Some Kinds of Love

by

David Penner

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Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."
(John 19:22)
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Chapter One - Introduction

And some kinds of love
Are mistaken for vision

- Lou Reed

My thesis is devoted to the complete *ouevre* of Charles Taylor. Charles Taylor is either, depending on how you view these terms, a philosopher or a political theorist from McGill University in Montreal. He possesses an international reputation. I have had the pleasure of seeing him in action on a number of occasions. Each time I was extremely impressed with his presence. His ability to speak for hours on subjects ranging from the poetry of Mallarme to the issues of Quebec without the benefit of a text or notes was inspiring. There is very little that has occurred in Western civilization that Taylor does not know a great deal about. He is fascinating on obscure social contract theorists and also writes with authority on the most minor of phenomenological movements. In studying Charles Taylor you are opening yourself to a wide field of literary and philosophical experience. He is a self-confessed hedgehog to whom all thought and expression leads to fairly particular questions. But as a hedgehog, his singularity of intention covers an enormous amount of ground. The only omission to his cultural understanding that I have witnessed was an endearing one. In responding to a question at the annual meetings for the American Catholic Philosophical Associations in Buffalo, New York, he confessed to never having heard of Larry Flynt, the recently celebrated publisher of *Hustler* magazine. This oversight on Taylor's part, for better or worse, has not affected the substance of my thesis.

It has taken me eighteen months to write this work. In those eighteen months I did not often
stray from its demands. All that I read and did seemed connected to what I was going to have to say about my subject. It might be tempting to say that, given the above, this thesis took over my life. This is not so. I am delighted to say that my life was able to take over this thesis. Some of what I knew I had to work on held very little interest for me. (It was the recognition that my discussion of Charles Taylor's overtly political thought was of very little personal interest that has provoked me to exit departments of politics and enter other disciplines.)

With the way that I think, a lot can happen in eighteen months. I moved this way and that in regards to what I thought was the fundamental aim of this thesis. I ran through at least six quite rigorous outlines. (My last outline, about seven months old plans for fourteen chapters; there are ten here.) I changed my mind about what I had considered to be my own essential viewpoints. Many chapters took on their own lives and I sometimes found myself looking for my argument instead of imposing them upon the texts. My advisor told me, in criticism, that you can see me in the text trying to figure things out. I think this is probably true. I do not wish that my text appear otherwise.

All of the chapters that follow were written mostly as individual essays. I often rely on earlier chapters to provide the background for the others. They were not written in the order that they appear here. While each chapter follows where I think it needs to go in specific areas of Charles Taylor's thought, I am happy to announce that, with some organization, there is a cohesive flow to what you are about to read.

I am uncertain as to how much respectability can be given to a project that was, at least initially, fuelled by anger. Eighteen months ago, as I began to write, I was governed by a desire to smash whatever conceptions of truth came my way. Included in this destructive free-for-all was an urge to smash the credibility of the rational faculties which are so celebrated in the hallways of a
politics department. I would like to think that my motivations were basically good. I was, and am, discouraged by the way certain views of truth and reason leave some people out or dismiss them as without merit. As I progressed in my work I came to feel that the glorification of reason among most of us is a symptom of our own insecurities about our own dismissals from the truth of the world and of God.

Of course, doing this entailed a very rational process. But rather than surrender to a seeming paradox, I was able, I hope, to make something out of it. I was aided by reading people like Michel Foucault, Soren Kierkegaard, Alexander Kojeve, Augustine and Charles Taylor. What I have come up with is an optimistic understanding of the negation of the human self. Through a reasonable deconstruction of reason there arises the ground for an epiphany. For me, this epiphany centred around a vision of what Kierkegaard calls the glory of emptiness. The lessons of Sunday School about the need to surrender yourself to God began to make sense and become attractive where once I had seen them as threatening.

I was led to this moment in my life, it seems to me, through the work I have done on Taylor. It was in Taylor's arguments against epistemology and his view of the wholly embodied self, phenomenological and structural arguments that I considered myself fairly familiar with, that I was able to connect with this theological view. My commentary here is personal but the point in sharing it is not. In suggesting that I am touched by the religious elements of Taylor's work I do not want to suggest that I am holding Taylor up against standards within myself. How I feel about what Taylor has written should not be important to anyone but myself. My criticisms of Taylor are not based on how I think things should be; they are based on imagining Taylor's objectives and then evaluating whether he carries them out or not. I am, in this text, neutral as to whether Taylor's objectives are
worthy. I have provided this personal introduction to defend my work prudentially here and not to defend or reject Taylor. Six months from now I will probably feel quite different about any number of the issues explored here. This possibility of change will not be present in what I have written.

Taylor devotes a great deal of attention to attacking the modern scientific understanding of ontology and metaphysics. His critique is centred against an understanding of science as representational of truth. Philosophy is valuable as a contrast to this dogmatic approach to the mysteries of the universe. Where science is known as the truth, philosophy is the pursuit to the truth.

The pursuit of philosophy is successful, in essence, only as a pursuit. It does not provide conclusions, it makes no absolute sense of data or impressions. It cannot, authoritatively, identify that which is in error. Philosophy, in my view, is similar to the Christian notion of grace. The truths that are delivered, and they are truths only about the erotic attraction and need of the contemplative life, are granted in moments of epiphany and are not guaranteed by a series of logical and faithful steps. Knowledge does not occur; it arrives. But this arrival can be clouded, hindered and made difficult by the residues of ordinary being. If we are to be open to the moments of temporary understanding we are going to have to be prepared. Reason is not removed from Eros, but it does not lay at its heart.

One of the significant themes of this work is my concern that philosophy has been caught up with the methods of philosophy. By this I mean we are drawn to the procedures of truth-seeking; we are infatuated with rational discourse, with dialectics, with historicity, with epistemology, with ourselves. We have badly confused the relationship between Eros and reason as grounded in our rationality. Reason does not work without being connected to love. How is it we know that the language which we use to depict and to represent is emblematic of anything at all? Why do we bother? When we gaze into the stars or into our eyes, what do we wish to find? Why do we want to
find it? To live the contemplative, rational life is to live the life of the lover; to be the Don Juan of the library. We are drawn and enticed by various mysteries. With reason we explore these mysteries and attempt to map their boundaries. I would like to argue that, with bad reason, we have turned the mysteries that provoke us into problems to be solved. When we look at the mysteries of life as problems we change the way we see ourselves in relation. One is small before a mystery; one seeks control over a problem. This is the reality of the Western world today. Human pride refuses to recognize intellectual futility. The unknown is futile, not us. The thing we love has become ourselves.

Now, for some, appropriate reason is the ticket outside of ourselves. With the application of reason to the mysteries of our being we can come to recognize our inability to find anything that we can call truth. We can come to realize that we know nothing at all about ourselves or about the world. We can know this one thing. But to know this one thing and to surrender oneself to the love that brought you to this singular conclusion requires a special reason and a gift from outside of yourself. This is accomplished by the weakness of reason which, ironically, must be strong enough to sense and articulate this weakness. But there is, for Christians, a gift that comes from without. This gift of grace cannot be bartered or negotiated. It arrives or it does not. All that you can do is to be open to its call; you can create a clearing within which it may appear. This entails removing yourself from the clutter of existence. It requires negating the hubris we connect to our logical understandings; it means realizing that there is no self by itself; that the human individual, as such, is a charade.

If this is so, and most do not believe it, there are tremendous ramifications on the way that we think about politics. I connect the philosophical pursuit to the Christian pursuit in that philosophers are humbled before Truth as Man is before God. When someone declares themselves to be a philosopher this is what I assume that they mean. If they do not mean this I gather that they
are actually scientists. A strange hybrid is the political philosopher.

I argue that the political philosopher is a philosopher only if politics serves the ends of philosophy. Otherwise, the political philosopher is an orator of power. One does not see very many of the former anymore. In my view, political philosophy is often a celebration of method. It runs against the philosophical claim that truth is outside of humanity. There is no such thing, I intuit, as political Truth. All there is, in the political realm, is the imposition of power. For a thinker to dedicate himself to the pursuit of truth within the city or the cave is only to tell stories about that city/cave in the language provided by the other inhabitants.

This is much more complicated than my initial statements suggest. Philosophy is, at least I think it is for Taylor, very much tied up with politics. The sensing of the Truth by which Eros is nurtured and provoked does not occur outside of the community. The community is necessary not only to create the sort of individual that can be a philosopher, but in so far as the individual does not exist without the community, the community itself is the home of the philosopher. The community is crucial to the practice of philosophy but the ends of the community are not the ends of philosophy. I argue that Taylor uses Aristotle to mend Augustine. Taylor shows how the city of God depends on, but is something other than, the city of man. For Aristotle the community could be structured to allow the preservation and perpetuation of important pagan virtues that sustained the good life. There were limits in understanding that Aristotelian thought does not trespass. These limits refer to what lies beyond the call for goodness and the plausibility of attaining that goodness. In Aristotle, goodness is connected to our human status; not everything is discoverable but the good life is still possible. For Aristotle these limits of existence and being were not problematic. Now, Death and impossibility are part of our lexicon and as such we are no longer content with the celebration of communal virtues.
as philosophically sufficient. But, for Taylor, the Aristotelian arrangement is still a crucial one. We need community to find grace. We need the human to connect with the divine.

It is my insistence that despite the crucial connections between Truth and actual existence they are distinct. I recognize the importance of community to Taylor's catholicism but I wish to warn against the heightening of emphasis on the political realm as the embodiment of metaphysics. It is in the community that love, virtue and understanding can be articulated; it is in the ability to embrace the limits of this love and understanding that philosophy begins. Modern liberal and rights theory are not philosophy according to this understanding. For them the limits of ethical thinking are not a mystery which we must recognize as more powerful than our words, but rather a problem which we must solve.

The recognition of the limits of existence, that truth cannot be ascertained and confidence guaranteed, are often problemmatized. We realize that which we cannot move beyond as a challenge to the question of how we should live. I wish to assert that the question of how to live is inevitably attached to an understanding of the limits of philosophy as a problem, as a method. Living ought not to be conceived as a problem to be solved; it is a mystery within which we live. In the embracing of existence as mystery the question of how we must live loses its status as an immediate problem. We cannot forget about the limits of being as either a problem or a mystery which engages us. This is why I think that Aristotle does not provide a meaningful theoretical response to the modern condition. That which engages us foremostly is not paramount in his philosophy.

I think that much of what is written above, and below, depends on how one regards original sin and the promises of Jesus. If original sin exists and the faith and love demanded by Jesus are
impossible, then there is no reconciliation with God from the standpoint of the human being. If this is so there is no human step beyond the recognition of the limitations of human steps. Community, then, will never provide salvation; it will never mend death and the fears that correspond to it. But it can lead us in the direction of grace. It will help us to clear away the residue of our existences, of our meanings, and create a space within which we listen for God. If there is original sin, the Good life of Aristotle is impossible, but the community is still essential.

But, you might argue, original sin is a human formulation; that it is a solution to the mystery of existence. I do not think this is so. Original sin is perhaps best understood as what is solely imaginable when human understanding crumbles. Original sin is born when reason and Eros come apart, when thought is killed as it smashes into walls of limitation but the love that fuels the thought remains. It is then that the awareness of human emptiness, governed by love, recognizes the omnipotence of the transcendental Other to which we are essential and still nothing. The premise of original sin is not a solution to the problem of existence; it is the recognition of our connection to the mystery.

Augustine, because of his view of original sin, has no patience for the world of politics. It is all hubristic, prideful and serving an impotent master. Taylor thinks this is wrong. He has a residual respect for the pagan, community virtue of Aristotle, but he is also preoccupied with the modern ontological mysteries to which I alluded earlier.

My thesis is all about philosophy as method. By method I mostly mean reason although I also include conceptions of justice and notions of ontology. I think that Charles Taylor has spent his life

\[1\] Do we have the mustard-seed of faith with which we could move mountains? Are we able to love Jesus in a way that is different than the way that I love you?
in a romance with reason. This love of reason is connected to a vision of the world beyond reason. But Taylor taints this with too much emphasis on the need to defend the unknown with logic and the usual trappings of philosophical method. Taylor prepares us to embrace the unknown and confuses us by giving us a logical definition of it.

The thesis is divided into three parts which each explore a different type of philosophical method. The first part looks at historicity and dialectics. The second undertakes epistemology. The third section considers the tension or problem of celebrating method at the expense of philosophy. Each of these three parts relates directly to the significant works of Charles Taylor. I assert that these are the three avenues of his critique against modernity.

In the next chapter I begin my discussion with Taylor's historical project as contained in the Sources of the Self. As Taylor tries to suggest that we have never been far removed from an intrinsic notion of what is good, I try to understand how these various and disparate formulas of good can be connected in presenting a meaningful picture of existence. Connected to this I raise the problems of historical meaningfulness, of dialectics and the importance of transcendental arguments. The problems which I think I raise are significant in the way that they relate to the question of the death of God in our modernist times. I wish to explore the question of resurrecting God, how this is to be sensible to a culture removed from metaphysical articulations. The question I am left with is how motivated are we to discover our need for transcendence or meaning in a world where understanding is temporal and not articulated metaphysically. I wish to suggest that to use history as an instrument by which good can be seen to be crucial to our self-understandings is not necessarily a good way to bring us in touch with our misidentified core.

The third chapter explores Taylor's views on Hegel. I am interested mostly in the
attractiveness of a Hegelian scheme as a standpoint for a hermeneutic position. Also, I am interested in the logical consistency of Taylor’s view of Hegel. I suggest that the dialectic and the notion of contradiction implicit in it are only sensible in the light of a profound metaphysical bias which Taylor claims to distrust. I do not wish to criticize the metaphysical underpinning but wish to suggest that the logic of Hegel is not self-sufficient; that it is not neutral, it does not explain the world before belief. As a result I wish to open up a critique of rational necessity as an empty concept delivering nothing but a defense of a faith using only the terminology of that faith. When I speak of faith I refer to Hegel’s and Taylor’s reference to Geist as the world spirit that makes sense of dialectics. I wish to challenge the logical formulation of the necessity of Geist without necessarily negating the premise of Geist.

Entwined with chapter three, chapter four explores the underpinning of historicity in transcendental arguments. I argue that there is no original truth to be found that can be absolutely removed from structural arrangements and understandings. In this chapter, I wish to show that Taylor uses transcendental arguments as the ground existing before structural formations. I argue that transcendental arguments depend on hypotheses that require an already structuralized or conceptualized framework to be either sensible or notable.

Chapter five considers Taylor’s criticisms of Marxism. I do this to show that the empirical complaints which Taylor uses against Marx are more congruent with Taylor’s own project than he admits. In order to remove himself from the scientific and technological understandings that Marx had of human existence Taylor is forced to negate some ontological and metaphysical premises that one would expect him to embrace.

Chapter six, the beginning of part two, appraises Taylor’s criticism of epistemology and
modern science. This is interesting in that Taylor provides a wonderful explication of the connection or correlation between reason and method. It is even more fascinating for seeing what Taylor is left to hold onto after this damaging critique of empirical methods. Taylor throws away knowable truth in, especially, the social sciences and in its place recommends a hermeneutic position that, in time, grounds itself in the same sort of rational procedures as the enemy it displaced. I argue that Taylor deconstructs science but then manipulates the same questionable standards to foist upon us his own philosophical view. My interest is in his desire to ground his thinking in method, rather than whether or not his philosophical views are attractive.

The next chapter continues the epistemological critique but in reference to the ontology that results. I argue that Taylor dismisses ontological confidence only to make a claim for a particular ontology. It is my view that Taylor does a wonderful job of exposing structural arrangements and then wishes that you like his construction better than anyone elses. He defends his own preferential view in the same type of procedures as the ones he aptly dismantles.

Chapter eight, beginning of part three, demonstrates, through a discussion of the impossibility of neutrality, how notions of good or acceptability are intimately connected to social constructions. The question of human truth is answered in relation to the episteme that creates it. Truth is shown to be connected to desire and human wants. After demonstrating Taylor's view of the impossibility of a neutral stance I ask how it is that Taylor anticipates that his understandings can be treated as separable from that which he has exposed. While agreeing with the impossibility of neutrality given the issues of epistemology and language, I wonder why it is that we do not see this constructivism as pointing to something tangibly meaningful rather than demonstrating the usefulness of the deconstruction of human truth. I argue that Taylor shows his hand in his discussion of ethnocentrism
where he makes claims for a position apart from a stance of judgement where we do not judge but exist in a position of almost neutral respect and appreciation. It is here that Taylor shows how he is different than the post-modernist as he longs to embrace a human truth by which we can defend our appreciation for things human.

In chapter nine I examine the complicated relationship, in Taylor, between political philosophy and philosophical truth. I argue that there is no such thing as political philosophy as it is generally understood. I argue that politics, while crucial to, fits into philosophy. I consider in some depth the problems of politics as an end in itself and suggest that Taylor can be read as supporting a view of politics as conducive to philosophy and not a view of philosophy as designed for the furthering of politics. I argue that Taylor is walking a line between pragmatism and theology; that he is trying to show that the City of God needs the City of Man. I wish to raise the ramifications and difficulty of the idea that politics and the question of how we should live are subservient to what is good, as this pertains to the modern life. The difference between philosophy and ethics becomes pertinent and I consider how it is that we can walk the line between political stability and Augustinian self-annihilation.

The last chapter focuses on questions of phenomenology, Heidegger's clearing, methodological power and the idea of grace. I wish to argue against phenomenology as a methodological distraction and argue in favour of the anti-method, anti-self project of Foucault. I wish to show that Taylor is stuck in philosophical method and that this affects his relationship to philosophy as an exposition of mystery and not as a considering of ethical problems. I am led to confusion through my consideration of Taylor's view of grace and of Heidegger's Clearing as they seem to tend to an understanding of a negated self rather than the humanist stance that Taylor takes.
The thesis ends in confusion and the recognition that the Augustinian side of Taylor's work does have an Aristotelian debt which Taylor mends. My confusion is in how much appreciation Taylor has for this debt and how much can be made of our earthly being. My confusion is compounded by the fundamental attention that Taylor gives to rational processes, concepts of logical necessity, transcendental arguments and other methodological constructs.

A note is necessary on my reading habits. I have consciously refused to entertain the rather small amount of secondary literature on Taylor. I have two reasons for doing so and they are in direct contradiction with each other. First, I did not want to be influenced by anyone in my pursuit of understanding Taylor. I was not, as this project began, sufficiently grounded in my views to not be pushed around by the viewpoints of others. So to avoid this potential bossiness, I ignored them. The second reason, is that no one has attempted to unravel Taylor's epistemology, so the secondary literature that I perused has not been useful to my purposes. I do pursue a running dialogue with many other thinkers and this serves my purposes much better. I did read and reread I would estimate 95% of everything Taylor wrote. The 5% of unread material is my guesstimation of articles and essays by Taylor which are unknown to me. There are a lot of other sources in this thesis that go unnamed. Themes of novels and review articles, dialogue from movies, snippets of conversations - I have absorbed liberally.

Regarding conversations I have some thank yous which decorum insists I pay. I would like to thank Prof. Leah Bradshaw who is my advisor and friend. I have greatly enjoyed my time in her company and am ever in awe of her good humour, generosity of spirit and her Gothic will; Prof. William Mathie for his friendship, trust and confidence in me and for being a source of religious
credibility; Prof. Allen Mills for being the catalyst for my work on Taylor and for being a very good friend and ally; Paul Vogt for being my best teacher and for being a sympathetic friend throughout all my intellectual phases of the last five years; Michelle Malo for her unbelievable patience and tolerance for the sublime and the idiotic, spouses, to borrow from George Steiner, endure vexation beyond acknowledgement; Prof. Ingrid Makus for our extended conversations and for her continual doubts about the academic project; Barb Smart for her incredible help in everything I did at Brock University; Prof. Charles Burton for his constant friendliness, great humour and encouragement; Prof. Daniel Madar for setting precedent in his help for me; Prof. Nicholas Baxter-Moore for broadening my perspectives and returning me to old forgotten friends; Mrs Lise Mathie for her toughness and care; Lance McMahon for being the most excited and pernicious about the work I was doing; Travis Kearns for being constantly bemused by the world and continually thirsty; Phil Skradski for demonstrating the virtues of Aristotelian friendship and always asking questions; Krista Woodhouse for helping me to connect my self to my teaching and showing what strength in sadness can be; Sophie and Maggie for any number of reasons or maybe all of them; and my parents, Jake and Greta Penner, for their radical openness.

Apologies to same.
Chapter Two - The Journey Inside

I am nothing like my sister  
I am nothing like my mom  
You can’t see me in my father  
Wonder where did I come from

It’s a sin to seek perfection  
It’s a sin to help the poor  
It’s a sin to hold convictions  
for none of them are true

So beware of good intentions  
And the passion in their eyes  
For none of them can open  
the gates of paradise

- David Byrne

It is hard to imagine living without an ever present sense of dualism. It is difficult to consider oneself, given that we are as so intimately connected to the world of our willed experience, as inseparable from the world within which we live. It is easy to fathom that we require external stimulants by which we live, but to consider that our being is connected with the objects of our inspections in an ontological way, is tricky. The post-modernists write and rewrite tracts that tell us that power begins at home; that we are all connected and infused with the same topical spirits and that these spirits are arbitrary. But the post-modernist is still looking for arguments. He/she believes that there are people who disagree and that these people are wrong. We admit our post-modern loyalties and then adhere to a dualism of us and them, as if to say they are not us and we will never be them. They see their minds as having gotten the joke.

The notion of disengagement is pleasing to us. It, even if falsely construed, creates a realm
of distance, of freedom, of meaning, for those of us in its thrall. Still, this inwardness has its pains. We feel removed and alienated from our world. We do not see ourselves in the faces that we greet or avoid. The courtesy and respect we feel for the world and others around us dissipates concurrently with the dwindling of our own security. We are too afraid of our inwardness to connect with anything else. We love our Liberalism, we exalt its ethic of freedom in sincere tones. But we have lost the other side of this freedom, the freedom to judge. We no longer care to embrace critical distinctions. Where once we scowled and remonstrated, we now just look away or, forgetting our discouragements, damn with loud praise. In losing our judgements we have lost ourselves; we, ironically, meld together. We exist without a direct God or grand schemes. We posit our lives on our lives creating a circle of entrapping tightness. We believe in nothing but ourselves. Some of us feel compelled to turn outside and find external sources, but the dualism doesn't ever really cease. This connection or correlation to the outside is given respectability in the way it glorifies or repairs the internal self. Moral philosophy and theology mostly get stuck in pragmatism or politics.

Heidegger's idea of the clearing, the Bible's notion of grace, Plato's allegory of the cave, no longer make sense or they become political fairy tales whose lessons are no longer unique or special. The Karamazov sons no longer seem all that different from one another, or from their father. The Romantic poets, like Mallarme, are gone from our understanding. As with Heidegger, they seem to only resonate in a land of make-believe. We are more likely to associate with Whitman and Thoreau for they provide the blueprint for the creative and sensitive human self which we have come to admire. Beckett is either pitied, explained and forgiven or embraced as a self-indulgent nihilist. The young are more likely to turn to the authors of the particular, those who see the importance of living in paramount moments - in the seconds where life either turns tragic or successful; books about
necessarily limited experience and not about other books. An epiphany, in today's language, is a return to stability not a call to something radically different.

Charles Taylor, whose own writings cannot escape the interpretive malaise he seeks to articulate, understands all of this and more. Different than most of us, he finds it deadening. Taylor sees a return to philosophy or a philosophy of history (between which he sees no distinction) as crucial for our escaping the modern panic or "muddle". It is in this return that we will perhaps be able to retrieve our original understandings, our fundamental truths. Most of us are vaguely contented with the lack of absolute truth in the world. The idea of an absolute truth or the voice of God seems to us an impossible constraint; a rule that challenges our beloved autonomy. It is the faith in eventually nothing that necessitates our freedom and hampers our desire to judge. Taylor's thinking is eventually theological, but a claim to the opening of grace is not his first order of business.

His first intention is to show us that our post-Enlightenment, scientific understanding of ourselves and reason is not the only possible framework of understanding. He grants that scientific thinking, or understanding ourselves as subjects split from the objects of our existence has a very powerful grip on the Western imagination. Taylor asserts that this supposedly neutral bond we have to this Cartesian understanding carries tremendous moral baggage. We do not see ourselves the way we do simply. We do so because of a corresponding set of moral principles from which we can no longer consider ourselves apart. The scientific premise of representations and correspondence between discussion and reality is dependant on this theory and a particular moral stance.¹ This moral stance is grounded in an atomistic view of the universe. Our moral voices are all directed towards the singular; the idea of the individual is the sea to which all moral rivers flow. This grounds and stabilizes

our ethics of freedom and self-responsibility. These two strong components of our existence, freedom and self-responsibility, filter the way that we understood and contemplate all things of our existence. Taylor finds this eventually shallow. The project of the philosopher cannot be founded on this sort of basis. Truth demands a surrender or understanding of the self which is growing more and more unimaginable. Politically, this atomistic sense is, firstly, logically corrupt and, secondly, pragmatically dangerous.

Taylor sees the human form as connected to a much larger web of possible meanings. The sources of our inspirations carry more than what we have taken from them. As intellectual and spiritual hunters we have taken the buffalo's tongue and left the meat behind. But the difference is, Taylor would argue, the tongue does not speak without the meat that puts it into motion. Taylor is optimistic that we can still remember and retrieve what it is that we have neglected. This retrieval is best accomplished by reconsidering the intellectual path of inwardness that we have taken. If we are to consider the modern condition we need to go back to the ideas that are the origin of this condition. We forget the baggage of yesterthought because the models that we work within today have, in the name of their foundations, denied the past as meritable. Certain articulations of what is acceptable or what is true have become frozen into our being. The original arguments for how we now live begin to look silly and far-fetched. Taylor writes:

We are dealing with a society which is characterized by the fact that it is out of true with this original. This makes it all the more important to understand the original, if we are to understand this society.3

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2 See: Ibid, 24. Also, see: "What organizes and makes sense of so much of our lives cannot but appear unchallengeable at first, and hard even to conceive alternatives to." (Ibid, 21.)


Taylor circumvents a critique of his notion of the philosophy of history by assuming the correctness of his philosophy of history. The society under inspection needs to learn the lessons of intellectual history because it is not
Those who long for the correction or redemption of the alleged modernist plight cannot just assert themselves and their own position. They must, to bring about reform, argue in the same language but from an earlier articulation as their opponents. They have to show what others cannot ignore and that this has pertinent meaning. For us to remember we have to return to how it once was done; we have to articulate the original frameworks back to ourselves. We have to go back to the moment when what we now understand as a truism was a subject of sceptical debate. The chapter that follows explores Taylor's understanding of Western philosophy and how it has delivered the picture of the isolated, atomistic subject.

In Taylor's view, history is not just coincidence or accidental. It is connected to the intended purposefulness of human action; this is human action not in individual terms but rather as a holistic entity, as an intellectual species. This thinking depends on two fundamental assumptions; first, that men are moved by similar teleological goals across different epochs. These goals can be understood as the desire to conquer nature and leave an imprint on history. Second, the successful accomplishment of these goals is only achieved collectively.

The modern, atomistic understanding of the self, to Taylor, is the result of a collectively created impulse or inward turn which replaced previous techniques of understanding. This clashes with what most of us would consider to be common sense. Our adherence to any principle, in our congruent with what intellectual history once said it should be. This automatically assumes that society arose because of an attempt to create a representation of a historical premise and that it must do this to be valuable.


7 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 185.
view, is dependant on our personal, individuated acceptance of it. What we understand as truth or belief is related, eventually, to what Taylor calls our notion of personal commitment. The faith, belief or understanding that we have of the world appears to us through our own individual understanding and acceptance. It is our will that declares a platform to be sturdy. It is our will that posits the power of our will. Ideas, Taylor considers, are not just the data of the mind, they are the source and grounding strength of thinking. As Kant argued that no thinking was done without concepts and Schopenhauer reckoned that thought depended on context, Taylor asserts that there is an underlying premise that fuels the way we interpret the symbols of our language as they relate to our existence. In our age there has been a change or deconstruction of the ways and symbols people use to define themselves. This, according to Taylor's logic, bespeaks a change in the underlying premise which is necessary to guide the interpretation of these symbols.

Now, Taylor argues, this modern understanding of the self is specifically not written in the language of the Gods. Our adherence to the new terms is a result of various strands of influential thinking. By using the term "result" we should not necessarily confuse it with an evolutionary conclusion. We are this way but we do not have to be by the decrees of an ontological nature. In fact, who we are or who we have become is intimately correlated to an ontology that we may wish to reject. New human identities are connected to, in Taylor's words: "the negation of what they (feel) they have to...overcome." Scientific, atomistic man is defined in terms against metaphysical man. These renewed self-descriptions, in Taylor's terms, often pervert or inadequately portray that which

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8 See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind", 86-7. Also, see: "(T)hat we confront our language of explanation with the self-understanding of our subjects, is nothing else but the thesis of the hermeneutical theory." (Charles Taylor, "The Hermeneutics of Conflict", 228.

they oppose. Taylor's project can, in part, be seen as an attempt to rediscover the original position which we have posited ourselves against.  

Taylor pursues this project of rediscovery most thoroughly in his magnum opus Sources of the Self. In that work Taylor explores the subtleties of the turn toward inwardness as it originates in the work of Plato and as it is best exemplified in modernist figures like Descartes and Locke. Augustine, though, is the figure that haunts most every page; for it is through Augustine that the project of Plato, which is followed through by Descartes, can be possibly redeemed. Because of his inwardness, Augustine is possibly the last ancient we can go to without having to become someone else, at least not immediately. In this chapter my interest is focussed on Taylor's explication of the canonical figures that have led us to the Enlightenment view of atomism. As regards the project of redemption, to which Augustine is a key source, I wish to consider this in more detail in the closing chapter. I would like, for the sake of brevity, to focus my attention on only four thinkers or streams of thought: Plato, Descartes, Locke and the Utilitarians.

Understanding Plato seems simple enough: we are good when reason rules our being, we are bad when desires are in charge. We can see, then, that morality's origin is in our ordered thoughts.

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The implication seems to be that Taylor, in his own concerns, is able to avoid this sort of ethic of pursuit via the desire for rejection. This is likely an untenable thesis. The source of Taylor's concern is eventually retaliation against what lies at the heart of the Enlightenment ontology. To complain that the Enlightenment is built on shaky foundations is one thing, to try to convince people that the vague, existential discontentment that most feel for at least an hour in a lifetime is the result of this logical and spiritual fault, is another. This is, I think, important. For Taylor to argue, as he well might, that the Modernists mixed up the Ancients is a mildly interesting philosophical question. To be an interesting political question must it not have some bearing on how necessary it is to those it seeks to redeem? To be compelling, Taylor has to change the framework of understanding the human self. To do this, he must show us our own resentment for what it is we have become. This is a web of enormous complexity as the lens of critique is the object of criticism.

11 I will also generally ignore the Romantics to whom Taylor has devoted so much attention. The Romantic themes are more prevalent in other chapters.
Reason provides us with self-unity, "calm", and "collected self-possession".\(^\text{12}\) Reason is knowing what it is good to do and how to go about doing it. From this starting point we have a curious source for the modern inward turn.

To understand how Taylor sees Plato as crucial to the modern understanding of the self it is important to consider how Plato distanced himself from the Homeric tradition. The warrior ethic, as anachronistically exhibited to us in the Homeric story of Odysseus, demonstrates, far too aptly, the virtues of strength and courage as they relate to the committing of great deeds. The warrior is given his greatness from the Gods (the Gods are often also responsible for the downfall of great men) but this does not diminish the wonder or worthiness of the warrior.\(^\text{13}\) He is the actor, the one of courage of ability. He is willing to put aside the hesitancy of thinking in order to act in a heroic fashion. Plato dismantles the idea that being is best served by our passionate actions. He does this by adding spiritedness to the things that reason must govern. But actually it is not how Plato negates the Homeric myths that is important, rather it is why he does it. For Odysseus truth or understanding comes in moments of great strength or strangeness. Plato has to get rid of this so as to maintain a unified moral picture of man and the cosmos. A unified moral picture cannot be ascertained through the Homeric celebration of instinctive or impulsive chaos.\(^\text{14}\) This is not the way the order of the Good works.

Taylor sees that this dismissal, or relegating of the Homeric warrior creed to a secondary status, has led to the confusion that Plato is the source of radical inwardness. The unified soul has


\(^{14}\) See: Ibid, 120.
become interchangeable with what we know as the internal self. This is an honest mistake. By taking the emphasis off action, by suggesting that it is better to be just (unified) and miserable rather than unjust (chaotic) and successful, Plato can easily be seen as placing the important emphasis of being on internal contemplations. And this seems right. It is right, but it is also a mistake.

Plato has numerous dualisms which Taylor identifies: soul/body, immaterial/bodily, eternal/changing; these dualisms are not best understood in the simple sense of inner/outer. The source of Plato's moral argument is in connection with the natural order. In having good reason one is able to come closer to the Truth of the world. This Truth of the world is One. As such, it is not divisible into separate entities of experience. There is that which imitates truth, which is only a reflection of the Form, but as an imitation it is still connected to the world of the One. Our internal contemplations connect us with the external order of Truth or the Good. The Good then, as we are shown in the *Meno* is inside us and outside. We have a source of it within and it correlates to the without. It is by loving this Good that we are able to lead an ordered and truly successful life. Philosophers love this good alone, they are not smitten by appearances of the good. They are in love, solely, with the pure essence of what is truth. As a result, the philosopher finds little of interest in the day to day political world of appearances and foolish aping of truth. There appears a split between the realm of philosophy and the world of the common life. Reason, as the allegory of the cave

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15 See: Ibid, 121.

16 See: Ibid, 123.


18 Taylor's reading of Plato is filtered through Augustine and Plotinus. Whether or not Plato's thinking can be rendered so similar to the Christian negation of the self is a contentious question. Taylor does not bridge the two completely, but at the heart of his Platonic interpretation is a strong and, admittedly, engaging religious element.
beautifully shows, is corrupted unless it is aimed at the appropriate objects.\textsuperscript{19} We can see the source and justification for all sorts of confusions. We do become separated from the outside world but in the sense that this separation provides greater adherence to the true external world. For Plato, the separation does not make sense unless there is this other, more crucial connection to be made.\textsuperscript{20} It is easy to see that as certain sides of the Platonic equation become powerful and intriguing, there would be certain ramifications once the cosmological angle was challenged by a new science.

In Taylor's reading it is with Descartes that the sources of morality become firmly entrenched within us. Where Plato situated the moral essence as outside of us which we apprehended by turning towards it and contemplating the good, Descartes corrupts the metaphysical honesty of this external realm, forcing us to depend upon our own reckonings.

\textsuperscript{19} See: Ibid, 124.

Thus, Plato is seemingly able to escape the concern of Luther's that "reason is a whore"; meaning that reason can accomplish whatever it is that we want it to do. In actuality, I don't think that Plato is able to escape this criticism. Plato's whore is a fancy one, but if you are without the faith of the Platonist, if your head and gaze has not been turned - the whole scheme seems an elaborate creation of reason. In fact, reason does not inevitably lead one to Plato's conclusions. The compelling beauty of Plato is in the interpretation and the possibility, not in the truth, of what he says.

\textsuperscript{20} A recent work by Leon Craig, The War Lover [Leon Craig, The War Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).], argues something very different. While granting that this work is on the periphery of Platonic scholarship, it is interesting to consider how fundamentally in error appropriation of Plato can be.

Craig argues that for Plato the act of philosophy is in itself an action demanding a warrior or heroic element from its participants. In a very direct sense Craig posits a Nietzschean will to power into Plato. This, I think, is a tremendous mistake. Firstly, it understands the essential dismissal of the Homeric hero as an act of over-riding rather than of negation. The hero of Homer is just not the right sort, it is not the man of temporal courage that should be celebrated but rather the man of contemplative prowess. To be a philosopher you must possess tremendous self-confidence and intellectual courage. The pursuit of philosophy is about the pursuit of a macho wisdom. This, I think, is fine, albeit a little empty, if the pursuit is seen as the essence of Plato's works. This is a bit tricky. The pursuit is a significant component of the Plato that Taylor outlines but the idea of pursuit without ultimate plausibility exposes the stronger essence of Plato.

Akin to Christian teaching, Plato can eventually be read as a claim to the importance of self-negation. The ego may fuel the philosophic life as it attempts to thwart its own mortality in its seeking of congruence with the world of the eternal. But this egotistic point of origin must fade for the promise of philosophy to reach fruition. The self that is propellled into philosophic pursuit by its own heroic ego is eventually lost or surrendered in that sincere pursuit. With the turn of the gaze in the cave, one turns away from the world of appearances, from the world of the particular, to the world of the eternal. Living in the world of the eternal does not provide for the glorification of particular strands of aggressive, macho pride.

To nurture and love philosophy solely as a pursuit, as Craig does, demands that it not succeed. If one is to accept that philosophy does not provide completion, one is conceding that philosophy is a discussion more about one's ego than it is about reconciliation with the whole.
With the surge of respectability, and the corresponding iconoclasm, of the natural sciences, previous understandings of man's relationship to the world fell away. This is evident in Descartes. The universe began to be seen as a mechanism, found through the sciences, rather than an order of the good found through loving contemplation. Reality came to be seen as understood through representations and correspondences between laws, theories and how these can force or impose actuality. The result of this change was the denial of a reliance on the certainty of the outside world as separate from our own understandings of it. The representations of being come to us not through connection to the "order of ideas" but through our own thinking. These ideas are not discovered, rather they are instigated and created by our own rationality.

To understand the world, and one's place within it, a series of objectifications took place. Taylor has Descartes leading this movement with the declaration that we are ontologically separate from the rest of the natural world. Not only should we understand ourselves as distinct and neutral as regards the natural world, we are also separated from our physical body of experience. This objectification of body and nature proved necessary to the thought of the early modern. The world, for the scientific principle of replicability to be fathomable, must be a mechanism removed from our own being. This has powerful ramifications. As Plato divided the two realms between the self and the world (which are joined in essence), Descartes forever separated them. In this separation the possibility of an external order of the good, or any metaphysical presence at all in the natural world, is destroyed. The world does not make sense as the interpreter of God anymore. Metaphysics

21 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 144.

22 See: Ibid.

becomes physics - an order of causality between the world and my body.  

And while metaphysics is absent from the causal forces of existence, Taylor identifies that there is still a morality entailed in this project. The soul, in objectifying the physical realm, is liberated. The rational faculty which initiates and demonstrates this split is an act of willful creation enabling the satisfaction of an egoistical basis of confidence. Descartes' ethics revolve around a degree of self-mastery which is provided by the manipulation of the external world, including the body, for the ends of ordered self-satisfaction. Our ethical power and truth is centred, in a way that Plato could not fathom, on the greatest of our possible faculties - our will. Descartes, by depicting the material world as metaphysically empty, emancipates the human urge for self-control.

To desire reconciliation with the order of the world is foolish as the world does not redeem us. Taylor sees in Descartes' understanding the pretence of melding the world with the mind as the source of illusions. We must understand our physical world and the passions that it may provoke as instruments for us to use with the wielding of our wills. The passions keep us biologically alive. As such they are a gift from God but they are also the potential source of our greatest woe. The rational part of the mind must have a proper understanding of its relation to the universe in order to "tame" these potentially disruptive desires.

The source of human morality, of Christian ethics, is solely rooted, now, in the internal self. Morality, in Taylor's view of Descartes, is akin to the dignity of being a rational being. We have then

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24 See: Ibid, 146.


a return to the warrior ethic, albeit a transvaluated one. It is the ability to create action that becomes the source of our heroism. This heroic approach is not measured in the eyes of others, but is considered from our inherent confidence and our ego seeking to explore and control. Ethics are living up to your own expectations. We do the things that we do because they are rationally dictated by ourselves to ourselves, not because they are desirable.

Taylor argues that God is altered but certainly not erased in this view. As rationality and judgement come to adhere more to proper procedures of thinking as detached from feeling we attempt to lose the correlation between this and belief. But this is sanctified in that the procedure of our thinking is connected to God. The internal turn, and the procedural methods of rationality which demand and define it, satisfy a God who asks us to attain "self-sufficient certainty". God wants and allows us to approximate Gods.

Our rationality depends on God. Because of God there is a physical world. God is still essential for creating the externals and justifying their relevance. This physical world, as science shows in its ability to replicate and manipulate, is based on mechanistic processes. It is our relationship to a mechanistic universe that demands a particular ontology. This ontology, as Descartes argues, is consistent with acting rationally with a proud will.

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30 See: Ibid, 156. Also see: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis", Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences, 266.

Taylor recognizes that we are still drawn to an idea of formal thinking, i.e. that proper thinking leads to truth. This is evident in theories of procedural liberalism or rational choice. (See: Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", Philosophical Arguments, 6-7.

Plato has been replaced by Descartes in a significant way. No longer do we understand truth as a correlation between ourselves and the unity of the universe. The universe, for Descartes, is an instrument that we must use to become the inspired objects that we are meant to be. The external world is a prop and a stage, the only actor is the mind of the individual.

Control over one's surroundings and body logically leads to one feeling that their subjectivity is disengaged from the world they exist in. This essence of disengagement leads to a different notion of morality than previous epochs enjoyed. The order of existence is meaningful only in that it is a device by which we can learn and practice the art of our rationality. Through this rationality we are able to manipulate the structures of existence and in so doing work towards the perfection of being.

The agenda of God, given this open ended flexibility of creating perfection, is freed. God becomes an artifact of the human will; theology is onto-theology. This moral premise is entirely dependant on our separation from the world; on us being disengaged. Being disengaged it no longer makes sense to see the order of the world as inherently meaningful. Along with the removal of Truth from the world, disengagement also provides for the denunciation of an externally guided teleology and ontology.

Descartes has become extremely powerful in the modern understanding of the self. It is curious to note that the areas in which Descartes' reputation has disintegrated have only served the particular essences of his philosophy. This, I think, will become more evident in Taylor's explication of Locke.

33 See: Ibid.
John Locke, as I understand Taylor to assess, unconsciously perpetuates the same simplistic interpretation of Plato as Descartes does. Also, Locke in his stepping way from Descartes on moral foundations, serves mostly to maintain the perspectives outlined by the earlier thinker. Locke assists the war against metaphysics and ontology even more militantly than Descartes. He completely denies the assumption that there is anything like "innate ideas" in human beings.  

Locke, in Taylor's rendition, argues that our view of the world comes originally and essentially from reflection upon our sensations. With development these arbitrary reflections work themselves into a pattern of thinking or understanding. This thinking is innocently derived from our original sense-less approach to sensation. Locke insists that sensations have to be conceived as the building blocks of experience and thought because they cannot be reduced to a "product of activity". The congruency between Locke and Descartes' original structure of thought is apparent: ideas are objects. The result of this huge step is that human rationality is freed from the confines of tradition and theology. Connecting Locke to the science of mechanism, rationality becomes procedural and not contemplative.  

Morality is not erased, though. The ability to control all aspects of our lives as objects, including ideas, greatly contributes to an ethic of "re-making" which is justified as conformity to God's natural law. This ability to remake ourselves from a disengaged perspective dealing only with

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36 See: Ibid, 166.

objects is what Taylor calls "Locke's punctual self". This self stands side by side with the new modernist proclamation of self-responsibility and freedom. Taylor writes:

We have to turn inward and become aware of our own activity and of the processes which form us. We have to take charge of constructing our own representations of the world, which otherwise goes on without order...

The essence of this self-responsibility, and accordingly the freedom it entails, is that we are capable of removing ourselves from ourselves. What we have, then, is a third person view of the self depending on a first person reflexivity; we provide objectivity through subjectivity.

For Locke, as Taylor suggests, the moral good is in what God commands. The command of God is the law of nature. And while God is not in natural processes, the law of nature and the mechanisms of nature are connected in that these processes show us how to attain God's commands.

38 See: Ibid, 171. The moderns have no patience for the mystical superstitions of religion. Freedom and self-awareness completely changed what it meant to worship. The early modern condemnation of witchcraft demonstrated an identity which wasn't very confident or mature. We were, at one point, still afraid of the possible abuses of belief in a metaphysical other. Our fears of such things, today, arise only in relation to the most bizarre of events like the actions of "cults" in San Diego, California and Waco, Texas.

This fearful response to religion is related to the modern view of dualism. The religious are condemned by their eventual denial of this dualism. Importantly, the onus of argument, because of the massive Western acceptance of a principle of division between man and the world, has switched to the Christian for him to demonstrate that the Christian faith can conform to this sort of understanding. If it cannot, it is deemed scientifically immature and labelled as childish superstition.

This has had a powerful effect on how politics is waged. The social contract follows as logically inevitable. Before the 17th century the question as to where government received its authority was never asked. This would occur only with a newly increased ethic of freedom and self-responsibility which the scientific critique of metaphysics initiated. Communities came to be seen as ruled by the consent of the individual. The community and the powers that it contains can no longer make decisions for the good of its people. Thus, a reason for accepting the authority of another has to be construed. In a world ruled by self-responsibility and freedom, this acceptance can be guaranteed only by consent. Only the individual, given that they possess a unique will and a particular view of their own ends, can give consent or adherence to an order that is bigger than they. The old principle of the divine right of kings is replaced by an atomistic view that refuses to acknowledge a hierarchy between beings. (See: Ibid, 190-7. I will deal with much of this in more detail in chapter eight.)


41 See: Ibid, 235. Also see: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis", 263; Charles Taylor, "Language and Human Nature", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 223-4. In the latter article Taylor demonstrates how Enlightenment thinking came to see the reality of the world as the thoughts of God. This should be understood in terms of symbolism or representation. God, in this sense, becomes an expressivist (to use language duplicated in Taylor's book.
Recognition and obeyance of this natural law is connected to tremendous threats and promises of reward. This aspect of God is crucial in that when we recognize the power of God we will also recognize that obeyance is the only sensible response.\(^2\) What it means to obey God is, even from our modernist standpoint, a bit odd. We are to enjoy the earthly pleasure. This does not mean that we are to wallow in the seven deadly sins. Rather, it means that we are to adhere to the basic utilitarian principle of seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. (The pleasures of the deadly sins are such that upon proper reflection one will see that they do not provide the pleasure they seem to promise.)

Taylor pinpoints Locke's law of nature correctly as the desire for self preservation and perpetuation. We are to work hard and preserve the human species. We can know this because it is such a fundamental urge. This becomes identical with a value that we do recognize in today's world: the virtue of living the ordinary life. We are to be productive in whatever we do, no matter how lowly. Taylor expands:

(H)e ethical outlook was plainly an endorsement of the serious, productive, pacific improver of any class and against the aristocratic, caste-conscious pursuit of honour and glory through self display and the warrior virtues.\(^3\)

Like Plato, Locke decimates the Homeric warrior/hero. But significantly unlike Plato, Locke does this in the name of an inwardness that does not seek reconciliation with the world as One but instead wants to be a part of the common One that rules the world.

Our utilitarian desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain is not wrong because it is made by God.

\(^2\) See: Ibid, 236.

\(^3\) See: Ibid, 240. For a consideration as to how the Protestant Reformation also contributed to this dismantling of mysticism, see: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis", 264.
All the possible pleasures of existence are present in the workings of an ordinary life. The Enlightenment idea of rationality which Locke assisted in formulating is a path towards self-love. To live the Christian life we need both moral and intellectual rationality; these two modes of thinking are demonstrated and delivered to us by instrumental reason. Moral rationality provides us with a wild and refreshing open-ness to our selves and existence; intellectual rationality provides the pragmatic method for pursuing it. God, is not a larger order of the Good which we seek to connect ourselves to, rather God is now the creator of a happy, mechanistic clock. Christianity is, as Taylor nicely puts it, reasonable and without tears. It becomes apparent that Locke not only stretches the distinctions between man and world that Descartes makes, but furthers Descartes' vision. The stream that flows from Descartes through Locke is logically consistent and inevitable.

The notion of grace which was important to early Christian thought vanishes. This disappearance is very significant. Grace was important in that it showed man that there is more than the natural good and that it was necessary for correcting original sin. The Enlightenment and Locke are forced, delightedly, to reject the concept of original sin as just so much metaphysical baggage; as, ironically, an example of sinful thinking. The destruction of grace is completed in Locke. Christianity began its slow decline which Nietzsche notes and celebrates. The absence of contemplative open-ness becomes even more pervasive in the thought of the Utilitarians.

It is with a brief look at how Utilitarianism sprang from the ethics of Locke that my exposition

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44 As such, Locke's project is similar to Augustine's. The crucial difference is that the end of Augustine's thought is the necessary and eventual denunciation of reason as reconciling us with God.


of the historical progression to the modern self stops.\footnote{For the sake of brevity I do not include a larger exposition of Taylor's thoughts on Rousseau. Rousseau's general will posits a common being centred on a common purpose which, in turn, furthers a common identity. It is possible for human beings to be wrong about themselves but because of our respect for the importance of unique self-realization and that a being is capable of being original, we must stifle any attempt to guide being as this will potentially interfere with an individual's highly personal pursuit. From the general will we construct a society based on laws that we, ourselves, dictate. See: Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Socialist Humanism", 64; Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty", Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences, 217; Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 362.} It is with the utilitarians that we can recognize the selves that we have become. The pockets of Romanticism that occasionally circulate throughout societies are either the anomalies of poorly conditioned youth or variances on the same principle of mechanism seen only from a different emphasis.\footnote{Taylor's sensing that a return or remembrance may be possible with the Romantics is compelling. This does not fit with the theme of this chapter. I would like to consider this in more detail in my closing chapters.}

As worship became in Locke the enjoyment of earthly gifts of pleasure, the premise of utility began to take on a powerful image. The fundamental maxim of utilitarianism, that we are, by a sensible nature, to seek pleasure and avoid pain, necessarily limits the structure of how right and wrong can be defined. With pleasure and pain standing as the sole judgemental criteria of human action, decisions of merit come to be derived only by the result of a particular behaviour.\footnote{See: Ibid, 321.} What we do or want to do is no longer seen as connected to or dependant upon larger mystical or natural orders. The world is neutral and apathetic as regards human actions. This sort of understanding, Taylor thinks, would not have been possible without Locke.\footnote{See: Ibid.} It is the radical disengagement that Locke defends which allows us to develop a view of the world as completely causal. The internalization of the centrality of this causality would seem ridiculous without the corresponding natural science. The disengaged reason that Locke propounds leads to principles of utility which are,
finally for human beings, possible for most if not all.\textsuperscript{51} The idea of philosophy not only changes in regards to whom it should apply, there are also changes in how it is verified. Good philosophy does not defend itself with instinct or intuition. No philosophy or theology, from this point on, should be accepted unless it concurs with empirical experience and rational scrutiny. This, inescapably, leads to secularization, as the Christian principles of faith, grace and miracle have to be either rejected or transformed beyond recognition.\textsuperscript{52}

With the decline of religious belief and original, mystical sin there is a corresponding rejection of inherent morality. The utilitarian rejects that we are either good or bad by nature.\textsuperscript{53} We are these things pragmatically; either we are good at preserving or maintaining pleasure or we are bad at it. Ultimate goods or even significant goods are merely what seems to work.

Taylor sees this sort of flippancy regarding horizons of good as the categorical error of the utilitarians. This can be discovered by considering the tenets of the utilitarian view. The utilitarian depends on three different foundational arguments: 1) dignified self-responsibility; 2) ordinary life is worthy of pursuit and; 3) there is a "universal and impartial benevolence".\textsuperscript{54} Taylor's argument is based on the tension between asserting these types of tenets and undercutting the metaphysical grounding that is essential to the defense of these same tenets. He explains: "(i)t is my thesis throughout these pages that this belief in the deliverance of unsituated reason is an illusion..."\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51} See: Ibid, 323.

\textsuperscript{52} See: Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53} See: Ibid, 322.

\textsuperscript{54} See: Ibid, 327.

\textsuperscript{55} See: Ibid, 324.
The utilitarian wishes to demolish previous metaphysical views. Morality is best understood as man preserving his own being. This being, curiously, must also be protected from the historically documented ravages of pseudo-mystical thinking. Human good is nurtured, (i.e. preservation of self and community), by destroying the order that had, at one time, supported it. The utilitarians thought that living an ordinary life and loving one's own self were essentially important. Arguing these two streams proved to be much easier if you denied original sin, Christian hierarchies and the celebration of humility over pride.\textsuperscript{56} For Jeremy Bentham, Christian asceticism was the enemy. Religion and traditional morality had caused the useless problem of hope and fear.\textsuperscript{57} Hope and fear had corrupted our ability to trust our instincts and desires; it had placed on them an imposition of appropriateness and criticism. Desires, in contrast to the Christian view, are equal and as such all have a possible, parallel validity. This belief in ordinary life, being tantamount to any other caste of life, and human pride, tended to a celebration of the sensual aspects of living. These logical results are what make the utilitarian and Enlightenment movement such a split from our ancient past. The grounds of sin and moral crime is gone. This loss of a conception of sin is not to be mourned given the newly understood historical atrocities that have been committed in the hopes of preventing it. Correspondingly, our views of law and religion are significantly altered.\textsuperscript{58}

The disengaged reason of the utilitarian tends to a holistic view of man and the world. The removal of theological metaphysics is essential for the removal of hierarchies of being, for the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56} See: Ibid, 327.\textsuperscript{57} See: Ibid, 328.\textsuperscript{58} See: Ibid, 328-9.}
negation of ontology and, for the dismissal of qualitative, "strong" evaluations. These are important to get rid of because their absence allows an equality of human desires which perpetuates the essence of a radical and unique freedom belonging to each individual.

But, Taylor notes, human suffering is conceived by the utilitarian as universally bad. The trouble, for Taylor, is not in rejecting human suffering but that this rejection has no principles to defend itself morally. Writers like Holbach suggested that nature will punish transgressors, but nature for the utilitarian is necessarily neutral. Others argue that natural shame and embarrassment will also punish evil-doers, but this requires a fully loaded ontology. For the utilitarian, political considerations dictate that an absolutely amoral and thoroughly egoistic self is loathsome. In their attempt to instill a radical freedom they are unable to defend themselves from the fear of its abuses.

The utilitarian still depends on strongly held notions of good. The key tension is the destruction of the type of thought which guaranteed or perpetuated this fundamental thought. They are unable to tell each other why they should be sympathetic, caring, nurturing or anything else. As Taylor argues, Enlightenment science and utilitarian moral views propound very little other than a notion of sympathy which is better understood as apathetic tolerance and self-interested care. The moral and

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60 See: Ibid.


63 See: Ibid.

64 The work of Sade and Nietzsche correct this cowardice.

65 See: Ibid, 337.
political element of utility depends not only on the precept that I live by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, but that others do as well. This is the source of my sympathy. If I have the power to not fear the ramifications of my inflictions upon others then I am still restrained by these sympathies. But, as Taylor astutely asks, why should I care?66

With the removal of religion because of its lack of congruency to scientific principles and evidence, utilitarianism offers itself as the next best thing. But with it a self-conceived notion of a fundamental good completely disappears.67 Utilitarianism has a fundamental good, suffering is despicable, but it cannot argue it. Utilitarianism became popular for what it destroyed not for what it created. It is Taylor's serious view that the results that utilitarianism seeks are better understood in the precepts of the philosophies that it dedicated itself to demolishing.68

Charles Taylor, in responding to the dominance of the utilitarian mind-set, embraces their fundamental concerns (negation of human suffering) as his philosophical own. I would like to argue that it is adherence to these political concerns that causes tensions in Taylor's work. By this I do not mean that Taylor wants to forget all about human suffering or even celebrate it but rather that in putting his philosophical onus in the same light, Taylor is forced into methods of argument which detract from the essence of his theologically based position. I refer to Taylor's Christian project of the negation of the self. It is my opinion that Taylor buries this project in his politics due to pragmatic, ethical considerations. This pragmatic method is not as far removed from questions of utility as one might hope or suspect they would be. We are left, then, with a curious paradox: a philosophy of

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66 See: Ibid.


Christian self-denial tempered by a commemoration of that same self in a political realm.

In the brief discussion that follows I would like to consider the ramifications and potential problems of Taylor’s genealogy. I am interested in what sort of arguments and moral position Taylor is left with. The question that focuses my thinking is connected to what sort of context Taylor places himself in. By this I refer to contrasts that Taylor sets himself up against. It is my concern that in reflecting and dismantling the dominant understanding of our time Taylor is not able to truly disengage himself from the same sort of structures that he criticizes.

As Taylor shows, there is a subtle and deviating history occurring in the movement of political and moral philosophy. As serious readers we can view the texts and authors of the canon in two basic ways. We can see them as attempts at true philosophy (an articulation of a perceived path of truth) or as ideological political tools. The latter method of interpretation has become increasingly popular in this day and age. I would like to suggest that there isn’t really a difference between the two; that sincerity and propaganda are cut from the same cloth of context and culturalization. This seems evident if we consider what it means for a theory to be true. Taylor considers Quentin Skinner’s argument, with which I agree, that the truth of a theory is connected to what a particular epoch deems valid or understandable.\(^6^9\) Now, this does not end our questioning but rather it provides an interesting point of departure. If we are to accept, as Foucault suggests, that in different times and places it is more suitable to think certain things over others, then how are we to comfortably explain attempts to change the intellectual hegemony of certain epochs? Is it possible that those who demand change do so because of a sincere understanding of what is truly valid? Or is it something else? Taylor writes:

But if one held that in general, ideas rise and fall as a result of struggles in which their

truth plays little or no deciding role, then one could argue that the historical explanation of their fate could indeed be separated from judgements as to their validity, for it involves factors of a very different kind.\(^{70}\)

This is exactly the point. But why is this point interesting? I would like to suggest that Taylor cannot accept this understanding because it destroys the possibility of valid interpretation. The progression of history not only has to be a meaningful one but it also has to be capable of being wrong. If the question of validity is neither here nor there then the possibility of intrinsic critique is also mooted.

The source of Taylor's commitment can be identified by considering how he defines the plausibility of interpretive criticism. Critique can be grounded in transcendental arguments.\(^{71}\) Transcendental arguments depend on being able to ascertain absolute undeniable assumptions like the fact that things can appear to us. From an originating point of accepting that it is possible that there is a knower, logical, transcendental arguments then explore what makes that possible and what it has to mean. The empiricists do not understand this opportunity. In empiricism ideas are self-enclosed. They can be articulated, described and abstracted distinctly from other ideas. This is because they are thought to represent particularities that are not necessitated by other criteria.\(^{72}\)

Taylor finds this act of disengagement of objects and thinking to be insensible. He argues:

\[(T)he \text{ condition of our forming disengaged representations of reality is that we must be already engaged in coping with our world, dealing with the things in it, at grips with them.}\] \(^{73}\)

The moral is that even the act of ignoring requires engagement. What we choose to see and how we

\(^{70}\) See: Ibid, 223.

\(^{71}\) See chapter four for a more thorough exploration of transcendental arguments.

\(^{72}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", 9.

\(^{73}\) See: Ibid, 11.
interpret what we see is tied to the way we wish to deal with things. When we look at where epistemology has gone from Plato to the Utilitarians we can see what was rejected. We see the rejection of metaphysical morality in the name of freedom. We see in Taylor a rejection of atomism, causality, and thought that does not include "intersubjective meanings". Does Taylor reject these things because in a war of contrasts he prefers one side to another? Not exactly. Taylor dismisses these principles of disengagement not because they are morally obnoxious but because they are logically flawed. How, I wonder, does this separate him from the cocky thinkers of the Enlightenment?

Reason, and this refers to instrumental reason, is still the arbiter of Taylor's judgements. Taylor attempts a distancing of himself from Hegel's view that the Truth will bring itself eventually to be. He thinks this is foolish but does not think that this foolishness entails that history has nothing to do with truth. He writes: "(t)he first view (Hegel's) is rightly discredited today. But is the second (anti-teleological stance) any more plausible?" It seems to me that if the second view is also wrong then there must be more to the first then Taylor lets on. I am not entirely sure what to make of this pairing. The most sensible interpretation I can make of this seeming paradox is that while the Truth may not eventually show itself, it still exists and, accordingly, views of history that ignore it are in serious error. Now, if Truth exists but the idea of it coming to fruition is ridiculous what sort of inspired confidence can we attach to its pursuit? It seems that philosophy again runs the risk of losing itself in its method rather than in its promise. The philosopher who is willing to take on the hopeless pursuit is heroic in the Homeric sense that Plato so essentially destroyed. For Taylor, the

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transcendental argument is defended by its essential origins not by the truth of its conclusions. I would like to suggest (and will argue in chapter four) that the idea of an essential origin does not arise without a faith, even an awkward one, of the plausibility of ends; that we would not conceive of a path without adhering to a sense of destination.

It is important to Taylor that we understood that we can make errors in the name of a bland freedom. We can realize that doing what we want to do may not make us free. Can we actually be wrong about ourselves? One imagines that the only way that we could avoid the danger of being wrong in our self-impressions would be if there was nothing to be wrong about. Taylor does not accept the latter. He argues that we are not just attracted to various different things but that some of the focuses of our attraction hold a very deep significance for us. He writes:

The whole notion of our identity whereby we recognize that some goals, desires, allegiances are central to what we are, while others are not or are less so, can make sense only against a background of desires and feelings which are not brute...^6

How do we know that this background is truly ours? Taylor continues:

We can do this only if we see it as mistaken, that is, the import of the good it supposedly gives us a sense of is not a genuine import or good.^7

We are, then, only able to recognize the plausibility of our own backgrounds by realizing the poorness of one imposed upon us; by having to live with a model of being that does not represent what we see as good.

Taylor condemns the instrumental reason of the Enlightenment for distancing itself from the good which is truth. He asserts that if what we want is wrong, instrumental reason will work to bring


This seems very different from rejecting Enlightenment, disengaged, instrumental thinking on the grounds of logical ineptitude. Rather, it strikes me that instrumental reason unless governed by appropriate moral understandings of what good and truth are will be all too successful in bringing about arbitrary and possibly awful consequences. So what then are we to make of Taylor's relationship to reason and meaning as derived through historical interpretation? Richard Rorty suggests that considerations of reason and truth as regards the ontological history of being will not open up questions in politically useful ways. Rorty, while not necessarily right about this, is able to identify a point of problem for Taylor. Taylor concedes that our judgements about goodness and excellence are manipulated by standards or perspectives that are often quite disparate and not always strictly defined. He writes:

This means that our grips on these terms, however we may later develop our own peculiar outlook, insights and interpretations, comes originally through the judgement "calls" made by others, and then also ourselves, in the exchange through which we learn practices.

Taylor likes to view this process of socialization or contextualization as a game. And as a game he recognizes that we fundamentally have a voice that respects playing by certain rules or any rules. Rules, in Taylor's metaphor, are equivalent to views of what is good, not only about what to do, but given that this is a game of the self, about what it is good to be. The Utilitarians have their rules of what it is good to be even if they deny them. It is good to be the sort of person who does not inflict pain and cause suffering in others. That is only the start, the utilitarians have an even stronger rule:

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it is good to stop the suffering of others.

For Taylor, then, the onus of interest is in considering why we need a rule or good and what may flow from this apparent necessity. I think that Taylor wants to argue that because we are able to adapt to something like A, that, consequently, we also have to like A' or A'' whether we know it or not. To accept a rule without cognisance is also to accept the baggage that underpins that rule. Taylor hopes that this sort of logic will lead people back to the Christian principles of Augustine by which they already, albeit pervertedly, live. He is confident that enough of the original ethic survives with which to instill a rebirth. He writes:

Repression can only make the past irrelevant where it actually succeeds in totally abolishing the practices whose implicit good it covers up.\(^6^1\)

But to make the return path that he wishes he has to work against interpretative freedom. He sees Rorty as arguing the following:

We can mount a persuasive case for one or the other (interpretations of historical progression) in the light of people's preferences in forms of life. But we cannot argue that one is truer than the other, more faithful to reality or the way things are.\(^6^2\)

I think this is important. Rorty's position, to Taylor, only makes sense as a component of the representationalist model and as such destroys the possibility of escaping the epistemological hegemony. Taylor swears that epistemology thrives as long as anything else is deemed unbelievable.\(^6^3\)

This exposes, I think, a fundamental and paradoxical curiosity in Taylor's work. First, I think Taylor is less interested in fixing the Enlightenment experiment in their logical errors, than he is in upholding

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\(^{61}\) See: Ibid, 27.


his own contrasting moral position. When faced with the logical sensitivity of the hyper-engaged post-moderns or of Rorty's engaged pragmatism, he resorts to desperate reductionism and pleas for hermeneutic detachment from previous canons of procedural thought. He uses interpretation and the negation of rationality to posit the possibilities of radical and inter-disciplinary interpretation as regards the work of others. When it comes to his own work, he returns to the same practices of logical discourse that he splintered in others. His history, from Plato onward, is not the hermeneutical assertion one would hope for; it is a reasoned argument based on recognizable correlations between statements and conclusions.

I find this paradox compelling because Taylor makes clear, in his destructive guise, how hermeneutics and logical discourse are actually the same thing. The terms which we decree worthy of logical inclusion and conversation are not connected to the language of God. They are a choice of an embedded community of agents, they are an example of the primacy of interpretation. To paraphrase a thought by Gadamer which delights Taylor: we are interpretation all the way down. But, then, for Taylor to defend his hermeneutics in the convolutions of reasoned rhetoric seems traitorous. Is Taylor's eventual claim that Hegel has been rightly discredited made on the basis of logic or from disenchantment? Or is he insincere?
Chapter Three - From Hegel to Hermeneutics

Hegel thought that, if enough was known about a thing to distinguish it from all other things, then all its properties could be inferred by logic. This was a mistake, and from this mistake arose the whole imposing edifice of his system. This illustrates an important truth, namely, that the worse your logic, the more interesting the consequences to which it gives rise.

- Bertrand Russell

And convictions are always alarming, unless you are looking at them from behind.

- William Faulkner

For Charles Taylor, Hegel's philosophical system is not a dogmatic representation of Truth. In Taylor's usage, Hegel does not tell his readers, eventually, how the world must make objective sense. For Taylor, Hegel's system is a reaction. It is a reaction to the Enlightenment understanding of knowledge and objective truth which governed the spirit of the age in which Hegel lived.

This understanding, originally grounded in Descartes, saw the essence of man as present in the capabilities and components of the mind, and the mind alone.1 According to Descartes everything, except for the mind that thinks, can be reduced to the possibility of illusion. This understanding of man and mind has powerful ramifications. If man is, before anything else, a thinking being -certain dualities arise. With man best understood as a particular and individual presence of mind he is

1 Descartes arrived at this conclusion by removing everything that was not absolutely necessary to an understanding of the self. By paralleling the "real" world with the world that appears to us in dreams he suggested that we can not be sure that the "real" world exists at any given point in time - it may, at any point, be a part of a dream. Our dreams are often so "realistic" as to not appear as dreams, at least while we are dreaming, therefore we can never be absolutely positive that what occurs in the "real" world is not actually happening in a dream. The only fact we can know with absolute certainty is that there is a mind that is either in the grip of a dream or is immersed in a reality. The mind experiencing phenomena, either "real" or imagined, is the only guarantee that one's self exists. Thus the maxim: I think therefore I am.
inevitably distinguished from the externality of life predominantly in the forms of nature and other men. If the individual’s thoughts, and the fact that a self is thinking them, is all that one can know about oneself, relations to other factors of existence (nature and the lives of others, even one’s own body), become uniquely understood. The individual (considering that the individual is best understood as a mind), is separated from nature, from others and even from their own body. This is what is meant by the famous formulation of Cartesian dualism - the mind is separate from the external world. This dualism results in an understanding of the world dictated by a series of "ands", or divisions: mind and body, man/nature, man and society.

This understanding of the external world is exemplified in the advent of the Enlightenment. For citizens and thinkers of the Enlightenment, the individual mind is primary; it is the starting point of all experience and understanding. Importantly, it is separate from external entities and forces.

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2 For a startling articulation of how radical this duality is see: "this I by which I am what I am is entirely distinct from the body and could exist without it". Descartes, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes - Volume One (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 127.

3 Aristotle provides a very different understanding of man’s relationship to his environment. According to Aristotle man is, by nature, a political animal. This means that for man to exist and to be able to pursue the good life he must accept the importance of the external, social world in the formation of himself. Man cannot be who he is, or discover the good life, without a community of others. This community is necessary as it provides, among many other significant properties like an environment necessary for friendship and virtue, a place for the individual to demonstrate oneself and an environment in which to find the materials necessary for the good life.

The first part of my point requires clarification. I am suggesting that, for Aristotle, the existence of a self is only meaningful in relation to others. Man needs the eyes of others to see himself. What does this mean? Simply put, man cannot understand himself as a particular self in a social vacuum. He requires that there be others to contrast and acknowledge him for what he is and for what they all are. The individual man, then, does not simply exist, isolated from his contemporaries. The entity that could exist without social nurturing or acknowledgement is not what we consider a self or a man.

The second instance of my demonstration is more straight-forward. For Aristotle achievement of the good life depends on a degree of material satisfaction. It is impossible to attain any standard of personal satisfaction or happiness if one is stuck trying to satisfy the basic needs of sustenance. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for man to satisfy all his clothing, housing and eating needs alone and still have time to discover his purpose and path to goodness. This, then, demands a division of labour that only a community can provide.

There is a more complicated sense, in Aristotle, by which man is dependant on unity of body/mind and of community. For Aristotle life is "a self-organizing, self-maintaining form, which can only operate in and therefore is inseparable from its material embodiment." (Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 17.)

The human life organizes and maintains its being through the presence of a self; it cannot do this abstractly or removed from the notion of being. This can be stated more simply. The human being who considers and plans their life (or
The Enlightenment based its thinking, not on the tradition of Aristotelian categories, but on the new science of Cartesian rationalism. The human mind was the source of all knowledge and opinion. The previous criteria by which human life was understood: traditions, cosmology, nature and metaphysics, were all deemed superficial in relation to the individual mind. The individual mind became the sole authority as regards behaviour, philosophy, politics and the understanding of the self.

Man became a disconnected entity, whole only in the power of mind, distinct from all the other categories of existence - nature, community, tradition and God. It is this understanding and new tradition that Taylor sees Hegel as reacting to. Taylor begins his discussion of Hegel by placing him in relation to two important philosophical streams - the expressivism of Herder and the understanding of radical freedom articulated by Kant. It will serve us well to begin with the foundations that these two thinkers define.

The epistemological changes and revolutions which the Enlightenment brought led to a response that was critical of the objectification of ontological possibilities⁴ and the nurturing of divisions between reason/emotion and understanding/feeling. Members of the Enlightenment viewed man as a "subject of egoistic desires, for which nature and society provide merely the means to fulfilment...utilitarian in its ethics...atomistic in its social philosophy...analytic in its science of man"⁵

⁴ That is, the Enlightenment in its definitive understanding of the mind as central to being, had to, as a result, dismiss a large number of alternative explanations for what was central to being. The Aristotelian understanding of the "political animal" was undermined; as was consideration that man was the way he was, in every regard, because of the will of God. God, it could be conceded by some, gave man rationality and God was understood and pursued with the actions of that reason. But man remained distinct from God as an omnipotent force.

⁵ See: Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 137.
and nourished by a *technological* type of thinking. Taylor, paraphrasing Nietzsche, chastises the Enlightenment view as mediocre, unheroic and dedicated to a "pitiable comfort".

Not surprisingly, there was a large philosophical movement, spearheaded by the Romantics, retaliating against this paradigmatic understanding of man. This movement is well represented (while not encompassed) in the figure of Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder responded to an Enlightenment view of man that he found cold and empty of meaning. The Enlightenment, according to Herder, disposed of the "meaning" of human life with its dismissal of a cosmic design. Herder agreed with Aristotle's understanding of life as a realization of a purpose; but Herder recognized that purpose to be understood by modern minds as being the self that lives that life. Not only does the expressivism

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6 By the terms "technological thinking" we refer to an intricate and complicated philosophical framework. Nietzsche's madman declared that the horizons of existence had been "sponged away" through the death of God at the hand of Enlightenment rationality. What has happened in the modern technological age is that horizons have been replaced with man-made frames that reality is forced to enter into. Enframing, which is Heidegger's term, is a very suitable term for this; it suggests construction. These frames are based on a technological understanding of being that force or order objects to enter into an understandable and rational position of use and efficiency. This enframing alters our understanding of being by ordering being into a position where it is forced to be articulated and rational for it to be worthwhile. Practices that do not demonstrate an efficiency, or potential ability to act as resource are nullified as they have no meaning for the technological individual. The essence of modern technology is the desire to order everything, to place everything in the rational, articulated frame of understanding. This results in more flexibility and efficiency. Our aim is to order things for the most productivity for the reason of ordering for its own productivity. We order things to stand by, to be "on hand". We have stuff on hand just to facilitate a further ordering. The things that are ordered, or directed, in this way have their own standing. They are called standing-reserve. We do not just use technology to take nature, and our relationship to nature, and turn it into an object that we exploit, or become master of. Now we have a relationship between subject and object that is purely relational. As Heidegger writes we are "ordering character in which both the subject and object are sucked up as standing-reserve." (See: Martin Heidegger, "Science and Reflection", *The Question Concerning Technology*, translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 173.) And whatever is in this sense of standing-reserve, no longer relates itself to us as a subject.


8 The term "romantics" refers to a movement of the late 18th and early 19th century and it is characterized by an impression of man as constructed by an "aesthetic consciousness". The Romantics emphasized feelings, emotive responses to phenomena, creative imagination and the personality of the individual as an artist. As such, the Romantic was sympathetic to the philosophical power of literature and the arts, community with nature, medievalism and a celebration of the common man.

9 See: "On the anthropology developed by Herder and those who followed him, there is certainly a rehabilitation of some basic Aristotelian concepts..." Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, 14-5.
of the Romantics resent and protest the objectification of man (and the splitting of man into dualistic relationships), it attempts a reformulation of what the truth is of human subjectivity. This truth is contained in the realization of the self and the purpose of the good life. This is best accomplished by realizing oneself in creating structures that are meaningful. The individual, in the act of creativity, develops his own nature and comes to a further understanding of what he is.

There is a subtle, but fundamental, difference in the way the Romantics and the Enlightenment exponents understood man's relation to nature. For the representative of the Enlightenment nature is, at best, an instrument - a canvas upon which the imprint of man's mind is shown. For the Romantic, nature has a significant role in the formulation of men's impressions; it acts not only as the canvas but also as the source of inspiration.\(^\text{10}\) Man, for the Romantic, can not be divided satisfactorily from this invaluable source. It is nature which provides the bond of explanation; that places man somewhere in its fold, showing man a purpose that a radically autonomous mind only works to destroy.

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\(^{10}\) This sentence requires further clarification. Herder is suggesting that an act of expression does not flow only one way; it also returns to the individual performing the expression. The act of expression is in itself an act that transforms the actor. For example: the actor expresses \(a\), but in the act of expression and the realization of the act in a natural world that recognizes it the action becomes \(A\). This newly arrived articulation is not distinct from the initial action so it can not be seen as just a general cause and effect: \(a\) causes \(A\). Rather, both parts of the action are intimately related and are in fact inseparable. This means that the relationship between man and nature (or community), is one of unity and meaning. The expression of \(a\) is realized and made "true" in its articulation in nature. (Consider this in relation to Heidegger's exploration of the idea of the work of art - or what he calls "truth setting itself to work". The work of art represents people and demonstrates, to those people, themselves. Clifford Geertz puts it well: "Its function is interpretive, it is a reading of a story they tell themselves about themselves." See: Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (Harper Colophon Books, 1973), 448.)

Taylor also argues this through Heidegger. See: Charles Taylor, "Heidegger, Language and Ecology", Philosophical Arguments, 104. In this article Taylor argues that Heidegger exemplifies a bold understanding of language as a medium that is what it expresses. This seems, on first glance, wildly bizarre. The theory, roughly speaking, states that all of the emotions that are represented by a word are in fact contained within that word. For example: the term "Ouch!" not only represents the criteria we normally associate with it - pain, frustration, desire for relief, but it also, in a very important sense accomplishes what it represents. It is pain and frustration, and it brings relief. This representation / presentation aspect of articulation inevitably contributes to the selves understanding of experience and expression. In fact, expression contributes to experience.
Herder's expressivism is a reaction to mechanistic understandings of nature. Herder posited that men reach their highest state when they are involved in an expressive activity by which their lives become an expression which unifies the self with its surroundings. This must be seen as a denunciation of the idea of an essential dualism between the self/nature and the individual and community. For men to be expressive they must exist in a community that espouses a culture. A culture is necessary to give a context and language from which expressions can originate - in other words, man is a political animal.\(^{11}\) The individual depends on this community for connection and cannot sincerely understand it as something distinct from himself.\(^{12}\) The community, then, is not merely a tool to further the interests of atomistic men. It is a foundation for the development of meaningful (in the sense of being attached to a meaningful order), understandings of self and existence.

For Herder, human, individual freedom is important. The expressive action represents a freedom which is an example of positive liberty. Freedom, in Herder's view, is not one of radical

\(^{11}\) This seems understandable but potentially problematic to the Romantic ideal. If the individual is intimately tied to the community; if the individual requires that a community espouse a culture so to provide him with a context (be it artistic or linguistic), by which he is then able to express himself how is he able to transcend this context in any meaningful way? It would seem that the individual would be bound by his situation. For example: Let us say I live in a culture that speaks a particular dialect of German, also in this culture are any number of specific and rigid traditions on which my understanding of existence is dependant -how will my creative or expressive inclinations he separate from these traditions and understanding of language? Sensibly, they will not be. Hypothetically, I will be expressing myself as unified with my particular culture. This is not quite satisfactory. It seems that this idea of expression, and its requirement of a tight communal bond (which seems sensible to demand), is strikingly circular and hegemonic. The individual has a context by which they develop the tools and material for expressivist activity. This expressivist activity demonstrates the unity that the individual has with their context.

This problem of "situation-boundness" is potentially saved by the notion of, what I have called, the "returning" nature of expression. If expression, dependant on a context, is transformed and made united with nature in the strength of its expression then perhaps the boundness of creativity is lessened. (See Footnote #16.) But for this to be so, of course, nature has to be meaningful: there must be cosmological and natural purpose. This is all the more easy to understand and accept if the metaphysical postulation of a meaningful idea of nature and cosmology is already present in one's communal context. We will return to the problem of situation-boundness, which we have gently introduced here, later, in this, and other chapters.

autonomy or distinction from natural processes. Instead, it is "synonymous with self-realization which is the basic goal of men...we can speak of it as unity, maximum fulfilment, harmony and so on." This idea of freedom, while perhaps not quite alien, is not common in our modern understandings of the term. It is with this curious idea of freedom that I turn my attention to another major thinker who reacts to the Enlightenment: Kant.

Morality and moral freedom are central to Kant's vision. Kant argues that the only connection between metaphysics and morality is the usefulness of metaphysics in demonstrating the plausibility of freedom. The idea that morality is connected to God as an arbiter of judgement, that we must behave suitably for reward and to avoid punishment, is senseless to Kant.

Is it good to be virtuous only because there is another world, or are actions rather not praised because they are good and virtuous in themselves? Does not the heart of man contain immediate moral precepts, and must one in order to motivate his disposition in accordance with all of these here always set the machinery of another world to work? Can one properly be called upright and virtuous who would gladly yield to his favourite vices if only he were not terrified of a future punishment, and would one not rather say that he avoids the expression of evil but nourishes a vicious disposition in his soul, that he loves the advantage of the simulation of virtuous action but hates-virtue itself? (It is) more appropriate for human nature and the purity of morals to ground the expectation of a future world on the sensations of a well-disposed soul than to ground its good behaviour on the hope of another world.14

But by reducing the importance of metaphysics to moral freedom Kant's task was not complete. Kant argued that if man was just another object in the world of objects his moral freedom would be limited by causal structures. To be morally free a person has to be distinguishable from these structures. For Kant, the individual is split by a radical division between his reason and his

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13 See: Ibid.

14 See: Kant, Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, 372-3.
sensibility. In appropriately understanding this split in the mind between what we reason and what we sense there are tremendous ramifications for the metaphysical and empirical "truths" posited by Newtonian science. The natural laws stated by Newton were only self-evident or demonstrable in relation to what the mind \textit{senses}, that is, what \textit{appears} in front of its gaze. We do not see these objects as they are in themselves, objectively. As such, the physical laws of nature are mental "responses" to phenomena and so are grounded in the world of phenomenal appearance and not in the objective, empirical reality of the thing-in-itself. In fact, we have to concede that the things-in-themselves may be governed by very different laws and appearances than those that \textit{appear} to us.\footnote{Man sees everything in relations to two conceptual frameworks: space and time. Every object is understood by man to either fill a space and dimensions or to not. Also, objects are related to us in regards to time: "It was here and now it is gone". As we have discovered, the importance of the relations between space and time may not apply to the objects-in-themselves. We can only be confident in saying that space and time apply to our experience. This is something. We can say that our minds posit the dimensions of space and time and also depend upon them to experience phenomena. It is because of this dependence that we understand space and time as \textit{a priori}. Space and time, then, are the categories of our intuitions. Categories, in a loose sense, can be interpreted as foundations. That is, categories are what are necessarily in place for us to exist as we do. A category for walking, strictly defined, would be the possibility of the movement of legs. Kant also argued that there were categories for human understanding and judgement.}

The consummation of Kant's argument is that we may finally conclude that the laws of nature which we accept are the postulations of our minds as reflections of our own experience. Therefore, our bond of obligation is to ourselves; to our experience of the world; eventually we are bound only to our own morality.\footnote{See: "On a hasty review of this work one will believe himself to perceive that its use is only negative, namely that we can never dare to exceed the bounds of experience with speculative reason..." Immanuel Kant, \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, xxiv-xxv. As Kant writes: "I must therefore suspend knowledge in order to make room..."}

\footnote{See: "Radical freedom seemed only possible at the cost of a diremption with nature, a division within myself between reason and sensibility..." Charles Taylor, \textit{Hegel}, 33. This concept of the dual nature of the mind contrasted the previous articulation of the mind as a singularly clear-thinking faculty suggested by Leibniz and Wolff.}
for belief". 18 In seeing the laws of nature as connected to our own minds a place is made for freely chosen action. 19 This provides the individual with the best of both worlds: there is a natural whole and there is radical moral freedom. But Kant's fundamental moral principle is that one should only act by principles that can be made into universal maxims by all of those potentially affected by the action. 20

Kant's radical freedom situates the free will of the individual as poised between inner impulses and a natural order. The subject is the carrier of a rational self-determination; he is free as he obeys the laws of his own making. Man's action is guided by the fundamental principle of the moral law; he impacts himself upon history, developing modes of life and institutions for society. 21

This view seems peculiar when you consider it closely. It seems to sculpt freedom as the force of nature. It does not suggest that man is able to alter the previous conceptions of nature in any truly forceful way. It is governed by restraints made upon it; restraints like the necessity of the fundamental moral principle and what appears to be only a shift in emphasis on the relationship between man and nature. The split-mind, which Kant postulates, separates the free individual from nature in a manner which conflicts with Herder's expressivism while not rigorously challenging the precepts of that nature. Granted, Kant is very effective in dismissing the empirical status of Newtonian science, but it seems that he eventually re-embraces it, albeit in a different disguise. He does this by demanding that the individual accept the categories of intuition, understanding and judgement as a priori

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18 See: Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, xxx. "Knowledge" in this context should not be understood in terms of an actual surrender but rather implies a revisionist account of knowledge.

19 See: "Now it does not do the least violence to this, if one assumes, even if it is otherwise only imagined that among natural causes there are also some that have a faculty that is intelligible only in that their determination to action never rests on empirical conditions, but on mere grounds of reason, though in such a way that the action in the appearance from this cause is in accord with all the laws of empirical causality." Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 573.


21 See: Charles Taylor, Hegel, 33; Hegel and Modern Society, 5.
reflections of oneself and not as something susceptible to radical change.

Hegel, too, had his concerns with Kant's vision. Hegel's concerns have to do with the inner struggles of morality; the contest between inclination and appropriate moral behaviour. The natural inclinations of man are not negated by a morality that stems from logical reason. But Kant considers the natural dimension to be a result of pure reason; how is there to be freedom without this dichotomy? Hegel does not find the answer in Kant and as a result Kant's theories do not live up to their potential promises.

Hegel is intrigued by the possibility of a synthesis of Herder's expressivism and Kant's premise of radical moral freedom. This synthesis (rather than just reworking one stream) is necessary because Hegel thought that expressivism could not justify itself without some sort of reconciliation with radical freedom. Hegel thought this synthesis possible in the creation of a reflective consciousness. The dualism between a radical, self-conscious freedom and an expressive community life had to be mended. In all, Hegel needed to mend four difficult divisions: the thinking subject and the world, the natural world and radical freedom, the individual and society, and finite being and infinite spirit. This last division is particular to Hegel and also assists in demonstrating the particularities of Hegel's system. Hegel wanted to meld the truth of a finite subjectivity with a connection to infinite life, derived from nature. This can only be accomplished if nature can be seen as having some sort of meaning or eternal spirit. The individual must follow their rational will to attain an articulation of the moral law, and because the individual is connected to a natural world, they must try to connect with, not only their interior dimensions, but the exterior world as well. Nature, in Hegelian terms, is spiritual and strives to realize itself. With this realization, man comes to be more than just part of the

If we are so connected to nature, where is there room for Kant's radical freedom? Human consciousness completes nature. The spirit of nature aims to complete itself in the conscious self-knowledge which is found in men. If spirit were able to do this without man then there would be no possibility for radical freedom. Men, then, contribute to the universal spirit by being its vehicle.\(^{23}\)

This brings us to Hegel's concept of Geist.\(^{24}\) Man is the vessel through which Geist is allowed to exist. In Hegel's thought without man there would be no possibility of a Geist. This is not to be understood as a reduction of God, because Geist is the spiritual understanding that posits the universe. Hegel, with the formulation of Geist, takes the ordered consciousness of Enlightenment man and removes the duality of subject/world and replaces it with a paradigm of man as the vehicle of spirit therefore uniting the two separations. Connecting the finite man with the infinite Geist is done through reason, and not imagination or faith. Reason contains the essence of self-determined freedom. All other manner of connecting would result in a surrender to natural processes, or desires, and thus, a surrender of freedom. Man must find his self-consciousness by divorcing himself from authorities imposed on him by society and nature. Dualism sees the individual as a conscious center participating in the external and the internal. The spiritual function of thought comes from this center.\(^{25}\)

For Hegel, the subject and its expressions are united. The individual is a being that thinks and a being that thinks through the expression of an external medium. This is how Hegel argues for

\(^{23}\) See: Charles Taylor, Hegel, 91.

\(^{24}\) Geist can be understood in many different ways. The definition this text uses is what is known in Western civilization as God or the cosmic spirit. (Throughout the paper they will be used interchangeably.) Others, like Francis Fukuyama and Gertrude Himmelfarb seem to identify Geist with freedom.

\(^{25}\) See: Ibid, 82.
radical autonomy: by positing spirit at the metaphysical center. This metaphysical foundation is to be seen as more than a crutch or "sky-hook" by which Hegel can hang a particular ontological and political view as I shall demonstrate. Hegel argues that all that is "real" is that which is in relation to a subject. This relationship complicates and also explains our understanding of the social and natural world. This world exists as the result of man acting as the vehicle for an objective spirit. Therefore, everything that the subject experiences, his entire phenomenological life, demonstrates and defends the essentialness of an objective spirit. One is able to see the proof and the result of this by looking at man's propulsive and proactive abilities and behaviour; abilities and behaviour which belong solely to man and are housed in his reflective consciousness. The reflective consciousness effects the external world in a way, that say, the consciousness of animals do not. The reflective consciousness is able to provoke change and adaptation in his environment. There is a hierarchy among beings, with the apex being that which uses its power of expression on the environment to be itself.26

Man, as a thinking being, is also a being that lives, and has thoughts that can be contradictory to the way that it lives. This is not difficult to imagine: a white man immersed and nurtured in an apartheid system who depends, for financial security and a sense of self, on a significant adherence to the principles of the society in which he lives, may consistently be faced with thoughts that are sympathetic and are persuaded by anti-apartheid rhetoric. This man's thoughts are, in a meaningful way, contradictory to his being. Hegel uses such logic to show that there also exists a hierarchy of types of thought. Different types of thinking replace previous types and if this replacement is viewed as progressive the observer will obviously describe the different types of thinking as hierarchical. This is quite evident in many types of thinking. Consider medicine: one sees the type of thinking that

produced the headache remedy of blood-letting as lower on the medical scale than the development of modern pain-killers. This seems straight-forward and sensible. Now consider this hierarchy in terms of theories of being and freedom and one can see what Hegel refers to when he thinks of history. Because of this hierarchy, and the evolution implicit in it, we have a history. In man battling with his own desires and trying to accomplish his radical will he creates a life which forms an expressive culture that, in turn, expresses the need for a rational freedom.

The rational subject has to be embodied in a natural world. This embodiment inclines one towards a unity between the self and nature. Reason fights this in order to eventually find itself. The subject, embodied, is then not representative of reason, but something reason must initially fight against. There are then two relations of the self: identity and opposition. The individual essentially contains the seeds of dualism. There is a reconciliation when the opposition is fully understood. Both sides are then transformed. Nature becomes a reflection of the aspirations of man. Reason stops seeing itself in terms of being more powerful than nature, because nature has been transformed into something reasonable, in the sense that it is an integral part of a rational plan. The idea of Geist which originally posited these possibilities is in turn defended by its results. With Geist as a starting point man lives through a number of inherently contradictory epistemes to finally emerge in the light of a full reconciliation with a nature that is now fully reasonable and appears as central to man's rational plan. In short, Geist identifies itself as the appropriate point of intellectual origin. Hegel's dialectic cleverly returns to demonstrate its initial assumptions.

Because the universe is necessary for the existence of Geist its structure can be articulated by looking at the nature of Geist. Geist tends towards the realization of reason, freedom, and a rational

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self-awareness. For Geist to attain "rational self awareness in freedom" the universe has to contain finite spirits. It has to be embodied in space and time, and this requires a finite vehicle. For there to be a consciousness, it has to be somewhere and at some time. This is the necessary limit that comes from a finite vehicle. For Geist to attain a full awareness it must be placed in position against finite objects. (Consciousness is only possible when a subject is placed against an object.) Because finite spirits die, Geist lives through all finite spirits throughout time.

The individual comes to self-awareness when it understands that the universe exists, as it does, to be the embodiment, and the expression of Geist. This occurs when individuals realize that they are the vehicle of Geist. Once this happens Geist, also, attains full self-awareness, and both come to freedom. Freedom, in this sense, is the realization of one's calling. Hegel, thus, argues that the universe, including human life, is the result of rational necessity, or in other words, an internal teleology. Man, then, is obviously the most powerful and free of earthly creatures, but in individual terms his power is only recognizable when seen in the context of rational necessity.

The radical freedom of Geist and structural necessity become linked. Geist, as it posits the world, is governed by what Hegel calls rational necessity. Rational necessity is the structure necessary for Geist to be. In other words, when an individual follows what is rationally necessary, (akin to Kant's categorical imperative), without any authoritative given, then Geist is expressed and is radically free. As reason is a directive faculty, meaning that it tends to goals, there must be an authoritative structure of some sort. (Meaning that a goal focuses behaviour in directions that

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logically and inevitably hamper freedom.) But, the only goal that Geist has is to be. All that follows is rational necessity. The individual, knowing himself in a rational way, sees the design of the universe as necessary. This does not limit radical freedom. The self, through his own essence, pursues the rationally necessary.\textsuperscript{31}

The world is designed from rational necessity, and can only be understood through rationally necessary thought. Therefore, the self-understanding of \textit{Geist} and the individual's understanding of the world are both understood by rational necessity. This is possible, if indeed there is a \textit{Geist}. Hegel uses the dialectic to demonstrate this. Hegel states that things in the universe cannot exist without their opposite. Therefore things can only be understood in terms of halves, what they are and what is their opposite. Through pursuing these sorts of relations in our experience, the individual, in time, will develop a conception of the \textit{Geist} which places the world as "its necessary embodiment, and it constantly negates itself to return to itself."\textsuperscript{32} (Through contradiction a thing evolves from what it is to what it is designed to be.)\textsuperscript{33} Hegel saw finite subjects as emanations of \textit{Geist}.\textsuperscript{34} The fact of finite subjects is evident, and so therefore there is a \textit{Geist}. If there is a \textit{Geist}, finite subjects are conceptually necessary.\textsuperscript{35} Everything that exists has an ontological necessity for the fulfilment of \textit{Geist}. There is nothing left out, there is nothing authoritative, \textit{Geist} is radically free, and we as its vehicle can partake

\textsuperscript{31} By rational necessity is meant conceptual necessity, not causal necessity. This distances it from empiricism. See: Taylor, \textit{Hegel and Modern Society}, 33.

\textsuperscript{32} See: Taylor, \textit{Hegel and Modern Society}, 35.

\textsuperscript{33} Hegel's dialectic is very thorough and confusing, containing a descending and ascending form. These aspects, while perhaps rationally necessary to an understanding of Hegel, are secondary to our aims here. Our need for the dialectic solely exists in his theory of contradiction. As a result, this section may strike the reader as a bit stilted.

\textsuperscript{34} See: Taylor, \textit{Hegel and Modern Society}, 35.

\textsuperscript{35} While this argument is hopelessly circular, again, this paper does not have the time to explore in any depth the problems apparent here.
in its freedom. *Geist* is, and has to be, the conditions of existence that follow from this necessity.

Eventually, for Hegel, Kant's "thing-in-itself" is made knowable but this requires the full realization of *Geist*. In the world of the finite, subjects deal with externality that are distinct from themselves. This causes conflict. *Geist* has its own conflict in that it is embodied in subjects that are stuck in their own dualism. The individual has divided spirit from nature in himself. This understanding of opposition and identity is essential to Hegel's ontological view. Division is absolutely necessary for self-discovery. Everything that exists must exist because of *Geist*. These finite "everythings" cannot exist on their own because of their inherent contradictions. Contradiction is at the root of all that lives. All that is in contradiction must either evolve or die, it cannot maintain itself in contradiction. The self, being a mixture of identity and opposition, is opposed to itself. There is a constant struggle, but this struggle takes place in the context of the self that is somewhat unified. Therefore, a contradiction is not disastrous to the whole, but only to parts of the whole. The results of contradictions (and tensions) of different historical relations, like that between the master and the slave, change the concept of the standard. This changing of the standard refers to any knowledge of a paradigmatic status and negates any problems of metaphysics that may be levied against the system. Ontology is not to be understood in a metaphysical / foundational sense but in a historical one. Mankind does not have a metaphysically defendable beginning, what it has is a history which tends to an ontological conclusion. We will become what man is meant to be. Therefore the standards of existence - the metaphysical foundations - are not rigid and as they change so will the standards of what man can metaphysically believe. Because finite beings are present in space and time they

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36 See: Ibid.

make claims of independence. But, as connected to *Geist*, they are not able to express or live this autonomy. The finite self, because of the evolution caused by contradiction, strives towards a realization of self as vehicle for *Geist*.  

There are a number of different oppositions available to the individual. The oppositions are, between man and nature, between the individual and the community, and between the finite and infinite spirit. Hegel answers this first opposition by stating that this dualism is solved when the self becomes aware that he is an essential vehicle of *Geist* and rational thought. This must, in time, be made conscious because it is connected to rational necessity. In becoming aware that we are a vehicle of the rational thought of *Geist* we are no longer merely finite subjects. Hegel circumvents the problem Herder has with freedom by merging the subject and the object, not by intuition, but with reason. For Hegel, man is part of a larger order, but because our realization of this comes from rational necessity freedom is not jeopardized.

As we have demonstrated, opposition stems from and returns to the identity of the individual. Thinking that results in the largest distinctions, also unites us. We evolve while maintaining the lower position that was catalytic for our evolution. Unity that maintains its distinctions is *reconciliation*. The two forces continue, but the opposition between them vanishes. But this should not be seen as  

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39 See: Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 47.

40 The only other way to do this, and this is prevalent in our day and age, is to postulate a free creative subject that lives in a world without God or form of morality. The result of this, in Taylor's mind, is a nihilistic malaise.

41 See: Charles Taylor, Hegel, 92-3.

42 See: Ibid, 120. An example of this is man's relationship with nature. Man had to create a dualism between himself and nature so as to stifle natural instinct and to prevent nature as an imposition on the individual's will. This splitting of unity was necessary for the perpetuation of freedom. Man commands nature and through this commanding both nature and himself are transformed. This brings both sides to a reconciliation.
rigidly as it appears. It seems that Hegel may be up to something more complicated than what initially strikes the reader. The dialectic through the inter-relation of concepts shows us determinateness. The dialectic eventually shows us what a thing is, deducible from logic. Or does Hegel only show the categories by which facts of nature are interpreted? Does he provide a divine metaphysic or an understanding of the power of mythology? Is it possible that Hegel shows us how phenomena are reconstructed in different epochs? Taylor writes that Hegel's *Logic* "ends by deducing the fact of nature".\(^4\) A.G. Pleydell-Pearce sees this as a serious error. He writes: "In opposition, we must say that the *Logic* ends by displaying a system of concepts within which whatever we are prepared to grant as a fact of nature must be *reconstructed* (italics his) if it is to be intelligible." It appears then that Hegel, following Kant, is discussing what is necessary for the reconstruction of the frameworks of what passes for knowledge and that this only occurs within systems of categories in a manner that is satisfactory to a reason that is also shaped by this framework.

Hegel's aim is to put rationality into philosophy. Hegel fits rationality into what our experience has defined as categories - but there are other components and these other components are also essential to the categories. Rationality "explains" the categories and their components. But with the rising of new experiences and thus new components and categories of new philosophies must be constructed; the Owl of Minerva is ever-ready for flight; dusk consistently threatens. Hegel accepts that existence and actuality differ; existence, for Hegel, is part appearance and part actuality. The studying of concepts is not studying reality but the way that we look at reality.\(^4\) There is a serious


\(^4\) See: Ibid, 316.
question then as to what Hegel represents. Is he a physician prescribing an anecdote to what he sees as a "sick" intellectual framework? Or is he a meta-physician, postulating from some quasi-theological foundation, about the essence of man and history? Or is his doctoring only to be seen as a thorough articulation of symptoms with little or no attempt at curative action? Perhaps, some light can be shed on these questions if we consider Hegel's view of the opposition between the individual and the state.

For Hegel, the state is integral in the formation of the individual as a vehicle of universal reason. The individual who lives in the state lives in an environment that is bigger than himself. As the state tends towards the truth of Geist: "as an expression of universal reason in the form of law"⁴⁵, the individual is brought towards what is rationally expected of him. Previously the state has been in an opposition with man, because of man's desire to be self-conscious and free as an atomistic individual. Because this, according to Hegel, is contradictory, the free individual governed by rational necessity will eventually come to see himself as a vehicle of universal reason. When the state embodies this reason, the individual and the community are reconciled. Men cannot be free on their own, but it is crucial for the development of both man and Geist, that he, for a time, think he can be.⁴⁶ This contradiction is essential for development.⁴⁷ Throughout these historical contradictions Geist


⁴⁶ See: Taylor, Hegel, 171.

Man cannot be free without life, and life cannot be sustained without community. Therefore, the state is the apparatus that perpetuates freedom, and so freedom is embodied in the state.

⁴⁷ See: Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 60. One of Hegel's most famous examples of this dialectical contradiction is his example of the slave/master relationship. Through this example he demonstrates that the contradictions of freedom expressed through slavery proved such that developing consciousness refused to accept the reality of it. Due to these contradictions, (that slavery made men free), slavery would die.

The importance of the dialectical contradiction is made evident in this process:

1) There is a true purpose or standard.
2) The individual or community develops an inadequate conception of it.
3) The moment of reality where 1) and 2) meet demonstrate a contradiction.
4) This contradiction results in the passing away of 2).
remains secure. It has expression in the manner in which finite spirits come about and pass away. The problem of a finite spirit's contradiction is ratified in its demise. And in this coming to be and passing away Geist is eventually realized.\(^{48}\) And while none of what Hegel offers here can be absolutely ascertained (and Taylor concedes this), Taylor suggests that Hegel should be believed because his interpretation fits.\(^{49}\)

It appears to Taylor that our queries, whether Hegel was a proscriptive or descriptive thinker, may both be answered affirmatively. It remains for us to consider Hegel's scheme in terms of its hermeneutic and ontological value; and to question whether these two understandings are unitary or divisive.

One thing that we can be clear about is Taylor's willingness to admit that Hegel's philosophy is mostly dead in the modern Anglo-Saxon intellectual world. As Taylor writes: "no one actually believes his central ontological thesis that the universe is posited by a Spirit whose essence is rational

5) The individual or society advances closer to 1).
This process is prevalent in history, both of a people and of consciousness.

\(^{48}\) A contradiction implies that history is meaningful. For there to be a contradiction there must, in turn, an intention and, accordingly, a failure to realize that intention.

\(^{49}\) See: Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 133-4. Hegel's theory has no starting point, it only seems to work backwards. In a given situation the observer must look backwards to find the pure thought and then follow the poor enunciations. It is discovered from the end, as one looks into the past to see how attainment of the end had failed. This, of course, cannot be done in history because we are unable to go back in time and actually identify a purpose. Hegel offers that while history cannot be seen in its epoch, the entirety of history is findable in its beginnings. It is very difficult to accept such convenient arguments. Walter Kaufmann in his attack on Karl Popper's Open Society congratulates Hegel for restraint: "he did not attempt to play the prophet and was content to comprehend the past." (Walter Kaufmann, "The Hegel Myth and its Method" in Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre, Notre Dame: 1972.) Kaufmann seems to imply that all that prevented Hegel from being a prophet was his restraint and his contentedness to absolutely understand the past. This past is understood as tending to where it eventually ends up; to declare this as meaningful while not part of the forward vision of the prophet is still profoundly metaphysical. Without the possibility of propheting from the experiences of the past the past seems to teach or provide little.
necessity.\textsuperscript{50} Hegel no longer has a vitality or intellectual presence in today's world but, as Taylor sees it, his warnings are still viable. While the modern individual may lack the presence of mind, or the Aristotelian character, to accept Hegel's foundations, the malaise that Hegel describes and defines is the same one that traps the modern ego. The threats to modern society are still based around questions of freedom and, as Taylor sees it, the dangers of homogenization - a lack of differentiation in modern society.

It is with modern problems of this nature that Hegel is the most helpful. But how can we make this leap? How is it we can reject the ontological substance of Hegel but still see him as a valued commentator on the world in which we live? Taylor does not see this as problematic. For Taylor, Hegel's historical dialectic offers a plausible account of historical progression.\textsuperscript{51} This means that without any consideration of the ends of history Hegel's understanding of how and why history has arrived at the present point is compelling. As readers we do not have to be concerned about where that history is headed to next, Hegel was kind enough to curb his prophetic instincts and so shall we; we do not necessarily need to consider this history as inherently teleological. It is possible to see Hegel as a historiographer; a precursor to Foucault and the post-modern revisionists, offering challenging and refreshingingly innovative interpretations of why we have sunk so low. This is what Taylor sees. The strict dialectic with its grand teleology is the ontological one. It is a matter of personal belief whether or not one accepts the notion of \textit{Geist} and a world governed by rational

\textsuperscript{50} Taylor, \textit{Hegel}, 538.

\textsuperscript{51} Taylor, \textit{Hegel}, 217.
necessity. It is the historical dialectic that is useful. It, for Taylor, has a hermeneutic value. This hermeneutic usefulness exists despite the problem that the historical dialectic cannot depend, as it does in Hegel's system, on the ontological dialectic. The ontological, teleological dialectic is so suspect that nothing can be successfully argued from its foundations. But, for Taylor, despite the fragility of the ontological dialectic, the interpretive historical dialectic has merits. As a result, the ontological dialectic is best seen as hypothetical thus removing it from considerations of ultimate tests of plausibility. Hegel is of primary interest when used with the problem of situating freedom;

22 It may be interesting to consider the un-believability of Hegel's ontological position as analogous with the death of Geist in a Nietzschen sense. We must consider what is lost with the death of Geist. It seems hard to imagine that with the removal of Geist we can justify or defend dialectical reason or the notion of rational necessity. With the removal of these two strictures we remove the hegemonic apparatus of constraint upon human consciousness and direction. There is no path and there is no appropriate method. As a result does man become Geist?

33 Taylor, Hegel, 218.

54 I am not convinced that Taylor is sincere about his rejection of the ontological heart of Hegel's system. His book on Hegel totals 571 pages. Of those 571 pages it is only the final section (34 pages) that seriously considers Hegel's system to be unbelievable. We are left, then, with 537 pages of densely argued text which has apparently been written only to convince the reader that its subject is eventually senseless. (Even Taylor's chapbook on Hegel written for the purpose of demonstrating that Hegel is germane to the modern world devotes the majority of its space to an articulation of Hegel's system.) For Taylor to amass such a rigorous explication of Hegel only to eventually diminish it by labelling it "unbelievable" seems at least a curious project. It seems potentially plausible to consider Taylor's view of Hegel to be respectful of more than Hegel's hermeneutic method. This will become more compelling when we directly consider the importance of foundations in the usage of hermeneutic techniques.

55 Taylor sees Hegel's ontology as being a possible interpretation of ultimate facts. I am not comfortable with or sympathetic to this position. It does not seem appropriate that the terms "interpretation" and "ultimate facts" should have anything to do with one another. First of all, if there are such things as ultimate facts and Hegel's ontology is inept why should we bother with Hegel as an interpreter? Is Hegel interesting if there are ultimate knowable truths? Secondly, the juxtaposition of the technique of interpretation and the discovery of ultimate facts seems to diminish what might be valuable in interpretation - its creative ability to transcend truth claims. If interpretation is seen as related to questions of ultimate fact it will become little more than a cousin of philosophy open to the very same denunciations that post-modernism adequately provides.

56 There are two problems with viewing Hegel's ontology as hypothetical. First, it does not logically stand up. This is due to the problem that Hegel does not adequately demonstrate that the finite perishes due to contradiction. The second problem Taylor states and re-states - Hegel's ontology is unbelievable. (Actually, the foundation of ontological essentialism on the whole is dead - not just Hegel's.) Rendering it as a hypothesis and not as a statement of truth does not change the status of its acceptability. If I tell you that the earth was initially populated by alien beings who are using the earth as part of a cosmic experiment it makes little difference if this position is the end of my argument or the framework by which I approach a connecting argument. Whatever the case, my position is unbelievable. Even if one is able to suspend the question of belief
a problem connected with our times. We have become a people who situate freedom solely within ourselves.

In using Hegel as a hermeneutic tool Taylor has found a philosophical source for a critique against utilitarianism and atomistic individualism. Individual subscribers of the principles of the Enlightenment have taken over the western world and have privileged certain conversations over others. Romantic "expressivism" is not enough to escape this atomistic understanding of the self and freedom. We, according to Taylor, must begin again by comprehending what is truly meant by man as a situated being. We must realize that our isolationistic theories of the self are not going to be successful; that they are the source of the malaise we live. We must begin to see, as Hegel saw, man as a self-defining subject united with other men in a community of freedom and that this unity is as central to the equation as any other variable. Modern society's notion of self-understanding and interpretation are inadequate tools with which to see the truth of our recent situation.

For Hegel to be of hermeneutical interest it seems that the reader must satisfy two important criteria: (a) he must believe or desire that his life is meaningful and (b), connected to (a), that human existence participates in an orderly fashion, that is, things in the world happen for a reason. These two criteria do not seem difficult to satisfy, at the very least they seem agreeable in the sense that belief in them does not seem either rude or repulsive. Faith in these two criteria seem to argue that a

and humour my use of this alien lens what is accomplished? If the new argument, the argument that my alien theory is the hypothetical stance for, concludes that identity must try to think of itself not atomistically but as part of a cosmic experiment - how seriously should this be taken? How seriously can one consider a hypothetical stances that we have agreed has no merit? It would seem more sensible, if I am sincere about the importance of my theory, that I spend my time creating room for my ontology in the modern dialogue and not suggesting that the irrelevancy of my ontological view is not important. Perhaps this is best done by pretending my ontological view is only hypothetical. But how are any hermeneutics possible if idealism is dead?

Hegelian hermeneutics is not only applicable but is potentially important. But is this, indeed, the case? Have we in fact set up a misleading understanding of the necessary criteria? Our reasons for stating the criteria as we did seem straightforward - they sit at the metaphysical center of Hegel's philosophy; without them no sympathy for Hegel is possible. If we do not believe that we are a part of a larger order and instead believe that life and the universe is chaotic and meaningless, a tale told by an idiot, the idea of Geist is going to appear preposterous. But even if we allow that most of the human race believes, or wants to believe, in a meaningful order - Hegel's dialectics, according to Taylor, still appear absurd. Obviously then the criteria that appear fundamental to a faith in Hegel are not fully appropriate. But we must counter this realization with the comprehension that without these criteria a faith in Hegel would be impossible. We must consider alternatives. Perhaps it is what Hegel asks us to do with our fundamental premises of acceptance that makes Hegel's system hard to fathom or accept. This seems potentially plausible. The criteria of the importance of personal meaning and a belief in an ordered existence are also satisfied by the Christian metaphysic. But the Christian metaphysic has demands. You must live a certain way; your beliefs cannot be treated like options that you accept and reject like so many visions and revisions. No, Christianity asks something of its participants; desiring the ends of Christianity is not adequate for fulfilling them. Accordingly, one can satisfy the criteria necessary for the acceptance of Christianity but still not be able to abide by its tenets.

Is this the case for Hegelian dialectics? It seems not. Hegelian dialectics do not demand any particular type of behaviour. The problem of accepting Hegel's view may be that Hegel's dialectic does not provide what Taylor thinks it very aptly promises. Our argument is best propelled by considering an area of concern congruent with Taylor - the problem of differentiation and alienation
in society.

Hegel's view of differentiation in society is not particularly complicated. The problem arises in that the modern liberal state has trouble holding onto its "unity and vitality".\textsuperscript{58} The foundations of civic virtue have died with metaphysics; the reasons behind our horizons of significance are fading. As a result social institutions are losing their legitimacy among the populace. The stop-gap of reactionary faiths and reactionary fundamentalist movements are acting as poor replacements for a concrete metaphysical foundation. We lack a self-understanding that is corrective. Modern society is privately Romantic and publicly utilitarian; these two worlds are clashing. How are we to knit society into a more cohesive whole? We need a more traditional approach to differentiation in order to clarify the failures of the modern view of absolute freedom. It is towards Hegelian rational necessity that we might turn. This rational necessity is supremely reasonable and commonly sensible; it is not faith, promise or tradition.\textsuperscript{59} This rationality would allow us to identify the situation-ness of freedom; it would realize the contradictions of the modern promise of radical freedom.

A society that aims for absolute freedom cannot accept any societal structures that are beyond reason. For absolute freedom to exist within a state all decisions must be made by all members. A traditional society with differentiated roles for its members is not congruent with absolute freedom. For all to agree on political decisions, (that is that social decisions reflect the will of all members as in Rousseau's social contract), a homogenous citizenry is demanded. There can be no distinctions between individuals in the public realm. This translates into no differences between social classes or individuals, (if there were to be differences the individual may view the state in a manner different

\textsuperscript{58} Taylor, \textit{Hegel and Modern Society}, 125.

\textsuperscript{59} I am not confident that reason can be separated from these other terms so easily. Reason, especially in the Hegelian sense, carries a large dose of faith, promise and tradition. Dividing these terms seems a fool's gesture.
than their neighbours), and no differentiation of political systems, like divisions of power. This denial of differentiation does not fit in with Hegel's requirements for the rational state. Hegel's ontology and dialectic insist that differentiation is necessary for social evolution. Differentiation is necessary for unity. With an emphasis on personal, independent responsibility and identity, the individual can see himself as not connected to a whole, but as an individual representative of the whole. This is a very different understanding. An individual who understands society in terms of something they owe allegiance to is very different from the individual who sees himself as a microcosm of that society. Taylor does not see how a modern state could maintain its homogenous hopes in a period where industrial labour, in its very nature, must be divided and where individualism is so highly favoured. Homogenization strives for, (no matter the private sphere's individual distinctions), a unity of social outlook. This is impossible, as the individual does not view himself as connected to something bigger, but sees the something bigger as an extension of his own individual freedom. For Hegel, social and political differentiation were meaningful as expressions of the cosmic order of Geist. The Idea must be reflected in society. Hegel understands social differentiations as demonstrating a reflection of the Idea. Ultimately, Taylor warns:

(0)ne of the great needs of the modern democratic polity is to recover a sense of significant differentiation, so that its partial communities, be they geographical, or cultural, or occupational, can become again important centres of concern and activity for their members in a way which connects them to the whole. 

Hegel saw the destruction of differentiation as the defeat of Sittlichkeit, which would "reduce society from an articulated unity to an undifferentiated heap." Homogenization sponges away our

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60 Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 107.

61 Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 118.

62 Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 133.
traditional understandings of identity, that is *Sittlichkeit*, and fills it with a destructive and vague nationalism. The importance of differentiation and the development of *Sittlichkeit* are integral to Hegel's propulsive ontology.

Taylor understands that the demise of *Geist* leads to a relativism of value structures governing human behaviour, or in other words, a justification for enacting negative freedoms. This justification pays no heed to the good of community or state. This may be true. But, without a defensible metaphysical scheme or a theory of prudential communitarianism these dangers may just be the price we pay for our "knowledges". The other option, and one Taylor does not adequately denounce, is a totalitarian form that dictates good and value onto an obeying state. Taylor is responding to the onslaught of the inevitable. Modern times are tending to a more nihilistic position; the position of a positive morality appears vacant. The fact that we are becoming a more relativistic people makes the possibility or suggestion of an imposition of a social good all the less supportable. Beyond plausibility, consider the moral ramifications of an imposed structure of what is right and what is good. It would render the will of the individual impotent in relation to this imposition. With the will of the individual rendered subordinate to the vision of the state, homogeny, and hopeless alienation are the only destinations of the state. Rational necessity offers potentially dangerous repercussions.

Taylor finds Hegel's thinking on differentiation within society significant. Without differentiation, in the public sphere, that is, without different manners of "expression" melding into a united rational whole, the private sphere will become a homogenous world of citizens encumbered by the irrationality of their absolute freedom. Is it sensible to mourn the lack of differentiation in
society unless Geist, and therefore unity, is not assumed? Taylor postulates the absence of differentiation as preventing the creating of the rational whole necessary for Geist. Now, without Geist, is this relevant? It is when one realizes that the metaphysical and ontological foundation responsible for Geist may still be prevalent in Taylor's thinking. His concern for differentiation then becomes understandable. It follows that in appreciating Taylor's concerns one must judge him by the Hegelian standards that he so adequately dismisses as unbelievable. It should be sensible to suggest that if Taylor articulated a position on Hegel that included a defence of Hegel's metaphysics it would have taken him nowhere. By trying to circumvent this issue Taylor buries himself in logical problems.

If, for the moment, we grant Taylor the importance of differentiation, his argument is still troubled. Taylor argues that a public realm devoid of significant differentiation will result in a homogeneous state. This does not follow. To make a contrary argument we will divide the state into two obvious but abstract spheres: the public and the private. In adding differentiation to the terms of this distinction we have, accordingly, public differentiation and private differentiation. It can be assumed that they have an effect on one another. If differentiation exists in one, it will not exist in the other. Taylor desires a public sphere that embodies the expressions of disparate groups of people. These expressions are akin to concepts of how the state should be run, we will call them concepts for the good of society, or concepts of the good. In a pluralist system, these concepts of the good will compete, and the winner will represent a particular vision for a particular period of time on particular issues. The view, or desired expression, of the majority will be the public view of all. If one wishes to employ a system different than pluralism, the same reduction can still be made. This expression,

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63 I argue, if there is an argument to be had, that if ontology is truly dead the question of differentiation is irrelevant. For differentiation to be significant some sort of ontology must be suggested.
or concept of the good, will dominate and take on temporarily hegemonic proportions. Imagine the possibilities if the large majority of the citizenry feels that homosexuality is wrong, inter-marriages sinful, academia wasteful, and/or that a particular group of people are not worthy of the same consideration as others. The contradictions, if indeed there are contradictions to be found given modern principles of relativism, will in time demonstrate the failure of certain programs, and possibly pogroms. This is not satisfactory. Also, to return to Taylor's concerns, differentiation in the private sphere becomes the alien enemy. Homogeny is the end result. The disciplinary mechanism of an expressive public sphere quickly normalizes any differentiation either out of existence, or to the margins of society. This, in due time, would be inevitable. The circle of expression, once publicly embodied, would grow smaller and smaller.

Compare Taylor's Hegelian view with the more liberal, utilitarian view which he rejects. Egalitarianism at the public level guarantees that in the private sphere differentiation is not only maintained, but propounded. The public sphere must remain detached from imposing concepts of the good onto its citizenry. The state is a bureaucratic organization designed to protect equalities, and freedoms, registered as rights, and nothing more. Its constitution should reflect the needs, and not the wants of its people. The private sphere is then able to develop as it pleases, restrained by certain principles of equal rights. This is essential given the removal of Geist and deified metaphysical claims from the social awareness. Hegel would not allow that an individual should be forced to live under metaphysical conceptions that they do not themselves espouse. To force such things is to perpetrate alienating, and paradoxically homogenizing, techniques.

Alienation, in Taylor’s view, occurs when the expression embodied in the public sphere does not match the expression of the individual. This seems a problem only in regards to Taylor’s depiction of the correct state. For the liberal, utilitarian state alienation is only possible if the constitutional embodiment, that of equality of rights, is not sufficiently articulated in the institutions of the state. Otherwise, it is a moot point, given that with no public expression there is no distinction between the individual’s expression with a standard that does not exist. The only other possibility for alienation is if a massive ontological shift in the citizenry was to occur, demanding that people be represented publicly not in terms of constitutional protection, but for some new ontologically reflective consideration, at this writing, unimaginable.

In Taylor’s position, alienation is easy to imagine, that is, alienation before a numbing homogeny is instituted. It has to be accepted, and Taylor at least suggests that it is, that concepts of Geist have no relevance, and so are therefore irrelevant. If one does not accept Hegel’s Geist, then one cannot accept any variant, which depends on the teleology of Geist, of Hegel’s state either. All that you are left with if you insist upon Hegel without metaphysics is a rhetorical defense of the hegemonic politics I refer to. Along with this line of thought, rational necessity is not seen as tending to the transcendent. This argument follows the same logic as the previous one. Given an imposition of expressive concepts of the good onto the private sphere, there are bound to be a minority of individuals whose expression is not demonstrated in the public realm. This, according to Taylor, causes alienation. The ramifications of alienation, that of a turn to the self, is, instead of being a danger, a path to a non-expressive state. But, the number of alienated people will not be enough to generate such positive change. In fact, the majority of these alienated will be normalized into the homogenous whole. Indeed, Taylor’s theory demands Geist to make any of its recommendations
anything but dangerous. Taylor cannot bring himself to guarantee an end to the state. An end to history, and to the state, would be the only category that could make such impositions justifiable.

Hegel knew this, Taylor does too, but Taylor is unwilling to argue it. Those reasons are his own. Taylor is correct, I think, in the assumption that had he made his argument with an acceptance of Hegel's ontological or metaphysical base, it would have been denigrated as politically hopeless. He is incorrect in thinking that by distancing himself from Hegel's absolutist core, he still has an argument.

Taylor's argument regarding the importance of differentiation is an argument about the importance of dialogue. Taylor sees the utilitarian liberal structure as closed off and spurning alternative concepts or modes of thinking. Fitting with his program of differentiation within society Taylor desires that we pursue hermeneutic courses of action in which to open up the liberal, intellectual debate. The Hegelian system, for Taylor, should be seen then as one of possibly many alternative lenses. Its particular relevance, again for Taylor, has been abbreviated above.

It seems to me that understanding political pluralism as representing respect and openness for all conversations neglects to understand that these conversations, to be open to all, must be in a common language or framework. Taylor recognizes that we converse in the political language of the "free enterprise" system. He finds that this language has no room for the language of the Hegelian

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65 As early as 1959 in an article published in the New Left Review Taylor discussed the importance of political dialogue. In this article he argued that given the dominance of the "free enterprise" system and the manner in which policy is directed by particular amendments to an already accepted framework, serious discussions of alternative views of the state are impossible. As a result the programs of the Left are considered to be utopian and of little interest to a people immersed in a capitalist society. To counter this hegemonic dominance in dialogue, the New Left must work towards creating, not a Socialist government but, a Socialist people who in turn would support a Socialist state. This negates the plausibility of a revolution. The New Left, following Gramschi, must propound and perpetuate their message in institutions outside the narrow boundaries of conversation decreed by the capitalist system.
ontology; its principles translate poorly. Taylor says that he wants to open up the discussion. What this inevitably means is that what any hermeneutic project really wants is to change the language.66 Taylor can be seen as not wanting openness for renewed dialogue but rather wanting a new language. In fact, Taylor’s case would be stronger if he was simply to attack the impotence and irresponsibility of liberal, utilitarian rhetoric. He realizes that, given the hegemonic climate, a criticism of this sort would not be heard. So failing criticism, Taylor should consider the tactic of convincing the intelligentsia of the rational ontology of Hegel rather than insincerely accepting its demise.

Is an intellectual revolution the only answer to Taylor’s concerns? Either he is wrong about the limitations and the negative conditions placed on the Hegelian ontological view or there is no logical way that the Hegelian message could ever be understood. Taylor recommends speaking to people in a language that their system prevents them from hearing. A revolution would be foolish, one assumes, because the people would not be Hegelian. How given Taylor’s dilemma could they become more open to the Hegelian scheme through a hermeneutic dialogue? Taylor’s view supports a revolution that in turn decrees a new language. Seemingly, this is the only way the language of rational necessity could be heard. But then how would Taylor’s procedures differ, other than in content, ultimately from those he criticizes?

There are two issues that come out of Taylor’s work on Hegel that are of particular interest to this project: first, the articulation of the closed Enlightenment understanding of the subject; and second, the possibilities of hermeneutic research into philosophical frameworks. I have outlined how I think these two projects may be linked and that they are both potentially troubled by Taylor’s lack

66 By his own admission (in the article in New Left Review) he suggests that the language of the Right cannot speak New Left. One assumes the vice-versa.
of desire to declare an ontological voice.

In brief summation Taylor rejects Hegel's ontology as dead. But, Taylor still thinks that Hegel's philosophy is compelling and rewarding reading for those who wish to articulate the modern malaise. This modern malaise, Taylor argues, is in desperate need of articulation and understanding. Hegel's ontology is "dead" foremost because of huge social indifference to concepts of ontology. It is not then, so much, that Hegel's ontology is dead, but that all ontology is suspect. The problem, particular to Hegel, is that his basic ontological view, that man is a vehicle of Geist and that "the state expresses the underlying formula of necessity by which this spirit posits the world" is seen as representing, first, a religious view, and second, an imposing totalitarian structure, to people in the modern world.

I have listed a number of concerns that I have with Taylor's Hegelian project. I am sceptical of the hermeneutical position as separate from a position argued as an edict of a particular faith. I think Taylor's aim is more grounded in a Hegelian faith then he admits. If his vision is only hermeneutical and not dogmatic, I see his project as no better served. It strikes me that the intellectual framework and desire for dialogue by which Taylor surrounds his hermeneutic technique is disconnected to Taylor's ends. If we are to learn from Hegel an acceptance that existence and actuality differ, that existence is part actuality and part appearance, I do not see how this moves us anywhere. We may realize, which I think we have, that studying concepts is not studying reality but the way we have looked at reality, but does this free us from, or identify, problematic illusions and delusions? In trying to convince modern man not to take himself, or his misguided path, so seriously. Taylor needs to ground his hermeneutics in a property that he defines but denies calling rational.

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necessity. Better yet, Taylor may do well to consider the intimate connection between the malaise he laments and the concept of rational necessity that sits at the heart of it.
Chapter Four - Transcendental Arguments

There is a certain type of metaphysican who, when he cannot get any further, takes himself by the scruff of the neck, like Munchausen, and so produces something *a priori*.

- Soren Kierkegaard

It seems to me that Taylor's hermeneutic project might be accused of grounding itself on fairly relativistic ground. This accusation, to stick, would have to be connected to an understanding of interpretations as radical openness. But I do not think that this is finally the case with Taylor. On some reflection and exploration it seems plausible that Taylor feels that a hermeneutic approach must be grounded on some sort of foundation. One way to consider Taylor's hermeneutical foundation is to consider what mode of thinking Taylor wishes to counter. This seems apparent enough, Taylor is criticizing the empiricist school that stems from an acceptance of Cartesian dualism.

The empiricist school argues that the only knowledge possible is that derived from perception.\(^1\) *A priori* reasoning and logic will not and cannot demonstrate "knowledge". *A priori* reasoning and logic do provide us with a language or an understanding of the way that ideas talk to one another, i.e. their causal relationships, but it does not tell us anything about the "real" world. The only gauge of the real world is to be found in experience and perception; and this gauge makes no claim to absolute certainty only varying degrees of probability. (Empiricism is often confused by some with number-crunching; by arguing that something can be proved empirically they mean that they can demonstrate numerical or statistical evidence which proves their argument. This is not a particularly good use of the term empirical. It replaces perception with mathematics and claims the possibility of

\(^{1}\) I will provide a rough sketch of empiricism here. For more discussion on this subject see Chapter Six.
truth.) Empiricists, therefore, see any system that makes claims of absolute truth to be deceptive at best.

This is more biting than it may first appear. Two standards are drawn - there is what one derives from their sensual perception and there is the "real" world which is beyond human understanding. Thus there arises an enormous dualism between what is and what appears. The onus of reflective confidence is found in what appears, but this is not solely grounded on the basis of a rejection of what is. What is is still recognized if only as the context by which the realm of appearances is rendered. The realm of appearances is all that is available in experience - it provides the "truth" of man's experience. But its essentialness is reflected in comparisons to the idea of truth in itself. The two are importantly divided but the division between the two is essential to the relationship that the individual has with his experience. Without some contextual acceptance of a reality in itself, beyond perception, there is no split between the appearance of reality and the truth of reality.

The question of freedom is the underlying crux of these arguments. The truth of actual reality (as distinguished from the truth of sensed reality), had been previously articulated in terms of natural laws and other physical hypotheses. For freedom from these procedures - to find a place for free-will in relation to these seemingly apparent causal structures - man must reduce the role of truth in physical laws while still saving the phenomena. Truth becomes what man willfully experiences, the categories of existence are private reflections and realizations. This results in a tangible and logical physical world, demonstrated by experience; a world from which the individual is perceptively separated. It is important to understand that the world is formatted as a thing distinct from our experience. It is this that renders our experience valuable. There is a world beyond and before us but
it is not a world with which we can participate. This, as I have been arguing, is not immediately construed as a reduction of reality, in fact, this reality, or notion of it, is central to the importance of the division. We and the world have to be, not at odds with one another but, divided so to remove man from the hegemony of physical causal relations.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the stage for an examination of Taylor's hermeneutics. I think that Taylor's understanding is best seen as iconoclastic and not necessarily constructive. I see Taylor's defense of hermeneutics as encompassing three wildly complicated areas (all under the umbrella of phenomenology and deconstruction). These three areas are the question of experience and perception, the importance of language and Taylor's critique of empiricism. By contemplating these three criteria we are prepared to evaluate what exactly Taylor's ends and understanding of the hermeneutical method is. While the attempts of this chapter are definitely preliminary I wish to sow the seeds of my concern. It is my conjecture that hermeneutics for Taylor is an outreach of methodological philosophy. Taylor may be a believer in philosophical essentialism; ultimately he is interested in demonstrating absolute truths. My corollary concern is that these problems may be symptomatic of any notion of hermeneutics and may not just apply to Taylor's version.

It is my view that Taylor considers transcendental arguments to be at the foundation of a hermeneutic interpretation of man and epistemology; and accordingly, politics. Taylor uses transcendental arguments to defend the role of philosophy in the sciences of man. It is my task to consider the plausibility and desirability of transcendental arguments to elucidate Taylor's attempted grounding.

Transcendental arguments (made famous by Kant in his transcendental deduction of the categories of existence), to be of any value, must start from an understanding of experience which
is undeniable. From this undeniable starting point they move on to a "stronger conclusion" which is necessary for the accepted foundation to exist.\(^2\) This is how Kant operated. He underlay two foundational basic assumptions of experience: i) the thinking subject is connected to his experience; ii) there is also a subject/object distinction.\(^3\) From these two foundations Kant thought he had derived the necessary existence of his categories. My interest is not in how Kant does this, but more how Taylor does this with Hegel and what doing this is worth. But let us be clear about what it is we are talking about. To best do that I will provide an explication of what Taylor argues in his paper "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology".

It is important to understand that Taylor's aim is to provide a thorough-going critique of empiricism.\(^4\) To do this he considers Hegel's thought on the notion of what Taylor calls sensible certainty.\(^5\) Sensible certainty is an exegesis of experience as based entirely on the perceptions made


\[^3\] Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 151.

\[^4\] Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 156.

Taylor's wrath against the empiricists seems mostly based, at this juncture, on his consideration that they are wrong. In the readings under inspection here Taylor does not rail against the empiricists for their radical atomism or for the cold, sterile world that results from their thinking: the critiques so evidently made in his books on Hegel. This raises, I think, some interesting questions about Taylor's intentions. His work on Hegel concludes with an appeal for Hegelian thinking as a hermeneutical device. This work drafts the attack on empiricism in Hegel but attacks it on grounds of logic and rationality - on deductive philosophy. It is curious to wonder how Taylor sees the two projects: the philosophical deduction and the hermeneutical interpretation. Is it possible that they are the same thing?

\[^5\] "Sensible certainty" is Taylor's terminology. I do not understand how he is able to connect his definition of sensible certainty with what he calls it. What he is describing is best termed pre-conceptual sensible perception. (See: Charles Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 156-8.) There is a big difference between the two. Sensible certainty implies the use of concepts like truth, relativity, subjectivity/objectivity and the like. Sensible certainty is not what he is discussing when he talks about perception before the use of concepts.

Concepts, hopefully we can agree, do have a relationship with the way we perceive experience; even if our understanding of concepts is not necessarily logical or causal there are, at least, linguistic concepts at work. I can understand why it would be interesting to consider a mode of consciousness prior to concepts; to consider a being that just blindly or blindly sucks up phenomena with no discretion. But, even if we are to grant the possibility of such an entity (which I am not), we cannot make him an empiricist without explaining his movement to conceptual thinking, i.e. to sensible certainty. But Hegel, as I will show shortly, needs to have a point of origin. This point
by the senses prior to any sort of conceptual framework. Behind the idea of sensible certainty lies a motivation: sensible certainty promises the richest and purest experience. This is provided by a reliance upon the senses without any conceptual framework because it allows the "subject" (this term is used for explanatory purposes only, it, too, is loaded with a rich contextual history), to "open" their senses before experience which is in no way dependant upon any prescriptive contextual imposition.  

It appears that sensible certainty in a significant way defies discussion. But there are a few things that we can say about it. First, it does seem to fit as a precursor to empiricism in that it relies solely on a non-contextual appropriation of sensual material. It remains un-clouded by paradigmatic views and by oppressive constraints of popular belief. Second, it is purely hypothetical. I say purely because it is removed from the potential criticisms that other hypothetical notions can be met with. It does this because of the absolute non-communicative aspect upon which it is based. It demands a silence in its own formulation; therefore its relation to certainty is tenuous. The use of words to describe the phenomena apprehended by the senses renders the material of the senses tainted. Doing so would place the results of future sense acquisition in the possible hands of a framework of jargon and rhetoric. Third, and finally, it is obviously important to Hegel as a point of origin. It posits itself as the purest form of perception. Before and beyond the context of learning it exists as a reactive

of origin has to be both "natural" and susceptible to dialectical contradiction. If sensible perception, as Taylor defines it and I label it, is "natural" it must have contradictions. Therefore it has to be conceptual. It has to be confident (or certain) that the method in which it participates in phenomena is accurate. This is important in demonstrating that it is, indeed, not accurate.

We cannot let Hegel posit a method of conceptual thinking as "natural". This is convenient for his argument for it shows a natural dialectical movement. We cannot do this, though, because we must force him to deal with any historical and cultural contextual baggage that may be involved in the transition between sensible perception and sensible certainty.

6 Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 156

7 Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 161.
component in relation to the world; it is not united and it is not against.\textsuperscript{8} The relationship by which sensible certainty approximates the world is one of subject/object but this can only be stated from a contextual position that exists outside the realm of those sensibly certain. But for Hegel this is, seemingly, a fruitful place to begin his deductions.

Hegel wants to demonstrate how "natural" consciousness transforms itself due to inherent contradictions.\textsuperscript{9} For Hegel this is an important task for if he is able to demonstrate that our "natural" method of perceiving is not essential and is in fact fraught with internal contradictions he is able to demonstrate dialectical movement.\textsuperscript{10} We have what Taylor now calls "common-sense" experience; he notes that it seems pointless to evaluate it in relation to an objective understanding of what that

\textsuperscript{8} Taylor parallels sensible certainty with "common sense". (See: "Hegel's aim is to move from the 'natural,' i.e. commonsense, view of consciousness to his own." Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 157. I can understand why Taylor correlates natural with sensible certainty but I think that this may still be a component of the argument presented in this note. This is also effected by my previous concern about how sensible perception makes the leap to sensible certainty.) I am in strong disagreement with this. In fact, I think it opens the reader to a clearer understanding of Hegel's deceptiveness - if Taylor's articulation is deemed acceptable.

I do not see anything "common" in what Taylor describes as sensible certainty. This is certainly not an example of the "common sense" we are familiar with in this day and age. The modern variant of common sense refers to the sense we all have in common and more so points to our understanding of logical relationships. The scenarios with which we comment: "It is only common sense..." are ones that refer to logical relationships which we understood as true beyond the need (not the possibility), of argument. Common sense distinguishes itself from private sense; and no matter how benevolent "common" can be in this usage it insinuates a context, be it a community or just a general understanding. Sensible certainty is before the "common"; before the comfort of particular logical patterns sets in. Therefore to suggest that sensible certainty can be described in terms of common sense is an error.

My argument with Taylor is not as pettyly semantic as it may appear. I think that Taylor (and Hegel), are setting up sensible certainty as a foundational straw-man against the dialectical contradiction. Taylor wants to argue that sensible certainty is the beginning of consciousness and from that point of origin work towards a view of self-consciousness. I think that it will appear that sensible certainty as viewed as pre-conceptual will not be fitted so easily into Taylor/Hegel's dialectical categories. This does not suggest that sensible certainty has a separate value, it seems to me to be a quite useless notion, it states that the origin that Hegel lays out is not the same essence that he subverts. My aim in this contention is to suggest (and not necessarily defend), that the original point of perception is fuzzy. This means that what is "natural" in regards to perception may be unknowable.

\textsuperscript{9} See Footnote #9.

\textsuperscript{10} Whether this movement is necessarily dialectically meaningful or perhaps just randomly contingent must, at some point, be considered.
experience should relate. To know that our image of reality is wrong we must know some particular facts of experience. This is agreeable for how are we to compare our base experience of phenomena with an understanding of phenomena-in-itself? There is obviously no way of doing so. But Hegel is not so easily trapped because as he sees it perception has its own gauge of acceptability, i.e. perception of experience is measured in "effectiveness" against a particular idea of what constitutes experience. The dialectical transformation occurs because this consciously apprehended yardstick is not absolute. Simply speaking, consciousness has an image, or idea, of experience and this notion fails. Arising from this failure come further attempts to provide an adequate understanding of experience.

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid, 160. Taylor says we must identify "some pervasive fact of experience." I think that for this to work identifying is the wrong term. Instead, we must demand these pervasive facts. The reason why we would demand seems open to speculation. Thus I am not sure that this movement is possible for this ontological reason. Identifying implies a move towards conceptualization; this is only sensible if it is realized as a desire with demands and not a natural compunction to identify.

13 Ibid. See: "(C)onsciousness is not just any object, it is an object that lives in a relation to a model of itself (as subject)".

14 Ibid.

I do not see how sensible perception would make the leap to sensible certainty if contradictions were present. Why would these not be immediately apparent; why would any time be needed to bring them to fruition and exposure? This is possibly answered by saying that the leap from sensible perception to sensible certainty is synonymous with the dialectical project and that as we try to develop our concepts we run into contradictions. To say that sensible certainty runs into the tension of contradiction seems strange.

I am also greatly troubled by this initial contradiction in "natural" consciousness. Why would it necessarily happen? If sensible perception is to be understood as pre-conceptual how would it reach the point where conclusions would be made and be seen as interesting? This consequence of resolution, one would follow, surfaces due to the imposition of conceptual thinking. An example is difficult because it renders definitive (and thus conceptually) the method of sensible perception and implies a reaction to response, but let me make an attempt. My senses pick up on "leaves" "blowing" on the "branch" of a "tree" (all of these terms imply a contextual linguistic framework that depends on concepts of contrasted objects); why, if I am non-conceptual, would I bother with a conceptual analysis and concern myself with the concept of causal relations and the like? Why would I consider anything at all? Again, why does my sensible perception have to extend itself into a desire for sensible certainty?

My perception shows me leaves blowing on a tree. Would I not need the presence and acceptance of a conceptual framework for me to find this impression un-satisfactory? If we grant the non-conceptual status of sensible perception we cannot provide Hegel with his starting point. If we cannot make the leap to conceptual thinking and thus the possibility of contradiction no movement like Hegel describes can occur. If there is a movement in the "natural" mode of perception that
Taylor comes to the point when he states that sensible perception opens itself to contradiction when it attempts to say what it experiences.\textsuperscript{15} In stating what appears to us we are demonstrating a context that may exist before an understanding of contextualization overwhelms us. This is how Taylor tries to format an original point of perception: a context of understanding based solely on sensible experience prior to apparent contextualization. Sensible perception is the poorest form of consciousness (when it is aligned with consciousness), because it has no discretion. Sensible perception tries, irrelevantly, to take in and understand everything. In this it attempts to be in touch with the thing-in-itself.\textsuperscript{16}

For Taylor, it is with language that one introduces and becomes dependant upon concepts. To be meaningful one must use categorical words like "this", "there" or "soon". These terms are universals. The term "this" is universal in its application; it refers constantly to the object under

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 161. But naming and speaking are conceptual, we have to be provided with the reason why sensible perception needs to arrive at a desire to communicate. Of course, I am not trying to argue that sensible perception is the natural starting point of perception. I am trying to argue that using such an apparently pure medium of perception Taylor and Hegel are setting up their foundations with a close eye on their argument.

Taylor, I think, tries to circumvent this argument in his discussion of Wittgenstein and language in the preface to this essay. Taylor writes that an experience before language would have no potential for knowledge; to name an object is to already understand oneself as grounded in experience, dependant upon a linguistic community. Private languages are impossible, according to Taylor, because the concept that is being expressed requires that it be understood in relation to proper semantic usage. This entails criteria and thus demonstrates the logical impossibility of private language. This follows because it is from the desire to identify sensations that the relationship to appropriate language develops. I do not think this argument is adequate because it presupposes that the individual feels a need to identify their perceptions and define them as experiences. It does not argue why man makes the leap between perception and articulation. In fact, for man to name an experience is to already understand oneself as grounded in the experience of a linguistic community. It is not apparent that the voicing of perceptions could be seen as the natural origin of perception. See: Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology", 153-4.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 163.

This claim, in the Kantian sense, is irrelevant. It does not matter, from the point of view of sensible perception (before concepts and context), if there is a distinction between the apparent and the real. The apparent may as well be the thing-in-itself. The duality never arises.
inspection. It does not tell what the object is but it definitely demands an object. It is impossible to speak or develop these types of universals without access to concepts. "This" must be conceptually contrastable with "that"; "there" with "here"; "soon" with "never". Therefore with the use of even basic communicative language we have to have concepts. Taylor continues by stating that we cannot know the particular without appending further terminology. The conceptual terms that I have used as examples do not say anything. "This" depicts nothing. Nor, interestingly, does the term "I" say anything to anybody about who "I" is; no real description is delivered. Sensible perception that longs for certainty can then only show, it does not actually depict.

This is where we fall into the dialectic. Taylor sees Hegel as saying that there can be no "unmediated knowledge of the particular". Sensible, pre-conceptual perception can only say "this", "that" and "the other thing"; it cannot provide understanding or knowledge of the particular. In short, sensible perception cannot say anything, on its own, that is meaningful. Taylor makes a sneaky and important point here - there can be no confident or "truthful" articulation of the particular with sensible perception, all that remains is the concept of the universal, i.e. the force that creates the context for the use of terms like "this" and "there". This means, for Taylor, that the concepts which

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17 Ibid, 164.

Does this seem like the case? Even if we accept what Taylor says about private language (which requires that we negate an asocial ontological urge towards language), does that argument fit here? Taylor contends that the term "I" doesn't describe anyone. I counter that the term "I" does indeed describe me to myself. There may be any number of terms that fit under the umbrella of the term "I" which I use for self-identification: punctual, thirty, patient and the like. But there does not have to be. The term "I" may act as a wholly adequate articulation of myself in, granted, a highly abstract sense. The notion of "I" represents me. I am an "I". Does this facilitate or demand further deconstruction? I do not think it is necessary. This is not an example of private language. I am dependant upon a linguistic community for my understanding of the term. Rather than an example of private language it is an example of the private "rendering" of public language.

18 Ibid, 165.

19 And sensible perception, in this formative pre-conceptual is not possible once concepts have been introduced to its methods. I am still curious, but not entirely confident, about how what I have called "the private rendering of public language" may apply.
arise from sensible perception are ontological - the particulars are not. I should not qualify this statement so quickly, we should consider the idea that the concepts are part of an ontology.\textsuperscript{20} Taylor states that we can only hold onto our sense of a particular with concepts. This is sensible. We can only maintain the idea of the particular in relation to contrasting other particulars. Conceptual terms like "here" and "there" are necessary.

This stands as an explication of Taylor's view of the first part of Hegel's argument. In summation: the argument is that sensible certainty provides the concepts necessary for perception but because it is unable to say anything other than the conceptual it is unable to say anything about the particular. But what remains is an ontological defense of concepts. This is the transcendental foundation from which further arguments, which Taylor demonstrates, logically proceed. My concern is that by calling this process sensible certainty one is assuming a move away from sensible perception. This move to make claims of certainty (which result in concepts), from the perspective of sensible perception is unjustified. The arguments of the impossibility of private language do not alter my argument for they assume a metaphysical need for language which is not necessarily demonstrable. As such, neither Taylor nor Hegel can have confidence when they insist upon the "natural" starting point of the dialectic. I argue that if sensible perception is actually synonymous with sensible certainty concepts and contexts must already be in place. I do not argue that these prior contexts or concepts need to be of a particular categorical sort. All I argue is that the "natural" beginning that Taylor/Hegel require for demonstration of dialectical movement is already tainted or clouded by contextual influences. The deconstruction of the natural is not satisfied in the way that Taylor describes sensible certainty.

\textsuperscript{20} For this to be so, language as Taylor sees it would have to be ontological as well.
His second argument stems from the first. In sensing, we sense the properties of objects, and they add up to perception. This also shows a contradiction. The contradiction is in the tension between the idea of a particular and the properties which stem from that particular. For me to understand that certain properties are conflicting, I must understand the context of the particular for this conflict to be recognized as incongruent with the particular. But this becomes paradoxical because we are only able to apprehend the particular through attention to the properties; if that is not the case we must rely on an inherent knowledge of the thing-in-itself divined internally or from who knows where. This is all very complicated. We cannot combine properties to find a particular; we can only move between possible notions of a particular and what it is we think we see in the properties that we sense. Taylor, paraphrasing Hegel, argues that we experience objects on two levels: i) as external properties (touch, taste, sound, etc) and; ii) as the result of the fundamental power of the particular.

Taylor writes:

(W)e couldn't have the experience we have, i.e. of objects with properties, unless these objects were grasped as the locus of causal properties and relations.

The particular, then, is the locus from which properties originate and are instructed. It is the "cause" of properties. This requires further explication: A property is grounded in a "causal background";

21 Ibid, 168.

22 This assumes that we are incorrect about the particular; that we cannot be lucky, or know that we were lucky, in our approximations.


25 Ibid.
the particular is the "locus of causal backgrounds". This constitutes our experience of the object. We see that an object contains a contextual or conceptual causal background; also, we are able to attribute our abilities to see to the same conceptual framework. We then logically attribute the source of the causal background to the particularities of the object - seeing that different objects manipulate their properties in different ways we are compelled to accept that it is the particular that motivates the properties. In order to avoid dealing with the contradictions of perception, that are now apparent, we divide our perceptions into two streams - our perceptions of the object and the object-in-itself. As such we have to accept that the particular (the object-in-itself) is beyond perception.

But where are we then? It appears that we cannot understand properties unless we understand them as emanated from a particular that is beyond our perception. What is it that we can discover? We cannot remove properties from the particular and still make sense of something. We cannot separate the unity of an object from its properties, meaning we cannot develop a sense of the whole by an understanding of the component; the component is senseless without the context of the whole.

How are we to attempt distinctions between appearance and reality? We accept that two objects can only be differentiated by their different properties, but this is problematic in that we have to attach properties to unknowable particulars.

The point of this for Hegel is that the object that we perceive is contradictory. The object is

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26 Ibid, 174-5.


Empiricism's contemplative (a passive reception of sense-data), view of experience cannot account for this argument. In empiricism there is no room for causal backgrounds or power in this epistemological sense. Taylor's argument posits that our experience of objects is intimately connected to our existence with them. (See: Ibid, 176.

28 Ibid, 177.

29 Ibid, 178.
both the singular particular and the many properties. For us to understand a myriad of properties we must have an object that can move between them, i.e. be the context for all the different properties. It is this context that we connect with. We think of an object as having properties because all these properties emanate from a single context.\(^{30}\) The causal context is behind each property. It is, for Taylor, only by understanding perception as "a consciousness of our interaction with the world, can we allow for the perception of causal relations."\(^{31}\) The object that we apprehend is the causal context.

We can see, then, the shape of the transcendental argument. We start off with an undeniable premise: conscious experience must be sayable.\(^{32}\) From that premise we smash the idea of pre-conceptual experience.\(^{33}\) To understand the particular we must articulate what we can witness, that is, properties. Properties and particulars can not be distinguished. Therefore the object upon which we gaze is the causal context.\(^{34}\)

I have made some preliminary arguments against this view; mostly dealing with the origin of it, but I am going to suspend my full critique for a moment. It is prudent for us to consider how Taylor clarifies the message of the essay we have discussed in his more recent paper: "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments".

In "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments\(^{35}\)" Taylor adds a telling component to the aim

\(^{30}\) Ibid, 178-81.

\(^{31}\) Ibid, 182.

\(^{32}\) We do not start off agreeing that this is an important statement; that conscious experience is necessary.

\(^{33}\) Which begs the issue that we desire sensible certainty, synonymous for Taylor with consciousness.

\(^{34}\) Ibid, 183-87.

\(^{35}\) I am curious as to why Taylor calls the method he explicates "arguments". It would seem a better term would be "transcendental declarations".

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of transcendental conclusions. "(t)hey then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or the subject's position in the world."^36 This is, of course, central to his earlier exposition but it is fitting that he articulates it in this manner for this paper. For it is in this paper that Taylor concentrates on what he sees Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty doing: demonstrating the "embodied subject".37

Taylor argues that our "primary opening" to the world of experience is through perception and our perception of experience is possible only if we are an embodied agent in the world. Taylor demonstrates our embodiment by the manifestation of an orientational structure.38 This orientational structure is, simply, the cues of sensibility like up/down, or there/here which allow the individual to operate. If we broaden our perceptual field beyond these basics we see that we experience perception as a realm where action is possible or inevitable. We have developed a framework of up/down and back/forth that allows for movement; it creates a space within which perception has room to breathe, room to move and be manipulated. Accordingly, our perception of the world depends on our ability to create a space for it; a space of movement and of action. We are able to perceive the world only because of the action of our orientational framework. This embodied orientation is ontological: "it is constitutive of our experience...being an embodied agent helps to constitute his field."^39 It cannot

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^36 Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments", 20. Curiously, Taylor prefaces his definition in this essay by saying: "The arguments I want to call 'transcendental' start from some feature of our experience..." (italics mine). This personal desire seems potentially important to our understanding of Taylor and of his inclination to transcendental arguments. I wish only to raise this curiosity at this point. I will dwell on it in larger detail as we continue. Suffice, for now, that the importance of want seems pertinent and not merely spurious.

^37 Ibid, 22.

^38 Ibid, 23.

^39 Ibid, 25. (Italics mine.)
be demonstrated by passive acceptance of sense-data. It exists prior to that possibility. But does this have any meaning outside of itself? Does it tell us anything else about our ontology? No, Taylor declares that it would be an error to suppose from the "truth" of embodied agency any further political ramifications.\textsuperscript{40} What can we say? It seems what we can say refers mostly to preventing certain things from being said. If a fundamental part of our existence comes from being an embodied agent there is no way that we can be uniquely or decisively subjective.\textsuperscript{41} There is no way that we can be justifiably Cartesian.

Is the purpose of transcendental arguments purely iconoclastic or does the argument need to posit \textit{a priori} categories to replace the empiricist's passive relationship to sense-data? There does seem to be a relationship between the two - how can we smash empiricism and defend an embodied agent without claims to categories? Taylor argues that we can use transcendental arguments to demonstrate, not categorical, ontological claims but, the form or context by which experience is defended.\textsuperscript{42} Taylor has a strange argument for defending his use of context outside of a faith in ontology.

He argues that agents must have an idea as to what they are doing and what they are allowed to do. He fancies his transcendental deduction of embodied agency as akin to the rules of a game like

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, 26.

\textsuperscript{41} See: Ibid, 26. "Put in other terms, we can't effectively exercise subjectivity, and be aware of a world, without a sense of ourselves as embodied subjects; for this sense is constitutive of our awareness." I wish only to add that this sense is constitutive of a particular and prevalent understanding of awareness. It is not necessarily an ultimate statement.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, 27. We are caught, then, in the same quandary of the last chapter. If we cannot subscribe to the ontology how is it we can accept the principles that stem from the ontology? If we cannot fully or convincingly demonstrate that we are inescapably embodied how can we fathom or accept the principles which stem from the agent as embodied?
chess.\(^3\) In this sense the rules act as a context and this context is, in part, a segment of the understanding of what is wanted and needed in living. The "activity of being aware" is part of the point of being like the rules of chess are part of the point of the game. From this vantage point we call transcendental arguments that which is brought to life by the activity which wishes to discover or capture reality.\(^4\) The activity of chess is moving one's pieces according to understood rules with the aim of capturing your opponent's king.

This argument does not make any ontological claims. It does suggest that a framework for understanding experience is an important component of that understanding. Some perceptual notion of awareness must exist for awareness to exist. Taylor writes: "if I couldn't recognize that when all broke down into confusion, awareness had failed, then you couldn't think of me as aware in the first place."\(^5\) But we are still not clear as to what awareness is. Taylor has suggested the importance of embodied agency. This is a fine answer, but what makes it a better answer than the one offered by empiricists does not seem a question of which one is the closest to the truth. I grant that both cannot be right; but the criteria of each negates the presence of the other. How is one to decide which criteria are valuable?

My criticisms of Taylor's writings on transcendental arguments take two directions, the logical and the theoretical. My logical argument against Taylor's transcendental argument has been presented in a number of footnotes throughout this chapter. For the sake of lucidity it may be helpful if I re-articulate them at this juncture.

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\(^3\) Ibid, 29.

\(^4\) Ibid, 30.

\(^5\) Ibid, 31.
It is my view that Hegel needs to justify the existence and plausibility of his dialectic. This cannot be done in terms of ends. I mean by this that Hegel is unconvincing in his assessment of what the ends of the dialectic are. The ends seem fairly important if we are to understand history as meaningful and ordered. How can we know that history has an order or a scheme and is not just contingencies acting upon one another? If we would be able to demonstrate an end we would be able then to demonstrate retroactively why occurrences occurred as they did. But we do not accept Hegel's claims for the end of the dialectic. Therefore we are not able to use ultimate conclusions to understand the meaning of historical movement. But we still want to posit the dialectic. Given that the end is out we consider the beginning. If we are able to demonstrate that from a "natural" state of being man found contradictions and was forced into movement - this movement will have to logically be dialectical thus providing the demonstration needed of dialectical progression. It is not the end of the dialectic that is important. It is the origin. With the origin we are able to demonstrate movement from a natural position. It is crucial that this origin be grounded in a "natural" state because then movement can only be argued as a dialectical response to contradictions. There would be no point to movement if it was not contradictory and showing man to be contradictory in essence exemplifies the importance of the dialectical project.

My logical objection to this project is very simple. Taylor has not adequately demonstrated what constitutes a natural theory of perception. As a result the dialectic that he demonstrates is already formulated on sympathetic contextual grounds and not in any essence. My problem with Taylor's understanding of natural perception is in his articulation of it as sensible certainty. I do not see why it should be labelled in terms of a desire for certainty. Sensible pre-conceptual perception does not imply a need for sensible certainty. I think that this is an important distinction because it is
possible that implicit in notions of "certainty" are such conceptual frameworks like the concept of truth and the question of subjectivity/objectivity. These conceptual underpinnings may affect and govern the naturalness of this idea of perception. Elsewhere on the same problem Taylor uses a different starting point but the problems are still the same. Taylor argues that for perception to exist we must see things in terms of an orientational framework, i.e. up/down, here/there. From this orientational framework we are able to see that perceptions are movements and that eventually we are embodied agents. The latter part is not what is important here. The important component is the step that Taylor does not articulate. He does not include language that refers directly to sensible certainty but in discussing orientational frameworks he has neglected the step from pre-conceptual sensation to conceptualized sensation. In both papers, one can assume, the leap between the two is the result of a desire for communication. Taylor does not consider how conceptual this desire is. It is this leap to language that is the origin of conceptual perception but Taylor does not explain why we need to desire expression. Taylor's claims require, for the demonstration of sensible certainty to be accepted as primal, that we accept the question of relations between subject and objects and the pursuit of truth as ontological. It seems to me that whether one accepts it or not, this view is not a matter for logical discourse, but a position better understood as one grounded in faith and desire.

Taylor tries to circumvent the importance of the ontological in his essay "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments". He is trying to demonstrate an articulation or interpretation of awareness that saves the appearances and renders the game of experience more playable. But, again, why does Taylor defend these claims in terms of plausibility and not in terms of attractiveness? There appears no reason why we should believe that Taylor's interpretation or articulation of the framework that demonstrates his theory of awareness is self-evident given its connection to a shaky dialectic.
The other stream of critique that I have to offer is more over-arching. I can understand and be sympathetic to Taylor's desire to critique the atomistic thinking and dualism of empiricism. I can potentially understand how a hermeneutic technique would be adequate to this task. I do not understand why Taylor's hermeneutical approach is so interested in the truth. I agree with Richard Rorty that it is hard to reconcile Hegel's project of holding time in thought with the development of a "phenomenological ontology." Taylor tries to distance himself from this ontological problem but he does not remove himself from an interest in the truth of the conditions of possibility.

The conditions of possibility seem to be another way of saying: What is true? An interest in these conditions reveals a desire for certainty that is, while not at odds, not necessary for a hermeneutic approach. Philosophy is interesting and fruitful if understood as time held in thought; what is the point of elevating philosophical thought and logic to figure out what a natural kind is? It proves the importance of the dialectic. Why is this important to prove? I suppose that with proof you have actuality, but what does actuality provide? For Taylor, it seems only to provide a refutation of empiricism. Why attack empiricism in an argumentative style that empiricism mostly refuses to speak? Taylor's view of the embodied subject is a potentially interesting device to use in approaching the world. But this is the problem. What is the benefit to be had in approaching or approximating the world? Why, as Rorty wonders, do we need to know the way the world is? 

It is in the manner by which Taylor uses transcendental arguments and phenomenological thought to dismiss empiricism that exposes the dangers of Taylor's technique. Jurgen Habermas

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discusses how philosophy has, with the development of epistemology, attempted to become an "usher" for the sciences.

In championing the idea of a cognition before cognition, Kantian philosophy sets up a domain between itself and the sciences, arrogating authority to itself. It wants to clarify the foundations of the sciences once and for all, defining the limits of what can and cannot be experienced. This is tantamount to an act of showing the sciences their proper place. I think philosophy cannot and should not try to play the role of usher. 48

Philosophy, in its development as epistemology, acts as an arbiter as to what modes of thinking are acceptable and which are not. This seems to step beyond arrogance into the ridiculous. Method philosophy has never had this sort of authority; it has told us nothing about the way the world is. It has deceived us into thinking that understanding the way the world is is important. My critiques can be summed up simply: Taylor's scheme does not work.

I think it is possible to see Taylor's use of transcendental arguments as strangely hermeneutical. He has outlined a contextual interpretive "screen" by which to filter our understanding of experience and existence. Taylor is interesting in the way that he does not ground his interpretive context in an ontology but very clearly argues for it on the strength of its desirability. I am troubled


Habermas, while not happy with the notion of philosophy as "usher", does not feel that philosophy must surrender itself completely. He argues that philosophy should see itself as a "stand-in" for "empirical theories with strong universalistic claims" (see: Ibid, 15.). This, perhaps is not far from Taylor. Or at least is not far from a way that Taylor could be viewed. Taylor can be seen as an iconoclast combatting empirical dogmatism using philosophy and hermeneutics, and not as a dogmatist himself. While this interpretation of Hegel seems doubtful it eventually does not matter because Habermas's newer role for philosophy is still troubled.

Habermas is against the denunciation of reason that occurs in generally well-meaning attacks on transcendental philosophy. But if philosophy is still to ground itself in some sort of relationship with rationality it is doomed. Why do we want/need to maintain rationality? If we are willing to throw out dogmatism why do we hold on to reason? Can reason be anything but an aiming for the absolute? Can reason be understood as valuable outside a continuum of varied degrees of truth? It seems that the only sort of reason that we could possibly admire is a pragmatic reason that proves itself in usefulness. Neither Taylor nor Habermas are aligned with this view. As such they are stuck in the mire of transcendent philosophy and the importance of dogmatic and hegemonic faiths in absolute truth.
by one looming aspect of Taylor's project. This is Taylor's desire to connect hermeneutics to the pursuit of philosophy, i.e. to find the truth of being.\footnote{We will not deal with this issue here as space does not allow. It is the heart of the second half of this text.}
Chapter Five - Marxism

What is science? It is trying to catch a very small black cat in a very large, entirely dark room. What is philosophy? It is trying to catch a very small black cat in a very large, entirely dark room when it is not there. What is Marxism? It is trying to catch a very small black cat in a very large, entirely dark room when it is not there, and pretending that one has caught it and knows all about it.

- Ernest Gellner

While Hegel, in his corrections of Kant and his grounding of the Romantics, may represent an important break with the empirical tradition, Marx presents, for Taylor, a return. In turning Hegel on his head, Marx negates what was most important about Hegel: the idea that the options of being were posited outside of the framework demanded by the empiricist epistemology of Locke and Hume etc.. Marx, in his view of historical materialism, returns us to this view. Therefore, to separate Marx from the scientific tradition which separated man from his environment is difficult. The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate how Taylor sees Marxism as connected to the Enlightenment project; what ramifications this may have on the hermeneutical project that Hegel helps to open; and how this critique of Marxism reflects on leftist politics as correlated to emancipation, nationalism and civil society.

Marxism, initially, appears to represent a radical break from the empiricist tradition. History and experience are not merely sense-data objects for our approximation. History is connected to human action; human action not in terms of individuals but in terms of collectives. Taylor articulates two assumptions of the Marxist view: first, men are moved by the same goals throughout time - to
conquer nature and time in history. This is Marx's teleological view.¹ Second, this conquering of nature and time can only be accomplished collectively. It is this first assumption, that there is a teleological basis to history and human experience that Taylor, originally, views as antithetical to the empiricist epistemology. It is this ontological grounding of human desire; a "mysterious directing mind"² as attached to our understanding of human action, that confounds the empiricist mind. Ontology has become important in Marxism in a way that empiricists and Cartesians fundamentally reject. It is important, then, to consider how valid or powerful the Marxist ontology can be, given the general critique of metaphysics that Marxism assumes.

Who is the socialist man? How can he be described? Taylor suggests three criteria: free from metaphysics; grounded in science; unified with community.³ This socialism has to be a Marxist one, as the view is among Marxists, paraphrased by Taylor, that non-Marxist socialism does not understand society because it lacks a scientific base of approach.⁴ Already we can see the arising of a complication regarding the relationship between Marxism and the Enlightenment legacy. Is socialism necessarily tied to a particular philosophical grounding? Can socialism make sense apart from a dialectic of historical materialism?⁵ The questions are curious. They amount to recognizing that socialism either must ground itself in a potentially metaphysical ontology of human integrity or it must be connected to some sort of Hegelianism without Geist, i.e. historical materialism but

¹ See: Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Empiricism", 240.
⁴ Ibid, 45.
⁵ Taylor raises these questions at: Ibid, 45.
governed by principles of logical scientific method rather than an essential ontological relationship with the world-spirit. Placing the spirit of socialism in Marxism, interestingly, does not answer these questions. It still remains to be asked whether Marxism is a philosophy or a science, or if the two, in this case, can be separated.

Of course, there are many variants, or in Taylor's language "restatements", of Marxism. For Taylor there are three methods of Marxism: use as a method of critical analysis; a body of scientific doctrine; and the only available humanist view of man and the human condition. To put these categories in singular terms they represent deconstruction, empiricism and ontology. On first glance these trends or dispositions of Marxism seem eventually antagonistic towards each other. Are we to think, then, that the different components of Marxism are eventually conflictual, each requiring the negation by one of the other streams in order to further its own interpretation? Or is it possible that these three "re-statements" all stem from a singular epistemological position? If it is possible for us to make this argument can we also suggest that thought that uses an ontology as its basis is inevitably dependant on a modernist epistemology and is thus susceptible to a common critique?

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7 Ibid.

Elsewhere Taylor argues that there are only two streams to Marxist socialism: a plea for community and a unified relationship; a scientific attacking of capitalism. This removes, or attempts to remove, the metaphysical element and sees itself as congruent with a socialism free from metaphysics.


8 It is tempting to consider this question as ridiculous, to argue that, of course, there is ontology without science. There is an ontology in Plato or an understanding of what an ontology requires in Aristotle. (Aristotle, possibly, being much more sympathetic to the question.) But I don’t think the question is a necessarily foolish one. We are probably agreed that the Greeks had an extremely different view of individuality and the self than we do. In fact, it seems sensible to argue that our understanding of how the Greeks understand the self is tempered, even tainted, by our embodiment in a particular perspective. This is not the same as arguing that any notion of human essence is only allowable within a context of science. But it does go some distance in showing that the question cannot be so immediately dismissed.
The three streams can be united in the prominence they give to history. History is the subject of the Marxist method of analysis, the foundational backdrop of the empirical technique, and the point of the ontological/humanist view. To understand the divergence or possible unity among these three themes it seems obligatory that we consider what is contained or demanded by Marxist theories of history.

The Marxist understanding of history is most often rendered as "historical materialism". Man is the product of particular epochs and as these epochs fall due to inherent contradictions - man changes, and he comes a step closer to the realization of pure humanity. This articulation encompasses all three of our streams. The process of dialectical movement, the exposing of contradictions, is the method of analysis; attached to this method are the empirical procedures of science which are only sensible in this ordered understanding; the end is the fulfilment of ontology. We can further entwine the three streams with the Marxist recognition, inherent in historical materialism, that human activity and consciousness are always congruent with the method of material production. It seems to follow that particular thoughts and actions are conditioned by particular systems of social arrangement and production, susceptible to the same contradictions that the system presents to itself.

Despite this conditioning, man can still consciously direct himself in action through history.

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9 See, for corroboration: "(Marx's) works - like those of Scripture or literature or the law - are open to different, and sometimes quite divergent, interpretations. Despite their differences, however, readers of Marx are apt to agree on at least one point: His philosophy of history, his account of how historical change comes about, occupies a pivotal place in his overall outlook." Terence Ball, "History: Critique and Irony", The Cambridge Companion to Marx, Terrell Carver, ed. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 124.

I concur with this observation but sense that divergent interpretations may all have to reconcile themselves to Marx's theory of history. This is to say, the only possible hermeneutical project seriously available to students of Marx must be centred around his theory of history.

10 See: Ibid, 159.
How can this be? The answer for Marxists is that while existing under a context of illusion man is still able to possess some inherent sense of his true self. It is man's consciousness that moves/progresses through history and as this combination moves towards truth, the one true rational order appears eventually in the movement of history.\(^{11}\)

Marx has to show the error of modern society and force, through the articulation of an argument of transformation. This distances Marx from the Hegelian critique of the modernist epistemology. We no longer need to start with epistemological issues; we start with the failures of actualized ideologies.\(^{12}\) Simply put, if a society propounds a type of freedom and that freedom is not present, there is a contradiction. But this is more complicated, as Taylor acknowledges. If freedom is not a 'truth' then it will appear as a failure of a subjective standard that we will then, following Marx, judge contradictory. We will not see freedom as a necessary and beneficial component of what we require from our articulation of understanding.\(^{13}\) This is an interesting dilemma. How is it, without philosophy, that we can know what should be thrown out and what is guiding our approximations? In other words, for Taylor, Hegel is indispensable. We have to keep aware of how our illusions about

\(^{11}\) See: Charles Taylor, "The Ambiguities of Marxist Doctrine", 161. These are troublesome thoughts. Taylor recognizes, as is evident, that if there is one path of true history then human freedom prior to this truth is an illusion. We are, as we shall consider a little further down, only to accept that one incarnation of man is the valid one - the last man. Man, leading up to the realization of truth is not truly a full man; he does contain some seeds of what full man is, but he is to the ultimate what the monkey is to us in Darwinian terms. One can see that it has to be this way. If man is unique and takes an individual path to an individual truth then there can be no universal truth. Marx cannot accept this and in order to prevent such thinking must declare that all interpretations of alternative paths to alternative goals must be the result of a false-consciousness. One cannot sincerely, for Marx, exist in a total rebellion against truth - the human will enacting itself against universal truths is synonymous with the expression of false consciousness. How, given our modern respect and love for the will, we can ever accept Marx’s participant as a man is difficult to comprehend.


\(^{13}\) See: Ibid, 15. Taylor is suggesting that if we do not maintain an epistemological critique then we are left with just arbitrary metaphysical opinions about what is the basis of our existence.
social reality can be potentially contaminated by the distortions of this reality. For Marx to write: "ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought," is to justify a system of thought with a powerful idealism. Marx, willfully, creates an impression of inevitability to the realization of his thought.

This is further compounded by the Marxist understanding that it is productivity or work that fuels the momentum of history. History is the result of pursuing a livelihood, of changing the modes

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14 See: Ibid, 16.

There are two concerns that demand mention. First, it is important to understand that this dilemma occurs only in the dialectical tradition; that if one were to abandon dialectics the problem too would be abandoned. Connected to this first concern is a more logical problem: how is escape from this ever possible in a meaningful sense? (Also see Chapter Four above.)

Let us mend Marx's error, as shown by Taylor, and see if it manages to work. If we assign metaphysical status to something in our lives then that something is considered beyond reproach - it may be inadequately construed but it is untouchable as an overwhelming notion. It follows that when we discover a contradiction we will know what to throw out and what to keep. This is unlike Marx's view in that nothing was posited as metaphysical; the modernist epistemology was accepted. This is a good critique, for what it says about Marx and what it says about metaphysics and hermeneutics.

It seems that if we take the route of demanding the metaphysical horizon it is impossible to evaluate it. If we are to think that our chosen metaphysics is not arbitrary or ontological then we must consider that it is a part of the web of our social context. If it is the latter how would we ever move, historically, dialectically, away from prior understandings? If our metaphysics is necessarily grounded in our society then how do we crumble the contradictions of our society without impinging on our horizon of appropriateness?

Let us consider this discussion from the perspective that our connection to our metaphysics is ontological. Let us say, like Marx, that while our understanding of self is connected to the mode of production we still possess a vague sense of the 'real'. Are we not back to where we started with a thorough negation of our own will? Have we not forced upon ourselves a drastic and oppressive determinism?

I think that there may be a way out of this quandary for both Marxists and Hegelians but it may be too strange for any political use. The solution, I think, comes from the Hegelian fact that history can only be understood retrospectively. This retrospective element is the source of both the problem and the solution. It is the process in that it creates in the observer a sense that experience and time make sense as they are patched together to connect the moment of now. The important question to ask is why would anyone want to make sense of the past? The answer is to be found in an existential concern for the future; if I can understand the purpose of the past perhaps I can predict the future, or at least, I can be assured that the future will be meaningful no matter if I comprehend it. This is where the possible solution comes in. If I understand the movements of the future as arbitrary or insensible then I can maintain my freedom. If I can surrender myself to what I view not as a rational will but an emotive will of desire then I remain free; not trapped by the meaning of my movement in relation to futility or the true freedom of future generations. The analytical movement in retrospect jeopardizes this possibility without offering any compensation in terms of alternative benefits. It does not show meaning but suggests it; and the suggestion is never our meaning but is a purposeful meaning for our children's children.

If we are to address issues of freedom in terms of emotive reactions and not intellectual importance in relation to truth we are left without Marxist justifications for revolution or a historical defense of leftist politics. But these visions stopped being ground in a humanism or teleology long ago, to be replaced, fittingly enough, by emotive constructions.


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of production through developing technologies, thus creating new paradigmatic possibilities for human consciousness.

Labour, for Taylor's view of Marx, entails reflection. In altering our relationship with nature or the objects of our experience, we are able to accomplish control over these elements and as a result, supposedly, increase our freedom. We become capable of "re-organizing our social life" and being. These re-organizations continue in a dialectical manner, with each stage creating new types of thinking and beings, until at the final stage of Communism the contradictions vanish and we become fulfilled. It is in this final stage, the recovery of common control, that we will have satisfied our most important intellectual and spiritual need - the control of control. The forces that rule our lives will be overtaken by a freedom that guides our lives. Technology and science will liberate us from metaphysics and still answer our existential concerns about freedom and fulfilment. The elites of a socialist society are engineers. The power of technology to save us is crucial to Marxism. It

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Not only must we control nature but we must also control this ability to control. If we can accomplish that we further increase what appears to be freedom. This exercise of controlling our ability to control is central to human fulfilment in modern terms. The premise of controlling control responds to Heidegger's fears regarding technological thinking and for him the inevitable shift to understanding everything, including ourselves, in technological/object-related terms.

It seems that Heidegger is right about this. If we imagine that we can control our ability to control nature we must be aware of what the boundaries of asserting control should be. I grant that ecological concerns can demonstrate some of these boundaries. But how are we to understand ecological awareness - in terms of technological viability or in terms of a moral responsibility to a natural, spiritual order? Outside of the recognition of ecological disaster how are we to know the limits of our pursuits? Is one of the tasks of technology, be it medical or something else, to demonstrate the dangers of technology? And again are we able to separate our technological discovery of danger from a technological understanding of that danger?

It seems right that human fulfilment does hang in these sorts of questions - but whether human fulfilment can be accomplished by understanding our use of technology in another type of thinking does not seem possible. This type of argument seems to depend on an acknowledgement of what a fulfilled being looks like, which according to the Marxist argument is not provided until the appropriate technology is in place.


I am not convinced that existential problems will evaporate in total freedom. Does the notion or fear of death, which affected Heidegger in such interesting ways, evaporate in a position of radical freedom?
demonstrates, for one, that Marxism cannot just depend on an explanatory theory of history. Technology is, in Marxian essence, the root of a liberation theory. Marx's iconoclasm of religion and metaphysics only works if he provides some type of foundational promise.\textsuperscript{18}

But what sort of promise will Marxists be able to make? Is it naive to think that a technological society does not have paradigmatic and contextual baggage that will be impossible to depend on and then transcend? To do so, agreed, one must control control. Is this possible? Can a society bounce away from the residue of its technological fix?

For many people, their work, their contribution to technology, is without meaning. As a people we have traded away our sense of alienation and the labour that caused it for consumer affluence. To change this one would have to change the way we understand our lives. The irony is that any attempt at a change would justifiably be seen as a limitation on one's "self-contained life", an affront to the known spirit of freedom.\textsuperscript{19} Luckily, for the consumptive paradigm, appetites continue until infinity unless controlled by reason (which arguably only changes the focus of the appetites).\textsuperscript{20}

This seriously tempers the self and society that Marxists have to liberate. Taylor writes:

A society which sees its ultimate significance in being a productive engine of unparalleled power must celebrate this by continually renewed tangible expressions

\textsuperscript{18} Foucault, who is equally radical, offers no foundational promise. This is because of a radically different view of nature. (See Chapter Ten for a discussion of Foucault and Taylor.) Taylor asserts that we cannot live within a system that is spiritually empty. If Marxism does not satisfy spiritually it will be rejected. See: Charles Taylor, "Marxist Philosophy", 55.

I think that Taylor is right about this, but only if history is taken as a meaningful and serious force. It is impossible to justify or understand Marx's historiography without perceiving a motive or direction on his part. Theories of explanation, for Taylor, makes no sense without a corresponding theory of liberation. This is sensible in the way that Marx understands explanation.

\textsuperscript{19} See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", \textit{Philosophical Papers, II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences} 279.

\textsuperscript{20} See: Ibid, 280-1. This is referred to in Marxist conversations as the "fetishization" of commodities.
of power.21

If I understand correctly, the implication is that consumptive society must continuously guarantee itself with supportive reflections of what it is doing. It seems then, if this is the case, consumptive society, or any society, will become the standard by which dialectical contradictions are measured. If this is so, it is hard to picture consumptive, technological capitalism as a stage to anywhere. To enjoy and defend a "cult of production" the people within it must feel a part of it.22 The way in for most of us is as a consumer.23 There is a difficult paradox that then arises.

If we are to understand that capitalism will collapse due to its own contradictions recognized by a people who are removed from the ontological constructions of that society - we are in some intellectual trouble. The problem lies in the notion of a detached people. For the socialist project to move, the consciousness of the participants must already approximate the end imagined for them. Taylor is correct to point out the logical failings and dangers in this position. The revolutionary rage of those in society (I imagine always a minority), who have absolutely no access to the consumer culture would be a rage of desire, not to necessarily change the ontology but to be included in it. This rage would only emerge through exclusion and would be a rage for inclusion. Therefore the consciousness of consumption is able to defend and perpetuate itself through those it rewards and those unable to participate. The only argument that could be made is one that demanded a metaphysical and not historically-derived notion of consciousness. This challenges any number of


22 Ibid, 232.

23 This is the message implicit in Fukuyama's The End of History. For Fukuyama our desire for Hegelian recognition can only be satisfied by liberal capitalism.
Marxist assumptions and methods and seems to leave little mobility for even the most divergent interpretation.

As men progress through history, in Taylor's terms, man's individual "powers escape their control". This power, (which apparently once belonged to man), is now in society. It is only through social labour that the world is changed; not through individuals or particular classes. A class-divided society cannot control this power to transform nature. The implication is that for the die-hard Marxist, society is now out of control and it can only be with the unifying redemption of the socialist/communist revolution that control over control will be given to all people. Taylor sees the processes of present day capitalism as controlled by no one; he argues that, instead and reminiscent of Foucault, it controls everyone. Taylor sees the emancipated view of power as having an expressive edge, even an artistic vision. This is frustrated by class society as it now stands.

Traditional socialism demands one economic and social political system. This, according to Taylor, is impossible and ridiculous - the Marxist dream of one world is foolish and dead. Today's

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25 This should not be construed as an anarchic declaration. Society is out of control only in the sense that no one individual or group of individuals controls it. C. Wright Mills, of course, in his discussion and exposition of power elites would disagree.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid, 48.


The social democrat tradition which is fairly strong in the academy today argues that ownership does not eventually matter; what matters is a planned economy. This is a view that Taylor is sympathetic towards. His view is connected to his notion of the embedded agent and the implausibility of totally escaping the paradigms of Western culture. In responding to an accusative analogy to the Marx brothers film "Go West" where the brothers dismantle a train until there is no train left, Taylor distances himself from Marxism and maintains a concern with the socialist political tradition but with a new understanding.

I burnt up the Marxism car first. But the others, I don't mean to burn up; I just meant to point out that we need to have that car but it's pulling in another direction; it's
society is not in a position where such rhetoric can gain any footing. The society of now is sympathetic to modernization and has, in large pockets, some sympathy or interest with qualified socialist ideas. To consider this a potential grounding for the development of an engaged and rebellious proletariat is naive. Western man's most recent ontology does not include such possibilities. This is not to say, that the specter that haunted Marx and Europe does not still waft through society with some influence. 29 The problems of modern capitalism find their appropriate intellectual escape in the same Romantic visions and concerns that were so persuasive for both Hegel and Marx.30 But as long as Communism sees itself as "the solution to the enigma of history, and is conscious of itself as that solution"31 determinism will be the rule and will not provide the hermeneutic openings that Taylor favours. This leads us to our discussion of the problems of Marxist ontology.32

29 This notion of spirit is central to a view propounded by Jacques Derrida in a recent work. Derrida quotes Marx on the spectre of communism haunting Europe and connects it to not only the spirit of communism but also to the ghost of Hegel. This ghost, or even spirit, continues to permeate the modern world. For Derrida it seems to haunt him by compelling a self-critique against metaphysics and ontology. (Derrida, like Taylor, recognizes that Marxism depends on metaphysics and ontology but cannot allow itself to be associated with any rigid grounding. Derrida delights in the tension.) See: Jacques Derrida, Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International, translated by Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).


An important tension is exemplified here. It is these same Romantic understandings of self upon which Marxism depends which are being challenged and crushed by the objective ontology of the technological spirit which fuels the relevancy of Marxism as a social force. I think this irony is fatal and also infects Taylor's other projects, as we shall see.


32 This, I think, acts as a good example of the problems of all ontology.
Man has come to understand himself as creating his own purposes from within himself. The world, as a result of, or as contributing to, this view, is perceived as an instrument with which to create changes that the individual wants or freely chooses. We, as Westerners, see this view of the self as "normal". There is still, on the fringes of intellectual society, a residual resentment against this type of ontological understanding. Man's potential is seen as his own; life is seen as a category of human expression with all the Kantian baggage the term implies. For Taylor this is a true demonstration of the potential or the degradation of what man truly is.33

Taylor is not comfortable talking in specifics about what man really is. He can write that there is a bent in our nature for "free and therefore collective control over our destiny".34 He can also write: "The only reason for faith in the inevitability of socialism is a naive Enlightenment belief in the certainty of progress and the goodness of human nature."35 Whatever his position, Taylor is not comfortable with Marxism's (and modern socialism's) grasp of the human self. As Taylor sees it there can be no exact science when it comes to human beings.36 But is what Marxism does with regards to the self an exact science? Is it not easier to consider it as a prescriptive analysis? Man, for Marx, is not a sensible object like the rest of the world; he is the sensible activity that creates developments in the mode of production. Yet, at the same time for Marx, man as an agent of human activity and


This is a wonderful remark. It ties the teleology of Hegelianism and the humanistic ontology of Marx to the apron of the Enlightenment. While I agree with this view, Taylor eventually does not. All the same, it does suggest an interesting point about what is required (or necessary for grounding) for a view of historical movement or inherent selves which are the nucleus of Taylor's work.

consciousness is the result of the paradigmatic force of this method of production.\textsuperscript{37} Marx, as suggested above, claims that man has a central inherent core that is hidden, but remains, in the social construction. Now, the first part of this would require a hard truth to demonstrate; the second is the argument against accepting the validity of that truth.

This tension is crucial to Marxism - the declaration of an ontology and a socially constructed self are not impossible to swallow. The notion that both are necessary to fuel the communist dream and that they will not become submerged with each other is very different. There is another element to this tension that bears articulation. Following Marx's logic of contradiction and false-consciousness only the final man at the end of history is true and valid. Final success in the historical project makes all previous notions of consciousness irrelevant.\textsuperscript{38} (The past then for Marx is not history but is reformulated as "pre-history".) Therefore the conditions of communist society are irrelevant to its particular consciousness. Consciousness is no longer needed to shape or contextualize society. Taylor writes:

But if communism, as the solution to the enigma, deprives pre-communist man of his role in history, it gives an exaggerated importance to communist man. For to "know the solution" is to have a consciousness which is not conditioned at all, it is to have a view which can never be seen as partial and incomplete by posterity. Marx's doctrine of communism, therefore, conflicts with the dialectical view of history in two related ways. It makes the consciousness of all previous societies irrelevant to their development, and it makes the conditions of communist society irrelevant to its consciousness.\textsuperscript{39}

This is an absolutely essential point. It illustrates perfectly how Marxist man becomes synonymous

\textsuperscript{37} See: Charles Taylor, "The Ambiguities of Marxist Doctrine", 159.


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 162.
with truth in the communist stage; man becomes 'scientifically and ontologically pure', and now man is distanced from the failed, but necessary, consciousness of the past. In his argument Marx is able to have things both ways. Man, as he is under capitalism, is a failure, yet this failed being is essential to the development of perfect being in the way that allows failed man to vanish when he is no longer needed. If consciousness and industry are so entwined, how is it that movement of the proportions that Marx envisions can occur? And, to return to the view that we articulated above, how, without a strong external being, would we know what to keep and what to throw away in our dialectical movement? Remember, "the ideal is nothing more than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought".

To understand Marx's position as regards consciousness, production and the movement of history it is integral to consider the Hegelianism that Feuerbach provided for Marx. This will also provide us with a corollary understanding of being by which we can further, and challenge, Marx. In a short book review, Taylor gives voice to the intellectual line that starts with Hegel and moves through to Marx. Taylor sees Feuerbach as an extension of Hegel and a pre-cursor to Marx as he attempted to convert Hegel's image of Geist into a representation of the possibility and final end of man. As we have been arguing about Marx, Feuerbach was a materialist, but not, Taylor insists, the

40 A view that I am more sympathetic towards is offered by Alexandre Kojeve in his Introduction to the Reading of Hegel. Kojeve argues that at the end of history man, rather than being realized, disappears. Man becomes an animal constructing edifices of existence and participates in a world that does not demand (and so justify) his involvement. See: Shadia B. Drury, Alexandre Kojeve: The Roots of Postmodern Politics (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

41 In fact it is my argument that since the Enlightenment all visions of escape, be they Marx's or Taylor's are tunnels back to the original Enlightenment epistemology of instrumental reason. I will explore this theme in the second part of this text.

sort akin to the materialism of the Enlightenment. Feuerbach was too convinced of Hegel's Enlightenment critique to be victimized by the Enlightenment's dull humanism. As the Enlightenment negated God as just an extension of human fear or desire, Hegel exposed the Enlightenment as not quite as ungrounded as was claimed. The Enlightenment view could not stand up to the hard questions of its origins. Hegel argued that the self by which philosophy could be grounded, was discoverable through transcendental argument (imminent critique). The transcendental argument is the dialectic with a starting point. We start with that which is impossible to deny and from that point of origin move dialectically to a thorough articulation of the self.43

Feuerbach, who respected Hegel's method, applied it to Hegel. He found the tension in Geist which he reconciled by recreating it as Man.44 This is not ordinary materialism according to Taylor: it differs in that central to its suppositions is the understanding that it needs to be grounded in a view of the self.45 Feuerbach recognized that the subject who inspects is partially formed by the act of inspecting. This is crucial to the notion of the embodied agent and to our discussion of Marx regarding consciousness and the method of inquiry. Starting at point A, a subject who is questioning the purity of that point will be transformed into person and point B while still imagining they are considering point A. Point A no longer exists and any dialectical conclusions that person now at point B assesses and propounds will be implemented on a being for whom the process no longer applies.

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43 Interestingly, this development of self-understanding through dialectic is constantly at the mercy of the mind of the one who is exposing and mending contradictions.

44 Again, Kojève suggests that Feuerbach made Christianity secular; turned God into man. The end of history demonstrates the truth of atheism as man ascends to the throne previously reserved for God. Kojève, as stated earlier, does not see the last man in quite the same way, but it is interesting to see the clear path that goes from Hegel through to Nietzsche.

Movement isn't dialectical anymore; it is the perpetuating of massive error intentionally but unconsciously.

For the sake of clarity, let us compare the two concepts of being that we have enunciated. First, we have the Marxist view that being stems from the result of the mode of production and is nominally protected by a slight core of true recognizable being. Second is the view adopted by Marx from Feuerbach - man is also changed by the fact that he evaluates his critical surroundings. This is a tricky project as Taylor concedes: "Feuerbach did not find the adequate formulation, but when one examines the difficulties he tried to master, one becomes less and less convinced that Marx did either." We have argued that this evolution of being cannot be necessarily guided in any specific way. In fact, the dialectical pursuit could result in the formulation of a being who rejects the plausibility of dialectics. By considering both of these concepts together it strikes the reader that the dialectical analysis of the Marxian ontology which hints at true being (which Feuerbach suggests we implement) would prove impossible to defend. With that core of personality challenged it is hard to comprehend Marx's system as moving in any way that is other than arbitrary. This is especially pertinent if, as Taylor argues, Marx's descriptions depend on his prescriptions. In a single dialectical stroke teleology and essentialist ontology become connected. Whether a hermeneutical view of the self can be justified, desired and separated from this mire remains to be seen.

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47 Ibid.


For evidence of Taylor's sympathies:

(The line from Hegel to Marx remains in many ways the most clear and intellectually structured theory of liberation of the modern world. I believe it is difficult properly to understand the modern world - that is, not just the events which we read about in the
For Marxists, is there a point to be made about interpretation? It seems that there is not. For the Marxist, interpretation is always eventually about emptiness. The point is, rather, movement and alteration; the achievement of fullness. This, it is important to note, cannot be understood outside of Hegel and Feuerbach. But the need for interpretation is necessary if Marxism can be shown to make metaphysical claims; if it does that, if it speaks of truth, then we must allow a position where scepticism or suspicion is possible. What sort of consciousness, or dialectic, would we have if we didn't? A religious/metaphysical outlook is apparently antithetical to the socialist state. The religious man and the Romantic need illusions; they breed false consciousness. Marxism's unanimity of purpose needs to be couched in philosophical expression. The only basis for this is in a truth; for Marxism - historical materialism. There is a relationship, then, between socialism and philosophy. And if we argue, as we have, that the goals of Marxism will not be realized given their epistemological baggage then a place for interpretation or mending of Marxist principles is demanded.

What is wrong with Marxism in a practical sense? We must again consider the problem of man as the fuel of history. It appears that we are faced with two awful options as regards this process:

newspapers, but even some of our emotional reactions, to personal “liberation” of ourselves or others, for instance - without some grasp of what this liberation talk is all about; and almost impossible to gain an intellectually coherent grasp of this without referring to the tradition of dialectical thought which Hegel launched and Marx so influentially transformed.

If this is the case, if Taylor is sincere, then we have a compelling example of how he is tied to the fragilities of the logical inadequacy of the Marxist tradition. This critique will develop as we continue.


50 See: Charles Taylor, "Socialism and Weltanschauung", 46.

51 Ibid, 57-8.

The argument being that the way we think, paradigmatically, connects with what we can think or imagine in the future. If we allow our ‘epistemes’ to be narrow this will trap our futures; thus the importance of hermeneutics.
history and the consciousness of man are either arbitrary or man is the product of historical determinism. Can the proletarian revolution occur if man is historically determined, a conditioned being? It seems unlikely. For Marx to move, man must be able to consciously transform his notion of human nature. For this to succeed, the Marxist must reject the ontological value of previous incarnations of being as useful, but no longer necessary and so no longer valid. This looks a lot like totalitarianism. To critique totalitarianism from a Marxist stance you have to reject the Marxist ontology and view of the dialectic. You have to be prepared to accept the possibilities of Stalin if you want to accept the critique of capitalism.

Marx tries to argue against those theorists who defined freedom as the individual free from restraints made by others. He offered that freedom lies in the collective control of our common life. But this has the inner logic of totalitarianism. In Taylor's view, we have to accept that ruling oneself is obviously the height of freedom. We need to think in terms of civil society and not collective control.

Marx's idea of the collectivity seems to be connected to the philosophy of Rousseau as well as that of Hegel and Feuerbach. Rousseau's general will posited a common being centred on a

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52 For a good exploration of the connection, or philosophical tension existing, between Marxism and nationalism see: Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). In it he writes:

Just as extreme Shi'ite Muslims hold that the archangel Gabriel made a mistake, delivering the message to Mohammed when it was intended for Ali, so Marxists basically like to think that the spirit of history or human consciousness made a terrible boob. The awakening message was intended for classes, but by some terrible postal error was delivered to nations. It is now necessary for revolutionary activists to persuade the wrongful recipient to hand over the message, and the zeal it engenders, to the rightful and intended recipient.


54 See: Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?", 211.
common purpose which, in turn, furthered the common identity. The tradition that begins in Rousseau can be contrasted with a much richer notion of civic humanism. Taylor understands civic humanism as society acting as a participatory community in which the institutions of the state reflect and purport a common human dignity. Where Rousseau offers a political theory based on consensus, the civic humanist tradition is a politics of conflict. For Taylor, Marx got off on the wrong foot by basing his political theory on Rousseau who had an atomistic conception of man which he socialized. The notion that men can reach consensus with one another is an idea rich in totalitarian danger. Arguing that unanimity equals perfect human freedom inevitably leads to the imposition of unanimity.

Marxism seems dead. It demands a belief in historical materialism which not very many people believe in anymore. The goals of socialism, socialists seem to be recognizing, can only be continued through Enlightenment structures and are attached to Enlightenment goals. Taylor muses that the old school socialists must think that this is where socialism started. He argues that socialism is empty because it finds the source of its grounding in the same principles as its enemy- the Enlightenment.

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55 Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Socialist Humanism", Out of Apathy, 64. Taylor embodies the civic humanist tradition in figures like Toqueville and Hannah Arendt.

56 Ibid, 65. Taylor furthers the point: "Marx then transposes it (atomism) into a social form, in which the self-creating subject is no longer an individual but a social subject: the species-being."

57 Ibid, 66.

58 Ibid, 54.

And the conversation continues. A slew of recent books all discuss, or aim to consider, the plausibility of socialism as a positive force. Inherent in some of these pamphlets is a concern for the question of the common good. In Socialism and the Common Good the question as to how common good can be answered in a world comprised of individualists is responded to in terms of assumed liberal principles of social justice and the line between the market and the state. Socialism has backed itself into social democracy. See: Preston King, ed., Socialism and the Common Good (London: Cass, 1996); Peter Hain, Ayes to the Left (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1996); Leo Panitch, ed., Are There Alternatives: Socialist Register 1996 (New York: Merlin Press, 1996).
Socialism is born from, and connected to, the Enlightenment and industrial society.\(^5^9\) The left has ignored their own moral basis. They have acted as if they could argue without one. It was predictable that Marxism would die, it began as spiritually dead. In trying to create itself out of Rousseau's atomism, Marxism depended on empty self-determining concepts of freedom. Socialists just emphasize different terms; the end of production for socialism is deified, made into a human-God.\(^6^0\)

The socialist movement, for Taylor, is trapped by its theory of ontology and its connection to economics. Taylor writes: "(t)he failure of the economic model is the condemnation of all models of human society which are based purely on an image of man as agent."\(^6^1\)

The eventual arguments of Taylor must reject atomistic political philosophy. They remain too tied to Enlightenment principles of objectivity, individuality and neutral disengagement. The question that should plague us is: can we escape the baggage of the Enlightenment? Does romanticism actually accomplish a split? Is there such a thing as alternative interpretations? If the most powerful philosophy of collective strength ever attempted in the modern world is stuck to the Enlightenment foundations of teleology and ontology\(^6^2\), can one imagine escape?

In the next chapter I will start my critical look at the source of Taylor's malaise: the epistemology that stems from the Enlightenment.

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\(^5^9\) For an interesting historical example consider John Strachey, member and high insider of the British Labour Party for over thirty years. A devout communist, philosophy never entered his head. Socialism was about one thing: social ownership of the means of production. Without that criteria, socialism did not exist. A recent biography of him shows in a manner congruent with our arguments here the powerful connection between the history of the Labour party and an empiricist epistemology. See: Noel Thompson, *John Strachey: An Intellectual Biography* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 1993).


\(^6^1\) See: Ibid, 234.

Chapter Six - Epistemology

"For that matter, I've antagonized my adviser. I told him I had no intention of fulfilling the science requirement."
"For God's sake, why not?"
"You don't really want to know."
Orson felt this rebuff as a small test of strength. "Not really," he agreed.
"I consider science a demonic illusion of human hubris. Its phantasmal nature is proved by its constant revision. I asked him, 'Why should I waste an entire fourth of my study time that could be spent with Plato, mastering a mass of hypotheses that will be obsolete by the time I graduate?'"
"My Lord, Henry," Orson exclaimed, indignantly defending the millions of lives saved by medical science, "you can't be serious!"
- John Updike
"The Christian Roommates"

The progress of realism can only be charted by its concurrent relationship to the history of ideas. Scientists give us little justification for viewing our present scheme of things, or any given worldview, as the absolute actuality. They have given us relativity, not revelation; they have revealed truths by exposing falsehoods; by trial and error they have learned to improve our observations and revise our hypotheses. All acquisition of knowledge can be described as the continual revision of hypotheses. The possibilities of experience are always vaster than our efforts to account for them; be they literary or scientific; and to that extent, truth will always be stranger than fiction.

- Harry Levin
The Gates of Horn

This chapter explores Taylor's critique of epistemology for two different reasons. First, Taylor's deconstructive approach to traditional epistemology is powerful and compelling and very much worthy of interest on its own sake. Second, it is in Taylor's critique that he shows his own theoretical perspective and while he may argue that his criticisms are grounded in the pursuit of truth
rather than the pursuit of a methodical morality - they, I believe, turn out to be the same thing. The fact that they are the same thing is curious. As such, the question that this chapter addresses is how Taylor is going to hold on to truth and philosophy after he has desecrated the analytic of reason? How is he going to posit an appropriate understanding of representation without recourse to knowledge about the thing-in-itself? I wish to suggest that if you distinguish philosophy from the methods of philosophy these problems can be avoided.

Empiricism is based on the attainment of factual knowledge based on sense experience. The subject of the empirical world is a mind that has sense organs which are connected to the phenomenal discharge of objects in his perceptual range. Taylor, correctly, notes that a critique of epistemology, of a theory of knowledge, has to be aimed at the whole of the project. It has to include a critique of the knowledge claim; of the ontology required for the claim to work; and the notion of experience, again, upon which the whole structure hangs.

The common critique against epistemology in these post-Foucaultian times is that what we think of as knowledge is completely dependant on powerfully induced social constructions of reality. The empiricist only partly agrees. Knowledge may change but the way that we know it does not. The method of humans gathering information is consistent and frozen. If we can develop a perfect empiricist method we just fit the data into the schema and out will come science. For the empiricist truth, depends on the exact recording of sensual occurrences. The empiricist notes and records brute-

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1 See: Charles Taylor (with Alan Montefiore), "From an Analytical Perspective", 5.

2 Ibid, 7.

This chapter deals specifically with the first critique - that of the knowledge claim. Chapter seven deals more explicitly with the ontological and experiential claims.

data. This brute-data is not questionable; it can in no way be, or should not be, altered by further postulations of reasoning.4 Even a criteria or qualification like belief is attached to brute-datum.5

The empirical tradition requires that phenomena be shaped into brute-data. This ability to take in data must be, for efficiency and by its nature, interpretation free. After the data is amalgamated it must be formulated and shaped by hypotheses. At all these stages interpretation is invalid. If an onlooker claims a different feeling or sense of what is being captured, this introspective declaration is to be qualified as hopelessly metaphysical.6

By using empirical tactics we are trying to make the strange understandable. We are bringing the odd into clearer focus. Taylor writes:

We usually claim to have explained an event when we give an antecedent from which it follows; not indeed any antecedent, but one which has a certain saliency: either because it is the one which we can alter more easily, or because it is the one which varies more often, the other conditions being standing conditions, or for some other reason. But in a scientific context, we have come to demand something more: we expect the antecedent condition to be singled out in concepts which show the connection between this outcome which we are explaining and a host of others.7

Taylor has correctly identified the empiricist aim to articulate the whole. By discovering the essence of an object, of what the object must be to be an object, we do not learn very much about the whole

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4 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretations and the Sciences of Man", Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences 19.

5 Ibid, 31.

This is curious. Our beliefs are so centrally dependant on our sensory experience that the notion of belief, itself, cannot be understood outside of, and so is inherently connected to, brute-datum. One of the queries of this chapter is whether Taylor can accept, or except himself from, this supposed rule. Taylor argues that political conceptions of reality depend on personal meanings that cannot be seen as brute-data. In a sense, for Taylor, it depends on how particular canons define their terms and how compellingly they instill them. (See: Ibid, 43.)


7 See: Charles Taylor, "Explanation of Purposive Behaviour", 49.
of the world. All we seem to learn about is what we need to say to talk about the object. But as this is all that we can say about anything, our understanding of the world is necessarily reducible to our ability to approximate objects. This approximation of the object is generally posed by two possible avenues of study. The first is the factual look at the object itself. The second is more conceptual, it looks at the relationship between the words that describe objects and does not attempt to say anything about the object as it truly is. These two studies can be labelled the modern and the positivist models.\footnote{See: Charles Taylor, "Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis", 99. Taylor suggests a third possibility to be found in phenomenology. It entails the intuition of essences, depending on intentionality, and is completely outside empiricism or positivism. We will look at this third option in more detail in chapter ten.}

As we discussed in chapter two the history of epistemology is grounded in some crucial human desires and needs. Knowledge has slowly and surely become the "inner depiction of an outer reality".\footnote{See: Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", \textit{Philosophical Arguments}, 3. Taylor is quoting Willard Quine in this selection.} This epistemological force has found its highest success in a mechanized scientific procedure.\footnote{See chapter two for elaboration of the chronological movement of empiricism to modern science.} Viewing the world as a mechanism has inevitably negated the presence and possibility of many alternative views. For Aristotle, the mind became one with the object of interest. (It was informed by the same \textit{Eidos}.) The mind participated in the being of the object. This is very hard to imagine today - representationalism seems the only imaginable manner in which to account for the being of objects. The mechanism of the 17th century has negated some of our more fanciful notions of perception. Knowledge, in a way different from the Greeks, has become an understanding of what is out there and what it puts in us.\footnote{See: Ibid, 3-4.}
Taylor argues that most of materialism depends on the view that one has found or is trying to find the 'real' language of nature. Belief in this 'real' and singular language results in the entrenchment of notions of truth and entails the rejection of the "ontology of all other" formulations of truth. And while Taylor concedes, briefly, that the empiricist method may be an interesting way of looking at the world, the idea of a real language subverts the possibilities of other, equally if not more interesting, interpretations.\(^{12}\)

The possibility of a real language that articulates the truth of the world irks Taylor. His complaint is centred upon a concern that empiricist science does not include the perspective of the subject.\(^{13}\) There appears, to Taylor, a powerful contradiction in the fundamental precepts of empirical method. Empiricism depends on two criteria that are incompatible. First, it depends on the existence of self-enclosed ideas that can be understood, described and abstracted apart from connections with one another. Second, these are true representations of objects in the external world. Taylor argues that if we understand the objects as representations of real objects in the world then we cannot maintain the exclusivity of them in a singular and detached world view.\(^{14}\) If we consider the mind as an object we find that sometimes we depict it in terms of object-description and inevitably we also construe it as a standpoint governed by terms like "that".\(^{15}\) This can be elaborated by considering

\(^{12}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Ontology", 139-40.

Whether Taylor, himself, escapes discussing things in terms of things-in-itself is at the core of Rorty's criticism of Taylor (to be discussed at the close of this chapter). Rorty sees Taylor as wrongfully thinking that he is embracing a myriad of different languages; languages separated from the empirical tradition. According to Rorty any language that makes truth claims or claims of appropriate representation, no matter how masked in hermeneutics or language philosophy, is grounded in acknowledgement, and accordingly attempts of approximation, of the thing-in-itself. This theme will unfold as we continue.

\(^{13}\) This concern is the focus of the next chapter.


\(^{15}\) Ibid, 10.
Taylor's view of Heidegger:

(The)he condition of our forming disengaged representations of reality is that we must be already engaged in coping with our world, dealing with the things in it, at grips with them.16

From this perspective to even ignore the world around us requires personal engagement. What we see and what we choose to see is connected to the way we deal with things. This is what empiricism fundamentally neglects. If we are to include our own standpoint then understanding cannot be "knowledge from the absolute standpoint".17 This argument hinges on whether or not one can objectify their own desires. Self-objectification is necessary for a valid commentary on our Truthful description of the external world. Where we focus the source of knowledge, the external or internal world, for Taylor, says a lot.18 The canon of Enlightenment thought saw "mental" as an interior representation of the exterior world. Our minds were the mirrors of nature (to steal a phrase from Rorty). The argument is that we are aware of objects because we have to be, our ability to be aware depends on it and so therefore our consciousness, if forced into a reduction, owes its existence and credibility to the external world. For Taylor, ideas are not just the data of the mind. Ideas create thinking. The mental elements of being are not sense-data, they are to use Taylor's wording, an


10 Taylor considers that our inner formulations of logic are understandable because they are our own creation. This is similar to Kant in that we can understand our own frameworks because they are a necessary invention of ourselves. When we attach the Kantian "I think" we divide the subjective from the objective. Actually, for Taylor, in doing this we raise the subjective and deny the objective. Our certainty comes only from our action; that we are doing it. It is a certainty or truth only about the way that we have organized our experience. (See: Ibid, 82.)

The empiricist appreciates this dualism but also tries to mend it. Our desires and mind can also be objectified. Taylor sees this as the source of the tension and I think that he is right. There is always the need for a mind that is guiding, that is wanting this objectification even if it is an objectification of the self. It is a desire to negate our desires. Therefore the pursuit of objectivity is inevitably grounded in an unavoidable position of subjectivity.
accomplishment.\(^1\) Knowledge, then, requires a subject and as Hegel thought, it is very hard to distinguish between an object and a subject.\(^2\) Taylor concludes:

Ultimately, a good explanation is one which makes sense of the behaviour; but then to appreciate a good explanation, one has to agree on what makes good sense; what makes good sense is a function of one's readings: and these in turn are based on the kind of sense one understands.\(^3\)

With Taylor's concerns in mind let us consider the epistemological view of experience.\(^4\)

The science that comes from the empiricist school is mainly about the discussion of objects. Taylor thinks that it is our experiential perceptiveness that unites any number of similar bodies into the classifications of objects. Then, when you say something about an object, our experiential perspective engages it in a discussion with the rest of the world.\(^5\) This is what creates the impression of truth or certainty. The point of exploring, one suspects, phenomena, of even labelling it sense-data, is the need to recreate data that expresses and represents certainty. We are suspicious of truth but we want to believe in method. If we were to continually use sentences that begin: "It seems to me..." are we able to read the "seems" as an implication, a notification of truth? Can I discuss, with any validity, how an object appears to me with any pertinence? Is the answer to be found in wondering how the things out there got inside my head? Are things in nature impressed on me? With these questions in mind we need to re-consider that the problem of empiricism is the combination of the "causal account

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\(^1\) See: Ibid, 86, 90.

\(^2\) See: Charles Taylor, "From an Analytical Perspective", 20.

\(^3\) See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretations and the Sciences of Man", 24.

\(^4\) Again, our consideration will be cursory. Further attention will be provided in chapter seven.

of perception" and a particular view of experience.\textsuperscript{24}

When we consider that the foundations of empiricism depend on an isolation of objects as separate from a subject and, also, a self that participates in their exploration, the problems of the empiricist account of experience becomes obvious. The creation of sense-data as the signpost of existence is the signature of the impossible attempt to put these two irreconcilable theses together.\textsuperscript{25}

Taylor discusses Kant's desire to articulate relationships (categories) that were objectively true. Without this idea of objectivity, Taylor paraphrases, "no unity of experience and hence no unity of consciousness, and hence nothing which we could call experience at all" would be possible.\textsuperscript{26} This changes the dynamic between truth and experience substantially. With the empiricists experience was overwhelmed by the power of data; with Kant experience depends on the possibilities of certain objective realizations. It seems sensible to find some startling similarities between the two. If the relationship is to be understood as to how important the subject is to the question of knowledge - how different are the two answers? Without a subject there is no point, or possibility, to objectifying. Without an involved subject there is no point to the way objects are classified; without him random representations would suffice. For Kant, experience must be a whole "shaped by the demands of objectivity."\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} See: Charles Taylor, "Sense Data Revisited", 100-1, 110.

\textsuperscript{25} See: Ibid, 110.

\textsuperscript{26} See: Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} See: Ibid, 111. It is my contention that Taylor concurs with this rather troublesome notion. This needs to be stated more clearly. Concurrence with Kant is not odd or startling; it is sensible and agreeable that without some categories like time and space relations we couldn't have what we know as experience. The troubling aspect is why this would matter given that from this point there is no further logical assumptions that can be made. Also, as is noted in the main text, there does not seem to be the distance necessary between the pre-objective and the objective understandings for profitable thought.

As a curious sidebar, Taylor, speaking of Heidegger, states that the fact that action is first "un-reflected practice"
facts. This is the difference between a context and the actual material. We cannot know the material outside of our own subjectivity but we must also depend on objectivity for the foundations of this subjectivity. One can easily see the critique of the empiricists. What is harder to see is the justification of hermeneutics as reasonable and not just a random guess. Also, it is difficult to see what the categories of space and time do to contribute to the movement of a dialectic.

In Kant, then, we have both a threat and a promise. If we are to be the sort of person who is capable of experiencing objective reality we have to tie ourselves to objectivity with the categories of existence. We cannot, then, have an experience without accepting it is as grounded in objectivity. That is, we make our foundations of existence an object. From this objective base we necessarily see relationships between what we perceive as representations. We are forced to note conditions of being (reflected in our representations) that without our actions and thoughts would be incoherent. So, as regards the empiricist model, we have a strange mix of critique and enslavement. We would be unable to make sense of the world if it was just data but we would also be unable to make sense of the world if it did not contain data. Dualism, then, has a subtle defender, it seems that it is not possible to be a person without dividing experience from non-experience even if this division is designed to demonstrate the impossibility of the final truth of such divisions. We are originally trapped in categories; it is through subjectivity that this essentially objective perspective demands that we are able to ward off the imposition of further categorical constraint.28 It is Taylor's adherence to the principles of this type of thinking that Richard Rorty uniformly rejects.

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negates the premise of a full understanding of what we are. (See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Philosophy of Mind", 96.) A strain of continental philosophy has used such thoughts to justify and perpetuate a movement of poetic self-invention. While Taylor is not eventually supportive of such movements, this sort of statement does demonstrate the problems that Taylor will have with his transcendental argument and his arguments of hermeneutical ontology.

We can accept that experience does not tell us the perfect constitution. We recognize that we are capable of dealing with our experience of phenomena in many ways; the potentials of interpretation go on and on. The rhetoric of the logical empiricists tried to provide a law into which we fit our experience.\(^{29}\) We, sensing that they did not possess a theory that was truth itself, wondered why we should bother. Taylor's arguments are strong, so strong that it is hard to imagine that modern science has the sort of hold it does have on our minds and imaginations. Let us concern ourselves, now, with the power of scientific theory as regards Taylor's most explicit concerns.

The tension between the "in-me" and the "out-there" which Kant and the empiricists exemplify is supposedly mended by science.\(^{30}\) Science, in Taylor's view, is comprised of three criteria that combine to make a neat circle. Science provides exactness to common sense; determines how "strength" of cogency is measured; and then justifies its own criteria as strengths.\(^{31}\) Scientific explanation provides the "antecedent conditions" of what is to be explained. This further demonstrates the connections between the explained and other factors, so revealing a method of discovering consistency and variability in properties. This knowledge of flexibility facilitates the ability for scientists to predict and manipulate. It also creates a language of procedure by which pursuits of truth are measured and evaluated.\(^{32}\) The interesting thing to draw from this is the premise of a unifying theory of knowledge. Science in its articulation of relationships unites what one might have thought were properties of essential difference.

\(^{29}\) See: "Understanding In Human Science", 29.


\(^{32}\) See: Ibid.
This understanding of science is compounded when we consider that the primary aim of science (outside of the pursuit of truth) is the perpetuation of control over objects.\textsuperscript{33} Simply, the scientific maxim could be stated as such: by learning how things work we learn how to use them.\textsuperscript{34} For this to work mechanistic explanations need to negate certain abstract possibilities of man's mind. Mechanistic explanations have negated the notion of meaningful progress and of embodied contextual understandings of experience.\textsuperscript{35} For science to be true it has to be true for everyone at anytime. As such, particular quirks of individuality cannot be connected to its reflections; science must see without a particular type of vision. It cannot pursue a teleological view for this too would be a constraint against neutrality.

For science, then, norms of behaviour and of external action are discovered they are not demonstrated. Science searches for a "conceptual framework" that will depict normality; it does not prove an abstract premise.\textsuperscript{36} Science, if it eventually produces a conceptual framework, will be able to unify diverse understandings of phenomena under one umbrella of understanding. Taylor suggests

\textsuperscript{33} Taylor in \textit{Sources of the Self} makes the Augustinian point that this desire for control is connected to the weakest of possible human wills. It is in not knowing the Christian good that will drive us to possess the world and be self-indulgent. See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 138.

\textsuperscript{34} See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 39-40.

Taylor writes elsewhere that mechanistic theories of science do not increase our ability to manipulate phenomena like it says it does. (See: Charles Taylor, "How is Mechanism Conceivable?", \textit{Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language}, 164.) To make sense of Taylor's latter comment we must not conclude that he thinks technological theories to be moot. The point of his comment is probably best read as an indictment of mechanism to provide valid progress. It would be foolish to argue that science has not made great leaps in the manipulation of nature. But perhaps it has not worked to our advantage as manipulating agents given that we, too, are under the knife of science. We have become an object of manipulation and as such are unable to maintain a detached, disengaged perspective through which to control our supposed power to control.

\textsuperscript{35} We no longer see ourselves as contained within a "web of meaning" in Taylor's terms. This is the source of Taylor's central critique of epistemology. Its ontological ramifications will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 36-7, 78.

\textsuperscript{36} See: Charles Taylor, "The Explanation of Purposive Behaviour", 53.
that there is more to this. The scientific hypotheses that explains an event or group of events creates the generalization that sets up the explication which shows the connection between diverse principles. The respectability of scientific thought relies on the validity of the conceptual framework that is used and results. The danger in this sort of thinking occurs when the principles of neutral scientific hypotheses are translated to the social sciences. For Taylor, the social sciences are grounded on disagreements about conceptual frameworks.37

The task of science is to depict without care. This apathy is central to the promise of natural science in delivering eventual claims of absoluteness and objectivity. Subjectivity is eventually connected to desirability and this taints or 'loads' the scientific method. Science makes a self-demand to be value-free.38

Science aims to provide as much intellectual certainty as is possible. It does not want to force phenomena into a model. As such, science demands the presence of a neutral world which can be evaluated and then shaped. This neutrality refers to both the natural world and the human world.39

To objectify nature in an unbiased manner man must be primarily an individual who is unable to bring contextual baggage and the art of misinterpretation to the epistemological project. This negation of interpretation as fundamental to understanding disconcerts Taylor especially (or perhaps solely) in terms of the social sciences. (When these scientific methods are transposed to a social science like politics alternative frameworks of understanding dry up.) Taylor does not accept the plausibility of

37 See: Ibid, 54. I will discuss the problems of epistemological neutrality in more detail in chapter eight.


39 See: Charles Taylor, "Peaceful Coexistence in Psychology", in Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language 135.
thought without a conceptual framework. Like Kant, Taylor sees an "I think" belonging to every thought. Taylor writes:

We cannot measure such sciences against the requirements of a science of verification: we cannot judge them by their predictive capacity. We have to argue that they are founded on intuitions which all do not share and what is worse that these intuitions are closely bound up with our fundamental options...the whole attempt to find the ideas of forms basic to reality involves us in the delusive game of placing there what we supposedly discover.  

If, as I have shown Taylor to suggest, our thinking is grounded in our experience and self-understanding how we are to now understand the principles of rational thought? Can a desirable concept of rationality survive a divorce with objectivity?

For the objectivist, human reality and social institutions are objectified in the name of understanding. Reason, as part of this process, becomes not an instrument of truthful vision but a technique of objectification. The rationalist starts with the intuition of meaning and then in the development of empirical clarity defines certainty. Certainty can be provided by ordering our thoughts with logical appropriateness. If reason is connected to truth, reason then must expose the relationships of actuality; reason for it to be useful must be didactic. If this understanding of rationality is not desirable, meaningful options are few. Rational thought can be seen as creating representations; not representing a portion of reality but designating meaning usefully or arbitrarily. For the latter, reason's role is cemented in maintaining the logical consistencies of the framework it has designed. It is no longer a case of reason in the philosophical/dialectical sense where the truth is

\[\text{See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 57; "Theories of Meaning", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 249.}\]

\[\text{See: Charles Taylor, "Peaceful Coexistence in Psychology", 135; "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 18; "Overcoming Epistemology", 5.}\]

\[\text{See: Charles Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods", 244; "Rorty in the Epistemological Tradition", 262.}\]
pursued. Rather, reason becomes a grammarian maintaining the sanctity of patterns. What happens, in Taylor's view, when reason and philosophy are relegated to these sort of options is easily understood by examining utilitarianism.43

Utilitarianism, as a political theory, fits securely with the epistemological tradition in that it satisfies the rational criteria of the empirical model. By grounding itself in the promise of human happiness, utilitarianism is able to discuss its desires in what appear to be factual terms. Utility is based on calculation of observable empirical realities. It does not see itself as dependant or infused with a metaphysical stance. Ethical questions are answered by the utilitarian without the need of a deliberative moral language.44

Utilitarianism rejects qualitative differences; there is just desire, no higher or lower goods. For the natural science tradition the idea of higher goods seems silly. The important question for the utilitarian is what is it right to do, never what is it good to be.45 For Taylor, it is an illusion that there is only one realm of moral possibility and that it can be encompassed in one principle of utilitarianism. The importance of philosophy is that there is more than one moral position and that these disparate positions will conflict.46 Philosophy must be an arbiter and it must sculpt an understanding of reason

43 I would argue that Taylor's Hegelian use of dialectics is very much akin to the second option for reason - that of the grammarian. The Hegelian contradiction, I think, is best understood as a recognition of a broken rule; a rule dependant on procedural frameworks. For Taylor these rules are engrained within. (See: Charles Taylor, "To Follow A Rule", Philosophical Arguments.)

44 See: Charles Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods", 231. Taylor sees this understanding as behind more recent Kantian political theory like that of John Rawls and of pragmatism. For Rawls and pragmatists questions of metaphysical truth are negated for direct appeals to unjustified human want. Taylor does not accept Rawls claim to only require "thin" notions of the good. For Taylor, the utilitarians are enmeshed in a deep moral language which they refuse to recognize. For the most complete analysis of this problem see chapter seven of this work and: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 79-81, 89, Chapter 19.


which is sympathetic to this role. But can we believe in the possibility of philosophy anymore? Can philosophy truly separate itself from the paradigm of reason that we have, first, become accustomed to, and, second, now rejected as doubtful? Taylor, of course, still sees room for a rational philosophy. He also sees the possibilities of a radical scepticism. It is in this tension that Taylor's project becomes apparent. His preference for a vague idea of philosophy over epistemology is well demonstrated in the following comment:

Now, theory of this high level (moral philosophy) may make many dizzy, and if so, it is always possible to remain on the lower slopes and collect facts about the solution or non-solution of problems and the avowed reasoning of the subject.  

While this sort of derisive comment may be appropriate and understandable coming from Taylor, it belittles the problems that Taylor's view of philosophy faces. The deconstruction of rationality and objectivity does have tremendous ramifications on any sort of moral philosophy. It may be possible for the moral philosopher to escape; but this escape must be wagered in the face of a tremendous scepticism of the rational project.

As utilitarianism has annulled the arguments between different moral goods it has created an opening for rational scepticism. Utilitarianism, as a political theory, is partly based on the impossibility of arguing between different moral voices. As such, the utilitarian appeal is found by those who desire a singular ethical standpoint by which we shall live. Taylor does not find the utilitarian solution morally compelling: "(i)n the absence of some demonstration of the validity of naturalism of this kind, the utilitarian and formalist reductions are clearly arbitrary." There are two paths we can choose

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47 See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 162.

48 See: "The Diversity of Goods", 244.
from: we can become cynical and sceptical of the plausibility of evaluating moral claims or we can understand the source of scepticism to be an amplification of a Hegelian contradiction.\textsuperscript{49} This entails viewing Taylor's criticism of epistemology as a move towards rejection of the contradictory. Reason, in this sense, discloses error.\textsuperscript{50} Statements and ideas are logical, consistent and acceptable when they do not contradict each other. This might be so but how does it deal with the problem, and not the creation, of scepticism? How are we to argue against the premise that either we are believers of certain views or we are not?

It is commonly suggested that we once believed in truth. Now, we believe in various disparate truths. How is it that we are able to make moral arguments in such a relationship? Reason either is useless in this sort of endeavour or we accept that there are "substantive issues between world-views which are arbitrable by reasoned argument aiming at validity."\textsuperscript{51} Does this latter option seem preposterous? Does it not seem more plausible, as Richard Rorty suggests, that our moral choices are choices between rival languages by which decision is dictated by how we conceive suitability? When Taylor argues that we are capable of agreeing about "substantive matters" are we talking about something that transcends just a common language or frame of reference? Taylor writes:

Can you invoke something to show that a torturer is wrong, objectively wrong, which you can prevent from being invoked to show that your way of life is wrong or

\textsuperscript{49} In order to be a Hegelian contradiction there is a requirement that we accept the dialectic as Hegel has articulated it. I have argued in chapters two and three that the Hegelian dialectic is logically unacceptable - that to use it as a framework would be an equally arbitrary reduction. If we are to continue to understand philosophy and reason as the methodology of morality then we are inevitably going to deal with these two choices: nihilism or Hegel. I suggest here, and elsewhere, that this tension cannot be mended and requires dismissal rather than overhaul for Taylor's vision to be realized.

\textsuperscript{50} See: 'Overcoming Epistemology", 15.

\textsuperscript{51} See: Charles Taylor, "Rorty in the Epistemological Tradition", 262.
It seems to me that instead of talking about objective, substantive truth what we are actually talking about is different languages of understanding. Moral philosophy, in this sense, is a discussion about languages. It seems understandable to register that one's own language reflects one's own sentiments and expressions better than another. When Rorty talks of how speaking differently rather than speaking truly is the force that changes history - Taylor asks what sort of truth claim this is. This is frustrating and surprising as it suggests that Taylor is still stuck in the mire of rational demonstration. Rorty has thrown out the epistemological tradition and with that dismissal the questions of how we know, what we know and where we are in history are also dismissed. Taylor does not throw out the questions whose answers once raised his ire. The question of singularity versus plurality is not interesting to Rorty - investing in its possibilities is to celebrate an ethic of objectivity imposed by a still apparently powerful Enlightenment tradition. Taylor, justly, condemned Marx for maintaining the atomistic bent of the Enlightenment but he stills clings to reasoned truth as final arbiter. His faith in what he calls substantive agreement does not extend to a faith without recourse to rational defence. Taylor argues that through certain reasonable understandings of the essential nature of language and teleology we are drawn to reject certain world views. His views of language and progress tend toward his sympathies with the hermeneutical method. Taylor knows the Enlightenment is wrong because of its contradictions; Rorty feels it was dull, asked all the boring questions and is not worthy of further consideration. Taylor does not see the Rorty position. To his

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52 Ibid, 261.


54 See chapter five.
thinking, to reject epistemology without replacing it only serves epistemology.55

Is philosophy, even the philosophy of Taylor, essentially grounded in empiricism? Is philosophical reflection a reflection on what can be empirically shown? Is the offer of philosophy more than just different interpretations, even anti-interpretations, of data and grounded thought? Is it possible to pursue a philosophy without an epistemology? Answering these questions entails knowing what the seeking of knowledge is and means. For us to acknowledge epistemology as connected to truth do we have to know what truth really is; to appreciate a methodology do we have to be able to ascertain that it is connected to a worthy pursuit? The empiricist says it is not the content but the medium that is important. Taylor's argument would be that evaluation of the medium is dependant on the content. We cannot know how close or far we are from a correct method without having an understanding of what it is to find knowledge.56

If philosophy is the task of demonstrating the appropriateness of certain models of understanding over others then philosophers have an unenviable task. The object of philosophy cannot sensibly be objectivity. Philosophical consciousness, for a thinker like Taylor, is historical - our philosophical grasps come through a narrative. Our philosophical understanding of reality is intimately connected to the way that we have come to think about things.57 The problem of empirical philosophy has to be viewed in terms of attempted objectivity - that the empiricist cannot mend the ontological question with a defiant egoism. For the empiricist language is connected to the real and

55 See; Ibid, 273.

56 See: Charles Taylor, "From an Analytical Perspective", 4.

is not seen as connected to a particular interpretive structure.\(^5^8\) This is a philosophy that despises rhetoric; does not respect the success, over the validity, of expression. For the empiricist there is such a thing as an ideal.\(^5^9\)

Anti-empirical philosophy has to battle against a great deal of baggage. What is left for philosophy to do; has the notion of truth been irrevocably stolen? Charles Taylor sees possibilities in a hermeneutical method. Let us consider whether hermeneutics is able to escape the Enlightenment grip of objectivity.

Taylor sees interpretation as a method of making sense of "an object of study", of identifying and explicating an "underlying coherence" in a textual analogue.\(^6^0\) It follows, then, that to use a hermeneutical method one needs a textualized object that either is capable of making sense or is not. We need to be able to distinguish between the sense of understanding that we take away from a particular mode of study and the possibility that our understanding is embodied and embedded in a particular realm of expression. If we are to take the possibilities of this sort of split seriously then we must recognize that meaning is, first of all, different than expression and that there may be a host of potential meanings.\(^6^1\) Taylor insists that we also recognize that experience or the ascertaining of meaning is not something that occurs without you. You are a component of the pursuit and as such you bring some bias or baggage to the endeavour of understanding. Hermeneutics is about understanding and interpreting our various interpretations that explain human behaviour and action.

\(^{5^8}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Ontology", 135.

\(^{5^9}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Theories of Meaning", 267.

\(^{6^0}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 15.

\(^{6^1}\) See: Ibid, 16.
If we are to understand structures of meaning we cannot do this except through interpretation.

Taylor writes:

But then the text of our interpretation is not that heterogenous from what is interpreted; for what is interpreted is itself an interpretation... (it) is an interpretation of experiential meaning which contributes to the constitution of this meaning. 62

If this is indeed the case how are we to reconcile the endless reductionism of hermeneutics to a meaningful practice?

Taylor does not dispute that hermeneutics is limited in how much truth it can provide; it is not to be understood, for Taylor, as a technique or a method. It is, for him, more a process or 'view' than anything else. The problem, then, is not in finding truth but, rather, being stuck in truth. It is in our ability to remove and disengage ourselves from our previous understandings that we are freed or open to consider other interpretations. If we are able to step outside of our situated understanding we can start to imagine other paradigms. Through an imaginative use of our boundaries we are able to posit other possibilities of existence that allow us to live on any number of different levels. 63

Taylor, convincingly, argues that there is no such thing as a structure of meaning except through interpretation. He writes:

(T)he text of our interpretation is not that heterogenous from what is interpreted; for what is interpreted is itself an interpretation... (it) is an interpretation of experiential meaning which contributes to the constitution of this meaning. 64

Taylor seeks to create a hermeneutical social science which tries to identify the interpretation used by a subject to explain action. There is, then, a division of epistemology. There is a classical science

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63 See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?", 152,159.

64 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 26.
It is in this dominant epistemology that the idea of interpretation has been negated or made invisible. See: Ibid, 41.
which studies physical relationships and a hermeneutical one to study our purposes.65

There are some troubling aspects to these suggestions. My concerns can be placed into two camps. First, I am not sure if hermeneutics distances itself from instrumentalism in the way it desires. Second, it seems that hermeneutics is still logically dependant on the hegemonic form of reason that is prevalent. I see no real room to move. While it may seem agreeable that science is constructed out of our interpretations this seems also to compound Taylor's project in two additional ways: it strips him of objective promises and it still does not answer how interpretation is able to negate its own contexts in its movement.

If interpretation is to be fundamentally understood in this context as rational and not emotive (not to suggest that emotive interpretation would escape these quandaries), how are we to understand the foundation or basis of this reason without connection to an over-arching epistemology? Our ability to interpret, it would suggest, is tied to the same assumptions, hypotheses and paradigms of reason which we wish to subvert or transcend. The irony of trying to fight from the inside is that our view of the outside is connected to our work indoors.

This is connected and fleshed out by our first point. Taylor writes that we cannot separate our


Epistemology is unfriendly towards teleology. Taylor sees action as inevitably defined by its ends. If we are to change our understandings of purposes this also changes how we understand the corollary action. Action, as governed by purposes, is, then, dependant on personal meaning. Behaviour is teleological and so teleological explanations are dependant on the notion of a particular being. (See: Ibid, 120; "The Explanation of Purposive Behaviour", 55). Enlightenment epistemology rejects this view. Taylor explains:

For empiricism backs up the rejection of explanation by purpose in two ways: the notion that all knowledge is based on impressions which come to the mind from outside leads first to a dualistic notion of body and mind as in causal interaction and second gives rise to a notion of observation according to which it is difficult to give a sense to observing an action as against observing the corresponding bodily movement. (See: Charles Taylor, "The Explanation of Purposive Behaviour", 61.)
interpretations from the way we view the "direction of development". This direction is enmeshed in our understanding of ontology. What we imagine already depends on who we think that we are. Who we think we are depends on what sort of world we think we are living in. Our understanding of what sort of world we are living in depends on our episteme. Now, for us to desire a hermeneutical method, desire itself is constituted in our psyches as relating, not to reconciliation with God or truth or ritual sacrifice but, to better mechanisms for dealing with life. Taylor may attempt to shift our focus from paradigms of efficiency to paradigms of good but the idea of shifting outside of the instrumentalist framework is not attempted. If this is correct and hermeneutics does not step outside of the epistemological framework it seeks to replace, it follows that it is susceptible to the same metaphysical accusations as per usual. This whole issue, as I shall show in the next chapter, is further compounded by Taylor's accurate dismissal of the epistemological manipulation of the self.

This is one stream of my critique. My other argument is concerned with Taylor's acceptance of science as valid in relation to discussion of an external, natural world. It would seem that Taylor is arguing that our understanding of science is thoroughly grounded in our interpretive consciousness. For Taylor, like Nietzsche, there would be no truth only interpretation. But for Taylor hermeneutics requires adept insight: "if you don't understand, then your intuitions are at fault, are blind or inadequate." Taylor also writes that hermeneutics requires that we: "have the sensibility and understanding necessary to be able to make and comprehend the readings by which we can explain

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66 See: Ibid, 156.

67 Hermeneutics are a new way, for Taylor, to return to the notion of the "turn" popular with Plato and Augustine. (See chapter three.) Hermeneutics as the art of other possibilities is empty; as a theology of the appropriate gaze it strives on a completely different level. For more discussion of Taylor's theological turn, see chapter ten.

68 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretations and the Sciences of Man", 53.
the reality concerned." The suggestion is that if we do not understand a particular hermeneutic answer then we must change ourselves to accommodate the new understanding. Besides the general strangeness of this request one must wonder how this can be done in the absence of premises of objective validity. For interpretation to be of interest there still must be truth. For Taylor to demand this ethic of adherence, this truth must be demanded. What is this truth for Taylor?

Taylor recommends that we understand ourselves not as the locus of experience but as a perspective on experience. We should try a perspective that is not ego-centric but one of an inevitable and undeniable shared experience. The cross-over of the natural sciences into the social sciences has created bewilderment. This confusion has resulted without the forgiving benefits of a truth which we could feel forced to reconcile ourselves towards. Taylor writes:

One can scientifically explain why certain theories serve the self-definition of certain people, but that they do so says nothing of itself for their truth.\(^{69}\)

Objectivity is better understood, according to Taylor, as articulating a perspective in interpretation. "A successful interpretation is one which makes clear the meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, cloudy form."\(^{70}\)

Taylor's hermeneutics are interestingly understood and evaluated by considering the argument that he has been having with Richard Rorty. According to Taylor, Rorty's pragmatism is nothing more than the old Enlightenment epistemology dressed up in new clothes. Rorty, as we have already noted, is against distinguishing between objective truth and subjective truth. In truth, Rorty is against the

\(^{69}\) See: Ibid.

\(^{70}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 52.

\(^{71}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 17.
continued use of this term as separated from other terms like belief. Taylor, on the other hand, argues that we should consider subjective experience against a backdrop of an objective natural world.72

Taylor has grown concerned with how successful the critique against the natural sciences has been. Empiricism, behaviorism and logical positivism have suffered the mocking by post-modernism and the like. All science is now seen as equally, laughably hermeneutic. Taylor thinks this is wrong.73

Given our discussion of how connected Taylor's view is to Enlightenment epistemology a number of questions can again be raised. Are the hermeneuticists under the illusion that the sciences of man are different from the natural sciences or do they share a foundational basis? Are they both defined by interpretation?

Taylor mourns the demise of scientific absolutism. Taylor was happy to purge science of its lofty rhetoric of social objectivity as it rejected "subject-related terms".74 Taylor wants to protect our experience from the objectivity of science but he is willing to assert that the world that is foisted upon us can be reflected in absolute terms. Taylor needs people to cling to "absolute descriptions" because they provide something to agree about which is before experience and beyond interpretation. His thinking insists on the importance of a split between schemes and contents.75 Without an objectively

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72 See: Charles Taylor, "From an Analytical Perspective", 9.


74 See: Ibid, 33. We have to explain what people do in relation to their desires; these desires are usually understood in "subject-related terms".

75 Taylor will not accept that our language has no connection to truth and that we cannot separate ourselves from the languages we call truthful. The split between scheme and content is the difference between truth made by the world and truth made by us. Taylor writes: "it seems to me evident that we cannot do without it. We are using it all the time." (See: Charles Taylor, "Reply and Re-articulation", Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism, James Tully, ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 219.) Taylor's confusion about the distinction is well demonstrated with this comment. He sees the truths that Rorty calls usefully pragmatic as necessarily true, he is absolutely uncomfortable with thinking about our pragmatic truths as dependant solely on what we are using that thing for. For Rorty, there is gravity in a pragmatically interesting and useful way. For Taylor there is Newton and Newton understood the language of the world. Where does this
established external world Taylor is left without a grounding for the transcendental argument and, thus, no dialectic.

Taylors appears throughout his career to have been responding to what he thinks are the excesses in the era of positivism. It is in this mode that he critiques science. In the era of post-modernism he has tried to revive some of the validity of empiricism. It is plain that Taylor requires some adherence to scientific principles. What is also plain is that his work is also conducive to the dismantling of those principles. He argues succinctly and consistently that the frameworks by which we understand, by which we initiate frameworks of being are the results of interpretations which have no ability to make claims of absolute validity. Science is inevitably something we imagined. The interesting tension is that science as a truthful pursuit supports the dialectical method. It shouts that if we make a mistake, we can recognize that mistake and we can move on. The premise of non-objectivity questions the truth of mistakes and wonders how it is we know we are moving forward. Taylor insists that we need to recognize that some self-understandings can be more insightful and less self-deluded than others. He sees a term like "potential" as essential in reference to the redemption of our past. Our lives depend on living by a truth.76 Richard Rorty accuses Taylor of depending on the impossible knowledge of the Kantian thing-in-itself.

Taylor does not see the correlation between talking about the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal; the subject-related and the absolute. Simply, for him, it has been very useful to have a mechanistic science; it shows us the world without us and the difference between that and the world confidence or desire come from? Taylor's notation that we use the distinction between scheme and content does nothing to suggest that there is such a true division. For that he needs a different argument.

with us. The absolute does not refer to our interests or to the thing-in-itself. Eventually, in science all discussion is in terms of correspondence. The difference between good science and bad science is that bad science attempts to explain the subject-related without the subject.\textsuperscript{77}

There are some obvious problems with this formulation. While Taylor denies the thing-in-itself it seems that declarations that posit a world without us, upon which we can comfortably construct a world of our own experience, implies a confidence in the truth of our groundwork. As this grounding is to be understood as separate from ourselves we must be relying on some implicit faith that we are understanding the mechanizations of the external world as they are in themselves and not, Taylor's words, to ourselves. The distance he puts between his view of the phenomenal and the Kantian restriction seems a false one. By suggesting that science works on a principle of correspondence he is unable to insinuate sincerely that the thing-in-itself is not part of this explication.

There is another side to this dilemma which we have been arguing throughout this chapter - the world of natural science is not distinguishable from the experience of its participants. This is to say that our understanding of the natural world as delivered to us by our scientific methods and principle is, in Taylor's terminology, never neutral. How it is that we are suddenly able to place ourselves against this backdrop of scientific neutrality is suspicious and disconcerting.

Taylor's ironic faith in a mechanistic view of nature as separate from man suggests two important questions: how necessary is the backdrop of scientific mechanism to Taylor's thought?, and, is Taylor able to defend a separation of epistemology and ontology? The second question belongs to the next chapter and the first question is too big to be answered fully here. I would like here to bring

out some of the possible ramifications the question implies.

Taylor asks Rorty how it is we can judge better or worse statements. Rorty's response is one that Taylor cannot fathom: we cannot - there is no framework that we have that can tell us. For Taylor, this is senseless, our conversations without the capacity for judgement are a stupid game if they are unable to have confidence in approaching the truth. I do not see a question here. I think that, yes, Taylor is right: it will seem like a stupid game if rational truth is what you are aiming to talk towards - as stupid a game as any logical-language puzzle is. It is just a game, with no pejorative qualifiers, if we see it as disconnected and forgetful of the realm of metaphysics and absolutes.

In the next chapter I turn my attention to a consideration of epistemology and its attempt to dominate the social sciences. This is where, according to Taylor, epistemology has wreaked the most havoc. It has cemented itself to a theory of modern autonomy which is dominating and destroying us. There are three tenets to this hegemony that concern Taylor the most. They are: i) the disengaged subject; ii) the punctual self who treats the outside world as an instrumental object and; iii) the atomistic view of society governed by individual purposes. These three challenges have become engrained in the human character. They embody, for Taylor, a great danger - epistemology carried over into ontology.

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78 See: Ibid, 52.
This question stems from Rorty's view that we need to consider our view of truth and philosophy as a conversation that lacks metaphysical or deeply moral commitments. For Rorty, if we can be content with this conversation we will not need to construct a space for a God to come to save us. The implication, for my reading, is that Taylor is creating the dimensions necessary to posit a moral reason to support the need for God. I think this is right (and may be right beyond Taylor); it does seem interesting to consider Taylor as implicitly requiring a definable and defendable realm of transcendental truth which through argument will be shown to be comfortable enough to house a through-going moral good. This space will not only afford the presence of good it will demand it. Taylor's question, I think, can be seen as an acknowledgement of this adherence.

Chapter Seven - Forgetting The Epistemological Self

We have no communication with being; for every humane nature is ever in the middle between being borne and dying; giving nothing of itself but an obscure appearance and shadow, and an uncertain and weak opinion. And if perhaps you fix your thought to take its being; it would be even, as if one should go about to grasp the water.
   - Montaigne

How can there be an objective world of money, property, marriage, governments, elections, football games, cocktail parties and law courts in a world that consists entirely of physical particles in fields of force, and in which some of these particles are organized into systems that are conscious biological beasts, such as ourselves?
   - John Searle

Such are the troubles of logical positivism. A religious thinker ought not to respond to them with a premature triumphalism. The verifiability proposal may be arbitrary, but still it is widely proposed by scientifically minded secularists. No tenable, dichotomy can be established between genuine scientific and spurious religious propositions. The fact still is that many - perhaps most - among the modern-minded are quite sure that the first class of propositions is genuine, and they are at a loss about how to give meaning to the second. For either statements such as "God created the world" are taken as explanations of observable phenomena; but then they are outmoded, mythological, prescientific explanations. Or else they are taken not as statements of fact but as expressions of feeling; but then it is illegitimate to project the feelings upon facts. In short, logical positivism, however dubious philosophically, still powerfully articulates a modern way of life and thought, and it is perhaps as such, rather than as a philosophic argument, that is has always had its power.
   - Emil Fackenheim

In criticizing psychological behaviourism and materialism Taylor has picked an opponent that was already dying. That Taylor is so concerned with it is interesting. First, while the materialist strain of the Enlightenment is not in favour in today's world, other Enlightenment precepts, such as radical
atomism, are. Second, Taylor's critique is interesting in relation to how it may work as criticism against Taylor himself. In extending what Taylor sees as the relationship between epistemology and a particular ontology (as he often laments has occurred), I think it can be shown that, still, Taylor is stuck in a very similar philosophical position to that of the enemy he dismantles.

Taylor's view of the self is not without great merit. I find it both encouraging and, at certain moments, convincing. I find myself nodding in agreement with Taylor's critique of the naturalist ontology but I do not understand, given his scathing attack of it, why he considers the self that is left to have any essential components whatsoever. I do not suggest that he need logically end up arguing a position staked out by people like Kateb and Rorty where the self is the result of poetic creativity. Rather, it seems that Taylor should end up in a position akin to Foucault's where the self is an amalgamation of different strands of a myriad number of webs - in fact, a self that is imposed as a self. This seems especially so given Taylor's interesting and compelling arguments around the impossibility of a neutral perspective.

But Taylor refuses to eventually go this route. One can assume that his hesitation is connected to his affection for teleology and responsibility in human action. It is what Taylor has to do to maintain this image of 'essentialism', and the off-shoots of hermeneutics that inevitably follow, that is the focus of this chapter. Taylor construes a self that is embedded in and is enamoured with the debts that it owes to its creators. Does this self also require a backdrop or framework of known truth in which to exist and flourish? As the empiricist tradition suggests, does being fit into a scheme where no particular being is knowable but the method by which a being comes to be can be ascertained?

Has the dominant epistemology of science resulted in a strict metaphysic that allows only a singular ontology? To answer "yes" one must also be able to identify what that ontology is. The
ontology, Taylor posits, is one where awareness and consciousness are construed as representations of phenomenal stimulation. With the move from empiricism to viewing the universe as a mechanism best articulated by science reality comes to be seen as "a correct picture within of outer reality." In other words, we have an internal representation of reality.

The empiricist view of experience is one that understands experience as an object, like other objects, stuck in space. If we understand ourselves as being aware of the world this must be because the world has imposed itself upon us. The human mind is in a relationship with the sources of the outside world. It follows that, for the empiricist, mind and body, the internal and the external, become seen as causally related. The ideas that are shown to us by empiricism are congruent with the impressions that instill them. Taylor notes that nothing, then, is seen as "observing an action" but rather one is always just depicting the movements of impressions. Our involvement with these impressions can be facilitated in one of three ways: they can solicit pleasure or pain or do nothing at all. The empiricist considers desire to be nothing more than an affect; desire is not a component of consciousness. The utilitarians ontologized this project fully in their declaration that it is the qualities of pain and pleasure that motivate and instigate action. The reaction which results in either fancy or hurt are impressed upon us; they are not the result of our own inclinations or vision.

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1 See: "The Significance of Significance", Philosophical Papers I: Human Language and Necessity, 200-1.

2 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity, 144.

In this section Taylor argues that the epistemological tradition insists that there is no certainty of the outside world except through the representational faculties of the internal mind. This is what Descartes does in response to the dwindling power of the Platonic order of the Ideas. The result is that we do not find ideas, we create them. The representations that we fathom and defend through rational methods are to be judged not to be standards outside of being and the world like the Forms but from a procedure of rational, logical assessment.

3 See: "Psychological Behaviourism", 517; Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 162.

4 Ibid.
Taylor is exactly right in suggesting that this sort of epistemology demands a particularly specific ontology. This ontology, in the judgement made of it by personal experience, learning and the like, is stretched to the tearing point. For Taylor, this tear is a rip in logic and not in its existential properties. The collapse of empiricism, as Taylor asserts, is not because it is morally outrageous but because it is logically inept.⁵

Empiricism understands learning (and accordingly, experience) as a method of reasoning with the medium and content of sense-data. Perception as connected to a unique or particularly grounded individual is irrelevant. Those who elevate or exaggerate the power of perception to inflect the sources of their experience are setting up a distracting dualism between themselves and what understanding of phenomena actually is. Sensory-data does not require a connection with the subject as viewer. The appearances of the world are identical to someone from Manitoba and someone from Zaire.⁶ The games of our perception only toy with these impressions, they do not and cannot alter them. Taylor aptly paraphrases this view: "(w)e cannot build a world out of them (our imbibing of sensory-data), we can only project one behind them...".⁷ This background world may appear necessary for us to construct metaphysical meaning or even history but it is, for the empiricist, a distraction from how things really are. Perception and the foisting of personality onto the world

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⁵ This is interesting. I would like to suggest that exasperation with logical inconsistency is not terribly different than being morally outraged. This is, in my view, what Taylor depends on in his argument against epistemology. It is the empiricist's procedural use of reason, his manipulation of logic as structure that Taylor resents. Whether Taylor's adoption of similar criteria is only ironic or more paradoxically empty is an essential question to pose. I hope that this question haunts all of the discussions in this paper.


⁷ Ibid; Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 161.
provides only a muddling web of confusion which we praise with the term philosophy. Taylor does not accept that our inner experience can be like this, even if empiricism appears successful in supplanting previous understandings of the self.

Consciousness and our understanding of our inner experience are transformed by an acceptance of this view. Taylor writes: "(i)n objectifying the experience, I no longer accept it as what sets my norm for what it is to have knowledge of these properties." A theological or evolutionary ontology does not gel with this sort of thinking.

By the twist of a peculiar editing decision at the staff of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* in 1967, Charles Taylor was commissioned to write the entry explaining Psychological Behaviourism. As a non-biased approach to definition, one should be sceptical about how Taylor approaches his task. That understood, it is interesting to consider Taylor's denotation.

Behaviourism, fundamentally, explains behaviour as the result of physical events. It requires that we provide an articulation of behaviour, create a science of behaviour, that is controlled or motivated by empirically recognized actions of behaviour and then explain our experiences in ordinary (non-metaphysical) language. According to Taylor, it negates the importance of "thinking,

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8 Taylor draws a fine and interesting critical distinction between objects and essences as a result of this type of discussion. Taylor writes that what an object must be to be considered an object of a particular type tells us nothing about the truth of the world. It tells us only about what we needed to say to talk about this object. (See: Ibid, 99.) The language of essences, then, is not a language of meaning. It is a language that immediately says more about the interlocutor than it does about the state of objects. This, of course, works in complete sympathy with Taylor's view of the embedded subject. It suffices for this moment to recognize the oddness of Taylor's project. He delivers a statement that when we talk about truth we are really just talking about ourselves. Now, this sounds like a fairly post-structuralist viewpoint but Taylor uses this tension as a spring-board to a notion of embedded agency which hinges upon an essential intuitive component of reckoning and philosophy. This seems in direct contrast to the direction one would assume him to go.

9 See: Charles Taylor, "Explaining Action", 64.

10 See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 162.

expectation, understanding and bafflement."¹² In other words behaviourism is the negation of philosophy; epistemology has become ultimate, the notion of intellectual flexibility or interpretation is mooted by the empirically demonstrated connections to these sort of notions and a physiological foundation. All the behaviour traits that we exhibit or imagine could be explained as rooted in physiological/chemically-related terms. The 'invisible', that in human beings which cannot be observed, must be denied. A component of a human being, like desire, would be understood as a symptom of an external and recognizable stimulant.

Behaviourism asks us to consider experience and our subjective view of it as a brain-state.¹³ Essentially connected to what we usually construe as experience are the bookends of desire and purpose. We, in our common sense view, see desire as what motivates our actions. On the other side, it is our purposes or ends which organize our desires into a pragmatically useful direction. The behaviourist has little patience for this sort of talk, even Cartesian dualism is rejected for its celebration of the mental, personal element.¹⁴ Human action, for behaviourism to succeed, must be immune to the variances of individuality or interpretation. If it was not, there could be no science of behaviour; consistency would be negated by the whims of individual focuses and the empty positing of imaginary visions and dreams. Behaviourism correlates interpretation with the caprice of metaphysics; it is removed from the truth or plausibility of the world as it must be.

The argument that behaviourists use to distance action from human desire is complicated. Desires are not causes of action because, according to Taylor's paraphrase of Hume, "the cause must


be contingently linked with the effect."\textsuperscript{15} Simply put, for desire to be separated from result the cause must be separable from the effect and desires cannot be thus dissociated. Taylor thinks that putting desire into this sort of framework is an error. He asks, can one get A to do X without intending the action of X? We must get A to want to do X. We can recognize the evidence of this sort of equation in our own lives. If X does not occur where we wanted X we can understand or explain this to ourselves with reference to either what exterior obstacles prevented the attainment of X or by re-evaluating the desire that seeks X. For Taylor, it is the desire for the antecedent which essentially brings action about.\textsuperscript{16}

Does Taylor's reworking satisfy the logical criteria set by Hume? It seems that the desire to do X and the action directed towards accomplishing X have obvious logical connections; it would seem difficult to make sense of one without the other. By uniting causality and contingency Hume makes it very difficult for human desire to be seen as a component of action. Taylor provides a good critique of this framework. He argues that the problem is to be found in that the explanation of intention is consistently explained in the same causal terms as effect for the sake of convenience.\textsuperscript{17} It is foolishness to see the equation in the direction that Hume posited it. The truth of the matter is that the effect is inevitably linked to the cause. While Taylor may be compelling when he suggests that motivation is difficult to demonstrate without recourse to "reference to dispositions"\textsuperscript{18} the question that Hume raises is not fully addressed.

\textsuperscript{15} See: Ibid, 60.

\textsuperscript{16} See: Ibid, 58,60.

\textsuperscript{17} See: Ibid, 61-2.

\textsuperscript{18} See: Ibid, 63.
It is my sense that Hume and his equation should be considered in a different way. If we are to understand Hume as an empiricist for whom the 'effects' are already present we are left only to answer what is the cause. For Hume, then, the effects are in existence before the origin of the desire. Now, this may seem more pertinent in a discussion of the natural sciences rather than in one on human psychology. But I would like to try and bridge the two. In the natural sciences the empiricist is confronted with a network of relationships and objects which are in place whether we participate in them or not. The insignificance of our involvement has ramifications on our psychology. By being objects ourselves, living in the material world, we are susceptible to or dependant on these same processes of experience, again whether we are aware of it or not. If human beings are able to alter these effects to create different (and not necessarily new) ones then the entire empiricist scheme is open to challenge through the manipulation of particular sways of popular thinking. What is, or appears as is, must remain consistent. This demand for consistency should not necessarily be understood as the sole argument for the empirical behaviourist. Kant, who claimed to have separated man from nature did no such thing; eventually his project concluded with a subject that conveniently willed the same processes of nature by which he was forced to live anyhow. Hume's challenge of connecting the criteria of causality with contingency is difficult. Is it a good demand?

We are all familiar with the criticism levelled against the technique of defining a term with the use of the term. Does the necessary connection between causality and contingency seek to negate a similar type of circular argument? It appears that the logical answer is affirmative. So, there may be more to the behaviourist logic than we are led to believe. It may not be a case of Hume arguing the equation backwards; the direction of the formula is congruent with the ethic of empiricism. But then what is it that we require? If we are to make room for emotions and desire must they be completely
distinct from the effects that are created? Can we describe effects with causes that do not contain the effect? If A wants to demonstrate that X is the result of L how crucial is it that L be separable from X? The first argument we considered by Taylor shifted the focus: we manipulated L to create X. This is a different question. This answers how we will behaviour, not how we explain it. Is there a difference between the two? There is if you consider the effects to already be accomplished. Thus lies the crucial difference between Taylor and the behaviourist.

It is a good distinction but it is not entirely the difference that Taylor thinks it is. Taylor's response argues a different method of understanding and different definitions of key terms like effect and truth. For Taylor the difference hinges on the embodiment of the subject; this embodiment demands or instigates different possibilities or interpretations of effects. And while this embodiment is presented by Taylor in a Hegelian framework that obeys rules of logic similar to those of the empiricists, it is this notion of embodiment that is a direct refutation of what logic is capable of. Hegel is important in Taylor's response. We can see through Hegel that the rational/logical process does not end with the empirical understanding of being and the world. The empiricists have made logical mistakes which undercut their supposedly inescapable logical demands. The problem for Hume is reached prior to his demand regarding causality and contingency. As a result the correlation between cause and effect is reversible in the way that Taylor manipulates it. This reversal hinges on a different logic of the self. Taylor sees behaviour as an account that is necessarily full of "non-contingent connections".  

Taylor is able to save emotions and desires through the renewed flexibility of his inescapably

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19 See: Charles Taylor, "Explaining Action", 80. Taylor writes: "an intrinsic language of desire, feeling, emotion or sensation is impossible."
logical lens. For the empiricist, emotions are dependant upon the objects of the natural world and do not alter those same objects. Taylor asks: "(a)re emotions, then, states of mind defined non-intrinsically in terms of their 'causes', or what gives rise to them, as desires are by what they give life to?"  

Taylor's response is simple and telling. Emotions are a way of being aware. Objects need not actually exist, they may only exist in the context (or way) of the subject. When an emotion rises to the conscious level it must recognize itself as connected to an object but the object of an emotion need not be an actual object. The object can be a characterization of the emotion. It is an object only in the context of the emotion. This governs our relationship to sensation. We place sensations in an organizational grid according to our own dispositions. Different people refer to and note sensations in different ways.  

And we can be wrong about our responses. Betrayal or infidelity may not exist as an actual object but still are capable of creating a great deal of emotion further perpetuating the object of betrayal. It is easy to see how this trans-valuates the Humean circular complaint. How this differs from general deconstruction is another question.

I can agree that behaviourism does not account for purpose and mental cognition. I can possibly agree with Taylor that behaviourism does not satisfactorily explain or negate all the possibilities of our mentality. Behaviourism mends the dualism of Descartes by conquering the mental side in the name of the physical. At best one can see the mind as distinct but impotent, unable to fight its own neutrality. Taylor seems sensible when he asserts that it is this denied mind, this left


21 See: Ibid, 67-8,76.

22 See: Charles Taylor, "Peaceful Co-existence in Psychology", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 125; Charles Taylor, "Two Issues About Materialism", 77. Taylor is referring to behavioursim's inability to describe things like "after-images" and the like.
hand side of the brain, which has come up with the methods of behaviourism. If we reject the dualism we reject the behaviourist.23

In trying to account for all of the possibilities of the mind and the complaints levied against it, behaviourism, in Taylor's view, has stretched itself to a level of meaninglessness. Behaviourism lacks a compelling ontological bite. It cannot grapple with even the simple contention that "behaviour alters with experience".24 If this can be stated with reference to an absolute meaning or a divine purpose which denies the relevance or validity of purpose then behaviourism might provide something, but this, for Taylor, is unbelievable.25 An attempt has been made to save behaviourism through materialism and mechanistic thinking. I would like to consider these strains in some detail.

Where dualism posited a split between mind and matter, materialism negates one of the halves. For the materialist, mind is matter and not a mind/matter importantly separated from other matter; any suggestion otherwise should be understood as referring to a ghostly, illusionary process best labelled by the pejorative, metaphysics. People are then objects which we 'anthropomorphize' with personalities and minds.26

Does one find it convincing that humanity can be reduced to biology which can then be reduced to physics or chemistry? While this reduction does not take what many of us see as the important problems of humanity seriously, is it possible that it places these worries in a more


25 See: Charles Taylor, "Peaceful Coexistence in Psychology", 127. Taylor's significant work on behaviourism is: The Explanation of Behaviour. In this work Taylor argues against B.F. Skinner's theories with great success. Much of what we have drawn from here can also be found in that very dense work.

appropriate light? Can we accept an understanding of ourselves, of our minds, as being nothing more than a brain that fires synapses and responds to physical laws? Our ordinary language does not acknowledge our sources of being as grounded in chemical states and relations. We talk in terms of purposes and intentions and through conversational guides we witness ourselves as embodied.\(^{27}\) We can see that there are two languages at war here. There is the language that represents a personality and a language that distils a science. Materialists reduce the first type of language to the scientific one. Taylor finds this logically incoherent.

Taylor insists that no matter what we do, we will still have to allow for a place in our ontology for the non-material. If we understand the human brain/mind as having two sides we can assign the right side to science and the left to personality. Materialism argues that the right allows and governs the left. I previously suggested that materialism can be seen as an attempt to rescue behaviourism. I think this is so but I think the difficulty of the task is interestingly exposed here. If we can understand behaviourism as extending the argument of Cartesian dualism to the point where the split between mind and body is negated we can see the subtle leap that the materialists make.

Behaviourism connects mind to matter - we relate as we do because our physical beings are connected to a physical world. Materialism tries to save this argument by nullifying the critique that proponents of personality have provided. Personality is a metaphysic that is understood best by chemical properties and links. There are two reductions then: one away from dualism towards physical embodiment in natural processes and one away from embodiment to the denial of the importance of personal experience.

The materialist sees perception as not connected to experience. Kant argued that experience

\(^{27}\) See: Ibid, 76.
must be a whole, "shaped by the demands of objectivity". What this means is that our experience of the world is governed by certain categorical rules without which we could not have experience, i.e. up/down, now/then, here/there... The lesson to be derived is that we are essentially embodied in the world and that Cartesian dualism offers a poor explanation of our existence. This does not refute the materialist understanding.

If we are to think of ourselves as motivated by desires, is it also possible to reconsider our desires as chemical states? As I have pointed out we have two different languages battling. We have a language that speaks in terms of intention/desire. This language is what lies behind causes and events. Taylor astutely points out that materialists need to destroy this language because it cannot be neutral. This language must be read as uselessly metaphysical and articulations of what it is good to be must be ignored. The materialist does not think there is an ontological difference between human beings and the material world. As a result there is no difference between the chemically induced desire for a certain action and the purpose which is attained by that action. Taylor writes:

For the purpose is not ontologically separable from the action, and this means something like: it can only exist in animating the action; or perhaps a fundamental articulation of this purpose, on which all others depend, lies in the action.

If this is so, materialism is arguing the correct points in announcing that human action is dictated by chemically constructed desires which respond to physical properties and the commands of our

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30 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 3.

synapses. This, as I have stated, denies meaning in the existential sense with which we often consider it. An interesting question is whether our feeling cramped by the negation of meaning can be used as the basis of a logical critique against materialism.\textsuperscript{32}

Taylor tempts us again and again to consider materialism in the language of personality which materialism seeks to translate. Is there a concept of identity that can be defined in "scientific/theoretical" terms which still accounts for the "particularities" of sensations and chosen/recalled memories?\textsuperscript{33}

Taylor sees the only conclusion for this question as provided by "the discovery that correlations held between types of events previously (understood) as distinct - in this case, the raw feel or the after-image and the process in the brain."\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} Taylor circles this sort of question with a delicate and interesting argument. He sees materialism as defending behavioursim against charges of logical incoherence. This suggests that logical coherence implies plausibility. Now, why does that follow? I agree that it does but this may be because I accent strictures that suggest that logic is a reflection of desire. For Taylor, logic, or perhaps better stated as rational necessity, is an important criteria. The two terms are different but still one would think that Taylor, engaged by hermeneutical usefulness, would see logical consistency as superior to dictative rational necessity. This is tricky and expositive: If we can see rational necessity as likely opinion shouted rather than opinion stated - logical consistency should then be seen as opinion respected. This is revealing because it intimates that Taylor's hermeneutics, or critique of other hermeneutic techniques like materialism, require logical coherence to be accepted. This would mean that it would have to obey certain processes and criteria to be deemed worthy. This adherence to logic becomes difficult when the dialectic or transcendental argument inevitably is shown to be without logical necessity or coherence. Taylor will not reject materialism because of a moral concern because that would be a poor form of argument. He has an interest in good arguments because he wrongly feels that his articulation is actually representative of a thorough and good science.


I am doubtful that the materialists would have used a term like particularities for it seems to already assume or posit a negative response to the question. It is not my sense that a negative answer is logically immediate.

\textsuperscript{34} See: Ibid, 202. (Emphasis Taylor's.) This is another interesting line of attack. Taylor argues that we need to correlate two kinds of events and that the fact that they occur in the same place (mind/brain) is not adequate. This is because mental events cannot be ascertained in any sort of compelling way by physiological actions and reactions. Again, the same problems for Taylor are exposed. Taylor's reference point of the human mind is attempting to speak a language that defies translation. Why the human mind as a compendium of chemicals could not answer the premise of a human will drawing up memories is not clear. I see no reason why materialism could not explain this: A more interesting problem is, I think, exposed in that Taylor speaks in terms of how materialism has to prove itself conclusively. This puts the onus of truth responsibility on the materialists. It is not a case, then, of why not but of why. Is this how hermeneutics should be understood - as interpretation that is verifiably true, that can show us the thing-it-self? Let us, for argument sake, accept that
My question about meaning is more pertinent than the mere denial of meaning can answer. What about the need for justice, to defend, justify or condemn certain behaviour? Taylor postulates that materialism requires the presence of a separated understanding of the soul. The soul must exist so as to not make the notion of mechanisms and materialism pointlessly absurd.\(^{35}\) Taylor has us arguing that we are too meaningful to negate meaning.

It is Taylor's position that the properties of objects that we note and the structures in which we place them are designed to create reactions or explicate fundamentals that we consider meritable. Our appreciation of the world of objects is not akin to a biological relation with nature like nausea or squinting.\(^ {36}\) Our experience with the world entails us, complete with the will and our choices. Taylor thinks the materialist (or the naturalist to use Taylor's term of choice) chooses their particular method of objectification as their good. This is the choice that they have made whether it works on a logical level or not.\(^ {37}\) The materialist choice is challenged by our other understanding of life which materialism is able to provide the conclusions that Taylor asks of it. What does this mean? Does it mean that we will all have to become materialists? What if the language of conclusions and scientific reasoning is a language that I do not think correlates with truth-in-itself? It would seem that I can escape the truth of materialism (given that it was demonstrated by the human criteria of logic and science that we ask it to fulfil) by speaking a different language, perhaps even a language where absolute truth is not a realistic or interesting term. It seems, then, that I would be worthy of the title: hermeneuticist. If I wanted to persuade others of my interpretation would I be best served by being a logician or should I become a story-teller in the tradition of Plato, Hobbes and Einstein? My point is simple - Taylor by denouncing the logical ineptitude of materialism is offering himself to be tested by the same criteria. He has no documented faith in Hegel's vision but he does have faith in Hegel's logical methods. The problem for Taylor, and philosophy, is that logic depends on a particular humanistic faith.

\(^ {35}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Ontology", 135.

\(^ {36}\) See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 6.

\(^ {37}\) See: Ibid, 46. I am in agreement with this argument of Taylor's. It is my suspicion that we see it as pointing in potentially different directions. Given that materialism which defines itself as rationally obvious is so hopelessly in error (according to Taylor) it is still plausible to assume that this materialist choice is one that comes from the rational mind or is it a preference of the emotive will? I am more sympathetic to the latter than I am to the former. I sense that Taylor, in his belief that we can strive in impossible situations, thinks that reason can temper and govern these desires. This is probably true - I may realize through argument that I can't sing like I want to. But can I want what does not exist? Can I long to play an instrument that does not yet exist? My questions wonder how important a difference there is between the known
refuses to surrender our will and faith in a connection to the good to chemistry. Materialism as a good, as the absolute good that frames our relative understanding of good, is empty to challenge the love we have of our wills. Subverting the cliche, if materialism was true we would have to deny it.

For the utilitarian, (who belongs to this naturalist tradition), controlling our appetites is not a moral choice but a pragmatic choice dependant on ever-changing criteria. If I choose not to smoke it is in relation to either a fear of health or a response to instilled fears or attitudes. If I choose to, it is a reaction to, or fear of, those fears. Taylor alleges that this, too, represents a view of the good; that to see this in another way would be to live in a dangerous illusion. Taylor explains:

(W)e are not beings whose only authentic evaluations are non-qualitative as the utilitarian tradition suggests; that if evaluation of desires is essential to our notion of the self, it is strong and not just weak evaluation which is in question.

unattainable and the impossible. I suggest that we are limited in wants by the world that we can imagine and that our imagination is restricted by what we can experience. This does not decide the issue between reason and desire but it does go some way in arguing that what we desire or think is good is connected to the world we live in. I suspect that this does not work originally on an abstract level; that we add the abstract as a method of rationalization of our simple desires.

38 See: "(A)n absolute question always frames our relative ones." ibid, 47. This sort of statement is foundational for many of Taylor's arguments. It is also the sort of statement that gets him in the most trouble. I would rephrase it by stating that a primary good generally motivates how we question and treat the other goods in our life. His use of the term "absolute" places him back into the scientific paradigm which his use of logic and desire denies. By using it as an adjective for questioning Taylor connects science with philosophy eventually showing the limitations of this idea of philosophy: When I speak of a primary good that governs us and guides how we question I am always speaking of the present tense. Our relationship to these goods is extraordinarily flexible and volatile; we run through an extended disconnected pattern of them throughout our lives. At twenty, I embrace a notion of social democracy based on what I understand as the primary goods of freedom and equality. The truth of freedom and equality frame the types of questions I bring to political and social problems. A few years later I begin to think that freedom is a scam; that there is no such thing as true equality or freedom and now I believe in a God to whom I surrender such questions. By the age of thirty I care little for any of these questions and live my life in relation to the question of a mix of any number of not particularly serious criteria. My point is that the locus of good moves back and forth, non-dialectically, in relation to my changing wants and perceived needs. The idea of an absolute question that governs my relationship to my life does not really exist unless I want it to.


I am wary of this distinction between strong and weak evaluation. Elsewhere I have argued that the source of these evaluations is based on emotive reactions and that our vision of a primary question that guides these desires is flexible. Following this, I would like to suggest that these fundamental goods or structures through which we evaluate secondary goods is also the result of desire and that it fluctuates throughout our lives. Taylor might argue that the idea of a change is the result of an overwhelming good which dictates the importance of movement. The changes that I am talking about are not as meaningful as this; they are more arbitrary and contingent than Taylor's scientific philosophy likes. Another argument

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Taylor eventually concludes that the stream of thinking which starts with Descartes and leads to materialism is "impossibly shallow" because of its restrictions on and denial of the idea of the primary good of beings.  

that Taylor might use is that we could not change unless we felt connected to a good that was not total that was not satisfying - that if we were connected to the truth we would not change. This is where dialogue between Taylor and myself becomes difficult as I think that this sort of understanding is a prop or justification of arbitrary movements and that the arguments that Taylor propounds are sensible only if you accept his structural language. For the sake of argument I will accept his language, but I still remain unconvinced. Taylor must also compromise and recognize that this truth by which life would be satisfying has not been discovered. Because of that we cannot know if we are getting closer or further away. Taylor's disagreement is connected to his faith in transcendental arguments and that while the future is fuzzy, the origins are clear. We can know where we start and so can therefore identify errors. But then the most serious issue between us is whether the thinking which fuels the dialectic is rational or emotional. If it is emotional, Taylor might argue that reason exposes the faults of particular emotional views. I would argue that we can't start there. To accept desire as primary, the construct of reason that we use to evaluate our emotions is a creation of that emotion. The possibility of contradiction between the two is not meaningful, it suggests only that the emotion has poor judgement. Good judgement may, indeed, be a tenet of a different emotional outlook. Why do we change? Possibly not because of an atomistic dialectic but probably because we have more or less money, friendlier or more dangerous neighbourhoods, different forces exerting different pressures...

50 See: Ibid, 288. Taylor does not see the stream as ending with the materialists. As materialism died, it appeared that it was being replaced or transformed by theorists who linked the human mind to the burgeoning technology of the computer era. These theorists mapped our physical and mental abilities in a formula that depicted us as deductive or calculative beings akin to the computer. Taylor is sceptical of the suggestion that computers are capable of self-generating action. The computer is always, at best, a high-speed, complicated instrument. Parallels between it and the brain expose the problematic question for theorists of this type: Who is using the instrument? In essence, who has decided that it is a useful instrument? Computing is something that we do.

Also, if we are to be understood as computing animals we do not seem to be aware of it. Computing is not what it feels like we are doing. Actually, what we do when we do something, when we react, feels the opposite of computation. These two streams of criticism against computation can be united. What I want to do and what I accomplish accidently does not depend on the judgement of an observer like the actions of the computer do. I, unlike the computer, am the "crucial observer". Action for human beings depends on a number of uniquely human, non-machine, language criteria. The action of the machine is what I want. My action is what I desire. A machine's action is only significant to me in that I desire it. My own actions are significant to me. (See: Charles Taylor, "Consciousness", 38, 41, 44-5; Charles Taylor, "The Significance of Significance", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 187, 199.)

Taylor's thoughts are compelling and satisfying but not fully. In asserting that action is what I want Taylor suggests a psychological atomism that he would generally condemn, and I think rightly so. Taylor's arguments would suggest that our actions are not usually what I want but that they come to me through the social framework I exist in. It seems then that it may be plausible to see the human individual as a machine for and of an un-focused socialization. This is interesting in that final purpose, or an idea of teleology that cannot go past the immediately pragmatic may not actually exist. Our envisioning of ultimates may reflect very little on our existence as tied up in a social context. In fact, our acceptance of teleology may be a component of our responsibilities as a socialized machine. My argument in no way wants to decrease what appears sensible in Taylor's refutation of the computer model. It seeks only to complicate it.

Taylor also contends that another popular view, that of the interactionist, is also ontologically dependant on a self that it cannot explain. The interactionist view argues that mental/physical events are fundamentally different but are causally connected. This is a view that resides in many people's common sense. To show this we would need to demonstrate the connection between something like a moment of introspection and a physical cause or result. The materialists would argue that it is the necessity of the latter to the former which is crucial. This tightens the language of, and reduces the clutter in, explanation. For the interactionist it is possible to have a mental action that has no physical
So, how are we then to understand our relationships to the objects of the natural world, to ourselves? Does how we understand ourselves come into how we understand the objects of the natural world and our actions among them as Taylor thinks it does? If this is so, how far does Taylor wish to bring us from the principles of science? We can probably accept that mechanistic explanations of how things work do not tell us why they are important. Mechanism, in other words, does not explain why certain things are significant. To do this, mechanism would have to incorporate a view of "action, desires, goals, (and) aspirations". The objects of our perception have an importance to us that is more than a material presence can explain. A materialist commentary is nothing without the criteria of "purpose" or "intelligence".

To see yourself as an immaterial, thinking being requires an ontological separation from the material world. Our bodies are material, though, and in objectifying the world and our bodies we must recognize that we only can do this through a desired understanding governed by something outside of logic. In traditional philosophical terms we need wisdom to have valuable knowledge. The materialist denies metaphysical elements. For them, sense of the world can be made through consideration of causal connections between the world and my body. Taylor asserts that the only 'reason' to do this is by understanding the desire to provide an account of our essence, or soul; that through objectification our soul is liberated.

ramifications. If this is so it would be possible to have thoughts and feelings even if one did not have a body. This, Taylor thinks, is logically possible but no one buys into disembodied thought. The interactionists are as ontologically dead as Hegelianism. (See: Charles Taylor, "Mind-Body Identity", 203-4.)

41 See: Charles Taylor, "The Significance of Significance", 204, 207.

42 See: Charles Taylor, "Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis", 94.


This directly correlates to the idea stated above that materialism needs a notion of the soul to make sense of its own
Mechanistic explanations only pretend to negate teleology and the premise of embodied experience. Taylor writes:

(T)hese features are an essential part of our notion of ourselves. If we can give a complete mechanistic explanation of our behaviour and feeling then, we feel obscurely, this will amount to saying that these features are not essential after all. But surely, our having goals is essentially involved in our being creatures capable of freedom and responsibility, and our very existence as talking animals seems inconceivable unless our behaviour is partly determined by relations of meaning.44

This sounds quite similar to Marx: though thought and action are conditioned, man consciously directs himself through his action. Man's consciousness moves/progresses in history, and as such history moves towards truth. There is an element of a social construction but this can be mended through the dialectic. What happens if the dialectic is a social construction?45

Taylor does not think that consciousness is the central question in arguing the differences between man and machine. He is convinced that it is rather a question of significance. Consciousness is a good because it brings significance to light and enables us to transform what is vaguely significant purposes. To deny the soul, according to this logic, is to inevitably wish to emancipate the soul.

44 See: Charles Taylor, "How is Mechanism Conceivable?", Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language, 166.

That this understanding may be a reflection of a particular desire or point in time does not seem to be taken seriously by Taylor. For him, to make sense of our lives is intuitively a fact. I am not so convinced and think that equally strong arguments can be made in the opposite direction. As a refutation of mechanistic thinking I also remain unconvinced. While I have no desire to rescue materialism from its grave, Taylor's manipulation of the argument begs refutation. I would be greatly surprised if materialists are not prepared for this sort of critique. I sense that the argument would suggest that teleology can be viewed as a construct that we have built around our impulses, that self-interested biological structures are complicated enough to posit a self-defending mechanism of abstraction by which we justify our particular chemistries. I am more convinced that the difference between Taylor and the materialists hinges on a choice of language. Ironically, it is in viewing their languages as different that we can see the similarities between the two. Either Taylor is right and we desire certain languages over others and the materialists have made a choice Taylor does not like. Or they both speak the same language of what is actually true and the materialists are wrong. Taylor has the choice and he seems to try to choose both. This is not really do-able. Taylor paints the materialists as choosing a different path to a good but then he judges them for not being true.

clearer and the focus of our lives.⁴⁶ Consciousness makes significance an ontological good instead of just a vessel for constructions. What is it that Taylor exactly means as regards significance?

The things that strike our consciousness particularly do so because they have significance for us. Your disposition towards certain properties is reflected in what you note. Our hierarchies of observation are built around these issues of personal significance. Our consciousness, for Taylor, is achieved through our understanding of what is important. Explanations of how things are, or come to be, are only interesting/relevant if they connect to what we see as meaningful. Importantly, Taylor argues that "things have significance for us non-relatively".⁴⁷ We could not abide or have relationships of any sort without concepts of how we understand meaning and its importance to us. For this meaning to exist and be powerful we must understand ourselves and others as individual, willing agents who are essentially connected to a group dynamic.⁴⁸ There are certain criteria of being and experience which are intimately related to how we view that experience. These criteria are socially dependant. Issues of dignity, integrity, shame, the desire for love all depend on others for them to exist. When we feel shame it is because of other people, not ourselves. We are unable to live without the types of examples that we have listed.⁴⁹ Interestingly, our relationship to what we think is significant, according to Taylor can be falsely constructed.⁵⁰ Taylor connects his view of significance

⁴⁶ See: Charles Taylor, "The Significance of Significance", 201.

⁴⁷ See: Ibid, 201.

⁴⁸ See: Ibid, 202. This is one small step away from the Kantian depiction of human beings containing inherent human dignity. I will consider how it welcomes the same pitfalls as Kant's view throughout this text.


⁵⁰ See: Charles Taylor, "Consciousness", 49. The idea of illusory significance fits with my interpretation of Taylor. If there was no possibility of wrongful interpretation of personal meaning, the justification of judgement would be made equalized between disparate viewpoints.
to the dialectic which will show us that some of our concerns are contradictory. We articulate what we find significant and, corresponding with Taylor, the significance is altered in the expression. Through articulation we can see how we truly feel about what we thought we felt. Through this articulation we are able to show and identify incongruence between it and our other views. Tensions erupt, contradictions are exposed and we come to a better understanding of what we feel and accordingly what we want.\(^1\)

Our interpretations of our experience depend on what Taylor calls strong-evaluations. These strong-evaluations reflect things that are good for us not because we want them but they tell us, indeed, what is good to want. We ought to desire our strong-evaluations even if we do not. Our understanding of our desires and intentions is, thus, never value free.\(^2\) So the objects of our experience remain the same, or may as well, what changes is our intelligent perception and the direction of our gaze. What we find significant is dependant on the cultural mores of our societies. Significance, to the materialist, is an example of anthropomorphism. For Taylor, significance is essentially prior to the qualitative desire to derive a materialist understanding.

How do we evaluate what are worthy desires and what are base ones? Is something good because I have chosen it or do I choose it because it is good? If my language and intellectual community thinks something is good must I also think it is good? Taylor attests that we sometimes

\(^1\) See: Ibid, 50. This is confusing. On one hand Taylor is arguing that we are socially constructed creatures and on the other that we can become essentially aware of particular errors of our relation to meaning and significance. Social arrangements provide the origin and the inflection of the terms (shame, dignity, indignation, etc.) of our moral and individual expression. Yet we are also able to identify that some of these expressions may suffer, not just from misapplication, but from a general and essential inappropriateness and that we can discover this mistake through a socially derived dialectic. Although Taylor pretends not to accept Hegel's Geist it seems that he must, otherwise how can he defend a meaningful progression of social constructions. To paraphrase and alter William Connolly's statement: Taylor needs Hegel to save him from Foucault.

neglect to choose things not because they will fail to provide us with benefits or because they are inconvenient, but because they are beneath us. If you cannot demonstrate that what you want to avoid cannot be contrasted with your other desires then their incompatibility is contingent. Qualitative distinctions are imperative in any human experience. If we were not capable of having any depth with which to evaluate various possibilities we could not possess the social or conversational skills to be a "potential human partner". The materialists want to get rid of qualitative distinctions so we can understand human life in terms of calculation. Taylor sees this as their strong-evaluation. Can the idea of choice or calculation survive without these strong evaluations?

In Taylor's work strong evaluations are not depicted as chosen. They are construed as "articulations" of what we consider worthy; they try to make sense of what is confused, helping us to understand what we desire or think is important. It is important for Taylor's project that he distance himself from the premise of choice. But what does he have to accept or propound to provide himself this distance from radical choice? The tradition of thought following Nietzsche provides a pertinent critique of this thinking. The Nietzschean idea is that these valuations, strong or not, are constructed either by ourselves (preferred) or by society. Our choice of these values or options is done through a form of reason that is also a result of the same process. Our faith in this reason is such that a decision as a result of clarity of reason hardly seems a choice at all. Sartre argues that our lives are based on making radical choices between competing strong evaluations or horizons of good. We are torn between possibilities that are either equally wonderful or, more often, equally despicable. We


don't find one choice superior to another; that would be a case for judgement not choice. We don't ever choose, for Sartre, in a meaningful way, we move from attractive position to attractive position, guessing all the while. This guessing and re-guessing is freedom.

Also, the context by which these options are delivered to us belongs perhaps not to an ontological, conscientious core of being but may come from the particular values of our particular communities. The idea that we can feel personally connected to what we perceive to be sincerely personal evaluations of good seems tenuous. Even in Taylor the whole point of recognizing our own inevitable relationship to the good is to eventually see the dependence this stance has on a community. Taylor runs the circle the other way around. His emphasis is cleverly unique. We owe what we think and feel about good to our peers and structure and because we are enamoured with these accepted structures we had better provide more allegiance to the network that instigates and refreshes these versions of good. We had better maintain the conversational public space. His criticism of this circle of interpretation and societal influence is based in a concern as to how tight it becomes. A wider circumference, for Taylor, is superior to a narrow one.

How is it that we can find room for personal responsibility in this spinning web? It seems difficult. If the way I think and feel depends on my conversations with others in the public space, I seem very much connected to them as a moral source. How is it I can be blamed for making a particular moral choice given the framework within which I choose? It would appear that all I can be accused of is not playing the game like everyone else is. In some places this is called breaking the law; in other places it is called sinning. Taylor writes:

(I)t is more honest, courageous, self-clairvoyant, hence a higher mode of life, to

choose in lucidity than it is to hide one's choices behind the supposed structure of things, to flee from one's responsibility at the expense of lying to oneself, of a deep self-duplicity.\textsuperscript{56}

The implication is that there is a true, ontological self hidden behind our strong-evaluations and interpretations of the world, a being-in-itself if you like. Now, this may be the case but it does not seem to be the case that Taylor has been arguing. First of all, the essential criteria of being is based in strong-evaluations. We cannot become a merited human being without these horizons of significance. And yet it is these criteria of humanity which come from our social peers. We are not, then, considering an archetypal human being but rather an archetypal social relationship which we find depicted and asserted in the canon of political philosophy from Plato to Rawls. Taylor is using the empty vessel argument. We, as a people, must live by some understanding of the good. The point, at this juncture, is the need and not how the need is fulfilled. But the method of fulfilment is crucial because if we accept that we all have a jug to put things into but it does not matter what we put in then why should we particularly care that we all have a jug? Taylor does provide a method of judging what should go in our vessels - it is be found in the dialectic which can be defended with the transcendental argument. The problem that entire epochs may be completely in error mends itself in the inevitability of exposed contradiction. The fun irony is that the idea of contradiction and dialectical movement may be the prime example of an intellectual epoch in great error.

Taylor, in his assertions, must make a number of indefensible metaphysical statements. This is not a criticism. The problem for Taylor is that his criticisms of scientific others also reflect their gaze back on him. Taylor's human self is as ontologically dependant as the materialist's view. Taylor sees his articulation as wider and more encompassing, as richer and more cheerful. That may be so,

\textsuperscript{56} See: Ibid, 294-5.
but it does not seem to be any more logically compelling than the materialist perspective. It is a matter of interpretation, which I would argue, is a matter of belief and desire. Belief and desire in turn, sympathetic to the essence of Taylor, are socially derived.\textsuperscript{57}

Taylor describes human beings as self-interpreting animals. All of our descriptions of action must contain elements of our self-understandings, emotions and thoughts.\textsuperscript{58} The materialist, as I have stated, is in a position antithetical to one that recognizes the indispensable importance of interpretation. It accomplishes this distancing by asserting an absolutist ontology that has no room for subject-related concerns or properties.\textsuperscript{59} Taylor sees perception as inevitably connected to interpretation: "(w)hat is immediately seen can no longer be distinguished as something separable from the interpretation a subject brings with him because of his knowledge, understanding and culture..."\textsuperscript{60} If we are to understand man as a self-interpreting creature then we will not be able to also hold onto a notion of pure clarity or objectivity.\textsuperscript{61} Instead of an object surrounded by other objects we will have to see ourselves as subjectivity connected to other subjectivity. This is a tremendously important viewpoint for Taylor and also for us wishing to understand Taylor. What Taylor does with his view of interpretation is enter us, forever, into a realm of radical guessing where no guess can

\textsuperscript{57} For clarification of Taylor's view of social dynamicism see: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 199-207 (particularly 206-7). Here Taylor recommends paying attention to social practices as intrinsic to the formation of ideas. He uses as an example how the thought of Locke and others helped to create a market relation which in turn perpetuated the type of person suitable for market relations. How Locke was able to arrive at the conclusions he did can be seen either as an argument stemming from ontological propositions or an example of story-telling or myth-making. Both owe something to the social fabric. Given this dependence I would argue that Locke is a story-teller rather than a scientist.

\textsuperscript{58} See: Charles Taylor, "The Significance of Significance", 189.

\textsuperscript{59} See: Charles Taylor, "Consciousness", 39.

\textsuperscript{60} See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?", \textit{Philosophical Papers I: Human Agency and Language}, 145.

\textsuperscript{61} See: Charles Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals", 45.
eventually be understood as superior to another. We cannot understand ourselves as belonging to an ontology. Let's consider these two seemingly opposite reflections of Taylor:

But the very fact that what was once so solid has in many cases melted into air shows that we are dealing not with something grounded in the nature of beings, but rather with changeable human interpretations...  

(O)ur interpretation of ourselves and our experience is constitutive of what we are, and therefore cannot be considered as merely a view on reality, separable from reality, nor as an epiphenomenon, which can be by-passed in our understanding of reality.  

The former statement seems to distance the participant from the validity of truth claims where the latter suggests that they have a symbiotic relationship. The former view articulates a view of relativism; the latter calls that relativism reality. Do we really need to do that? While, potentially, agreeing with this sentiment I do not see the immediate point of discussing it in these terms. It strikes me that Taylor wants to take advantage of the weight of the term reality while undercutting what had once given the term that weight. The former articulation seems more honest, but I do not think Taylor is sympathetic to the kind of moral relativism that this view of interpretation entails. If so, he is then forced to demolish what others have called truth by de-constructing that term and then making a similar claim for his own, rather emptied, version. Taylor is reduced to making ontological claims that need a strong metaphysics to defend them. This is the irony. By playing his game the way he does, Taylor is forced into a losing situation. Assertiveness has to be matched with a logic which eventually is a form of confidence which has lost its power due to the sort of arguments based on the premise of social construction which Taylor has provided. Elsewhere, Taylor states: "in fact our identity is


deeper and more many-sided than any of our particular articulations of it.\textsuperscript{64} We are left with an ontology that posits that we are more than our particular current representations. This seems to confuse the notion that we are capable of choosing many different central goods with an inherently complicated ontology. We are flexible but this does not make us deep. In fact, it is our radical flexibility which renders levels of depth irrelevant.

Admittedly, there are some minor conflicts between different self-interpretations, in society and within the self. But eventually what we have chosen (not necessarily a singular choice), will dictate how we view reality and tell us what meaning is. Taylor agrees with this.\textsuperscript{65} He calls these choices strong evaluations and argues that a contrastive language is able to open up the strengths of certain underlying premises and alternatives.\textsuperscript{66} It is through our ability to interpret our interpretations and desires that we alter them. But without a clear understanding that there is something preferable to our socially imposed context, I think that we must wonder what the point of these terms, these questions and these goals are worth. Also, I do not understand how we can distance ourselves from the point that the notion of preferred alternatives is rooted in our socially constructed/derived self-understandings. Taylor has gone from all we have is interpretation to arguing that because this is all we apparently have, it is a human good and must be continued; that human virtue is in the act of interpreting. From this point Taylor attaches us to a dialectic which depends on some fairly difficult assumptions - all grounded in a socialized context. We can understandably ask in curiosity: why bother?

\textsuperscript{64} See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 29.

\textsuperscript{65} See: Charles Taylor, "What is Human Agency?", 22.

Taylor thinks that there are no external, ordered criteria by which to settle issues except through interpretive disputes. He smashes the materialists and their brute-data to replace them with an interpretively fuelled dialectic. They are not, fundamentally, that different. The materialist calls us a machine; Taylor calls us interpreters. They are both adjectives which demand a noun. Taylor and the materialists both believe in the prestige of the noun. I grant that what they do with this noun is very different. All the same, I am struck by how Taylor strips the materialists of their ontology to supply one of his own. I don‘t believe in your God, try mine. The irony lies in Taylor’s use of the same dialogical framework that he ultimately cannot reside in. And while, "(e)valuation is such that there is always room for revaluation"67 may be true, I wonder why it is important. Taylor thinks it is important and is mostly angered by the materialist stream for their narrowing of our field of vision.

If Taylor is right then we would be able to step out of our particular situation and imagine other paradigms. Taylor thinks this possible. He sees our imagination as allowing us to extend our situations and provide for a life on many different levels.68

The crucialness of self-understanding to our experience is shown to us, as Taylor views it, through our experience of secondary properties. Secondary properties refer to the inflections that objects possess; the aspects of an object that are produced and noted by our sensory apparatus. Primary properties are the object itself from which it can be stated that secondary qualities originate. Taste, smell, the sensation of pain; these all refer to our connection to secondary attributes. The primary quality of the object is the object in the immediate sense. For the materialist secondary qualities are only in the human brain and are the result of particular chemicals working their particular


68 See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?", 159.
magic; they have no real connection to the primary object. For someone like Taylor the idea of a primary object is a farce; it is actually nothing but an amalgamation of secondary qualities dependant on the experience and self-understanding of the individual. Secondary qualities essentially depend on our individual experiences. Therefore, a science which aims to explain and define what these secondary attributes are and do is suspect "because they cannot make good a claim to be independently part of the furniture of things." Secondary properties are subjective and as such cannot be integrated into a science of nature like supposedly primary qualities can.

Can we talk at any serious level about secondary properties? Taylor suggests that our comprehension or ability to apprehend these nuances should be considered as being "placed ontologically not in things but in our sensibility, or in our experience of things." This returns me to my previous arguments. In calling it ontological Taylor adds to the categories of space and time as depicted by Kant. But like Kant's categories this new category of self-understanding as correlated to experience has no moral component and does not provide a suitable bridge to creating a moral position. As a result I wonder what is gained by finding or defining an ontological core. We are returned to our discussion of jugs. Our experience and self-understanding are deepened or fleshed out by having ontological status but does it mean anything?

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70 Taylor is not consistent as to where he places his emphasis. I sense that Taylor sees the objects of our experience as entirely govern by our interpretive abilities and self-understanding. But elsewhere he asserts that there is a science of the natural world that stands as representative of reality. How he is able to defend this sort of neutrality in the face of the supposed importance of self-understanding in evaluation is a bit of a mystery. I think that we have a strange circle here. Taylor wants to defend the importance of self-interpretation and he is compelled to connect this to the powers of particular social arrangements. But he wants to avoid the moral relativism towards which this position tends. He does this by implying universal standards of ontology and natural knowledge. The problem is that his view of powerful interpretation is either tainted by his truth claims or it erases them.

71 See: Ibid, 47.
Taylor is, I think, correct in thinking that what is important in any given situation is what we see as grounding our feelings, or what we think would provide these grounds. But this extends to a problematic conclusion. We feel emotions if a situation has a certain importance. We recognize it through emotional responses but it is also what grounds our emotional responses.\(^72\) The problem is in what Taylor sees as the recognition of emotional errors. Taylor thinks that we can be wrong about our emotions; that certain emotive reactions can be called irrational. He adds that we wouldn't call them irrational if we did not recognize some core of importance in having emotions. If we didn't, who would care that they were wrong?\(^73\)

Taylor understands people as wanting to be moved by particular desires. This is reflected in the sort of questions we ask ourselves like: who do I want to be? is this a good thing to be? It is up to us to decide what sort of being we want to be. We reflect on our own desires and this is essential to how we see ourselves. We seek to choose the worthy over the base.\(^74\) Taylor thinks that this contrastive element is essential. We cannot choose to be courageous without having some recognition of cowardice, same as I recognize red as distinct from yellow except that our contrast here is

\(^{72}\) See: Ibid, 49.

\(^{73}\) See: Ibid. I disagree with the idea that emotions can be wrong. I would argue that they can be seen as inappropriate. If I think that you stole something from me and become very angry, my anger is real and beyond the need for justification. If I find out that you did not steal from me I may feel another emotion which replaces but does not negate my anger. I may feel remorse. In retrospect my anger was inappropriate but only in relation to a network of contrastive feelings and my relationship to you. The idea that Taylor wants to suggest is that there are methods of justification as regards our emotive reactions. This prepares us for a method of judgement. I do not see this as being significantly different than being a method by which we rationalize our emotive movements. I was angry because I thought you stole my stuff, therefore justifying my anger. Without my concern for you and my hopes of further benefits in my relationship with you I will provide new emotions to replace the old. If I don't care and if I remain disconnected I will not feel the need to negate my previous emotions in the name of enlightenment.

\(^{74}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Responsibility for Self", 282. Of course, from Taylor we come to understand that our definitions of what is worthy and what is base originate in communities and history where different geographies and epochs provide different definitions.
qualitative. Now, when it comes to the formation of our identity what we emphasize in this contrastive pairings represents what is significant for us.\textsuperscript{75} If we are to lose the ability to make this sort of choice then we will be lost. If the idea of honour is crucial to your self-definition and through some action the ideals of honour and dishonour become negated you will have lost your foundation for your being.\textsuperscript{76} This is akin to the panic of those who lose what was once a potent faith in God. Without these self-understandings apparently we are nothing.

The interesting thing about self-understanding is that it depends on being aware of one's range of significance. A self-aware being has "representations of their representations".\textsuperscript{77} It is in our ability, as based in what we fundamentally think as good, to represent our representation to ourselves through which we are able to judge whether our representations are good or not. This is trickier than it first appears if we consider that what we think is good, fundamentally, is not grounded in ontological truth, but is created by a particular type of socialization. Our evaluations of good and bad are then dependant on a notion of good which is not necessarily absolute. There is nothing awful about this. We make decisions of right and wrong as connected to our belief in the opinion of what is worthy and what is not. This question of worth is donated by our epoch but this does not challenge the fact that we require this sort of articulation. It isn't any particular sort of articulation that we need, just an articulation. We are able to judge only in relation to our intellectual or moral context. We are not particularly able to judge the principles of our own context. At best we can accuse it of not fulfilling its promises, without attacking its central core. We can say that there is no freedom or

\textsuperscript{75} See: Charles Taylor, "What is Human Agency?", 19, 26.

\textsuperscript{76} See: Ibid, 35.

\textsuperscript{77} See: Charles Taylor, "The Person", 265.
equality in our society but we do not escape the way that the principles of freedom and equality govern the way we respond and talk about its issues.

If we accept that, Taylor's use of Heidegger seems odd. Taylor reiterates, with admiration, Heidegger's thought that: "the notion of responsibility is strikingly put in the idea that Dasein's being is in question in his being, that the kind of being we are to realize is constantly in question."\(^76\) This renders our ability to represent and evaluate our representations as ontologically true. This seems to me to be the same trick we have seen before: a meaningless phrase stated in the rhetoric of heightened respectability. The importance of evaluation and representing representations may be ontological but because the material on which we judge is the result of contrived situations there is nothing significant in our need of the process. Ontologically, let's say, I need to have something in my hands. That isn't interesting. What is interesting is whether it is a cigarette, a pen or a gun. And the only way to judge which of these instruments is appropriate is the context within which we live. Sometimes, as Taylor concedes, we have been committed to, from a distanced perspective, embarrassing ideas and projects.\(^79\)

Taylor's problem with the materialists is obvious. The materialists remove the range of the moral good, the aspect of contrastive choice. For the materialist, qualitative choice is illusionary metaphysics. Materialism, of this sort, is mostly dead, but the tradition of which it is an extreme is still powerful. This tradition of radical atomism demands and prescribes certain psychological characteristics. The success of this view of the human self has resulted in a forgetfulness of other human possibilities. I would like to turn briefly to a consideration as to what this means and why it

\(^76\) See: Charles Taylor, "Responsibility for Self", 289.

might be upsetting.

Taylor thinks that the Enlightenment ontology, of which naturalism is a strong component, has made the premise of other interpretations or options silly or impossible. He writes: "Just having behaviour which meets a certain pattern in a regular way doesn't amount to fulfilling the purpose of realizing this pattern." Our allegiance to purposes demands more. The ends that we pursue are essential to our explanations of action and experience.

This context of the self is negated by the scientific tradition of our times. This is because according to the scientists it requires adherence to the non-empirical. Taylor explicates:

For empiricism backs up the rejection of explanation by purpose in two ways: the notion that all knowledge is based on impressions which come to the mind from outside leads first to a dualistic notion of body and mind as in causal interaction and second gives rise to a notion of observation according to which it is difficult to give a sense to observing an action as against observing the corresponding bodily movements.

Individual inwardness is now the only imaginable conduit to reality; it has become unchallengeable. The most serious ramification of this is that we have forgotten that this step is dictated by a particular moral stance.

The materialist language reduces our ability to challenge assumptions of ontology and the role of language in our formations. We find ourselves living in relation to logical procedures which are not an ideal but are a foundational metaphysic. We see the person as "a subject of representations"
of the outside world and our own inklings. This understanding of the self has come to dominate the way we think about and study the social sciences.

Taylor thinks this shameful. The fundamental reference points or assumptions about being are under attack. The attack has not been made directly at the heart of the Enlightenment ontology which is the actual source of our reference points but, whether the critics recognize it or not, has used this ontology as its source of critique. We have seen the rising of the self-creating subject who views morality as individually chosen values. The world continues to become raw material for our manipulation. Human reality and the social institutions which guarantee and defend that reality have become objectified in the name of a specific understanding. Reason is not a form of vision but is a method of objectification. Science defends the self-defining subject who lives in a neutral world ready for re-shaping. In freeing ourselves from the objects of our experience we are able to increase our power in dominating those objects. Taylor thinks this is wrong: "(o)ne has to understand people's self-interpretation and their visions of the good, if one is to explain how they arise; but the second task can't be collapsed into the first, even as the first can't be elided in favour of the second."  

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83 See: Charles Taylor, "The Dialogical Self", 307. It has been my argument that Taylor in his critique of procedural reason does not significantly distance his own theories from what he condemns. It seems that Taylor just embraces a different procedure. Taylor quotes and manipulates thinkers like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein as reactions against the paradigmatic power of the Enlightenment rational focus. Whether or not these thinkers escape the bonds of rational method is debatable. It is my contention that Taylor ends up clinging to a variant of the same principle of rational necessity but through a different approach.

84 See: Charles Taylor, "Peaceful Coexistence in Psychology", 133.

85 See: Ibid, 135. Taylor's idea that reason is a form of vision is extremely interesting. Reason becomes a form of the imagination similar to how it appears in Plato's Republic. I think this is an interesting approach. But Taylor falls into some trouble when he needs to defend one vision over another. All of a sudden reason becomes a criteria of validation and not just a symbol of a personal appreciation or love. Vision becomes connected to truth to defend itself. It appears that seeing reason as a type of vision is more congruent with an expression of a deep emotion. Logic becomes a language of a type of love, with no ability to justify itself or belittle the vision of another. Taylor has mistaken some kinds of love as an epiphany.

86 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 204. This is a complicated sentence. The idea of the good is not found in our understanding of a person's self interpretation and our understanding of the visions of the good cannot negate the
We consider the details of our Enlightenment framework so much that we neglect consideration of that framework. This is a difficult problem to escape because we are comfortable accepting the framework which makes sense of us even if it is prescribing that sensibility. The Enlightenment provides only one language with which to understand human beings. It has forgotten the language of the community as regards the formation of identity. Since Socrates, our understanding of self has removed our debt to the community. Also, we have forgotten that we are living under a framework. We want to deny the presence of this as a framework because we are stuck, in Taylor's understanding, in a bad natural science view of practical reason. Our rejection of other frameworks is the result of a unique moral reason which we don't recognize.

There are tremendous ramifications as a result. We understand ourselves as radically individual. Politically, people must be allowed the right to develop themselves individually. Autonomy has become the centre of respectability. We see ourselves as disengaged, removed from the natural world and as rational agents. As a result we no longer see ourselves as connected to a larger order with which we seek reconciliation. We have embraced a vision of ordinary life; our ordinary experience has become central, we no longer compare ourselves to a measuring stick of metaphysical truth or the Word of God. Religion no longer frames our Western horizons. In Nietzschean language, our horizons have been sponged away. Now we invent new idols of tradition which we are willing

importance of understanding the importance of self-interpretation. The first part seems to make sense; it seems plausible that all sorts of socialization mechanisms and practices would also need to be considered to fully understand the good. The second section is trickier. It seems to set up a dualism between what we understand as good and how we actually understand ourselves. I don't understand why this would be the case. It implies that we can have a good that is above and beyond our self-understandings and social baggage.

87 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 32.

and even eager to constantly replace. These traditions are curious in that their sole criterion is a focus on the individual as the locus of meaning.  

Taylor thinks that self-determined concepts of freedom are empty. Self-determination only provides either conflicts between differing atomistic views or a unanimism that suppresses dialectical conflict. Atomism dictates the boundaries of what can acceptably be argued and this shuts off any number of other possible avenues of experience. Knowledge has become procedure, "representing reality according to the right canons" instead of embracing, loving or living in a larger order. With the space in which identity is shown to us existing solely in our interior our ability to articulate an impressive self is diminished. Taylor would like to see life as open to interpretations which are based, not on internality, but on our being embedded in external regions. Akin to Plato, Taylor wants to connect us to a "space of disclosure" comprised of reason and contemplation where being will be shown to us. We need to move past frameworks to attain wisdom. Taylor finally confesses a truth:

89 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 8, 12-3, 17, 23.


91 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 196-7.

92 See: Charles Taylor, "The Person", 279-80. For the sake of clarity, what Taylor is getting at is similar to what Heidegger is talking about when he discusses the "clearing". Through contemplation and embracing of the premise of contemplation we can clear away what is the residue of being, that which is provided by hegemonic frameworks of being. For Heidegger the "clearing" is a space in being where we will wait for wisdom or awareness, or more simply, the voice of God. It is this latter hope that, I think, permeates Taylor's philosophy.

93 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 39. This removal of the webs of meaning so as to create a space where an epiphany is possible is a sudden, but understandable, argument of Taylor's which we find in his most recent writings. I don't think that Taylor is successful in merging this idea of the clearing with his critique of science. His critique depends on a Foucauldian understanding of social frameworks. One could have Taylor arguing that human flexibility and dependence on context does not change the fact that we live in webs of meaning but that the webs may change. The argument between Foucault and Taylor is whether these changes are arbitrary or inspired. The problem of waiting, through love, for grace is that the notion of doing this is the result of a particular social construct. The idea of authenticity cannot be separated from an intellectual tradition which has its own baggage. To denounce the Enlightenment as oppressive, to say that modern technology removes authenticity is to argue that there is such a thing as authenticity. For Taylor to forcefully argue, that while there may not be such a thing as an authentic being or a clearing, the Enlightenment has limited what we can imagine.
"(t)his deep hunger (to know who we are) exists in human beings and is never going to be stifled in them. The attempt to do without it is just like whistling in face of the wind."\textsuperscript{94} This sounds like an exaggerated version of the "we all have a jug in which to place our being" argument that I have argued is empty. If not, it is a declaration that I can either love, hate or ignore. As such, I find it admirable but, still, half the point.

Taylor sees explanations of behaviour as demanding acknowledgement of the accompanying disposition. We cannot not understand an explanation until we understand the link between the behaviour and the emotion being demonstrated. He writes:

(W)e have an explanation which along with a mediating proposition, refers to a goal or feeling - sometimes a more general susceptibility to the feeling in question, sometimes to another feeling - and which is thus teleological and intentional in the same sense as our ordinary explanations of action...language of experience is full of non-contingent connections and bespeaks throughout a teleological account of action and feeling.\textsuperscript{95}

We are, then, necessarily embedded in our emotions and our view of desirable purposes. These two criteria can be associated with having an innate grasp of deep structures in everyone. They are a pre-requisite to existence. One's capabilities to deal with the world are defined by the picture that these capabilities are able to present.\textsuperscript{96} Meaning, then, is unique for a subject and is not present in-the-

ourselves to be he must provide some inkling as to why we should be open to these interpretive possibilities. The bigger problem is providing that demonstration without fundamental access to the same Enlightenment tradition. To be what Taylor requires this demonstration must forget about validity and rational necessity. It must content itself with emotive persuasiveness.

\textsuperscript{94} See: Charles Taylor, "Marxism and Socialist Humanism", 76.

\textsuperscript{95} See: Charles Taylor, "Explaining Action", 85; Ibid, 81,83.

\textsuperscript{96} See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved in a Genetic Psychology?", 143. Again, this is problematic: Taylor is forced to argue that not only is awareness of disposition ontologically demanded but the material of this awareness can be hierarchically understood otherwise there is nothing really wrong with the empiricist outlook. Taylor is forced to argue that we grow in maturity, not in relation to societal standards but in terms of closeness to authenticity. He writes: "(t)o plunge on, regardless, in the certain faith of relevance is to say in effect, that knowledge of the structure has no relevance for
situation-itself. Things are only meaningful in a context of meaning. 97 Taylor continues:

(u)ltimately, a good explanation is one which makes sense of the behaviour; but then to appreciate a good explanation, one has to agree on what makes good sense; what makes good sense is a function of one's readings; and these in turn are based on the kind of sense one understands. 98

But, Taylor cannot abide by an understanding that does not include a standard of moral frameworks to make qualitative judgements. How is this different than saying that every game has its own rules? How, if this is accurate, can we decide that one game is a better game than another? At times Taylor seems to agree; reconsider this statement: "(b)ut the very fact that what was once so solid has in many cases melted into air shows that we are dealing not with something grounded in the nature of beings, but rather with changeable human interpretation." 99 All formulations or interpretations that make claims for truth are suspect. How do we judge self-interpretations? Taylor hints at an answer by arguing that we use a "deep unstructured sense of what is important" as a yardstick. 100 This does not satisfy for either Taylor is making an argument based on some inherent, essential, "unstructured" knowledge or this standard is really just a component of the same language that it is evaluating. How do we then reject the materialist model of instrumental control? Because it is silent about the moral

97 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences, 22.

98 See: Ibid, 24. How is it that Taylor can reconcile this statement with a standpoint by which we can judge or evaluate movement as progress? Taylor seems to be saying that human beings and their desires are tied up with culture and culture cannot be separated from the language that people speak. This seems to negate the possibility of standards or of a meaningful ontology.

99 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 26. How then do we justify or crave a fixate for what seems radically flexible? How can Taylor provide his science of interpretation, his hermeneutics?

100 See: Charles Taylor, "Responsibility For Self", 298.
good that it supposedly denies? Can we not accept that it is our view of the good, that it does not promise redemption and move on? Or we cannot deny it because we find it ugly and, again, move on? How much weight can we put on Taylor's argument that there is no yardstick with which to judge on a meta-level but that we still need to wonder about the validity of certain epistemological movements and judge them by the language of logical coherence?

Taylor argues that moral philosophy must be about what it is good to be rather than what it is right to do. He argues about standards of strong-evaluation that stand independent of our desires; that we have moral intuitions. He argues that we must talk about what sorts of life are worth living. He provides all sorts of examples, but eventually what are we talking about here? I would argue that these conversations are connected to the language of a particular context; that which we deem respectable and worthy of awe is more a reflection of culture than it is of intellectual or moral purity. Saying that understanding comes from our conversations cannot say anything about the merits of any of our conversations. Interestingly, my source for this argument can largely be found in the work of Charles Taylor.  

And I find this argument very interesting. If you add to it Taylor's thought on neutrality in the social sciences and his view of political atomism this interest increases. In these two areas Taylor adds to the elucidation of some central and fascinating themes. At the same time, though, this elucidation provides for a great deal of confusion in considering what he does with his conclusions.

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101 I think that the only way to eventually make sense of Taylor is as a Christian. On a lighter level, Taylor's critique of the materialists seems to support a creationist view of our origins rather than one of evolution. How Taylor could reconcile his theory of significance and horizons of good with the primordial ooze seems impossible.
NOTE: This page [186] is blank due to misnumbering of pages. There is no text missing; the text on p. 185 continues on p. 187.
Chapter Eight - Neutrality

Three baseball umpires are sitting in a coffee shop discussing the art of decision making as it pertains to a baseball game. They are arguing about balls and strikes and their own role of deliberation. The first umpire suggests, "I call them as I see them." The second umpire, not satisfied with such a passive role, states, "I call them as they are." The third umpire, thinking that the first two umps are in the wrong business, declares, "They are nothing until I call them."

- Old joke

It is Charles Taylor's view that everything that we look at is touched by what we think is good. Therefore, what is of potential interest in our scientific or philosophical pursuits is not that which we think is being shown to us but the position of the me that is seeing. There is no such thing, for Taylor, as a neutral inspection. It is impossible to look at or into something without qualitative baggage. What we choose to look at and how we look is reflected in the glimmers of our desires and our understanding of what is important. These desires and rankings of importance are attached, eventually, to what it is we think is good or of foremost significance in a human life. By good, Taylor does not automatically wish to imply some sort of vulgar pantheism where God is in everything that we can experience. The good that Taylor is suggesting is nothing in particular. The good that governs our inspections and reflections is up for grabs. It could be a reiteration of the crueller aspects of Nietzsche's will to power or the more generous traits of Christian altruism. The good depends on you and then everything else depends on it.

Taylor recognizes that the source of particular goods is not as arbitrary as I have made it sound. Mostly, what we recognize as our fundamental goods are remarkably consistent with those of everyone around us. Our goods come from one another, from the inflections we put into our institutions and how our constitutions feel in our mouths. We daily assert the gentlest of dictates on
one another. And as children we are weaned on a common language and structure of understanding that we adopt under one guise or another.

Taylor is not satisfied with this culturally bound historical explanation of good or bad. It smells of relativism and relativism stinks of moral danger. For Taylor we are stuck in a many layered collection of problems. First, we are stuck in a biased understanding of the world that we think of as neutral. We think that we have found an objective truth when all we have articulated is a simple interpretation. Second, if we are able to crawl out of the first mire, we come to think that we live in a world that can provide no defense of judgement. We fall into a nihilistic malaise which coerces us back into a narrow understanding of liberal values of tolerance based on apathy.

Taylor, as I shall show, demonstrates how this trap comes about. It is my view that Taylor is absolutely right about everything he says except his consideration that it is a trap. I am agreed that there is no point to embracing a notion of neutrality. But I think that Taylor, again, constructs his ability to judge on a foundation of anti-judgement which he, himself, has created. Whether this is so or not is only part of the argument. Perhaps a more crucial consideration to ponder is whether the ability to judge in the position that Taylor clears is desirable or is really a dangerous reiteration of the same neutrality that he denounces. In the question of neutrality, scientific or political, and the study of man and world Taylor is forced to face off against a Thrasymachus that he is initially more likely to see as a friend than a foe.

As we have seen in the last two chapters, modern science has made its pursuits under the guidance of one fundamental assumption: we can know the truth. It is possible for us, in the scientific
perspective, to vanquish illusion and found a true science. Natural science argues that theory shows us a view of "underlying mechanisms" which enable us to understand how things work causally. By explaining how things work causally we are assisted in our project of living more satisfactorily. We are better able to control our environment. At the heart of this understanding or approach is a sentiment that expresses that "our action takes place in an unperceived causal context."

Now, Taylor is mildly sympathetic to this view as long as it does not leave the realm of the natural sciences. Of course, this sort of sympathy of Taylor's is inevitably destined to be retracted. How is it that a science that thoroughly discusses the processes of the natural world for supposed human benefit could be expected to not have tremendous ramifications on our understanding of humanity? This, again, returns us to the Kantian impossibility of removing ourselves from our embodiment. Science is free from the human psyche in a Cartesian world but we have not lived in that world since the Enlightenment. Our scientific understanding of the natural world, that which offers control over our environment, cannot be removed from a desire to control that environment. The pursuit of truth be it in philosophy or science has effects as we shall soon see. The important question is whether these effects and the pursuit can eventually be understood as contingent and arbitrary or whether they may be construed as necessary.

Taylor does not imagine that the study of natural sciences has any place in the study of the social sciences. This sentiment has not been generally shared as political science departments form

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and thrive across North America. The study of political science favours replicability and understanding over vision. Political variables are converted into data which can be analyzed empirically. How is it that we are able to convert the wide range of political components and inflections into brute-data? Particular policies pinpoint certain classifications which make sense of the goals we have accepted. It eventually does not matter what these goals are. We, if we are scientists, can accept that there are such things as facts and values but that they can be separated. Taylor's questioning begins with wondering: can analysis and evaluation be separated?

How can a science of politics work without dealing with what is considered to motivate political action? Students of politics must include an analysis of the values and hopes of the citizens that they label in variables. If this is so, then political science is eventually a study of the feelings of individual and collected citizens. Political scientists do not see this exactly in these terms. Political scientists (only those who admire the title) must distinguish between social reality and what "we think and feel about it" or give up their reputations as scientists. Taylor puts the challenge well:

We cannot measure such sciences against the requirements of a science of verification: we cannot judge them by their predictive capacity. We have to accept that they are founded on intuitions which all do not share, and what is worse that these intuitions are closely bound up with our fundamental options.

Scientists, like everyone else, base their work on fundamental assumptions that cannot be

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6 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 29, 44.

7 See: Ibid, 45.

8 See: Ibid, 57.
demonstrated non-metaphysically. They feel it is good to pursue truth, because truth is liberating and liberation is, again, a good.

So what?, one might sensibly ask. What residual problems could possibly contaminate one who assumes that freedom is a good? Consider Taylor's interesting dismissal of Seymour Lipset. Taylor sees Lipset as rejecting Marxist revolutionary arguments by arguing, himself, that the "dimensions of Marxist variation" are invalid, i.e. they do not correspond with factual reality. Lipset sees it as only sensible that we rationally choose "peace and consent" over "violence and despotism". Lipset, in this step, shows himself to be dismissing the variables of other-contextual normative theories, but is more comfortable prescribing a more common and contextualized normative theory. Lipset views the institutional and political structure of his being as the same as the natural, truthful order of being. Lipset's understanding of truth and rationality are dogmatic. Taylor identifies the common proposition: "there has developed a culture in which a certain form of rationality is a dominant value." This rationality makes the same methodical assumptions as those it seeks to denigrate. The circle is clear. Political scientists in rendering neutral analysis of particular political regimes or concepts manipulate their own fundamental assumptions as unquestionable foundations of truth. Taylor sees this hegemony of thought as naive. He writes: "(o)ne can scientifically explain why certain theories serve the self-definitions of certain people, but that they do so says nothing of itself for their truth."Taylor's argument is quite compelling: we who analyze and inspect are also preachers of a

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10 See: Charles Taylor, "Political Theory and Practice", 75.

sort. But what does this really mean? Is there any possibility of interesting flexibility for the uttering of esoteric opinion? Before I consider how much movement the academic or engaged intellectual has in a web of dominant societal values, it would be of interest, as regards the judgement of those values, to consider what lies at the base of this argument against neutrality. What are the standards to which claims of neutrality must respond?

The scientific paradigm provides a justification for needing and using a concept like neutrality. It defines what criteria is necessary for neutrality to be attained. The theory goes that if the analyst takes a side, or alignment in the name of neutrality, then the particularities of this thinking will invariably show itself in its conclusions. The political scientist is sort of an arbitrarily derived referee enforcing rules of neutral, non-judging inspection. But, as Taylor identifies, rules of analysis do not show us why they should be accepted as the components of neutrality.\(^\text{12}\) In Taylor's seemingly sensible view we must recognize that in any given climate there is a duality of acceptable/unacceptable arguments or lenses through which thinkers and observers do their work.\(^\text{13}\) It is these contexts which we cannot avoid. In denying them in the name of truth we are merely hiding them from our own gaze. In this act of unconscious evaporation we turn to theories which claim either a distanced objectivity or neutrality which serves only to further instill the dominant context. What we conceive as an act of the imagination only throws us back onto the spikes of our original intellectual position.

How we describe is connected to what it is we think we are describing. In other words, there is no serious distinction between the fact and the value. Our emotions and descriptions are mixed. Taylor writes: "(i)f one searches for some core of feeling which might exist independently of the sense

\(^{12}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in the University", 130-1.

\(^{13}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 46.
of its object which constitutes it, one searches in vain."¹⁴ We will not find a truth that is beyond what we ask of truth. The descriptions we give to actions or phenomena, even the fact that we have noted them, is connected to our own interests.¹⁵ What political scientists are actually doing, if they are astute, is showing an understanding of functional relations that articulate contexts through which we understand phenomena. We can recognize that particular contexts have a particular emphasis; that they embrace some sort of relationship with the variables under its gaze, and that they reject other views.¹⁶ It is this rejection of other views that may provide the source of the problem. It bespeaks a confidence in the particular over the universality of endless possibility.

For an individual to be compelled by certain views of explanation, or for that matter, to exist as a rational subject, they must be aware of what it is about their context that appeals. This demands an understanding of what it demands and what it provides. All the practices of our society demonstrate this. We do what we do because we have certain understandings of the value of doing them. We participate or do not participate in a practice like paying taxes because we have an understanding of how this fits into a larger contextual package of society's mores. We do not need to explain this to ourselves in theoretical or abstract terms because it fundamentally makes sense to the citizens of this specific context. Observers and political scientists do not detract from what we are doing; all they aim to accomplish is the provision of a sub-level of explanation.¹⁷

These descriptions and evaluations try to show what is crucial among all the criteria involved


¹⁶ See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", 63.

in this political action. This idea of crucial mostly refers to what is essential for this process to work as it does or as it should. But in arguing that there are particular ways for this to work and potential improvements to be made, the political scientist is also making a moral claim that doing so is morally significant. For Taylor, the idea that these two components are ever separable is meritless. The reason for thinking that they can be separated reflects a very potent modern desire: the separation between fact and value demands the sort of atomistic self that corresponds nicely with our view of democratic pride. In making this a truth claim we are ignoring the entire civilization that went into the formation of our culture; a culture that, in turn, has told us to what to call and expect of truth. Taylor ponders: can we understand the rules of society without knowing what that society considers to be good?

Taylor argues that theories of the social sciences, "unlike with natural science", are not about things separate from our self-understandings. Social sciences are about understanding people's

18 See: Ibid.

19 See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 50.


21 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 55.

22 See: Charles Taylor, "Political Theory and Practice", 70, 73.

That Taylor sees the subjective importance in the social sciences but not in the natural sciences is peculiar. I think that Taylor depends on the natural sciences to represent a standard of possibility for the interpretive structure of the social sciences to be deemed meritable. That there is absolute truth outside of us implies that there is truth inside of us. Of course, Taylor accepts that we will not find the truth within, but he uses the standard set by the natural sciences to give the pursuit validation.

Is it sensible to consider the natural sciences as distinct from us? It seems most obviously not. For science to be of any interest to us at all it must, too, be connected to some moral edifice or answer. Understanding of the natural world is inseparable from deriving some sort of purpose from that understanding. Why do we focus on the things that we do? Science is not an end to itself. In our study of something like gravity we have a moral interest in how the question turns out. If we ask what is so important about gravity one might be given answers like it is essential for medicine, or travel, or architecture, and so on. But we can still ask why those things are of value. My point is that eventually we are going to have to give some sort of moral answer. It is good to make people's lives easier; it is good to prolong life, and so on. To argue, then, that the principles of science are not as connected to our values as the social sciences seems wrong.
motivations and goals. Goals and motivations do not make sense without considering what these people value. It is essential, then, to consider the subject of the science as a crucial variable of that science. As Taylor argues, without a subject, coherence is arbitrary. Meaning is something of value only as it relates to a particular human or group of humans.\textsuperscript{23}

Social scientists dwell on the infra-structures and effects of particular social relations and practices and the ideologies that ground those relations. In analyzing these considerations, the social scientist must recognize that all practices and institutions, like voting or paying taxes, are connected to normative, constitutive values. We must recognize these constitutive norms as central to what it is that we are considering. We may not have a conclusive understanding of what these values mean or how to articulate them but we must concede their omnipresence.\textsuperscript{24}

Our approach to the world is necessarily specific. We cannot help but have a precise emphasis or inflection about our own experience. This makes the question of neutrality absolutely impossible. If we describe our values and attempt to show how we may have arrived at them we are exposing a value of concern with appropriate grounding. In viewing our position in the world we choose terms and ideas that we think or feel make the best sense of our lives. Our languages of thought are the same as our languages of appraisal.\textsuperscript{25} How we think or feel and what we are attracted to as a result of those thoughts and feelings is the method by which we understand and pursue the world. We do not make sense of our lives by explaining ourselves as outside observers. Outside observation is

\textsuperscript{I, against Taylor, cannot see the sense of a line being drawn between the natural and social sciences.}

\textsuperscript{23} See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 16.

\textsuperscript{24} See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 41-2.

\textsuperscript{25} See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 57.
unable to provide or touch our inner core of feeling. Therefore, to think that it is possible to pursue a truth without a specific accent is a fool's errand.

This inability to depict a neutral stance is connected, I think, to all of our endeavour. We are unable to remove our bias of judgement in our judgements of one another or in our contemplation of the stars. The language that comes from within my cares and concerns is primal in a non-ontological sense. It is the way that I sculpt the world; it guides what I accept and what I think needs to be discarded. The serious question for traditional philosophers is to ask whether, given the overwhelming invasiveness of the self-understanding, is there anything larger to be used as a gauge of acceptability or correctness? Taylor provides what may be a surprising answer. He asserts that the terms with which we judge are always our self-descriptive terms; we can never negate or replace with official truth our primary adherence to our own claims of self-understanding.26 But we do not really find ourselves in confrontation with the need for absolute verification very often in our lives. We may realize or think that our lives only make sense in a certain way. I may not be able to understood my self as fanatically open-minded about tolerating other religions as a good example of humanity. I may see that sort of person as a sheep or as less than human. We all probably have understandings of the world, without which the world would cease making sense. So, when we think of these values that we have of the world, we think of them as true.27

26 See: Ibid, 58.
This is an interesting comment for Taylor to make. I think that there is a danger, that in asserting that we all depend on our self-understanding when rendering judgement on anything that we decide is important, that Taylor might try to exaggerate the moral elements of this understanding by stating it as ontologically necessary. If we decide to give Taylor the ontology of radical subjectivity we must continue to recognize that he has not said anything with a moral imperative. We all depend on our self-understanding. But, again, there does not seem to be a rule that this self-understanding be anything specific. Our self-understanding can be what we call deep and complicated or it can be what we call vapid. There is no reason, outside of the context of the self-understanding, to compare the two.

I think this is right but misleading. I don't think that we necessarily understand our own sense of what is good,
How does this affect the work of the political scientist? Or, more interestingly, how does the work of the political scientist affect us? The political scientist who wants to do objective, empirical work either will attempt to set this value criteria aside or demarcate it in specific, non-flexible terms. This latter component entails a movement from values to definitive facts and not a step towards recognizing that facts are values. Values, if we can parallel them to emotive responses towards experience, may or may not come from our science. Where values originally come from is a difficult question. It is possible that there is a relationship between our scientific pursuits and a normative/prescriptive procedure that provides the implementation of a value structure. If this is so, is it possible to attach a moral onus of responsibility onto a field like political science?

As argued above, where our values originally come from cannot easily be validated. In acknowledging the primacy of values in our thinking we are accepting the notion of moral pre-conditions. Without these pre-conditions we would be lost in the world. We would not know how to identify characteristics or phenomena in a way that we could consider useful. Neutrality, then, is impossible if it is to be considered meritable. We require a background of "value commitments" even to make sense of neutrality. The term "neutral" is not a neutral term. All frameworks of

desirable and the like as metaphysically true. We are far too open-minded and tolerant, we are far too liberal, to view our approximations of what is right for us in dogmatic terms. Therefore, I do not think that we think of our own values and choices in terms of a duality of true and false. Also, anyone over the age of twenty-five, I think is cogent of the tremendous possibilities of flexibility as regards our moral grounding. We start off as Marxist, become Libertarians and end up as social-democrat Christians. At each stage we imagine the good that governs us to be fairly temporal. When we look at our lives in retrospect, I don't think we see a plot but rather an arbitrary unfolding. This flexibility, and our acceptance of it, bespeaks a non-dogmatic approach to questions of truth versus false.


30 See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in the University", 128.

Taylor explains that what appear to be exceptions to this rule like the referee in a sporting match can easily be explained.
understanding have specific value positions. Any scheme of thought or analysis will provide a value-
slope for human beings. If a scheme tries to show us who we are and how we live it is showing us
how we should view good and bad.\(^{31}\) This is inevitable. If a public policy analyst argues that Policy
A will not provide the social safety net that its backers think it will, the analyst, while not having an
opinion on welfare programs (though unlikely), does have a view on the merits of the sort of system
that produces legislation. Through commentary, acknowledgement and agreement follow. Even if we
decide that good/bad and human ontological needs are irrelevant we have not escaped the charge.
This has become our value instead. Pragmatism is a value, a truth claim.\(^{32}\)

Truth and truth claims are different for different people. We reach different conclusions in
different places and in different periods of our lives. How then are we to make sense of what political
scientists aim to do? Is it enough, or even interesting, to provide clarity in regards to our unique truth
claims? Taylor comments:

Taylor would counter that this is neutrality for the sake of a game which is well understood to impose its rules on the world.
Through his neutral stance the football referee is demonstrating agreement, acceptance and maintenance of the rules. This
is interesting when you consider the role of the commentator/moderator in much of our political life.

\(^{31}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in the University", 73.

\(^{32}\) See: Ibid, 83.

The same ghost of relevancy haunts this idea as well. Again, it seems that Taylor is making a "jug" argument. We
all must have values, even those of us who denounce values. The problem is that without a category of judgement, accepting
that we all must have a value structure of some vague sort does not get us anywhere. On what basis, other than assertion,
is one framework or value-scheme more acceptable than another? If Taylor is able to show that those who say that there is
no such thing as a true value are asserting, in that moment, their view of true values, what has he got? Does he have the
grounds for a dismissal of nihilist rhetoric? I don't think so and I am not always convinced that he would welcome those
grounds. As a hermeneuticist, rival interpretations are the fodder of life.

My view is that Taylor is able to show a paradox in the thought of those who deny value schemes. Perhaps they
are not denying value schemes, perhaps they are denying that they are of interest to the political philosopher. Taylor, through
his argument, is able to claim a monopoly on relativism. It is through his perspective that all claims become metaphysical
which we are incapable of judging in regards to truth. Taylor really has thrown out truth; interpretation is all: if an
interpretation is able to actually provide what it claims to want to do, then it has merit. Taylor's point is regards neutrality
is that all thinking or analysis whether it concedes it or not has a point and as such is judgeable on whether or not it can
succeed in providing the necessary ground for its points. At heart, there is little moral distinguishing between these points.
Taylor thinks that most schemes are doomed to fail. This seems, again, intimately connected with a faith in Hegelianism.
If it is not then this is just a game where recognition of these rules is only dependant on whether you want to play.
Ultimately, a good explanation is one which makes sense of the behaviour; but then to appreciate a good explanation, one has to agree on what makes good sense; what makes good sense is a function of one's readings; and these in turn are based on the kinds of sense one understands.33

This seems to answer my question about the importance of clarity with a negative. Clarity, in this view, is akin to preaching to the converted. The witness of clarity is only recognizable and understandable if you are already mostly sympathetic to the project that it is elucidating. What is the necessary good in doing that?

Elsewhere, Taylor implies that if we do not consider the importance of clarity, our understanding and ability to participate in our worlds will decay. He writes:

The recovery of a valid relation to the earth is the hardest thing once lost; and there is no relation to the absolute where we are caught in the web of meanings which have gone dead for us.34

So while we may be stuck in paradigms of what it is possible to think, these same paradigms require the nurturing of evaluation to continue. It is in reflection and awareness, in clarifying, that we maintain a connection to a faith in something like an absolute. Taylor, it seems, is arguing that while metaphysical theories cannot make absolute claims of validity, if we were to lose them we would lose our, albeit illusionary, connection to the world of absolutes and truth. It is sensible, when confronted with this sort of thought, to wonder why we should care. Perhaps this dilemma can be clarified by considering our dependence on some sort of belief in good.

As it looks right now, we project good onto an unknowable but basically neutral world. The qualitative distinctions that we derive for ourselves are the sole providers of reason for our moral

33 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 24.

beliefs. Because of the importance of what we bring to moral issues and questions can we not say that
good is a relative term?35

In Taylor's analysis, good is necessary for life, judgement and how we understand humanity.
It makes sense of and provides a perspective for our own essential judgements. My metaphysical
sense or appreciation comes from what I think is real and important.36 My understanding of reality
and how I understand or refuse to understand God is the same thing. Our understanding of our own
choices as goods has a depth that demands moralization on our part. Even if our perspective of choice
is one of non-realism or the denunciation of what has been construed as moral beliefs (ala Nietzsche)
we are arguing a moral perspective. If a stance of non-realism was also sincerely non-moral, then why
would we bother or believe it?37

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35 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 53, 56.


37 See: Ibid, 60.

Taylor wonders why we would denounce realism and morality without having our own moral point. Why would
anyone want to smash the idea of absolute truth unless they thought it had some point, that it provides focus on some other
assumed good? Taylor construes this as a form of madness. From Taylor's language of science and rationality it is madness.
That is, if madness is that which does not speak our language. I think that Rorty is good on this in "The Priority of
Democracy to Philosophy". We tend to think that others who do not think in our language are crazy. The Nazi or
the KKK member is insane because they do not understand the terminology of humanity like we do. I think that something
similar is going on here. That it is going on with Taylor, given his radical critique of rationality as posited by scientists, is
discouraging. The terms of dialogue between realists and non-realists depends on very different definitions of key terms.
For the non-realist the understanding of sociological or historical apparentness is not the same as embracing a view of
morality. To say I like freedom is more a pledge of allegiance to my context than a moral commitment. Terms like belief,
truth, reason and philosophy can only be used against the non-realists in the way that Taylor uses them if he actually knows
that the way he articulates them is correct. For all Taylor knows, the world may be the way we want it to be without reason
or logic. For the non-realist the terminology of logic and reason as purveyed by Taylor and others seems bizarrely foreign
and crazy. They seem to be playing games with words and calling the completed games conclusions. Taylor cannot
understand how someone can say there is no truth - the logical paradox negates the phrasing.

I am suggesting two quite different things here. First, I want to argue that madness is only a term of reference from
those doing the accusing. This is my ideological argument. My logical argument against Taylor is that this sort of
understanding of the in-communicability of distinct dialogues follows from his own argument. This will become clearer
when I discuss Taylor's own concerns with the difficulty of cultural translation later in this chapter.
But on the same token the idea of moral obligation also gets tainted in the process. In demanding that we all realize that we are dependant on moral frameworks, but that these frameworks can be wildly diverse, we are left with moral relativism. Certain ideas of the good only appear to those who have the security of a certain contextual placing.

In our own context, we spend our lives confronted with many different goods. Taylor agrees but adds that we feel compelled to rank them.\(^\text{38}\) This, Taylor admits, can be very difficult. But with each of our understandings of the good come a list of appropriate questions which we can acknowledge. Through asking questions like: does this mean more to me than that?, we are able to identify our highest goods.\(^\text{39}\) These highest goods, accordingly, order all of our other goods. This is what sets the standard of all judgements. It sets the morality of our culture. If you understand ethics to be beyond these sorts of contexts, the scene can appear very discouraging as previous goods can quickly be dismissed. These people are logically rare and generally viewed by the rest of us as crazy. We change the way we value other views of the good. We no longer think that owning slaves is morally acceptable. This contextualization comes to contain all of our views of the good. Taylor sees Aristotle as arguing that the supreme good is the proper relationship of all goods. In the modern context, the supreme good that dominates all other goods is epistemology. It dictates what is acceptable and what is not. Our supreme good for our context has become all we can imagine when


\(^{39}\) Taylor acknowledges but disagrees with thinkers like Sartre who argued that we are stuck in life with radical choices with which we cannot posit one good over the other. Taylor, does not see this as disagreeable, in the moral sense. If you are forced to decide between staying with your ill mother and going to fight for the underground Taylor thinks that you have a conflict between two powerful goods not an absence of goods. Taylor’s point is valid but it doesn’t enable one to make a decision.
we conceive of the word truth.* To think about the good in the world is, in Taylor's terms, to be
narcissistic and critical of political humanism. Our goods now demand a celebration of ordinary life,
of freedom, and of an epistemology of atomism.

Taylor writes: "our acceptance of a hypergood is connected in a complete way with our being
moved by it." Now, either we are to understand this in terms of being pre-conditioned by our
context to embrace certain truths or there is a truth that is prior to our thinking. The latter possibility
(which you will find in Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger) collapses into the former. Good, for
most of us but not necessarily so, usually gives the reason for how to provide commendation. If good
is what we value, satisfaction of our values is always a good. Taylor states:

The descriptive aspects of goods meaning can rather be shown in this way: good is
used in evaluating, commending, persuading and so on by a race of beings who are
such that through their needs, desires, and so on, they are not indifferent to the
various outcomes of the world-process.42

As we turn our attention back to the question of analytic neutrality we can acknowledge a few
fundamental understandings. We cannot, apparently, live or analyze without an idea of the good. But
this good is flexible and dependant on any number of variables. Cultures tend to produce hyper-goods
which dominate the way good is evaluated within that context. These contexts vary. It seems we may
have come some way in showing that neutrality does not exist. But what would the problem be if we
pretended it did?

In feigning neutrality the social scientist is fated to support the status quo. The question of

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40 See: Ibid, 65-6. Also, for a full discussion of exactly this sort of point, see: Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of

41 See: Ibid, 73.

whether this support is meritable becomes impossible to ask. It is inevitable that particular frameworks (which are, in themselves, unavoidable tools), of explanation in the study of politics will accept, support and perpetuate certain value judgements. The inkling to even pursue the study of political phenomena presupposes the desire to either witness or expose views about who we are as political beings.43 The premise of the neutral but engaged spectator is impossible. One cannot avoid "descriptive predicates and evaluative terms" that are eventually designed to carry moral resonance.44 But what, we must curiously ask, is the problem of claiming neutrality even if it does not exist? How is it that our interpretations when masked under the guise of neutrality actually propound the status quo? How can this be avoided?

Taylor sees a moral movement in the way our gaze affects what is under its inspection. He adds to the power of theories when he writes:

A theory can do more than undermine or strengthen practices. It can shape or alter our way of carrying them out by offering an interpretation of the constitutive norms.45 Theories change practices and practices change those who are integrated within them. To pretend that our theories do not have a valutative component is to render change without recourse to judgement. The typical way of approaching value criteria is either to accept certain values over others or to completely negate the valuative aspect entirely. This latter technique, often seen in the university, is an attempt to deny that there is any sort of valuable good that is represented in whatever issue or policy is under discussion. As political scientists we dismiss the reasons for arguing that something 


45 See: Charles Taylor, "Political Theory and Practice", 70.
is or not worthy of the compliment - good.\textsuperscript{46} We, in our policy and structural analysis, either undermine or over-ride the question of valuation in our pretence of neutrality. If we do not recognize that not only are we looking at the values of others but that, also, in the act of interested looking, we are also perpetuating values, we will be unable to actually challenge or defend our own political or social understandings.

If you change the value judgements, you change the framework through which those value judgements are understood. This, invariably, has an effect on political society. The idea of accepting the framework without embracing the corresponding values is impossible. A framework of understanding is always shorthand for what it is we value as regards human needs. If we reduce or negate the value structure we also negate the essence of the framework.\textsuperscript{47}

In Taylor's view, then, we are irrevocably connected to valuations which constitute our frameworks of understanding. If we are to neglect these valuations in our considerations of these frameworks we inescapably will alter those values. Theories are not merely collections of ideas that we apply in a detached manner. Theories also transform that which they consider and the person who is doing the considering or accepts the considerations. This is because of the relationship between social practices and self-understandings which I have previously identified. If we alter our practices,

\textsuperscript{46} See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", 72; Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", 8. Taylor calls these two methods over-riding and under-mining. Over-riding refers to choosing certain values over others. Under-mining relates to the negation of their importance. If one makes a successful objection which can be understood as under-mining a certain set of values which are connected to a context or framework, the framework will be altered. If we just replace the value without dismissing the framework, we are over-riding. An undermining objection dismantles the basis upon which we came to make judgements and disconnects the value from the variable or articulation that it was based on. This will also change the framework which would have explained the dismissed variable, thus covering its tracks.

\textsuperscript{47} See: Ibid, 75. Taylor writes: "For the connection between a given framework of explanation and a certain notion of the schedule of needs, wants and purposes which seems to mediate the inference to values theory is not fortuitous." (Ibid, 74.)
a new self will arise to conform. If we change our self-understandings, new practices will rise to
govern these new beings.48

It is this ontological component that is most curious. For Taylor, or Heidegger, to note that
the transformative ability of blind theorizing and practice has a result in a shift in being that may not
be ambiguous or trivial, they must have an understanding of being that allows for tainting. Now, this
can, I think, be argued in terms of preference; that Taylor prefers the sort of folk we once were. Or
it can be argued in terms of political pragmatism; that who we are becoming can logically be shown
to be contributing to economic or political chaos and we don't want that. Or we can argue against
this idea of change in terms of philosophy; we are getting further and further from a notion of good
that originally permeated our Beings or souls. This latter option is distanced from pragmatism in
terms of emphasis. A society for the philosopher of this Aristotelian sort denounces political chaos
as constraining our ability to find the good and theoretical life. The pragmatist's only good is the
maintenance and perpetuation of a society that most of us like.

I would argue that Taylor, despite appearances, embraces the pragmatist view. The paradox
or irony is that he does so in the name of philosophical goods. By this I mean that Taylor has a vision
of a stable society that demands a respect for what we subjectively understand as highest goods. The
point for Taylor is not to bring us closer to God but to prevent the downfall of modern society.
Taylor has no Marxist hopes or desires for democratic collapse. For Taylor, ontological foundations
are valued for their usefulness in pursuing the social and political content. The irony, in this language,
is that Taylor, given that he is an underdog, feels he has to defend their usefulness in the rhetoric of
reason. As a result, it is crucial that Taylor be able to argue that our wandering and neglectful social

48 See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 40, 42.
ethic not be allowed to warp into dimensions unchecked. To make this argument he has to persuade us that human beings have something to lose in accepting the negation of our previous valuative foundations.49

Taylor confesses:

There is such a thing as self-lucidity, which points us to a correspondence view: but the achievement of such lucidity means moral change, that is, it changes the object known.50

The message is that while there may be a self that can be articulated in terms of an ontological reality or a correspondence to the world as it is, this self-awareness, this epiphany of introspection, alters the view that is available or seen. This can be seen in two different ways. Either we come to a final and correct view of who and what we are with the occasion of self-lucidity or we forever lose ourselves in a pattern where we always know what we just were but in that moment inevitably move on to a different identity. My sense is that Taylor subscribes to the former. It is my fear that he cannot avoid the quagmire of the latter. It is understandable that Taylor eventually ends up making this sort of argument. This becomes more evident when we consider Taylor's concern that while a true perspective may be asking for too much, we can certainly be wrong in what we value.51 That is, it may be in fact an error or an illusion of our being to have forgotten Aristotle in the way that we have.

Theories become illusionary, Taylor thinks, when they are understood to be sciences.52

49 The reason for Taylor's doing this, at least rhetorically, is social not spiritual. This shows Taylor as a fascinating archetype: a pragmatist of the unpopular. Given that Taylor shows this hand with more willingness than the rest of the canon he allows us to work backwards and discover that unpopular pragmatism is quite likely the best way to consider the dialectic of fringe political philosophy.

50 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 26.

51 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 70.

52 See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 49.
Theories, it would then seem, become illusions or deceptive when they feign to provide truth or, it follows, when they pursue it as a science does. What is it about science that is pejorative in Taylor's sense? I would suggest that it is science's belief that certain avenues of thoughtful or emotive consideration that make requests on a metaphysical or theological imagination are useless to the discovery of truth. But then Taylor's comments seem too deeply ironic to be given much value. If we argue that science is to be persecuted because it persecutes we are going to end up looking stupid. Accordingly, can any theory avoid the sort of tensions that Taylor elucidates? Is it possible for a theory to not be exclusionary in its pursuit of truth? If a theory does not pursue truth does it escape the possibility of being delusional? does it remain a theory?

Science, in Taylor's view, has argued that it is a chimera that there are many possible interpretations as regards the natural world and our place in it. This belief in interpretive movement, to the scientist, is dangerous because if interpretation is given free rein it may lead to radically different outcomes. For the scientist, to not have a common ground of reality is to flirt with madness and chaos.

States and persons can be torn apart by the exaggeration or enhancement of divisions. It follows, then, that theories that have a wrong or divergent factual understanding about human beings and natural systems are not just stupid, they are also dangerous. They are dangerous because they may envision possibilities for humanity that strike us as both wrong and morally outrageous. To feel confident about our ability to label views that are an alternative to our own we demand some conviction in our own understandings. If the things that we know are awful are not seen or felt to be

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53 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 55.

awful by others we must pity them for having a false-consciousness; they really do not know what it is that they are seeing or feeling. They have being willfully ignorant and they now actually believe their errors in thinking. To make these sorts of accusations is to use theory as a science.

We have come to understand our theories of exposition, be they scientific or philosophic, as good if they explain the practices they consider; if they clear up previous confusions; and if they tend to higher productivity, increasing our ability to produce what it is that we want. As I have shown, Taylor understands the success or failure of theory as eventually changing who we are. If we are able to make clear something previously opaque, if we are able to bring to fruition a project previously beyond us, we will change. How do we know that in the change we make we are not in serious error? How do we avoid being dogmatic in areas we know nothing about? If we can convince ourselves, on what ground will we be able to convince others?

While Taylor thinks that these are valuable questions, he does not go very far in providing answers. He acknowledges that in applying our new theories and their potential ramifications to a criteria of logical sensibility we may be just comparing to the old paradigm of a specific type of reasoning that we cannot know was correct to begin with. We may think that our previous context, which we use now as a standard, might be wrong. We can always ask: "how do you know, why are you sure?" Arguments about answering these sorts of questions do not ever approach the point of solutions. They are invariably arguments about the argument.56

If we think about this problem, if indeed we need to see it as a problem, in terms of dialectics some curiosities arise. As we have already stated, a theory is deemed meritable when it exemplifies


the practice under its inspection. These theories change our practices, supposedly, by making them less contradictory. A theory is proven when the change is viewed as for the good. If the theory is correct our practices become clear; "we would be capable of more clairvoyant practice". That is, we would be more aware of what it is we are doing.

Let us consider a theory of taxation reform put forth by a political scientist. His/her criteria of evaluation is based on what sort of fundamental assumptions surround what it is that a taxation policy should accomplish. There should be a serious element of fairness in whatever policy we aspire to. More importantly, we should make sure that our theory will appeal to the populace. As we pursue our theoretical research we will come to conclusions as to where previous theories and policies have failed. We will note that the taxation system that is in place does not embody the principles that it intends to replicate. The practice, as instituted, does not embody the principles that we connect it with. Our new theory tries to explicate those principles inherent in our understanding of taxation by clarifying what is of central importance. Once our theory is readied it is tested by its acceptance or rejection by the citizens of whose principles it is designed to reflect. If it is accepted it is a good theory. If it is rejected it is because it is not coherently connected to what is important to the people. It has either mistaken what it has thought contradictory or it has compounded those contradictions with ones of its own.

This is a dialectic. It negates the negatives and hopes to replace them with positives. If it is successful it will please the people that it was created to represent. With this measure of success, we, as its designers, will see ourselves as correct, as having tapped a truth. This, for Taylor and myself, is the start of self-delusion. In finding confirmation in a nation of accepting faces, our theory "can

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It is this understanding of confirmation that constitutes how we judge other societies and our own. We view societies according to how they fulfil different "explanatory purposes" as connected to "a normatively significant one." We talk about institutions in relation to how they construe, respond to, and combine the interests of the people under their authority. A society that does not do this, one where inputs and outputs do not match, is considered less superior to the society that satisfies this requirement. Does this have any effect on our self-understandings? Does politics construed in this way limit the possibilities of what politics can be? Does it shape, guide or enforce the shared meanings and significance with which we unite to share and give? Or does the theory of the political scientist show us the importance of things that we had not, as of yet, considered?

Taylor thinks it is important to consider what John Stuart Mill thought was at the essence of a stable and successful society. Taylor paraphrases: "truth can be approached, only where different beliefs, different theories, different manners of seeking truth are allowed to dispute with each other." I can think of no better example of an argument defending an understanding of society as hermeneutical rather than scientific. It is important, for Taylor, that we distance ourselves from understanding the world as a scientific entity and reconsider the world as analogous to a text. This is because, if we are truly interested in truth or in answering questions of what is appropriate, our understanding of truth will fade if it is no longer posited against alternatives. We, in modern society, no longer find alternatives interesting or appealing. We defend our singular position by devaluing the

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59 See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", 76.

60 See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in the University", 133.
pursuit of truth. We do not have time to worry about dialectics. We have to liberate ourselves, we have to create the best taxation policy, we do not have time for vague discussions.  

What we have, then, is two camps. Those who understood the world as grounded on interpretation and those content with the standardized interpretation who, as a result, negate the notion of interpretation as crucial or important. The important question for thinkers like Taylor is whether or not it is possible to create a dialogue between these two disparate camps. This is where political philosophy would show its differences from other types of philosophy. This conversation is negated by the empiricists or the neutral political scientists on the grounds that it does not exist. The question remains whether it can be asserted that the conversation is either possible or ontologically necessary.

Taylor insists that we must deconstruct this epistemological bias. For him, it is morally relevant that we open it up to other intellectual languages. But why? Is this insistence based on moral necessity or because of pragmatic reasons? When Taylor says: "we have to raise (recognize) the issue of epistemology in our reflection", is this demand based in relation to a concern for our political selves or should we do it to save our souls? Let us consider what is at issue here.

Taylor does not claim that we should replace the epistemological language with ours. The Romantics do not negate the Enlightenment. For Taylor, we must recognize the constant presence


62 It is my sense that the conversation is impossible. The claim that, despite difficulties, an attempt to hold it is necessary seems less than obvious to me. I will consider the difficulties of dialogue in the next chapter.


64 See: Ibid.

65 See: Charles Taylor, "Understanding and Explanation in the Geisteswissenschaften", 205.
of a perspicuous contrast. We have to recognize that our analysis of the world is hermeneutical whether we denounce hermeneutics or not. Accordingly, language is never a code of understanding but is always, at root, a framing of biased contrast. It is through this recognition of bias that human openness is maintained.

Human openness to ideas of good has been replaced by a thoughtless adherence to particular hypergoods. In our western case, this hypergood is a premise of freedom and equality structured entirely around the building block of the distinct individual. We defend these hypergoods, when pressed, in regards to their having resulted from the same aspirations that it tells us we should have. Mostly, we defend this hypergood in relation to our scripted wants and understanding of what is true about human beings and the world. We live under a common sense derived from practical reason. This form of practical reason, if analyzed, shows itself to be grounded on an Archimedean point.66

The metaphysician and his canon is left with nothing to stand on and, as such, has no power to enter people's lives.

The hermeneuticist, as shown by Taylor, is either the last gasp or the foundation of philosophy. To use hermeneutical techniques the world is textualized and the truth removed. This is done by distinguishing between the "coherence made" and the way this coherence is embodied in a particular realm of expression.67 This project while seemingly easily accomplished (at least in university history departments) is battled by a concept of practical reason and epistemology that denies it a place. In a sense, for the empiricist, hermeneutics is not metaphysical enough. Taylor does not see the sense in this adoption of reason. He concedes that convincing the rational scientist of the

66 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 73.

67 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 15.
hermeneutical standpoint is an act of futility.

(T)here is no further step to take in rational argument; we can try to awaken these intuitions in him, or we can simply give up; argument will advance us no further.68

Why does Taylor cling to the interpretive approach? The quick answer is that it makes logical sense to him; it explains phenomena and history in the best way he can imagine. But if we attach the interpretive approach to these structures of meaning and reason, will we not see through them? Is it more likely that hermeneutics is Taylor's best attempt at a politically pragmatic philosophy?

Taylor's interpretive science is prepared to acknowledge that the structures of society are perhaps not reflections of human truth but are, as is everything else, metaphysically empty. Political society, like all things, can be understood and argued in an infinite number of ways.69 This refers to both the way we construct our societies and the diverse social ways of strangers. Taylor's arguments put him in a tricky bind. He is able to criticize the principles of ethnocentrism, celebrate multiculturalism, but how is he able to condemn, absolutely, totalitarianism?

To evaluate the terms a particular culture uses in its own self-descriptions one must, according

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68 See: Ibid, 18. We are given a clue here as to where the essence of necessity for the hermeneutical project lies. Taylor hints that the truth of hermeneutics can be recognized in our intuitions, I suppose before they are destroyed by the enclosing modern world. This correlation between hermeneutics and intuitions posits an inherent, ontological defense of interpretive, non-neutral understanding. As such construction is all invention pitted against the truth of openness: How or why Taylor's hermeneutics is not a similarly constructed edifice of polite relativism is unclear. Our intuitions, I imagine, are the answer. Where is it intuitions come from? Where must they come from?

Consider this from the same article (Ibid, 26):

But then the text of our interpretation is not that heterogenous from what is interpreted; for what is interpreted is itself an interpretation...(i)t is an interpretation of experiential meaning which contributes to the constitution of this meaning.

It seems, then, that it is only the interpretive method that is meritable. All claims to substance or conclusions are suspect. One would assume that acceptance of, or adherence to, method is eventually a conclusion of some substance. Our sense of wild openness, to avoid the trap that Taylor has set for all things, must make an ontological claim. This is, of course, no escape at all.

to Taylor, understand the community and the way they perceive human good. Is it possible for us to recognize or comprehend what another society means when they call something good? Is it not possible, Taylor justifiably asks, that some ideas of the good are incommensurable with ours?

How is it that we are going to ever justify our views or considerations of the practices of other cultures? Taylor thinks it is impossible to learn another's language by observing them. An attempt grounded on observation shares nothing of the intrinsic values of a people. This approach is only capable of delineating a structure or code of representation. If we are content with this latter approach the theories of comparative meaning that result will only be a processing of different 'meanings' comparable to our own. It could not make claims of absolute sincerity or touch upon the meaning that certain things have for different people.

Different cultural backgrounds, Taylor presumes, are potentially comprised of very different types of feelings. The way we understand our relationships with others is at least partially constructed by self-descriptions which are posited by larger constructed social forces. Our understandings of others are dependant on the framework by which they express themselves, our correlation to this framework and how we understand its inflections and nuances. Certain, mature, types of relations between people are not possible without some use of socially derived articulation. For us, then, as observers, to fathom the cultural or political practices of another is to seek conciliation between our

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70 See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 54.

To evaluate terms one needs to understand their community in their terms, i.e. as connected to their concept of the good. This analysis must accept that we, as inspectors, also have a community and idea of good by which we understand their motives and actions.


Following this Taylor writes that until we are able to establish a language between these diverse notions we should think of the idea of good as a universal and that differing societies have differing universals.

understandings of what is appropriate with theirs.

We cannot know that we understand or are even a part of another's world until we are able to use their words as they do. We must be able to feel the desires that we may speak of. You have a language, to paraphrase Hubert Guindon, when you are able to make love and confess your sins in its tones. When we look at another culture and see what appears to be a magical practice, it is our tendency to represent it with what we know as a religious ritual. In so doing we posit some specific social information. Mostly, we circumvent how the agent, themselves, feels about their own actions. The only way we can intellectually justify this act of ignoring is to argue that there are activities happening in that individual's world that are beyond their understanding. Simply put, we suggest that we have a deeper understanding of their practices than they do.

This ethnocentric view of ours is complicated by our inability to explain why they choose the mediums and methods of expression that they do. Often times, what we call ritual and religious is devoid of a logical, practical and symbolic coherence which we have come to expect from our own ideas of practice. All the same, we take their actions and represent them as akin to something we might have done.

When we do this, is what we identify as the over-arching mechanism or framework of how they understand meaning of any interest? Does it really tell us the whys of their particulars? Taylor asserts that to give a convincing view of a culture we must understand how the agent feels. Scientific language, the language of cause and effect, is not capable of conveying this type of appropriate

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73 Hubert Guindon, Public Lecture, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. October 25, 1996. I will try not to consider, too deeply, the seeming correlation between making love and confessing sins.

understanding. It seems, then, that we have two choices. We can place an objective stamp on cultures, other than our own, that may or may not correspond to reality. Or we can sadly accept a relativistic inability to truly identify the truth of anyone else.\textsuperscript{75}

This dilemma is compounded by the problem of our own language. What we derive as right stems from what we historically understand.\textsuperscript{76} Our inability to be purely neutral infects the quality of the judgements that we are the most confident about. We convince ourselves that our vocabulary is immune to a split between descriptive and evaluative components. Evaluation cannot be split from description because evaluations develop the criteria of which terms are chosen by us.\textsuperscript{77}

Taylor demonstrates that our choice of language, our affection for certain contrastive halves over others, depicts a metaphysical position. It is Taylor's view that our evaluative language comes with commitments that are inseparable from an ontological view.\textsuperscript{78} In using the language we accept as our standardizing framework we judge criteria with certain conclusions already in place. In evaluating and describing the actions of another group of people we need to realize that what they are doing is connected to their ontology and not ours. Are we in any position to judge then? Science

\textsuperscript{75} See: Ibid, 196-7.

\textsuperscript{76} See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 77.

\textsuperscript{77} See: Ibid, 198.

\textsuperscript{78} See: Ibid.

I don't think that Taylor's understanding is as absolute as he makes it out to be. I would argue that most of the choices we make between the two sides of a contrast are not made in relation to an internalized understanding of what is true, of what speaks the language of God. I think that, firstly, the choices we make depend on what sort of language we are used to speaking. We will generally choose terms that are congruent with our previous semantic understanding. This need not be understood in terms of a connection to what we perceive as a metaphysical truth. Secondly, the terms that we choose to govern our decisions fade and grow as the climates of our lives change. Certain emphases are made in regards mostly to how secure we are in our ability to react.

I, in no way, wish to challenge Taylor's observations about the impossibility of meaningful neutrality. I do wish to challenge that this lack of neutrality and the fact that it does pretend it exists is, in itself, meaningful.
is incapable of doing so because it does not appreciate the crucial importance of a people's own (strong) evaluations as connected to how they act. We cannot be neutral in our analysis because they are not neutral in their being.

If we accept all this (and it seems acceptable), are we always prior to what is needed for understanding? It appears so. For us to understand another culture, truthfully, we would have to step outside of our own ontology and into theirs. Or, Taylor suggests, we can accept a lesser type of understanding. We can use the language of descriptions and not take a stand on the values that are attached. We can just accept that people live as they do, without wondering if they are right or wrong. We will take the declarations of people regarding their beliefs as opinions. Whether they are true or not we will not care. We will consider why they said what they said, not whether what they said was valid. We will come to recognize that what strangers do might not be understandable but perhaps just different and without correspondence to what we do.79

This sounds like a useless suggestion. It presupposes the possibility of neutrality in even wanting to consider the practices and reflections of other people. For this to be plausible we will have to come to expect our cultural political scientists to defend their researches in terms of finding a certain group of people interesting and not because of an intellectual relevance. It would be a curiosity about the meaningless or the vacant. Simply put, the direction of our gaze already shows our hand. The objects of our inspection are not the source of our partiality. It is the act of inspecting that can never be neutral. Philosophy and science, both, are not neutral. No matter their intentions or claims of innocence they are imposing disciplines of personal desire. It is what I choose to look at and how I choose to look that are not connected to an objective realm of photography. I have an

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agenda and my agenda is not my own. It is not God's, it is ours.\textsuperscript{80} It is Taylor's aversion to ethnocentrism that shows where he stands in his lack of neutrality. It is ironic for him to think that he can defend an ethic of openness through an exposition of the impossibility of neutrality.

How does this affect our political life? We have been putting the political scientists under the lights, but what harm are they really doing? What harm is possible?

So far, I have agreed with Taylor that practices do not exist without particular vocabularies. We agree that social reality is dependant on the languages we use to describe it. Following from these two points we come to recognize that the meanings and norms of society are connected to practices which are connected to our historical appreciations of certain terminology. We can see, then, that political arrangements and agreements depend on the relationship between language, ideas and their institutional embodiment. There is, in Taylor's terms, a realization that we live under "inter-subjective meanings, which are constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act."\textsuperscript{81} It is how we consider this matrix that may be the problem. Political scientists may accept an inter-subjective reality but they objectify this loosely construed construct as a solid variable with which to apply procedures. As a result, the criteria which is satisfied by our inter-subjectivity becomes entrenched. We no longer clarify our practices.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{80} I hope to bring to mind, in two important ways, the work of Michel Foucault. First, neutrality is a term that reflects power. Second, power does not belong solely to the person exhibiting it. For that to be the case the individual would have to be neutral. This power comes from within and without.

\textsuperscript{81} See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 36.

\textsuperscript{82} See: Ibid, 38.

Taylor uses a good example to demonstrate this. Political scientists see work and labour as not just abstract ideas that we embody but as a rigid social reality. Now, work depends on any number of social constructions to be made possible. Political scientists interpret our relationship to work and labour as not just one possibility of existence out of time, but as absolutely necessary right now.

This culture of work is only understandable if we see it as connected to a tradition of emancipation; that it is through work that we liberate ourselves from the earth, and it is through our ability to earn wages that we liberate ourselves from
The study of politics has become the study of an object outside of the person who is doing the studying. Policies and institutions are the fodder of this study and they are treated like instruments of analysis. Political science where it does concern itself with the articulation of values, according to Taylor, neglects the importance of "common deliberation". Our understanding of politics is thoroughly atomistic. Atomism, for Taylor, disregards the social element of a political community. This casual disregard creates a causal society unable to imagine common actions. Modern political theories and studies of politics consider themselves, if they are to have any merit, as "being theories of how things always operate, they actually end up strengthening one way of acting over another." The institutional structure of today and the values that underlay it are seen as congruent with a natural order. In today's study of politics the primacy of individual rights is heralded over all other philosophical considerations. The individual and their rights have become understood ontologically.

We have become fat with our easy answers to questions like: If between two positions - one that rules despotically or one that dignifies the person, can we fail to judge in favour of the purveyor of freedom? Between true despotism and true egalitarianism, who wouldn't pick egalitarianism? The problem with these questions is that they are loaded and boring. They are loaded in that they pretend that this is the heart of the issue; that the policy that provokes a higher standard of equality is automatically superior to one that does not. But that seems like such an easy question that we are

the elements. Without paying attention to these abstract elements we run the risk of losing our understanding of this emancipatory element.

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85 See: Ibid, 76.

86 See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", 79.
tempted to not consider that there may be other pertinent questions to be asked. What is it we mean by equality? Do principles of equality depend on other principles for its foundation; principles that we are negating through ignorance?87

The sort of fundamental questions that we have become accustomed to asking do not pay any attention to the importance of community in the life of the individual. This dismantling of the community is understood instrumentally. The community is dealt with by an understanding of consensus or the amalgamation of individual values. The ontology necessary for this scheme to work is an individual one. The majority of these individuals are the voice of the nation. It is now hard to imagine how politics or institutions could be the embodiment of a community spirit. We can only contemplate the possible differences between the public and the private if we can understand both in our ontology. The public, in the dominant epistemological ontology, is only sensible in terms of individuals.88

But on what basis should we care? Our complaint against the dominant form of politics and political studies is that they do not accept that their foundation of neutrality is impossible. Is it sensible to hope that Taylor is able to transcend this sort of problem by conceding that there is a problem? How is it that Taylor's position does not just exemplify another, equally partial, view of what is appropriate? Even if one is able to excuse Taylor from perpetuating a particular form of ideology, his politics of openness is not far removed. Taylor sees as the proper response to the

87 But, for Taylor, while the supremacy of rights is obnoxious, there is a trend which, to him, is far more disturbing. We are tending to a view of consensus in our political decisions which is destroying the possibility of a dialectical dialogue. Given our scientific understanding of politics we tend to see politics as negotiations between not terribly disparate alternatives. We have come to see politics as "bargaining". The word bargaining is only significant in our vocabulary. The problems of a politics of consensus versus a politics of polarization will be one of the themes of the next chapter.

88 See; Charles Taylor, "The Philosophy of the Social Sciences", 78, 80-1.
problem of neutrality, an attempt to open ourselves to as many possibilities as we can fathom. Why? Why has the evaporation of the merits of pretending neutrality resulted in an ethic of avoidance of that neutrality? Is Taylor demanding that because there is no logical sense to the premise of neutrality that we must throw it out? But if distance from that neutrality is eventually impossible is it possible for us to see the logic by which we judge the appropriateness of our lives, as connected to the truth of reality? There seems to be a quandary. Is Taylor hoping, for his own political purposes, that we as readers will not extend the critique of neutrality so far as to become logical relativists? If so, Taylor needs to be more careful in his condemnation of ethnocentrism. He has stripped from us our usual critical claims about the practices of strangers. We are, eventually, just different with no recourse to judge. Taylor does try to connect his openness of other cultures with a claim that would support his political apprehensions. Taylor, paralleling the closing sections of Plato's *Symposium*, argues that understanding and loving are best considered as one. Understanding is the same as attunement. The terms by which we love the pursuit are the same by which we understand it. It is possible, then, for Taylor (this is, in my view, sneaky), to critique another society for not being attuned. For separating understanding and loving. Of course, the only culture that Taylor can, with any confidence, apply this to is his own. With other cultures we are returned to the same questions: how would we know if they had separated understanding and loving if they don't have those terms in their lexicon? We would have to find a facsimile and make a representation. As a critique of his own culture, it is more understandable. But it is quite a testimony of faith on Taylor's part.

Taylor will argue that our ability to critique comes from transcendental arguments, i.e. arguments that have absolute, undeniable conclusions. These arguments depend on accepting that
there is a knower and from there trying to see what is possible.  

A high language (meaning a complicated and open one), is needed to understand a complicated, multi-dimensional life. A lower level language will never see the crucial factors. Will we ever see the crucial factors? Is it not a vain attempt to see ourselves in theoretical terms? Doesn't the impossibility of neutrality render this task impotent? The hypergoods of rights-based Western politics dominate our thinking. The political thinking and philosophy of today is stuck in its acceptance of fundamental truths that are insensible. Can practical reason provide the grounding on which to make astute political judgements? Rationality has come to defend itself in terms of its methods not in its results. Thinking is no longer defended in terms of final truths. This mode of procedural thinking is tied up with the modern account of freedom. If you want freedom of desire and thought then thinking has to be on a practical level. Legitimacy does not come from the moral ends, but from the whoredom of its exercise. The morality of thinking has disappeared. Procedural thought does not consider the backgrounds of existence or the higher goods that drive us. In terms of absolute good, we no longer feel able to talk about it. Freedom is now our hyper-good, defining the boundaries of what is discussable. We find ourselves defending it in inevitably inadequate ways. The moral ideal has become this indefensible freedom. All of our moral possibilities now have to be filtered through this one lens. The connection of morality to obligation has destroyed the possibility of its acceptance.

Is Plato right about us? Can we not see the similarity between tyranny and democracy because our own actions are not in relation to the true order of being? Or is Taylor closer when he writes:

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89 See: Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", 9. This is a very important line of thought for Taylor. I will consider it in greater detail in chapter nine. For now, it is interesting to note how similar it seems to the thinking of Descartes.

90 See: Charles Taylor, "The Significance of Significance", 206.

91 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 86-9.
Ultimately, we have to decide beyond all reasons, as it were, what our values are. For at each stage where we adduce a reason, we have already accepted some value in virtue of which this reason is valid.92

The idea that we can be neutral about these choices seems, given Taylor’s fascinating and compelling critique, unlikely. What then? Are we not arguing always on the basis of power? Of the desire to implant our interpretation (even if our interpretation is based on hermeneutics) into our own lives and maybe the lives of others?

92 See: Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in the University", 82.
Chapter Nine - Politics

You fight your superficiality, your shallowness, so as to try to come at people without unreal expectations, without an overload of bias or hope or arrogance, as untankable as you can be, sans cannon and machine guns and steel plating half a foot thick; you come at them unmenacingly on your own ten toes instead of tearing up the turf with your caterpillar treads, take them on with an open mind, as equals, man to man, as we used to say, and yet you never fail to get them wrong. You might as well have the brain of a tank. You get them wrong before you meet them, while you're anticipating meeting them; you get them wrong while you're with them; and then you go home to tell somebody else about the meeting and you get them all wrong again. Since the same generally goes for them with you, the whole thing is really a dazzling illusion empty of all perception, an astonishing farce of misperception. And yet what are we to do about this terribly significant business of other people, which gets bled of the significance we think it has and takes on instead a significance that is ludicrous; so ill-equipped are we all to envision one another's interior workings and invisible aims? Is everyone to go off and lock the door and sit secluded like the lonely writers do, in a soundproof cell, summoning people out of words and then proposing that these word people are closer to the real thing than the real people we mangle with our ignorance everyday? The fact remains that getting people right is not what living is about anyway. It's getting them wrong that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and then on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again. That's how we know we're alive: we're wrong. Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. But if you can do that - well, lucky you.

- Philip Roth
American Pastoral

Even from the simplest, the most realistic point of view, the countries which we long to occupy, at any given moment, have a far larger place in our actual life than the country in which we happen to be.

- Marcel Proust
Swann's Way

It is in considering Charles Taylor's writings on politics that one finds the best example of the
quandary buried deeply in the heart of his work. The question that underlies my approach to Taylor's political thought is a difficult one to formulate, let alone answer. Does Taylor put the good life and its conclusions ahead of the political life, or is the good life a device, a method, in which to pursue the best, freest, and most egalitarian political life? Does philosophy serve politics or does it work the other way around?

Taylor's political views mostly centre around an understanding of the individual's primary dependence on society. This fundamental necessity of society to the construction of individuality, (be it through the creation of opportunity or, more radically, through the necessity of community for the development of language and thought), is being thwarted by our predominant Enlightenment understanding of individuality and the theory of rights that corresponds with this perception. Taylor's enemy is political atomism not only because it is insensible but because it removes or makes difficult our understanding ourselves as socially committed and constructed.

Society, in Taylor's view, is best nurtured by republicanism or the notion of civil society. Taylor sees this as absent in our modern liberal age. The associations or clubs, which Tocqueville recommends to America, are dwindling. The renewed vigour of federalism in Canada is centralizing the political voices of nations into one spot. This singularity of position has challenged our ability to feel any control or power over our own lives. Taylor uses Quebec and its disagreement with the rest of Canada as the textbook example of a community rejecting the homogeneity of modern liberalism.

The argument which I wish to pose in the pages to come is not an easy one to make. I would like to suggest that the idea of political philosophy is a potentially awkward pairing of terms. The way that Taylor sculpts the origin of how humans define good as necessarily dependant on a living
community demands some sort of philosophical understanding to be made sensible.\textsuperscript{1} I argue that for this understanding to be useful as a philosophical defense it must abstractly exist outside of the dimensions of the social creative process. In other words, it must be transcendental. While I think this is very difficult it may not be impossible to speak this language.

But if we are to fathom a process of evidence that exists outside our social views, in fact if we are to imagine that the necessity of having social views demonstrates a category of existence, we must also imagine that there is an end to the process; be it in salvation or the formulation of the perfect state. I do not mention these two possibilities as congruent. In fact, they are, following Augustine as Taylor might, opposites.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Much of what Taylor has to say about politics and the individual's relationship to society is quite Hegelian. Hegel, of course, argued that society is essential to the identity of its participants; that without society individuality could not be. This is not to say that Hegel argued a position of complete social construction; without individuals there could be no society. The pairing of the individual and society is symbiotic. There is no primacy given to one over the other. The sources of our being are given to us by our societies but we remain detached, if you will, through the freedom of choice given to each of us by our wills.

Hegel is most obviously a deep source for Taylor. In fact, except for his significant work Sources of the Self, Hegel sits at the bottom of all of Taylor's thinking. In Sources of the Self the foundation is granted to Saint Augustine. While there are some similarities between the two it is my view that, in Taylor's work, Hegel must eventually accede to Augustine. Taylor may see the rational project of Hegel's as necessary but it must, in time, be understood as a weak attempt to justify the city of man.

In Hegel's thought there are a number of problem areas which a Catholic, like I assume Taylor to be, may have trouble accepting. Hegel was no great friend to Catholicism. He lambasted the Romantics for their voluntary enslavement to Catholic servitude. His view of the Protestant Reformation was a positive one; in it he saw history continue its approach towards demanding rational necessity. Hegel famously saw the state as God standing in the world, which is not to imply that the state was divine but rather that the creation of a great state relied on the grace of rational inspiration.

This latter view is central to this chapter. I don't think this view is sensible and would argue that Hegel, like many another, has confused method with result. Hegel, in seeing rational necessity and the freedom of man as the vehicle of Geist is actually saying that rational necessity speaks the language of God. Taylor does not ultimately accept this. The question which remains is whether or not a politics based on Hegelian conceptions can be meshed with the theological foundation that Taylor posits in Augustine.

\textsuperscript{2} I have included the Aristotelian view in the latter category. Aristotle's political philosophy is centred around the idea of immanence within the community. By this I mean that in Aristotle's framework the existential considerations that haunt modern political thought are interestingly absent; the community comes not to a perfect end but accomplishes what is necessary for its existence. Somewhere along the intellectual way we picked up the notion of limits; that the community might be restricted in what it can hope to achieve. This idea of limits is present in Plato's republic. In that work limits are connected to philosophical yardsticks which the human creation cannot attain. Augustine, of course, followed this idea in a Christian structure including an idea of original sin.

I wish to argue in this chapter that Taylor uses the idea of immanence within the community as a prepptatory stage,
My argument hinges, then, on an understanding of political processes and truths as conducive to the furthering of philosophical knowledge or wisdom, and not for the pragmatic politics of today. But to be compelling, in this modern day, philosophical arguments with political overtones have to be made in terms of pragmatic appeal. Taylor's main test, because of his political elements, is showing us that we are indeed infected with a liberal malaise; that the lack of control in our lives is alienating us and making us miserable; that we are dissatisfied with political thought as it is now embodied. He, then, if successful, can show us a scheme for embracing the goods which we probably already recognize as dear and the corresponding political understanding that follows.

What is the point of the politics that Taylor expounds? If the point is as I have suggested, to serve a philosophy which is grounded in the political, is it sensible to imagine the possibility of massive commitment to a politics not ending in wealth and happiness but in wisdom? Can Taylor really promise us the city of God out of the city of man?

It is my sense that Taylor threatens his more philosophical goals by slipping into what I call "methods". By "methods" I mean what I have meant throughout this text, that confusing the processes of philosophy (be they reason or politics) with the same status as the goals of philosophy - one is making an error of judgement and appreciation. In celebrating that the method of philosophical movement is in the processes of reason and the society that constructs it, one celebrates the topical over the ultimate. This chapter, depending on what sort of emphasis you place on politics in terms of the meaning of your life, is either the end of Taylor's critique of the Enlightenment or an example of his philosophical/theological method. My sympathies are to the latter but in maintaining the consistencies between Taylor's politics and his acceptance and love of the possibility of grace I partially satisfactory in itself, to the attainment of a hermeneutic openness to the plausability and possibility of grace.
become drawn into a complicated circle or spiral within which consistency becomes uncomfortable.

Again, depending on your view, much of what you have read to this point leads either to this juncture or you can see what follows as another step towards philosophical understanding; another step towards truth instead of an arrival. I have concerned myself mostly with Taylor’s critique of Enlightenment rationality in all of its guises. The latest posture which I would like to consider is political atomism.

Atomism, simply put, is the result of seeing oneself as disengaged from the context of the world; of being radically individual in the face of a massive and oppressive world. This understanding, to whose lineage Taylor devotes Sources of the Self, has come to govern our understandings of what existence means. It has posited its own particular brand of rationality onto the world to the degree that its sense of understanding is seen as totally normal. We are immersed in the pseudo-appropriateness of its terminology. In that most of us have come to identify with a social outlook that is based on atomistic principles we have reduced the flexibility or openness of our communities and public spaces with which our freedom is negotiated. Atomism has fragmented us as a people, and we are less able to imagine alternatives.

Atomism is a view of society as constituted by individuals for the satisfaction of the ends of

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3 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 177.

4 See: Charles Taylor, "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere", Philosophical Arguments, 281-2; Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal -Communitarian Debate", Philosophical Arguments, 188.

Taylor sees atomism as negating two essential criteria for the maintenance of a civil society. It negates the importance of common deliberation and the vocabulary necessary for a different understanding of man’s relationship to society. The common states of our being have been re-interpreted as states that reflect on our being as individuals. Atomism has become a philosophical theory, a religion complete with its own ontology. It has rendered conversation about the public sphere as automatically totalitarian in nature. Its view of individual freedom is hegemonic and as such specifically fitters into dangerous jargon any attempts of criticism. See: Charles Taylor, "The Philosophy of the Social Sciences", 84, 89; Charles Taylor, "Political Theory and Practice", 71.
individuals. A central tenet of this sort of approximation of the world and the place of a certain human nature within it is the primacy of rights based rhetoric in discussing any sort of political structure. Given its individualistic outlook, rights are primarily understood as the rights of individuals, not the rights of a collectivity. As the individual is the locus of society, society can only be derived through acceptance by the individual. Authority cannot be justified in terms of social necessity or social demands, this demand has to be justified on an individual level. If we combine these two notions we arrive at an understanding of society as based on the acquiescence of individuals to a society that is obligated to the rights of a group of individuals.

Taylor's consternation with atomistic thinking begins with the historical tenuousness on which it depends. Atomistic thinking presumes the self-sufficiency of the individual. This is, of course, on any glance a difficult proposition to accept. Who could survive outside of society? Even if one were to accept that amongst us there are those who are strong and lucky enough to avoid the pitfalls of nature and our own inescapable frailties is what would be left properly defined as a life? Those who belong to the atomist camp think this a wrong place to start a critique. The question of interest is not whether we can survive without society, the question refers rather to the desire for a minimal state based on the premise of individual rights. But Taylor is not so quickly stifled. His argument is that we are not just talking about an inability to survive physically but also an inability actually to be; to be in a position with which we construe things like individual rights. Taylor does not think that we


can understand or develop what we know as human potential outside of a social context.  

The atomistic desire may, according to Taylor, originate in a growing suspicion of notions of esoteric levels of hierarchy. As such, the atomist desire is a desire to liberate man from false, high goals. Living under the pretence of higher goods can make one feel excluded and insubstantial. To escape this would seem only beneficial.

Growing economic possibilities among the lower and middle class increased who was able to imagine freedom and what it was to be self-aware. These growths changed what it meant to worship and to be a part of a larger order. The desire to wield power through religious and moral persecution, including early denunciations of witchcraft, eventually led to the political atomism of Locke and Grotius. Before the 17th century, nobody wondered where the community derived its authority. This authority was part of a tradition of thinking which embraced a notion of a higher order. When more and more people came to be aware that they were doomed to fulfil only a lowly and subservient role in this order, the order was slowly smashed. Communities came to be authoritative where agreed to by the amalgamated individual. The society, which was prior to government, lost its ability to command without concession from the individual. This disgruntlement with a higher, esoteric order led to an ethic of what Taylor aptly calls "ordinary life". This ethic of ordinary life was conveniently

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8 See: Ibid, 190, 197. This does not seem to respond fully to the atomist's desire for rights. If they are willing to concede survival to society why would the concession of being increase their sense of indebtedness? It seems that Taylor is making atomism something that he can defeat. The respect for individual rights is ballooned into a moral demand or respect for the development of human potentiality. This may have been the way it was once sold (and of this I think it would be probably only a selling technique and not a sincere theory) but it is certainly not the criteria that interests people today.

Also, it is interesting to note that Taylor seems to be straying from the Hegelian understanding of the question of primacy belonging to either individuals or society as a false one. If Taylor's argument that we need society to even fathom individuality is true then society does seem a logical precursor to the notion of individual will. If it is prior it can be (though not necessarily) understood as the source of what follows.

9 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 81.

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connected to the instrumentalist, scientific thinking of the time; together they posited and cemented a theory of "disengaged reality". From this theory springs the political side-effect of atomism.

This development, even in the simplistic form delivered here, immediately shows how compelling rather than logically necessary the atomistic argument is. I think that this is probably still the field upon which this battle is waged. Ontology is up against pragmatism.

The atomist sees politics as the ability to find agreement between pluralistic sets of requests or demands. This sort of theory demands that there be no necessary social view of truth.\(^1\) (I will discuss below what sort of truth this is.) The framework by which requests are recognized and considered is then fundamental. This has developed into what is called procedural liberalism. Western society has delivered to itself a privatization of life. Society has become an instrument complete with instructions which we manipulate to best serve our individual ends. As we already have most of what we need as formed individual units we use society to provide the means to execute these abilities.\(^2\) As atomists we do not see the need for allegiance to a social safety net that may be pertinent to our existence. The fact that we may have a dependence on society does not shift our love for individual rights onto the community. Taylor, as we shall see, does not see the need for community in terms of an intellectual debt. Rather, he argues, pragmatically, that without responsibility to the whole, the part will collapse. But first, let us explicate further the nature of rights-based liberalism.

We have come to live by theories of rights because we no longer are able to live by theories of an order of the good. Unlike the Greeks of Aristotle's time we have no great confidence that we


are cogent as to what the good life is. With the absence of confidence about the good life (I think this must be considered distinct from a desire to negate the possibility of knowing the good life) we are uncomfortable surrendering anyone to the good of another. Politically, then, we have structured our arguments in terms of rights as supposedly separated from particular ideas of the good. Politics based on rights try to accomplish their political goals through a rights discourse and a corresponding series of courts to arbitrate on that discourse. Politics is not done in relation to cogent arguments referring to particular goods.

Taylor is suspicious of this articulation. Taylor argues that the things that are encompassed by rights are the things that command our respect. In commanding our respect they attain a special moral status. Taylor asks: would it be sensible to have a theory that propounded and delivered rights without a depiction of the moral status of human worth? It follows, then, that when we recognize rights as pertinent we must also recognize the moral desire which wishes to perpetuate them. In the desire to further or even maintain human rights there is an affirmation of something good about people which makes them deserving of rights. Given that we deliver these rights to all people, we are also morally bound to not interfere with the rights of another. It does not matter who you are originally in order to receive rights. We extend human rights to deviants, to people completely lacking in rationality. There is just something about all human beings that we feel that they should have the


right to live as they choose.\textsuperscript{16} Taylor writes:

To believe that there is a right to independent moral convictions must be to believe that the exercise of the relevant capacity is a human good.\textsuperscript{17}

To defend a system based solely on individual rights without recourse to metaphysical or ontological baggage we would have to argue that society is really just a helpful bonus to what are self-sufficient individuals. If this is not the case, we will need other criteria for our foundation. As it was for Aristotle, rights are only eventually understandable in relation to what is good.\textsuperscript{18}

I think that Taylor has set up his critique in a not entirely honest fashion. A defender of liberal principles of rights like Richard Rorty is able to skirt this sort of conversation simply by being either unimpressed or uninterested in the words that Taylor uses. For Rorty, the desire to defend liberal principles is the start of the problem. There is no defending them just as there is no defending anything. In thinking that by attaching opinion to some theory of the good, this works in a way to defend that thinking is preposterous. One's theory of the good would eventually need defending and so on and so forth. At the end of this downward spiral of defending is ultimately a declaration that what we have chosen is what we like and what we wanted to choose. Principles of rights are not based on an ahistorical ontology, they are based on who we seem to be now. These appreciations are quite possibly not authentically our own; they likely come from the frameworks of the society we live

\textsuperscript{16} See: Ibid, 194-6. I am not entirely convinced by Taylor's logic as it stands here. It is my view that Taylor may need to make reference to Hegel's master/slave dialectic to defend what he is arguing. When Taylor argues that we are bound to respect the dignity of one another I think this may be amiss. Why is it that we would not just want to command that respect for ourselves and extend it to others only as a pragmatic guarantee of our own need? I think Taylor's response would be in reference to Hegel; that we need to be recognized by others to even have this point of egoistic reference and that people we see as beneath us are not capable of providing this acknowledgement. I think this idea is very complicated and fraught with possible areas of disaster. I will return to this issue.

\textsuperscript{17} See: Ibid, 198.

\textsuperscript{18} See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Ambiguous Legacy For Modern Liberalism", 64.
in. Taylor is very sympathetic to this constructivism as we shall see. The point that Taylor is not sympathetic to is that these conclusions which we and others reach are not necessarily sensible in terms of some over-arching sense of embodiment in a world-spirit. Taylor laments that all we do is think about justice and never consider the philosophy that is prior to considerations of justice. Rorty thinks that we think too much about philosophical underpinnings and too little on the political possibilities of the definition of justice that we have accepted.

This sort of argument becomes more interesting in terms of evaluating other cultures. For the liberal, concern for other cultures is part of what fuels their rhetoric. If particular views of appropriateness are deemed more meritable than others, some minority cultures will inevitably suffer. It is because we do not have confidence in what is right or true, even our own views, that we have to protect others from the danger that may be us. For Hegel, other cultures could be completely wrong in the sense that they did not participate in rational necessity. Hegel had more confidence in his ability to tap into the good and what is rationally necessary. Taylor's view is more hesitant.

The liberal state in not propounding a particular view of the good sees itself as able to ward off discriminations. Taylor sees liberalism as not wanting to smash cultural differences but also not doing those differences any additional favours. Taylor is suspicious, perhaps not of the intentions, but of the ability of liberalism to protect against prejudice. Because liberalism protects more than the fundamental basics of the human individual, it is inevitably propounding an atomistic view of what is good. By protecting more than the fundamentals Taylor is referring to liberal adherence to economic individuality, to a denial of community imposition on any and all issues. Taylor in

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suggesting that these are not fundamentals implies that what is fundamental is better understood as protection of life, livelihood and other more basic securities.\textsuperscript{21}

Again, it is interesting to consider this sort of supposed atomistic neutrality as it pertains to consideration of other cultures. Are we to presume that as we, within the boundaries of our own liberal state, judge radically diverse people as equal that we do or should do the same with other cultures? It seems compelling that in deeming all others as equal that we are really just damning with faint praise. Taylor's thesis that others want our respect not our blanket acceptance seems sensible. But if the granting of our respect is to be meritable we are going to have to be somewhat stingy with upon whom we bestow it. Taylor recommends that we accept that even radically strange cultures may have a kernel of truth in their practices that we may be able to eventually recognize.\textsuperscript{22}Taylor seems to be suggesting that instead of accepting all as equals before power politics, that we actually recognize everyone as worthy of respect. There does not seem to be too much difference between these two things: if we respect everyone for the kernels of truth they may possess, this seems only a more fanciful way of deciding what it is that grants equal status. Taylor, in his criticism of liberalism's un-admitted provisional good, seems to be arguing that it is by nature, exclusionary. This seems at odds with his argument that a good is necessary for a society to exist and maintain itself. Given his radical multi-cultural acceptance, how is this good to define itself if we are not actually able to make significant, rather than superficial, contrasts about things that really matter? He seems to challenge his own defense of principles of good. This is, of course, an unfeasible charge to make

\textsuperscript{21} How, first of all, the extras that Taylor identifies and suggests are not intimately connected to what he does as basic is obscure. Second, without a firmly grasped ontology of being it would be impossible with any level of aplomb to know what is fundamental to a human life and what is not.

\textsuperscript{22} See: Ibid, 256.
against Taylor. But what is of prime interest is that in showing that the liberal good is exclusionary, he posits a good of fundamental openness to the possibilities of other goods; in other words: a philosophical hermeneutics. How this notion of good avoids blandishment or a homogeny of casual egalitarianism is not clear.

There is more to Taylor's critique of liberalism's estranged relationship to its view of the good than that it does not support cultural and moral differences. Taylor realizes that by making accusations of a solely moral nature little political advantage will be served. He also must convey to us that we are, in addition to being a danger to others, a danger to ourselves. Taylor is convinced that modern procedural liberalism's understanding of its own good is leading to a crisis of political legitimacy; that it is negating common beliefs and the structure by which these beliefs are negotiated. 23 Taylor also threatens that once the basis for legitimation is gone in a society, the society is doomed to collapse. 24 The logic of this argument can be demonstrated in the development of liberalism itself. As individuals came to see themselves as detached from "larger, meaningful orders" authority came to be justifiable only through the consent of the individual. 25 Only the individual, because of their own will and own view of their ends can give consent to an imposing force in their life. Hierarchies of being once organized society. They are now construed as a despicable potential problem. The solution was seen in the creation of theories of individual rights, and this idea of the individual right would be the focus or standard upon which laws were applied and ratified. 26

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25 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 194.
But this is collapsing because it has lost its meaning. And, ironically, this loss of meaning has been instigated by the fact that meaning has come to be understood as construed on the individual level. As we celebrate and perpetuate a profound notion of individuality we concurrently contribute to the dismantling of our crucial communities. The less community involvement we have in our lives, the less we look to the community for support, be it fiscal, spiritual or psychological. The result is a dependence on government to provide services not for communities but for collections of individuals. The community does not construct a public library, for use by the community together, through its own concern and care. It relies on the funding of libraries, for the use by individuals, by the government. This strain on the government from us is paradoxical in that we come to resent the taxation that is required from us to pay for what we have neglected. Government, as it attempts to reply to our demands, comes to be seen as an imposition.

This is just one side of our problem. As we withdraw from our communities we entrench ourselves in an uncomfortable symbiotic relationship with the capitalist system. We, as isolated, social atomists come to crave a security that can be only provided by increased productivity and profit in our financial worlds. As we work harder to make more and more money we become stuck in a treadmill that eventually deposits us in an exhausted yet bitter state. We are, in Taylor's terms, tied to theories of exponential growth where we see any drop in productivity as a signal of stagnation.

To be an effective and secure producer and profit-maker we are forced to surrender much of

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our extra-curricular time (time spent relaxing, contemplating, creating, worshipping...) to the process of making a living. As we lose our ability to do the things that we may have understood our lives to be about we come to find that we only exist in one dimension. We contribute to our society, due to insecurity, exhaustion or what have you, as consumers. This has become our role in society. We are to keep the economy going by buying the most recent products and replacing them as quickly as we can tolerate. Consumerism has become our culture; Instead of asking: "have you read American Pastoral?", we ask: "have you driven a Ford lately?". In fact, Taylor might argue that books like Roth's American Pastoral, while perhaps a sincere attempt at being something other than itself, have also become commodified. We have to get the new books, see the new movies, listen to the latest CD, eat at the most talked about restaurant. Much of our lives have become entwined with what we recognize and acknowledge as, uncritically, disposable.

Taylor thinks that we are getting fed up and alienated with our consumer culture.\footnote{See: Ibid, 110.} We will come to see that our pursuit of economic efficiency is falsely constructed. We may come to reject these norms but then find that we have to live by them anyhow.\footnote{See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", 282.} We are, according to Taylor, living in a modern malaise which is the result of a discontentment with how we economically ground our lives. This grounding, Taylor asserts, is being seen as less and less plausible by more and more of us. Modern society has created a consumptive standard that only 60 or 75% of people can satisfy. As a result, many people cannot live what appears to be a normal life.\footnote{See: Charles Taylor, "The Politics of the Steady State", 57-8.} We are, Taylor thinks, thinking more and more of dropping out of society (we have already dropped out of our communities), even
if we are not actually daring or able enough to do so. The point is that if I find society incongruent with my life, society will become a prison. An enlarged government will cause tensions, more taxes, more impositions on individuals. To deal with this a society must be capable of forming tight and beloved bonds between its members. But we feel alienated and not confident in our ability to affect the institutions of society.

I think that while Taylor attempts to goad us into either embarrassed or elitist agreement about this malaise it does not really exist. I grant that it is important to many of Taylor's theses that this malaise exist. Articulating it does not create it. I do not see a great deal of chagrin or disappointment in people regarding the financial system that has been foisted upon them. There is much complaining, as I imagine there has always been, about particularities: about a certain boss, about having to work certain hours, about time constraints and wages, etc. But these complaints are pitched at a level congruent with a complaint about how rain ruined a long weekend. That is to say, like the weather, the economic system we live under is presumed as not always friendly but unchangeable. This lack of efficacy in regards to the financial processes of society does not, I think, bother too many people. If you talk to the students in seminars and lecture halls, one will find students that may dress and approximate the cultural tastes of their sixties counterparts but one will not find a similar negative ethos against money or the government. Young people, in my experience, like money and do not worry about, or trust, the government. The fear that is bandied about that this

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33 See: Charles Taylor, "The Agony of Economic Man", 223. While Taylor's comments in this paper are based upon reflections of the "hippie" movements of the 60's one does not sense that he has noted the decline of hippiedom in the name of fiscal promise and potential. In The Malaise of Modernity, Taylor continues to see us as discouraged by our economic society, to the point of desiring retreat.


current generation will not do better than their parents is not terribly bothersome. Our parents did very well, we will survive nicely at two-thirds that level.

On a more abstract level, it is my consideration that one of the first psychological victims of alienation is the ability to recognize oneself as alienated. As such, the discontentment that Taylor imagines must be there is not. Economic insecurity and a consumerist lifestyle is what we know and mostly tolerate and even enjoy. The loss of a soul we never knew we had, troubles us not at all.

Taylor is curious in his amplification and desire to convince us that we are miserable. On one hand, a compelling argument that we feel this malaise is important for it could provide us with the care and attention needed to bring about either a social or a personal redemption. On the other hand, Taylor, to some degree, depends on us also appreciating and enjoying this culture for his pragmatic arguments. I think this seeming paradox may elaborate a great deal. I would like to suggest that the two sides of Taylor's concern represent, on the one hand, a theological concern, and on the other, a political one. How these two are juxtaposed, I think, is a subject for some consideration.

Modern industry, which is fuelled by our atomistic vision of the good, has destroyed social solidarity and the religious community. These two traditional standards of stability and goodness appear irrational in contrast to the rationality of progress and productivity. The community seems first irrelevant and then annoying. This view eventually translates itself over to the family. The family becomes privatized for individual ends.\(^{36}\) We maintain our relationships in private, accordingly, we

\(^{36}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Alternative Futures", 83. Taylor writes in what appears to be critical tones of women challenging traditional roles. He writes:

This places marriage under great strain, which is further intensified because the same aspiration to self-development and self-fulfilment leads women today to challenge the distribution of roles and the emotional give and take of the traditional family. (Ibid, 83.)
live within a consumer society which nurtures this private self. The gap, as I have demonstrated, between the self that fits an order and the self in the absence of these orders, is filled by an image of man as a proponent of industrial society. This change was facilitated by the ontological development of rational self-interest which was very different from an ontology of solidarity and seeing man as, by nature, a political animal.

We have come to live, in Heideggerian terms, in a technological paradigm. Simply, this paradigm involves the incarceration of the dualism between subject and object into our economic and productive lives. We are the subject to which all other things in our domain are the objects. We measure our status as subject in relation to our ability to control and manipulate the objects of our experience. Our knowledge of the object, and accordingly the furthering of our own subjective knowledge, is created in our ability to control. The maxim by which we pursue this control and manipulation is efficiency. Efficiency is conducive to the productivity by which we are further able to control. The object or reason behind this efficiency is not clear; it is efficiency for the sake of efficiency. Through the objectification of nature comes a process, similar to Marx's view of alienation, by which we objectify one another and ourselves for the aims of control in the name of efficiency. We become an object to be made more efficient. Once this objectification and manipulation goes beyond the needs of an ever-demanding society, we continue to order phenomena into efficiency so to place our objectified creations in what Heidegger called "standing-reserve". All of our relationships to life are altered. We are no longer able to connect with what Heidegger calls (and Taylor strictly adopts this thinking), the work of art. The work of art for the ancient Greeks was that which was the result

37 See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis", 262.

38 See: Ibid, 224.
of our own self-image but also returned back to us to show us who we are. It was the creation of the public which, in turn, showed the public who they were. Taylor calls this the public space. No matter its title in the age of the technological paradigm it is represented as a singular hegemonic monolith of efficiency and control. This is what we have created and now this is who we have to be. There is no flexibility in our work of art. In Taylor's terms: art is infected. 39

We have relinquished our contemplative aspirations. We have lost the contemplative language; our art and objects have dumbed us. Why, beyond our forced and insincere embarrassment, should this particularly bother us? The only reason for potential strife is if the technological paradigm was fated to collapse. This seems hardly compelling. First, if it was to collapse why wouldn't we just move on, adjust, to our changing situation? Second, why would Taylor not want it to collapse? The second question provides the clue for appreciating Taylor in these points. Our concern cannot eventually, it seems, be one of stability, at least not for Taylor given his criticism of the paradigm. Our concern may need to be originally of this sort of self-indulgent pragmatism. But eventually the concern is spiritual. Why should we be ashamed of our technological essence? Because it prevents us from acknowledging and even cowering before our spiritual origins and debts. We have lost our ability to contemplate and with that comes a concurrent inability to recognize our dependence on God. In Heidegger's terms we have to clear the residue of our technological confidence and create a clearing. A self almost emptied of self, and in this space we are to wait for God. Taylor, like Heidegger, is eventually theological.

But this does not seem to completely clear up the issue. There are a number of emphases of Taylor's political thought that do not immediately lead one in theological over political directions. Taylor's concern about a society in contradiction in its relationship to its view of the good is

ambiguous. His claim is that it cannot provide the apparatus for its view of human good. What sort of significance this exemplifies is not entirely clear.

Taylor identifies the sources of our modern malaise and how it may be brewing towards a challenge against the way that politics is negotiated in Western liberal democracies. Still, Taylor notes, the official source of authority and power in the modern life is embodied in the political institutions. The institutions of society are important to Taylor for the institutions of public life are governed by the relations of people in their lives. It is the way that people live and act that determines the methods and motivations of the institutions that watch over us. This relationship has a dynamic flavour. The institution (akin to a Heideggarian work of art) shows us who we are as we tell it what to be.

The institutions which we live with today mirror back to us the self-image of man as primarily an individual. Political practices and the institutions that perpetuate them define and depend as they were defined by, and depended on, a public persona as comprised by the individual will. If we are to consider a practice like voting or paying taxes we can see what Taylor means. We do not understand these practices in any sort of significant collective sense. Our votes are added up and whomever the majority of individuals recommends is given the seat. When it comes to paying taxes we do not understand ourselves as contributing to an entity which we could call ourselves. We, at best, give to a society which is distinctly removed from our own private sense of being.

40 See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", 288.

41 See: Charles Taylor, "Invoking Civil Society", Philosophical Arguments, 218.


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What is implicit in our institutions is how society is understood by its members. The policies and bureaucracies give us descriptions, which we have fed into it, of what it is okay to think and be. Our institutions reflect common practices which are intensely connected to normative, constitutive values.44

The most important point to make in all this is that the individual must be aware of what is embodied in the practices of the state in order to be able to engage in its practices. The point to be drawn from this is that practices in society require recognizable self-descriptions which are understood in a tightly flowing relationship with the embodied institution. The question of most pertinence is: are we inevitably stuck in our current self-representation? Have we painted ourselves into a corner? Taylor thinks that the principles that fund our institutions are threatened by this modern malaise and growing sense of alienation. It is his considered opinion that we need to remember what originally grounded these institutions in order to rescue the practices by which we live.45

I would argue that for this sense of panic to be an urgent one and not just a pang of birth as we enter into a new self-understanding there must be some sort of ontological and desirable image of the human self which we are risking. The constitutive norms of society need to resonate with us. We need not necessarily know what the point of these norms is but we need to be confident that there are some. This point of what we are doing and how we are doing it is expressed and often altered in our articulations of criticism or support. Taylor writes:

For if our social practices are constituted by our self-understandings, then an

44 See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 41.

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alteration in these self-understandings can amount to a change in the practices.\textsuperscript{46}

But this necessitates that we are free to dictate our own futures. The modern liberal ontology posits a few fundamental tenets which may be impossible to circumvent given that they set the boundaries of what sort of questions can be raised against them. Taylor lists these characteristics as follows: we see ourselves as controlling nature for our own ends; we see freedom as self-dependence; and we set our focus on the future.\textsuperscript{47} I think that Taylor is absolutely right in suggesting that these principles fuel the modern ontology. I see no political escape from them. There is some argument that recent environmental/ecological movements have challenged the first criteria - our desire to control nature for our own ends. I think this is mistaken. I grant that there may be a handful of individuals who understand nature in a hyper-Romantic sense of holism with the spirit of the world. But this is not how pro-environmental arguments are made. They are made in reference to pragmatic and prudential social concerns. The argument is not to stop using nature for our own ends but to do it more sensibly.

It is interesting to consider that most of us are not believers in a pantheistic holism or that successful arguments about everything must contain a pragmatic clause. We have come to see ourselves, as I have mentioned previously, freed from external orders. The modern identity has come to see itself as connected to principles of liberty, static human nature, and efficacy.\textsuperscript{48} This has been, intriguingly argued by Taylor, the result and nucleus of a new religious ethic of the virtues of the ordinary life. There is no hierarchy, just a gentle mix of the biological with the moral for the benefit

\textsuperscript{46} See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 42.


\textsuperscript{48} See: Charles Taylor, "Alternative Futures", 71.
of all.

This individual is not to understand the world as a "locus of meanings" but as neutral facts of "contingently correlated elements, the tracing of whose correlations will enable greater and greater manipulation and control of the world." Human reality and the social institutions designed to represent and perpetuate that reality are symptomatic and representational of an ethos of objectification.

This has been one stream of our liberal ontology. The other stream has been contributed by, in Taylor's view, a Romantic Humanism. What this view has brought, in Taylor's words, is the notion that:

To be human is not to be discovered in the order of things in which people are set, but rather in the nature that people discover in themselves.50

One can clearly see the congruences between these two streams. The best way to discover this inherent self is seemingly through the manipulation of the world around; call it working or call it creating art. Through the altering of the world, for Marx, the world comes to show you who you are.

I argue that Taylor is necessarily dependent on an ontology he is loathe to admit. That said, Taylor finds the view of an inherent self separated from the world in which he is embodied an incoherent proposition. Taylor agrees that no one can understand themselves without finding a connection between their past and their future. Society has stripped us of the ability to easily do this. Our culture, and thus our understanding of ourselves, given its consumerist bent, has become


50 See: Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have To Become States?", 46.
disposable. We now sincerely do things that we have no inclination to do.\textsuperscript{51}

Taylor is much more supportive of a view of the self that has an effect on the world while being a part of the world. Private efficiency and manipulation does not make a whole, it makes in Aristotelian terms, a beast or a God. Taylor sees man as:

(S)ustained on one hand by the culture, which elaborates and maintains the vocabulary of his self-understanding; and on the other hand by the society in which he has a status commensurate with free subjectivity.\textsuperscript{52}

Man walks a line, then, between debt and freedom. How this line can be neutrally maintained is a troublesome question.

In liberal democratic societies the fundamental assumption about human beings is that we all possess human dignity just through being alive. Part and parcel with this dignity is an onus that we should be treated in a certain way. This treatment is apparent to all the good members of a democratic

\textsuperscript{51} See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", 251. If this is indeed necessary to the formulation of an understood self in the way that Taylor suggests, I remain unconvinced that it will ever necessarily occur. I have argued previously that the notion of continuity that Taylor wishes to manipulate is a false construct. We do not, I don't think, live lives that are coherently ordered. To use a literary metaphor, I do not think that our lives are a novel with a single character following a cohesive plot. It is my sense that our lives, if they avoid stagnation, are a collection of short stories which share a character of the same name but of remarkably diverse personalities and traits. Who I was at twenty is connected to who I am at thirty by name only. The construction of a linear chronology of the self comes to be through a sort of narcissism regarding one's present state. By prideful necessity we come to see who we are now as superior to who we once were, we have come to call this growth or maturity. This is a difficult line to walk. Retrospection will quickly show us that if there is, indeed, a continuum of replacement or "growth", then who we are now, and the thinking we consider precious, is going to be dismantled eventually for something newer and more improved. In Augustinian terms this sort of thinking, hopefully, will lead to the collapse of an image of the self as complete. But most people would not accept that what they think know is destined to be possibly negated by what is to come.

Another, I think, more cogent possibility is that who we are at any given point is a reflection of arbitrarily filled standard criteria. This would include how much money we have, the security of the neighbourhood we live in, and the sort of things (probably related to the first two criteria), that we are afraid of. This is to say that who we are at any given point of our life is no worse or better than who we are at a later time. The point is not to compare but to recognize that one's life is not dependant on what it has at one time been.

If this means that we cannot understand ourselves as a coherent whole with lucid self-knowledge, then I agree. To suggest that we can seems to invite trouble, both politically and spiritually.

\textsuperscript{52} See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", 275.
Now, Taylor wants us to recognize that the notion of dignity which we have accepted is laden with references to a moral good. Taylor's bigger point is that beyond accepting that we depend on this good, we cannot have it without a community.  

But must it be? Could we not have what appear to be good citizens who are radically self-interested and are insecure enough about the world they live in to subscribe to a theory of a veil of ignorance? That is to say, a prudent self-interest? I think that this bears some thought. A society that is built on accepting principles of freedom and equality does not necessitate that I believe in freedom and equality for anyone but myself. I may not care, and probably don't, if you are treated freely and equal. All I demand is that I am treated as such. It is my sense that this is not an uncommon view in today's world. My question is whether my connection to your sense of freedom and equality through my respect or love of you is more effective than each of us wanting it for ourselves and often granting it to others due to what we consider prudent self-interest. If love is not present, will greed or guilt suffice?  

Taylor does not concede this. In one of his most popular essays "The Politics of Recognition", Taylor addresses the necessary bonds between our pride and each other. Taylor sees us as demanding recognition. He writes:

The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the mis-recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people as society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning, or contemptible picture of themselves.  

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Taylor argues that recognizing someone is not just an act of social politeness. It is essential to the self-awareness of that person. Recognition comes in two ways. First, from the collapse of social hierarchies; the falling apart of principles of honour. We have replaced this structure with one of egalitarian dignity. Second, it can be attained through theories of authenticity, that is to say, being true to yourself. To do this you must depend on an original sense of right and wrong and follow it truly. Authenticity comes from trusting our own central core. In so doing, we are provided with a full humanity.

In the intellectual contribution provided by Rousseau the idea was raised that authenticity was buried and distorted by society's evil sway. Our authenticity is removed from us by the passions which are excited by our prideful responses to social interaction. We become tainted and lose ourselves because of our pride. This type of thinking has maintained itself in our modern world. The self is seen by many as prior to the baggage which society impinges upon us. There is obviously something to this thinking. In any number of situations we can postulate what it is we wish we had done in contrast to what it is we felt we had to do so to guarantee the acceptance of others. Against the idea of man as socially constructed there is this powerful notion of a discoverable inherent self that lies below the surface of our daily political deeds.

Taylor sees the crucial characteristic of human life as being the result of having to work ourselves out, come to grips with the self that is I, "dialogically". We find ourselves in the dialogue

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57 See: Ibid, 227. I would like to add a third possibility. We can achieve recognition by thoroughly being ignored or criticized by the society we live in. The importance of a standard of other with which to fight against is, I think, crucial to self-identity.

that occurs between ourself and others; we find ourself in relationship to an argument against what others foist upon us. We cannot, essentially, remove ourselves wholly from our social context or construction "but we should strive to define ourselves on our own to the fullest extent possible, coming as best we can to understand and thus get some control over the influence of our parents, and not fall into anymore such dependant relationships."  

This sort of dialogical space is created through the art of conversation and, mostly, argument. It is dependant on being recognized as a worthy interlocutor. We can see in children how important recognition by important others is. We warn new parents how easy it is for children to internalize particular negative images and how those negative images stick with us. We also teach that to withhold recognition (or love) is akin to oppressing children. This, according to Taylor, applies, as well, to adults. What we are supposed to do in our adult lives is to note and see that people are different than us but that they are still significant. This significance is connected to the fact that we accept that people are bred and born with inherent dignity. As I have suggested above, I am not convinced that anyone actually believes or needs to believe in principles of inherent, Kantian dignity. Does this mean that our society will collapse? If we do not love one another does this mean that we cannot coexist? Or is the problem for us on some other theological level?  

Taylor thinks that inherent dignity is crucially connected to our ability to possess self-rule. Self-rule is essential to democratic, liberal politics. If we think that freedom and self-rule are good

59 See: Ibid. I am not sure that I fully understand this. It is automatically acceptable that we try to free ourselves from our immediately oppressive relationships, those with parents, siblings and other minor authority figures. But it strikes me that emancipation from these possible constraints only prepares one to better fit into the illusion of freedom. Depending on how you envisage principles of individuality as detached from societal forces dictates how you view the importance of emancipation from the symbols of oppression. Obviously it is positive to break free of abusive relationships but can this be done without creating a dichotomy between the "individual" and the world at large? Must personal movement and rejection of certain structures (while innocently adhering to others) necessarily be understood as autonomy? If it does, aren't Taylor's important arguments in serious trouble?
then we have to be respectful of corresponding propositions which are essential to those goods.\(^{60}\)

Citizen self-rule as connected to self-dignity is based on understanding that what a person does as a citizen has a value to that citizen. This value is found and appreciated in that we are able to provide for our society and state.\(^{61}\) This ability to understand one's contribution to one's society as valuable is connected to issues of recognition. Taylor parallels it to Hegel's dialectical exposition of the master and the slave. It is in this dialectical pairing that "self-consciousness and recognition" become entwined.\(^{62}\) To be noted by other persons as a person is to become a person. We exist only in our being evaluated. This evaluation, as we will soon discuss, occurs only in a public space perpetuated by the conversations that can transpire only in its dimensions.

This framework, I must confess, is not particularly compelling to me. It strikes me that the complete negation of recognition is equally conducive to the sort of formation of the self that Taylor desires. If one considers the gay rights movement of the last twenty years an interesting alternative may curiously be shown. Advocates of gay and lesbian lifestyles in fighting for recognition in terms of respect and admiration for their choices are probably fighting a losing battle. To heterosexual North America the gay lifestyle is not seen as different, but at heart, acceptable. It is recognized, if at all, from a position of apathy; from a position of "do what you want, I don't care, just as long as I don't have to hear about it". The arguments are not about whether gays and lesbians are human beings like the rest of us deserving of human rights. We really do not think about it in those terms. They are given rights because they are citizens of this country, just like us, and it does not matter


\(^{62}\) See: Ibid, 72.
what they are like as people. We accept them because we negate the importance of recognition.

I would like to argue something even bolder. I wish to suggest that as far as best serving or nurturing the identity of a person or group of persons, negation of recognition or critical recognition is by far the better approach. To my thinking this is a superior way of understanding the slave/master dialectic. To return to our group of gays and lesbians. If gays and lesbians are correct in thinking that sexual preference has any sort of correlation to their identity, it is my sense that the forging of this identity is probably best supported in the way that we forged our identities as young adults. We rebelled. Rebellion, in the sense I speak of it, is a far more effective method of self-discovery than adherence and assimilation to the approving nods of others. For the scheme that Taylor posits, cultural assimilation will preserve and freeze the identities it accommodates. And while practices and methods of assimilation eventually act as a defense or standard of what we have come to see as our primary structures of understanding, we soon confuse the method of existence with its ends.63 We become stuck in assimilated and strictly defended constructions of truth. Taylor sees that this is trouble, I do not see why Taylor thinks a politics of recognition, given a journalistic view of people, will break through this dogma to greater openness.

If we do indeed depend on the friendly recognition of others, we are forever cast in a standard not of our own making. By smashing the standards of being and placing yourself in the space that remains in the fragments that fit and are comfortable we set a different approach to being. As the standards of our existence come to us as reflected in antithetical terms to those who are not us and flattering terms from those we admire, we may come closer to recognizing that identity itself rests on impermanent and flexible ground. This recognition, I think, is very important. To be able to

63 See: Charles Taylor, "What is Involved In A Genetic Psychology?", 142.
understand that who you are is based on your negative and positive relationships with others one is more open and less dependant on those relationships being truthful. As such we create natures more open to dialectical movement (if you like) and hermeneutical opportunities. In short-hand it is my opinion that the politics of being as constructed on a negative understanding of recognition is equally if not more conducive to political flexibility and philosophy than a non-existent civil politics of recognition based on reflections of common inherent dignities.

The difference between a politics of friendly recognition and the politics of denied recognition is that the former is congruent with an argument for commodious civil society. Given that identities have been supposedly shaped and self-nurtured outside of a non-existent state of civil society, one wonders if the public space that Taylor recommends is really so necessary. Unless, and this may be interesting, Taylor is talking about an idea of the self that is fundamentally different than the one we are and normally conceive of. This new self may, in Taylor's language, be a Christian self of a completely different breed. Again, I wish to suggest, that if indeed Taylor is hoping to create a human form more open to the possibilities of otherness, temporal or spiritual, a politics of recognition seems a sloppy way of doing it. If Taylor's motives are purely political he must answer a more disturbing charge of being essentially naive about the status of modern peoples.

It is my sense that Taylor craves the formulation of a new type of self. Taylor identifies with Aristotle in noting that there was a political life of nobility and an ordinary life of prudential concerns. Aristotle noted that the ordinary life, while crucial to human existence, was secondary to the more theoretical life of ultimate human ends. The argument is that beyond our world of everyday appetites and living there is an important domain of values and the structures that we place on things and the

64 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 212.
world around us. We do not make sense of our lives by explaining structures as outside ourselves. Our thoughts and feelings are essential to how we understand our place in the world and where we see ourselves in hierarchies and continuums. This understanding, or ability to posit sustainable values, is crucially linked to our existence in a community of social peers. This demands a different ontology; an ontology that does not fit in with "atomism inflected common sense". Taylor, I think, plans to overcome this image of the self and replace it with one that is authentically socially embedded; an ontology of construction.

Taylor thinks this can be logically provocative. We are, as individuals, dependant upon language to formulate, explicate and articulate our thoughts and feelings. We come to own our languages through the recreation of it through continuous contemplation and manipulation of expression. In order to keep our essential language from "freezing" or stagnating itself and us with it, we need consistently to refresh the life and spirit of the words that we use. If we do not do this we fall into the trap of expressing ourselves through phrases that come to us by convenience instead of personal, expressive communication. Language is kept alive or useful through sincerity. It is capable of breathing and having power when we use it to express all of our humanity.

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65 See: Ibid, 57.

66 See: Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal - Communitarian Debate", 192. I am not positive how Taylor was able to transcend this common sense grounding, and having done so where he is able to gather confidence that he was successful given that recognition was probably not forthcoming.

I think that this argument of Taylor's shows some crucial points. First, I think that it exposes the difficulty in translation and dialogue between two radically different ontologies. The ontology of reflection, contemplation, Eros and a higher order does not make sense from a perspective of atomism-inflected common sense. This is akin to how Dutch makes no sense to the Japanese. My view is that there is no possibility of dialogue between them.

Even if we are to not think in terms of the plausibility of dialogue, Taylor needs to demonstrate the catalysts towards a desire for it. I think that he tries to do this by showing that we are in the midst of a malaise and that this crisis will provoke further reflective thinking. I think this is completely wrong, both empirically and theoretically. The loudest crunch of the modern malaise, if there is such a thing, is that the first victim is inspired optimism.

67 See: Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have To Become States?", 49.
None of this works if you are the only one doing it. The community of which you are a member must also be expressing itself in all the avenues of humanity. Accordingly, if we lose our respect for the community we will lose the ability to keep our languages and ourselves fresh. Some individuals, as history demonstrates, thrive in the ashes of a smashed culture, but for the rest of us society must be involved in what we find important. This connection to society, besides providing the contextual framework through which approximation is possible, is also the grounding of our ability to attain political self-rule.

Before we consider issues of efficacy it is important for us to wonder about how we are able to trust that the self that results from particular uses of language and the choices available therein is an authentic self. We need to wonder if, indeed, the argument for the importance of language and the community that nurtures it is built on the assumption that there is such a thing as an ontological purity which can be mislaid or abused. Society may be able to provide most of us with the means of how to imagine and pursue our strongest desires. Is it possible that our strongest desires are not authentic? The answer to that question, I think, wholly depends on whether you find philosophical defenses of concepts of authenticity believable or not. Is it possible for a subject to be wrong about himself? Is it possible always to be right? How can we know that the choices that we think we make against the external objects of our existence, the way we shape our phenomena, the way we trap it into words, are either true or false? Do questions like this have any meaning? How can we be wrong if there is nothing meaningful to be wrong about? Is our strong desire for political stability potentially wrong? Is it possible that our human life would be best served through political and social annihilation? If the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah had welcomed their apocalypse would we be more able to forgive

them? I have no idea. But I think the question is a crucial one especially in the context of political philosophy. Is it important what our social good is, can we be seriously in error about what we think is important? Do we live in these errors throughout history, allowing the contradictions of our non-lives to expose themselves to the logic of true living and slowly but surely come to evolve actual existence? If so, are we to understand ourselves and our ancestors as living a death so that our children's children may one day live a life in the truth? No, most of us, if coerced into contemplating the end of history, do not see it on earth. Are we all living in death to see that life is not living? Is this what Taylor wants to show? Or does he want the best political apparatus feasible?

Taylor, on one hand, can say that some people are fundamentally wrong about themselves. He agrees that what we really want can be confused and tainted by our lower desires.\(^69\) He grounds his idea of thorough being on two rules: identity is defined through conversation; and the understandings, or constructions that underlie social practices.\(^70\) Yet, Taylor insists that our underlying social construction needs to be one where we are open to alternative understandings of ontology. Why? Why do we have to be interested? Taylor sees the sense of the question. He agrees that if we are considering a capacity that is just contained in a being being then the conditions necessary for development are irrelevant.\(^71\) If being is just for being then it does not matter what sort of being we become or nurture. In fact, being can be Being and not a constant becoming. The modern idea of philosophy as method has insisted that self-understanding and explanation are built on self-

\(^{69}\) See: Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty", 227.

\(^{70}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Atomism", 209.

\(^{71}\) See: Ibid, 200.

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discovery; on the end of the travail which is being becoming.\textsuperscript{72} We, in Taylor’s words: ”go in word, but not necessarily to find God; we go to discover or impart some order, or some meaning or some justification, to our lives.”\textsuperscript{73} We wish, when on our deathbeds, to look back and see a life that told its story. This is the question, then, which I think faces Taylor’s political philosophy. Is it eventually about attaining being and sustaining it politically? Or is it about attaining a principle of becoming and sustaining it politically? The latter question, again, must be compounded - of the two components which one is operative? I think a portion of the answer can be discovered in Taylor’s social constructivism.

To have an identity, to play a role in the world, requires thought. Thoughts, in Taylor’s articulation, are ”events in the minds of individuals.”\textsuperscript{74} Thoughts, to be discernible and sensible, must exist in a context or framework of meaning. This framework is only made possible by a community of interlocutors who acknowledge and accept the meaningfulness of certain terms and the negation of said meaning from other insensible terms. What we are able to think, then, is inevitably structured by what sort of rules the particular context suggests or demands. We are not able to, sensibly, come up with a private language of meaning that has no reference to the commonly acknowledged one. Language is not just a system of correspondences or representations. We cannot consider a moment of language or experience as separated from its framework. In our consideration of the moment we also, consciously or not, reflect on the foundational context.\textsuperscript{75} This foundational context is the

\textsuperscript{72} See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 178.

\textsuperscript{73} See: Ibid, 177.

\textsuperscript{74} See: Charles Taylor, ”Irreducibly Social Goods”, 131.

\textsuperscript{75} See: Ibid, 134; Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 54; Charles Taylor, ”Language and Human Nature”, 230-1. In the latter citation Taylor mirrors Heidegger’s point that language is bigger than us and that we are ultimately prisoners
community where language is made real and is nurtured. The point of most interest from all of this is that if we are to deny the essential importance of the community in our lives, we also deny the importance of meaning. For Heidegger, as it is for Taylor, it is not we who speak but rather it is language that speaks. Accordingly, this shows that it is not really the self that expresses, it is the community.

But an inevitable question arises: can we not live in a society without meaning, without noticing what it is that is a good? Can I not become a pragmatist with my sole motivation being a desire to fit in? Can we not fall into a world of art without any ability to judge that world? Taylor does not think that this dreary view, in addition to, for him, its complete lack of desirability, makes any sense. Without the "horizon" of good given by the values of a community no one could possibly have an identity. No one could posit themselves as merely trying to fit in, of going with the motions. You are who you are only because you live in a community that has given you an index of value choices and the corresponding structures with which to enact them. We would go through a lot of anguish and pain to avoid the influence of other people in our own lives. It would be inconceivable to imagine that the loves which govern our life as, first, not brought to us by the influence of others, and, second, not absolutely crucial to a sane life. Should we, in the name of a pure authenticity, attempt to free ourselves from these bonds? This is impossible. Even if we separate ourselves from

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76 See: Charles Taylor, "Language and Human Nature", 234. The language that we speak must be created, exist and be nurtured in a community of interlocutors. This language should always be understood as our language.

77 See: Ibid, 239.

78 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 55.

79 See: Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have To Become States", 45.
our parents, from the authority of our teachers, we will still find ourselves turning to some form of dialogical conversation, be it in books or what have you. Human nature is a meaningless pairing of empty words without the context of a social force which in essence contradicts the words it gives power to. The attributes by which we recognize humanity, the words we use to praise and remonstrate it all depend on our social structures. The thoughts that we are convinced sneak in, unabated, they belong to all of us. Taylor states it subtly: "(T)he dominant cast of thought in a country cannot be unconnected with its social reality." More than the conditions of society guiding the range of thought, thought in every guise owes its possibility to a world constructed through the processes of civility.

Having shown that social intercourse is essential to being Taylor delivers his ultimatum: if we can know that society is of great importance we ought to guarantee and perpetuate this kind of society. We should insure the existence of a society dedicated to the maintenance of the public conversation. Because you and I can only be free and understand what we mean and like about being free we need also to be concerned about the status of our society. We must maintain a society in which the principles we admire and consider fundamental to a person's, any person's, life are protected and respected. To do this we may have to protect certain state institutions and practices.

This has the ring of oppressiveness as I am sure Taylor recognizes. In Taylor's suggestion that we must maintain fundamental institutions and practices that embody what it is we like about our

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nation, he flirts with the radical conservatism that is only politically attractive today in the politics of the far left. Taylor's arguments about this sort of moral protectionism can be seen as tying us irrevocably to previous standards of attractiveness. In Taylor's writing there is consistent mention of the way that structures are altered in the moment of their, even innocent, interpretation. What we set up as our foundation, is changed in our re-articulations or reflections of them. But no matter our apparent flexibility, these interpretations start off and are guided by original propositions which may be as far as anyone knows, completely in metaphysical error. Or is it as in the children's game where we whisper a word to another and watch how it completely changes directions? The difference between the two is the difference between a potentially meaningful progression starting from a solid but flawed point of origin and a completely arbitrary acknowledgement of change through no standard at all.

It may be likely that there is not really a difference between these two frameworks. There may only be an illusion of difference. As Taylor suggests when we compare our opinions with independent reality, we are stuck because reality is not independent; it depends on being accepted by people for it to have credibility. The popularity of any given theory makes a big difference on the way society decides things. What is deemed normal, what is understood as acceptable or unacceptable in terms of argument come from the society we live in. The question between meaningful dialectical movement from a sturdy foundation versus arbitrary sways of popular attention becomes startlingly pertinent.

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84 See: Charles Taylor, "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere", 268.
86 See: Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 46.
As members of a multi-cultural, late twentieth-century, liberal democracy does it seem accurate to intimate that we have choices and options about what to believe? It certainly appears, based on the number of tensions between us, that we do. In my view the idea of options is discouragingly paradoxical. If there are options to be had we will not be able to recognize them. If we think there are options that we can see, we likely are confusing the particularities of issues with larger abstract differences. An argument about who should be taxed more than others does not show a difference of options. Two voices arguing about which ideology provides greater recourse to freedom also does not show a difference of options. In both of these examples, the opposite viewpoints are grounded in the same foundations. In the first both accept some principle of taxation. In the second both accept freedom as a foundational good. For us as Christianized westerners to have a conversation with Islamic Middle easterners about the relationship between church and state, while we may be able to recognize most of each other's words, we cannot talk to each other. We speak fundamentally different languages. In this way, no radical challenge to our understanding of ourselves and our politics is possible on any large scale level. The odd individual may be able to move into deeper understandings of their foundations, unearth forgotten tracts which are written in similar dialects but the tide will not be swayed, outside of a combination of violence and time.

The effect of political policy on society fits with this problem. Politics that follow atomistic ontologies are inherently flawed in that they provide for a people who exist under the rubric of an illusion. Procedural liberalism, distributive justice, both these schemes understand man as ahistorical, as grounded on nothing but their premise of man as primarily a rights bearing individual. But, in

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87 See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 54.

Taylor's view, to posit a theory such as this, to even incline oneself to such a theory, is to demonstrate a connection to a view of human good. This, and any, view of the good depends on a social framework to exist. To praise and seek equality is to stand inside a social perspective and to have a definitive position; otherwise what is the point of fostering equality? This social perspective, from which such choices are made, is dictated by how we understood concepts like justice. What ever practical or pragmatic policies or articulations we come up with are not in a position to question the foundation by which it is capable of existing. If we are to think in terms of distributive justice it is only understandable in the terms of what is to be distributed; that is, what we value in common. Distributive justice only makes sense in certain types of environments and communities. These environments must be, by logical necessity, based on an underlying respect for freedom and equality which is often at odds with how it is currently defined.

Connected to what it means to be an individual we demand control over our own lives. It is Taylor's position that efficacy is asserted most powerfully in the social sense; it is not possible to have a tremendous control as an individual. It is in belonging to a society that we can really understand what efficacy is all about. Taylor writes:

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90 See: Ibid, 296. This argument of Taylor's is not satisfactory. Yes, we can agree that what I recognize of value is quite dependant on what my community deems meritable. It is a leap from that perspective to one where I have to be willing to surrender my individual (though donated to me by my community) desires for a communal debt. If our society posits as its work of art an image of itself as an amalgamation of autonomous individuals and attempts to instill these values in its collective members, should these members feel responsible to surrender that which their society is about in order to save that society? It seems from this logic that the moment of self-surrender to communal debt is a step to the evaporation of this particular state. I guess for Taylor some goods are far better than others.

91 Following footnote #90: Is it even good in any society, necessarily?

On the contrary, an individual is sustained, on one hand, by the culture which elaborates and maintains the vocabulary of his or her understanding.\textsuperscript{93} In our modern lives we have given ourselves over to a "consumer society". We recognize capitalism as a force that has vastly improved our ability to control our lives, but the price we have had to pay for consumer affluence is alienation from our social strata. This endlessly complicates our relationship to social participation.\textsuperscript{94} We attach our idea of freedom to a capitalist ethic of consumer control. As a result we have surrendered any number of other avenues of control, like that over our lives. We are loathe to control the free market as we fear that this will hamper the image of our fiscal respectability which will, in turn, affect our consumer possibilities. This could only happen in an existence where consumerism contributes a large portion to how we understand ourselves. Freedom becomes lost in its new definition of the freedom to buy as much as you can afford.

But, as many of us certainly can attest, we cannot buy as much as we think that we need. In fact, we find ourselves squirming at tax-time and when we get the dental bills. This crush of economic insecurity tends to the realization that something much more powerful and pervasive is actually in charge of our lives. As a result we come to see the idea of efficacy as an illusion or as a utopian scam stemming from those who have attained even less than us. We find ourselves stuck. We are not fond of the fiscal norms that have come to centre our lives but to back away from them strikes us as lazy cowardice. The issues which we thought we had erased like poverty and racism threaten us anew and we feel powerless to prevent them.\textsuperscript{95} The relative success of our capitalist venture, the wealthy that

\textsuperscript{93} See: Ibid.

\textsuperscript{94} See: Ibid, 78.

\textsuperscript{95} See: Ibid, 85.
have arisen from our ranks, have convinced us that our consumer values can work. It is this blind, illogical hope that it has to happen for us and our neighbours that also defies us to consider options. Our partial success is wounding us.\(^6\) Liberalism, in its minor capitalist successes, has forgotten or negated what it once held dear: "participatory self-rule". Taylor is concerned that we will not be able to maintain our state with what he describes as the "marginalization of participatory self-rule."\(^7\) The question that we need to ponder is how far gone is our idea of freedom from what it needs to be? Can we make sense of freedom without a concept of self-rule? Can we imagine being the leaders of our own lives and worlds?

Freedom has come to mean a certain thing which has very little to do with controlling our own lives. It is this contradiction, between the principles by which we model our expectations and the actualization that we accept, that Taylor considers of essential importance. Taylor sees most people as recognizing that rights are secondary to freedom; i.e. that rights are about freedom.\(^8\) For Taylor this is important. It is only if we recognize that the principle of freedom is still what grounds rights that we may be able to move away from our narrow understanding of what freedom has come to mean.

To understand freedom we must be able to see a world outside of ourselves. Freedom, Taylor states, is not available to the person who hates and cannot identify with unfamiliar human types.\(^9\) This notion of freedom takes more than a unit like a family to originate; it takes the differentiation only

\(^6\) See: Ibid.

\(^7\) See: Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate", 199.

\(^8\) See: Charles Taylor, "Atomism", 201.

\(^9\) See: Ibid, 204.
possible in an entire civilization. This is evident for Taylor if we think of all the various contributions from differing concepts of humanity that have gone into articulating the freedom that it is possible to know today. When we contemplate freedom we attach ourselves to others in time. If this were not so we would have to emancipate ourselves with each new generation. Freedom already exists in our practices. Taylor's argument is if we can still recognize that freedom is what guides our principles then we must acknowledge a serious obligation to the moral precepts of freedom throughout time. We can best maintain this freedom if we take a role in guiding our society in adherence to the principles that we demand. We, in our consumerist culture, are enslaved by the "endless multiplication of our desires". This enslavement has made contemplation of the truth of freedom very difficult.

There are two prevalent definitions of freedom in conflict within our society. One group of theorists define freedom as the individual free from restraints made by others. This view is challenged by those who think that freedom lies in the collective controlling our common life. The second view, while not very popular in today's or any day's world, posits that it is the view that best provides for self-rule, which must be understood as the height of freedom. Freedom, properly understood, is measured by the extent that one is able to determine one's life. Freedom, to be meaningful, must be

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100 See: Ibid, 205. I don't think this is necessarily so. It is perhaps the absence of oppression in successive generations that allows us the luxury of not constantly fighting the same battles. I grant that the presence or possibility of oppression may depend on what sort of freedoms are already apparent in our practices, but this is an assumption that the oppressors would oppress if only certain practices were not present. Also, this seems to be true for only a sect of the population: a white, middle-class, male sect. To argue that young American blacks do not have to fight the same battles that their fore-fathers won is simply wrong and cold-hearted.


102 See: Charles Taylor, "Legitimation Crisis?", 249.

103 See: Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?", 211-2.
something that we can actually practice and exercise.

In considering the more prevalent negative view of liberty an interesting correlation can be made to metaphysics. Negative liberty in its desire to remove obstructions from the life of the individual has not been satisfied with just removing external barriers. It has also concerned itself with the removal of internal hindrances; those provided by traditional metaphysical orders. The prevalent conception of liberty argues that self-realization is better accomplished through the absence of metaphysical boundaries and responsibilities. The view is quite simply that freedom is the ability to attain what you desire. We are not free if certain desires are blocked. Taylor counters:

The capacities relevant to freedom must involve some self-awareness, self-understanding, moral discriminations and self-control, otherwise their exercise could not amount to freedom in the sense of self-direction; and this being so, we can fail to be free because these internal conditions are not realized.

Taylor's point is that we can fail to understand our ends. We can, in the pursuit of freedom, cement a removal of freedom.

If freedom, to be meaningful, must recognize limits on the self as this is connected to actual expression, it appears that some verifiable or pragmatic metaphysical standard must be present. This is how modern liberal practitioners articulate this other view of freedom. If we cannot know what it is to be truly free then we must protect ourselves from the power that pretends to know what is best for us. Taylor does not view it like this at all.

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104 See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 82.


106 This necessity can be shown by correlating freedom with its sister, equality. Equality is an important tenet in the modern view of freedom for, not the way it raises the status of some but, the way it lowers the position of others. In a non-ordered, equalized world no one can lay claim to especial rights given a particular status. The Jew's status as the "chosen people" of God cannot be recognized with any seriousness. Taylor recognizes two differing principles that are used to underline equality. One way of perpetuating equality is to ignore differences. The other way is to celebrate them.
For Taylor, freedom begins and ends in the maxim: "free people are self-governing people". This circumvents the need for metaphysical justifications. If we are able to agree with Taylor's basic principle, the structure of good and community that is necessary to maintain it will appear as logically, and not theologically, necessary.

Taylor is confident that this sort of argument will be recognized by most of us. He bases this on his consideration that people can still get collectively angry about abuses of freedom. This anger is not based and cannot be based on atomistic self-interest. We simply wouldn't care if society was just an instrument for our manipulative uses. For Taylor, we are still drawn to universal axioms of freedom as our highest good.

As freedom is fundamental to our existence we find ourselves, naturally, seeking to defend it; even if our defences are eventually unconvincing. How do you defend freedom without recourse to ontology? Our notion of freedom is grounded in a particular understanding of certain moral ideals. And yet it is our understanding of freedom which seeks to liberate itself from these moral precepts.

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107 See: Charles Taylor, "Why Do Nations Have To Become States?", 41. Taylor makes interesting use of Montesquieu by apparently agreeing with the notion that men concerned only with private or even spiritual goals are not fit to live in a free state. (See: Ibid.) The problem that Taylor might have with men who pursue only their private goals is obvious. What is more interesting is the men governed by spiritual goals. My sense is that the operative term is "only". If Taylor can be found to agree with this view, there exists, then, a bridge between Taylor's spirituality and his politics. I imagine that a man completely governed by spiritual goals would be less concerned about being kicked out of a free state than Mr. Self Interest. But is this so? I am doubtful. It is my opinion that Taylor shows an interesting theological element and importance to liberal democratic society. It provides the social and contextual grounding conducive to recognition of spiritual possibilities or realities. Christianity adheres to our phenomenal underpinnings. As such, it is to the benefit of the Christian life that the state be as free, hermeneutical and as open as it can be. That this freedom is dependant on obligatory relationships is welcome given that it shows the necessity of the relationship to that other that man must recognize. This still leaves the question as to whether Taylor's ends are redemptive or politically still open.

108 Remembering that arguments are mostly acknowledged by their congruence and desirability to the society that they are designed to convince.

109 See: Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate", 195-6. Taylor is obviously tuned into different television stations than I am. I do not see myself as living among a public that gets significantly angry about outrages against freedom, not when these eruptions periodically occur do I see them sustained until satisfactory conclusions are wrought. Perhaps Taylor is watching a station dedicated to re-runs.
Taylor writes:

(Freedom, universalism, altruism, community responsibility) are among the central moral experiences of modern culture, the hypergoods which are distinctive to it. And yet what these ideals drive the theorists towards is a denial of all such goods.\(^{110}\)

We have to, if we want to preserve our freedom, create a mechanism which will sustain as well as protect freedom.\(^{111}\) Our emphasis has been entirely on protection. If our comprehension of freedom becomes based on a notion of society as an amalgamation of individuals, the legitimacy of what freedom truly means will be seen as oppressive. Our freedom to do as we please without restraint (in most matters) has become not only the freedom to do nothing, it is working against what freedom fully is. We are wrong to think that freedom is in escape. We, in Taylor's opinion, can have even a fuller freedom if we can see ourselves as the guides of a society which is essential to any articulation of what freedom is.

This is done through the nurturing of a public space within which conversations about what it is good for us to be can occur and be considered important. Taylor defines the public sphere as a dimension where people form their opinions commonly and individually.\(^{112}\) Taylor shows the structure of this public sphere as follows: 

'(a) general understanding of what things count as is constitutive of the reality we call the public sphere.'\(^{113}\) The public sphere is, then, the place where a society creates its work of art, to paraphrase and borrow from Heidegger. Taylor also asserts that the public sphere

\(^{110}\) See: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 88. I am not convinced that most of us feel any necessity to defend freedom. To who?


\(^{112}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Liberal Politics and the Public Sphere", 260.

\(^{113}\) See: Ibid, 262.
is to take place outside of structures of power. Can this be what he means? As read, it implies that the public sphere exists concurrent with institutions and frameworks of power without being guided or influenced unduly by them. This does not make sense if one considers Taylor's other arguments. One is tempted to consider that the public sphere is intended to be conceived of as prior to arrangements of power; that it decides the flavour of good that power will abide by. This would seem to correlate it with the phenomenological thinking that Taylor uses elsewhere. But if this were so, the public sphere would be only useful as a point of origin, and the placing of that point would always be logically suspicious; if this were so there would be no point about talking about creating a public sphere in today's world. No, as strange as it may seem, Taylor needs the public sphere to exist in a space transcendentally placed above or beyond the contaminating hand of power.

Whether it is sensible to imagine its existence separable from mechanisms of power perhaps can better be demonstrated by considering what the public sphere is designed to accomplish. The public sphere is the home of public opinion. Public opinion is not just a collection of individual views, it is the result of conversation. It is as a result of these conversations (Taylor considers them to be mostly arguments) that ideas of a shared good can arise and be identified. We come to see that terms are meaningful in a dimension beyond the particularities of a me and a you. We are able to construe important notions of meaning together. This acceptance of the importance of this social creation

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116 See: Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate", 189. But how are we to know that what we are saying is of any value; that what has caught our eye is what matters? Does it matter what we talk about? Does what we talk about have to have a basis in some sort of reality?
and commitment radically affects society.\textsuperscript{117}

The view of the socially constructed good in a strict sense does not fit with a narrow view of individual good. It is this narrow view and its rejection of obligation and commitment to anything other than our own self-will that threatens to dismantle the scaffolding that protects and sustains our primal necessity of good. The law is now seen as something outside of myself which, if I respect, I will obey; or more likely, I will obey as an acceptable infringement on my rights of freedom. This is a long way from seeing the law as a reflection of things that we see together as significant; as things that we \textit{share}. Taylor reminisces that our institutions, practices and laws used to be a part of our shared desire for society; they were not something outside of us.\textsuperscript{118}

Taylor's advice is that we learn to speak or think in a number of different languages or terminologies. He writes:

(S)o that they can begin to see the limitation and the historically conditioned nature of any philosophical language, and more particularly languages of political philosophy.\textsuperscript{119}

This is a wonderful statement and it is hard not to be sympathetic to its sentiment, but is it sensible? Can we really learn a language outside of the ones that we have been taught to speak, a private language? Taylor considers that free public opinion and absolute power do not go well together. This depends on a truth of which Taylor is much more confident than I: people must have a voice and will

\textsuperscript{117} See: Charles Taylor, "Social Theory as Practice", 96-7.

\textsuperscript{118} See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Ambiguous Legacy For Modern Liberalism", 68. I wonder about this. It seems to me that this public sphere did not belong to very many people. I suggest that women, minorities and those who did not own land were undoubtedly excluded from these public discussions. Much like the discussions the Greeks had in the public courts, who was excluded from the conversation challenges the respectability or plausibility of the conversation.

\textsuperscript{119} See: Charles Taylor, "The Philosophy of the Social Sciences", 76.
outside of their political apparatus.\textsuperscript{120} I think that this is absolutely at odds with much of Taylor’s argument, at least as I have presented it. This autonomy away from structures of affect and power subscribe to principles of neutrality or the consciously pre-conceptual which previously Taylor could not abide by. I think that Taylor was correct not to abide by it. The views which we use to judge our culture are inevitably given to us and recognized by the forces of that same culture, namely us. The way Taylor speaks here is to say that we can escape our context: where then, in what space, are we existing? Are we without baggage?, without a firm grasp of what we value specifically? Or is Taylor just arguing the light argument that through a public sphere we can keep our systems honest? If so, this actually suffers from the same criticism but only at a slower pace. In time, we will come to recognize the abuses of power as the semblance of justifiable authority. Taylor says free public opinion and absolute power do not mix. It seems rather that the contrary is true; that absolute power depends on the presence of free public opinion, granting that freedom will always be measured in relation to the power that sculpts it. What does Taylor think that he can lead us past? Does he think he can separate us from our being to exist in another earthly realm? Or must we be Montesquieu's angels?

Taylor connects what he articulates as the public sphere with an organizing form of society called civil society. Close to its roots in Republican forms of government, civil society is a society based on a theory of shared goods.\textsuperscript{121} It comes to be posited as a reaction against a politics based on individual actors which due to its atomist nature is in constant gridlock. Civic humanism observes this privatization of self as a "corruption". In the civic humanist belief it is "common action about shared

\textsuperscript{120} See: Charles Taylor, "Civil Society in the Western Tradition", 128, 130.

\textsuperscript{121} See: Charles Taylor, "Social Theory as Practice", 99.
beliefs" that result in laws that are lovable. For Hegel, a free society cannot be free without this social commitment.\textsuperscript{122} Civil society sees citizens as connected, to the benefit of their own self-rule, to each other as regards their views of the common good. These views are politicized in that truly affective political policy. By drafting their own laws as stemming from their own beliefs about the good, a civil society comes to see adherence to their constitution as freedom.\textsuperscript{123}

Hegel's term \textit{Sittlichkeit} (loosely defined as "social ethic") embodies what the point of civil society could be. \textit{Sittlichkeit} exists as a unity between the family, civil society and the state. Hegel recognizes, like Locke, that society has a political status before the creation of government and its institutions. The governing state, to be sensible and legitimate, must correspond with the values inherent in this pre-governmental society.\textsuperscript{124}

Civil society is attracted to associations merging people together under common points of reference. These associations have a symbiotic relationship with the law: they are formative of and protected by the laws that they decree. A politics is healthier when it is able to draw upon its associations rather than submerging them beneath the rubric of the state and its policies. The position that is depicted by civil society is a different scheme of politics, not just a different way of facilitating policy. For it to be a reasonable potentiality in our society, there has to be a perception that it already exists, if not in our cognizant articulation of our practices then within those practices in a way that it can be exposed. If it is not a part of our consciousness it is as likely to be as appealing as India's caste system.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Ambiguous Legacy for Modern Liberalism", 70-1.
\item[123] See: Charles Taylor, "Invoking Civil Society", 204, 214; Charles Taylor, "Use and Abuse of Theory", 44.
\end{footnotes}
While others contend that civil society has not existed since Aristotle and depends on many Aristotelian assumptions which no longer make sense to us\textsuperscript{125}, Taylor is convinced that the civil society tradition is alive in our modern liberal politics. We can identify it in our, albeit partial, ability to understand Quebec's crisis.\textsuperscript{126}

Quebec exemplifies the aspiration to protect its own society and culture even if this means sacrificing some liberal freedoms. It wishes to defend what it sees as the values of their own unique brand of civilization. These values can be identified as linguistic and Roman Catholic in essence. Traditional Quebec citizens feared that they would lose what they understood as their basis to North American values of "material progress, of wider communication, of the cult of achievement".\textsuperscript{127} Quebec wished and wishes to assert and affirm their particular nation over a nation of colonial power which represented material progress at the expense of their values.\textsuperscript{128} Quebec has insisted in the face of a country that is perplexed that they wish to preserve their autonomy as a group against a hyper-

\textsuperscript{125} I am referring to a statement by Ronald Beiner made to Michael Sandel at the University of Toronto.

\textsuperscript{126} It should be noted that this correlation between a sympathy towards Quebec and a more over-arching interest in civil society is my postulation.

\textsuperscript{127} See: Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and the Political Intelligentsia", \textit{Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism}, 5.

\textsuperscript{128} See: Ibid, 6. Taylor does an interesting job of articulating how the Quebec experience evolved into what we now recognize. Taylor sees the start of the tension in the gap between the educated classes and the rest of the French population. The power elite, because of Canadian ownership, were not French. The glass ceiling that French Quebec people met was at the professional class. French Quebec found themselves closed off from advancement due to the exact characteristics that they had been raised by their parents to celebrate.

As the doors to education became more open, the new Quebec intelligentsia, who craved economic and democratic reform, found themselves embarrassed and out-dated by the discrepancy between French culture and the rest of North America. This frustration mixed with a lack of the appropriate English skills to be competitive in the North American market created the necessity of reform in Quebec. These reforms, given that the majority of businesses in Quebec are owned by English Canadians, would have to be accomplished by state intervention. The goals of the reforms were twofold: First, it was necessary to franchise the economy; open more jobs to French Canadians working in their own language. And second, they needed to demonstrate to the rest of Canada and the world the power that existed in the French community. It is the desire to have and to demonstrate this efficacy that fuels the Quebec that we have come to consider. (See: Ibid, 11-8.)
individualism as exhibited by other Canadians. They have chosen primary social goods over individual ones. This choice is grounded in a desire for self-rule that the rest of us can recognize. It is this ability to recognize and even identify with what Quebec wants that makes them different to our imagination than the Bosnians. We may find their Catholic traditionalism a bit archaic but it is connected to something that we have some memory of, some clue about. We have no clue why the Bosnians should be listened to. We do not know how to begin justifying their actions.

It is through our partial understanding of the Quebec experience that we can be confident that we still have some sympathies to the politics of a civil society. How can it be accomplished? Taylor, throughout his career as a social observer, suggests two paths. We must decentralize and we must create a politics of polarization over a politics of consensus. Polarization will provide us with a context that is aware and open to the potentiality of numerous diverse possibilities. Decentralization will put some power back into the communities with which to arbitrate between diverse proposals and opinions. One step creates the conversation, the other gives it power.

The question remains: what is the good in doing this? How do we know that what we are doing is appropriate, effective and right? How do we know that we should care about those questions? The answer, for Taylor, is partly found in his understanding of the good that is prior to society.

We are able to ask certain questions about justice only on the basis of some sort of framework

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129 See: Charles Taylor, "Irreducibly Social Goods", 140.

130 That, and the fact that almost every book in political theory in this day and age is devoted to the premise of civil society.

131 Taylor discusses the politics of polarization almost exclusively in The Pattern of Politics.
of sensibility our community has constructed. The framework stems from the communities' decisions about what it collectively thinks is good. Now, if this is absolutely so, it is possible to have a community where equality between peoples is considered loathsome and debased. There may be communities where the notion of might is right has wide acceptance and claims strong respect. So then, are there ways we should treat each other no matter what sort of society we live in? It seems impossible to answer yes to that question without recourse to our own frameworks which conveniently contain components of universalism which allow such questions to even be formulated. If the fact that a question like this cannot be assuredly answered is discouraging or scary, it goes to show that you are, at least, still faithful to the frameworks that you cannot escape.

But what about those who do not care that the answer is negative; those who have no desire to prevent atrocities in the poorer neighbourhoods let alone in the poorer countries? This demonstrates, in Taylor's view, a loss of responsibility to the social framework by which your ability even to be jaded is possible. Without faith and respect in this social framework we cannot reflect morally and as such the question that I raised above will not seem very serious. A non-realist standpoint only makes sense from Taylor's point of view if you have no culture or sense of your own context, if you have lost the sense of the good that you were born with.

Given that this idea of the good that we are discussing is based on historical contingencies (eventually, supposedly, tempered by a dialectic) it is hard to know what exactly to take seriously. We have returned to what appears to be a vessel argument; it does not matter absolutely what the

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132 See: Ibid, 310. This is a contentious statement for Taylor to make. It implies that any attempt to imagine outside of our framework; to even suggest a deconstruction of its sacredness, is a move towards nihilistic sin. If we are to accept this, we must return and return and return till we either come to a view of society that captures true goodness or shows us the path outside of the self by which that goodness is found.

good society embodies is, what matters is the necessarily pivotal position of a good in the life of a society. But, as I have argued previously, if the term good can be filled with wildly disparate versions of meaning it does not matter that we must have a structure of good. What matters to you and to me is our ability to attain the particularity which is our good.

This is in direct contrast to the popular liberal view that visions of the good must be relegated to the private realm; discussion of the good in the public realm would, by logical necessity, be discriminating. For this to be achieved the state has to accomplish two goals: it has to be neutral and it has to allow for the pursuit of private versions of the good. This position has often been criticized as confusing neutrality with a presumed view of what is good; that to do what liberals want to do is good. Liberals like Richard Rorty and Ronald Dworkin have responded to such charges by insisting that the liberal structure is prior to understanding concepts of good. This is to say that liberalism at its most neutral necessarily exists before more mature, private formulations can be asserted and realized. Taylor finds this view implausible. To his understanding liberalism as practised in the modern and post-modern academy is much more Christian than it is Islamic. It is certainly not culturally neutral. The view of equality that has been handed down to us by Protestant reflection on Christian principles is a method of looking and not just a precursor to our ability to have a gaze.

Necessarily, in Taylor's sensible view, there is a concept of the good that underlies our practices and institutions. This good is essentially equivalent to having an ontology. As our society has nominated individuality as its good it has also dictated a correlative ontology. The term

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134 See: Charles Taylor, "The Right To Live", 239.


ontology has taken a beating in the modern world. Taylor notes that the term has come to be synonymous with advocacy. \(^{137}\) Taylor thinks that there is more than mere advocacy occurring. An ontology does not just recommend certain choices over others, it guides the way we view those possibilities. The ontology may reflect our inklings, or what we wish to advocate, but it does not disappear once it has set its normative structure in place. Taylor expands:

Taking an ontological position doesn't amount to advocating something, but at the same time, the ontological does help to define the options it is meaningful to support by advocacy. \(^{138}\)

The point is that the ontology is prior and acts as a pre-condition to advocacy. Taylor has used the liberal's argument in reverse. Yes, the liberal structure is previous to the individual good's that are later chosen and advocated. But the liberal structure, itself, is the ontological good that makes such thought or concern even possible.

This sort of argument becomes pertinent for Taylor when one considers how questions of good have been seen in the modern age as subservient to questions of justice. \(^{139}\) If we do not talk about the good before we talk about anything else, we are going to have to accept whatever is being assumed.

We must, though, concede that the liberal argument has a point. It does seem logically that the principles of equality as we have come to know them would be in trouble if we were to publicly

\(^{137}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate", 182. This confusion, if that is what it is, is understandable. Given the impossibility of a neutral perspective or even a neutral allegiance to a certain view, acceptance of an ontology is to advocate a certain position or stance towards the world. The suggestion that the ontology comes before the desire to view the world in a certain way is suspicious. This sort of ambiguity is circumvented only by defending an ontology as philosophically true.

\(^{138}\) See: Ibid, 183.

\(^{139}\) See: Ibid, 186.
give credence to particular views of the good. How harshly can advocates of liberal neutrality be condemned for just blandly accepting that freedom and equality are so good that they are beyond evaluations? Is this acceptance of their hyper status even more compounded by the apparent fact that we exist in a vacuum of sorts where no ultimate good can be discerned? Is the liberal flippancy only problematic if in its disregard it threatens its own collapse? Or is it because, despite all arguments to the contrary, it is deeply in error? Taylor's political writings demonstrate that his concern is for the former. I have tried to argue that his concern for the former is grounded in a regard for the latter.

Taylor argues that since the dismantling of hierarchical notions of the order of being, authority can be legitimately granted only through consent. This necessity of consent is connected to the further necessity of the unavoidable demands made upon the citizenry by the state. For a society to feel worthy of the adjective "free" these obligations cannot be seen as imposed. The only way for this imposition to be avoided is for the citizenry to see the rules of the society as a part of him or herself. (To paraphrase Kant we are our freest when the laws that we must obey are congruent with the laws we choose.) Given that these rules relate mostly to the allegiances and commitments demanded of the individual for the whole, the individual, to not feel imposed upon, must feel connected to what is apparent as the common good.\(^\text{140}\) All theories and politics, at some point, depend on an idea of the

\(^{140}\) See: Ibid, 187, 198. The things that we see as good are only seen as such because of the "background understandings" that come from a contextualized culture. Culture is not to be understood as an instrument; as such it needs to be seen as essentially good and common. Common understanding is not ever the result of an amalgamation of individuals. Taylor uses the concepts of friendship and love to demonstrate that these terms are senseless or empty if not construed in terms of a pre-dominant relationship of us as together. When as a society we recognize something like friendship as a good it is never a case of: "I think the idea of honest friendship is good, it is good to hear that you do too." Without a cultural, communal backdrop of appreciation we would have no ability to defend why the things that we hold dear are of any value. (While I think what Taylor argues is accurate I am not so sure how to use this scheme to explain Christian adherence in long atheistic countries.)

The crux of the matter is that Taylor does not think that we will be able to maintain these understandings unless we perpetuate a common view that maintains its image of goodness. (See: Charles Taylor, "Irreducibly Social Goods", 136-9.)
good that is public, that cannot be reduced to an individual's wants or needs. Thus, if we are to posit our good as strictly defined on an atomistic basis, we are going to find ourselves in a crisis of legitimacy. Who we are and what we are capable of respecting depends on the refractions of our commonly held views of the good. Without due support or adherence to their presence in our life as a work of evolving art, we will be quickly lost. We must respect: "the goods of a culture that makes conceivable actions, feelings, valued ways of life." And this is only because they are foundational for us and our social stability, not because they are necessarily true.

I think that Taylor is, for the most part, onto something very powerful and important. I think that his comments on the necessity of context and the relationship it has to our own understandings of who we are are absolutely correct. I also am compelled by his view of the importance of good in the formation and maintenance of society or even the individual life especially as that individual is connected to a cultural context. I do not accept the primacy or transcendental definition he gives to our cultural understanding of the good. It strikes me that while Taylor avoids speaking in terms of absolutes and truths what he has carved here is very close to defining itself as a static truth. He argues that our ontology comes before the methods of advocacy that we manipulate from it; this suggests that it exists before our interpretation and, in fact, guides our interpretation. I think this is either wrong or meaningless.

While accepting this position may suggest certain political understandings as crucial to our existence it does not appear to me that these conclusions are automatic. Taylor is advancing something very similar to what he does in his discussion on transcendental arguments. There exists


[^142]: See: Ibid, 140.
before our formulations and positions of advocacy a pre-conceptual standing of what we understand ourselves to be. I am certain that this need not be true. It does provide a sort of philosophical primacy to the stability of our state, and not in relation to competition with the pre-conceptual ontological standpoint of a diverse culture. Despite this plausibly attractive component, I do not think that we are necessarily stuck or frozen into any sort of fundamental ontology. In fact, I would argue that the understanding of the liberal ontology is rhetorical and if not that, naive. I would like to assert that an ontology does arrive in our culture but not before desire leaves its mark upon it. These desires may come from wildly divergent sources and misinterpretations. This is where Taylor's hermeneutics are so important to make sense of his split arguments. The view that grounds us is very much dependant on how we interpret it. To argue that underneath all of our possible interpretations is a core of understanding which cannot be articulated is in contrast to the importance that interpretation has on the object of its inspection. The argument that there is a central core from which interpretation stems is either empty given that we change what it is in every arbitrary move of our interpretive flexibility, or it is Geist. Seeing how Taylor denies Geist because it does not pass the test of interpretive acceptance, I am led to conclude that Taylor is not completely sincere about his phenomenological argument. Structuralism, as Taylor hints in the close of his Hegel, is stronger than the transcendental.

Interpretation is multi-layered. There is a level of interpretation which is open to rhetorical flourishes and political finagling. Taylor recognizes this level. There is another level, argued by Merleau-Ponty and Taylor, that underlies the various intentions of this first level. I argue that this second, primary level, if it is not connected to a truth that will find itself in eventual articulation, is empty. I would like to suggest that if we are to have any understanding of this primary level at all, if it is to have any effect upon our social psyche, it will be on the first level of the rhetorical and the
political. At the very least, we can never be comfortable about a difference between the two. We can never know what it is about us that is ontological and what is just the baggage of interpretation. To say that, for us, our ontology is to interpret is to guess. Even if that guess is right we haven't really learned anything politically.\textsuperscript{143}

Taylor grounds our ability to be wrong in that we are tied to the ontology that gave birth to us. Taylor is not able to have his argument both ways. He cannot assert a level before interpretation and then claim to know which interpretations are poor embodiments of it. He cannot so assuredly trust his interpretations of what is true and what is being said about it. Certain goods, Taylor suggests in a manner similar to Foucault's, may be only possible for certain contextually placed humans. The only way to express, create or recognize these goods is through force.\textsuperscript{144} For the enforcer there is no argument more attractive than that what they impose is not by whim but by necessity.

But then Taylor will argue that: "our acceptance of a hyper-good is connected in a complex way with our being moved by it".\textsuperscript{145} Taylor compounds this innocent statement by contending that we are moved by what is good, and this is a good that is separable from the fact that we are moved by it. I do not know why I or anyone else should accept this. Taylor defends it in a strange manner. He claims that this can be defended by noting the success of intuitions to still feel right. As such any theory that does not ground itself in the primacy of intuition is to be dismissed.\textsuperscript{146} I confess that this

\textsuperscript{143} But have we learned anything spiritually? I suspect that an affirmative answer can be given only if the spiritual element can be found in the presence of the confusion and not in the recognition of a primary state of pre-conceptual understanding.

\textsuperscript{144} See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 61.

\textsuperscript{145} See: Ibid, 73.

\textsuperscript{146} See: Ibid, 75.
makes no sense to me. Taylor's argument had been that our intuitions are essentially dependant on our contextual constructions. The implication that they are connected to an order of good is paradoxical. Taylor does not connect postulations about an order of the good and of intuition as just another example of what we can come up with when we culturally construct.

It is Taylor's surprising argument about intuitive goods that demonstrate that his motivations may be more theological than prudential. Taylor's original position that politics does not make sense if you do not think about what it is that people think is important or good does not suggest that concerning oneself with good is a theological imperative or politically useful. He clarifies:

There is an important dimension to politics that can only be understood in the light of the universal human aspiration to be in contact with some larger, fuller, more significant life.¹⁴⁷

Does this have to be understood in reference to God? Could we just state that people want to belong to something valuable; that our identity depends on belonging to something in which we feel included? The answer to these questions may lie in whether the associations by which we form our identities are provisional and satisfactory. If they are the theological imperative may not exist.

These two possibilities may point back to a distinction between Augustine's Catholicism and modern Protestantism. For the modern Protestant, success in the human guise is not antithetical to Christian teaching. For the Protestant, virtue has come to be connected to the realm of the ordinary. Favour in God is discernible by having success in the human sphere. The Protestant God is uniquely forgiving; you don't have to actually succeed in living by the word of God, you just have to try very hard and have faith in God's love. This understanding is premised on a view of God as providing great benefits and possibilities for those who live in His world. Accordingly, God and political stability are

¹⁴⁷ See: Charles Taylor, The Pattern of Politics, 103.
connected in that if you have the latter you have the blessing of the former. Interestingly, Taylor finds this view "flat and repugnant."\textsuperscript{148}

Taylor thinks the question of what it is right to be is absolutely empty if we do not know what it is good to be. With the relative denigration of what it is to be good we fail to understand the good life, the good, or God as something that we love.\textsuperscript{149}

Civil society, then, is a return to the openness that is necessary for seeing that which is good; civil society is the essence of what we are to be. I am not convinced that Taylor is interested in civil society as a precursor to an Augustinian notion of grace. Taylor is correcting Augustine. The City of Man has to be of a particular type for the City of God to be possible. Taylor, in a way that Augustine didn't, recognizes that we can forget the language of grace, we can reach the point where listening for its call is impossible. So does this make Taylor one of the Protestants, despite his objections?

This argument of mine is challenged by Taylor's seeming interest in the stability of a society of self-rule as an end onto itself. I do not know how this can be ultimately defended without being the stepping stone of Geist. I think that Taylor is concerned about such a defence. Taylor writes of Hegel:

His view suffers from a great inadequacy, in that the ultimate metaphysical idea that in Hegel's magnificently consistent way runs through and informs his whole work is a conception of subject/object identity, which is both metaphysical and incredible, and I think in the end a very bad model for a political society."\textsuperscript{150}


\textsuperscript{149} See: Ibid, 79.

\textsuperscript{150} See: Charles Taylor, "Hegel's Ambiguous Legacy for Modern Liberalism", 76.
I think this is very telling. It is my view that Taylor is also governed by a profound metaphysical/theological view. I also think, present discussion possibly excepted, that his view is also magnificently consistent. It is my sense that the above quote suggests two very pertinent points. The first is that the politics of man is not best sculpted in reference to the potential politics of God. Taylor is correct in hinting that metaphysics has very little interest in our political lives. The other key suggestion, and this only works if you agree that Taylor is a profoundly religious thinker, is that politics requires a rhetorical distancing from that which Taylor sees as its point: the essence of connecting to the order of the good. Rhetoric to be palatable to the many cannot speak in terms of the arcane and the metaphysical. I think it is a testimony to Taylor's sincerity, love, and intelligence that he is able to play his cards without showing his hand. Taylor does not want to lead us to God; he wants to lead us to a place where it is possible for God to show Himself to us. This place is intimately connected to the maintenance of freedom and efficacy; it is connected, for Taylor, to civil society.

I have my doubts about civil society but they mostly pertain to not sharing Taylor's optimism about its growth and possibilities. It strikes me that what we call civil society will inevitably stick to the sort of thinking that is hegemonic in any given epoch and geographical language. In creating a public space we may only grant credence to the views that we already held. I do share, if I understand him correctly, his aim of the openness of the good. I think that I see this project better served in postmodernism, but I may be wrong about how I predict the ramifications of intellectual collapse and self-doubt. It is my opinion that phenomenology is a distraction from what Taylor seems to want. I would like to turn to that now.
Chapter Ten - Phenomenology

Nietzsche's undertaking might be understood as finally putting an end to questions about man. Is not the death of God in effect manifest in a doubly murderous gesture which by putting an end to the absolute, is at the same time the murder of man himself? For man, in his finitude, is not separable from the infinity of which he is both the negation and the herald. Is it not possible to conceive of a critique of finitude which would be liberating with respect to both man and the infinite...

- Michel Foucault

Charles Taylor, as a phenomenologist, sees the structures by which society supports itself as, at heart, embodying a view of the good. This good is not truly knowable or speakable but we are able to tell what it is not. I am concerned with Taylor's negative articulation, because I think it may clash, at least in political appearance, with an alternate good that fuels Taylor's life and thinking, one that is less explicit in his work. I wish to suggest that Taylor's dualistic conceptions of the good reflects a deeper confusion in his thought regarding the ends of philosophy.

I would like to begin this chapter by considering Merleau-Ponty's extenuation of Husserl as regards the hermeneutic project. Merleau-Ponty recommends we: "describ(e) our original experience of this world without assuming the truth or validity of any statements we may know about it." If we are able to do this, as Taylor notes, our descriptions will be pure and without prejudices in respect to what it is we are describing. In discounting all that we think we may know about the how and why of perception we not only construct a hermeneutical path - we also defend the hermeneutical endeavour. But Merleau-Ponty demands something a bit more strict than an openness to alternative

\[1 \text{ See: Charles Taylor (w. Michael Kullman), "The Pre-objective World", 109.} \]

\[2 \text{ Ibid.} \]
views. To satisfy his requirements we must distance ourselves from desire or evaluations in our perceptions. Not only must we remove ourselves from what has been given we must become a perceiving self that is a priori to the social language of perception.

To obey we must describe what we do; we need to perceive without thinking about what we ought to perceive. This is a very perplexing request. To comply we must reject our notions of everyday and scientific frameworks of understanding; the categories or horizons of our "normal" existence must be forgotten because they presuppose their own validity. We need to forget about the objective world as dogmatic and, like Kant, we should see it as a perceptual achievement and not as a true reflection of true existence.

Those familiar with phenomenological philosophy will be reminded of Husserl's desire to return to the way things appeared in our original experience of them - before they had been perverted by deterministic language. Phenomena, simply put, are not things. They are the precepts by which things first arise "in our perceptual experience." Therefore it follows that perception is no longer the perception of things but is now the perception of perceptions. This sounds complicated but it is not. We understand perception in relationship to categories and, the phenomenologist argues, our experience depends on our understanding of perception as governed by particular categories. What we are talking about is an attempt to approach the phenomena behind the genesis of categories. This is important because for a theory of perception to have philosophical relevance it must provide an

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid, 110.

5 Ibid, 111.

6 Ibid.
origin that is not attached to the categories that are the result of that origin.

On any number of glances this request seems daunting and beyond the criteria necessary for use as an interpretive tool. To be an interpretive tool a theory of perception need only offer solutions to our epistemological difficulties. The demand made here is much more stringent. For it to be effective a theory of perception must deal with "the whole of our experience of the world on the basis of which we have built our languages, our works of art, our scientific systems."7

Merleau-Ponty further complicates his task by arguing that the categories of our experience are not a priori but come from evolving experience.8 Merleau-Ponty has set himself an Herculean task. There is no way to prove that a phenomenological description of perception can provide a defensible understanding of the origin of experience. It takes little reflection to see Merleau-Ponty's dilemma. How can we describe the world without the categories of everyday or scientific language? This seems akin to describing the world without talking, writing or using any language. We may accept that there was a world that we perceived before we accepted the categories of existence but what can we say or think about it now, and what would the point of thinking about it be?

Taylor, characteristically, states that Merleau-Ponty's arguments are not provable but they provide a rewarding starting point for understanding phenomena.9 The point is to remove us from the confines of the empiricist view of experience. Let us grant this. We are free of such confines. Let us even accept that we can apply other categories or paradigms to our experience - how have we escaped the methods of Merleau-Ponty? It seems that you must buy into the entirety of Merleau-

7 Ibid, 112.
8 Ibid, 113.
9 Ibid.
Ponty's program whole. To accept only the part that deconstructs empiricism as hermeneutically relevant is to flirt with a nihilism as dark as any post-modern relativism.

Perceptions, for Merleau-Ponty, cannot be right or wrong. This is because they do not give any information about the world. Consciousness requires, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, a "ghost in the machine". The pre-objective world is sensible because he endows "his pre-objective world with reverential meaning." Ideas, then, become a form of assertion. The involved consciousness has an intention which is realized in the phrasings and words chosen and the phenomena focused upon. When Merleau-Ponty says that language predicates are central to the pre-objective world, and in relying on "the intentionality of consciousness" he sculptures the pre-objective as made up of both the world and of experience. The focus is not what is "out there" but about what is inside of us that creates the importance of an "out there".

This contextual view of perception has some important ramifications. If we cannot already perceive an object as a particular type of object how can we make judgements about foreign objects? This diminishes the power of empiricism and of logical judgement. Taylor sees Merleau-Ponty as arguing that there "can be no meta-perceptual basis for judgements made on the basis of perception." What is the position of perception as regards human subjectivity? Perception has to

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10 Ibid, 118.

11 Ibid.


13 This idea strikes me as being intimately connected to what I consider the importance of desire in philosophical thinking. This shouldn't be confused with *eros* or the love of the good. What I mean refers to the desire that underlies a love of the good; the desire that begins the philosophical project. I think that it is this desire that should perpetuate the hermeneutical project (if one is desired). It is the only sensible foundation. It is interesting to consider this in Merleau-Ponty's terms: that what we think or perceive is the result of a desire or inclination to perceive in a certain direction.

14 Ibid, 119. Or logical deductions it would also seem to follow.
provide more information than the judgements that claim to be the result of it. This seems sensible, but according to Merleau-Ponty, perception is justifiably able to make logical connections about what is implied. This does not seem to fit the strict category of information but still recommends perception as a useful mechanism. If the information provided by perception is the result of an interpretation (an implication?) we have to ask where did the knowledge to make the interpretation come from? This brings us to a different level of concern. If perception is "perceiving as", what we perceive as must also be found in our perception. We are firmly embedded, in an interesting way, in the process of perception. Different than the transcendental argument where our embodiment was exposed by its necessity for having a relationship with an object we now see that embodiment is governed by the ability to perceive ourselves as perceiving.

For Taylor's use, Merleau-Ponty's importance lies in the way that he shows us to be embodied actors. The way that we act and the way that we describe our world cannot be accomplished without describing the external world. To be an individual or even just to be means being moved by certain things in the world. We are incapable of describing an experience, a pleasure, or a fear without reference to the world that surrounds us. Our ability to perceive the world, what we perceive of the world, depends on where we stand in it. Our perception is only sensible to us from a basis of embeddedness. Also, we must perceive, meaning that we must take a stand in our world. To be a human being, as we have come to think of it, is to have some relationship and/or view with one's world. No matter how obscure and oblique the world may appear to us, we are driven to find ways to articulate it for ourselves. This truth of embodiment affects what it is to be human and what it is

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15 Ibid.

16 See: Charles Taylor, "Embedded Agency", 1-3, 6, 10.
to reason. The body cannot be separated from our articulations and our understanding.\textsuperscript{17} Taylor connects his understanding of our dependence on the world to our similar dependence on spatial relations.

Taylor posits two arguments around the relationship between individuals and issues of spatiality. The first is that we require versions of the good in the same way that we require a spatial grounding. We cannot exist without concepts of good just as we cannot live without an understanding of space and time. The good toward which we direct our life is as important as understanding the distinction between here and there or past and present. The second argument is that the good that rules our life is not only as important as an \textit{a priori} grasp of space and time (the point being that ideas of good are, as the phenomenologist would have it, also \textit{a priori} to our cogent existence) but that it is connected to our spatial arrangement and understanding.

As Kant showed us, our understanding of spatial relations is inherently a part of our being. So the same, says Taylor, with moral space. To exist at all we must exist in a world of questions about our own moral space.\textsuperscript{18} Without this moral space we would not have a place to stand in relation to the various contrasts that contribute to our understanding of being. We would be completely lost, unable to distinguish in importance the turning of a page from the death of our mothers.

I think that this is absolutely right. We cannot exist as we have grown accustomed without some sort of definitive relationship to what we think is good, significant and important. If we were able to survive as human beings without such criteria, even on a purely subjective level, we would have to construe another term for what we call living. Seemingly, the only way for us to deny this

\textsuperscript{17} See: Ibid, 16.

\textsuperscript{18} See: Charles Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 31.
component of our existence would be to destroy the notion of the human self as connected to anything truthful. That is, the notion of inherent relationships to formal goods is challenged when we consider that these goods do not have to be anything in particular, thus potentially relativizing the whole project. We may be able to swallow a refutation of this notion of inherent good that suggests that, yes, we all have a core place for good in our being, but this core is filled in a myriad of different ways, none better than another. As such, to talk about the core is to defend any number of possible alternatives and interpretations as to how that core should be filled. Or we could argue that given that the core is dependent on fulfilment by diverse and disconnected criteria that the important flow to the relationship between inherency and actualization is to be found in how the core is actualized. This would, in turn, lead us to understand that there is no inherent centre or soul to being, just the necessity of one given the way we have constructed the necessity of a primal good.

Taylor won't have this. This is because Taylor in connecting the inherency of an innate place for the good with the spatially embedded nature of beings is able to discern an ontology that stands above relativism.

The development of the modern self is firmly connected to a topography of an inner versus an outer force of being. This primacy of the inner over the outer is subverted when it displaces the notion of the inner as the path towards God which Augustine stressed. For Augustine the inner is what led us to God, that is, it led us to the order of being, by demonstrating the futility of a purely inner being.

In the Sources of the Self Taylor articulates the origin of this inwardness as beginning in Augustine. For Augustine, God is to be found in the method of knowing and this knowing is particularized for each individual. We are to dedicate ourselves to this internal self contemplation
above all other goals; we are not to worry about our politics or our property, we are to worry about our souls.  

I, through my thinking, come to see that my ability, to touch upon truth, depends on something bigger than me. This works on two levels. As I see that my thinking is structured in terms of my position in contrast to the objects of my common experience, I need to be able to posit something that amalgamates those common objects. If I do not do this these objects are just arbitrarily connected and any information or truth I attempt to derive from them will not be fully sensible. I need to see the particular as of a piece. If it is not of a piece I will fall victim to the uselessness of my imagination. Also, my reason needs a standard of truth through which it can be justified. Without an absolute I would not be able to pretend a faith in my ability to cogently apprehend anything. We need God to contemplate externals; He is necessary as a first, loving cause. Because of God there is a physical world. This physical world when approached by our wills and intelligence shows itself to be a mechanism of which we can act as a manipulative part. This, in time and turn, provides us with an understanding of our selves as rational actors with proud wills.

We come to know who we are, as connected to God, by remembering and bringing out the connection that we have to God. Taylor identifies two trilogies at work in Augustine's thought. The first trinity of mind, knowledge and love displays a technique by which the mind in coming to realization or knowledge is led to loving that what is demonstrated, i.e. God. The second trinity, of memory, intelligence and will works exactly the same way: our memory provides intelligence and this

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19 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 130.

is acted upon by our will. The second trinity, for Augustine, is senseless without the first. But it is the second trinity that most of us get caught up in. We are governed, not so much by the love we have for the source of our knowledge but rather we are drawn to the will that manipulates our intelligence. The will is not necessarily a negative thing. Through a strong and prideful will one is able to recognize their own weakness, their own inabilities. This realization results in an understanding that Truth is not found with human intelligence, that for Truth to be made manifest we depend on loving and being loved by God.

We are capable, then, of two different moral positions. The distinction between these two positions, the embracing love of God over self vs the positing of the will as a reflection of our intelligence is drawn as a result of original sin. Since Adam committed his crime we have been turned away from the good; we have been separated from God. It was only in the Garden of Eden, living under the grace of God, that we were able to appropriately name things. For us to reconcile ourselves back into the fold with God we have to be granted grace. Our ability to open our selves to grace, which is the responsibility of our freedom, depends on the strength of our wills. If we have a weak will, we are unlikely to ever conquer our pride and will continue to live an existence that is directed around ourselves and others.

In realizing our need for God, we must surrender ourselves to Him. Taylor asks, seemingly in sympathy with Augustine's construal of the human responsibility, what is that we can love when we are free of everything? What do we have when rational agency becomes a replacement for God;

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or in the words of Wallace Stevens which Taylor quotes, when we replace God with poetry? If we think that poetry can redeem us what is it that we could possibly mean?

With the disappearance of Augustine's thought we do not turn any less to inward states. But now the inward has become synonymous with self-creation. We do not discover human weakness inside, we create personal strength. This creation of personal strength demands that we posit ourselves against the world. The irony, and what shows Taylor that this view is wrong, is that we have to separate ourselves from the embedded position of the world so in order to redeem ourselves.

The question that remains is that given Taylor's arguments against being as disengaged are we automatically drawn to a figure of man as collapsing on his own merits? If so, do we end up with God or just each other? My thinking is that once we recognize that we can personally satisfy ourselves as removed from anything else we have two alternatives: we can depend on the community for reliance, or we can deny self-reliance in the name of the promise of God. The question between the two is to be decided on the grounds as to whether we can attain a satisfaction and efficacy for the individual through an ethic of community.

I suggested in the last chapter that Taylor connects the community to one's ability to fathom and be open to the grace of God. If this is the case the community must provide a foundation of interlocution and openness while still being unable to fully satisfy the existential complaints that we may suffer. This all depends on whether or not you believe in original sin. If you do, there will be no healing of the rift between ourselves and God through a nurturing and demonstrative community. If you do not you still may not cling to views of radical disengagement but the promise of security is possible through a thoroughly good community. It is my impression, from Taylor's personal

appearances and from Sources of the Self that Taylor believes in original sin. If this is so, the arguments he makes pertaining to the importance of an embedded understanding of the self should be connected to an epiphany of awareness as regards our chronic emptiness of being. This does not always appear to be the case. Taylor makes a great deal of the social optimism that stems from our re-understanding ourselves as embodied agents, a much bigger deal than he does about the eventual need for reconciliation with God. I call this hesitation or ambiguity of ultimate points, in contrary tones, a fixation on method. I think that Taylor can escape this charge if he can be shown, as I have tried to show, that he is something of an odd pragmatist.

The sources that Taylor manipulates stand against the dominant intellectual currents of ordinary life. He uses Heidegger and Wittgenstein to defend a notion of embedded agency. Heidegger and Wittgenstein both disagreed with the mechanistic ontology that had become prevalent with the success of Enlightenment science and the Protestant Reformation. Taylor paraphrases Heidegger's defence of embodiment as follows:

(T)he condition of our forming disengaged representations of reality is that we must be already engaged in coping with the world, dealing with the things in it, at grips with them.24

The things, then, that we choose to see or even ignore are connected to the way that we deal with these things. For us to understand a singular object as a singular object we have to connect it with a whole background of objects in which to note its isolation. For any term or perception to have the meaning that we wish it to have we have to define it in terms of contrast or relation to the backdrop of a fully posited world. All of the reasoning that we will ever be capable of depends on the contrastive elements of the background of our approach. Logic is not sensible without this ethic of

contrast. When we reason, what we do is describe the backdrop by which we live in ways that we hope others will find compelling and agreeable. Discussion of any sort would be infeasible if we did not trust that we had a common foundation of being.

Importantly, this backdrop which grounds and is the aim of our articulations can never be fully articulated. This is logically sensible as what gives life to articulation must always be bigger than what we are saying. Experience and conversation are never sensible outside of a foundation of its own context. And the context which governs understanding is connected to a foundational background which defies final understanding. It is unlimited and surpasses any attempts to assuage it. We can articulate a context within our background but we cannot capture the whole. When Kant says an "I think" accompanies all of our thoughts, the phenomenological trend shows that this "I think" depends on a background within which it can perform.  

Our background and our attempts to articulate it are the basis from which we make arguments and declarations. It is the unspoken and unspeaking place where we learn, as Wittgenstein suggests, the rules we need to live as we do. The rules which we live by, for Wittgenstein, come from our societies, they come from one another. It is interesting to consider how it is that we can be assured that the rules that we dictate to each other are appropriate or even how such a question can ever be asked. Are we, when we obey, following moral intuitions or are we abiding by a structure built around the term moral that are completely arbitrary social constructions? Can we have an articulation of Truth that is contained within a humanly derived construction?


26 See: Charles Taylor, "To Follow A Rule", 168.

A rule can only make sense as something we need to obey if we are aware of what it might mean to misunderstand or deviate from it. It follows then, as Wittgenstein argues, that we need a whole context of understanding for us even to understand the simplest rule. If we could not rely on some sort of common context there could be no such thing as a basic explanation for any explanation would require a vainly endless series of endless explanations.\textsuperscript{28} This understanding of our common sense everyday lives is visibly given to us by one another on the basis of an accepted and acceptable preliminary understanding of certain structures. It is this socially constructed understanding which declares that something, a description or a rule, makes sense. It is social practices that create what we know of meaning.\textsuperscript{29}

It is these created frameworks which provide a context for our moral views and reactions. It is from these fundamental and agreed assumptions that we make moral decisions. Now, Taylor sees that these frameworks by which we understand ourselves are firmly grounded in our linguistic communities.\textsuperscript{30} It is easy for us to identify the primacy that the community has over the individual but it is not easy to see why the community is correct or worthy of our adherence besides its crucial, non-judged, contribution it makes to our identity. For all we know our society may be making us all creeps slithering away from the gaze of God.

Understanding this connection to a socially constructed moral essence does provide some genesis of movement. We can arrive at the conclusion that certain responses to dualism and engagement with the world are hopelessly incorrect. It is our living in the midst of, and as a

\textsuperscript{28} See: Charles Taylor, "To Follow A Rule", 166.

\textsuperscript{29} See: Ibid, 174.

\textsuperscript{30} See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 27.
contributor to, dualities that instigates the formation of being. Our view of common sense depends on a social construct to exist; it is best understood as the sense that we all have in common. The common sense of today has become a form of disengagement from the processes of spatiality and the world. The fact that acceptance of this position is contained in common sense does not make it congruent with truth. In fact, disengagement of the sort which our common sense embraces requires a grounding which is antithetical to disengagement.

To appreciate Taylor we need to consider the relationship to having a socially derived context and the fact that that context is dependant on a fuller, silent context for its existence. Taylor states:

We have to innovate in language, and bring the structures of our being in the world to clarity by formulations which open up a zone which is ordinarily outside our range of thought and attention.

The important point to consider here is the importance that language has in showing us the relationship between our contexts and the unknowable grounding by which our contexts and conversations occur.

Merleau-Ponty counters Kant's argument that intuitions require concepts. For Merleau-Ponty intuitions on their own have significant meaning; descriptive discourse is what enunciates this meaning: "judgements are expressions of perceptions; and of its meaning." Perceptions are always more than statements, they are always from a certain space and time in a manner that statements never are. Judgements cannot refer to anything but themselves; "the subject matter of judgements

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32 See: Charles Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels Between Heidegger and Wittgenstein", 73. I have demonstrated the reasons for this argument elsewhere.


being inaccessible prior to judgement.\textsuperscript{35} It is then necessary that there be a transcendant object upon which judgements are made. This transcendental object is the pre-objective world. There is nothing that can be taken as completely independent of any context that encompasses directly proven language and perception. Judgements are not sufficient. The phenomenal field cannot be reduced to a set of statements. For statements to be interesting they have to refer to something besides themselves. The thing referred to must be perceivable. This is a transcendental argument that posits that perception must exist over and above the undeniable presence of language.\textsuperscript{36}

When we use words we see ourselves as depicting something. All of our sentences/words are thought to belong to something other than themselves. There is a curious relationship at work here. While we consider the words we use to be representations of other things, the other things that these words represent tend to be, for our understanding, other words. Words are inescapable. Our very consciousness is constituted by the articulations, we practice and conceive, of language. Our descriptions do not represent reality so much as they create our reality. The descriptions that we have, and accordingly the reality we conceive, depends on what sort of language we speak. Our reality and the feelings we have about that reality come from what we think of as good descriptions. In turn,

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 122.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 121-2.

There is a distinction between perception and perceptual appearance. We see only perceptual appearances and not perceptions. To see through to the hint of perception takes, according to Merleau-Ponty, skill - "Introspection is an acquired skill." (See: Ibid.) This formulation has its problems. Given the distinction of perceptions and perceptual appearance how is one to know the difference unless they are absolutely able to identify perception therefore making it possible to make comparisons? And if this was possible why would we be fooled by perceptual appearances? Merleau-Ponty argues that because objects could not be seen as real if it was impossible for them to get in each other's way we should not confuse the conditions of perception with the object of perception. (See: Ibid, 124.) This is tantamount to saying that because we can only see objects in terms of contrast we should not mistake this contrast as definitive in our understanding of an object. Merleau-Ponty writes: "the only cure for error or misperception is more perception." (See: Ibid.) This is perplexing. How is one ever to feel confident that they have perceived enough? There can never be anything resembling confidence beyond a level at where you are only responding or perceiving the very basic - the level which can only talk about itself, as ideas relating only to other ideas.
these good descriptions are tied to how we feel and the society where certain feelings are made possible.  

For us to thrive and survive in our worlds we have to find some way of making sense of what is being said around us. This making sense comes to us through an appreciation of the context through which terms are used. It is this context and our grasp of it that provides for a defence of linguistic logic and of grammatical understanding. It is what allows me to write this and you to read it. Taylor thinks that:

We must have a way of formulating our own adequate grasp of the truth-conditions independent of the formulations of the target language.

This is essential to how we understand our modern lives. We have to reach a point where it is ourselves that we see as speaking and not just language. We have to see the words that we are using as not just a part of a code that refers to its mother code. It is important that we conceive the terms we use as referring to something real. If we are able to accomplish the latter step, speaking and using words come to have value. The code of language may be adequate for our instinctual, common-sense renderings of our lives but when it comes to discussions of our emotions we must feel that in the words we use we are describing, not a code, but ourselves. If this is actually the case, if this need supersedes the language that explains it, then there must be something prior to our use of language. We must have the pre-conditioned inkling before we have the words that describe that inkling.

This is even more complicated than it initially appears. The formulation for self-description

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38 See: Ibid, 274.

and expression no matter how privately craved does not occur atomistically. It results only in this web of other people. The favourite terms of self-description are only favourable in the context of a community that recommends them. What the phenomenologist wishes to add is that the catalyst for this expression is prior to the expression. The question is whether this catalyst is also socially derived.

One increasingly dominant view of the modern world is that the terms by which we understand reality are the terms with which we are forced to decide value. Once we accept these terms (and there really is not a question of choice involved) the question of truth is relegated to the boundaries within which it is discussed. Taylor, as we have suggested, finds this view inadequate. He reckons that theories of conditioned truth are not conclusive enough.\textsuperscript{40} This is for exactly the reasons listed above. It depends on a complete lack of initial involvement of the participants. The terms which we use in our lives are more flexible and vibrant than a purely socially constructed theory of language allows. Taylor makes this clear when he writes: "(y)ou cannot understand how words relate to things until you have identified the nature of the activity in which they get related to things."\textsuperscript{41} This nature is constituted by social interaction but interaction is not to be blandly confused with social constructivism. It is a richer project than the arbitrary formulations the latter suggests. The words we use are decided upon together, because we do not exist apart from each other. The question I raised earlier as to whether the initial impulse to express was socially constructed can be answered. No, not for Taylor, not in the sense that it is the arbitrary result of words thrown into space. The confusion occurs in thinking that there is still a primal individual who initiates the responses or desire for speech. This individual is a group, this craving is a group craving.

\textsuperscript{40} See: Ibid, 279.

\textsuperscript{41} See: Ibid, 291.
This is why Herder is so important to Taylor. Herder, in his refutation of Condillac's theory of language, exposes that representational views of language assume the urge to language as solved. Herder argues an interesting view of the relation between speaking and the self that is altered through speaking. This alteration, for Herder and Taylor, demonstrates the capability of a reflexive consciousness. It is this reflective consciousness which is essentially prior to our ability to understand that certain terms can stand for certain things. Reflection is only possible in speech. It is expression which exhibits reflective awareness. Man, interestingly for Herder, is like God in that it is by his will that ideas are made manifest. The ideas do not exist before their expression in language. Language comes before thought. Language, Taylor writes in his explication of Heidegger, "enables us to grasp something as what it is." Words, in this tricky theory, produce what it is that they are, and they transpose us through their use. With language actually connoting what it is it represents, an increase of vocabulary is an increase in being. Language allows new dimensions and understandings of experience to exist. This creates the capability to feel new emotions and depths of being in language. With growth in language we increase the possibilities of possessing "strong" values.

The end of all reflective expression is the expression of a true self or, more fittingly, a world where this self will be able to show itself in contentment. We pursue this through a maze of tensions. We are always dealing with our embodiment in language. As such, there is no end to the battle

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between objectivity and expressivism; the battle between scientific enunciations of truth and an unsatisfied philosophy.\(^{47}\)

This difference between science and philosophy is the difference between material and particular language. Material language speaks in terms of facts; particular language speaks in judgemental descriptions.\(^{48}\) For the latter to be meaningful in our existence; for us to feel ourselves as participants in our lives instead of cold reactors to facts we cannot usefully hate, we must believe that our judgements apply.\(^{49}\) But we do not live in a world that has tremendous respect for the language of admitted judgements. Our understanding is stuck in a tension between the material and the particular types of speaking.

If we understand material voices as logically grounded, in fact, as the arbiter of logical respectability, we will have trouble adopting the language of the particular. But the problem is that if we speak only the material language we fail to make a bridge between a correlation of definition and description. But we do have a sense of understanding when we use these words. Our use of material language is always tied up with judgements. There would be no possibility of speaking the material language if we did not accept the way it sounds.\(^{50}\)

Taylor argues that we use many terms and corresponding ideas which fit into both camps.\(^{51}\)

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\(^{47}\) See: Ibid, 246.

\(^{48}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Ontology", 129.

\(^{49}\) See: Ibid, 131.

\(^{50}\) See: Ibid, 136.

\(^{51}\) This is not actually the case but my refutation does not affect the point of Taylor's argument. I would like to suggest that there are not two camps, that, like Taylor hints, there is just a camp of judgemental language that has two sides. One side is the accepted; the other is the debated. Science also sees no distinction between the two languages but from the opposite perspective.
The performance of this system across different tasks and datasets has been consistently strong, indicating the robustness and versatility of the approach. Further advancements in the methodology could include the incorporation of real-time feedback mechanisms to adjust the model's parameters dynamically, thereby optimizing performance in dynamic environments. This would involve developing algorithms that can adapt to changing conditions, which is a critical aspect in many real-world applications. Additionally, integrating machine learning techniques with traditional data processing methods could lead to a more comprehensive and effective system. The potential for such integration is vast, spanning from healthcare diagnostics to environmental monitoring, where accurate and timely information is crucial.

The outcomes from this research have profound implications for various fields, including healthcare, finance, and transportation, where predictive analytics can provide significant benefits. The scalability and adaptability of this system make it a valuable asset in the development of future systems. Furthermore, ongoing research in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning is expected to continue expanding the capabilities of such systems, making them even more effective and versatile.

In conclusion, the performance of this system is commendable, and the potential for further advancements is promising. The integration of real-time learning and dynamic feedback mechanisms could significantly enhance the system's adaptability and effectiveness, positioning it as a leading technology in the field. The potential applications of such systems are vast, and the advancements made in this research have laid the foundation for future developments in artificial intelligence and machine learning.
Our thinking about language depends on having "factual" language tools with which to think with confidence. Our having a language, as I have stated before, depends on our having a community of interlocutors. We are, then, before we think, embodied. The material language, despite its popularity, is antithetical to this position. The explanations of judgements that science provides do not require an embodied agent and as a result they suppress the particularist language into the material.52

This runs counter to the stream of thinking which Taylor embraces. For Taylor, our qualitative languages, which are never decisive on moral issues, are connected to something more than our articulations of the moral. This something is an inclination towards a higher good.53 Again, this higher good has the appearance of relativity. It does not matter exactly what it is, what counts at this juncture is that it is what governs the words we respond to and respect. This higher good can be conceived as a force that allows or even insists that we play our language games. The words we use depend on the way we place them in sentences, to paraphrase Wittgenstein.54 The sensibility of terms depends on our desire to place them appropriately. The desire for appropriateness mirrors our reflections on what is good.

Through our revelatory conversations we fine tune a language that can be seen by us as insightful. If we find that we cannot talk without these terms, these terms, then, may as well be understood as "real features of the world".55 If in our considerations of the genesis of these terms we come to accept some pre-conceptual necessity of them, then we must also add this pre-conceived

52 See: Ibid, 140.
55 See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 69.
state to our ontology. We have to situate our ontology on top of it. Through this sort of argument Taylor moves away from structuralism and takes refuge in an additional category of being.

We may still be in doubt about the relation between our perceptions and the real world. Either we have a "ghost in the machine", as Merleau-Ponty suggests, that relates us to the world or there is some other psychological/physiological correspondence (or, a third option, the quandary ceases to be of interest). If it was a "ghost in the machine" why would we ever be in error? We have to keep looking for the source of this correspondence. Eventually we will have to create criteria of what Taylor calls "veridical perception". We cannot say that criteria have to be originally applied or that they can be misapplied for perception to be truthful. We are forced to develop or accept an idea of perception that is prior to questions of truth or falsehood. The judging criteria of prior perception would not be suitable. Taylor writes:

Once we have admitted that statements about the world can be true or false without being incorrigible, without, that is, having satisfied all the criteria for their being true, there is no reason to refuse to the perceptual basis of these statements the right to be called veridical; false, or misleading, even when we perceive without the explicit use of criteria.  

Perception changes as we go from illusion to veridical realization. At every step along the way there is "truth", or may as well be. Perception, in this sense, does not imply judgement; it is prior to judgement. It is more than can be put into words. Perception cannot be reduced to words and ideas nor is it reducible to the Kantian "I think" responding to categories in the desire to create a sensible universe. It is, instead, a logic before words; a truth before criteria.

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56 Ibid, 126.

57 Ibid, 126.
It is in the question of ontology that Taylor's use of phenomenological precepts becomes telling. Who we are is connected to the urge which precedes the origins of language, given that if we were unable to imagine an articulation of what is important to us we would be unable to conceive of things as of a particular importance. If this were to occur we would not be able to exist as we do. The understanding of our ontology is not easily accomplished because the articulation of these essential rubrics of our nature are the hardest to articulate.\textsuperscript{58}

Taylor further explicates the importance of attaching ourselves to things we deem significant:

What I am arguing here is that our being concerned with some or other issue of this range (an idea of what is good) is not an optional matter for us, in just the way that the orientation which defines our identity is not, and ultimately for the same reason.\textsuperscript{59}

We demand a spectre of good and a purpose to the fulfilment of that good. These purposes are our own creations and they are essential to our actions.

Taylor argues that those with a higher consciousness recognize that we have to have some way of dealing with the world. For us to deal with the world the world must be ready for us before it can be present for us. There must always be more to the world than what we can use of it. For us to develop a perspective that perspective must be already present in the world in its entirety. Just as

\textsuperscript{58} See: Charles Taylor, "Responsibility For Self", 296.

\textsuperscript{59} See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 42. I am mostly willing to agree with this point of Taylor's. But I do run into people who do not think in terms of what is good as much as they think in terms of what is not good. I fear that there are a great many of us who do not have a clear understanding or even a desire for a "good". They do live by goods, if and they will grant this. But they do not know, or cannot attest, that the goods by which they live are appropriate, actually good, or whatever. The goods that many of us live by are understood by us as goods that we have been fed by our parents and culture. We neither trust nor challenge them. Even on the most basic questions (which generally have to be asked negatively) we are neither here nor there. Is it wrong to sin? Almost all of us will say, yes; but we seem to do it all the time. We are mighty blasé about almost all questions of the good. It is very difficult to find a firm commitment to a good that is not just a liberal stance against the bad. The closest thing we have to a common good is a self-interested pragmatism and a desire for politeness, for avoiding conflict. But not everyone is proud of these goods or even speaks of them in terms of their being good. If Taylor wants to be compelling by first of all showing us we have to have a good and then discussing what goods do not really work, I think that he may have to come up with a different strategy.
to appreciate God, God must be above, before and beyond any sort of appreciation that can be formulated. We should never confuse the way we view the world as the only possible way to see it. Doing so makes the world what we say it is. This is because our awareness of being in the world is dependant on being in it. As such, our way of viewing the world has to accommodate this understanding.\textsuperscript{60} The point is, then, that we cannot have great confidence about what the world (or, I gather, God) is but we can show what it is not. We cannot have correct theories but we can be correct about what is wrong.

What sort of ontology can we have if our precepts are based in the negative? If we feel correct in dismissing theories of being that deny embodiment what can we ontologically say about ourselves due to embodiment? Can we say that there is such a thing as true subjectivity or individuality? It does not seem like we can. As atomism negates embodiment we are compelled to negate atomism. In so doing, do we also invariably have to negate the principles of individuality that correspond with that philosophical framework? Is Taylor an anti-humanist at heart?

Phenomenologists discuss the attraction to significance in terms of intentionality. \textit{We intend} ourselves towards objects which are significant to us. Significance and intentionality do not exist outside of an embodied framework because of the necessity of perception in our construction of our sense of being. Taylor explains:

Perceptual and behavioral space are one, that our behavioral know-how enters into what we see, and that this is what invests the phenomenal field with significance.\textsuperscript{61}

Our perception is not really an action, then, but is actually a reflection of our passions; it is about

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\textsuperscript{60} See: Charles Taylor, "Embodied Agency", 10-1.

\textsuperscript{61} See: Charles Taylor, "Phenomenology and Linguistic Analysis", 95.
being excited about something that is shown to us actively. Our perception is significant because it is in our world. Otherwise, perception would have to have understandings of what it approximates *a priori* in the mind. If we are to deny perception, and embodiment, we have to embrace immanence and the transcendant.

The empiricists attempt to unify areas of significance. But Taylor argues that the meat of the issue is in that we have to have some sort of perceptual experience of pre-understanding to make any sense of scientific principles.\(^{62}\) How do we know that they are truthful or attractive? How do we know that what they say is crucial to the discussion of life?

For Husserl, the study of essences was at the heart of philosophy. This asks the same difficult questions of toleration that science asks for. How do we know that what Husserl intuits is the key? Is it remotely possible to argue from any position other than popularity or, more credibly, faith?\(^{63}\) It does not seem so. Again, we need to have some sort of idea of the good behind everything that we say. Not only do we have an idea of the good that may bespeak ethical responsibilities, we inevitably are positing a metaphysical good that we trust and revere. Taylor, while not necessarily proving God, has demonstrated the apt need for one, whatever that God may be.

The way we think is not just a good for us, it is a moral good. This is complicated in that our ontology shifts with our constant re-interpretations of self and our understandings of truth.\(^{64}\) We never start off at the end. But each stage is a truth of sorts, and with each step we come close to the fulfilment of that which is unfulfillable. This is what the human life is. For us to be assured of our

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\(^{63}\) See: Ibid, 102-4.

\(^{64}\) See: Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", 55.
position, regarding ultimates, is at any point an error. But from within this hesitant perspective we
can recognize that which is faulty. We can throw things out but we cannot insist that something stay.
If we attempt to maintain a perspective we become stuck in the method of pursuing truth at the
expense of the pursuit of the ends.

In our modern world science has taken over ontology; it has frozen us in method. Heidegger,
Wittgenstein, Taylor and many others have rejected their ontologizing of rational procedure.65 Science
has become the only way of seeing things. It has left in its wake an understanding of man as dualistic;
as having thoughts separated from their contextual experience.66 These theories are based on moral
intuitions which they have worked to disregard.67

Apparently, the utility of a pre-objective world is to be found in its scathing critique of
empiricism and the ontological perceptual foundation it demands. Merleau-Ponty argues that
perceptions are not assimilated to statements and it is because of this that we are able to perceive a
reality that we cannot "know". Perceptions, in Merleau-Ponty's view, are prior to, and not of,
judgements. Perception, it then seems, is before true or false. It is before and more than language and
logical discourse and the foundations of experience that these two structures imply. Our experience


66 See: Ibid, 68.

67 I very much like this direction that Taylor takes us. I do not see how eventually he derives the confidence to say
no to others as related to his own philosophy. Embodiment, as Taylor argues it, is compelling and it gets with what I note
of my experience. But how is it I know that this is the crucial criteria of existence. The problem with arguing with Taylor
on these points is that you eventually have to use Taylor's arguments. I wish to suggest that embodiment may not be that
important, we cannot know. But for it not to be important, or to be important, I have to suggest that Taylor is right about
us all having a fundamental good that is proven by us being embodied: I have to eventually argue against the part of the
argument which I like the most that we are drawn to metaphysics for our stance towards the world. At this point, I am
interested only in suggesting the dilemma. At the end of the chapter, in my brief discussion of Foucault (who I see as a
perfect compliment to Taylor in a very perverse way), I would like to return to this question. It is my feeling that we can
possibly embrace a good which is constructed around the denunciation of good.
of the world varies and cannot be restrained by the logical claims of any given intellectual epoch.

Taylor takes from these premises the idea that logical empiricism possesses no inherent connection to a pre-historical truth and that the objects discussed in empiricist rhetoric are being formulated in terms that are already tainted by the fact of the context in which they are being approached. Taylor, typically, eventually finds Merleau-Ponty unsatisfactory. Merleau-Ponty demonstrates the need for a transcendental relationship to the pre-objective identity from within which we need to communicate to develop appropriate methods of naming and meaning. But inevitably Merleau-Ponty leads us to a view of man that is fantastically ontological. Taylor, in a consideration sympathetic to his hermeneutical understandings to come, is appreciative of the openness of the other possibilities that are previous to notions of true or false.

Beyond the simple critique of theories of knowledge that demand correlation between the world and considerations of the world what does phenomenology offer? It offers a view of perception that does not, and cannot, adequately distinguish between perspectival appearance and true perception. Merleau-Ponty suggests a phenomenological reduction which can reduce forever, which in other words, nullifies itself. He provides us with a theory of perception which is apparently prior to true or false. This is a misconstrued aim for without our acceptance of the words 'true' or 'false' the theory has no appeal. Merleau-Ponty brings us back in time to a process before judgements without accepting that it is only the period after judgements that holds philosophical interest. He dismantles the term "secure truth", and accordingly dismantles restrictive theories of truth. The replacements he offers are poor. Taylor, in his use of Merleau-Ponty found a foundation for his critique, but for a solution he needs to go elsewhere or cease to bother with one. Merleau-Ponty does not provide the grounding necessary for an interesting hermeneutical attack.
I wish to shift gears at this point. I have been arguing throughout this long and wearisome work that Taylor is stuck in method. By this I have meant that Taylor is too interested in proving his perspective through the denunciations of other positions. I think that much of what Taylor does on this front is fascinating and wonderful. But I remain sceptical as to the plausibility of Taylor attaining success. This, for me, has been connected to what often appear to be antithetical theses on Taylor's part. I see Taylor as trying to free truth from labels; to free it from a dogmatic understanding. But I have also seen Taylor as positing certain essential criteria to his pursuit of truth. Political freedom often appears to become an end onto itself in Taylor's more topical and popular work. I have tried to show in the previous chapter, how there may be a bridge between this radical openness and his political views which runs to the side of openness. But I think that there is a deeper problem which may not be so easily solved.

Taylor is, ironically, stuck in a form or reason which tends to conclusions. The best thing about reason, as far as I can reckon, is that it encourages us to adopt it as our guiding light and then in time shows its limitations. It is in the recognition of these limitations that I think philosophy begins. Taylor seems to be stuck somewhere between the idea of the limitations and the discipline that got him there. While we may grant that Taylor's conclusions are more open-ended than many others, it is the promise that they can be demonstrated theoretically which wounds his attempts. As such, while there are massive differences between Taylor's thinking and the empiricist's, they are not all that far removed from one another. They just disagree about conclusions. Their methods and adherence to something called reason are similar.

I think that this is compounded when you consider the most intricate aspect of Taylor's work: his theory of the self. Given Taylor's theological background and intellectual framework I am yet to
understand, if I am to have a cohesive Taylor, why he celebrates the human self. It has occurred to me that ontology, for Taylor, is a structural device through which he attempts to weave a compelling argument. If this is the case I see it as fraught with paradoxes. If his intention is the furthering of a self as a spirit of truth, he needs to be more honest and reflective about his opinion of Hegel and the Romantics.

It is in considering Taylor's work on the Heideggarian clearing that I am led to parallel Taylor with Foucault. I think it is in his understanding of Foucault that Taylor shows where he stands. It is my contention that he may be able to fulfil at least one part, the philosophical non-political, non-methodological part by standing closer to Foucault than he is content to do.

For Heidegger, our being is constantly "in question". What this means is that our being is always becoming. By becoming I refer to the life as philosophical; that who we are, at any given point, is never the entirety of what we are. The project of living is a constant becoming that does not result in a firm, grounded idea of Being. The process of becoming is connected to what Heidegger has called the "clearing". The clearing, to my understanding, is the space beyond our articulations of being. To connect it with the rhetoric of the phenomenologist, our clearing is a place in our future akin to that place in our past that was pre-conceptual and truthful. By being pre-conceptual, the parallel to the clearing is the source before language. For Heidegger the clearing is constructed by language. In no way should this be confused as saying that the clearing is just an amalgamation or even connected to the constructions we offer with words. The clearing, while made out of language, is the pre-idea of worth which is present in our ability to think and speak. Language creates the space for our articulation of the clearing but this clearing is not to be mistaken for that which might be in

This all sounds horribly obscure. Let me try to elucidate. The clearing is the source and end of our inspirations. We are led to it through the use of our language, but given that our understandings and use of language are hopelessly finite, the clearing, for it to possess the position that Heidegger feels it does, must be more than what we use to create it. More simply, the clearing requires us but it is more than us.\(^{69}\)

The clearing is like a symbol created by our expressions but is also the source of those expressions.\(^{70}\) The clearing as a space is constructed, according to Heidegger, by our conversations. Our conversations create a grand symbol or lexicon which provides the medium by which reality appears to us. Again, what appears in our space should not be understood as something existing in truth. What we have in our appearances is something which is a part of the total space. We should try thinking about it in these terms: our symbolized life is beyond our grasp and yet is filled with humanly constructed values. It is our space within the clearing that allows some of us to see the wafer of communion as something actually more than a wafer.\(^{71}\)

The clearing is hinted to us through our expressions. Language is, in essence, a form of expression. This connection between language and the space within the clearing is what leads Heidegger to suggest that language should speak and not us. This idea of language speaking and we being the conduit to it is interesting. It refers to the truth of words as separated from our emphasis on them. Words are correct because they have power. They show us God as God is the word. We

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\(^{70}\) See: Ibid, 259.

\(^{71}\) See: Ibid, 264.
as rational creatures cannot understand this relationship. It is the difference between the truthful language of God from which our dialect stems, but does not lead to. Understanding this is simply not possible as a human being.

If this is so and if we can call the attempt to be silent as we listen to language philosophy, then there is an element of self-rejection that is important to the philosophical project. Taylor thinks Heidegger can be saved from the charge of being anti-humanist but I do not understand how or why one would want to do that.

For Heidegger we have to get out of the subject to get to the clearing. The notion or premise of the clearing, and the language that directs us to it is, work to deconstruct the individual. We have to recognize that the "I" that we cling to is responding to and is dependant on something that is not "I". The eventual path of philosophy must lead us out of the "human centred" and into the divine.  

I think that the clearing can be paralleled with the Christian notion of grace. Grace is important to show us more than the impotence of the natural good. It is also necessary to correct original sin which prevents us, as humans, from ever articulating anything in terms of absolute truth. The Enlightenment rejects original sin (as does anyone, I suppose, who thinks that truth can be found in a human guise), and turns the goodness of God into a solely human commodity. This is an exercise in futility. If there is actually such a thing as original sin, our political arrangements, our formulations of being will always be woefully short of the mark.

To create the space within which the clearing can appear we have to remove from our lives the residue of human existence. We have to deconstruct and destroy our connections to what we think are truth; we have to separate ourselves from the pride and hubris that we have in being human.

We have to surrender ourselves to an understanding of our relationship with language where it appears that we are not in charge. We reason and we reason but the end of this reason needs to be that the source and codes with which we reason are bigger than the formulations and hypotheses that we put together. We have to concede that it is the inspiration of reason that is crucial not the resulting deductions. If we are able to do that the clearing will arrive. But this is not the end of the story for Heidegger, nor should it be for Taylor. We construct the clearing, a space of radical open-ness within which we are prepared to see the truth. In this space, as Heidegger writes, we wait. And what we wait for is God.

So, if we are to take the project of philosophy seriously, if we are truly to wish to be philosophers, we must be prepared to discard all the tools of our trade. We must not heighten the importance of reason, of dialectics, of logic, of rhetorical persuasiveness, of power, of politics, of human freedom or of human truth. To celebrate these devices or hopes is to not celebrate philosophy; it is to celebrate the method of philosophy. It is a discussion about power and not about truth. The post-modernists have shown us, the social and natural scientists, that method detached from undefendable claims has no weight. Many social scientists reject this view as irresponsible, nihilistic and destructive; to feel this way, to me, suggests an adherence to methods.

I am not convinced that this is what Taylor wants eventually to argue. He wants to hold onto a notion of the subject as connected to the divine but apparently capable of working out the problems of sin through conversation and self-efficacy. I do not think that this probably works and I do not think it is philosophy.

I confess, after all these pages, I do not think I know what Taylor is really up to, but I do not think that Taylor is clear about his own purposes. I argued in the previous chapter, that the majority
of Taylor's arguments use a rhetoric which hides his only occasionally glimpsed agenda; that in arguing for a certain deconstruction of dominant Enlightenment principles he is able to bring us all closer to philosophy. It is either that, or he has thrown away philosophy for a love of the world and all those who suffer in it. On the latter front, it is hard to fault him.

Taylor’s treatment of Foucault (which I will discuss very narrowly)\(^73\) exposes a troubling side to Taylor's work. I agree with William Connolly that Taylor shares many of the same propositions that Foucault offers. I refer to the congruence of structuralism and to the relation between power and knowledge and the relation between the death of the God and our manner of thinking.\(^74\) Connolly states that it is these similarities which make the differences between the two so pertinent. Connolly sees as the reason for the differences, (Taylor’s different orientation to the self, morality and politics), the importance of the separation of the two. I see the separation as what causes the differences. It is these differences which disturb me in my closing consideration of Taylor.

Taylor is disconcerted by Foucault because of what Foucault does with our political relationships and our sense of the self. Foucault has argued that epistemology is always connected to the culture of a people. These two variables, culture and epistemology, are entangled and the idea of disentangling this knot is impossible. Foucault, like Nietzsche, saw both the moral and the rational as orders imposed on the world. What we think of as good is directly connected to the apparatus of power/domination that pervades our lives.\(^75\)

\(^73\) Foucault is much too rich a thinker for me to provide more than a cursory glance in this work. I plan, in my next project, to consider Foucault, and his possible congruences with Augustine using Kierkegaard as a bridge, in much more depth. I realize that much of this work leads to this discussion and apologize if what I do offer is slight. I aim, at this point, only to be provocative and to hopefully convey my sense of the importance of what is under discussion.

\(^74\) See: William Connolly, "Taylor, Foucault and Otherness", 367.

\(^75\) See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 99-100.
Foucault also denies the presence of an authentic self prior to this entanglement of power. He rejects the self that appears out of the power relationships as a sincere and anticipated creature.\(^6\) He refuses a sense of meaningful unity to our lives. He rejects the picture of our lives as a sensible narrative.\(^7\)

Taylor finds something deeply askew in Foucault's thought. Foucault seems to expose wrongs but does not seem to want to suggest that doing this is connected to a good. Foucault, instead, argues that "(t)he idea of liberating truth is a profound illusion. There is no truth which can be espoused, defended, rescued against systems of power."\(^8\) Taylor is boggled by this. He does not understand how we can talk about power without having some semblance of respect for issues of freedom and truth. In Taylor's mind, to deal with questions of power you need to consider it, sensibly, in terms of imposition. If there is imposition, it follows, there must be a falsehood going on.\(^9\)

But Foucault denies the possibilities of a greater (human) truth. Along with this he negates the possibility of a greater freedom. We think that there is freedom and truth because of our identity.\(^10\) These human apparitions have become what are significant and they define our horizons for us.

For Foucault, the individual is the result of modern ideas of control. The being who is controlled is what we understand with the term - individual. Power of yesterday kept us with restrictions. The new power wants us to produce. This is not foisted by elites, it is posited without

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\(^6\) See: Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology", 16.

\(^7\) See: Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self, 43, 47, 50.

\(^8\) See: Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth", 152. (Emphasis Taylor's)


purpose by all of us.\textsuperscript{81}

Taylor enjoys this thesis up until the point where he recognizes that Foucault does not have an ultimate point. Foucault makes no claims in his divisions of classical vs. modern techniques of control, that the self is constructed, of the plausibility of "expressive liberation".\textsuperscript{82} Taylor thinks that this lack of desire to choose a side, to exemplify one's own good, is incoherent.\textsuperscript{83} Taylor argues that to make sense of purposelessness without purpose we have to explain it. We have to be able to show how purposefulness and purposelessness are connected. Taylor writes that "all patterns have to be made intelligible in relation to conscious action.".\textsuperscript{84} Foucault suggests that power is connected to context and context can only be made sense of in terms of its power. Taylor does not think we can stop there. He demands: But why does this happen? What creates the structure?\textsuperscript{85}

I don't think that Taylor understands Foucault in a way that could have deep resonances for his own thought. What Foucault has done is to try to destroy method. He has exposed that there is no appropriate way of realizing what sort of mess we are in, and there is no way of getting out of it. We are not stuck in this mire because of some power elites placing us there for their own advantage. We are there, if you want to think in these terms, because of our own sin. In the celebration of our selves we have come to weave our spell upon the world and this spell has trapped us. The lesson to

\textsuperscript{81} See: Ibid, 158-60.

\textsuperscript{82} See: Ibid, 163.

\textsuperscript{83} He also thinks Foucault is wrong in his parallel between the classical and the modern idea of control. He thinks Foucault misses the greater degree of efficacy in democratic over totalitarian societies. I am not sure I really see this or if it can even be seen. Confidence about our own level of freedom seems to me a Foucauldian red-flag.

\textsuperscript{84} See: Ibid, 171.

\textsuperscript{85} See: Ibid, 173.
be derived from reading Foucault is that we are negated without something much larger and much less human to bail us out. To be saved we have to be slaughtered. We have to be prepared to exhibit the madness of Abraham or of John the Baptist if we are to conceive a way out of the world.

Taylor's concerns are concerns with the method of existence and not the ends. He cannot bear a philosophical discussion that does not refer back to issues of freedom and self-efficacy. I am arguing and have been arguing that to be caught up in the question of the freedom of man is a central part of Taylor's theological/philosophical project. But to imagine that it is the whole of that project, or that redemption includes the path one took to get there is to negate the premise of redemption. Foucault, one would think, plays a crucial role in Taylor's vision. Foucault negates the points that the City of Man thinks that it has made. He shows our emptiness, our weakness, our uselessness as we connect ourselves to a reason that moves us nowhere but fills us with pride. He smashes the Enlightenment but I am concerned that the core that sits under the Enlightenment, that there is a direct correlation between reason and Truth, is a notion that Taylor wishes protected. I do not have great confidence as to why. I do not know if he fits this into a scheme of the Clearing and of grace or if his ends are purely political.

Again, Taylor writes:

For what is meant by a "teleological philosophy"? If we mean some inescapable design at work inexorably in history, a la Hegel, then of course I am not committed to it. But if we mean by this expression that there is a distinction between distorted and authentic self-understanding, that the latter in a sense can be said to follow a direction in being, I do indeed espouse such a view. And that makes a big part of my "ontology" of the human person...If, in order to believe that some self-interpretations are less distortive than others, you had to hold a full-scale Hegelian theory of history, or perhaps a Platonic vision of the universe as ordered by the Ideas, it would indeed be a hard view to defend in the late twentieth century.86

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Taylor disconcerts.
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