up.⁶⁵

To answer the initial question of how to reconcile a particular religious faith with the tolerant doctrine of deep diversity, Taylor tells us that only through the love that comes with faith can we truly expect to live up to the standards set by liberal political culture. And in response to the standard criticism of modernity leveled by many Christians, he reminds us that Catholic means unity and wholeness, not sameness.⁶⁶ Complementarity not conformity is the essence of unity, and this is the essence of the gospel ethic that emerges from the Incarnation. The Redeemer has given us new life through love, and this means loving all of the diversity that God has created. Christians must accept a level of humility in the realization that only in the Enlightenment's toppling of Christendom have the principles of Christianity – universal human rights – been truly embraced. Concurrently, they are left with an equally potent sense of unease because the widespread denial of the transcendent could result in actions that contradict those principles.

Faith in the transcendent is by no means presented by Taylor as a practical solution to social problems. In *A Catholic Modernity?*, he repeats his contention that faith is the best account of human experience, and he reinforces his earlier argument by illustrating that even the atheist arguments of Nietzsche strive to make a case for something more than the primacy of life. While for Nietzsche it is the will to power rather than the transcendent, there is nevertheless the

65 Ibid., 32.

66 Ibid., 14.

conviction that humanism alone is an empty form of self-gratification.⁶⁷ Of course, this is by no means proof of transcendence. It is ultimately a matter of faith. And it is from this faith that Taylor derives his hope that for all the ills of modernity there is hope. And the way to realize this hope is love. And regardless of the great challenges posed to the flourishing of this message in our time, Taylor can continue to rely on providence and prayer: “Perhaps is it not contingent that it is the century both of Auschwitz and Hiroshima and of Amnesty International and Médecins sans Frontières ... Let us pray that we can do better this time.”⁶⁸

So it would seem that ultimately the trinity of faith, hope and love are the cornerstones of Taylor’s political philosophy. Christianity, not Hegelianism, thus seems to be Taylor’s creed. But, as we have learned from his philosophy of language and of history, what are these concepts but abstractions when taken out of context. To build a political philosophy, he must draw on far more than Christian theology. He must dip his bucket into the well of history that has given form to the liberal political culture he admires. He must learn from the analysis of other philosophers to identify and defend against the malaises of modernity, the corrosion of meaning, the stunted conception of freedom, and the loss of community. And as he makes clear himself, there is none more important to his work than Hegel.

Does this make him a Hegelian? Not if what we mean by this is that he puts Hegel above his Christian faith, or he accepts the embodiment of God in nature. However, if it means that he admires Hegel’s work above all others and his political philosophy is most influenced by Hegel’s thought, then the answer is ‘yes.’ Yes, Taylor takes up the torch from Hegel, and if we accept

67 Ibid., 28.

68 Ibid., 37.

that Taylor's metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's *Geist* is incorrect, then he may well be more in keeping with Hegel than he is willing to acknowledge. His conception of freedom, though undoubtedly infused with agape, is Hegel's synthesis of Kant and Herder. His conception of reason is grounded in the idealism, dialectic interpretation and philosophy of history articulated by Hegel. His source of meaning flows from Hegel's account of the historical progression of the human consciousness of freedom. His political philosophy in which he reconciles individual freedom with the common good is sewn together with Hegel's theories of *Sittlichkeit* and recognition. Even Taylor's assertion of Christian faith has striking similarities to Hegel's own as discussed above in the section on George Grant. All these elements combined provide a fairly substantial case for calling Taylor a Hegelian, and yet, however much he derives from Hegel, there are aspects of his work that are distinctive.

Rather than claiming to have a complete philosophical system, he prefers to rest on the system provided by Hegel, drawing from it whatever can be sustained by his BA principle. Conveniently, he need not have an irrefutable account of the whole because he can borrow from one who has done the leg work. Moreover, he places far greater emphasis on faith than Hegel does. According to the non-metaphysical reading of Hegel, Christianity was held apart from the system. Hegel claimed to be Christian, but he put it aside while he worked out his system. While Taylor refrains from writing about his faith until late in his career, it is never really so disassociated from his work. At times, it is mentioned in passing, and it is likely the explanation for why he never attempts to give totalizing account of things. It is present without being entirely explicit. Once we take into account his recent writings, however, we find that Taylor has followed very neatly in one tradition that has a name. It is a tradition that is grounded in Hegel's

work, though it is characterized by a stern denial of being Hegelian. It is the tradition he was exposed to as a young scholar at Trinity College School and McGill University. It is the tradition treated in this thesis. Charles Taylor, with his apparently accidental attraction to Hegel's political philosophy, is a Canadian Idealist.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

In modernity, we are born free, but there is nothing of significance for us to do. This is the promise that comes with the emerging supremacy of classical liberalism. The importance of our actions barely reaches beyond our own skin, and even then some of the humble among us might wonder how our own comfort and entertainment can truly be called important. Pleasure is pleasant, but to what end? In the struggle for freedom we have broken away from the traditional authorities and their superstitious assertions about a higher purpose. We have put government in its place, not as an embodiment of a grand, national ideal, but as a service provider which is paid in the form of taxes to keep order. We pursue our private interests, and though we may feel small and powerless in the face of the cosmos or society at large, we are satisfied that though these forces may jostle us about, we owe them nothing. We try to generate our sense of purpose on a micro-social level, and we have many creative means to suppress the yearning to be part of something bigger.

With this as our condition, where does our national identity fit in? What does it mean to be Canadian when I am primarily defined by my most immediate set of desires? What is Canada other than a collective of self-interested individuals scurrying around for their piece of the pie? Surely it is no more than a mere contract not unlike those found in the market place and indistinguishable from those found in other developed countries, and it is valuable insofar as it succeeds in keeping the peace and facilitating wealth production. And if Canada is no more than this, then there is nothing of consequence to lose by allowing Canada's sovereignty dissolve in the winds of globalization, so long as the new arrangement is equally lucrative.

Many have come to adopt this truncated view of humanity as mere accumulators, not realizing that the way we conceive of human nature and the individual's relationship to the state helps determine the way we will act and how we will structure society. As they act out their beliefs, certain valuable facets of society will be lost, and they will wonder how things could have gone so poorly. Will they then press on undaunted in their project of dismantling the progressive institutions of government, confident that their approach will eventually be vindicated? Taylor has said that modern society "is Romantic in its private and imaginative life and utilitarian or instrumental in its public, effective life."¹ There is a good deal of truth to this statement, though it is more figurative than literal. The mix is far messier overall, with people at times appreciative of the acts of national spirit, while simultaneously denying their value. Individuals are concerned about their authentic fulfillment, but they quickly lose track of what that means and are once again captivated by the sweet delights of the market place.

Consequently, on the question of whether to maintain Canadian sovereignty or to merge with some larger economic engine, there is little resistance to saying farewell to the quaint maple leaf. Those nostalgic holdouts clinging to a national dream do so by defining Canada in terms of what it is not: It is not the boastful radical individualism that they attribute the United States. Somehow Canadians are more peaceful and law-abiding, kinder and fairer. But where is this kindness if we have come to see the state not as organism infused with the spirit of a compassionate people striving for some higher purpose, but a contract enforcer and service provider? It must exist only on an individual level, and when it is generalized it refers to the many individuals who happen to live within a certain set of borders.

¹ *Hegel*, 541.

Canadians do not have a defining revolution, or a vivid beginning that can be regarded as the font of their national identity, to be referred to in times of strife or when pausing at a crossroads. When pressed to define themselves they might clamber for a smattering of barely related icons without having any clear sense of how they can really be seen as parts of a whole. Did Terry Fox run to raise money for cancer research because he was Canadian, or is he a symbol of Canada because Canadians want to be associated with his courage? There may be no way to answer this, but there is a way to tie some of these parts together. There is a facet of the experience that presents a coherent vision of the individual, the community, and the higher purpose which we are engaged in. It is an intellectual tradition that has had a formative impact on our culture and our institutions. It cannot be said to define the 'Canadian way,' because there are many Canadians who stand outside of it and are no less Canadian for that. But it does define the priorities of a substantial portion of Canadians, and many of our greatest are counted among them, both those who have made their contributions and those work at it today. And it may well be this idealism that accounts for the similarities found in the amalgam of icons that are often patched together to give a picture of the Canadian spirit.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to identify that intellectual tradition and show how it has been articulated in the political philosophies of three of Canada's most prominent thinkers. The aspiration is that it will restore Canadian Idealism to its rightful place in the forefront of Canadian consciousness, to be championed and challenged, nurtured and embattled. However it fares, it should not be allowed to be lost out of neglect and pass away with a whimper. The amnesiac obsession with all things new must not be permitted to stifle the memory of the Canadian identity as it took form in the philosophical idealism of our scholars, cultural

figures, church leaders, and politicians. These people and their ideas that have played so great a role in defining the character of Canada - a country widely admired for its fairness and commitment to peace - must be given a place of prominence worthy of their tremendous contribution to the development of liberal democracy.

C.B. Macpherson, George Grant, and Charles Taylor have played pivotal roles in carrying the torch of this tradition, and sharing its light with their students and their readers around the world. Macpherson's possessive individualism thesis made him one of the foremost Western political philosophers of his day. While Grant may not have had much influence beyond Canada's borders, his work as a popular philosopher, speaking over the heads of the intellectuals in his polemical essays and radio shows, gave him arguably the highest profile in Canada of the three. And Taylor has attained an extraordinary level of international recognition that continues to grow. Each gives us different lessons about the potential application of Idealism, the truths it uncovers, the dilemmas it raises and the nature of the country and the times in which they have lived.

Macpherson's distinction between developmental powers and extractive powers provides us with a means to explore the inequities of the unbridled market place, and reminds us of the need for economic intervention by a government that has not lost sight of its obligations to the flourishing of all. Macpherson took the empirical tone of political economy and infused it with the moral harmonies of Green, and the classical teleology of Aristotle, all unified with a strong Hegelian bass. His idealism edged its way into the discourse disguised as combination of hard economics and intellectual history, though his Marxist terminology ensured he would not be mistaken for an agent of the status quo. It was a combination that drew attention for being critical

of naked capitalism, but people were sufficiently familiar with these cries from the left. They were not as shocked as they would have been had Macpherson touted some Idealist metaphysics, which is what crippled Grant's career in academia. Macpherson also stands an example of the vulnerability that comes with part measures. His assertion that we have a moral right to enjoy our human capacities was persuasively criticized for its inadequate support. He responded by stating that it is more pleasant to believe that we are moral beings rather than sheer accumulators driven by necessity. But is this enough? In this regard, his work indicates that a retrieval of Hegel's thought, including the notion of reciprocal recognition, is called for to enhance our understanding of human nature and the institutions required to accommodate its fulfillment. A greater case can be made, and has been made, for moral obligations to one another without falling back on a question of preference.

Grant exemplifies the Christian form of Canadian Idealism that had generally fallen out of favour in the 1920s. Emboldened by his experience at Oxford, he attempted to press this message regardless of the ire it raised among other Canadian philosophers. He dreamt that Canada could be the point of genesis for the Hegelian synthesis, and his optimism was contagious. Although, while his enthusiasm for this new dawn made him popular among his students and his eloquence won him a wide audience for his writings and talks, he was soundly trounced more than once by his fellow scholars. This persecution by his peers inspired him to take an increasingly aggressive stand against the direction adopted by the universities, the government, and society as a whole. And his faith in progress was shaken by the arguments of Leo Strauss. Though he lost his dream, he fought on in his writings till the bitter end, and for him the end was bitter indeed.

Nevertheless, his work continues to offer worthwhile insights into contemporary debates. In his most renowned work, he highlights the potential of a sovereign Canada to champion the principles of Idealism and to serve as fertile soil for cultivating the rational state. In lesser known works, he has provocative suggestions for Canada's potential international role, he warns us against the deterioration of the universities, and he paints a vivid picture of our internalization of technology as a way of knowing the world. And yet, perhaps his most overlooked work, "Two Theological Languages," is one that most deserves our consideration. While modernity is on one level characterized by a lost sense of higher purpose, there has also been a healthy revival of evangelical Christianity in North America. This revival is very likely informed by the same resentment of truncated rationalism that concerned Grant, but it takes a direction that Grant did not pursue. Where do we draw the line between competing forms of Christianity? Grant identifies two distinct theological languages, one putting reason before God and another that has an excessive disregard for individual reason. Grant proposes a synthesis. His analysis provides a means to understand the issue at stake and the path to resolving it. At a time when we see the neo-liberal agenda being buttressed by the evangelical movement, it will require more than explaining the nature of extractive powers to persuade people to choose a different path. It must be argued that morality will not be defended by attacking the role of government, but by ensuring that government is living up to its duty to represent the ethical life of the state. An important part of this ethical life, moreover, is the conviction that individual fulfillment entails rationally developing one's own ends.

Taylor's work on religion makes a similar case, though his focus at the moment is on Catholicism.² Taylor wishes to reconcile Christians who are dismayed by the effects of modernity to the view that the break from tradition brought on by the Enlightenment and the emphasis on individual freedom are an essential component to the realization of Christian principles and, perhaps, Providence. Taylor remains undeterred by the Straussian line of argument; he is optimistic that our problems can be resolved as long as we conceive of public life as part of our identity and that we participate in the governing of our society. No "muttering retreats / of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / and sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells,"³ or remaining aloof in the stance of what Hegel calls the "beautiful soul," never compromising with the concrete. He calls for public engagement that is complemented by an understanding of the fundamental importance that our institutions have to the formation of our identities. This understanding should inspire a respect for the need for a deep diversity approach to cultural pluralism, as well as the legitimacy of the human need for recognition. This is the path to overcoming the modern phenomenon of the divided self.

There is a fairly smooth connection between Taylor's Christian faith and his argument for deep diversity, and the bridge between the two is Hegel's philosophy, which he champions. He seems to diverge from Hegel at roughly the same point as T.H. Green and John Watson. He is concerned about the notion of a God bound to nature and he questions the soundness of Hegel's philosophical system. The civic humanist reading of Hegel gives convincing reasons to question this interpretation of Hegel, and indicates that Taylor was more in agreement with Hegel than he

² Also, it might be noted, he was far more reserved than Grant in expressing the importance of Christianity to his thought, saving it for the late afternoon of his career.

³ T.S. Eliot, *T.S. Eliot Selected Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, Publishers, 1936), 11.

knew. Regardless of this dispute on the most accurate reading of Hegel, Taylor's use of Hegel's work makes considerable advances on issues that seemed to stump Macpherson and Grant, arguably because he went directly to the source. Whereas Macpherson's account of human nature rested on his preference to believe it, Taylor has written extensively on the importance of language, and our moral horizons. Taylor has also validates Macpherson's argument for preference in developing the best account principle. Ultimately, like Macpherson and Grant, Taylor, too, is compelled to bow out of philosophy and rest his position on a leap of faith, but he does so much later than his predecessors.

There are a great many other Canadians who we might find fit the profile of the Canadian Idealist. We might include one of Macpherson's mentors, Harold Innis, or his students, such as Ed Broadbent and Douglas Moggach.⁴ Among those in Grant's circle, we might include his friends, the journalist Charles Taylor,⁵ the poet Dennis Lee, the painter Alex Colville, as well as his nephew and U of T political philosopher Edward Andrew. Taylor's circle might include his friend and fellow philosopher G.A. Cohen, and his student and admirer Jack Layton. There are a great many others, such as the influential Ottawa Mayor Charlotte Whitton, literary critic Northrop Frye, novelists Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies, economist and writer Stephen Leacock - the list could go on. By identifying the presence of this tradition we are better situated not only to understand some of our foremost leaders in every field, but also ourselves and what we stand for. This will surely help as we set out to navigate the choppy waters that lie ahead.

⁴ See Moggach's *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁵ Not to be confused with the Taylor treated in this dissertation.

Idealism's reconciliation of individual freedom and civic unity is achieved through a conception of positive liberty that elevates us above our status of either buyers or sellers, in perpetual cycle of self-gratification where the highest purpose is wealth accumulation. It recasts us as players in a larger moral narrative, and gives us a greater significance than mere bundles of appetites. We need not feel stunted in relation to the world at large because we are bound for our short lives to focus on satisfying the most immediate desires, which pull us to and fro. We need not feel powerless in the face of either these desires or the social, market, and political forces that tell us what we should like and how much of it we can hope to get. We are participants in a high-souled societal project of self-actualization, love, reason, and moral fulfillment, not grunting and scratching our way through a "city of pigs" blind to all but the most immediate self-interests. This is the promise of Canadian Idealism, and this is the inheritance we are privileged to enjoy, refine and pass on.

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