On the Revival of Hegelian Political Thought

Hegel and Modern Society. By Charles Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

The revival of interest in the thought of Hegel in recent years ought to occasion some surprise. There was a time, not far in the past, when the idea of returning to Hegel for insight into our own problems would have seemed to many to be totally out of place. Students of politics would have granted him a place-possibly even an honored place-in the history of political thought, deserving of a chapter more or less in any `overview' of the developments leading towards the present state of knowledge. But the confident, self-contained liberalism of the recent past thought that it had little need for the qualities associated with Hegelian thought-his apparent metaphysical orientation, his insistence on an encompassing theory of history, his idealism, his seeming inattention to the glories that can be produced by technology and economic growth, his preference for western Europe rather than for the far more distinctively new nations to the east and west. Of course, Hegelian ideas had many indirect influences on liberal thought and more direct influences on Marxism, but still they seemed to be no longer of the mainstream as they were in the nineteenth century.[1]

Yet there has been a visible renaissance of interest in Hegel's political thought in recent years, and the best of this work goes far beyond merely historical accounts of his impact on a tradition claimed to be no longer ours in any vital sense.[2] I would like to ex-

1. Cf. Leo Strauss, ***What is Political Philosophy?*** (New York: The Free Press, 1959), 58, 246; and Joseph Cropsey, "The United States *as* Regime and the Sources of the American Way of Life," 1-15 in ***Political Philosophy and the*** *Issues* ***of*** *Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977). O.W. Holmes, Jr. can cite Hegel as an authority in "The Path of the Law," *Harvard Law Review,* Vol. *X,* No. 8 (March 25, 1897), 71; while Woodrow Wilson employs a Hegelian notion, if he does not mention Hegel by name, in claiming that "the idea of the state is the conscience of administration." "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly, Vol.* LVI (December, 1941), 485; reprinted from the original of 1887.

2. The most outstanding works in the Hegel revival, beyond the books by Taylor, are: Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge

amine here in particular the recent work by Charles Taylor on *Hegel and Modern Society,* which is the most impressive attempt to state the importance for us of Hegel's thought.[3] Taylor's *Hegel and Modern Society,* a distillation of a more comprehensive work on Hegel,[4] aspires to show why Hegel's thought brings us to the core of the dilemmas of modern society more acutely than any other alternative. Beyond his very illuminating exegesis of major aspects of Hegel's teaching, Taylor offers an interpretation of modern society, an analysis of why its current typical forms of self-understanding and self-interpretation are inadequate, and a defense of the specific

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University Press, 1972); Judith A. Shklar, *Freedom and Independence, An Interpretation of the Political Ideas of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Raymond Plant, *Hegel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973); George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975); B. T. Wilkins, ***Hegel's Philosophy of History*** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., ***Hegel's Political Philosophy, Problems*** *and Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Walter A. Kaufmann, ed., ***Hegel's Political Philosophy*** (New York: Atherton Press, 1970); G. A. Kelly, *Idealism, Politics, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); G. A. Kelly, *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Exceptionally important studies have been published by Manfred Riedel in a series of works over the last two decades: *Theorie and Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1965); ***Studien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*** (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969); *Burgerliche Gesellschaft and Staat bet Hegel* (Berlin: Luchterhand Verlag, 1970), and other works. For a useful symposium see *The Legacy of Hegel: Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium,* ed. J.J. O'Malley, et. al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), especially the essay by Kenley Dove, "Hegel and the Secularization Hypothesis." A review of recent work on Hegel has been undertaken by James Schmidt, "Recent Hegel Literature: General Surveys and the Young Hegel," *Telos 46* (Winter, 1980-1981), 113-147, and "Recent Hegel Literature: The Jena Period and the Phenomenology of Spirit," *Telos* 48 (Summer, 1981), 114-141; a third essay, on literature concerned with the ***Philosophy*** *of Right, is* promised.

3. This work inaugurates a new series by Cambridge University Press on "modern European philosophy." The editors open the present volume by arguing for the need to make "contemporary European philosophy intelligible for a wider audience in the English-speaking world, and to suggest its interest and importance in particular to those trained in analytical philosophy." As they observe, the dominant tradition in English philosophy "was developed by Moore, Russell, and others in revolt against idealism and the influence of Hegel at the turn of this century" (vi). They provide a very brief sketch of the break between a continental tradition influenced by Hegel, and, on the other hand, an English school which consciously sought a different direction.

4. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). The work discussed in the text is derived almost entirely from this larger *Hegel,* which is a

usefulness of Hegel in the current situation. His book stands nearly alone in the contemporary literature on Hegel for its skill in carrying through these themes, and as such it helps to provide or clarify the rationale which students of Hegel owe to their readers, if they are to be told that something important can be gained from his thought. "Hegel," Taylor argues, "has contributed to the formation of concepts and modes of thought which are indispensable if we are to see our way clear through certain modern problems and dilemmas" (xi)

It goes without saying that learning to see these problems and dilemmas in a Hegelian way means in part to shed certain characteristic illusions which tend to be more prominent in our more familiar ways of looking at things. Thus, in Taylor's account, both the standard ideas of social science and, in a more political vein, the standard hopes and convictions of the liberal tradition come in for a great deal of criticism. Learning to understand Hegel means learning to obtain some critical distance on these elements of current orthodoxies.[5] In return for this critical emancipation, what do we get? Taylor argues convincingly that Hegel's methods can provide a deeper recognition of what the real problems of modern society are and why they are either problems that might be solvable or conditions that we must live with; we learn then a Hegelianism that is of great usefulness for its diagnostic value. On the other hand, it also becomes evident that Taylor's thesis contains a criticism of Hegel's thought and an implicit proposal for a modest, revised Hegelianism, purged of idealism, as the basis for a sounder political science that will move beyond Hegel. His Hegel becomes the supreme guide to understanding the impulses behind modern society but an inadequate source for remedies.

Taylor's position leads to some strikingly useful insights into the importance of Hegel. His account is all the more noteworthy for its

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comprehensive study of Hegel's thought. *Hegel and Modern Society* is limited to social and political themes; Taylor describes it as a "condensation" of the earlier work but one that has a different "center of gravity," aiming to give a "view of the ways in which he is relevant and important to contemporary philosophers" (xi).

5. Taylor advances one example with uncharacteristic vehemence; it is also one of the few points where he utilizes an example drawn specifically from American politics. "As recently as a decade ago . . . the liberal intelligentsia of America and the Western world . . . announced an imminent 'end of ideology' " (113). This he calls a "myth," as was the belief that modern society could live with a purely pragmatic, utilitarian outlook. On the contrary, societies, he holds, need "justifying beliefs" which interpret "the ends of human life in their relation to society, nature and history" (112).

defense in many particulars of Hegel's political doctrine; he does not merely explore Hegel's elaborate and original conceptual structures but reads with sympathy his unusual account of the meaning of modern politics and society. But Taylor's view is perhaps even more important for its criticisms of Hegel, not necessarily because the criticisms stand up to every examination as because they lead us to the core of certain problems associated with Hegel's thought. These problems concern Hegel's idealism and, secondly, the historicism in which his philosophy of right and of history culminates. In regard to the first, Taylor is highly critical; in regard to the second, not critical at all. I will suggest that the point of attack might be better reversed.

Taylor's case for Hegel is bound up with a reading of the contemporary political situation, which he, like others, regards as defective. The modern liberal state is "threatened with breakup." "Free societies, whose institutions can only function with wide-spread voluntary participation," now have difficulty maintaining their unity and vitality (125). Civic virtue is in decay, as is the set of beliefs, doctrines, and common convictions which could, in the past, elicit it. The modern liberal state, as found in the western democracies, depended on a certain set of goals and expectations that provided the unifying self-interpretation or the `horizons' of modern politics. These horizons, associated with assumptions about the value of greater production, technology and the like, offered a guide to the structure of the world in which the modern state worked and a key to the claims that it could make to be based on a real insight into the sum total of human possibilities.° The guidance derived from this loose but rich set of expectations now seems less than compelling to many observers and, less articulately, to many participants in the modern state. The symptoms of decline of the modern faith are all around us: a decline of legitimacy on the part of both social and political institutions, movements that take one or another part of the faith and push it to extreme conclusions, and the inability to locate any convincing version of the modern self-understanding that will still both inspire effort and provide a foundation for the sustenance of what has already been achieved.

The decay of which Taylor speaks has two inseparable sides. It is in some sense a decay in the intellectual world that interprets for us

6. Cf. Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *The Review of Metaphysics,* Vol, XXV, No. 1, (September, 1971), 41-44.

what the modern state is, a kind of loss of confidence or conviction on the part of those who explain, interpret and mete out justification or criticism.' But it is also a decay with roots in social developments themselves. If confidence ebbs, then there cannot be merely a lack of ingenuity in refreshing the arguments that once animated the modern faith; the decline must have roots in the failure of social and political institutions to give birth to a healthy conviction of the kind that allows even the thoughtful to see themselves as living up to and reproducing the core standards of the society. Let us note in passing, and return to the point later, that Taylor thus links mind and society together, like a true Hegelian. He identifies this linkage as a crucial Hegelian insight, vital to grasping what Hegel proposed concerning modern society and an insight to be preserved even when we depart from other Hegelian teachings (87ff, 129, 134). In his own criticism of Hegel, he does not doubt the principles by which Hegel linked mind and society together in a radically new way.

Taylor's argument concerning the erosion of modern self-confidence will not seem unfamiliar; the reading of the present situation is not novel and accords with a large literature that has deep roots but has recently become known in larger, more public circles as well. But he moves beyond the familiar when he argues that present difficulties have origins going back into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Our problems are derivative; they make manifest a deeper dilemma belonging to the heart of what modern civilization means, a dilemma visible in the age of enlightenment and revolution when two separate and conflicting tendencies in thought and politics came to light to signify the meaning of the new modern society but to drive it also in two divergent directions. Hegel perceived these two tendencies and their mutual tensions and then sought a way to put them to rights with each other. He did this in an exemplary, if ultimately unsatisfactory manner.

The first of the major tendencies is rooted in a view that becomes clear in the Enlightenment and then generates influential institutions, ideals and practices that Taylor characterizes as follows:

7. For a much fuller statement of Taylor's views on "mainstream political science," see his "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man" and also his "Neutrality in Political Science," in ***Philosophy, Politics and Society,*** **Third** Series, ed. Peter Laslett and W. G. Runciman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 25-57. Cf. also Stanley Rothman, "Mainstream Political Science and its Discontents," in *Teaching Political Science,* ed. Vernon van Dyke (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanitioc Press, Inc., 1977), 1-33.

> The technology of industrial society pushes to a more and more extensive subjugation of nature. But what is much more important, industrial civilization has enforced repeated reorganizations of society and men's way of life in the name of efficiency and higher production. Urbanization, factory production, depopulation of the countryside and sometimes whole regions, mass emigration, the imposition of a rationalized, rigidly measured pace of life at the expense of the former seasonal rhythm; all these changes and others, whether induced by planning or arising through the hazards of the market and investment patterns, are explained and justified by their greater efficacy in meeting the goals of production. In this respect the utilitarian conception is entrenched in our practices and institutions; it is a mode of thought in which different ways of living together are assessed not by some supposed intrinsic value, and certainly not by their expressive significance, but by their efficiency in the production of benefits which are ultimately `consumed' by individuals 09-70).

Here the dominant mode of public life is described and its premises indicated. It is a way of life that has not emerged naturally but as the result of an intellectual change, a new theory or conception which accompanied and perhaps initiated new practices. Taylor locates the intellectual or spiritual home of this new orientation variously as the Enlightenment or as utilitarian ways of looking at human beings and human societies. It was an outlook which sought to understand society and politics as devices for satisfying wants and needs, which viewed man as "the subject of egoistic desires, for which nature and society provide merely the means to fulfillment. It was a philosophy which was utilitarian in its ethical outlook, atomistic in its social philosophy, analytic in its science of man, and which looked to a scientific social engineering to reorganize man and society and bring men happiness through perfect mutual adjustment" (1).[8] It might be noted here that Taylor appears to equate liberalism with this line of thought. Yet this is a point on which one might well entertain certain reservations, for liberalism comes to sight before the eighteenth century and could better be called one of the sources of the Enlightenment and of utilitarianism.

Alongside this Enlightenment and utilitarian view there is another tendency which emerged partly as a critique of important principles developed in the eighteenth century and partly as a

8. On atomism, see Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in *Powers, Possessions and Freedom: **Essays in Honour** of C.B. Macpherson,* ed. Alkis Kontos (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979),39-81. Cf. also Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *The Idea of **Freedom, Essays in Honour** of **Isaiah Berlin,*** ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175-193.

radicalization of those principles. Taylor calls this tendency, broadly, the Romantic movement. It has two chief aspects. The first, which he names 'expressivism', protested against making man into "both subject and object of an objectifying scientific analysis." It suggested an "alternative notion of man whose dominant image was rather that of an expressive object." Human life might attain ('express') a "unity rather analogous to that of a work of art, where every part or aspect only found its proper meaning in relation to all the others. Human life unfolded from some central core-a guiding theme or inspiration-or should do so, if it were not so often blocked and distorted." This expressive unity can only be achieved through practices that do not "isolate the individual from society [or] from nature" (1-2).

Secondly, as another "reaction against the radical objectification of Enlightenment thought," there is the discovery of "radical freedom." Kant developed the notion of an independence of the individual from natural causation in the life of "self-determining subjectivity" (5).[9] Self-determination is seen in the possibility of guiding action by respect for a rational moral law. Ultimately, of course, if the moral will is not to remain empty, it must impress itself on action and on history, in the struggle to develop modes of life and institutions for society which comport with the will of a free, moral subjectivity. Thus arises the notion of history as the realization of freedom, history as the fullest form of man's total self-expression. We might well consider this view not just a reaction to the Enlightenment but rather its radicalization. It certainly continues and intensifies the Enlightenment's confidence in the autonomy of reason and reason's transformative powers. On the other hand, by introducing the issue of morality, of the meaning of history, and of freedom as a mode of self-expression and self-fulfillment, one will easily see that it moves into a sphere where concerns beyond efficiency, production and the satisfaction of desires for comfort and self-preservation dominate public life. Hence, in this light, Kantian

9. Taylor at first calls Kant "the main figure in this revolution of radical freedom" (3). Rousseau is a forerunner in some ways, but Taylor argues that Kant's view imposed itself on later generations more forcefully. Later he observes that the view of "reason as criterion of action arose to challenge the utilitarian view in the late eighteenth century, and that was the radical moral autonomy of Kant. This view starts in a sense with Rousseau, to whom Hegel gives credit for it" (75). Hegel strongly emphasizes the importance of Rousseau; see the *Philosophy of Right,* paragraph 258 **Remark,** paragraph 29 **Remark.**

thought not only builds on Enlightenment convictions but alters them decisively. Perhaps the most important point separating the early moderns from the Kantians is the discovery of the `self.' From the standpoint of a purely `empirical' orientation, which thought that only knowledge arriving through the senses could be objective and certain, there seemed no way to account for soul, self, personal identity. What can the individual be except some kind of locus of perceptions, bundled together in a mysterious, perhaps only accidental, way? If Hume posed the question, Kant showed the inadequacy of this outlook and the necessity of thinking about the self `transcendentally,' as Taylor lucidly explains *(3-6).*[10] But this `self,' if a reality, alters our expectations and goals. If it constitutes the core of personal identity, then it is unlikely that an idea of happiness or satisfaction based on appeal to the passions will suffice and unlikely that a society providing nothing beyond comfort and security will satisfy.

Taylor argues that Romantic and Kantian notions have profoundly shaped our ideas about what constitutes the good life, moving us beyond the Enlightenment's interest in merely ending the "self-caused immaturity"[11] of the past or in achieving more efficient social engineering, greater industrial production, and general mastery of nature. The Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment originated the notion that "art" may be "the highest human activity and fulfillment, a conception which has had a large part in the making of contemporary civilization" (2). "Modern civilization has . . . seen the proliferation of Romantic views of private life and fulfillment, along with a growing rationalization and bureaucratization of collective structures. . . Modern society is Romantic in its private and imaginative life and utilitarian or instrumentalist in its public, effective life" (71). This is an unwieldy pair. Men can hardly "recognize themselves" in the public institutions of modern society (136). Thus, there has been a continual critique of modern society from the Romantic side on the grounds that it is "philistine, productive of mediocrity and conformity, timidly egotistical; as stifling originality, free expression, all the heroic virtues; as dedicated to a `pitiable comfort' " (137).[12]

10. Taylor, *Hegel, 30.*

11. Kant's phrase for the outlook from which the Enlightenment frees us. See his "What is Enlightenment," in *Kant On History,* ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company, 1963), 3-10. Beck's translation of the phrase is "self-incurred tutelage."

12. The term "pitiable comfort" is from Nietzsche, as Taylor indicates (137 notes).

To this criticism of modern society we can add the external evils. It is no longer possible to believe that "the horrors and nightmares of history, the furies of destruction and cruelty which remain enigmatic to agent and-victim," have been put behind us (139). The temper which believes in the infinite capacity of social engineering to satisfy men and to eliminate evils has proved too shallow. Its methods produce an overlay of professionalization, bureaucracy and rational planning, technology, and economic and industrial development, but they do not speak to that side of us which wishes to be wholly free or to find a consummate unity of public life and private satisfactions. Nor has it succeeded in preventing direct political oppression. To the contrary, it is easily adaptable to use by despotic as well as free societies and, when brought to the service of the former, it has provided some of the special modern aids that have, if anything, made the maintenance of despotism easier.

Thus, Taylor argues that modern society is a failure in providing the kind of expressive satisfaction that would both support and elicit the notion that freedom finds a culmination in public life. In place of this intellectually or spiritually satisfying order, we have only technically competent public institutions, at best; they deliver benefits at reasonable cost, sometimes, to citizens presumed to be essentially private and self-seeking. But the benefits do not awaken a chorus of assent or of civic minded devotion to the processes of public life. The public institutions are instead made the target of `romantic' protest in ever-renewed forms.[13]

Taylor maintains that Hegel's thought is exemplary because it recognized, in anticipation, as it were, the dawning problems of a modern society. Hegel was able to grasp that earlier modern doctrines concerning freedom, mastery of nature, objectifying analysis, the emancipation of the individual from the tyranny of custom, religion and nature, and so forth, were incomplete and one-sided views. They served as negative, liberating doctrines, but they failed to carry the modern sense of emancipated subjectivity through to completion. That completion must mean going beyond the merely critical emancipation from the past and proceeding toward an 'embodiment' of freedom in a society which can seem not like a constriction of freedom but like a realization of it in practice.

Taylor regards Hegel's most important contribution to be the insight into the defective character of modern views of subjective freedom. Hegel restored to view-chiefly by reflecting on the model

13. Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society,* 111-118.

established by the city of classical Greece-the notion that the impulse toward freedom and self-direction (radical autonomy) must reach some embodiment in the actual practices of a community or state. A freedom that is merely negative or critical and that is capable of reaching no realization in practical life is only, he held, a disguised version of the defective idealism that separates the real world from the ideal, creating a disharmony; such a disharmony may be useful because it can be disquieting and energizing (as was the case with the idealisms of the past, both Platonic and Christian), but it is finally a problem that has to be overcome. Such a disharmony is the result of thought, owing its origin to the stirrings of a critical outlook which leads us to reject unthinking adherence to established ways. But the critical consciousness is governed finally by a striving toward resolution and satisfaction in a practical political order, a state, and not by a permanent denial of the validity of all politics in an unceasing rebellion against the real world.

Hegel sought to understand whether the original harmony (of the public-spirited citizen at home in his time and place) could once again be restored, but on a basis which would take account of the freedom of the mind and also of the criticisms which the moderns had directed against pre-modern life and thought. These criticisms Hegel largely accepted as correct, but he thought them one-sided and incomplete. The doctrines of liberalism and the Enlightenment taught an abstract individualism, in which men were urged to live like semi-strangers, having something of their own and their secure private rights while regarding society as a device merely to protect those rights and with no importance beyond them. As a reaction to this view, there was a Romantic criticism which seemed to glorify the vagaries of private feeling, emotion and inspiration. Both views have in common a dependence on specifically modern ideas of free, emancipated subjectivity, and an inability to combine that sense of freedom with a satisfactory grasp of the way in which individuality leads beyond itself to the social and political. Hegel thought it possible to elucidate the antinomy within the. modern outlook and then to overcome it by means of a coherent doctrine in which freedom and society could be fit together rationally and thus the modern emancipated subjectivity could be brought back to earth and to a sensible and satisfying political life."

Taylor holds that Hegel's thought offered the best hope of achiev-

14. *Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society,* **122-124;** *Hegel, Part* **IV.**

ing such a unifying doctrine, but that it has nevertheless failed. It has failed not only in its intended effect-to teach a view of freedom that would be more compatible with a sound politics-but also on its own terms for there is a flaw inherent in the doctrine itself as Hegel conceived it. To examine this judgment on Hegel's work, let us turn first to Taylor's reading of Hegel's practical teaching and then to his study of the core difficulty in Hegel's thought, as he argues, his `idealism.'

When it comes to practical matters, Taylor in most cases defends Hegel's recommendations, just as he defends also Hegel's articulation of what the problems are. Thus, he accepts Hegel's views on the necessity for "differentiation" in politics and society. Unlike those who blame Hegel for failing to pursue radical notions of equality, Taylor boldly defends Hegel's argument that various differentiations known from the past need to be preserved, though also, of course, reformed. Although he thinks that Hegel was "wildly wrong" if he meant to predict what would actually occur in the evolution of the modern state, his proposals concerning what was necessary were not objectionable. Taylor argues that we see in our time a relentless movement toward the abolition of differentiation, of partial, subsidiary communities, of differences in ways of life and in expression of one's own rights and duties. The direction of modernization is toward radical egalitarianism, a homogenization of mankind in every conceivable way and a burning hostility toward every tradition that seems to stand in the way of-this drive. Yet Taylor holds that the homogenization of man is unsustainable. The need to be something more than merely like everyone else leads, and has led, to new forms of differentiation. Nevertheless, there are great dangers in the failure to accommodate this need in a reasonable manner, by appropriating and renovating traditional "partial communities" (116) in which the individual could participate concretely and with which he could identify himself in part. Above all, we suffer from the harm caused by new, virulent nationalisms. "Nationalism has become the most powerful focus of identity in modern society" (115). It too easily tends toward "narrow and irrational chauvinism" (116-117). Taylor concludes that "absolute freedom by itself is empty and cannot offer a focus of identity . . . Ideologies of absolute freedom only produce something in the hands of a minority with a powerful vision which it is willing to impose" (116).

Taylor then urges that we need to rediscover a possibility for differentiation. We need a "ground for differentiation, meaningful to

the people concerned, which at the same time does not set the partial communities against each other, but knits them together in a larger whole. This in a single formula is what modern society would require to resolve its dilemma. It is something which traditional societies had" (117). It can only be achieved by recovering the more positive orientation toward traditional differentiations, such as Hegel teaches, and, secondly, by clarifying the failures of "absolute freedom," especially by grasping the larger whole, both human and natural, which defines and limits it in ultimately beneficial ways.

Taylor amplifies this point in his criticism of Marx, showing the manner in which Hegelian thought provides the ground for seeing the difficulties inherent in Marx's project; he reminds us that some of the most important flaws in Marx's thought are best perceived from a Hegelian standpoint.[15] If, within the existing liberal democracies, the dangers of homogenization and the reaction which it engenders are felt, they show the limits of the notion of "absolute freedom," the belief tht everything may be made over in accordance with ostensibly rational standards and in disregard of limits imposed by nature and history. Taylor argues that in Marx and others among the `young Hegelians' we find a "trans-position" onto man of the qualities that Hegel thought belonged to reason in the trans-human sense. Ultimate freedom and spontaneous creativity are radically anthropologized. Hegel's critics opposed his attempt to speak about an element in man and society which points beyond both and in terms of which we can come to a certain acceptance of the limits within which society and history proceed. The anthropologization, the total humanization of `idealism,' is connected with a program of radical transformation of the world (141-142). Man becomes wholly self-creating, self-defining; natural limits need never offer an ultimate constraint, since they are ever-receding, moved by the Promethean being who creates himself ever more fully (145). Every form in which limits to progress are accepted-and Hegel teaches such limits-is interpreted as an ideological resistance to full recognition of the scope of freedom and can then be swept aside as forms of man's inhumanity to man.

15. Taylor remarks twice on the `power' which Marx's thought has exerted in modern times (142, 152). But his own view is not unlike that expressed in George Lichtheim's title, *From Marx to Hegel* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971); cf. Lichtheim's introductory essay, in which he refers to "the post-1945 revival of metaphysical idealism in the ancient Central European heartland of the Marxist tradition" (2).

Thus we find in Marx the development of a Promethean aspiration based on confidence in the "willed transformation of nature, both human and external, as an essential part of man's fulfillment" (141). Insofar as Marx's thought reaches near to the character of science, it might do so in its critical study of capitalism. But this is accompanied by a "wildly unrealistic notion of the transition [to communism] as a leap into untrammelled freedom, which simply sets aside the old restraints" (149). The difficulty is reflected in the practices of the communist regimes, which attempt to will or force the new order. They thereby unwittingly adopt the "stance of engineers relative to the at best inert, often refractory social matter they had to deal with" (147). This ultimately produces extremism in practice (150-154). Those who absolutize purely human freedom tend to hold that the goal can be achieved by conscious planning and tenacious acts of will. Hegel's interpretation of the trans-human character of the rational and the free, on the other hand, made it possible for him to distance himself from the extremism of the revolutionary movement. His doctrine of the cunning of reason is really an assertion that social forces cannot wholly be subjected to planned human direction, even if they reach a humanly intelligible result. They contain something inaccessible, subordinating the purely human concerns to the nature of reason itself. The rational state must be allowed to grow; it cannot be forced (115, 121-122). It must emerge through a kind of intelligent cooperation with the given conditions at hand, not through their forceful obliteration. But this argument for moderation is available only when we have ground for believing there are limits that must be recognized, not just constraints to throw off (145, 159-161). And yet this cannot be believed when the very essence of the human is freedom for self-creation. The pressing practical problem is now the confinement of the sense of absolute self-creating freedom by means of ideas which can expose its inaccuracy and bring us to grasp the limits which give the human world its shape. This moderate thesis, which reflects Hegel's views, is Taylor's statement of the political lesson to be gained from a grasp of `modern society' from a Hegelian point of view.

If these are the problems, then what inhibits the restoration of Hegelian thought? Taylor finally holds that such a restoration is not possible, even though he so lucidly and persuasively argues for the relevance of Hegel's insights on many particular points and on the

large point of teaching us to see what the core problems of modern society are. But, Taylor says, "Hegel's philosophy is at once incredible and highly relevant for us" (72). The "incredible" aspect concerns Hegel's doctrine of spirit (Geist), of which Taylor offers a very emphatic critique. The most interesting point in his criticism of Hegel is the thesis that his view of spirit cannot, on *practical* grounds, be a viable proposition for us. It is true that he, also holds that it has important intrinsic flaws on a theoretical level. But he advances an independent argument suggesting that the development of modern society has shifted the grounds of our outlook, making the whole project of relating the political to a larger, trans-political order (as does the doctrine of spirit in Hegel) seem implausible and outmoded. In a revealing comparison, he suggests that we regard Hegel's idealism with the same kind of reflective, detached admiration which we would feel in reading Aquinas. Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God are "expressions of what the believer believes." "Similarly, Hegel's proof" concerning existence [Dasein] at the core of the *Logic* "seems more of an incisive expression of his vision than a strict proof" (67).[16] As an argument, it is impressive, but it is finally more of a stimulating `Weltanschauung' than an achieved demonstration.

For modern society, it is a symptom both of its social and its intellectual orientation that it finds even the direction of Hegel'sdoctrine to be implausible. It is perhaps an expression of what we believe that we cannot believe in a cosmic, unifying reason. We would not recognize ourselves in any such larger order, Taylor claims. He implies more than that Hegel's particular arguments are flawed; he holds that the intention is flawed, in ways that we can now see on the basis of modern social experience. There is a new element in the construction of the modern, namely precisely the inability to see any possibility of restoring the link between the human mind looking for self-understanding and social understanding and, on the other hand, the larger structures of the trans-human and trans-political world.[17]

18. Cf. Taylor, *Hegel, 231,233.* Cf. also the comments of Hegel on "Dasein" in the *Philosophy of Right,* in *Vorlesungen fiber Rechtsphilosophie 1818-1831* ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Stuttgart: Friedrich Fromann Verlag, *1974),* Vol. IV, 150-151.

17. Cf. Marvin Zetterbaum, "Self and Subjectivity in Political Theory," *The Review of Politics,* Vol. 44 (January 1982), 80, citing Karl Li with 's *From Hegel t0 Nietzsche.* Taylor uses theological language rather freely throughout his account of Hegel's thought (e.g., *23-40),* but he does not offer an explicit statement of Hegel's position on

The difference between us and Hegel is compared to the difference between ancients and moderns. Hegel's grasp of the relationship of man to society as somehow reflecting the inner order of reason itself (as he holds in his doctrine of spirit) is "parallel to the pre-modern view" which induced men "to revere the structures of their society . on the grounds that these reflected the will of God or the order of being, in short the foundation of things to which man owes ultimate allegiance" (81). Hegel's idealism shares this same quality. Oddly, Taylor's rejection of the Hegelian thesis moves him close to the Enlightenment orientation which he opened by attacking. Elsewhere in his book, he remarks that "an important aspect of the seventeenth-century revolution was its rejection of this conception of order," namely "the idea that there is a larger rational order to which man essentially belongs." Such a rejection gave rise to a "new conception of order" in which "reason and nature were dethroned as the ultimate criteria" and "political obligation was grounded in a decision, to submit to a sovereign, dictated by prudence (calculating reason). For a self-defining subject, obligation could only be created by his own will" (74). Taylor places the beginnings of this view with Hobbes. In a related passage, he notes that we have come to define as "conservative" or "reactionary" the notion of a "cosmic order as a corner-stone of political theory" (81). He rightly remarks in this passage that it is inappropriate to apply the labels of conservative or liberal to Hegel's thought; he points out that Hegel's "cosmic order" is the order of reason (which was the cause espoused by the modernizers against the conservatives), not of tradition or faith. Still, Taylor's own criticism of Hegel's doctrine of reason seems to participate in the attack on such views that was initiated by Hobbes and which permeates the liberal and Enlightenment traditions and the kind of state they propose. He shares a basic principle of the modern liberal critique of classic and medieval thought and uses it for the criticism of Hegel. Taylor would thus suggest that in his idealism, his doctrine of the unification of reason and

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theological matters. Kenley Dove has argued that Karl Li with has provided "the *only* systematic interpretation of nineteenth century German philosophy" in his *From Hegel to Nietzsche,* and the thesis of that work is that Hegel was engaged in a "secularization" of Christian categories ("Hegel and the Secularization Hypothesis," 148). Taylor seems to imply that what appears as theological in Hegel is actually derived from other sources (metaphysical and practical together) than conscious or unconscious assimilation of religious tradition; but, again, he does not enter explicitly into the issue.

society, Hegel failed to join into one of the essential principles of modernism, or deliberately repudiated it. Correspondingly, being modern means living a social existence that is self-admittedly liberated from any positive claims about a larger order of reason or nature and in which then human freedom needs to be understood solely from out of itself. In a certain sense he seems to show that it is not just in Marx but in modern thought in general that we find that freedom is `anthropologized,' even radically so.

Thus, we obtain from Taylor an insistence on a Hegelianism without idealism. We want society to be a product of decision, of self-definition and self-recognition bowing to its own rationale, not to anything that can be considered a trans-subjective or a `cosmic' truth, on the order of pre-modern doctrines or on the order of Hegel's thought concerning the `spirit' that is both human and more than human. We cannot ask society to involve us in any positive assertions about the trans-human; because we cannot find such assertions to involve what we are or want to be. If then society is ours to make at will, we might wonder why it is not also something that can be calculated, revised and manipulated at will; why is it not the kind of entity that Enlightenment thought is said to have believed? Is it that such a society lacks `meaning' or expressiveness? But can something that is a product of our decision be said to lack expressiveness? Or is it then lacking in expressiveness just because it tells us only about ourselves as free to choose, and not about what we are in a more permanent way, what we must will as well as what we can will? We have from Taylor in any case the proposition that our current task is to re-think the situation of modern society by means of this shrunken Hegelianism, Hegelianism without metaphysics, as it were, and in the light of the fact that modern society seems unhappily to mean only the freedom of the calculating reason plus a longing for an `expressive' fulfillment of some high kind that embodies a grander principle than the calculation of utility.[18]

Taylor's arguments for and against Hegel offer a remarkable recovery of the problems of the modern state as Hegel saw them. He

18. Taylor gives us a hint about the future in his comment that Hegel's "conclusions are dead, and yet the course of his philosophical reflections is very much to the point" (154-189); note in this context the suggestions at 159, 161, 188, 167 note 1 and 188 note 1 that we must now proceed without Hegel's confidence that everything can in principle be made intelligible; what now seems more plausible is the irreducibility of the irrational, which enters into our lives in ways which Hegel cannot articulate.

shows, at a concrete and practical level, what need we have for the kind of thought that Hegel offered. If Taylor is right in his reading of modern society, then it needs, on practical as well as theoretical grounds, the kind of thought which shows us how to situate freedom in a larger whole and which thus moderates the potential for extremism in the principles of radical subjective freedom (160-161, 167-169). Yet at the same time, Taylor feels obliged to insist that the conclusions of Hegel are "dead" (167) because Hegel exaggerated our ability to find a "conceptual necessity" behind all things, a necessity that could be articulated in an "ontology" (166). This failure must leave us then with the primacy of subjective freedom in politics. What is first for us in modern society is not the sense of limitation derived from relatively clear principles concerning the overall frame in which man is situated but rather a sense of freedom to construct a social world from out of the principles of freedom itself. That freedom is perhaps somewhat restricted by its origins in the levels of "unreflective life" or "unreflected experience" from which it emerges (166). But beyond this original burden, it is apparently not confined by any larger whole to which it can be shown to belong as a part and by which it is limited in its ends or goals. [19]

Taylor nevertheless emphasizes the importance of Hegel's attempt to show the "emptiness" and "potential destructiveness" of the sense of radical autonomy when it stands by itself, not situated in a larger whole (167). Now it would seem that the aim pronounced here as necessary and desirable-to achieve an insight into the beneficial limits to freedom-however it would be pursued in detail, would require that the critic stand apart from his own society and its ambitions so that he can look beyond them and articulate the limits confronting human and social possibilities. Modern society and the modern sense of radically free subjectivity need to be put in perspective, we might say. But how can this be achieved if we forbid `idealism,' if we forbid any way of looking outside the horizon of the social world as it currently exists?

I do not want to underestimate the difficulty of articulating a plausible `idealism' nor to argue that the idealisms of the past-be

19. Taylor admits that if we turn away from Hegel, we turn then toward his critics, such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and so forth (158-159). With the exception of Kierkegaard, the thought of Hegel's critics has a tendency to correct Hegel's rationalism by emphasizing the "instinctual or elemental depths" or "instinctual nature," the "Dionysiac" (158). In other words, it tries to situate human freedom in a context given by the sub-human, the instinctual or the irrational.

they of Hegel or Plato-could be construed as wholly convincing, even supposing that we have an adequate interpretation of what those idealisms mean (which is doubtful). But I would emphasize here the importance of recovering the practical question that is at the basis of the attempt to think about that larger whole within which the social world is situated. Taylor has shown the practical question at stake but is systematically prevented from following it through. And the reason for this incompleteness is that he accepts too uncritically not just the notion that Hegel's idealism fails to convince but also, to introduce a new point, another doctrine coming from Hegel, the principle of historicism. I can best illustrate what is entailed in this reference to historicism by turning to both Hegel's and Taylor's discussion of Socrates; in the present case, the Socratic example stands for a mode of thought which is as philosophically liberated as one could wish but which also does seem to find a way of teaching a disciplined or "situated" view of freedom.

Hegel's political thought is not merely a response to the dilemmas, of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, and it has powerful elements that are not merely framed in the light of modern developments and thought. Greek thought and practice exerted a powerful influence upon him from the earliest stage of his career. Further, when he examines the peculiar incompleteness and dividedness of modern freedom, he finds in it a problem larger than the purely modern. The real origins of modes of thought that separate and divide so that we seem torn between unreconcilable alternatives (as between modern Enlightenment and modern Romanticism) lie in pre-modern thought, both religious and philosophic.[20]

Hegel held that Socrates is the first to have raised in decisive form the proposition that the grounds for assent to the social order must be reason. He took the case of Socrates to illustrate a stage of the fundamental problem of the relation of thought and practice.[21] As Taylor remarks, examining Hegel's ideas on this point: "In the Greekpolis men identified themselves with its public life and its common experience. Their most basic, unchallengeable values were

20. See Taylor, *Hegel,* 58ff. on the religious origin in the Old Testament of the kind of thought that separates and divides, undermining a more primordial unity.

21. ***Philosophy*** *of Right,* paragraph 138 Remark, 279 Remark; *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte,* ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1955), 71-72; *Lectures on the* ***Philosophy of World History,*** **trans.** J. Sibree, chapter in the discussion of the "Greek World" on "The Political Work of Art."

those embodied in this public life, and hence their major duty and virtue was to continue and sustain this life. . . . But the public life of each of these poleis was narrow and parochial. . . . With Socrates arises the challenge of a man who cannot agree to base his life on the parochial, on the merely given, but requires a foundation in universal reason" (92) The polis achieved the fullest embodiment of an expressive unity of man and society. But the Socratic turn to reason seemed to call into question the laws and practices, and to direct attention toward trans-political standards of reason and away from the authority of the fatherland.

Yet it is important to note that Hegel does not hold that Socrates attempted immediately to engage in a program of political reform. For a crucial element of the Socratic discovery of reason was also the discovery of the enormous gulf between the climate of politics and the demands of reason. This gulf seemed unbridgeable or insuperable. This is not to say that there could be no communication or influence over it. But it would remain as a problem of two different sets of standards and concerns. And therefore one could not expect that the thinkers could ever be in total harmony, expressive or otherwise, with their time and place.

The original example of the problematic relationship between thought and society is thus a case where thought serves first and foremost as critique of an existing expressive unity. Public belief and mores were in harmony with Athenian politics, we learn. But the Socratic thought and practice are an act of self-emancipation from expressive unity. And they seem to embody a thesis that the thinker must stand aside, as critic; they are an attack on the kind of thinking which judges its orientation by the standards of the existing time and place. Further, despite the fact that Socrates' self-liberation from the confines of existing opinion is an assertion of freedom, his thought is in another sense a way of establishing certain limits to constrain the freedom of his country for dogmatic self-assertion of common opinion. As long as common opinion remains unchallenged, it is likely to take its own standards to be absolute. When it can be shown that there is something else to look to ("universal reason"), then the authoritative commands of law and custom are relegated to a smaller, more defined place. They will not be taken to be indicative of the absolute and unqualified; they become more local and particular, and have to be seen in the light of their differences from the universal.

Now this way of regarding the commands of society seems to suc-

ceed in situating the political at least to the extent of introducing a sense that there might be standards, independent of time and place, in terms of which one could grasp the limitations of one's time or place. And it would do this permanently, provided that the discoverers of universal reason do not dream that purely rational standards can be embodied without adulteration in practical affairs. Such restraint appears to apply to Socrates. In discovering univeral reason, he also discovered the gulf between the political and the rational. This gulf seemed permanent. It is of course true that "even the self-conscious individual is related to some society." But these individuals, as Taylor very rightly remarks, "saw this city as quite other than and beyond the earthly city. And the actual community of philosophers or believers in which they worked out and sustained the language by which they identified themselves was scattered and powerless . . . . The community of the wise, as that of the saints, was without external, self-subsistent existence in history" (92).

I would call this doctrine the practical foundation for idealism. The theme of *The Republic,* in which the doctrine of `ideas' and hence `idealism' is broached, is less the `ideas' than the discovery of the city which is according to reason and which is not a `real' city so much as a city in speech for contemplation by those sufficiently emancipated from `real' cities to open their minds to another alternative. It is a city which is an `idea,' in the simple sense of a thought. It has no actual historical existence and it may well be that Plato did not have any intention or expectation that this mundane world would allow any practical realization of it. Yet its existence in thought seems essential for two reasons. It is, in its own way, the home of the thinkers in a truer sense than their own fatherland. And, secondly, it seems to `express' (to borrow Taylor's term) a need for the thoughtful to look above or beyond their actual circumstances, in order to secure a critical distance from those present circumstances. This kind of divided, bifurcated vision, attentive to what is good and bad in the real world but looking beyond it to a world of thought, seems essential to the classical example.

Here we have a case, then, where dividedness-between the world in which we live and the world toward which we think-is consciously asserted. Now Hegel rightly perceived this Socratic-Platonic case as a challenge to the Greek polis' claim to complete authority over mind and spirit. But Hegel thought that the challenge could, in principle, be accommodated without an abject surrender of either side. In his view, the central theme of modern politics con-

cerned the possibility of bringing the rational into harmony with the political, which of course also entailed bringing the political into harmony with the rational, in ways which the Greek polls could not achieve. Hegel's defense of modern society is, in part, stated in terms not just of overcoming Enlightenment social criticism and romantic rebellion but in terms of meeting the age-old issues of these relationships between philosophy and the politics of the existing, historical world. But Hegel did not only address this problem; he proposed to resolve it. The concluding thesis of the *Philosophy of Right* holds that there is at hand a reconciliation between reason and the state, just as the opening thesis proposed to bring together what seemed hopelessly divided, freedom of thought and the practical freedom of the citizen of a good state. Further, if we think through the implications of this view, we are led to still more radical conclusions.

There is in Hegel's thought a point where he himself approaches very close to the thesis which Taylor has described as the radical anthropologization of freedom. This point embodies his `historicism.' In one of the most famous propositions of the *Philosophy of Right*[22] he held that "philosophy is its own time, grasped in thought. Considered in its context, the interpretation of this proposition is far from a facile matter. Yet it suggests to many, if we consider its practical and rhetorical influence, that thought is limited to a time and place, an "expression" of its time and place; thought is "situated" within history. The implications of this idea are only clarified when it is put alongside the above-mentioned conclusion to the *Philosophy of Right.* Here we are told that we in the modern world are at the apex of the decisive movement in history. At this apex, there is a culmination of a kind of parallel movement in which thought lowers its heaven down to the mundane world and the same mundane world is purged of barbarism in order to be brought under the control of right and law. The meaning of the modern state is the rapprochement of thought and history, politics and reason, in a state which harmonized them or at least puts an end to the notion of their irreconcilability. This passage suggests the core of Hegel's historicism is its practical and political force.

Hegel's doctrine binding the mind to its time and place is a complicated one, and it is inseparable from his argument that the par-

22. ***Philosophy*** *of Right,* Preface. In the translation by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 11.

ticular time and place in which this realization has dawned is one that could be called a peak of human development, in which somehow the fundamental character of man and the state becomes clear and becomes clear as a reflection even of the larger order of things. Hegel criticizes those who cannot see that the modern state, the outlines of which were visible in the western Europe of his day, is the achieved rational state. He finds no further need for the emancipated, a-historical intellect, such as that of Socrates, which stood apart from all realized politics and compared the existing world to the standards of a city "without self-subsistent existence in history," a city "other than and beyond" the mundane city (92).

Taylor's position, as we have seen, is a criticism of Hegel's idealism in the sense of his argument that the modern state can and does reflect the larger order of things, characterized as "cosmic reason" or "spirit" in some sense common to both man and nature. And he presents this criticism of Hegel's idealism not only in his own name but as a more general statement of the characteristic outlook of modern society itself, which has somehow decided against making any positive claims to reflect or embody any trans-human order. But Taylor accepts, as I read him, the historicist principle that the mind reflects society, that we have no grounds for looking beyond the existing social world toward an `ontology' or toward a-historical cities such as a city existing solely in thought. [23] In so doing, he follows Hegel and he also articulates a common principle widely accepted in modern society or at least by those who claim to speak for modern society. [24] Whereas Hegel defended the modern state as *the* rational state in part *because* it adequately reflected the larger order, Taylor holds that we must find whatever meaning we can in modern society *because* we have no adequate way of relating the social world we inhabit to any larger order, since we have no adequate way of conceptualizing that larger order. We must then

23. Thus, Taylor assimilates his criticism of the `individualism' taught by liberal doctrine to the criticism of the `individualism' of Socratic philosophy, which detaches the thoughtful from mundane politics. See *Hegel and Modern Society* 94, 92; cf. 125, which suggests, with Hegel, that the only alternatives are the ethical "identification" of the individual with the "society and its institutions" or else "alienation"; and consider the overall argument of 125-134.

24. See Eugene F. Miller, "Positivism, Historicism and Political Inquiry," *American Political Science Review,* Vol LXVI, No. 3 (September, 1972), 796-817, with comments by Braybrooke, Rosenberg, Rudner and Landau, with a rejoinder by Miller, 818-873.

think about our problems from within a purely human, social frame of reference. But in so doing we must then also face up to the very critical view of modern society offered by Taylor. In thinking about its dilemmas, particularly the need to find some way to `situate' freedom so that we make the limits to human freedom plainer, we must nevertheless think within a framework given by these very social principles themselves. Taylor has argued the element of extremism inherent in the modern doctrine of subjective freedom; but if we reject altogether the possibility of appealing to "ontology" or "cosmic freedom" or "nature" for an understanding of the frame in which freedom is situated, then it would appear that we can only undertake the study of our problems by relying on the questionable principle of radical autonomy itself.

Perhaps then the core difficulty with Taylor's thesis concerns his acceptance of the thesis that we must expect society to be an 'expressive' realization of thought and thought to be an `expressive' articulation of the social world it inhabits. Once useful, this view now proves limiting when applied to the modern society Taylor describes. This doctrine does not provide the principles by which to make a truly critical attack on extreme modern interpretations of freedom. To make that critique, one needs an emancipation from the modern society that presents such difficulties. And yet Hegel's thought does not have as one of its salient strengths the articulation of a systematic critical independence of mind from society or of thought from its time. To the contrary, Hegel's thought denied the present need for a fundamental critical independence, because, he says, the mind can now come down to earth, having the rational state at hand.

I suggest, then, the need for a more critical view of this historicism, and, as a consequence, a reconsideration of the desirability of ridding ourselves of `idealism.' It would be absurd to advance this proposition in any dogmatic sense, or to minimize the enormous difficulties inherent in any return to idealism. But we need to think of idealism not dogmatically, as a series of doctrines about reason, the cosmos, nature, and so forth. There is, I would emphasize, a practical and political point connected with `idealism' that is much closer to home and that follows from Taylor's reminder of the Socratic case discussed above. Following Taylor's suggestion, we would emphasize the deep need of modern society for a grasp of the limits to freedom, a grasp that would situate freedom within some sense of a larger order that defines it. We need not claim that

there is indubitably a larger whole, nor that we know what it is with any certainty. The serious posing of the question is sufficient; it is important that we see that it is a valid question and that it is a vital question that must emerge from reading what happens to a society when it becomes too confident of its own principles and pushes them to extremes. Raising the question of that larger order, the frame within which the free, self-creating self is situated, is itself a fruitful response to the harmful absolutization of freedom. But if we raise it, and if we pursue it thoroughly, we must move away from the Hegelian historical thesis that the modern state is the apex of development and of mind, within which thought can come to rest. What I would mean by idealism in its practical core is the increasing readiness to subject this present mundane world to critical examination of a kind that is not prepared to surrender to the canons of its own time and place but is willing to seek a critical independence from that time and place. Yet this independence will only work if we remain open to conceiving, at least in thought, a community according to more rational standards than obtain around us. That community may have no immediate existence in history, it may be a-historical and impracticable. But it can serve to clarify our ideas and confirm in a sense our independence. The Socratic model gives an example, perhaps *the* example, of this kind of quest and this kind of critical independence. If we are not willing to think independently of modern society and its principles, and learn to free ourselves from it in thought, it is difficult to see how we can achieve that capacity to teach modern freedom its limits that Taylor shows to be necessary.

The University of Oklahoma DONALD J. MALETZ