

Idealism and Identity:
George Grant and Charles Taylor
Confront The Modern Dilemma

by

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B.A., Concordia University, 1995

Thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts (Political Science)

Acadia University
Spring Convocation 1998

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0-612-27586-8

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Abstract

This thesis discusses the communitarian political philosophies of two prominent Canadian thinkers, George Grant and Charles Taylor. By focussing on the Hegelian influence of their thought, the author argues that both Grant and Taylor have developed, via their assumed ontologies, artificial conceptions of the self in relation to community and culture. These ontologies led Grant and Taylor to defend inadequate theories about the just ordering of the state. The context of the discussion presented in this thesis ranges from the larger issue of the crisis of the modern age, to the particular impact of that crisis on Canadian cultural politics.

It is widely believed that the modern age is experiencing a profound eschatological crisis. Previously established moral structures are being challenged by a secular scientific culture. The crisis is being experienced on personal and political levels. Philosophy, sociology, psychiatry, and art all contemplate the modern individual's struggle with anomy, alienation and existential despair.

In politics, this crisis is seen in terms of cultural fragmentation, and/or the collapse of a moral foundation for theories of justice. Fragmentation is considered a crisis because it is difficult to construct a state which reflects the diversity of interests and identities. The collapse of morality is feared because without a moral order there is no bulwark against tyranny. The philosophical debate regarding this crisis has resulted in the establishment of two factions, communitarians and individualists.

Grant and Taylor analyze Canada's crisis of identity in light of this larger philosophical dilemma. Both ground their analyses in significant ways in the philosophy of G.W. Hegel and both conclude by advocating state protection of cultural groups. Their prescriptions are based on the importance of providing a moral context within which justice can be nourished. The author suggests that Grant and Taylor are mistaken in their championing of cultural communities. Rather he construes humanity as a complex web of interacting diverse cultural influences.

References Given in Abbreviated Forms

LN - *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*, George Grant (1965)

PMA - *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, George Grant (1959)

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my father for raising questions at the fireside atop Honeywell Hill and igniting the spark of philosophical wonder and political concern. I am also grateful to him for proof-reading much of this thesis.

I am grateful to my mother who *arched over those new eyes the friendly world. Who displaced for him with [her] slender figure, the surging abyss... Nowhere a creak you could not explain with a smile.*⁴

I am grateful to Dr. Greg Pyrcz for his generosity of spirit, encouragement and expert guidance.

I am grateful to those friends who brightened the days, and who went beyond the call of duty in assisting me in my academic endeavours: Carol McQueen, Greg Clarke and Lisa Hammett Vaughan.

I am grateful to the institutions which continue to value the quest for truth.

I am grateful to George Grant and Charles Taylor for fueling the fires that began those Honeywell nights.

⁴Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Third Elegy" *Duino Elegies*, trans. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1963), 37.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

There are some recurring themes in modern contemporary art, philosophy, and politics. We often hear of the fragmentation of perspective, meaning, and society. At the same time, we hear about globalization or cultural homogenization. These assessments of the trends in modern culture are considered by different people to be either positive or negative developments; fragmentation and homogenization can be thought of as being either contradictory or complementary. Linked to these themes are the concerns that we live in a post-moral world in which God is dead and the shallow anti-ethic of narcissism or consumerism guides our lives. In contrast, there is the common fear of the rise of the Christian and Islamic fundamentalism or the spread of pagan religious cults. All these competing perspectives reflect people's desire to uncover the essential quandary of the modern condition, and usually each perspective claims to have the key to how we can address the true source of human suffering, and from there find effective solutions to the variety of social problems that plague us. It is often said that we moderns are suffering because we have somehow gone off track, we have broken with nature in some fundamental way and we must try to discover where we erred. The one point on which they all agree is that they are struggling for freedom from the false order we have constructed.

I have no intention of boldly asserting the essence of modernity, nor do I claim to comprehend what it means to be free. In my thesis these points are left a mystery, and much of my argumentation is based on the contention that the concepts of eschatological essence and freedom are elusive, if not chimera. In my thesis I analyze the arguments of two influential Canadian political theorists who have taken a stand on the larger themes I have listed, and who have attempted to examine a diverse set of philosophical, methodological and political issues from the perspective they have adopted. The particular issue that I am concerned with is cultural

pluralism and ethnic diversity in Canada. It is from the point of this concrete political issue that I reach into the political philosophies of George Grant and Charles Taylor. My agenda in this thesis is multifaceted. On one level I am illustrating that there are many similarities between Grant and Taylor and that this is due to their situatedness in a firmly established Canadian intellectual tradition. In terms of my main argument however, I have two primary lines of criticism. Not only do I critique their political views concerning multiculturalism, but I also expose the errors in the fundamental premises of their philosophical perspectives. Indeed, I believe that by looking at the ontological and methodological foundation of their philosophies we can best comprehend their politics and, moreover, the subtler implications of their proposals. Thus my analysis includes an investigation of their treatment of the questions of human agency, time as history, morality and culture.

In short, I argue that Grant and Taylor belong to a tradition of Canadian idealism which has been strongly informed by the philosophy of GW Hegel. It is my contention that by reading their work in light of this Hegelian influence we can see the misleading conceptions of freedom, the self and cultural communities which they have developed and the divisive and oppressive potential of the resulting political views. While many people have argued for and against the culturalist and nationalist politics of Grant and Taylor, the significance of Hegelianism has been underemphasized, and in Grant's case it has been almost universally regarded as unimportant. Moreover, my thesis contributes the unique perspective of looking at them not as isolated political philosophers who share an interest in Hegel, but rather as members of a scarcely acknowledged Canadian intellectual tradition which has been documented by a few intellectual historians, but virtually ignored in the literature on Canadian political thought.

George Grant was born in 1918 and died in 1988. He received a BA in history from Queen's before going on to study law and theology at Oxford. He returned to Canada and became one of Canada's most prominent political philosophers. He began publishing articles on Canadian nationalism in the 1940's and for the next forty years he continued to stir the minds of academics and non-academics alike with penetrating and provocative essays and books on a myriad of subjects. He is best known for his pamphlet sized book, *Lament for a Nation*, published in 1965, in which he announced that the death of conservatism in Canada marked the death of Canadian nationalism. This book became astonishingly popular and sparked a revival of patriotism among many young Canadians. At the moment, Grant is receiving a significant amount of well deserved attention. Most recently the University of Toronto Press has published *The George Grant Reader*.

Charles Taylor was born 1931 and is a professor at McGill University in Montreal. He has had a remarkable academic career, and has become one of the leading political philosophers of our time. He held the prestigious Chichele chair at his alma mater, Oxford University from 1976 to 1979, and was recently awarded the Canada Council's Molson Prize for working with distinction in the area of the humanities and social sciences. His monograph *Hegel* has established him as a foremost authority on Hegel's work, and his extensive publications on Canadian politics and particularly the Quebec crisis have been central in the academic discourse in both French and English Canada for 35 years. In the 1960s he was a frequent contributor to *Cité Libre*, and in 1965 he ran as an NDP against Pierre Trudeau in the Mount Royal riding of Montreal.

Grant and Taylor address cultural pluralism beginning with a larger philosophical question about justice: How do we navigate the seas between the Charibdis of chaotic meaninglessness, and the Scylla of tyrannous dogma, the Charibdis of pure, unhindered will and the Scylla of absolute, unyielding law? Throughout history philosophers have had to confront the personal struggle between nihilism and transcendent law. We find hubristic nihilism beautifully articulated by Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Upon realizing he has been cast down from heaven, Satan asserts his independence from the authority of God:

Farewell happy fields
 Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
 Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
 Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than he
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
 We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
 Here for his envy, will not drive us hence;
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition though in hell:
 Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.¹

Milton captures the opposition between pure human freedom and divine law. We, like Satan are aware of an order to the universe, though we may not wish to accept its authority. Instead, we may place our faith in our own reason, through which we can make a heaven of hell, without a divine authority to reign over us. This may seem like an unwarranted digression, but it is crucial

¹ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971), Book I, lines 249-64.

to understanding the perspectives of Grant and Taylor. It is central to Grant's fundamental question, if we are detached possessors of reason and freedom, and there is no divine authority, what makes justice our due? Grant and Taylor seek to establish some form of system which includes an authority greater than individual will. They set themselves against the popular criticism of organized religion that contends that a moral law dictated from on high is merely a device through which an elite can restrict the freedom of the mass. To overcome the popular voice they must confront the great riddle, how can religion claim to unite the seeming contradiction of individual liberty and external authority? How can a community thrive without finding a solution to this paradox? As Joan O'Donovan points out, this has been a running concern throughout Grant's career: "These political essays ... contain the tensions that will dominate Grant's late philosophical reflection. These are the tensions between the authority of tradition and the claims of thought, between law and freedom, between the universal good and the particular good."²

Using Hegel was crucial to unlocking the fundamental elements of the arguments employed by Grant and Taylor. In their discussions of multiculturalism they use Hegel's philosophy as a point of perspective, but they do not always explicitly link Hegel's arguments to the issue they are addressing. Only upon familiarizing ourselves with Hegel can we realize the extent to which he has influenced their work. Without a knowledge of Hegel, the assumptions underlying their arguments are not always apparent, and it is difficult to see how their various arguments complement one another. By way of introduction, I will briefly set out the modern

² Joan O'Donovan, *George Grant and the Twilight of Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 14.

dilemma as understood by Hegel and adopted by Grant and Taylor, then I will describe the conception of the state that emerges from it.

According to Hegel, the modern dilemma lies in finding a way to reconcile the two competing philosophical forces that have emerged in reaction to the Enlightenment. Hegel was among many 19th century thinkers who believed the Enlightenment had developed a distasteful conception of humanity. Hegel maintained that the scientific world view of the Enlightenment objectified humanity and nature, reducing everything to its component parts, and maintaining that everything can be manipulated through scientific engineering. Enlightenment thinkers sought to reorganize nature and society to overcome all forms of human suffering. Individuals were regarded as isolated from society and nature, and their actions were understood in terms of causality. Humanity was considered to be as understandable and malleable as plants in a hothouse.

The two forces that reacted against this knowledge paradigm are best represented by the expressivism of Herder and the radical freedom of Immanuel Kant. I will begin with expressivism. Herder maintained that human life [has] a unity rather analogous to that of a work of art, where every part or aspect only [finds] its proper meaning in relation to all the others.”³ In contrast to the atomistic conception of the self offered by the Enlightenment, Herder argued that humanity is expressive by virtue of belonging to a culture; and a culture is sustained, nourished and handed down in a community.”⁴ We are bound to and fulfilled by our culture and our

³ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

community. Expressivism rejects the utilitarian notion that the state is merely an instrument to mediate a contractual relationship between separate isolated citizens. Expressivism maintains that fulfillment is achieved through familiarity with the guiding principle of one's culture and acting in accordance with it. According to the expressivist view, humanity "is not body and mind compounded but an expressive unity englobing both."⁵ We are united with our culture, our community and nature. We must recover this self-conception from the analytic, disiccating stance of objectifying science."⁶

The second philosophical force that characterizes our age is the radical freedom best articulated by Kant. Kant opposed the Enlightenment conception of freedom because it did not include any sense of making choices based on what was morally right. It reduced human will to causality, where one's decisions are based on the desire for happiness. Kant argued that "instead of being dispersed throughout [her] diverse desires and inclinations the morally free subject must be able to gather [her]self together, as it were, and make a decision about [her] total commitment."⁷ According to Kant, moral law is categorical and it binds us despite the sacrifices we might have to make. Kant's notion of freedom is considered radical because he maintains that individuals are bound to the moral imperative which they follow through their rational will. Kant has managed to bring together moral law and individual freedom by asserting that moral law is binding *a priori*, and that we are free when we break from desire and use our reason to act morally. Thus we are independent of the natural world and causality.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

Grant and Taylor perceive modernity as being the conflict between the unity of expressivism and the individualism of radical freedom. These two philosophical forces lie at the heart of most manifestations of political and social discord in our times. In the area of multiculturalism, it is the struggle between communitarianism and liberalism, or individualism. For instance, the Quebec crisis is interpreted as a struggle by those who identify their community in expressivist terms, and feel threatened by the largely individualistic ethos of the rest of Canada. Like Hegel, Grant and Taylor do not champion either pure expressivism or radical freedom, but rather seek to synthesize the two philosophies by drawing upon the virtues of both. Hegel provides the ontological and methodological formula for achieving this synthesis, and Grant and Taylor draw from it to formulate their versions of the just ordering of the state.

The idea of the state that they develop from this synthesis is never explicitly set out in a treatise, but one can draw the main principles from their writings. While there are some differences between their conclusions on multiculturalism among other things, the main principles of the philosophy of the state are held in common. One of the most important assertions is that the institutions and culture of the state are formed by the progressive development of ideas, the most important idea being the notion of freedom. According to Grant and Taylor, the institutions of the state reflect our culture and our ethics, and therefore the institutions provide a context in which citizens can gain knowledge of their cultural identity and the ideas that have evolved over time, such as freedom. As well as being the source of our identity, the institutions of the state provide us with a sense of order and safety so that we can fulfill ourselves as human beings. This view of the state was well articulated by the British philosopher F.H. Bradley:

The child ... is born ... into a living world ... He does not even think of his separate self; he grows with his world, his mind fills and orders itself; and when he can separate himself from that world, and know himself apart from it, then by that time his self, the object of his self-consciousness, is penetrated, infected, characterized by the existence of others ... He learns, or already perhaps has learnt, to speak, and here he appropriates the common heritage of his race, the tongue that he makes his own is his country's language, it is ... the same that others speak, and it carries into his mind the ideas and sentiments of the race ... and stamps them indelibly. He grows up in an atmosphere of example and general custom ... The soul within him is saturated, is filled, is qualified by, it has assimilated, has got its substance, has built itself up from, it is one and the same life with the universal life, and if he turns against this he turns against himself.⁸

Included in this organic conception of the state, the just community includes a notion of a common good toward which all citizens work, and to the authority of which all citizens defer. Citizens realize their freedom by recognizing that their interests are tied to the health of the state and that they best serve themselves by freely choosing to do their duty for the state. They do not find fulfillment in focussing upon their particular self-oriented desires. To quote from Henry V, "Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own."⁹ In Canada's democratic, constitutional monarchy this means participating in democratic discourse to assist in determining the community's common purpose. Thus, this system does not suppress individual freedom, but rather encourages rational individual participation in defining the authoritative law of the state. Included in this notion of community is the idea of duty. We are responsible for the welfare of all citizens as well as responsible to the common purpose. This organic conception of

⁸ Quoted in Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 34.

⁹ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) 4.1.168-70.

community not only entails the idea that all its members are bound to each other historically and culturally, but also that they are bound to the laws of nature and God.

The trouble with modernity, according to Grant and Taylor, is that the present institutions of the state do not effectively reflect this organic vision, thus people are ceasing to identify with the state and are losing their sense of allegiance. In their anxiety, many have sought other subcommunities which better represent their values, and others have simply retrenched in their traditional cultures. Grant and Taylor are supportive of these efforts to realize fulfilling cultures, but they would prefer if Canada as a whole could represent the principles of the organic state, and individual cultures could act as vehicles for a greater allegiance. That is to say, by finding fulfillment in their immediate cultures, they would develop a loyalty to the large umbrella state that protects their interests.

I would now like briefly to state the line of arguments I have developed in response to Grant and Taylor. I make four main points against the Hegelian assumptions adopted by Grant, then I go on to offer three additional criticisms of Taylor's work. First, I maintain that there is no justification for assuming that time as history has been the progressive development of the human consciousness of freedom. The claim that the history of human civilization has been a progressive development of our knowledge of freedom is more an assertion of faith than of fact. Second, following from the first, I argue that there is no justification for the assumption that by interpreting our ideational history that we can gain an insight into the role our era plays in the progression of the consciousness of freedom. That is to say, if history is not a progressive development of our knowledge of freedom, then there is no reason to believe we can discern our ideal role by interpreting history. Third, I contend that the form of communitarianism and

freedom that Grant discerns from interpreting history as the progressive consciousness of freedom is not convincing because it makes radical demands based on an unsound ontology and methodology. His depiction of the Canadian cultural identity as a national philosophical idealism is unfounded, and his conception of freedom involves too many assumptions about the self and society. Finally, in the realm of practical politics, Grant's subsequent conclusions of the importance of maintaining a bi-national Canada depict an artificial conception of the cultural landscape of the country and could only be realized through the oppression and marginalization of many Canadians.

In my criticism of Taylor I carry over the assertion that history is not the progression of the consciousness of freedom, but then I employ an additional line of criticism. First, I show that his language based explanation of human agency is invalid because it rests on two false assumptions. a) language is the fundamental level of human consciousness, and b) we can transcend our cultural socialization through language. Whereas Grant justified his conception of freedom with an interpretation of history and faith in God, Taylor relies on the theory that language is the fundamental level of human consciousness. By refuting his philosophy of language, I undermine his conception of freedom. Therefore, rather than seeing language communities as providing tools for human autonomy, they are seen as sources of systemic oppression. Second, I challenge Taylor's depiction of cultures as isolated unities and argue instead that there is far more global transcultural overlap than he accounts for. He claims that we can only be free within our fixed cultural context, but I argue that trans-cultural interaction has rendered

such cultural unities artificial. Finally, I conclude that his deep diversity approach to multiculturalism is misleading and potentially oppressive and divisive.

The chapters of this essay are set up as follows. Chapter two provides a basic explication of Hegel's ontology with special attention given to his views on the relationship between culture and the state. This discussion of Hegelianism helps us to better understand Grant's ontology which at times can be hidden in rhetoric and loose scholarship. It also provides some background knowledge of Hegel which is helpful in our discussion of Taylor.

Chapter three provides an introduction to Grant's political and philosophical thought. The chapter sets out the essential elements of Grant's communitarianism. It includes a summary of his conservatism and nationalism, and his Hegelian assessment of the modern crisis. The main intention of this chapter is to explain Grant's ontology and methodology in light of his Hegelianism, and to illustrate how these provide the foundation for his communitarianism.

Chapter four presents my criticism of Grant's Hegelian ontology and his conception of the just state. In the final analysis it becomes a question of defining human freedom and extracting from that definition an idea of how society can best be structured to facilitate freedom. Thus I attempt to show where Grant's notion of freedom fails and how his subsequent ordering of the state would be unaccommodating both for Lockean or Millian strains of freedom, and for Grant's own notion of freedom.

Chapter five begins the discussion of Charles Taylor's Hegelian perception of modernity and his application of that perception to his analysis of the Quebec crisis.

Chapter six sets out Taylor philosophy of human agency and his view on the relationship between culture and human freedom. In chapter seven I argue that his conclusions regarding human agency are inadequate and therefore his subsequent political philosophy is problematic.

This project touches on a broad spectrum of ideas, but centres on one specific political problem: multiculturalism. In my thesis, I work to provide a more accurate depiction of Canada than is offered by two of our foremost political thinkers with the hopes that it will function as a more just perspective from which to address this complex issue.

CHAPTER II : THE MODERN DILEMMA & HEGEL'S PRECEPTS

The aim of this chapter is to provide an introduction to Hegel in order to identify the precepts of the idealist tradition with which Grant and Taylor are associated. Hegel is a counter-revolutionary of the scientific revolution. He develops his phenomenology in reaction to the Enlightenment defiance of faith and espousal of pure reason. Hegel fears that Enlightenment thought will lead to a conception of the self that will result in extreme atomism and hedonism.¹⁰ He and some of his contemporaries believed that this would create a level of fragmentation in society where differences could only be resolved by a Thrasimachian notion of justice, the right of the stronger.¹¹ This fear was not merely theoretical; it stemmed from the very real experience of witnessing the Terror of post-revolutionary France. Without some form of common moral code rooted in the community, such as tradition and religion, the political field is left without limit: there is only caprice. Moreover, that faith which remains in the wake of the Enlightenment has lost its position as a way of knowing the world and God, and has been reduced to mere belief - a secondary adjunct to reason. Hegel argues that this weak and empty form of faith would soon give way to nihilism.¹² If faith is neither above nor on par with the individual's power to reason, morality will erode. They may strive for equality and the

¹⁰ Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

actualization of the general will, but, without a strong faith, the general will cannot engage in any positive action; it has no common good to work towards. It can only attempt to restrain difference. The general will would oppose any efforts at creating a societal order, because any order would threaten to oppress those whose desires did not correspond. Ironically, in its generous efforts to protect plurality, such a society would be a ruthlessly homogenizing machine.

William Connolly writes of the consequence of this decay: “The highest determination of absolute freedom is a self emptied of any specific character, drained of everything particular; its highest power is the ability to kill those who fail to conform to an imaginary point called the universal will.”¹³ Eventually, many thinkers realized that by derailing faith, the Enlightenment ideal of pure reason results in the establishment of pure tyranny.

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.¹⁴

The aim of the Hegelian project is to reunite reason and faith in a form that will reap the best of both worlds: the certainty of proof offered by reason and the moral strength and direction offered by faith. The absolute knowledge of the Hegelian ontology

¹³ William Connolly, *Political Theory and Modernity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993) 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

“unites revelation and knowledge by giving the former the shape of conceptual understanding and the latter the inner experience of fulfilment.”¹⁵

Hegel’s methodology reflects his ontology. (This methodological approach is the model adopted and slightly customized by Grant and Taylor.) In Hegel’s philosophy of history, he maintains that the role of historical study is not to study events in history as empirical facts, but rather to trace the history of ideas, because it is ideas which have been the driving force of history. Hegel argued that unless human actions or events in history were regarded as outward expressions of thought, they would be incomprehensible and therefore irrelevant. This methodology stands in firm opposition to those he saw employed in the philosophy departments of the university of his day.¹⁶

According to Hegel, the historian should strive to understand the eidos of history. This approach to history is grounded in a complex ontology in which the primary assertion is that world history can be interpreted because it is guided by universal reason. He states that “Reason is the law of the world and ... therefore, in world history, things have come about rationally.”¹⁷ Hegel asserts that philosophy has demonstrated that Reason is the substance, the form and the essence of all things in reality. All things are the actualization of Reason. Moreover, Reason is not a prime mover which creates the

¹⁵ Ibid., 111.

¹⁶ Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966), 44.

¹⁷ G.W. Hegel, *Reason in History*, trans. Robert Hartman (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), 11.

universe, then recedes into oblivion; it is also the power which guides reality according to its will:

It is its own exclusive presupposition and absolutely final purpose, and itself works out this purpose from potentiality into actuality, from inward source to outward appearance, not only in the natural but also in the spiritual universe, in world history. That this Idea or Reason is the True, the Eternal the Absolute Power and that it and nothing but it, its glory and majesty, manifests itself in the world - this, as we said before, has been proved in philosophy and is being presupposed here as proved.¹⁸

For Hegel, “Reason” and “Idea” are philosophical terms for God. Everything which exists is formed by His will and directed by it. Thus the study of history is the attempt to discern God’s ultimate purpose by reading its manifestation in reality. “This ultimate purpose is what is willed in the world itself. We know of God that He is the most perfect; He can will only Himself and what is like Him. God and the nature of His will are one and the same; these we call, philosophically, the Idea.”¹⁹ The Idea is manifested in reality in three forms: Thought, Nature and Spirit.²⁰

In Hegel’s ontology, Thought is the purest manifestation of the Idea and it is made present in the human spirit. The Idea directs history in a dialectical movement toward the ultimate purpose through thought, and hence through humanity. Thus, Thought plays a central role in the historical dialectic. The dialectic functions through the threefold

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²⁰ Following Robert Hartman’s example in his introduction to Hegel’s *Reason in History*, from this point on I will be using the terms “Idea,” “God,” and “Reason” interchangeably.

process of thesis - antithesis - synthesis. Thought begins as a thesis, but because it has not yet reached its ultimate goal - full awareness of the Idea - it contains an inherent contradiction which eventually opposes it as the antithesis. The clash of these two imperfect thoughts results in the destruction of them both. Then, like a phoenix from the ashes, the truths contained in each thought emerge purified and united as a synthesis. This synthesis becomes a new thought tainted with its own imperfection, and the process continues until the will of the idea has been realized.

Thought occurs in human consciousness in the form of the ethos of a particular society. In this form, Thought acts as the bridge between pure subjective Reason and Reason's manifestation in existence. The subjective Idea is made objectively real in the cultural ethos of human society, thereby uniting the subjective and the objective. Hence, the Idea is made more real by its objective actualization in existence, and that which already exists achieves its full actualization through the consciousness of the subjective Idea.²¹

Nature is the term which Hegel uses to delineate objective reality. Nature is temporal time and space, and it issues from the Idea. It is the outside expression of the Idea-inside-itself. Humanity's capacity for Thought means that we are physically of Nature and psychically of the Idea.

The third element, Spirit (Geist), constitutes the central subject of philosophy, because it is through studying the Spirit that we discern the purposes of the Idea. The

²¹ Taylor, *Hegel*, 391.

Spirit is the will of the Idea. In contrast, the study of Thought takes the form of logic, and the study of Nature is done through empirical science. While both logic and science are valuable ways of revealing the structure of Reason, they do not reveal its purposes. More critically, if we study Nature exclusively we will develop a compartmentalized understanding of the cosmos in which humans are the great manipulators, rather than a holistic view in which humanity merely plays a role. According to Hegel, the latter is realistic and the former is a destructive illusion. By studying the Spirit, we gain insights into the ultimate goal of the Idea; thus we discover our role and how we should act to be closer to the divine. Just as one must know the common purpose of a state to act according to its ethic, so one must know the purpose of the Idea to behave morally.

We can trace the Spirit by observing its manifestation in the ideational dialectic of human history. As stated above, each thought in the dialectic brings objective reality closer to full consciousness of the Idea. Thus, the history of human civilization progresses, and Nature moves toward the full awareness of the Idea. In other words, human progress is the synthesis of Idea and Nature into the World Spirit. And the study of history is, in theory, the study of the will of the Idea.

To summarize, the Idea-in-itself is the essential reality of the world upon which all else is based. Nature is the antithesis of the Idea, the Idea-outside-of-itself; Nature's substance, form and content is derived from the Idea. Alone, Nature does not progress; it exists in cyclical time. But through the historical dialectic of Thought, humanity becomes conscious of the Idea and hence Nature is united with the Idea. This progressive dialectic is made possible by the will of the Idea, the Spirit.

Hegel's unique view of history is based on this ontology. Whereas Thought is manifested in Nature, Spirit is manifested in Time. Time in this sense is distinct from objective time and space. History is the progressive movement of self-consciousness through Time. In other words, as Spirit synthesizes Idea and Nature in the Thought of humanity, history is made. Humanity is the part of Nature which provides the passage way for the unification of the Idea with Nature:

After the creation of nature appears Man. He constitutes the antithesis to the natural work; he is the being that lifts itself up to the second world. We have in our universal consciousness two realms, the realm of Nature and the realm of Spirit. The realm of Spirit consists in what is produced by man. One may have all sorts of ideas about the Kingdom of God; but it is always a realm of Spirit to be realized and brought about in man.²²

Humanity can contemplate Idea both in its empirical form, Nature, and in its historical form, Spirit. But only in contemplating the realm of the Spirit is the Kingdom of God made existent in the human consciousness. Thus, the only worthwhile study of history is philosophical history, and, in turn, the only fruitful form of philosophy is historical philosophy. It is only in studying the progression of ideas and human nature that we can hope to grasp the Idea.

But what is the historical progression of human consciousness? What is the Spirit? Where does Spirit begin and Nature leave off? Hegel's answer is "Freedom." Freedom is the essence of the Spirit. According to Hegel, this is true on two levels. First, that which the Spirit reveals to human consciousness is free, namely, the Idea. The Idea is free because it is perfection and as such has no other desire than to be itself. Second, over

²² Hegel, *Reason*, 20.

time humanity learns of its capacity for free will, and to use reason to discover the Idea. Thus human history is the progression of our knowledge of Freedom, the freedom as embodied in the Idea and our own freedom to reason and to choose. The implication here is that human freedom rests in our ability to gain knowledge of the Idea, and our ability to choose to act according to the divine laws we discover.²³

Hegel describes history as a progression of three main stages of the consciousness of freedom. It begins with the culture of the Oriental where the ruler dictated the law and the people were unaware of their freedom: "They only know that one is free; but for this very reason such freedom is mere caprice ... This one is therefore only a despot, not a free man."²⁴ Despots are slaves to their passions and their desire for power. The second stage is that of the ancient Greeks, the founders of philosophy. Through philosophy, people became aware that some are free; however, they did not know that humanity as such was free; therefore a distinction was made between the citizen and the slave. In the third stage, the Reformation, it became clear that the freedom of the soul is universal: "Only the Germanic peoples came, through Christianity, to realize that man as man is free and that freedom of Spirit is the very essence of man's nature."²⁵ It is after tracing this dialectical progression of history that Hegel states, in no uncertain terms, "World history is the

²³ Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 152.

²⁴ Hegel, *Reason*, 23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

progress of the consciousness of freedom - a progress whose necessity we have to investigate."²⁶

Hegel provides an argument to support this conclusion, although it is an odd formulation. He explains that the opposite of Idea is Matter and because Matter is pulled by gravity it cannot be free. Matter must always strive for unity beyond itself, in Spirit. In so doing, it also seeks its own destruction, because once unified with the Idea it ceases to be. In contrast, Idea has a self-contained existence. It does not seek unity beyond itself; it is "Being-within-itself."²⁷ Hegel explains that "this, precisely, is Freedom. For when I am dependent, I refer myself to something else which I am not; I cannot exist independently of something external. I am free when I am within myself. This self-contained existence of Spirit is self-consciousness, consciousness of self."²⁸

Hegel's philosophy of history focuses upon the dialectical evolution of civilizations, as we saw in the three-stage interpretation of the progression of the Spirit. According to Hegel, by studying the spirit of a people or nation, which he calls the *Volksgeist*, he can interpret the Thought which their *Volksgeist* embodies.²⁹ For Hegel, the *Volksgeist* is realized in the private passions of people because passions are the means by which the *Volksgeist* is realized. It is the *Volksgeist* which creates the art, law, morals,

²⁶ *Ibid.*,24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*,23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*,23.

²⁹ Singer, *Hegel*, 32.

and religion of the nation. In contrast to Kant, Hegel's method accepts the importance of the passions. Whereas Kant believed passions only hinder reason and disguise truth, Hegel considers the passions to be integral to the progression of history. Rather than depicting passion and reason in hostile opposition, Hegel asserts that both are bound to the *Volksgeist*, therefore they inevitably serve the Spirit and hence Reason. Hegel calls this "the cunning of Reason." People's passions are formed by their social context and drive them unwittingly in the service of the world Spirit. At best, people can gain an awareness of their own *Volksgeist* and its role in the historical dialectic. But this awareness will only allow them to see how to serve it better, not how to redirect it.

One cannot skip over the spirit of his people any more than one can skip over the earth. The earth is the center of gravity; a body imagined as leaving this center can only be imagined as exploding into the air. So it is with an individual. But only through his own effort can he be in harmony with his substance; he must bring the will demanded by his people to his own consciousness, to articulation. The individual does not invent his own content; he is what he is by acting out the universal as his own content.³⁰

This seems to be a contradiction in Hegel's thought. If "one cannot skip over the spirit of his people," how then can we fulfil the purpose of human consciousness, namely, to strive to know the Spirit and live according to its designs? Assuming history has yet to achieve its full actualization, then presumably the *Sittlichkeit* (the ethics of a particular social context) would be at odds with the *Moralität* (universal morality).

Hegel believes he has resolved this apparent conflict, and in so doing reconciled the opposition of absolutism and relativism. He argues that while each stage in the

³⁰ Hegel, *Reason*, 38.

progress of the Idea is transitory, for the moment they represent the most fully realized manifestation of the Idea. Therefore the duty of each Volksgeist is to achieve full expression, because, while it lasts, it is the objectification of the Idea. Unlike the individual who can choose how to act, the Sittlichkeit is entirely subject to the Spirit and must conform to the order of World History. Therefore, it cannot be at odds with the idea. Hence, the best way to serve the Idea is to conform to one's Sittlichkeit and to assist the Volksgeist in achieving its fullest expression until it finally falls beneath the weight of its antithesis. In short, morality is at the same time completely rigid and completely flexible.³¹

The study of history, therefore, should not be concerned with the immediate interests of particular individuals, except insofar as those interests are indicative of the general culture. Individuals are merely minor partners in an infinite universal process. Historical analysis should be concerned with unveiling the Spirit as it has been made manifest in a particular Volksgeist and its objective manifestation, the State. The Volksgeist and the Spirit are united in the State. The State is the existent vehicle for both the particular culture and the universal Spirit. To study the State and the Volksgeist of a society, Hegel would either do a comparative analysis between our present culture and a preceding one, or interpret the historical progression of the idea of freedom.

The State is also significant because it provides the context in which individuals exercise their freedom to strive to know the Spirit, and to choose right action. Hegel

³¹ George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1950), 647.

rejects the notion of freedom that arises from individualism.³² The individualist ethic seems to deny external limits and advocate the ability to define autonomously personal limits, which is a lightly veiled denial of the concept of a moral right and wrong. According to Hegel, life without limits is not freedom. Free individuals require the external ethic of the State to provide the discipline necessary to employ their capacity to reason, and to guide them to behave morally.³³ Their passions are given order and form by the State, through the imposition of laws, ethics, arts, and so on.

What counts is the common will. In thus being suppressed the individual will retires into itself. And this is the first condition necessary for the existence of the universal, the condition, namely, of knowledge, of thought - for it is thought that man has in common with the divine. It thus makes its appearance in the state. Only on this soil, that is, in the state, can art and religion exist. The objects of our considerations are peoples that have organized themselves rationally.³⁴

Thus through knowing their own culture, people come to know the will (the Spirit) of the Idea and how to live according to that will. It is through people's consciousness of how to partake in the Moralität that they are free:

(T)he State is the definite object of world history proper. In it freedom achieves its objectivity and lives in the enjoyment of this objectivity. For law is the objectivity of Spirit; it is will in its true form. Only the will that obeys the law free, for it obeys itself and being in itself, is free.³⁵

³² Avineri, *Hegel's*, 138.

³³ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁴ Hegel, *Reason*, 51.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

Hence the State, as the objective manifestation of the Idea, is the subject of historical study. More specifically, we must learn about that which animates the institutions of the State. It is the Volksgeist which constitutes the culture of a nation, and forms the essence of the individuals within the state.

To summarize, Hegel's philosophy of history is concerned with the Spirit as it works through the dialectical progression of Thought as manifested in states. In his ontology, each state contributes to the development of Freedom - the consciousness of the Idea - by developing the consciousness of its own principles. Once a state has developed these elements to the limits of its capacity, the internal struggle and dynamism of the state is lost and it crumbles. As Hegel explains, "the deepest, highest interest thus has gone out of life; for interest is only where there is opposition... It is this life of habit - the watch is wound up and goes by itself - which brings about natural death."³⁶ This decline opens the culture to the rise of an antithesis which subsumes the symbolism of the old state and gives rise to a new Volksgeist containing both the lessons of previous states and the seed of its own eventual decline. In this way, the work of world history continues on its path toward both the unification of Nature and Idea, and humanity's full consciousness of freedom.

³⁶ Ibid.,90.

CHAPTER III:
GRANT'S ONTOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY:
THE FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITARIANISM

George Parkin Grant (1918-1988) is one of Canada's preeminent political philosophers. He is best known for his *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (1965), a philosophical look at the developments of Canada's political culture after the electoral defeat of John Diefenbaker. Like most of Grant's work, this book was written for the general reader. In his *Lament*, Grant proclaimed that the defeat of Diefenbaker by the Liberals and their America-friendly platform, marked the end of conservatism in Canada, and hence the end of Canada's national culture. With this proclamation Grant sparked a fervour of Canadian patriotism among intellectuals, politicians, and lay people, all rallying behind, and seeking to nourish, a revived sense of Canada's identity. Thus, with this one small book Grant brought national attention to the form of conservatism which he had been writing about since the 1940s and which, though largely forgotten, had been a strong force in Canadian political culture in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Looking at Grant's intellectual development, it is not surprising that he would be the one to spread this message. His family identified themselves as descendants of United Empire Loyalists, and he was raised in the heart of Tory Canada. He attended Upper Canada College, the prestigious private school where his father was principal. Then he went on to study history at Queen's University, the traditional training ground for those

entering public service and also the place where Canadian philosopher John Watson (1847-1939) first introduced into Canadian political culture the form of conservatism which Grant came to defend. A.B. McKillop has written that Hegelian idealism began with the work of John Watson, a professor at Queen's University from 1872 to 1922. Watson's ideas took hold in Canada because it was a time when there was a strong reaction against the secularizing forces of the Enlightenment. Watson and his followers thought Hegelianism "could maintain the existence of the 'moral nature' of man while asserting the active powers of the mind. It constituted a new conception of design and purpose operating in the universe, one that could encompass rather than capitulate the evolutionary science."³⁷ One of Watson's most enthusiastic followers and Queen's most renowned principals was George Parkin Grant's grandfather, George Monroe Grant. As William Christian notes in his biography of Grant, "G.M. Grant's influence on his grandson was strong but indirect; it came through the curriculum and the other structures of the institution he had formed."³⁸

G.P.'s other grandfather, Sir George Parkin (1846-1922), worked his way from the rugged life of rural Nova Scotia to studying at Oxford and became a prominent educator, lecturer, Canadian nationalist and British Imperialist. It was Sir George Parkin who implemented and administered the first Rhodes Scholarship. As a promoter of the

³⁷ A.B. McKillop, *Contours of Canadian Political Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 98.

³⁸ William Christian, *George Grant: A Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Inc., 1993), 38.

Rhodes Scholarship, Parkin firmly asserted that “the education of young men at Oxford would further Anglo-American understanding and cement imperial unity.”³⁹ G.P. Grant continued along his fateful path by winning the Rhodes Scholarship and studying law at his father’s alma mater, Oxford’s Balliol College.

After completing a law degree and a Ph.D. in philosophy at Oxford, G.P. Grant returned to Canada to work as a professor at Dalhousie University. Considering his background, it is little wonder that Grant became a vocal advocate of the Hegelian conservatism of Watson, a Canadian nationalist who enthusiastically supported the link to the British Empire, and a promoter of educating the general public in matters of philosophy and politics. (The latter point explains in part why Grant’s work usually addressed the general reader rather than the specialist.)⁴⁰

Grant’s conservatism should not be confused with the commonly understood definition of conservatism; his views could not be reduced to a hostility to change, a preference for the familiar, and a nostalgia for the immediate or distant past.⁴¹ Grant’s form of conservatism is very difficult to articulate in a paragraph or two. Indeed, most of the literature discussing Grant’s political philosophy never explicitly states what it is, but rather explains it in terms of what it isn’t, i.e. it is a reaction to liberalism, radical

³⁹ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 40.

⁴⁰ William Christian, “Editor’s Introduction,” in George Grant, *Philosophy*, xi.

⁴¹ William Christian and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1974), 76.

individualism, technology, and capitalism.⁴² I submit that Grant's conservatism is more than a reaction; he is advocating a particular social structure. Grant himself never methodically and explicitly explains what it is he is proposing. It is for this reason that this thesis uses Hegel's philosophy as a device to draw out the principles of Grant's conservatism.

Grant believes that the just state includes a notion of a common good toward which all citizens work, and to the authority of which all citizens defer. According to this vision, citizens realize their freedom, not in fulfilling their particular self-oriented desires, but by recognizing that their interests are tied to the health of the state and that they best serve themselves by freely choosing to do their duty for the state. This includes participating in democratic discourse to discern what constitutes the community's common purpose.⁴³ Thus, this system does not suppress individual freedom, but rather encourages rational individual participation in defining the authoritative law of the state.

⁴² See H.D. Forbes "The Political Thought of George Grant" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 26, no.2 (1991): 46-68; Barry Cooper, "A Imperio usque ad Imperium: The Political Thought of George Grant" in Larry Schmidt, *George Grant in Process* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1978); John Muggeridge, "George Grant's Anguished Conservatism" also in *George Grant in Process*; Peter Self, "George Grant, Unique Canadian Philosopher" *Queen's Quarterly* 98, 1 (1991) 25-39; Denis Duffy, "Concrete Hypothesis: A Meditation." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 4 (1969): 3-6

⁴³ Note that as with Hegel, Grant does not distinguish between the state and community. The state not only contains the institutions that reflect the culture of the community, it is the spirit of the community, the level on which all citizens conceive of themselves as parts of a unified whole. Hegel distinguishes the state from the family and civil society, levels of interaction in which the common identity of the community is not necessarily present. Indeed, the form of liberalism Grant opposes is on par with Hegel's depiction of a society that has the competitive market place mentality of civil society without the unifying spirit of the state. (Aveneri, *Hegel's*, 130)

Included in this notion of community is the idea that we are responsible for the welfare of all citizens as well as responsible to the common purpose. This organic conception of community not only entailed the idea that all its members were bound to each other historically and culturally, but also that they were bound to nature, and the laws of nature. The best secondary description of Grant's conservatism was set out by Gad Horowitz in his discussion of Grant's *Lament*. In this essay, Horowitz emphasizes the socialist element of Grant's position and hence it is worth quoting here as a means of diffusing the common assumptions about conservatism:

To Grant socialism, like conservatism, is a teleological philosophy: it is based on a doctrine of good, or happiness, a conception of an essential human nature which men are either prevented from realizing, or made to realize, by their social arrangements. Such a conception involves the notion that 'there are ways of life in which men are fulfilled and others in which they are not'. It therefore implies the restraint of certain forms of human freedom, the discipline of certain human passions, which prevent the realization of the good life in the good society. Conservatism is 'essentially the social doctrine that public order and tradition, in contrast to freedom and experiment, were central to the good life.' Socialism is 'the use of the government to restrain greed in the name of the social good.' It appeals to the conservative idea of social order against the liberal idea of freedom.⁴⁴

The form of nationalism that emerges from this conservatism is quite distinct. It is not concerned with ethnicity;⁴⁵ it is a matter of politics, culture and, most importantly, history. Grant believes that our institutions are formed by our culture, and our culture is

⁴⁴ Gad Horowitz, "Tories, Socialists and the Demise of Canada," in H.D. Forbes, *Canadian Political Thought* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985), 355.

⁴⁵ The same can not be said for Grant's predecessors. As Carl Berger points out in *The Sense of Power* race played an important role in the nationalism of George Parkin and his contemporaries (Berger, 1970, 226).

inherited through the developments of history. He argues that Canada's national unity rests on the existence of our common conservative culture, a conservatism shared by the two sub-nations, the ultramontane Catholics of French Canada and the Empire Loyalists of English Canada. As he often states, this shared conservative culture is what led to the constitutional agreements of 1791. Both nations wished to protect themselves from the liberal forces of the United States.

A society only articulates itself as a nation through some common intention among its people. The constitutional arrangements of 1791, and the wider arrangements of the next century, were only possible because of a widespread determination not to become part of the great Republic. Among both the French and British, this negative intention sprang from widely divergent traditions. What both peoples had in common was the fact they both recognized, they could only be preserved outside the United States of America.⁴⁶

Grant valued the British Empire as a counterweight to the pressures of the US. In his early writings, he said he hoped the Commonwealth would provide an alternative superpower to the USSR and the US.⁴⁷ He hoped the Christian principles of British conservatism would promote democracy and freedom while protecting people from the ruthlessness of private companies who were responsible to no one.⁴⁸ However, in the 1960s it was clear the British Commonwealth was not a third power and would not be able to provide a bulwark against American culture. Grant began to see the US as the

⁴⁶ George Grant, *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978), 68.

⁴⁷ Cooper, "A Imperio," 24.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

spearhead of the new technological culture. This culture included a conception of freedom that denied the existence of a transcendent authority and contented itself with the pursuit of fulfilling personal desires. This technological culture was committed to exploiting nature to satisfy individual desire. According to Grant, liberalism represents the political ideology of the technological society. Up until he wrote his *Lament*, Grant was optimistic about Canada's chances for resisting the technological culture. He believed that in Canada conservatism would prevail. In the 1940s he saw its hope resting in Canada's membership to the Commonwealth. Then, in *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (1959), he stated that he believed the alienating nature of technology would incite a counter-revolution among the young. However, by 1965 he surrendered: "The impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada. As Canadians we attempted a ridiculous task in trying to build a conservative nation in the age of progress, on a continent we share with the most dynamic nation on earth. The current of modern history was against us."⁴⁹

Grant perceives the current of modern history as a crisis that is manifested in the fragmentation of Canada, the sense of alienation among its citizens, the exploitation of the environment, and the globalization of technological culture. Technology for Grant is more than the tools we use to achieve our ends; it is the way we understand ourselves and the world. It is "the mastery of human and non-human nature in experimental science and technique, the primacy of the will, man as the creator of his own values, the finality of

⁴⁹ Grant, *Lament*, 68.

becoming, the assertion that potentiality is higher than actuality, that motion is nobler than rest, that dynamism rather than peace is the height.”⁵⁰

Grant’s argument about the dangers of technological culture is a current application of Hegel’s assessment of the clash between the traditional moral order of Christianity and the Enlightenment ideal of pure reason. Hegel had sought to understand why the French Revolution resulted in the Terror. He concluded that pure reason was empty when devoid of a cultural foundation. When the Jacobins had torn down all established forms of authority, there was nothing left to hold their authority in check. All the institutions responsible for maintaining order and justice lost their legitimacy.

Grant believes we face the same dilemma today at a more subtle level and a more gradual rate. Now the revolution is ingrained in our culture, and it is slowly eating away at our traditional institutions. Grant believes there is value to both conservative and technological cultural forces, but he fears the latter unless it is balanced by the former. The technological culture is systematic, mechanized and uniform. It is based on the industrial, capitalist principles of mass production and the bottom line. In order for it to work, it must produce people to perpetuate it. They must be trained with a universal homogenous education, so that, like nuts and bolts, they can be exchanged for one another. The role of the universal education system is to mass produce efficient workers and effective consumers.

⁵⁰ George Grant, *Time as History* (The Massey Lectures, 9th series. Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), 44.

Progress is the goal of this new culture, and progress is a concept that can be infinitely redefined; things must get bigger, faster, richer, more high tech. Nature is to be conquered; one frontier is continually replaced with another: the wild west, Mt. Everest, space, the depths of the oceans, DNA. While a progressive view of history plays an important role in Grant's own thought, he asserts that it is balanced by the simultaneous presence of cyclical time which represents the unalterable laws of nature. He maintains that, without this authority, knowledge becomes purely dynamic; the aim of scientists (there is no room for the unproductive thoughts of philosophers) is originality, to subvert the orders of the past and present. Philosophy is smothered by empiricism. The modern knowledge paradigm is exemplified by the fact-value distinction, which maintains that knowledge is only valid if it can be verified empirically. Therefore metaphysical questions about God, truth, justice or love are considered meaningless because they are unverifiable. They may be suitable subjects for the privacy of one's home, but they should not become the subjects addressed by schools (including universities), businesses, or, as Grant fears, the courts.⁵¹ Ultimately, Grant believes the decline of conservatism marks the slow emergence of a contemporary equivalent to the Jacobins.⁵² For the first 20

⁵¹ Grant argued that the US Supreme Court's decision in *Roe vs. Wade* represented the impact of the technological culture on the justice system. Grant asserted the courts had decided that human life was expendable for the sake of convenience. See George Grant and Sheila Grant, "Abortion and Rights," *Technology and Justice* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1986)

⁵² Although, due to his cultural heritage and the work of Max Weber, he draws a parallel with Oliver Cromwell rather than Robespierre.

years of his career, Grant sought to synthesize the best elements of the competing cultures. He hoped that his communitarianism offered that synthesis.⁵³

The definition of freedom plays a central role in his communitarianism. Grant's notion of freedom is radically different from the mainstream usage that is prevalent in popular culture. When a blood-soaked Mel Gibson cries out for freedom in the period piece *Braveheart*, our emotions are piqued and we think we know what he's talking about, but if we were to try to explain it we would have some difficulty. Is it a call for freedom from foreign rule? or from an inadequate judicial system? or from a government which is only concerned with the welfare of the elite? In the blatant atrocities Gibson depicts in his epic film, it is not difficult to imagine what the lack of freedom might be like, but we cannot say from his film what it is to be free in a positive sense.⁵⁴ Grant would say that our difficulty stems from the emptiness of Gibson's use of the word. Grant hopes to reveal exactly what it is that is worth defending in a cultural community by providing a deeper explanation of what it means to be free.

Philosophy in the Mass Age is known as Grant's Hegelian book, because in it he is most explicit about his debt to Hegel's philosophy. It seems like the best place to begin

⁵³ Note that Grant's communitarianism borrows from, but is not the same as, that of the United Empire Loyalists and the Ultramontane French Canadians. He is merging their conservatism with a form of individual philosophical freedom.

⁵⁴ In his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty," Isaiah Berlin makes the distinction between positive and negative liberty. Gibson's would fall under negative liberty in so far as it is defined as freedom from restraints of an authority, as opposed to "positive liberty" in which individuals use their reason and knowledge to direct their own purpose. See Berlin, *Four Essays*.

an examination of Grant's theory of community and culture, because it is the work in which his ontology is most evident. In most of his early writings, he shows no awareness of the indirect influence that Hegel had on his thought. In his later writings, though he explicitly rejects Hegel, his philosophy is so obviously embedded in Hegelianism that his protestations ring hollow.

Grant's intentions in PMA are twofold. First, he clarifies his philosophy of freedom. Part of this clarification includes the assertion that the survival of freedom in modern society depends upon universal participation in philosophy. Like Hegel, he considers philosophy to be the key to human freedom. Freedom rests in our ability to evaluate rationally our methods and our ends. His second project is to criticize modernity - particularly in reference to problems in Canada - and to suggest how to combat the cultural decline. The need for philosophy, of course, is central to that criticism. He develops his two objectives in a broad-brush history of moral philosophy (and, by association, freedom) beginning with its inception in the natural law doctrine of ancient Greece through to the pragmatism of the 20th century. He explains what moral philosophy is by discussing its historical development. In so doing, he simultaneously illustrates the distinctly modern conception of the world which has risen from this historical development, and points out where we as moderns have gained, and where we have lost. This chapter is an exposition of some of his observations, including the resultant philosophy of history and ontology and offers an introduction to Grant's assessment of the modern crisis, his proposed solution, the methodology he employed to reach these conclusions, and the (largely Hegelian) ontology that supports it all. The

chapter will conclude with a description of Grant's communitarianism in light of the Hegelian influence.

All of Grant's arguments spring from the belief that humanity has a unique capacity to reason that enables us to unlock moral and universal truths. At the very opening of the text, he asserts that, "Whereas animals live by instinct and therefore do what they do directly, we can decide between alternatives, and this choice is possible because we can reflect on how we are going to act."⁵⁵ Here Grant establishes a series of fundamental assumptions upon which the remainder of the text depends.⁵⁶ First, he assumes that we are superior to animals and, in turn, the rest of nature because we are not restricted to acting according to instinct.⁵⁷ Second, he maintains that, unlike animals, we have power to choose how to behave. In other words, we are free. Third, he asserts that the source of our freedom rests upon our unique capacity to reason, to "reflect on how we are going to act."

Like Hegel, Grant considers reason to be the bridge between God and Nature, enabling humanity to transcend Nature and gain knowledge of God: "Contemplation can teach us the knowledge of God's law."⁵⁸ Thus, the role of reason is not restricted to

⁵⁵ Grant, *Philosophy*, 3.

⁵⁶ These assumptions pre-date Hegel, but just as they are the foundation for Hegel's philosophy so too are they the foundation for Grant's Hegelianism.

⁵⁷ This anthropocentric interpretation of nature is fascinating coming from a proponent of the redivinization of nature.

⁵⁸ Grant, *Philosophy*, xxxi.

utilitarian purposes; it also provides the means “to make true judgments as to whether actions are right or wrong.”⁵⁹ Grant attributes this lesson to the ancient Greeks, the founders of moral philosophy. The doctrines of Socrates and Plato held that humans could transcend their restrictive context of living in accordance with archetypal patterns and myths, and “could find themselves by losing themselves in the divine”.⁶⁰

What makes reason powerful? If we recall that “Reason” was one of the names Hegel had for God, we begin to understand. For Grant, as for Hegel and the ancient Greeks, the cosmos is ordered according to an absolute logic, or Reason:

It is that reason which is common to God and to men. The universe is a great system of beings, all moved by law and ultimately governed by the divine mind. It is a hierarchy in which all beings have their place, from the stones that obey the laws of the physical world, up through the plants and animals to man, and beyond man to the angels, and finally to God, who is reason itself.⁶¹

Thus, for Grant, our capacity to reason is our link to the divine. One important consequence of this semi-divine state is that we are partly free from the laws of nature. Thus, Grant’s conception of freedom has two dimensions; we are free actively to seek knowledge of the divine, and we are free to choose right or wrong action. Grant’s perspective is illustrated in this lament: “The old idea that ‘the truth shall make you free,’

⁵⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁶¹ Ibid., 28.

that is, the view of reason as the way in which we discover the meaning of our lives and make that meaning our own, has almost entirely disappeared [in the mass age].”⁶²

Another offspring of reason is history. Grant holds that divine Reason and human reason, shown by Hegel to be united in the Spirit, create history. History is the manifestation of both the will of God and, because we are free, the will of humanity. According to Hegel’s philosophy, space-time is cyclical because nature is guided by a fixed law. Through the imposition of God’s will and human will on nature, time develops, and therefore there is history. In other words, both God and humanity have wills which create change. This change breaks the cyclical nature of time and forms the dynamic time of history. Without will freed from the logic of Nature, archetypal patterns would merely repeat themselves. Will (of Spirit) manipulates logic causing change. This is verified, in part, by our awareness of change.

Grant contends that this awareness of dynamic time was revealed by the Judeo-Christian religion in its notion of providence. “It was the Jews who discovered the very idea of history. More than anything else, what has made Western culture so dynamic is its impregnation with the Judeo-Christian idea that history is the divinely ordained process of man’s salvation.”⁶³ The Hebrew prophets teach that the final purpose toward which history is moving is the redemption of the Jewish people through the Messiah. “The events of time are seen as oriented towards the future ... The purpose of God unfolds in

⁶² Ibid., 10.

⁶³ Ibid., 40.

the world and will culminate in his final purpose, that of redemption.”⁶⁴ This notion was synthesized with natural law doctrine in the works of St. Augustine of Hippo, and later St. Thomas Aquinas.

Another aspect of the human capacity for reason is the ability to do evil. Whereas animals are obliged to conform to the logic of nature and therefore can do neither good nor evil, we have a choice. As Hegel says, “This is the seal of the absolute and sublime destiny of man, that he knows what is good and what is evil, and that his destiny is his very ability to will either good or evil. In one word, he can be guilty.”⁶⁵ Thus, with our capacity to reason comes responsibility. We are free to do evil, that is to violate God’s law, or to do good. Therefore we must “attempt to actualize the eternal law in [our] own lives.”⁶⁶

Just as reason gives humanity the capacity to choose evil, so too is it the source of their salvation. Grant argues that this notion of salvation, brought to the West in the Judeo-Christian religion, was combined with the philosophy of the Greeks and made into a social science by Hegel, then secularized by Marx:

When Marx is thinking about history, he is thinking in Hegelian terms. History is the sphere in which spirit is realizing itself in the world. It is realizing itself always in relation to nature. Nature is what it is and what it is not. A stone is a stone and not something else. But man is self-conscious, and self-consciousness divided against itself. *Man can always stand above himself and make himself what he is not.* Every action is a project to the future, in which we negate what we are now. Therefore, man

⁶⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Reason*, 44.

⁶⁶ Grant, *Philosophy*, 32.

both is and is not what he is. Spirit, then has different logic from the logic of identity proper to nature.⁶⁷

While Grant opposes Marx's attempt to secularize Hegel, he follows him up to this point. Grant believes human self-consciousness of reason enables us to overcome our objectivity and that history as a social science is the method we use to do this. The study of history is a tool that helps us discover the eternal law so that we may learn to act in accordance with it. "In economic organization that expresses our relation to nature, [Marx] sees the cause of human evil in the past; in the creation of a new relation he sees the overcoming of that evil."⁶⁸ The existence of evil obliges us to analyse society and attempt to distinguish justice from injustice. According to Grant, there are two methods of moral philosophy. We will set out those two methods with examples of how they help us to understand freedom, thereby simultaneously explaining and exemplifying the practice of human freedom through reason as Grant understands it.

First there is the comparative method. This involves comparing our society to those which precede ours. Grant asserts that "comparison is useful, because only as we become capable of thinking outside modern assumptions are we able to see at all what our assumptions are ... As we try to think with [previous cultures] their vision of human nature and destiny, we come to see our own."⁶⁹ For Grant, this form of philosophy is vital to the well-being of our society because it enables us to see beyond the principles of our

⁶⁷ Ibid., 54. My italics.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 24.

culture or civilization, and to question their value or to see their worth. Through comparison we find that many of the assumptions we take to be true and fundamental to the ordering of society, are neither true nor necessary.⁷⁰

The comparative method is based on the important premise that we are so deeply embedded in our own culture that we cannot be aware of its strengths and weaknesses without philosophy. This premise is not only important to Grant's methodology but also to the communitarianism itself, because it shows the extent to which we rely on our culture to develop our view of the world. For instance, it justifies recognizing that freedom is achieved by working as a part of the community rather than as an independent agent. To deny our interdependence with society is to deny a vital part of ourselves. Grant explains, "individual beliefs as to the nature and destiny of man make, and are made by, the forms of society."⁷¹ In fact, we can only be free of the influence of our society by recognizing its influence, articulating it, and transcending it. "[T]he act of philosophy is not only a continual negation of the self, a continual self-transcendence; it is often, also, a negation of what is most dear to one's own society."⁷² Thus, freedom is achieved through active contemplation of society, not the denial of it. Indeed, if we do not engage in this form of philosophy and attempt to assert our independence, we will only succeed in

⁷⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁷¹ Ibid., 14.

⁷² Ibid., 15.

blocking the only route to freedom. We will be entirely subject to the mores and trends of our social environment and never truly be exercising our inherent freedom.⁷³

Grant's comparison of ancient "mythic" cultures and modern historic culture is an example of the comparative method. In PMA, this comparison serves a dual purpose of a) introducing his conception of freedom by illustrating the origin of humanity's knowledge of its own freedom, and b) introducing an alternative conception of time by revealing that our conception of dynamic/historic time is not the only way that time can be perceived.

According to Grant, mythic cultures had no notion of freedom because people believed that the order of the universe was fixed. Individuals were not responsible for choosing how to act, or philosophizing about truth. Right action had been determined and set out in a complex system of myths and rituals. One did not seek some transcendent truth, because daily action was considered to have religious significance.⁷⁴ One need only behave according to the traditional archetypes to act morally. "Any actions that could not be given this kind of religious significance were considered profane. For events to be profane, to be unique and individual instead of repetitive and universal, was for them

⁷³ There is not a conflict here with Hegel's notion that we must follow our particular *sittlichkeit*. Rather transcending one's *Volksggeist* heightens the individual's awareness of the importance of their *Volksggeist* in history. In fact, philosophy gives the individual a deeper understanding of what precisely their *Volksggeist* is and how best to live according to its *Sittlichkeit*. Moreover, Hegel's philosophy did not entirely omit the possibility for dissent. For instance, he was a strong advocate for the right to meaningful labour: "this is the infinite right of the individual to find itself satisfied in its activity and labor. If men are to be interested in anything they must have "their heart" in it. Their feeling of self importance must be satisfied' (Hegel, *Reason*, 28).

⁷⁴ This may be an intentional parallel to Calvinism's "worldly asceticism" which was discussed briefly in chapter two.

almost to be unreal, for it was the religious element which conferred reality.”⁷⁵ This changed with the contributions of Socrates and Plato. From them, humanity learned to transcend the mythic consciousness. Plato taught that an individual soul is capable of higher knowledge, and hence human beings came to know themselves as free.⁷⁶

Grant agrees with Hegel that time exists on two plains: the cyclical time of Nature and the progressive history of the Spirit. Grant illustrates this by contrasting the notion of cyclical time as understood by ancient societies with our contemporary notion of history. According to Grant, the ancients did not believe time was human-centred. The cosmos moved us; we did not move the cosmos. The implication of the historical view of time is that the changes caused by human action mark the movement of time. Grant cites Plato when he states, for the ancients “time is considered as a moving image of an unmoving eternity and in which the passing events of life only have meaning as they lead men to the unchanging reality of God.”⁷⁷ In Hegelian terms, this describes the difference between the patterned logic of space-time as it exists in nature, and the dynamic Time where the Spirit is made manifest.

Grant uses this distinction to make two further points: (a) there is an absolute logic to the universe, and (b) time and nature are not infinitely malleable (as Marxists and positivists might have us believe). These two points support another important claim:

⁷⁵ Grant, *Philosophy*, 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

there are restrictions on human freedom. This is what Grant means when he affirms the reality of God. For Grant, God is the order of the universe which is both eternal and infinite. This order is the source of natural law; law represents the existence of a divine authority. In Hegelian terms, this knowledge reflects the logic of Reason and Nature without introducing the progressive drive of Spirit. Grant indicates that the existence of cyclical time is validated by the fact that an entire civilization believed time was cyclical and ordered, and virtue meant conforming to that order. He argues that we have since learned that we are free of confining and often “silly” rituals which are present in ancient societies that continually relive the mythological archetypes. We have also replaced the notion of cyclical time with progressive time, history. However, Grant believes that by putting aside this ancient conception of time entirely, we have learned our lesson too well and lost a valuable truth. Modernity has lost the notion of a divinized Nature and forgotten the presence of God’s will in history. He contends that rather than seeing our life as meaningful when we imitate and repeat “ the eternal archetypal gestures of the divine,”⁷⁸ “we have taken our fate into our own hands and are determined to make the world as we want it.”⁷⁹ Grant criticizes modern “historical man” for having replaced God as the maker of history.

The second method of philosophical investigation is historical interpretation, as a long narrative of the progression of human civilization’s consciousness of freedom. If we

⁷⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 221.

accept the premise that history moves in a dialectical progression where each Thought is formed by its predecessor, then history also provides us with an insight into the role *our* Thought plays in the dialectic, what our contribution to the progress of history is meant to be. Grant asserts that a philosopher of history is “one who believes he knows the meaning of the historical process as a whole and derives his view of right action therefrom.”⁸⁰ Therefore as bearers of reason we can find meaning in the order and process of history, the manifestation of divine will. This is what Grant is referring to when he states, “How we act depends on what we consider life to be about, what we think is going on in human history in general, and in our own lives in particular. We do what we ultimately think is worth doing because of our vision of human existence.”⁸¹

For philosophical history to be useful in this way, we must assume that history works in a progression. Hegel’s argument in this regard goes as follows. If Idea is perfection, then His will must be perfect, because a perfect God would not will evil. If His will (the Spirit) is perfect then it must will perfection. Therefore, God’s will must be to will Himself. The progression of history is the movement toward the unification of Nature (God as object) and Idea (God as subject). This movement occurs in the consciousness of humanity which embodies the bridge between the two realms. Once humanity becomes fully conscious of God, then Nature will be united with Idea and History will have achieved its end. Thus, through the study of the progression of history

⁸⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

as a whole we can discover the will of God, and with that knowledge we will move closer to the completion of history.

Grant's methodology reveals that he agrees with Hegel's philosophy of history. Grant maintains that we can learn right action by knowing the process of history. Thus, he assumes there is a correlation between the process of history and rightness. For instance, if the process of history had no meaning *an sich*, but meaning rested exclusively in the minds of individuals or in the *Volksgeist* of societies, then the process as a whole would tell us very little; history would only be worth studying for comparative analysis, or as a form of fiction to be interpreted by critics who use it as a catalyst for their own ideas. But for Grant to consider the process worth investigating indicates that it has an essence apart from its component eras, and, furthermore, that this essence is good.

This conclusion is verified by the format of PMA which depicts the historical development of humanity's knowledge of freedom. Like Hegel, Grant looks at history as progressing through apparent dialectical stages. By looking at his reading of these stages, we verify that Grant does believe history works in a progressive movement, and that Hegel's philosophy of Geist is the foundation for the belief. The stages also reveal the principles of Grant's philosophy of freedom by showing the point at which each facet of freedom came into human consciousness. Finally, the stages tell us what Grant believes our stage to be, how we can raise freedom to a new level.

According to Grant, the first major transition in the historical dialectic is the discovery of philosophy when we became aware of our own ability to interpret the eternal law. This was the contribution of Socrates and Plato who realized that we are not only

receivers of the eternal law, but also interpreters of it. Through philosophy we can transcend the existing moral assumptions and gain a clearer knowledge of the Ideal. Next, Christianity taught us the truth of providence. We learned that we have the freedom whether or not to choose to do God's will, and to work toward salvation. The Enlightenment then gave us a practical form of freedom; it gave us technology which liberated us from a life of hard labour, and gave us leisure time to engage in philosophy. However, this blessing is mixed. Science has also led to the assertion that humanity can control nature and rise above its laws. We have developed a hubristic confidence that through reason we can transcend all limits, including the authority of the divine. Grant considers the economic materialism of Marx to epitomize this perspective:

There is for him no nature without human significance; there is no significance to human freedom apart from the domination of nature. 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 that evil.⁸²

Grant tries to show that Marx's conception of freedom fails because it restricts our freedom to interpret the Ideal, or divine law. Marx has defined the truth of history, and there is no authority greater than the human will, and laws of economics. Therefore, further reflection about our ends is redundant; the only worthy project is to use our knowledge of economic laws to impose our will on nature and overcome suffering. In other words, we are free to exploit nature to satisfy our desires, but we are not free to

⁸² Ibid., 54.

evaluate the worth of our desires.⁸³ Thus, in a purely Marxist state our freedom to reason would be restricted to utilitarian purposes and our ability to transcend and criticize our condition would be systematically curbed. As a result, both nature and humanity are perceived to be material to be exploited for the purpose of Marx's highest good, economic equality.

For Grant, the importance of Marx is not only as an illustration of the failings of his particular ideology, but of a major trend of the modern age. Marx is useful because he takes it to an extreme level, but similar lines of thought can be found in positivism, pragmatism, and liberalism. All of these share the tendency to subvert the notion of a transcendent truth and divine authority, and replace it with unlimited human will. Thus they have a stunted conception of human freedom.

According to Grant, Marx does teach us one valuable lesson about the just community. A state is only free when all its citizens are free, not only a particular class. Marx understood the injustice of capitalism:

The contradiction that capitalist society creates is that it has produced the possibility of overcoming scarcity, that is, the conditions for overcoming class dominance and inequality have arrived; yet at the same time it has chained the mass of men to uncreative labour, work for which they have no responsibility.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 56.

If, as Hegel contends and Grant implies, history is the manifestation of the will of God driving us toward absolute freedom, then we can discern our role as the beneficiaries of this ideational heritage. We can discover our place in the universal historical narrative and determine how to refine or synthesize the contradictions in our conception of history. The flourishing of philosophy in society is essential to this project. This is the hope Grant is expressing when he states:

Indeed, just as our industrial civilization creates the conditions of repression, it also creates the natural conditions of universal liberation: not only in the economic sense that people who are free from the necessity of hard work have the leisure to pursue ends beyond the practical, but also in the sense that an industrial society breaks down the old natural forms of human existence in which people traditionally found the meaning for their lives. In such a situation many persons are driven by the absence of these traditional forms to seek a meaning that will be their own.⁸⁵

Thus, according to Grant, the philosopher of history is responsible for tracing the development of history from one civilization to the next, and for interpreting how each civilization contributed to humanity's consciousness of freedom. Moreover, the philosopher must explain how all the stages can be seen together.⁸⁶ Every facet of our culture and institutions must be united into a coherent entity. The key to reading history is knowing how to disregard the "less significant" human actions. The filter employed by Grant and Hegel is the question: What role does this culture play in the progress of freedom?

⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 39.

By summarizing Grant's observations, we see what he believes our role in history is to be. We learn that there is cyclical time, an ordered cosmos and divine law. We learn that humanity is capable of discerning God's will through the application of reason. We learn that God's will is manifested in time as providence. These three lessons considered together tell us that human knowledge of divine law can progress over time. More recently, humanity has learned that through science we can overcome classism and inequity.⁸⁷ Therefore, our role is to bring these lessons together and to fight the modern trend to favour only some of these lessons. We must oppose the tendency to think of progressive time and the technological capacity to manipulate nature without the other lessons of history. Our role is to unify these thoughts with the conceptions of eternal cyclical time and the fixed laws of nature. We must unite the concept that humanity is free to impose its will on time and nature with the notion of divine authority.

Grant attempts to unite these two conflicting truths by developing an alternative conception of community. According to Grant, the most essential element of the just state, beyond freedom, is the primacy of a common purpose toward which the entire community and its institutions are dedicated. When we refer to common purpose here, however, we are not including broad concepts such as "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," or "live and let live." Common purpose in this sense is understood in cosmological terms. It is a purpose which reflects the community's beliefs about the higher order of the cosmos; it is a purpose which finds its authority in God's will; and it

⁸⁷ In his later writings, Grant loses faith in technologies ability to do any good whatsoever.

is a purpose which guides every act and every thought of the members of the community. Grant explains this in terms of the natural law tradition.

According to Grant, the notion of natural law has provided the metaphysical foundation for morality in Western culture since the age of the ancient Greeks up until the time of the Enlightenment. Its main premise is that the universe is ordered, not chaotic. "That is," explains Grant, "it conforms to law; and to conform to law is to be held in being by reason."⁸⁸ Thus the universe is perceived as a unity, and each part, including humanity, must play its role accordingly.

Grant unites law and freedom by establishing the quest for knowledge of natural law as the common purpose of society. The aim of philosophy is to bring the laws of the state in line with natural law. In Hegelian terms, natural law *is* Reason, and we are responsible for structuring our community so that it manifests, as nearly as possible, the subjective Idea in the objective realm. In contrast, Grant argues that when a society has no notion of transcendent natural law, then there are no grounds for justice. In response to the doctrine of pragmatism he asks, "If you say that the right is 'the expedient in the way of our behaving,' how can there be any room for the categorically wrong? May not the torture of children sometimes be expedient and therefore right?"⁸⁹ He maintains that the pragmatist approach to morality is grounded in the same misconception of freedom which Marx advocated. (While Marx did not advocate the freedom of the individual, he did

⁸⁸ Grant, *Philosophy*, 28.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

claim to have discovered how to manipulate nature and society to free humanity from suffering: alienation, exploitation, and poverty.) It stems from the Enlightenment criticism of God which sought to overcome the limit of an absolute law. The distorted notion of freedom has usurped the notion of God in favour of the absolute liberty of the human will.

According to Grant, this conception of freedom lacks morality and justice. One may be free to think as one pleases, but of what value is this if there is no knowledge worth discovering? We are left with our appetites as our only motivation and our only measure. Thus, Grant concludes, "the pragmatists' conception of freedom ultimately fails because it does not understand the relation between freedom and thought, that is, between freedom and spiritual law."⁹⁰

In Hegel's words, "law, morality and the State, and they alone, are the positive reality and satisfaction of freedom. The caprice of the individual is not freedom."⁹¹ Freedom only exists when the individual is directed toward some higher purpose and perceives that there are limits within which one must live. Because, as Hegel explains, the State embodies the union between the subjective willing of the Idea and the objective substance of existence. Freedom is realized in this union. Thus those aspects of national life which articulate the State's culture are the realization of freedom. These include art, law, morality, science, and, most importantly, religion. Through religion we become

⁹⁰ Ibid., 88.

⁹¹ Hegel, *Reason*, 50.

conscious of the nature of freedom and the union between the objective and the subjective.⁹²

For Grant and Hegel there is no freedom without religious thought. Ironically, individualism without the limit of a state religion destroys any route allowing the individual to transcend the immediate norms and facts of society and to discover the essence of freedom. Or, to use the term “religion” in a more inclusive sense, if the state religion is pragmatism then true freedom is unattainable because it excludes the notion of a transcendent truth. According to Grant, pragmatists can only be motivated by their passions and not reason, because reason involves transcendent contemplation of the Law and the Idea. Thus they fail to fully realize the human capacity for freedom.

Clearly stated, Grant’s communitarian society includes belief in the Absolute and natural law. Faith is the glue that binds civil society to the institutions of the state. It manifests itself as a common purpose. Freedom of the individual is realized in Grant’s communitarianism because the common purpose is the participation of all citizens in philosophical contemplation of how to make society most free. To explain how this works we must once again look to Hegel.

God wills perfection; therefore He wills himself. Nature is the objective manifestation of God. Idea is God as subjectivity. Nature is perfectly ordered according to God’s law. However, perfection is not fully achieved until Nature and Idea are united. God wills this unification. Humanity is the bridge between Nature and Idea because

⁹² Ibid., 63.

humanity has the semi-divine capacity to reason. Reason gives us access to knowledge of the Idea. Our ability to reason, which distinguishes us from the rest of Nature, is what frees us from the cyclical patterns of Nature and gives us choice. The more we learn about our power to reason, the freer we become.

It is God's will that we be free because it is through our freedom that Nature becomes conscious of Idea, and the two are made one. God wills that people become more conscious of their freedom, because that is how unity is achieved. Thus in striving to become aware of God's laws and God's will, we succeed in developing our knowledge of our own freedom. Thus to act freely is to further God's project of unifying Nature and Idea. In sum, human freedom and God's will are in synch.

Therefore the just state is one in which the common purpose is to gain knowledge of God's will and structure the institutions according to that knowledge. If this is achieved, the law of the state will be as close as historically possible to the law of nature and God's will. In such a situation, not only would human freedom and divine law be in harmony, but so too would human freedom and the law of the state. Thus, according to Grant's communitarianism, freedom involves furthering the common purpose of the state and following the divine law.

By measuring Canada according to this standard, Grant finds that there is much to be thankful for, even in our failings. For instance, he laments the subversion of faith perpetrated by Enlightenment thinkers because it undermined the freedom of the soul. However, Grant is grateful for the technological developments of the Enlightenment which could potentially liberate us from a life of hard labour and enable all members of

society to have the leisure time to pursue moral philosophy. Furthermore, the Enlightenment belief that the world is infinitely malleable opened the ideational floor to a thinker such as Marx whose doctrine led to the establishment of one of the most oppressive regimes of the 20th century. And yet it was Marx who taught us that a society is not truly free until all its citizens are free. Thus, Grant perceives that Canada is in the fortunate position of being able to learn from these mistakes and insights.

However, there are some aspects of Canadian culture which are entirely at odds with Grant's communitarianism. In place of classical philosophy, pragmatism is the common philosophy or ethic of the modern educated Canadian. Grant argues that the doctrine of pragmatism maintains that truth and right action are determined by what is expedient. Moreover, pragmatism does not allow for the validity of any form of metaphysical questions. Hence it curbs the freedom of the soul and leaves people bound to the assumptions dominating society, namely, capitalism and consumerism.

Despite these apparent challenges, in PMA Grant still has hope for Canada. In fact, one might say that Grant finds encouragement in what he considers to be glaring ideational problems in Canadian society. Grant believes that such negative attributes represent the inevitable imperfection found in any culture, and that these weaknesses will provoke the next phase in the dialectic. By offering his Hegelian communitarianism, Grant assumes the role of articulator of the antithesis. He believes the younger generations will take up his standard, because they feel alienated by the system:

However much the repressive elements of late industrial society may lie on us like chains, this very society is a fruit of the civilization of Europe: the civilization of rational theology, of the Reformation, and of the Enlightenment, a civilization that brought men a knowledge of themselves

as free as had no other in the past. And these young people, whether they know it or not, hold in their very being the remnants of that tradition, the knowledge of themselves in their freedom, even if much else from that tradition has never been theirs. Thus knowing themselves as free, they know their freedom as standing against the pressures of the society that bind them in an impersonal grip. In such a society the best of them are open to the philosophic life with an intensity worthy of the greatest periods of human thought ... And these young people are the evidence that in our society profound philosophical thought is arising. They herald what may yet be, surprisingly, the dawn of the age of reason in North America.⁹³

Thus Grant hopes that his articulation of the antithesis will spark the dawning of a new age, a synthesis of the natural law and philosophy with the developments of modern technology. In the end of his text he calls upon the reader to participate in defining the moral law which will act as a foundation and common purpose for this glorious new age. Our role is to find a way to revive the various insights into freedom that we gain from the study of history, and to synthesize them into a new state religion.

Our minds are not separate, and we move towards the truth only as we are willing to learn from the full weight of what the thought of the past and the present have to tell us. Humanity has been called an inherited deposit, and we only become fully human as we make that deposit our own.⁹⁴

Only by making the deposit our own will we be realizing the will of God and therefore be truly free. In short, for Canada to be a just state, it must have a single uniform culture which includes a faith in human reason, history and God. He believes this one culture can include two nations - French and English Canada.

Some commentators attempt to diminish the significance of Hegel's influence on

⁹³ Grant, *Philosophy*, 12-13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

Grant's philosophy. They acknowledge Hegel's influence on PMA, but emphasize Grant's subsequent refutation of Hegel in the 1996 introduction of PMA.

At the theoretical level, I 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 of 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 reading the conclusion that Hegel has understood the implication of that doctrine better than any other thinker. I therefore attempted to write down in non-professional language the substance of the vision that the age of reason beginning to dawn and (dawn) first in North America.⁹⁵

Joan O'Donovan, William Christian and Sheila Grant depict Grant as primarily a Christian Platonist who temporarily found some use in Hegel's synthesis of classical philosophy and Christianity. O'Donovan alludes to the distinctions between the Christian doctrine of providence and Hegel's dialectical determinism. She also notes that Hegel's philosophy does not include the existence of revelation.⁹⁶ Finally, she notes that whereas Hegel spoke of the progressive dialectic of history as a certainty, Grant was merely hopeful.⁹⁷ William Christian and Sheila Grant state that Grant "did not have a cut and dried system and did not seek to create one."⁹⁸ Christian and Grant emphasize the influence of Simone Weil, and, by extension, Platonism and Christianity.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 121.

⁹⁶ O'Donovan, *Twilight*, 44.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁹⁸ William Christian, and Sheila Grant. eds. *The George Grant Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 6.

It is certain that O'Donovan, Christian and Grant are correct to stress the important influence of other thinkers besides Hegel. It would be imprudent to suggest that anyone but Hegel could be an unadulterated Hegelian, and even then we might wonder (Schelling adamantly asserted that Hegel had stolen all of his ideas). It is not my intention to label Grant definitively. However, it is my intention to illuminate the importance of Hegelianism to Grant's political philosophy and use it to reveal the subtler facets of Grant's arguments. While Platonism and Christianity are crucial to Grant's thought, it is Hegel who has provided Grant with the interpretation of modernity. While this is tempered at times by other influences such as Weil, Ellul, Strauss, Heidegger, and so on, it is Hegel's philosophy of history, his depiction of the modern dilemma, his conception of freedom, and his proposed solution that we find at the heart of Grant's communitarianism. Furthermore, I believe O'Donovan, Christian and Grant are incorrect to depict Grant's PMA as a brief dalliance with Hegelianism. As Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott have shown, the influence of Hegelian thought on Canadian political thought has extremely deep roots.⁹⁹ They trace this back to John Watson whom they credit for bringing Hegelian philosophy to Canada in 1872.¹⁰⁰ Their study includes a reference to Grant,¹⁰¹ whom they consider to exemplify a strain of Platonized Hegelianism that began with Wilfred Currier Keirstead (1871-1944). Thus Grant need not

⁹⁹ Leslie Armour, and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1981)

¹⁰⁰ Armour, *Faces*, 217.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

have been familiar with Hegel to have been influenced by him. Grant only needed to be familiar with the conservative strain of Canadian political thought that was entrenched in institutions he was a part of, including the United Church, the Anglican Church, Upper Canada College and Queen's University. En passant, it is note-worthy that Armour and Trott explain that, like Grant, Keirstead "spent much of his life puzzling over the confrontation between individualism and communitarianism."¹⁰² While interest in this issue does not make one Hegelian, it is the issue that Hegel brought to the fore and argued was the essence of the modern dilemma.

¹⁰² Ibid., 397.

CHAPTER IV: **REFUTING GRANT'S HEGELIAN VISION**

Is this freedom-centered analysis of history and the state the correct, or even a helpful, approach to determining a just community? Is the communitarian conception of the state which is born from this ontology and methodology correct or helpful?

While freedom is undoubtedly a valuable idea and perhaps even worth dying for, it is also highly abstract and it is bound to be an unsteady foundation for any analysis, let alone an ontology. In this chapter I contend that Grant's Hegelianism leads him to construct an artificial conception of the self and community. I also argue that, as a consequence of his misconceptions, his political philosophy would be unjustly oppressive if it were transformed from theory to practice. I begin with a criticism of his most fundamental ontological assumption, the progressive movement of history. In turn, this leads to a criticism of his philosophy of freedom which I will suggest is a form of ideological tyranny when stripped of its ontological support. Finally I will discuss the implications this has for his communitarian vision of the just state, with particular reference to the Canadian context.

To appreciate where Grant's approach begins to derail we must first acknowledge certain shaky points in the philosophical edifice. Once this is done we can address Grant's criticism of modernity and his communitarianism.

To begin, I would like to deflate the confidence which characterizes the Hegelian conception of moral philosophy adopted by Grant. As stated earlier, the Hegelian project

is to reunite reason and faith in a form that will maintain the certainty of proof offered by reason and to produce the strength and direction offered by faith. The absolute knowledge of the Hegelian ontology “unites revelation and knowledge by giving the former the shape of conceptual understanding and the latter the inner experience of fulfilment.”¹⁰³ But Hegel is unable to meet his own standards in his Herculean effort. He breaks with common sense and, accordingly, the project fails.

Hegel’s project, I wish to contend, fails because the entire vision is contingent upon the truth of an as yet unseen unification of Idea and Nature. Hegel’s ontology claims to be able to employ reason to decipher the will of God and the eidos of history. Eric Voegelin provides a strikingly simple and yet compelling response to this when he states:

History has no eidos, because the course of history extends into the unknown future. The meaning of history, thus, is an illusion; and this illusionary eidos is created by treating a symbol of faith as if it were a proposition concerning an object of immanent experience.¹⁰⁴

The symbol which Voegelin accuses many thinkers of immanentizing is Christianity’s notion of a sacred sphere of history which is distinct from the cyclical profane sphere of history. According to the Augustinian distinction between the city of God and the city of man, eschatological fulfilment can only exist in sacred transcendental history, not in the experiential profane history. Thus Hegel is giving way to the temptation to bring the transcendental notion of redemption into the experiential realm. Not only does this

¹⁰³ Connolly, 111.

¹⁰⁴ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 120.

contradict the Christian doctrine of two spheres of history, but it also contradicts Hegel's own promise of certitude because it is necessarily a conviction of faith. Connolly writes:

The ontology of Spirit must be known to be believed, but the claim that it is knowable always collapses into an act of faith. If certainty is stripped from this ontology then the determinacy and directionality which discipline the Hegelian dialectic are also peeled away. For the theory was to be established not by assumptions it proves at the beginning but by the authoritative result it achieves at the end. Absent the promise of the end, it is contestable which direction must be taken whenever a particular mode of consciousness is negated.¹⁰⁵

By failing to offer us any certainty, and by failing to provide an authoritative insight into the future - for we have clearly not reached an age of universal freedom as Hegel predicted - the Hegelian ontology has crumbled beneath the weight of its own standards. Without proof we return to either/or status. Either we rely on faith without proof or we despair at the ultimate meaninglessness. Reason cannot tell us whether to have faith, or which of the competing contemporary theses represents God's will. Once again we find there is no easy route between Scylla and Charibdis.

Therefore, by adopting much of Hegel's philosophical approach, Grant also adopts this great failing. However, Grant is partly aware of this limitation of Hegelianism. While he still has confidence in Hegel's vision of history and its predictive power, he recognizes that this vision is grounded in faith. He copes with this "problem" by simply asserting his own Christian faith:

The justification of moral law would involve showing that without such a conception, all our actions, our striving, our decisions, our agonies must count as nothing and why they do not so count. Only a great artist could state this affirmation in the concrete; only a great philosopher could show

¹⁰⁵ Connolly, 114.

how it can withstand any argument brought against it. As I am neither of these, it must remain in part a matter of faith for me.¹⁰⁶

Instead of advocating the rational certainty of the *eidos* of history, Grant asserts that there is room for irrational faith. However, he tempers this by insisting on the importance of philosophy to ensure the continuation of a just moral law, rather than permitting the flourishing of a dogmatic fundamentalism.

It must be emphasized that 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, a closed morality, a morality that does not care about its own communication ...[and] a morality that does not care about its own communication is condemned at its heart, because it contradicts its own first principle, charity ... Those who care about charity must care about communication, and to communicate requires systematic thought. A genuine moral language must try to be universal.¹⁰⁷

Unlike Hegel, Grant does not presume to convince using logical reasoning. Instead he employs two rhetorical devices: sensationalism and empowerment through the promise of autonomy. For the first, Grant plays on the fears and anxieties which are inherent to the human condition, the most pronounced of these being the sense that there is a more perfect world elsewhere. We have seen this sentiment throughout history. People have dreamed of a golden age of bygone days, a transcendent heaven, a temporal Shangri-La, or a future utopia which we will achieve either through the grace of God or our capacity to reason. Grant begins his argument with a prognosis of the ailments of modernity. These are not unique observations for either him or Hegel. They are the

¹⁰⁶ Grant, *Philosophy*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

necessary counterparts to the optimistic aspects of modernity, just as any age will have its discontented critics. They are not so much a negative consequence of the Enlightenment culture as they are a part of it. Hegel might think of it in terms of an antithesis, but it is better understood as the sensation of being alienated from the world, a sensation which is present in every era and every culture; the only thing that changes is the way it articulates itself, and this is contingent on the dynamics of the culture.

Eric Voegelin has identified the presence of this form of disillusionment throughout history and across many civilizations. He asserts that this occurs when “the loss of meaning that results from the breakdown of institutions, civilization, and ethnic cohesion evokes attempts to regain an understanding of the meaning of human existence in the given conditions of the world.”¹⁰⁸ Whether it was the Stoics, Christian, Hebrews, Manichese or Persians, “one feature may be singled out as the central element in this varied and extensive creation of meaning: the experience of the world as an alien place into which man has strayed and from which he must find his way back home to the other world of his origin.”¹⁰⁹

It is this timeless discontent that Hegel presents to us as he reacts to the loss of meaning in the Christian world and confronts the new horizon of the post-Enlightenment era. And Grant has adopted his rhetoric. Thus Grant has, in this way, abandoned the

¹⁰⁸ Eric Voegelin, *Science Politics and Gnosticism* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1968), 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

discipline of philosophy - which is about striving for knowledge - and has become involved in sensational rhetoric and great speculation.

The second rhetorical device - what I've called "empowerment" - is the invitation to be an autonomous participant on the frontier of a new age. Because he is aware that following the Hegelian doctrine involves faith, Grant knows that the doctrine can no longer be asserted as logical and indisputable. Therefore he must present many of the elements of the doctrine as logical statements, then call upon the modern individual to take a leap of faith, then systematize a moral code which meets the Hegelian standards. In other words, first, he presents a prognosis: modern society is sick, and he outlines the symptoms, e.g. misconception of freedom, exploitative practices of capitalism, loss of moral philosophy. These are ideas that are widely accepted in popular philosophical criticism. We hear them confidently asserted at pubs, parties and in pop songs. Thus they rhetorically ring true and, accordingly, Grant is not obliged to support these claims in a rigorous academic manner. Grant then presents the treatment: modern society needs to recognize the existence of limit, reason, God, the eidos of history, all in the name of freedom. Again, these ideas, especially that of freedom, are firmly embedded in the modern psyche and need not be rigorously established. Finally, Grant asks the reader to get involved in the healing process by helping to formulate a moral system. In fact, the latter is more a cry for all-hands-on-deck at a time of urgency. In order to avoid catastrophe, people must actively defend against the encroaching evil. By asking rather than telling, Grant meets one significant criteria of his own doctrine: humanity's consciousness of freedom has developed to the point that people will not blindly accept a

moral system; the modern moral system must be the design of each of its participants.

Thus he has merged form with content.

The first consideration is how the moral law can be formulated in a way that does not override but fully recognizes the freedom of the spirit. The breakdown of the old systems of moral law were chiefly due to the failure of their formulations at this point. The demand of the law seemed external to the human will from which it was demanded. As men became conscious of themselves as free they believed their freedom to lie in the rejection of what was external to them.¹¹⁰

While rhetorically this is a milder presentation of ideas than Hegel's, the result is the same. Grant has effectively criticized modernity and presented a "true" solution; the only difference lies in the tone with which he asks us to accept his solution.

However, neither Grant's acknowledgment of the element of faith, nor his inclusive rhetoric save him from an obvious criticism. If the system of thought relies on faith, then the ontology and methodology based on that system can no longer claim to have a sturdy foundation. Thus the knowledge paradigm of the Enlightenment reasserts its foothold. For all its imperfection, at least empiricism produces evidence.

If the ontology is based upon an insupportable faith in providence, then there is little wonder why we don't accept it. However, Grant's methodology requires closer analysis. Grant's moral philosophy offers two methods: The first is comparative history, comparing modern civilization to past civilizations in order to illuminate elements of our culture of which we would otherwise be unaware. Second, he offers interpretive history, reading the historical narrative which produced modern civilization, and discovering from

¹¹⁰ Grant, *Philosophy*, 96.

this the purpose of history. The former method is untouched by our arguments thus far, and as it does little to support communitarianism, is irrelevant here.¹¹¹ The latter method is a vital justification for communitarianism but Grant's employment of it is suspect, for reasons already offered.

If the only way one can maintain that history has an *eidos* is by taking a leap of faith, then the hope of discovering the purpose of history is short-circuited. It both preserves and culminates in an irrational belief in Spirit. As interpretation, it can only be made convincing through spiritual revelation or by arriving at history's end and evaluating time's conclusion. Obviously neither of these options can be established by Grant. Therefore history, as Grant understands it, is an idealization of time inspired by an inherent human desire to overcome suffering, an idea developed from a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine. Consequently, his historical methodology is rendered unconvincing. In challenging this feature of Grant's moral philosophy we also challenge the assumptions that relate to it, especially, that history is the progressive development of human freedom and most significantly, that it relies on Grant's particular conception of freedom.

Grant calls on people to both think for themselves, and to think as *he* does. He calls upon them to transcend the intellectual oppression of modern society and at the same time to discover what *he* does. This contradiction relates to his conservatism. Grant

¹¹¹ Nevertheless, there have been many effective arguments made against the value of comparative studies. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1978) is an excellent exposition of the frailties of social science's claim to value neutrality in comparative studies.

argues that a healthy and just community must have a coherent set of moral laws which are willingly followed by all, which in the Hegelian parallel philosophy is known as the *Sittlichkeit*. But he also asserts that each individual, to be truly free, must critically engage in the philosophical process which determines these laws.

Grant is aware of this internal conflict and he invites the reader to take this puzzle on as a personal and public challenge. Each citizen must both independently discover the just law of the Absolute, and freely conform to society's laws. However, according to Grant, until we reach the end of history these two sets of laws will necessarily conflict. Moreover, it is unlikely that everyone will come to understand the law of the Absolute equally well, so there will be some conflict on that level also. In Hegelian terms, we are to use our human freedom to interpret the *Moralität*, by tracing the progression of history, and thereby to discover the correct *Sittlichkeit* for our state. This is so that we may contribute to our freedom and to the full realization of our *Volksgeist*, and, in turn, further the proper progress of history and the will of God. However, Grant declares what this true nature of history and the *Moralität* are before the rest of us begin our own philosophical journey. He invites us to see our freedom in agreement with him and, with him, to reject the existing social order.

In other words, if we should respond to his call of all hands on deck, and go forth to interpret the *Moralität* for the reasons he suggests, then we have already accepted so many of his assumptions about truth, the state, freedom, history and the order of the universe that to say we are exercising the freedom of the human soul would be meaningless. In this case, "freedom" is synonymous with "following Grant."

Grant advocates reading history as though it were the will of God, but he criticizes the existing state (which has, presumably, been provided by God). He claims that ours is not the true state. On this point Grant breaks somewhat from Hegelianism. For Hegel, the individual is entirely subject to the will of history. Freedom is only achieved through the realization of this fact, not by attempting to alter the state:

What makes men morally discontented - a discontent on which they pride themselves - is that they do not find the present appropriate for the realization of aims which in their opinion are right and good - especially the ideals of political institutions of our time. They contrast things as they are with their ideal of things as they ought to be. In this case it is neither private interest nor passion that desires gratification, but reason, justice, liberty. In their name people demand their due and often are not merely discontent but rebellious against the condition of the world. To estimate such views and feelings one would have to examine the stubborn demands and dogmatic opinions in question. At no time as much as in our own have such general principles and notions been advanced with so much pretentiousness.¹¹²

Grant has taken the easier route of uncovering the deficiency of things¹¹³ rather than taking on the real philosophical challenge of attempting to comprehend how it fits the telos. And no matter what “good” is lost in society, Hegel’s position remains clear.

But then what about the atrophy, corruption, and ruin of religious, ethical, and moral purposes and social conditions in general? It must be said that essentially these purposes are infinite and eternal. But the forms that they assume may be of a limited order and consequently belong to the realm of mere nature, subject to the sway of chance. They are therefore transitory and exposed to atrophy and corruption.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Hegel, *Reason*, 46.

¹¹³ Obviously, in life there is always suffering, so identifying sources of discontent is never difficult.

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *Reason*, 48.

Thus, Grant's hubris is not only apparent to those wondering at his assumed familiarity with the Moralität, but from the perspective of his own Hegelian roots.

With his corrective program, Grant transforms himself from one who is speaking out in response to a religious feeling to one who has assumed the role of great seer, or prophet. Grant advocates a single uniform moral system for the community which he has discovered, one which, if it were implemented, would require a revolution of such magnitude that it would be necessary to entirely restructure the educational, economic, moral, religious, and governmental institutions. According to his ontology, history is a progressive development of the consciousness of human freedom and this progression is willed by God. If this is so, who is George Grant to assert that in modern Canada, God has made a mistake? How can he justify his claim to know the true conservatism and hence the proper formation of the community? He himself acknowledges that the present manifestation of Canadian conservatism differs from his own:

To put the problem directly in terms of our contemporary society: there can be no doubt that we all have need of a proper conservatism, an order that gives form to persons, to families, to education, to worship, to politics, and to the economic system. Yet to express conservatism in Canada means de facto to justify the continuing rule of the businessmen and the right of the greedy to turn all activities into sources of personal gain.¹¹⁵

Grant's conservatism involves the complex ontology we have been discussing and a moral law; whereas, according to Grant, contemporary conservatives have little or no moral code, they only follow their appetites:

¹¹⁵ Grant, *Philosophy*, 101.

The conservative idea of law has often been in the mouths of capitalists, but seldom in their actions. Their economic policy has been the denial of order and form. It has been carried out by exalting the impulse that is the very symbol of the unlimited and the disorder. As a ruling class they stand condemned for their denial of law.¹¹⁶

While we might sympathize with this condemnation, we still must realize that Grant has transformed himself from the questioning philosopher to the knowing prophet. In Voegelin's discussion of Hegel, he revives the Platonic understanding of philosophy as it is articulated in *Phaedrus*. There the "true thinker" is not to be described as "sophos," one who knows, because "actual knowledge" is reserved for God. Thus he calls the "true thinker" "philosophos," the "lover of knowledge." According to this definition, Grant has stepped beyond philosophy.

Now, having examined the problems that lie in Grant's methodology-ontology, let us discuss the main subject of this thesis, the right ordering of society. Grant's conservatism includes a highly developed conception of freedom to which this essay has given much attention. According to Grant, a conservative state is made up of individuals who freely conform to the state's laws (written or otherwise) because they have achieved knowledge of the rightness of the *Sittlichkeit* through their participation in moral philosophy. While he does not presume that all laws are by nature just in our current society, he does suggest this would be the case in the social order he advocates. Grant draws on Kant's definition of moral behaviour when he explains that for an act to be moral the individual must not only behave according to the moral law, she must do so

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 101.

freely of her own will. "It is not a moral act to obey the law, except in freedom. Thereby good acts are distinguished from right acts."¹¹⁷

But this sets us with a difficult paradox. Grant asks us to accept and defend the freedom of the human soul. And yet, he also tells us that freedom involves following the natural law by obeying its objective manifestation in the true *Sittlichkeit* of the period in the progression of history. This contradiction may seem palatable when taken with Hegel's theory of dialectics in which the Idea is at once alien to the objective world and at one with it, but, as we have established, that is an issue of faith, and best left to theology, not politics. If in the actual ordering of society, the lawmakers decide on what constitutes the true *Sittlichkeit* of their state, then there will be no room for the freedom of the individual soul, only the freedom to follow the law. Again, this may make theological sense; however, in politics it is known as double speak.

If freedom was realized by willingly obeying the law, then philosophy itself would necessarily be directed toward supporting the state's *Sittlichkeit*. The measure of the truly free philosophers would be the extent to which their philosophy supported the status quo. Those who doubted the validity of the *Volksgeist* would be deterring its ultimate fulfilment and hence opposing the will of the state and the will of God. This would not be tolerated. Indeed, this was the lesson of the death of Socrates.

Grant is aware of this problem as his criticism of Marx indicates, but he believes he has avoided the pitfall. He argues that Marxism failed because Marx asserted that

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

human reason, not God, was the source of redemption from evil and suffering. According to Grant, Marx severed the link between humanity and the transcendent truth by denying the existence of God. Marx left us subject to the will of the state and its ideology without an alternative point of reference or source of knowledge. Only the social institutions which represented the purposes of humanity - the most powerful being the state - could provide knowledge and understanding. "Marxism has failed in the West primarily because it does not allow sufficient place to the freedom of the spirit."¹¹⁸ However, in practice, Grant's theory would necessarily arrive at the same conclusion. He demands a uniform faith in the state's *Sittlichkeit*, but this is an impossibility. Faith is not so easily achieved, and common readings of the *Moralität* are highly unlikely - a fact to which the diversity of world religions attests. Therefore one is left with either systematic oppression of difference, or tolerance of cultural fragmentation. Thus we must conclude that the fulfilment of the Canadian *Volksgeist* is pure fiction, blindly hoped for or mistakenly remembered.¹¹⁹

Grant hopes to avoid cultural oppression by insisting on the inclusion of moral philosophy in society. The citizenry is to be free to arrive at the common cultural beliefs on their own. But this merely culminates in the confused tone for which Steven Holmes

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹⁹ It is a common practice to place an imagined narrative on history to suit one's own beliefs. This argument is set out in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991). Canada's history has been one of ongoing cultural struggles regarding its constitution and identity. A united coherent Canadian *Volksgeist* is imagined, but it has never existed.

criticizes communitarian thinkers: the communitarian puts the community forward only to pull it back and say it is just a supplement to liberal society. Holmes explains that there are two claims here, "one is newsworthy but implausible and the other convincing but bland."¹²⁰

Grant's error is revealed in Connolly's criticism of Hegel's notion of collective freedom. Connolly accuses Hegel of depoliticising the ideals of social life.¹²¹ He argues that Hegel "invests too much ontological significance in the artifices through which common purposes are defined and the common standards by which conduct is governed."¹²² For 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. The following are some of the elements he considers to be essential to politics and which stand in direct opposition to Hegel's state:

[First,] that common understandings form the background for collective action in modern society; second, that decisions binding upon all members must be made in a complex society; third, that the resources of social knowledge are perpetually insufficient to select a single decision with confidence from the array of possibilities; fourth, that a case typically can be made for some of the choices ignored or foreclosed by any decision actually taken; and, fifth, that political conflict, disruption, disturbance is one crucial way to educate members about the uncertain and contestable elements in common understandings and to alert them to the ineliminable

¹²⁰ Holmes, Stephen. "The Permanent Structure of Antiliberal Thought," in Nancy Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 223.

¹²¹ Connolly, 129.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 130.

element of arbitrariness in the very necessity of common action amidst conditions of persistent indeterminacy in knowledge.¹²³

Connolly concludes that 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."¹²⁴

It is the aspiration for realizing a pan-country harmonious higher wisdom that makes Grant's vision of Canada with one conservative culture and two nations so disturbing. There is a sense in his writings that if we universalize philosophy, then we can overcome contentious inter-cultural politics within Canada. He hopes that we can all unite behind the truth of a single conservative vision. But as we examined the support for this vision we found it to be feeble ontologically and methodologically. His conception of freedom and history, upon which much of his communitarian state is dependent, proved to be interesting yet ultimately unconvincing. Now, with Connolly's insight into Hegelianism, we can see how Grant's communitarianism would stifle discourse.

¹²³ Ibid., 130.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 130

Like Hegel, Grant would have his citizens first agree with his ontology, then freely engage in philosophy. But once they have agreed that the movement of time is instigated by the spirit of history or will of God and that the world is engaged in a dialectical progression toward the unification of the objective and the subjective, and, finally, in order to be free we must conform to this understanding of the cosmos and our Sittlichkeit, then it begs the question, What room is left for an individual to philosophize? Many of the fundamental questions are answered and the less significant are covered under the obligation to conform to the Sittlichkeit. We seem to be left with two choices, neither of which would satisfy Grant. Either you have a uniform culture and suppress all questioning, philosophical or otherwise, or you permit philosophical thought and accept the political fragmentation and cultural pluralism that comes with it.

This point is made effectively by Barry Cooper who argues that factions are inevitable. Cooper criticises some of the false assumptions which prop up dreams of Canadian unity or Canadian nationalism. In this criticism he leans on some of the ideas which guided the composition of the *Federalist Papers*. In the *Papers*, Publius (the pseudonym for the authors of the text) asserts that a faction exists “whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”¹²⁵ Publius considered there to be two potential solutions to the inevitability of factions. The one which he (they)

¹²⁵ Quoted in Cooper, 207.

considered to be the best, and was the subject of his treatise, was federalism. The one he rejected was that which Grant seems to advocate, “giving every citizen the same opinion, the same passions and the same interests.”¹²⁶ Publius’ justification for rejecting this solution was practical and straightforward: “the fallibility of reason meant that men would hold different opinions and so espouse different interests. Moreover, ‘the diversity in the faculties of men from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interest’.”¹²⁷ Though surely the first point here is sufficiently undeniable to provide an incontrovertible rebuttal of Grant’s proposed culturally homogeneous state, it is worthwhile recounting Cooper’s elaboration of the second contention.

Cooper maintains that the natural inequality of human faculty will necessarily result in economic inequality. This inequality of property in turn creates a distinct diversity of interests among the citizens. People concerned with protecting their property will seek legislation which favours their particular industry or tax bracket. Quoting from Publius, Cooper concludes that the causes of factions “are thus sown in the nature of man.”¹²⁸

According to Publius, the spur for this form of factionalization digs deeper proportionately with the size of the state. For citizens of huge states, it is more difficult to

¹²⁶ Ibid., 207.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 207.

conceptualize the interdependence of the citizenry; therefore it is also more difficult for people to imagine that self-sacrifice for the greater good is in the interest of all. Consequently, the prudent law maker of the large state will form laws on the assumption that people are seeking private gain rather than virtuously striving to realize the common good - in Cooper's words, so that "largely private passions and interests could be turned to public good."¹²⁹ This is what Publius hoped would be achieved through federalism. Because federalism is comprised of a dispersion of authority across the populace, it therefore provides checks so that no single group can mobilize the state's resources to meet their own particular interest.

While Cooper does not entirely deny the role of selfless sentiments in the decision-making process of individuals, he argues convincingly that it would be unrealistic to hope for a populace that is nearly entirely motivated by a common purpose and which will willingly subject their more immediate interests to the higher aim of fulfilling a *Volksgeist*. The only imaginable exception to this rule would be at times of national crisis, such as war or threat of natural disaster.

On the other hand, if the law makers and citizenry were to deny Publius' cynicism, the outcome would still fail to meet Grant's vision. That is, if the lawmakers construct a state which is guided by common purpose and in which the citizenry "recognize" that it is best to subject their individual interests to the higher truth of the state's *Volksgeist*, then it is still doubtful that Grant's conservatism would flourish. Why?

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

Because his conservatism defines philosophy as well. Hence thinkers who employed alternative philosophical methods would be oppressed. But the oppressive nature of Grant's ideal state is not limited to the non-conformist philosophers; it would also oppress or marginalize groups according to culture, "race," or historical lineage.

Despite Grant's apparent liberal sympathies for the political underdog - he champions the innocent youth, the elderly and other unwary victims of the capitalist system - his communitarian conception of the just state is elitist in nature and, if employed, would oppress cultural minorities. While he may oppose the moneyed or military elites of Canada, he also promotes the traditional Canadian cultural elite - French Catholics and English Protestants - at the expense of those less established, or simply politically and economically marginalized. By way of providing a balanced analysis, it should first be stated that in some sense, his is truly a noble struggle for fundamental principles of a (dual) culture which did once dominate Canada (though not always judiciously). His is a sincere effort to defend the principles, not the people. He is not making an ethno-racial plea, but a cultural one. He is defending a culture which is, at its theoretical centre, supposed to be inclusive and tolerant. In his early writings, the culture he defends is the Tory tradition. However, in later writings, without altering his general argument, he states that he is not concerned with which particular culture provides the dominant common purpose, only that one exists and that it includes the insights about freedom which he considers vital.

In this era when the homogenizing power of technology is almost unlimited, I do regret the disappearance of indigenous tradition, including my own. It is true that no particularism can adequately incarnate the good. But is it not also true that only through some particular roots, however,

partial, (sic) can human beings first grasp what is good and it is the juice of such roots which for most men sustain their partaking in a more universal good?¹³⁰

However, despite the essentially noble motivation for his position, his principles lead him to ignore the importance of the diverse cultures as such and their importance to the people who identify with those cultures. It is his grounding in high principles such as justice and freedom rather than explicit condemnation of other which makes Grant's writing so appealing at first glance. Only after some reconsideration does it become clear that the price he asks for the realization of justice and freedom may be unjust and oppressive.

One could draw support for this claim by reading between the lines of PMA, but Grant's *Lament* renders this form of forced extraction unnecessary. In LN he is explicit in his disregard for minority cultures within the state, as we will see.

LN was written some years after PMA and while it maintains the same vision of the just state, it has lost the optimistic hope for the dawning of a new age. In LN, Grant has reconciled himself to a more tragic historical fate. He becomes a chronicler of the way events in political development have destroyed any hope of Canada realizing Hegel's dream. The freedom that is realized when individuals identify their ends with the ends of the community is usurped by the radical individualism of liberalism and its counterpart, the technological culture. Grant argues that Canada has lost its conservative communitarian culture and has been subsumed in the mass age of modernity. In this text he also changes his position on the question of progress. Whereas he had once shared

¹³⁰ George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (House of Anansi Press, Ltd. 1969), 68-9.

Marx's hope that technology would provide us with the means to overcome poverty and economic inequality, he came to view technology not only as a means but as an end in itself. He contends that it is a device of the morally void modern movement. In his 1966 introduction to PMA, this transition is stated clearly:

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 the equivalent to the loss of himself and the knowledge of how to live. The ferocious events of the twentieth century may batter the outposts of that faith, dim intuitions of the eternal order may put some of its consequences into question, but its central core is not easily surrendered. Its bastion is the trust in that science that issues in the conquest of nature, human and non-human. Every moment of our existence is so surrounded by the benefits of technology that to try to understand the limits to its conquests, and also its relating to human excellence, may seem the work of a neurotic seeking to escape from life into dreams.¹³¹

Despite this important shift in his thought, Grant's conceptions of conservatism, the state and freedom remain constant. The significant change lies in his conclusion that rather than history moving toward the unification of the objective and the subjective, we are entering an age of universal homogenization and tyranny. However, we will not address these issues here. This essay is only concerned with the arguments and assumptions that underlie these conclusions. Thus LN serves only as an illustration of where those arguments lead, namely, "from life into dreams." But these are Quixotic dreams, and like

¹³¹ Grant, *Philosophy*, 119-120.

the knight of the woeful countenance, Grant's heroic deeds may be chivalrous in spirit, but they are folly in fact.

In LN, Grant depicts Canada as a state binding two nations, French Catholic and English Protestant. Although this is a fairly common assessment we must also realize that his vision is a misleading simplification of confederation. The confederation of Canada involved an unification of a diversity of groups - generally represented by provinces - who were interested in federalism as a protection from the expansionism of the US. This was the age of nationalist movements. Empires were breaking up. The imperial powers of Europe were scrambling to become nation-states at home, and they were losing interest in their colonies which were often proving to be more liabilities than assets. Thus, with less support from Britain, the provinces of British North America sought to protect themselves from being overrun by their powerful neighbour to the south. They hoped to realize their own potential while maintaining political and economic ties to Britain. To a large extent, Grant is correct to say that the shared loathing of the US stemmed from their shared tradition of conservatism in British North America, both Ultramontane French and Anglican English, which contrasted sharply with the radical individualism of America's Lockean liberalism. However, beyond this conservatism the differences were pronounced and regional cultural identities were extremely important. Hence, Grant is taking unfair lexicographical liberties by attempting to draw from this shared conservatism a firm Canadian cultural unity, or even a loose bi-culturalism.

Grant makes his case by asserting that the seeds of this vision of Canada were planted with the constitutional arrangement of 1791. According to Grant, this is when the

common purpose of the Canadian nation was affirmed, and since then all of Canadian history has been a battle between the forces for Americanization and the forces for the unity of the French and English of British North America:

A society only articulates itself as a nation through some common intention among its people. The constitutional arrangements of 1791 ... were only possible because of a widespread determination not to become part of the great Republic.... What both peoples had in common was the fact they both recognized, that they could only be preserved outside the United States of America.... Both the French and the British had limited common ground in their sense of social order - belief that society required a high degree of law, and respect for a public conception of virtue. Both would grant the state much wider rights to control the individual than was recognized in the libertarian ideas of the American constitution.¹³²

While opposition to Americanization may continue to be a vital part of Canada's elusive identity, and some remnants of Catholic/Tory conservatism may still trickle through our shared subconscious, surely by the beginning of the 20th century the population of Canada had changed sufficiently to consider it in broader terms than as the common purpose of two nations. And yet this is what Grant faults Diefenbaker for articulating. Diefenbaker attempted to promote a multicultural form of Canadian nationalism. Grant explains that Diefenbaker appealed to one united Canada, in which individuals would have equal rights irrespective of race and religion; "there would be no first- and second-class citizens."¹³³ For Grant this missed the essence of what distinguished Canada from the homogenizing universalism of the US, the common purpose of two conservative

¹³² Grant, *Lament*, 68-9.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

nations. It was these two cultures alone which must have firm control of the mechanisms of the state in order to resist homogenization:

The appeal of a nation within a nation is more substantial than that of the Ukrainians or the Jews. For Diefenbaker, the unity of all Canadians is a final fact. His interpretation of federalism is basically American. It could not encompass those who were concerned with being a nation, only those who wanted to preserve charming residual customs.¹³⁴

In this passage we see the difficult position in which Grant's bi-national communitarian depiction of Canada places him. For Grant, the inclusion of the French nation is a noble gesture which epitomizes the tolerance of other that is central to the conservative doctrine. He speaks of the equality of French Canada with an air of self-congratulation. However, he restricts his magnanimity to those present at the 1791 constitutional arrangements and to whom he awards the rather ill-defined status of "nationhood." To encourage tolerance of less "substantial" groups such as the Ukrainians or Jews is beyond his conservative capacity. According to Grant, these cultures cannot fend off homogenization, and, indeed, to recognize them in the constitution would be an erosion of diversity rather than a defense of it.

This is where the primacy of uniting culture and state (though it be bi-cultural) runs foul. Does recognition of historically marginalized cultures erode diversity, and if so, is it better to oppress them in the name of protecting the dominant culture? This is the side of conservatism which John T. Woods discusses when he cites John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic*. Woods looks at the effects of the European conservatism in the prairies where he

¹³⁴ Ibid., 21.

says “the community-centred rural culture of post-feudal Europe lingered and was nurtured”¹³⁵:

Not only were European peasant communities lifted up and dropped almost intact into waiting positions in the prairie economy, but they were collectively assigned stations in life by the British-nurtured “charter group” who already controlled Winnipeg, Edmonton and the other prairie cities. The prairies supported a society almost of estates, or castes, socially and geographically sequestered on the ample plains.

The case of the Ukrainians is most striking. They were encouraged to work the marginal lands to the north of the best wheat and ranching country, it being assumed that the simplicity and tenacity of “these sturdy people” - judged to be a kind of racial characteristic - suited them (and would suit their children) in perpetuity to the difficulties, primitive conditions and meagre rewards of working the sour soils of Manitoba’s interlake district. An often subtle but unmistakable and persuasive pressure was exerted to keep them in the status, first, of peasants and then, with the growth of the cities, of labourers.

The Jews were expected to stay with light manufacturing and merchandising. Their intrusion into the worlds of finance, or the residential districts of the Grain Exchanges and the Manitoba clubs’ Anglo-Saxon members, was blocked in any way that conscience would permit; and, on occasion, conscience could be rather lenient in the matter.¹³⁶

Here, Woods has precisely captured the tradition of cultural elitism which Grant falls into.

Lament for a Nation has often been attacked for having too narrow a vision of Canada. When it was published, the multitude of new Canadians and old who did not fit into his dual-nation vision had no shortage of articulate voices defending their place in the Canadian landscape. Grant was seen by many to be elitist, imperialist and, on some

¹³⁵ John T. Woods, 85.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

accounts, racist. But there were also many Canadians for whom it struck a chord and it became required reading in many university Canadian politics courses for decades to come. And yet, only by seeing the Hegelian strain of Grant's thought do we realize just how dark the potential of his theory might be, despite the seemingly innocent and perhaps noble intentions behind it.

By bringing his theories down to earth in the form of the Canadian context, Grant illustrated the inevitable weakness of his ethereal investigations. He attempted to articulate the essence of the Canadian *Volksgeist* by interpreting its history through a philosophical lens. For many Canadians, his words struck home; he was stating what they had grown up believing in their hearts and minds. But for many others, Grant's description of Canada was a cruel slight. It is in this very conflict that the failure of Grant's Hegelianism and his communitarianism is made apparent. If, indeed, tolerance is part of Canada's *Volksgeist*, then there can be no delineation of a Canadian culture. It must remain fluid, amorphous and inclusive. If this means abandoning the Tory tradition that distinguishes Canada from the US, then, this is a consequence we must accept. Because the oppression of minorities for the sake of difference (i.e. difference from the US) cannot be justified as a defense against the as yet unrealized tyranny of universal American culture.

CHAPTER FIVE:
CHARLES TAYLOR:
THE QUEBEC CRISIS THROUGH AN
HEGELIAN LENS

Charles Taylor's work has largely been a strong and broad based attack against the atomistic world view that emerged following the Enlightenment. He believes that the modern age has been confronted with a profound crisis which is centred on how we define ourselves in relation to the world around us. The Enlightenment marked the establishment of the notion that humanity's capacity to reason and manipulate their environment liberated the individual from the authority of nature and the community. Previously in the West, Christianity had bound people to each other through their membership in the Christian community (what Augustine called the city of God) and people considered themselves united with the cosmos, and subject to the divine authority of natural law. In this holistic conception of the universe, people made their decisions in accordance with the transcendent law as it was interpreted by their community.

According to Taylor, there has been a shift away from the holistic worldview, and in modernity decisions are based on the will of the individual. Taylor finds evidence of this transition throughout western culture. We have developed a notion of a disengaged self which, through the application of value-neutral reason, is an autonomous determiner of good separate from the state. Taylor considers this to be but a mistaken conception of humanity, presenting human beings as little more than a collection of self-generated interests and designs. He believes it is the source of the deep sense of malaise present throughout human society. Through an Hegelian critique of this intellectual trend, Taylor

attempts to maintain the notion of a rational autonomous human being while retrieving the sense of expressive unity that comes from belonging to a culture. In his application of this theory to the multicultural debate he comes out in favour of protecting cultural communities from what he takes to be the homogenizing forces of the modernity.

This chapter will examine this social and philosophical phenomena in the more concrete context of the Quebec crisis. From this we will gain an understanding of Taylor's communitarianism, and hence his approach to addressing the problems of multiculturalism. By setting out Taylor's use of Hegel to explain the ideological forces driving the Quebec crisis, we will come to know Taylor's conception of a just community and what he believes endangers its survival.

According to Taylor, in late modernity we are experiencing an eschatological shift in which our understanding of the relationship between the individual and society is being radically altered. He contrasts modernity with western paradigms of the past. One example of a previous western cultural paradigm (part of which he hopes to reclaim) is the classical concept of the polis as the cosmos writ small. For the citizens of Ancient Greece, there was no ontological distinction between themselves and the state. Taylor also refers to the Augustinian duality of a city of God and a city of man. The city of God was thought to be the transcendent Christian community where people were united under God's law and measured by it. The city of man, or the state, was the forum in which everyone acted, Christians and non-Christians alike. Taylor contends that, with modernity, the state has come to be seen solely as an instrument established to fulfil the

desires of its citizens.¹³⁷ The individual is seen as an autonomous entity apart from any form of community. He argues that this view of the self leads to a widespread sense of alienation from the state.

With the subjectivist paradigm, the state loses its spiritual meaning and eventually people withdraw their allegiance and the authority of the state loses its legitimacy. 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. If people feel no meaningful connection to the state and the community it represents, then they resent its use of coercion on these occasions. They feel alienated by an authority with which they no longer identify. To counteract this feeling of alienation, states develop systems for greater political participation by the populace.

Furthermore, Taylor argues that the “value neutral” governing practice of modern states is a central cause of the sense of alienation experienced by citizens. He asserts that, as a consequence of the lost sense of belonging, people seek out communities where their interests are being represented. Thus, the national community allegiance is replaced by allegiance to 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’”¹³⁸ Thus, there

¹³⁷ Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 112.

¹³⁸ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*, 115.

are two effects of modernity: a personal sense of alienation and a desire to create a meaningful link to a community.

According to Taylor, modern communities tend to be based on a narrow minded dogmatism. They are usually grounded in either myth or passion, and they are without reason.¹³⁹ Taylor argues that people are only free if they use reason to determine their ends. Without the use of reason 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 also because of its social consequences. Inevitably, social stability will be disrupted by the discontent of citizens who realize they have lost their freedom.

Taylor has been addressing the Quebec issue since the sixties, but it was not until he wrote his formative monograph *Hegel* in 1975 that he clearly set out the ontological foundation for his position, a foundation from which he would delve further into questions of human agency, the methodology of the social sciences, the essential role of culture in human development, and the role culture plays in the state. Until he had put *Hegel* together, his arguments regarding cultural pluralism (multiculturalism), particularly in relation to Quebec, were intelligent observations, but had less depth than his later work.

For instance, in his 1965 article "Nationalism and the Political Intelligentsia: A Case Study" he argued that the sovereigntist movement was led by a new anticlerical intelligentsia who wished to assert a modern French identity in opposition to the Anglo-

¹³⁹ Ibid., 112.

Saxon culture that dominated North America. He contended that they had adopted new standards of economic achievement from the US, namely social progress and democratic mores. With these new standards, the rising French Canadian intelligentsia saw that Quebec compared poorly with their neighbours¹⁴⁰ and believed that they could only develop a powerful and wealthy Quebec by taking full control of their government. They hoped that then they would have a French Canadian nation of which they would be proud.¹⁴¹

Explaining Quebec nationalism as stemming from economic envy felt by a spoiled elite may have *some* validity, but it is a far cry from the analysis he sets out in his 1985 essay, "Alternative Futures: Legitimacy, Identity and Alienation in Late-Twentieth Century Canada," or his 1992 essay "The Politics of Recognition." In these later essays he considers the Quebec crisis to be an example of the competing strains of Western thought going toe-to-toe in the Canadian forum, an intellectual conflict best defined by Hegel. From the Hegelian perspective, the modern eschatological conflict involved not only a struggle between the analytic science of the Enlightenment and the expressive unity of Romanticism, but also between the competing conceptions of freedom put forth by Rousseau and Kant. Before we follow that line of thought, let us first take a moment to

¹⁴⁰ Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and the Political Intelligensia: A Case Study," *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, ed. Guy Laforest (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

set out Taylor's current position on the relationship between culture and the state, and how to address the competing demands of different cultures within a single state.

Taylor defends a position he calls "deep diversity."¹⁴² According to this position, society should accommodate various forms of government within Canada to meet the particular needs of different groups. Taylor does not support imposing a single system on all groups regardless of their history and culture. According to Taylor, we should 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.

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:

This is far from accommodating all Canadians. For Quebeckers, and for most French Canadians, the way of being a Canadian (for those who still want to be) is by their belonging to a constituent element of Canada, *la nation québécoise*, or *canadienne-française*. Something analogous holds for aboriginal communities in this country; their way of being Canadian is not accommodated by first-level diversity.

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 would 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

¹⁴² Taylor, "Impediments To A Canadian Future," *Reconciling*, 183.

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.¹⁴³

Taylor is not suggesting that some form of cultural community affiliation should be obligatory, nor is he advocating the fragmentation or tribalization of Canada. Instead, Taylor is proposing that we accept “more than one formula for citizenship”. He contends that this has long been Canada’s way of keeping its Confederation together, and is 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.

At this level, 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 understandings of the social goods themselves - the inevitable product of historical and cultural pluralism.”¹⁴⁴ Like Taylor, Walzer claims that the community plays an important role in

¹⁴³ Ibid., 182-3.

¹⁴⁴ Micheal Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 6.

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 this unity between individual and community. For Taylor accepting the notion of the individual as embedded in the community has profound implications regarding our notions of freedom and morality.¹⁴⁵ He asserts that in order to understand ourselves and our role in the dialectic of history, we must recognize this embeddedness and study the ideational developments which have formed us.

This is another important dimension of Taylor's deep diversity thesis. Taylor contends that the modern division of the self and society results in the loss of the tools necessary to human autonomy. He argues that a secure cultural context is essential to human development. Our culture provides us with the horizon of meaning from which we interpret ourselves and the world, and hence it is also the context in which we develop our morality and our capacity for rational evaluation of our priorities, or in other words, our freedom.

¹⁴⁵ For a thorough assessment of the different forms of communitarianism see Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).

In "The Politics of Recognition" Taylor applies his philosophy to the multicultural debate, with particular reference to the Quebec crisis. He begins by providing background information about the broader issue of liberalism itself. Borrowing from Ronald Dworkin's essay "Liberalism,"¹⁴⁶ he explains that the predominant form of liberalism in the United States does not make "substantive" claims about the ends of life or use legislation to make people virtuous.¹⁴⁷ Instead, the US is committed to the idea of a "procedural" republic in which we "deal fairly and equally with each other, regardless of how we conceive our ends of life."¹⁴⁸ The principle behind the procedural ethic is the protection of the dignity of those groups holding different conceptions of virtue from the majority. Under the procedural model, the state is only concerned with protecting an accepted group of fundamental rights. A citizen's purpose or aim in life is determined independently. However, citizens share at least two common purposes: the realization of equality for all, and the freedom of all citizens to choose their own good so long as they do not violate the rights of other citizens.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Ronald Dworkin, "Liberalism." in Stuart Hampshire, ed., *Public and Private Morality* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

¹⁴⁷ Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 245.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹⁴⁹ Though Taylor does not mention it here, Rawls developed another form of procedural liberalism, namely identifying constitutional principles from a perspective of neutrality.

Taylor describes two sides of the present multiculturalism debate, the advocates of difference-blind liberalism and the advocates of the politics of difference. These labels represent divergent conceptions of equality. Procedural liberals contend that a just state must be blind to differences of gender, colour, creed, and so on. In contrast, those who believe that the state should promote a substantive ethic for their cultural community contend that a difference-blindness policy would impose the values of the dominant culture (which claims to be value neutral) on the minority cultures because the fundamental rights and rules of the state would be dictated by the will of the majority. They argue that treating everyone “equally” in this sense would have a homogenizing effect. They fear that difference-blindness cuts at their cultural roots and destroys the elements essential to the development of their authentic selves. As Will Kymlicka explains, the counter response of procedural liberals would be that a cultural group cannot use the coercion of the state to impose a notion of the good life onto the members of the community. A valuable life must be led from the inside. Citing Dworkin, Kymlicka asserts that there are two preconditions for living a good life; first that we live in accordance with our individual beliefs about what gives value to life, and second, that we are free “to question those beliefs, to examine them in light of whatever information and examples and arguments our culture can provide. So individuals must have the resources and liberties needed to live in accordance with their beliefs about value, without being imprisoned or penalized for unorthodox religions or sexual practices, etc.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Will Kymlicka, “Liberalism and Communitarianism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18.2 (June 1988), 184.

Taylor argues that Quebeckers are proponents of the politics of difference and that Canada outside Quebec (COQ) favours difference-blindness.¹⁵¹ In his effort to reveal the ontological foundation of the opposing sides he contends that they are divided by their different conceptions of human agency. To interpret these diverse positions he looks to Hegel, who held that the modern dilemma is to reconcile expressivism and individual autonomy.¹⁵²

Hegel considers Immanuel Kant to be an important figure in the reaction to Enlightenment conceptions of freedom and morality. The Enlightenment maintained humanity was “another piece of objectified nature” and human actions could only be seen in terms of cause and effect. Consequently, freedom was considered to be the ability to make choices in accordance with personal desires. Kant developed an alternative philosophy of radical freedom which became the foundation of procedural liberalism. Therefore it is his philosophy that provides the support for COQ, according to Taylor. Kant believed the Enlightenment notion of freedom amounted to the demise of morality, and he redefined freedom as the capacity to use reason to choose to act in accordance with moral law despite the utilitarian factors of happiness and desire. Reason gave humans freedom from their passions. “The morally free subject must be able to gather himself together, as it were, and make a decision about his total commitment.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ He recognizes that there are other groups in Canada advocating the politics of difference, but for the sake of clarity he limits the discussion to two groups.

¹⁵² Taylor, *Hegel*, 76.

¹⁵³ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*, 3.

However, Kant did not believe we have the ability to decide independently what the right action is; the moral law is categorical and binds us unconditionally. Freedom lies in the individual's will to choose whether or not to live in accordance with the moral imperative. "Hence Kant argues that the moral law must be binding *a priori*; and this means that it cannot depend on the particular nature of the objects we desire or the actions we project, but must be purely formal."¹⁵⁴ Therefore, moral law transcends the objectification of natural science. We do not conform to it because we are entirely subject to the laws of nature. We have a choice. The essence of morality is when we freely choose to act morally.

The philosophy of autonomy that supports Quebec's substantive liberalism, according to Taylor, is provided by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was also writing in reaction to the Enlightenment. Rousseau argued that the primary restrictions on human freedom were the existence of a social hierarchy and the human dependence on the esteem of others. In a society where citizens determine their own goals independently, social hierarchies create oppressive self-definitions. Those who are in positions of power will impose their goals on the people they control: "one person's glory must be another's shame, [or] at least obscurity."¹⁵⁵ In addition to the weight of social hierarchy comes social dependence. In our quest to gain the esteem of others we may cease to determine our own ends and instead strive to fulfil the ideals of our peers. In other words, we lose sight of our own goals in our quest to gain the acceptance of others.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁵ Taylor, "The Politics," 240.

Rousseau proposed that this could be overcome by creating small scale democracies, city states, whose citizens are united by a common goal and where legislation is determined by the general will. The principle behind this approach was that personal autonomy would not be restricted by social hierarchy. If everyone had the same goal, then it would not matter where one stood on the hierarchy, one would be free to fulfil one's goal. Moreover, as a participant in the common goal one would gain the esteem of others:

Complete reciprocity, along with the unity of purpose that it makes possible, ensures that in following opinion I am not in any way pulled outside myself. I am still "obeying myself" as a member of this common project or "general will." Caring about esteem in this context is compatible with freedom and social unity, because the society is one in which all the virtuous will be esteemed equally and for the same (right) reasons.¹⁵⁶

Taylor argues that, in line with this Rousseauian reading, the common goal of Quebeckers includes more than protecting the culture for those currently in it; there is also a will to encourage it to flourish so that it will not disappear in the future. "Policies aimed at survival actively seek to *create* members of the community."¹⁵⁷

Kant's procedural liberals consider this substantive project to be a threat to human freedom. To give Quebeckers exceptional treatment strikes procedural liberals as a violation of equal rights. They argue that the Quebec citizens who do not share an allegiance to this common purpose would be unjustly restrained from fulfilling their individual goals. They also argue that it would set a precedent in Canada and undermine

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 240.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 246.

what they consider to be the fabric of a just society. According to the Kantian philosophy, freedom resides in our capacity to choose to do good or not to do good. Because a good act is only virtuous if the agent has willed to do it without any form of external coercion, the role of the state is to provide the framework in which the citizen has the maximum possible liberty to make those choices. To a Kantian, having the state “forbid ... francophones and immigrants to send their children to English-language schools, but allow Canadian anglophones to do so,” as Law 101 in Quebec does at present, is an unnecessary imposition on the parents’ capacity to choose. Moreover, it indicates that the state values one culture, the dominant French culture, over the minority cultures and does not respect the minority cultures. According to the proceduralist, “a liberal society must remain neutral on the good life, and restrict itself to ensuring that however they see things, citizens deal fairly with each other and the state deals equally with all.”¹⁵⁸

Thus both sides of the debate refer to the same principles. Quebeckers worry that procedural liberalism will have an homogenizing effect and will erase the cultural context they consider essential for their development as autonomous human beings. They argue that imposing a rights based liberalism on them is an act of cultural oppression:

The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form. Consequently, the supposedly fair and difference-blind society is not only inhuman (because suppressing identities) but also, in a subtle and unconscious way, itself highly discriminatory.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 246.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 237.

In contrast, COQs consider substantive liberalism to be a form of oppressive and unequal treatment by the state which curbs the capacity of citizens to be autonomous human beings. But Taylor does not believe the two sides need to be at odds. He contends that liberalism can accommodate both formulations:

I think [procedural] liberalism is guilty as charged by the proponents of a politics of difference. Fortunately, however, there are other models of liberal society... These forms do call for the invariant defense of *certain* rights, of course. There would be no question of cultural differences determining the application of *habeas corpus*, for example. But they distinguish these fundamental rights from the broad range of immunities and presumptions of uniform treatment that have sprung up in modern cultures of judicial review. They are willing to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes in favor of the latter. They are thus in the end not procedural models of liberalism, but are grounded very much on judgments about what makes a good life - judgments in which the integrity of cultures has an important place.¹⁶⁰

For Taylor to conceptualize and advocate this new form of liberalism he has to resolve the Hegelian dilemma: How to unite expressive unity with radical autonomy? He does this by following Hegel on his first step; he adopts a Herderian theory of language which provides him with a new way of understanding human freedom. According to this theory, cultural embeddedness is essential for the development of an autonomous human being. However, one does not need to conform to a common purpose or concur with the general will, as Rousseau would have it. Instead, autonomous individuals use reason to arrive at their own conception of the good life, while realizing that they depend on their cultural context to develop a rational conception of the world, and a means to evaluate the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 248.

choices presented to them. The following chapter sets out Taylor's Herderian philosophy of language and culture, and his position on human agency.

CHAPTER SIX:
CHARLES TAYLOR:
HUMAN AGENCY AND HERDER'S
PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Taylor is advocating that both the Rousseauian substantive democracy and the Kantian procedural liberalism can coexist within a state. To understand how he comes to this view we must examine the philosophy of language he adopts from Herder.

Taylor hopes to follow Hegel by weaving the theories of human autonomy set out by Rousseau and Kant together with the expressivist theory of Herder.¹⁶¹ In “The Politics of Recognition” Taylor describes the Quebec crisis as a conflict between the two theories of human autonomy: Rousseau’s and Kant’s. Following a path similar to Hegel’s, Taylor’s solution is to unite Rousseau and Kant in his theory of deep diversity using Herder’s expressivism as the bonding formula (drawing upon the ideas of Herder’s followers).

In this chapter we will show how Taylor achieves this synthesis and thereby reveal the philosophical justification for his defense of culture and deep diversity. First, we will set out Herder’s contribution to Taylor’s philosophy of language and culture. Second, we will indicate how Hegel and Taylor use Herder to combine freedom with a community ethic. Finally, we will briefly explain Taylor’s theory of human agency, which relies heavily on both Kant and Herder.

¹⁶¹ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*, 114.

As exemplified by positivism, people have come to define themselves as possessors of language, not as possessors of reason. Taylor is interested in understanding how this change came about.¹⁶² In Taylor's discussion of language he pits two forces against each other: the designative and the expressive. This conflict mirrors the conflict between the Enlightenment's atomistic conception of the self and Romanticist's holistic binding of the self, society and nature. The designative theory of language can be seen as the linguistic variation of Enlightenment scientific thought. Just as the scientific revolution sought to liberate people from the bonds of irrational religious thought, and asserted that knowledge was gained through empirical observation rather than biblical interpretation, so too did language theorists seek to free language from church and place it in the hands of the rational individual.

The Christian theory of language was expressive. Language was considered to be a system of symbols representing the word of God.¹⁶³ The expressivist theories of Platonists and Christians maintained that language was developed through a process of discourse in which the entire community was involved. The common language that emerged from this discourse re-presented their shared interpretation of the cosmos. Gradually, this conception of language began to change and people started to think of language exclusively as symbols of things, rather than as expressions of the group's ideas

¹⁶² Richard Nutbrown, "The Self, Language, and Community: Taylor's Hermeneutic Project," *Eidos*, V, 1 (June, 1986), 16.

¹⁶³ Charles Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 223.

and beliefs. It became common to think of words as designating things. Accompanying this perspective was the idea that words were created by individuals, like solitary discoveries made independent of the community. Individuals were the masters of their own lexicon. Enlightenment thinkers broke language down into its component elements in the same way they had broken down the natural world. They sought to give language an objective order. They believed that our knowledge of the world is formed by language. Therefore, if language were not harnessed by reason, they feared it would distort our perception of the world.¹⁶⁴

In reaction to this designative theory of language, romantic philosophers such as Herder revived expressivism. However, rather than arguing that language actually expressed the order of the cosmos, he argued that language only expresses the speaker's perception of the world. "Human communication was held to embody what we are essentially, the expression of which is the making manifest of these embodiments."¹⁶⁵

The important difference between expressive theory and designative theory is that according to designative theory, language exists apart from the speaker. It is an objective tool that will have the same meaning for whoever uses it: 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. This could include words, painting, body language, and so on. We are only

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 226.

¹⁶⁵ Nutbrown, "The Self," 19.

fully aware of it once we have articulated it. In this case, the word “rose” is not simply the thing 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 logically and temporally by the perceiver’s experience of the plant and our unique human capacity for reflective consciousness. By “reflective consciousness” Taylor means the ability to experience things in a fuller way by articulating them. Taylor contends that the use of language gives humanity a superior awareness of things perceived, as compared to the instinctual 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.¹⁶⁶

According to expressivist theory, words are only meaningful when they can be compared to other words. The word “rose” only makes sense if we can contrast it with other words in the lexicon. If someone were to say “rose” to another person, the listener would require a language context in order to understand the utterance. Even if the speaker were to point at a rose while saying the word, any number of things could be understood

¹⁶⁶ Taylor, “Language,” 230.

from the gesture. The listener could interpret “rose” as meaning plant, object, freshness, obstacle, red, thorn, and so on. In short, the gesture would be meaningless. This may seem like an obvious observation, but it has fairly radical implications for how we understand language and hence ourselves.

If we accept that preexisting language structures play a significant role in forming subsequent linguistic developments, and if we accept that our perception of the world is formed by our articulation of it, then it follows that preexisting language structures play a significant role in forming our understanding of the world. We can actively recreate speech, but the background structures of language play a large role in guiding our new coinages. Thus we can exercise some influence on our new awareness of the world, but we can never entirely control language as designative theorists attempt to do. This places an entirely new significance on the role our language community plays 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 community:¹⁶⁷ “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, can never be just *my* language, it is always largely *our* language.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 234.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 234. Taylor’s italics.

This brings us back to Herder's theory 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 in which freedom is achieved when we sever ourselves from the values of our community, according to the holistic viewpoint we are free when "we become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining an identity through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression."¹⁶⁹ We are not imprisoned by our horizon of meaning. In fact, it gives us the context and the hierarchy of significance that acts as a foundation from which to choose. 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 significance, we would likely be guided by our appetites, otherwise we might be able to act in some incoherent and random way. Our decision about how to act would be guided by what we found physically satisfying. Beyond that there is a possibility that we could act in some *incoherent and random way*, although it would be difficult to imagine this among the sane. But neither of these would be realizations 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, can I define an identity for myself that is not trivial. Authenticity

¹⁶⁹ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991)

is not the enemy of demands that emanate from beyond the self; it supposes such demands.¹⁷⁰

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."¹⁷¹ According to Taylor, this unity conflicts with the uglier forms of nationalism because it includes a concept of embedded individualism. Herder's nationalism is shaped by the belief that only within their own culture can a people cultivate their authentic, *individual* identities. Herder thereby unites individual freedom with community. Not only does this theory argue that duty and individual freedom are complementary, it asserts that our duty and our community context are vital to the development of our authentic identities and our authentic individual freedom. 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".¹⁷² With this notion of individual development, Herder avoids the oppressive all-encompassing tendencies of nationalism.

Finally, Herder's philosophy has an important impact upon our conception of our relationship to nature. In contrast to the Cartesian mind/body dualism, expressivism

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 40.

¹⁷¹ Taylor, *Hegel and Modern*, 2.

¹⁷² Ibid., 3.

involves a conception of mind and body as an expressive unity. If we accept that mind and body are one, and we accept the less controversial observation that the body “is in interchange with the whole universe,” then it follows that the mind is also in interchange with the whole universe. According to this theory, humanity is wholly a part of nature and “the greater current of life.”¹⁷³ Taylor argues that “as an expressive being, man has to recover communion with nature, one which had been broken and mutilated by the analytic, desiccating stance of objectifying science.”¹⁷⁴

So how does Herder’s expressivism fit with Kant’s radical autonomy? It doesn’t. The thinkers who admired Kant’s moral freedom felt that it must not be limited to the boundaries of inner consciousness. They argued that the free individual “must try to impose its purpose on nature as well.”¹⁷⁵ This is thoroughly at odds with the unity of humanity and nature which Herder described.

Radical freedom seemed only possible at the cost of a diremption with nature, a division within myself between reason and sensibility more radical than anything the materialist, utilitarian Enlightenment had dreamed, and hence a division with external nature, from whose causal laws the free self must be radically independent, even while phenomenally his behaviour appeared to conform.¹⁷⁶

In the 1790s, the young intellectuals of Germany took it as their task to unite the two ideals, radical freedom and the expressive fullness. Among them was Hegel. And his

¹⁷³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

solution, as we've discussed at length, was to conceive of a will or spirit that guides nature. He postulated that if nature were more than a blind force, then it could be possible to harmonize nature's will and human will. According to Hegel's formulation, humanity is most free when working toward the realization of the Spirit by working to fulfil its own Volksgeist. The two recurring ideas of Hegel and his contemporaries are:

...that we can really know nature only because we are of the same substance, that indeed we only properly know nature when we try to commune with it, not when we try to dominate or dissect it in order to subject it to the categories of analytic understanding; and secondly, that we know nature because we are in a sense in contact with what made it, the spiritual force which expresses itself in nature.¹⁷⁷

While these two ideas constitute a common ground for those seeking to synthesize Kant and Herder, Hegel distinguishes himself from his peers by including a crucial element: reason. The Romantic movement was primarily a reaction to the emphasis on human rationality. "For reason," explains Taylor "was precisely that which analyzed, which segmented reality in order to make it comprehensible. Rational thought seems inherently concerned to divide and to make distinctions."¹⁷⁸ Consequently, most thinkers sought an alternative path to knowledge, to bridge the gap between the subjective self and the order of nature. Intuition was believed to be that bridge. And with the rejection of reason to know nature, so too went the use of reason to realize freedom. It was believed that the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 12.

structures of reason were bound to restrict the mind, thus the ideal form of thought for the free individual is “untrammelled imagination.”¹⁷⁹

Hegel contends (and Taylor agrees) that suppressing reason negates any aspiration of uniting freedom and expressive unity. We can only come to know morality and nature through reason. Without it we are lost in “the great current of life.”

If our unity with the cosmic principle was to be achieved by abandoning reason, through some intuition inarticulable in rational terms, then we have in fact sacrificed the essential. For the full clarity of rational understanding is the essence of self-determining freedom, which obtains, after all, where pure reason gives the law. To achieve a unity with nature in pure intuition, one of which we can give no rational account, is to lose oneself in the great current of life, and this is not a synthesis between autonomy and expression, but a capitulation in which we give up autonomy.¹⁸⁰

This discussion of Taylor’s philosophy of language provides a more complete explanation for the importance of culture to the development of the self. This argument is a vital support for his defense of culture and his arguments against atomism and procedural liberalism. But how does the will of the agent realize itself in this seemingly all encompassing language lexicon and horizon of meaning?

According to Taylor’s theory of human agency, 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 second-order desires regulate first-order desires. Taylor uses the example of people who refrain “from acting

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 12-3.

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."¹⁸¹ 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. (Taylor distinguishes this from a weak second-order desire, such as refraining from eating ice cream in order to maintain an attractive physique.)

For Taylor, the importance of the existence of strong second-order desire is that its flourishing is contingent upon the human ability to develop a refined evaluative vocabulary which articulates the superiority of one choice over another.¹⁸² 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

¹⁸¹ Charles Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 16.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 24.

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:

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 preferences, but also about the quality of life, the kind of beings we are or want to be. It is in this sense deeper.¹⁸³

Tangentially, we might note that Taylor's exposition of the human agent is vintage expressivism. We crave a supply of definitions for words and phrases such as "virtue," "quality of life" or "deep," but Taylor does not supply it. Nor does he believe it possible. These are experiential symbols which can be illustrated via examples, but they can not be confined to definitions as concepts can.

According to Taylor, the depth referred to in the passage above is born of self-interpretation. By questioning the motives of their desires, individuals gain a truer, more complex and more complete understanding of themselves and, presumably, will be better equipped to make their choices.¹⁸⁴

This is central to Taylor's understanding of the agent; choices are guided by a personal set of preferences which are informed by consideration of values. Even when faced with dilemmas in which our values dictate that our two options are equally valuable, the importance of our preferences remains intact, despite their uselessness in

¹⁸³ Ibid., 26.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 27.

helping us to decide. In fact, it is at such times that we are forced to make a deeper investigation of our values in order to determine where the right choice lies.¹⁸⁵

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 persons."¹⁸⁶

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 articulations of values. He argues that we can never rest confident that our presently articulated values are not erroneous and distorted.¹⁸⁷ The self is too complex for us to expect to overcome all self-deluding interpretations:

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 38.

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 re-evaluation.¹⁸⁸

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 I sense to be the highest mode of life?"¹⁸⁹ 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, "but rather that what takes the place of the yardstick is (our) deepest unstructured sense of what is important, which is as yet inchoate and which (we are) trying to bring to definition."¹⁹⁰

According to Taylor, this fundamental reflection on the self defines the agent's "inchoate evaluations which are sensed to be essential to our identity."¹⁹¹ It is in this capacity that it can be said that we are responsible for ourselves and are bearers of free will. This holds whether we choose to engage in this form of evaluation or not; having the capacity is sufficient to assert the presence of responsibility.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹² Ibid., 42.

Taylor's conception of the human agent is fundamental to his philosophy of language, expressivism and culture. First, by presenting an "explanation" of free will, Taylor supports the claim that human beings are capable of analyzing their condition, partly independent of the constructs of the society. This means that human autonomy is something that can be realized, if given the proper conditions. Therefore, it is something we should consider when ordering the state. Second, by demonstrating that free will rests in the agent's ability to articulate desires, motives and values, Taylor establishes a foundation for the importance of culture to human freedom. We rely on our language and culture to provide the context in which we can exercise self-interpretation and hence realize our authentic selves. Thus Taylor's expressivism offers a solution to the modern dilemma. It unites individual freedom with community cultural unity, thereby countering the widespread sense of alienation and giving good cause for the revitalization of participatory politics. If people began to see their duty and their freedom as one and the same, then the democratic process would get a tremendous boost. Of course, this need not be a nation-state model of society. It could involve a federation of cultural groups who develop a loyalty to the whole through their loyalty to the one. Clearly this constitutes a profound and far-reaching foundation for Taylor's theory of deep diversity. But is it sufficient?

Taylor's deep diversity thesis would seem to be the ideal method of protecting human freedom. He has constructed a theory of freedom that is founded on the logic of expressivism. But has he reached the heart of what it means to be free? In his project, he intends to reclaim an ancient conception of the self and language by making it

comprehensible in the modern horizon of meaning. Thus, in this sense, he is only reviving a forgotten belief, not creating a new one, so to say he has succeeded may not be as unbelievable as it may seem at first. And yet previous forms of expressionism have relied on symbolic linguistic systems that depict an unfathomable cosmic order, such as Plato's realm of forms, or Augustine's city of God. Taylor attempts to support his claim through rational argument, not faith. In this sense, his project is indeed bold and different. As shown above, his argument is based on the primacy of language. However, some questions remain regarding our capacity for sophisticated articulation: Is language as deep as we can go? Is linguistic introspection sufficient for identifying the power structures which impose themselves on our thoughts and actions, or does it conceal them in its implicit acceptance of them? We will address these questions in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
CHARLES TAYLOR:
POLYPHONY AND REALPOLITIK

The questions raised at the end of the last chapter bring us to an aspect of expressivism which is problematic and yet fundamental to the expressivist project, namely the primacy of language. By addressing this vital issue, I intend to reveal where Taylor is most vulnerable, both in his philosophy and his political stance on multiculturalism. In this chapter I will begin by criticizing Taylor's philosophical assumptions about language and hence culture and human agency, then I will draw on some effective criticisms of Taylor's politics.

Jürgen Habermas has presented a compelling critique of Taylor's expressivist claim to universality. First, he challenges Taylor's assumption that the expressivist dimension to language is more fundamental than the designative dimension to a language.¹⁹³ Habermas contends that human understanding has a pre-linguistic status. He thereby undermines the contention that meaning can only be sought through philosophical hermeneutics.

Second, Habermas argues that using existing language to analyze meaning in society does not constitute a critique. Language is incapable of critique because it is distorted by a system of rules which order society. Until interpreters engage in "depth-hermeneutics" they will not be able to emancipate themselves from "repressive forces

¹⁹³ Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in Micheal T. Gibbons, ed., *Interpreting Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 176.

which deform the intersubjectivity of agreement as such and which systematically distort every day communication."¹⁹⁴ This indicates that Taylor's analysis is bound to perpetuate the "repressive forces" in society because his device of interpretation is contaminated by existing power structures.

In his first point, Habermas contends that there have been certain philosophical developments which confirm that operative thought does have non-linguistic roots.¹⁹⁵ According to Habermas, "there is sufficient indication that language merely 'sits upon' categories such as space, time, causality and substance, and rules for the formal-logical combination of symbols which possess a pre-linguistic basis."¹⁹⁶ This contradicts Taylor's argument that language is the link between the agent and intersubjectivity. For Habermas, language is embedded in the cultural power structure and stands once removed from intersubjectivity.

Habermas's argument derives support from psychoanalysis and critiques of ideology. In both cases there were assertions of the existence of distorted communication. For example, psychoanalysis taps into dreams or scenes from early childhood and claims to observe operative thought free from systematic distortions. Psychoanalysis asserts that the development of distorted communication results from repression of desires, fear, taboos, etc. However, although psychoanalysis is able to expose an example of distorted

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 197.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 180.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 182.

communication, it continues to decipher pure thought using systematically distorted communication. Therefore Habermas does not accept that psychoanalysis represents an effective alternative for depth-hermeneutics.¹⁹⁷ Thus, although Habermas does not offer psychoanalysis as a "theory of communicative competence," he believes it provides sufficient proof that hermeneutics will continue to be corrupted by the power structures of the community until it can access a pre-understanding of language:

Depth-hermeneutical understanding requires, therefore, a systematic pre-understanding that extends onto language in general, whereas hermeneutical understanding always proceeds from a pre-understanding that is shaped by tradition and which forms and changes itself within linguistic communication.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, it would seem that the expressivist claim to accessing truth via language ignores the fact that the interpreter is never liberating herself from the oppression of her initial socialization. By overlooking the existence of pre-linguistic cognition, the expressivist dogmatically defers to the authority of tradition.

Habermas's critique certainly poses a problem for Taylor's hermeneutics. First, if language is not primary, then there is some question as to how essential it is to the development of the authentic self, assuming there is an "authentic" self, the importance of culture to that authenticity may be only partly language-related, if at all. Second, if language is irrevocably tainted by power structures, then Taylor's theory of human agency becomes an illusion in which we perpetuate systemic oppression as we engage in

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 195.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 193.

our evaluations. Third, the defense of culture becomes a defense of distorted communication. Whether we are speaking of a majority or minority culture, to defend it from the homogenizing and oppressive forces of liberalism is no longer a defense of individual autonomy, but rather a struggle to maintain a variety of forms of oppression. This may be worth fighting for, but for reasons other than those presented by Taylor.¹⁹⁹

The questions raised by Habermas seem to topple the edifice so carefully constructed by Taylor. Taylor's account of the ideational history of the Western world and his insights into the philosophies informing current political positions remain valuable assessments of contemporary controversies, but his interpretation is far from definitive, and hence his more interesting observations are diminished. Neither his account nor his interpretation provide firm support for his political stance regarding solving the current debates on multiculturalism.

On the subject of multiculturalism, Habermas wrote "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State" in response to Taylor's essay "The Politics of Recognition." Habermas argues that Taylor is wrong to assert that the liberal institutions of democratic countries attempt to be ethically neutral. Habermas contends that the institutions of government and the justice system are ripe with the ethics that have gone into creating them and that have formed their policies and decisions along the way. He argues that Taylor's portrayal of rights based Kantian liberalism is misleadingly

¹⁹⁹ For instance, we might want to apply the biodiversity argument: we need a variety of social structures in order to ensure the survival of humanity in the face of transforming environmental conditions.

truncated. The ethics of the state are ever present and constantly being formed and reformed by the people involved in judiciary and governmental processes, in short, by the citizenry.

In contrast, Habermas contends that the paternalistic social welfare style liberalism that Taylor promotes imposes an artificial culture on the citizenry that restricts their natural autonomous development. According to Habermas, if we can have a system in which the citizens are constantly participating in a legal and moral dialogue, then the current liberal system will be able to accommodate the competing demands that Taylor hopes to protect. To illustrate his point, Habermas takes an example from the history of feminism.

Liberal governments have sought to create an environment of “equal opportunity to compete for jobs, social standing, education, political power, and so on.”²⁰⁰ But feminists have argued that the legislation that has been implemented has perpetuated certain stereotypes and resulted in new forms of discrimination. Instead, they argue, equal recognition can only be achieved once the people concerned are involved in defining their needs:

The individual rights that are supposed to guarantee women the autonomy to shape their private lives cannot even be appropriately formulated unless those affected articulate and justify in public discussion what is relevant to equal or unequal treatment in typical cases. Safeguarding the private

²⁰⁰ Jürgen Habermas, “Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State,” in Amy Gutmann, ed., *Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 114.

autonomy of citizens with equal rights must go hand in hand with activating their autonomy as citizens of the nation.²⁰¹

Habermas believes that the protections necessary for ensuring the integrity of cultural and social differences can be achieved under a discourse-oriented procedural democratic model, and does not require an explicitly collectivist language.

One important difference between Taylor and Habermas is their understanding of intersubjectivity. Both accept that there is a system of shared assumptions, or horizon of meaning which acts as a background for communities. This horizon of meaning forms and consists of the ethics that guide the community. And yet, whereas Taylor draws more definite lines between cultural groups, Habermas contends that the intersubjectivity is far more trans-cultural than Taylor believes. According to Habermas, ethical assumptions are often shared by different groups even before any form of interaction between the groups. Through discourse these shared ethics can act as points of reference from which different groups can approach a rational discussion about issues where they disagree. When there has been extensive cross-cultural interaction, for instance when different groups share the same state, then the degree to which there are significant similarities is far greater. Given this global inter-cultural commonality, Habermas contends that discussion is preferable to institutionalized collectivism.

In his essay “Habermas and Pluralist Political Theory”, Brian Walker explains Habermas’s position by posing the question: “How can people be asked to modify ethical

²⁰¹ Ibid., 116.

views which they believe to be true and valid in order to follow public norms which only partially reflect these views?"²⁰² By way of response he explains:

Public norms do at least **partially** reflect the ethical positions of all people affected by them. Discourse takes the form it does in order to show people the way public norms link up with their own ethical views. Habermas also argues that many modern forms of ethical life have strong universalistic principles within them, and that when these are explored they will lead people to a realization of the importance of reflecting on other people's claims for the good and of becoming involved in discussion. (emphasis in the original)²⁰³

Walker agrees with Habermas's contention that there are universal ethics that can act as a background or foundation for discussion between different groups. The significance of this position is that it opposes the uniform imposition of a set of rules that only benefits an exclusive elite within the community, whether or not the group's supremacy is backed by historical precedent or power of coercion. "From this perspective, communitarians would be asked to justify why a sub-group of society should be able to set the values for the culture as a whole."²⁰⁴

The ontological foundation that Walker develops to support his alliance with Habermas is a merger of Habermas and the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1885-1975). In his article "John Rawls, Mikhail Bakhtin, and the Praxis of Toleration", Walker argues for the necessity of discourse ethics and toleration in a pluralistic society. Bakhtin

²⁰² Brian Walker, "Habermas and Pluralist Political Theory," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 18.1 (1992), 92.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

developed a view of the self “as a chorus of ethical voices which exist in dialogue with each other.”²⁰⁵ This is distinct from Taylor’s dialogics insofar as Bakhtin emphasized the plurality of “voices” that constitute the self, not only their varying and often contradictory nature, but also the presence of many different moral languages from a diversity of cultures. Walker points out that this psychological melange has been identified by some thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre as a sign of our decaying times and cultural disorder. But according to Bakhtin, this “heteroglossia” is not only natural but desirable. Anything else could only be unnaturally imposed by some form of tyranny: “A unified outlook or a standardized language is, for Bakhtin, a sign that power has somewhere or at some time been imposed and that the tendency for language to develop itself through dialogic means has been blocked by a monologizing force.”²⁰⁶

Amelie Oksenberg Rorty’s criticism of Taylor’s deep diversity is based on similar logic. She contends that Taylor’s theory runs into trouble by presupposing a relatively sharp distinction between culture and politics.²⁰⁷ First, she maintains that though there may be many cultures within North America, there is a considerable overlap in values as a consequence of the shared political-economic culture. Second, she asserts that due to shared histories of different cultures, or different histories among people considered to be

²⁰⁵ Walker, Brian. “John Rawls, Mikhail Bakhtin, and the Praxis of Toleration.” *Political Theory* 23.1 (February 1995), 106.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁰⁷ Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, “The Hidden Politics of Cultural Identification.” *Political Theory* 22.1 (February, 1994), 156.

of the same culture, it is extremely difficult to differentiate cultures. She believes there is a need for a clearer criteria for distinguishing cohesive identities.²⁰⁸

According to Bakhtin, when a person is determining their ends they find that they have to engage in an inner dialogue involving different moral voices and these become apparent not only in the inner dialogue, but also in discussions with others. Like different sounds in a piece of music, he refers to the different voices as a “polyphony”. Part of this theory includes the conception of the self as intertwined with the community. “The formation of the self out of an internalization of various languages and projects means that there is no fixed border between self and society.”²⁰⁹ We are only made aware of the self through the eyes of the other.

In some ways, this supports Taylor’s notion that the community is vital to the constitution and development of the self, but in Bakhtinian theory the analysis of the self stops there. We can not attempt to go deeper by making language the core, or by discovering some pre-linguistic undistorted level of thought, as Habermas advocates. There is no rational individual will guiding human language, only the ongoing dialogue of the community of which the self is a part. Kantian theories about an autonomous

²⁰⁸ Jeremy Waldron has also made an argument for the difficulty of differentiating cultures. “The hybrid lifestyle of the true cosmopolitan is in fact the only appropriate response to the modern world in which we live. In the modern world context to immerse oneself in traditional practices ... is inauthentic” p.100, “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative” in Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). See also Katherine Fierlbeck, “The Ambivalent Potential of Cultural Identity,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXIX:1 (March 1996)

²⁰⁹ Walker, “John Rawls,” 107.

rational will or Freudian theories about a basic set of drives can only be plausible “at the expense of a systematic marginalization of important elements of our behaviour, looking at the historicity and creativity of our lives as epiphenomenal in relation with some deeper set of characteristics.”²¹⁰ Walker explains that “Bakhtin refers to this as ‘theoreticism,’ the tendency to erect concise models of human behaviour and then to develop internal strategies that marginalize the various elements that do not fit.”²¹¹

Therefore in a Bakhtinian reading, Taylor’s theory would be understood as an artificial construct. To argue that language is a unique quality which gives humanity a deeper awareness of objects and experiences, and hence the capacity to engage in rational first and second-order evaluations, is to force an image of the self onto what is actually a more fluid, amorphous entity. And this imposition facilitates Taylor’s arguments about truth,²¹² moral responsibility, culture, and freedom. Without it, his arguments about multiculturalism, for instance, resemble matters of opinion, not reason.

Bakhtin’s theory is not anarchic. There are rules which lend order to communication and thought, but they are not independent of the “creative and unpredictable activities which govern them.”²¹³ A form of creative drive directs the formulation of the sentence or communication we express. Consequently, there is no

²¹⁰ Ibid., 108.

²¹¹ Ibid., 108.

²¹² See Taylor’s “Foucault on Freedom and Truth,” *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

²¹³ Ibid., 108.

stabilized base language which ensures clear communication. Hence, not only are we incapable of straightforwardly conveying meaning across cultural boundaries, but also within our own culture. Information can only be conveyed if the listener gives attention to the horizon of the other. "Speaking is a form of building, a construction of one's meanings that is only possible if one can listen sensitively and successfully to the foreign voices of the interlocutor."²¹⁴ It is worth emphasizing that for Bakhtin there can be communication between internal voices, and between people of the same or different cultures. However, there is never an internal synthesis of the voices, nor is there a full understanding between people. There is only the capacity for ongoing dialogue.

Walker's merger of Habermas and Bakhtin provides an excellent critique of Taylor's conception of the rationally autonomous self and his theory of deep diversity. Moreover, it is the foundation for a unifying pluralism (without being homogenizing) which better accommodates a tolerance of diversity and the potential for discourse. Furthermore, by revealing the philosophical weaknesses of Taylor's position, it explains why his theory of deep diversity is vulnerable to practical political criticisms.

A good example of this form of criticism is argued by Arthur Ripstein in his article "Recognition and Cultural Membership", which addresses Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition." To the extent that he takes Taylor's position on the Quebec crisis at face value without delving into the ontological level, Ripstein raises some serious challenges to the practicality and desirability of Taylor's thesis. However, when Ripstein tries to

²¹⁴ Ibid., 108.

delve into ontological waters, he misses the boat for the simple reason that Taylor's deeper arguments aren't present in "The Politics of Recognition," though they have been set out elsewhere. Ripstein complains that "the essay suffers from a lack of a developed account of why cultural membership matters."²¹⁵ Although Ripstein might benefit from a more thorough familiarization with Taylor's opus, his assumption that Taylor's argument has no philosophical foundation - a fact this thesis has gone to some lengths to prove - stands him in good stead.

Ripstein points out that on one level Taylor is making a fairly common argument for a form of liberalism in favour of collective rights. He asserts that this position is not unique to Taylor and is less controversial than the nature of his claim. Ripstein argues that Taylor's justification for collective rights could have far more threatening implications for the liberal principles of equality and freedom. He opposes Taylor's contention that cultural survival is the central rationale for special rights. In this use of Ripstein we will focus on his straightforward arguments and overlook his conjectures about what Taylor is actually wanting to say, or "his real arguments" or what lies "underneath [his] vocabulary of group rights."

Ripstein contends that Canada includes a plethora of cultural groups concerned with preserving their culture and seeking government protection from the homogenizing

²¹⁵ Arthur Ripstein, "Recognition and Cultural Membership." *Dialogue* XXXIV (1995), 332.

forces of the liberal state. He draws a parallel between these groups and Quebecers,²¹⁶ and argues that having the majority in a jurisdiction should not entitle any group to “use the coercive apparatus of the state to enforce their hopes.”²¹⁷ By striking this parallel, Ripstein reveals that Taylor’s thesis is unable to answer many questions:

What counts as a culture surviving? How much change is still compatible with survival? (Does the fact that members of various ethnic and religious minorities in Canada identify themselves with those communities count as cultural survival? Or must their practices be ones that their immigrant ancestors would readily recognize and approve?) Why minorities? May a majority culture preserve itself, or the majority understanding of it? (If, God forbid, Quebec were to separate, would it *lose* its right to protect its culture?).²¹⁸

These questions provide an insight into the ambiguity of Taylor’s position and hence the threat it could pose if left to political interpretation.

Ripstein’s second point addresses Taylor’s attempt to distinguish “fundamental rights” from “privileges and immunities” as a way of identifying the areas where the state can make exceptions for cultural groups. This would distinguish between such things as the fundamental right to the freedom of religion and zoning regulations. Ripstein argues that “although the distinction is itself impeccable, Taylor asks it to support a heavier load than it can bear.”²¹⁹ He asserts that it is not always clear which right falls into which

²¹⁶ While it is true that Ripstein is overlooking the historical precedent of Quebec’s special status, Taylor does as well. Therefore the full complexities of the Quebec situation are set aside here for the sake of addressing Taylor’s arguments as they stand.

²¹⁷ Ripstein, “Recogniton,” 334.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 334.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 335.

category. For instance, *habeas corpus* may be as sacrosanct as Taylor says, but what of the prohibition on prior restraint? There are many examples where fundamental rights are not so clear. “What about freedom of religion? Should religions be allowed to discriminate on the basis of race and to retain their tax-exempt status? May a minority culture limit the religious freedom of its members in order to prevent assimilation?”²²⁰

Given Taylor’s conception of freedom (of which Ripstein seems unaware) we know that human autonomy is the core principle which would answer these questions. For instance, a minority culture would be permitted to guide its members through education and incentives, but it would be impermissible to restrict discourse and independent evaluations of their ends. However, Taylor’s ability to answer such questions does not get him out of hot water. Because Taylor argues that one’s culture is essential to agency, at times he would have to side with the maintenance of the culture and the language above some people’s conception of the good life. He would consider it necessary to protect them from the tyranny of a false conception of the self and free will, for example, as he finds in the ontologies of Marxism or positivism. According to Taylor, we need the moral space to provide a set of imports, if we are to make free choices. Only in the light of a prior background of significant issues can we realize our authentic selves. As Ripstein notes, “the problem with appeals to the good is that they carry little weight in justifying policies to those who do not share the particular view of the good. Unfortunately, talk about what people want fares even worse on this score. The mere fact

²²⁰ Ibid., 335.

that people feel strongly about something is not itself sufficient reason for suspending even immunities and privileges.”²²¹

However, if we reject the language oriented understanding of autonomy, and hence the integral importance of culture as defined by Taylor, and accept the notion of a polyphonic self influenced in part by the many interacting cultures, then we can retrench the liberal primacy of the self while remaining sensitive to the politics of difference and the importance of recognition to human dignity.

With the polyphonic notion of the self we also recognize that many of Taylor’s arguments strike a chord in our own ethical horizons. We may not wish to accept his conception of agency and the approach to multiculturalism that goes with it, but we may want to learn from his thoughtful investigations which we recognize as articulations of heretofore uncharted corners of our own minds. As Walker states, “there is no reason to believe the articulate and careful arguments that Charles Taylor and others make about the importance of strong evaluation in everyday life would not be convincing contenders in discussions about public norms.”²²²

In drawing so heavily on the Habermasian and Bakhtinian philosophies, the intention is not to put Walker’s understanding of dialogism forward as an alternative to Taylor. Rather Walker’s arguments are best understood as a device for revealing Taylor’s weaknesses. While many of the ontological arguments presented by Walker are

²²¹ Ibid., 337.

²²² Walker, “John Rawls,” 92.

compelling, his confidence in their capacity to justify a “polyphonic strategy of toleration”²²³ may be a little ambitious. He sets the following goals:

To cultivate the voices which might buttress a tolerant response to the demands and values of others, while at the same time ambiguating the voices which serve as sources of intolerance ... [and] to maintain an articulate tolerant position which might gain the allegiance of a reasonable majority, leaving xenophobic extremists on the fringes.²²⁴

While there may be some room for this agenda, I believe Walker may have fallen victim to wishful thinking if he believes this form of dialogics can be developed into some form of moral vision. When legislation and allocation of resources are on the bargaining table, there is little room for digging into the “moral métissage” (the various voices sedimented within each individual) in order to “pick out the voices which might encourage toleration, and, through dialogic means, encourage them to full articulation.”²²⁵ This degree of goodwill can only be hoped for in conditions where both groups have little or nothing to lose, either because the forum is separate from the central political institutions (i.e. Parliament, Senate, election campaigns, the courts, and so on), or because they have otherwise reached a deadlock. Nevertheless, in a forum which is removed from what I wish to call “pure politics,” I believe that Walker’s Bakhtinian dialogics is a viable project for confronting many cross-cultural conflicts.

²²³ Ibid., 117.

²²⁴ Ibid., 117.

²²⁵ Ibid., 117.

Amelie Rorty made a similar *Realpolitik* criticism of Taylor's politics of multicultural recognition. Taylor has argued that we recognize the values of different cultures, but he does not advocate accepting them as valuable or good by virtue of being part of a culture. There should be deliberation within society to assess the value and acceptability of certain practices. In response, Rorty acknowledges the positive potential of bringing various groups out to engage in cross-cultural discourse to assess the pros and cons of their cultures; however, she also asks, "How is criticism to proceed without degenerating into the kinds of power struggles that are settled by charisma, influence peddling, or rhetorical brilliance?"²²⁶ Her second remark, which we delved into somewhat above, addresses the issue of who defines the cultures once they are established and recognized by the state. She contends that there is a potential for the culture to be structured by sub-groups within the culture, all of whom are working to realize their separate interests:

The politics of cultural essentialism is, if not coercive, at least often oppressive, even when individual rights are strictly preserved. Although they disagree among themselves about their primary directions, many Jewish American and African American communities press their members to define themselves as primarily Jews or blacks rather than as philosophers, women, or Red Sox fans. Such identifications involve .. the presumption of active participation in promoting specific policies... To be sure, individuals can decide to join their voices to the clamor over cultural definition, or they can attempt to ignore it and tune to cultivating their gardens. Both alternatives carry costly personal consequences in losses of alliances and friendships.²²⁷

²²⁶ Rorty, "Hidden," 160.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

In conclusion, Taylor's project to synthesize radical autonomy and expressive unity in a Herderian notion of language and culture provides many valuable insights into the ethical voices of modernity, and in particular, of the Canadian unity debate; however, it does not succeed in providing a convincing solution. Taylor helps us to appreciate better the importance of culture to the constitution of our perspectives and morals, but he does not provide a convincing foundation for the primacy of language, establishing the necessity of having an essential culture, or provide an adequate account of human agency; hence, like Grant he is unable both to borrow from Hegel and to shed the uncertainties of faith. He is unable to supply an answer that will replace anomy with allegiance, and atomism with collectivism. Moreover, he cannot definitively inject meaning into the state and rekindle a Canadian identity.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

George Grant and Charles Taylor have been academic purveyors of a modern Hegelian dilemma: the conflict between two strong, contradictory ideational claims, the expressive unity of the community and the rational autonomy of the individual. History has culminated in this conflict which informs every facet of social relations in the modern age. According to Hegel it is the purpose of the modern age to arrive at a synthesis of these claims.

Grant and Taylor see, in late modernity, expressive unity being overwhelmed by forms of rationalist individualism. They assert that the state has become a mechanized bureaucratic structure guided by the principles of individualism, Enlightenment-styled empiricism and rationalism. These principles permeate public and private institutions and inform the dominant, liberal political culture. The consequences of this hegemony are that citizens no longer understand themselves as members of their state's community, but rather as profoundly individuated beings for whom the community is merely a device to fulfil particular desires. Eventually the political system fails to claim the loyalties of citizens because it is only meaningful as a device. Citizens become alienated. Grant concludes that people have become profoundly complacent, while Taylor, taking a more optimistic view, argues that people seek to establish communities that have a sense of higher purpose, that will restore a common allegiance.

Both Grant and Taylor explore the impact of this dilemma in the Canadian context. They perceive the presence of a widespread malaise about the capitalist agenda of society and the political fragmentation of Canadians into cultural groups. Grant

articulates an expressive holism in the form of a more locally familiar conservatism, depicting Canada's traditional holistic order of two conservative nations, Loyalist English Canada and Catholic French Canada. This conservatism was centred on virtue as the overarching principle binding community, and concern for the well-being of the whole. This is contrasted with a freedom-centered, radical individualism predominant in American liberalism. Thus Canada is confronted with the dilemma of reconciling the conservative tradition with rational autonomy without succumbing to radical American individualism. Ultimately, Grant comes to the tragic conclusion that this resolution cannot be achieved, that Canadian conservatisms are dead.

After years of optimistic essays on how Canada could resolve its dilemma, Grant concludes that both Canadian nationalism, and Canada's culture have been eclipsed. The technological society and liberal ideology of America have imposed a new homogenizing and universal order which stifles philosophical thought and human freedom. He argues that multiculturalism is not a viable response as it is a denial of culture, in his judgment, not a defense of it. For him, in advocating multiculturalism in the language of liberalism, multiculturalists succeed instead in promoting the further universalization of pseudo-neutral liberal values, thus undermining the cultural communities they claim to champion. According to Grant, the paradox of the liberal multicultural agenda is that it undermines both liberalism, and the success of any form of cultural survival. He argues that although liberalism professes equality, it also undermines equality by failing to provide a firm ontological foundation. If liberalism has a notion of a higher good or Moralität, then, asks Grant, what is there to make equality our due? Without a higher good, equality can be

redefined according to the whim of the times. Grant argues that liberalism subsumes other cultures into the technological culture of the mass age by imposing a set of supposedly neutral standards that carry non-neutral assumptions about the environment, time, community and the self. Roughly speaking, this technological culture perceives the world as a compartmentalized collection of objects to be exploited by human reason for material gain.

Charles Taylor follows Grant without being as bleak; he too concludes that English-speaking Canada has already adopted the political culture of Enlightenment empiricism and rationalism. He is concerned for the survival of those cultures which he believes still have hope, French Canada and other minority cultures in Canada.

Taylor sees the very same forces at play that Grant identifies. Like Grant he describes Canada's culture as having been predominantly bi-national where people arrive at their allegiance to the whole via allegiance to the part.²²⁸ He asserts that this has been the perspective of the political elite and the implicit formula for political arrangements throughout Canada's history. For most Canadians outside Quebec, national identity has not been uniform. For some, there has been a firmly accepted regional view of Canada, while for others allegiance has been "unhyphenated." Despite these competing visions of Canada's identity, Taylor holds that the one important unifying factor that distinguishes Canada historically is the participatory model, though he finds it to be currently under

²²⁸ Charles Taylor, "Alternative Futures: Legitimacy, Identity and Alienation in Late-Twentieth-Century Canada." in Guy Laforest, ed., *Reconciling the Solitudes* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 102.

siege by the forces of modernity. The “participatory model” is Taylor’s variation of what Grant calls conservatism and Hegel understood as holistic unity. It is a republican political culture in which community members share a sense of common identity and a profound respect for the institutions of the state. Taylor confronts this with the rights model characteristic of the US, in which community members derive their sense of dignity from asserting their inalienable rights even if it means trumping the collective decision, not from being able to “mobilize a majority for legislative action.”²²⁹

According to Taylor, the rights model is gaining ground in Canada’s political culture and it is creating a greater sense of distance between the individual and the state. As individuals cease to identify with their governing institutions, the state becomes merely a machine to foster capitalist enterprises, highly bureaucratized and bent on the technological mastery of nature.²³⁰ Consequently, the benefits of this system (primarily material wealth) are beginning to pale in comparison to its costs, namely, the sense of lost efficacy, and the sense of alienation.

Unlike Grant, Taylor does not view multiculturalism as an homogenizing force of the late modern paradigm. Rather, he argues that, by decentralizing political decisions and defending those groups that still make cultural claims, we can hope to preserve vestiges of community. In preserving these communities we not only revive loyalty to the

²²⁹ Ibid., 93.

²³⁰ Ibid., 80.

whole through the part, but we provide people with a political and cultural context in which to realize their capacity for developing into autonomous human beings.

The political perspectives of Grant and Taylor are grounded in intricate philosophical arguments about the self and the relationship between culture and the state. Furthermore, as political philosophers, Grant and Taylor explicitly set out their ontologies. It is primarily on this level that I've elected to address their arguments.

Despite Grant's eventual despair, in his more optimistic moments (prior to his introduction to Strauss and Ellul), he believed that, at the heart of the modern conflict between value-neutral liberalism and the traditional moral order, there lay the seed of a superior culture which would grow out from the conflict as a synthesis of the individual autonomy advocated by liberalism and the moral unity embodied in conservative cultures. He hoped that an alienating mass society would provoke people to unite in a common effort to realize the capacity of all individuals to employ their divine power of reason, and to strive to know the good. This would be the birth of the greatest level of freedom in human history. All citizens would be using independent rational thought to restructure society. They would share a common purpose while enjoying their autonomy; thus they would have both a unifying moral order and freedom. Their struggle to resist mass society would vitalize them to work toward the dawning of a new age of reason.

Taylor shows no signs of despairing. On the contrary, with each new publication this highly prolific and complex philosopher weaves new elements into the "new age" Grant envisioned. Instead of calling for the youth to pick up the torch or making prophetic statements about what will be, he steadily ties together new complex arguments

about methodology, politics, science, philosophy, linguistics, and education. With each new book, essay, response, review and lecture, a synthesis of radical autonomy and a holistic community becomes more and more feasible and his ideas gain wider and wider audiences. Will he succeed? Will he capture the imaginations of this or coming generations and provide the basis for engaging whole societies in this project? I have tried to show that he cannot succeed, and why the aspirations he shares with Grant are flawed.

Taylor will undoubtedly be pivotal in breathing new life into the Hegelian strain of Western thought. Already he, Grant and others have many followers; but they only speak of the dilemma and the ideal that might be. Never will a sober Hegelian announce that the ideal has been realized. I do not mean to affirm Grant's despair. Instead, I deny the existence of the modern dilemma itself. To accept that we are teetering on the edge between technological totalitarianism and a bold new age of reason, one must first adopt a veritable host of assumptions about the self, community and history. Without these assumptions, not only does the dilemma become illusory, but so too does the ideal that Grant and Taylor would have us work toward. I have attempted to show how, in adopting their set of assumptions, Grant and Taylor created artificial and reductionist depictions of the self and community. The most fundamental of these is the notion that human beings are distinct from the rest of nature by virtue of their capacity for reason and free will. These two capacities are inextricably intertwined, as reason is said to give us our capacity for free will. An important facet of this conception of freedom is that it is not merely the capacity to discern freely what is right for us; reason enables humanity to gain insight

into the transcendent good, in Judeo-Christian terms, God's law. With this insight we are able to choose freely to act in accordance with the transcendent good. Freedom, then, is not simply the absence of restrictions on the process of making choices, it is our capacity to choose whether or not to act in accordance with our insight and conscience.

At this point, the holistic element of their view comes into relief. Hegel, Grant and Taylor maintain that humans require a cultural community to provide the education to learn to use their reason, and hence to be free. Reason and freedom only thrive in a culture which has a conception of a transcendent good. Without such conceptions, people will have no method of intellectualizing or of making their lives significant. Our horizon of significance is given to us, formed and reformed, by our culture. Our horizon of meaning is formed by the culture that preceded us and will be changed in our time by ourselves and our contemporaries. The history of Western civilization has been a long chain of ideas, of paradigms, that have formed the basis for the new ones built by each new, successive generation. This supports the philosophy of history underpinning the methodology employed by Hegel, Grant and Taylor in their work. According to this methodology, we can become cognizant of the ideas that have formed our culture by tracing the ideational progression of history. Philosophy is the employment of reason to discern from our history the highest principles of our culture as they have been handed down to us, and to articulate those principles so that they can be realized. The medium of realization is language.

I have argued that Grant follows Hegel closely. In fact, he continues to be a Hegelian in his idealism, communitarianism and criticism of modernity long after he

renounces Hegel in his 1966 preface to PMA. Some commentators take Grant at his word that he could separate his conservatism from his philosophy,²³¹ but in fact his politics and philosophy are bound together and are not separable. The only aspect of Hegel that he ever abandoned was the hope that modernity would succeed in provoking a new age of reason. Instead, in his apparent despair, he went so far as to wonder if the Western world is a failure.²³² However, Grant never entirely abandons his faith in moral progress because Providence is fundamental to his Christian faith.

My criticism of Grant's work focuses on the notion of the progressive movement of history. The notion of progress continues to be relevant to his communitarianism in a number of ways even after he himself abandons it. The fundamental premises of his communitarianism (positive freedom, the role of philosophy, the value of culture) are given form by the Hegelian theory of the dialectical movement of history. It is from his reading of the historical dialectic that Grant discerns the true nature of human reason and freedom, the highest moral truths of our culture, and the nature of the modern dilemma. That is why, even after he has renounced the notion of a progressive history, it is still important for us to determine why he was right to do so. If history is not the dialectical progression of the consciousness of freedom, then Grant must develop different arguments to support his claims about reason, freedom, morality, and modernity. His

²³¹ See Barry Cooper. "The Philosophical Context of George Grant's Political Thought." in Yusuf K. Umar, ed., *George Grant and the Future of Canada* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1992)

²³² Charles Taylor, *Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada* (Toronto: The House of Anansi Press Limited, 1982), 132.

denial of historicism is also a withdrawal of his own philosophical foundation. Like the emperor with no clothes, boldly he stands naked claiming to wear the finest fabrics which are visible only to the virtuous. Dare we admit to seeing no clothes and risk being seen as less than virtuous? Of course, But first we must ensure he cannot return to his original historicist claims.

Hegel's intention was to unite faith and reason, by developing a conception of Idea, Geist and Nature which could be corroborated by the rational analysis of the manifestation of Geist (God's will) in the progressive development of human civilization. With this project in mind Hegel imposes an interpretation of the progress of human freedom on history, and from this he concludes that the modern age embodies a dilemma from which a new age of universal freedom would emerge. I have argued that Hegel fell victim to the tendency to immanentize the Christian notion of a sacred sphere of history. Unless the new age were actualized, thus confirming his assertions, Hegel's philosophy could only be a matter of faith. Of course, we have yet to see the new age, and Grant himself, even at his most Hegelian phase, maintained that faith, not reason, was fundamental to Hegelianism. Therefore, historical dialectics and the presence of Geist in time do not constitute compelling foundations for political analysis.

Without this ontological foundation, Grant's methodology also begins to fail him. He claims that it is the moral philosopher's role to discern and articulate the highest moral truths of his age by interpreting their development in an ideational history. I argue that if history is neither progressive nor dialectical, then there is no reason to believe that there has been a moral progression, or, more significantly, a progressive development of

freedom. Moral theories drawn from history tell us more about the subjective situation of the theorist than about moral truths. At best, and this is not bad, history might function as a form of fiction such as novels or films, and be used as a catalyst by critics to articulate insights about human sentiments and society. So, while Grant's concept of freedom may be of some worth and importance, it derives no actual support from an interpretation of history.

We need not be advocates of the concept of freedom Grant associates with liberalism to oppose the concept of freedom he employs. To recapitulate, Grant's freedom involves making our choices rationally, and this is only done when we choose in accordance with the good. As distinct from the Kantian freedom based on pure reason, Hegelian freedom recognizes that our appetites and our societal norms will play an important role in forming our desires and our knowledge of the good. Socialization and appetites provide the background and the context from which we begin our efforts to interpret the *Moralität*. The free individual will use reason to become aware of those forces and choose the worthiest actions. Thus Hegel's freedom allows for both reason and the influences of passion and societal conditioning. Hegel (and Grant) makes this unification conceivable by constructing a theory that the principles of the good and the interests of society are in harmony. This notion of their intrinsic harmony is based on the ontological belief that the State is the objective manifestation of the Idea. With this unifying theory in hand, Hegel and Grant are able to conclude that true freedom entails choosing to do one's duty in society.

I argue that this theory fails for two reasons, first, the ontological foundation is not a convincing premise for those of us who do not share with Grant the Hegelian faith. Thus, the theory of freedom is reduced to a matter of conjecture. Second, Grant's version is excessive in its claims on our powers of suspended disbelief. He raises the stakes by providing his own radical interpretation of Canada's principles, and, in turn, of our duty. In contrast to Hegel, Grant argues that we are free only if we follow *his* radical interpretation of the state's principles and choose to act in opposition to current norms. In my view, his notion of freedom mistakenly assumes that everyone in the community will uncover the same principles should they use their reason. It does not matter whether one comes at it from the issue from Hegel's conservative perspective or from Grant's particular radicalism, his assumption is mistaken. The difference between them is whereas Hegel is somewhat conformist,²³³ Grant elevates himself from philosopher to prophet. While Hegel's conservatism is flawed at its ontological foundation and hence unappealing, Grant's radical conservatism is both ontologically flawed and highly contradictory, and hence distorted. For Grant to suggest that positive freedom entails conforming to *his* radical interpretation of universal principles is absurd, and reveals an astonishing lack of modesty.

Grant's hubris is the basis for his political views regarding Canadian nationalism and culture. It is from this standpoint that he argues in favour of the traditional

²³³ There are ways in which Hegel proposed improvements to the political regime of his day, but he never strayed far from the established norms. See Peter Singer, *Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 40.

conservative cultures of Loyalist English Canada and Catholic French Canada. He claims that these are the only cultural groups in Canada that have the necessary institutional and historical roots for passing on a moral order and a common Canadian identity. According to Grant, they have been united since 1791 in their efforts to resist American liberalism, and its affiliates: individualism, worldly asceticism, and negative liberty. This depiction of Canada is false given the diversity of cultures that have been a part of the Canadian landscape for over a hundred years.²³⁴ Furthermore, it is wrong to aspire to unite individual freedom and national culture. Drawing upon an essay by Barry Cooper, I contend that factionalization is inevitable in any society, and if cultural unity were achieved it would be at the expense of political freedom. As Porter documents in his book *Vertical Mosaic*, this choice would not be new in Canadian history.²³⁵

Thus, Grant's philosophy of freedom leads him to construct an artificial conception of the ideal community. I say artificial because the elements he hopes to bring together are constructed fictions. The freedom he imagines is philosophically unconvincing. The united Canadian culture he depicts has never existed, except perhaps in the dreams of those belonging to politically dominant cultural groups. The aspiration to harmonize individual freedom with a national culture is Quixotic, and if it were enacted

²³⁴ Grant consistently turns a blind eye to the presence of aboriginal Canadians. It is tempting to play the racist card here (which would likely be valid), but it is better to focus on the (ill)logic of his explicit argument to ensure a full comprehension of his views. To keep this focus, I emphasize the various European cultures which he considers beneath consideration.

²³⁵ John Porter, *Vertical Mosaic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965)

as policy, would be more tyrannical than any system found in the history of the dreaded technological empire, the United States of America.

Taylor also develops a Hegelian conception of freedom. As with Grant, his definition of freedom leads him to conclude that individuals rely on the articulated moral principles of their cultures for a context in which to act freely. Unlike Grant, Taylor uses more than rhetoric and faith to support his contentions. He makes a rational argument based on Herder's thesis of expressivism. He argues that our comprehension of the world is structured by our linguistic articulation of it, and that only through the process of rational analysis and re-articulation can we hope to develop our own unique set of second-order principles. Freedom, he argues, is the ability to use reason and dialogics to arrive at our own articulations of our second-order principles. The political implications of this conception of human agency are that individuals clearly require more from the state than policies of minimal interference. For citizens to realize their authentic identity and to be truly free, they must have the cultural resources (i.e. education, religion and family) to develop their capacity to use reason to articulate their individual second-order desires. Language must include in its horizon of meaning the means by which the individual can contemplate the metaphysical questions that are vital to human fulfillment and a just society: i.e. questions about justice, love, truth, hope, reason, faith, and so on. It is also essential to have institutions which act as fora in which to interpret the cultural narrative which forms our language and our perception of ourselves and the world around us. Only after this is accomplished does it become important to be free from externally imposed limitations so that we can live in accordance with our principles. Without the

cultural context, the promise of negative freedom simply hides that the citizens are deprived of the necessary tools to develop into autonomous human beings. The “value-neutrality” of the state becomes a subtle form of dehumanization which leaves people entirely subject to manipulating forces of capitalism and the stifling routines of an all-encompassing bureaucracy.

By basing his political philosophy on rational argument rather than faith and rhetoric, Taylor evades all the criticisms launched against Grant, except one. He too uses a reading of the historical ideational progression of freedom in Western civilization to validate the truth of positive freedom. However, having already argued in my critique of Grant that this line of argument is invalid, I will summarize the arguments exclusively applicable to Taylor.

Taylor’s expressivism relies on two main assumptions: first, that language is the deepest level of human understanding, second, that we can transcend the oppressive forces of our culture through the rational interpretation of the cultural narrative. Habermas raises compelling reasons to doubt that either of these assumptions are acceptable. He argues that unless philosophical investigations look deeper than language, they will be trapped in the power constructs of our culture’s intersubjectivity. Drawing on the work done in psychoanalysis, he shows that language “sits upon” more fundamental levels of consciousness, such as space, time and causality. He argues that language is formed by the structures of the particular culture and cannot be used to transcend one’s socialization. He argues that free rational thought can only be realized through some form of as yet undeveloped depth-hermeneutics. If language is not primary, then authenticity

and autonomy may be hindered by the restrictions of a culture's distorted communication. It could be that Taylor's deep diversity is no more than a policy of protecting diverse systems of oppression.

Habermas also challenges Taylor's conception of the self as embedded in a fixed cultural community, and his subsequent contention that the state should protect these communities to ensure human autonomy and continued loyalty to the state. He argues that due to widespread interaction of various cultural groups, particularly those that share the same state, there is far more trans-cultural intersubjectivity than Taylor accounts for. Therefore, to protect fixed cultural communities is to protect theme park style fictions.

Drawing on Bakhtin via Walker, I argue that neither the internal dialogue of the individual nor the values of a culture are necessarily coherent or fixed. Rather they are polyphonic in nature, and in a constant state of flux. The decisions and thoughts of an individual are informed by an often self-contradictory heteroglossia, as is any given culture. Furthermore, there are no cultures in modern society that are ideationally isolated. Thus, there is external as well as an internal dialogue experienced by every culture. Therefore attempting to establish a standardized language or unified culture could only be done through an imposition of power, and still, could only be achieved at the most superficial level. Hence, the communitarian unity envisioned by Taylor is a slightly more pluralistic form of the elitism and oppression we saw in Grant's political philosophy. While individual freedom is essential to Taylor's politics, the inviolability of his project - due to its mistaken conception of human agency and culture - makes it realizable only at the expense of freedom, in both its Hegelian and Kantian forms.

My views on the political philosophies of Grant and Taylor are based on what they say, not upon how their ideas might play out in policy once diluted through the actualities of Canada's political process. In that form their ideas could be both safe and beneficial to the public. This is true in the same way that the potentially totalitarian ideology of classical Marxism might be a useful rallying cry in a time when the gap between the rich and the poor is widening to the obvious detriment of democracy and the rule of law. It might be fundamentally flawed, but it carries with it clear statements about justice in a highly threatening package. We witnessed this in the 1960s when Grant's radical conservative ethnocentric *Lament* neither obstructed Canada's multicultural policy nor did it give rise to an oppressive English-French regime in Canada. It did reinvigorate Canadian patriotism and the struggle to work toward the worthwhile principles at the core of his message. Taylor too could not expect to have his ideas directly translated into policy, but we could learn from them. However, when using a toxin to counteract a toxin, we must be very careful about the quantities and qualities. For instance, Taylor's emphasis on dialogics, decentralization, and cultural recognition is extremely useful when applied to the conflicts and alienation experienced in a large pluralist state. However, the illusion of cultural unity within those groups which he promotes could be highly destructive for both individual freedom and cross cultural discourse. Therefore, while Taylor's political philosophy may not present as great a threat in practice as it does in theory, it may be preferable to seek other philosophical packages for the same political approaches.

I contend that Walker's model of Bakhtinian polyphony provides a superior ontological and political speculum for the contemporary conflicts arising out of pluralism. It is true that conceptualizing ourselves as a heteroglossia of moral voices and our communities as amorphous and overlapping entities, does not provide us with the comfort of a firm identity and the accompanying sense of belonging. It is also true that this cultural polyphony does not give us an illusion of a strict moral order that guides our decisions and protects us from randomness. According to Bahktin, the rules of communication go hand in hand with randomness. In short, polyphony does not provide any of the rational certainty and moral comfort that Grant and Taylor seek to provide. It seems we must continue to navigate between Scylla and Charybdis both with skill and trust in the gods.

This is a contemporary articulation of a timeless solution to an equally timeless dilemma. What makes Bakhtinian polyphony attractive is not its definitiveness, because it certainly cannot claim to have that, but its adaptability to a variety of cultural perspectives. It makes no claim at cultural neutrality, nor does it forcefully stave off homogenization, but it does effectively combine the capacity for individual autonomy with the recognition of cultural embeddedness. Most importantly, it provides a philosophical context in which to engage in cross-cultural discourse with an attitude of tolerance, without falling prey to the divisive misconceptions of cultural groups offered by conservative communitarians like Grant and Taylor.

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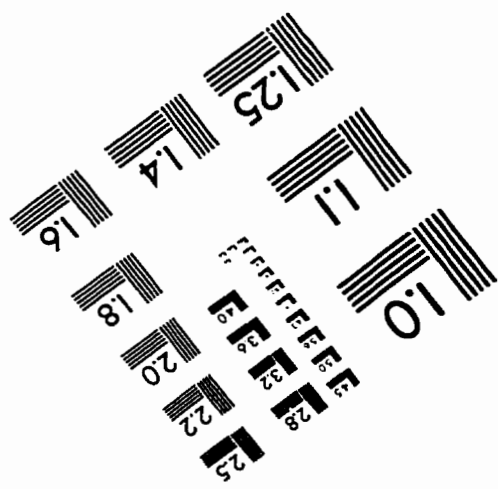
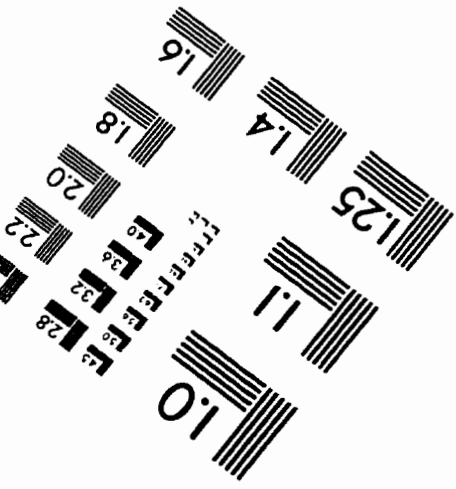
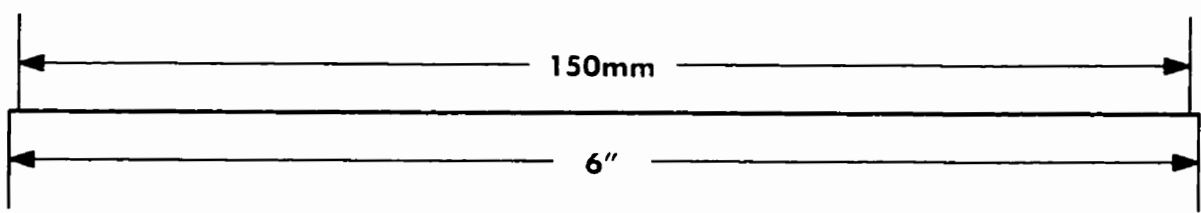
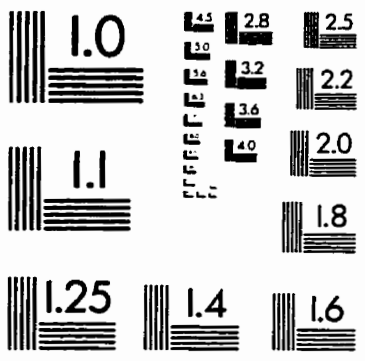
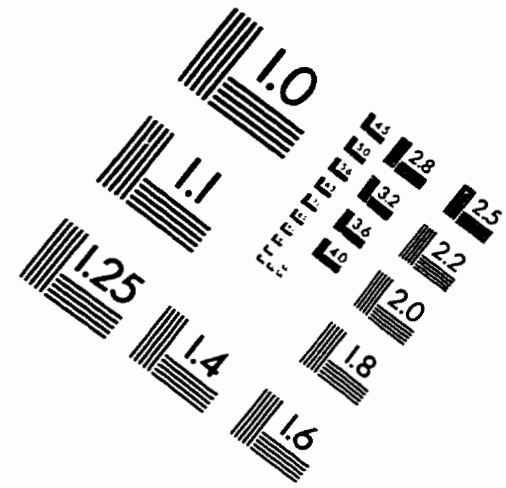
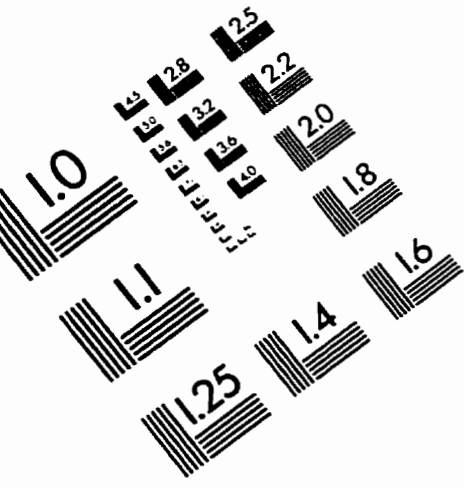
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