PROCEEDINGS OF THE DISCUSSION PANEL ON

PHILOSOPHY AND FREEDOM: THE LEGACY OF JAMES DOULL

Canadian Philosophical Association Congress
Dalhousie University/University of King’s College
Halifax, NS, Canada
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“Not many in Canada can be compared to James Doull as the creator of a philosophical school based in an interpretation of the whole history of Western philosophy. When one adds that his school has continued to reproduce itself for a half a century through several generations of students, that it remains central to the life of vibrant institutions, and that this power of regeneration stems from its union of a linguistically and philologically disciplined reading of texts with a total system of philosophy, Professor Doull’s accomplishment is virtually incomparable in our country.”

- W.J. Hankey

“Of all the Canadians of my generation, he certainly has the clearest intellect of any I have known. Nothing I would ever have to say about philosophy will compare to his knowledge of it.”

- George Grant

During his lifetime, James Doull, Canadian philosopher and long-time professor of Classics at Dalhousie University, never published a book. His interpretations of the history of philosophy and his penetrating assessment of the contemporary philosophical landscape were contained in a series of important articles published between 1961 and his death in 2001. With the 2003 publication of Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull, Doull’s work was made available to a wider public for the first time. The collection gathered together his most important articles, along with commentaries on the articles by scholars with whom Doull had worked closely.


2 Quoted in William Christian’s George Grant: A Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 139.
Through what was surely a providential coincidence of events, the Canadian Philosophical Association held its 2003 Congress in Halifax at Dalhousie University and the University of King’s College just as the publication of *Philosophy and Freedom* was being launched. Given Doull’s profound influence on the institutional life and academic programmes of Dalhousie’s Classics Department and King’s Foundation Year Programme, it seemed only fitting to organize a CPA discussion panel on the occasion of the book’s publication to consider Doull’s philosophical legacy. The panel consisted of eight presentations (seven of which are included in this volume), and was designed for both a general philosophical audience unfamiliar with Doull’s thought, and for those who have spent many years struggling to come to terms with his work. Like the book *Philosophy and Freedom*, the panel was organized to represent an overview of Doull’s systematic interpretation of the history of philosophy, with each presentation treating some period or question central to his philosophical enterprise. Doull’s legacy as a teacher was in evidence during this event, as most of the panelists were either former students of Doull or students of his students. Many of Doull’s friends, colleagues and former students were also present in the audience, as well as both the editors and most of the contributors to *Philosophy and Freedom*.

All the papers were originally written to be delivered as oral presentations and they have not been substantially altered from this form, thus explaining the colloquial tone of the contributions. These are “proceedings” in the fullest sense, providing a written record of the discussions that took place over the two days for those who were not present.

Through his lectures, seminars, and articles on philosophy, history, literature and politics, James Doull has made a significant contribution to the study of the humanities in Canada. Those familiar with his work have drawn from it a much richer understanding of the contemporary world, its thought and institutions, by means of a deeper understanding of this world’s historical origins. In light of his work as a founding editor of *Animus* and the fact that his philosophical vision continues to inform the journal’s raison d’être, it is appropriate that the 2005 issue of *Animus* be devoted to examining various aspects of James Doull’s thought and its influence.

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**Floy Doull** opens the issue with a biographical introduction to the theoretical and practical activity of the last two decades of Doull’s life. She explains how his political engagement in opposition to the Trudeauite revolution against the Canadian constitution and in favour of the attempted return to its principles through the Meech Lake Accord was intimately connected with his more theoretical work on recovering an awareness of the ‘Christian Origins of Contemporary Institutions’.

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3 Louis Greenspan’s delightful observations on the philosophical relationship between Doull and George Grant were unfortunately not available for publication.

4 Special thanks to Kieva Bearden for her meticulous proof-reading of the entire volume, and to Catherine Wilson and Steven Burns for their help and advice in organizing the panel.
Lawrence Bruce-Robertson offers an illuminating account of Doull’s interpretation of Aristotle. Perhaps no figure besides Hegel (and perhaps Augustine) played a more central role in Doull’s thinking: Doull’s annual Aristotle seminars were legendary among his students in the Dalhousie Classics department, and testified to a life-long engagement with the Aristotelian philosophy, although Doull published only a few very dense pages on Aristotle during his lifetime. Through an analysis of these pages, Bruce-Robertson shows the importance of Doull’s claims that Aristotle’s philosophy emerges as a direct continuation of Plato’s philosophical project; that Aristotle is as thorough-going an idealist as his teacher; and that the various strands of the argument in the *Metaphysics*, in particular *aitiology*, *ousiology*, ontology and theology are completely unified. Bruce-Robertson shows how for Doull, all being and nature is ultimately to be explained with reference to God as the first principle.

D. Gregory MacIsaac considers Doull’s Hegelian interpretation of Neoplatonism. He argues that a fuller understanding of Neoplatonism than is available on Doull or Hegel’s account can suggest a plausible middle ground between Hegel and Heidegger on the relation between philosophical thinking and history.

Gary Badcock examines Doull’s conception of the proper relation between religion and secular institutions. Badcock remarks how Doull goes further than Hegel’s view that there can be no true secular institutions without true religion, conversely claiming that one can not have true religion without true secular institutions. Badcock shows how this extension of Hegel’s thought is intimately related to Doull’s interpretation of the development of post-Hegelian history.

David Bronstein tackles the debate between Doull and Jewish philosopher and Hegelian commentator Emil Fackenheim on the question of whether Hegel could remain a Hegelian in the face of the Holocaust. Since the question hinges on whether radical evil can be rationally comprehended, Bronstein defends Doull’s view by focusing on the meaning of thinking and of evil in the Hegelian philosophy.

Eli Diamond discusses Doull’s vision of what it means to be doing philosophy in Canada. He analyzes the relationship between Doull’s dual claim that our situation as Canadians can afford us a privileged access to the Western intellectual tradition, and that recovering a better understanding of this intellectual tradition is crucial for our political survival as a country.

Jamie Crooks examines Doull’s highly unorthodox understanding of Heidegger’s philosophy, and the response it provoked from Doull’s former student and renowned Heidegger commentator Graeme Nicholson. Specifically, Crooks evaluates to what extent Doull’s locating Heidegger within a dialectic of the ideal and natural self in postmodern history and politics distorts the meaning of Heidegger’s thought considered on its own terms.
Toward An Intellectual Biography: 
James Doull’s Work From 1980 To 2001

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When I accepted the invitation to participate in this panel, it was with the thought that what I might usefully provide was an account of James’s intellectual life as I knew it, a unique perspective, no doubt, but one which coincides with how he was known by friends and colleagues. Using the bibliography of his writings from 1980 to 2001, I can sketch the circumstances which prompted him to produce those elements in the bibliography, their historical contexts and evolution, and the development over those twenty years of what might be thought the abiding theme or thrust of his intellectual activities.

It has been remarked by friends that James’s best work was done in the last twenty years of his life, the years of our marriage, and it has hence been suggested that our marriage in some way created the apt conditions for his work to flourish. If by his “work” one means his publications, then it is undeniable that the last twenty years of his life were the most productive. But these years coincide also with his years of retirement when he could devote himself exclusively to such activities as writing; also with his life in Newfoundland and a lively, continuous and intimate conversation with friends there, especially Lin and Marion Jackson, together with an ongoing dialogue with his colleagues and students in Nova Scotia. There were important political and philosophical activities flowing from that conversation. But in the larger sense, his “work”, and the fruits of that labour, are there for all to see in his students — later his colleagues — at Dalhousie, King’s, Memorial, various other universities in North America and beyond. About that labour I have mostly second-hand knowledge, but I have experience of its fruits in works of his former students which I have read to great profit, and in the warmth of relationships with them that I still enjoy. The most recent evidence is found in the book that inspired this panel, Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull.

Here I must limit myself to what I know best, James’s work during the last twenty years of his life, years of peace and tranquillity, years of quiet contemplation, yet years also in which he entered fully again into family life with all that entails, including children to love and educate and a wife with “too many irons in the fire” whom he loved, and by whom he was loved, to excess. Over those years, he spent hours each day at his work, in an easy chair usually, reading and thinking, making notes and sketches of arguments which eventually would be fodder for one draft or another of the paper that was engaging him at the time. His habits, as all who knew him would attest, were orderly — rising at a certain hour, working continuously in the mornings, and
if the matter were pressing, then after lunch until supper, frequently going for a walk in the afternoons, dining modestly after a drink of Scotch, retiring at more or less the same hour every night unless we were entertaining or invited out with friends for dinner. And if I was not teaching, then my life too happily fell into that pattern, except for attending as needs be to those “irons in the fire”. We would often think of our life together as having a kind of monastic order, something that delighted us both.

For several of those years he continued to teach, at Dalhousie until 1988, and in collaboration with Lin Jackson at Memorial until 1993. When he was in Halifax during teaching terms, he and I corresponded – handwritten epistles which I treasure, full of detail about his teaching, his writing, his thoughts in an ongoing dialogue with me. In addition to what I remember then, I have these marvelous letters to turn to in reconstructing at least some of the intellectual labours of those twenty years.

Although I had heard about James for years from the Jacksons, I only really got to know him when he came to Newfoundland in the summer of 1979, and then returned as Visiting Professor in our department in the Fall. It was just after his return to Nova Scotia in 1980 following his tenure at Memorial that the political foment of the 80's in Canada began. During the summer of 1980 there were intensive negotiations by the federal and provincial governments on constitutional renewal to lead to patriation, something that Trudeau and the majority of premiers had promised if Quebecers rejected the sovereignty-association mandate in the May 1980 referendum. These negotiations ended in failure.¹ Lin Jackson had been writing pieces about these constitutional matters for the two local newspapers, the Evening Telegram and the Daily News and had the ear of Brian Peckford, then premier of Newfoundland, providing him with needed arguments and principles in these critical discussions.²

James described him accurately as “philosophical consultant to the government.” [Letter to Floy, Sept. 19, 1980] When Trudeau proposed the unilateral patriation of the Constitution to Parliament in October, 1980, euphemistically called the “people’s package” as giving to the individual Canadian a “charter of rights and freedoms” despite provincial objections, it did not appear immediately that provincial governments grasped the enormity of Trudeau’s proposal. But Lin and James, in active collaboration across the Strait, set out to inform them.

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¹ In part, failure seemed to be the federal strategy from the beginning, as revealed in the leaked document popularly called the “Kirby Memorandum”, since this would give the federal government a free hand to design the Constitution they wanted. Although the Government had sought the consent of the provinces, it maintained that it was not legally required to do so. In this the Federal Government was supported by two provinces, Ontario and New Brunswick.

² Peckford even quoted from one of Lin’s pieces as though Lin were his authority.
James enlisted colleagues and students to do what they could to save the Constitution of Canada. He plotted strategy with Wayne Hankey, especially concerning the involvement of the British government. Wayne, back and forth to Oxford at the time, had a letter published in the *Times* to very good effect, and James wrote to a number of premiers arguing that they should make their opposition clear to the British government. Although the Trudeau government was trying to convince us that Britain would just go along with whatever the Canadian Government wanted, it was important to undermine that confidence and show it to be false. James wrote to Lin:

> As the Brits become conscious how they have been taken in by Trud., one can expect that they will be stubborn, not saying much but letting the opposition to Trud. show itself – to the point where it is obvious that they have no course but to stay out of the fight. Trud. will gamble everything. I have sent your things and Wayne’s *Times* letter to Edmund Morris, the N.S. Minister in charge of these matters. When he has digested them I propose to talk with him in the hope that he will take himself to London to add another voice to the provincial clamour.”
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In December 1980, James produced his “Open Letter to Members of the House of Commons and especially of the Senate of Canada” urging them to defeat the “package”, both as against the Constitution and as destructive of Parliament itself. I quote from parts of that piece:

> There can be little room for doubt what Mr. Trudeau and those about him intend in their revision of the constitution. Their idea of Canada is a centralized technocracy which will draw its authority directly from the people and not through the federal parliament and, as required, the agreement of provincial governments. ... Government by opinion polls and propaganda is contemptuous and destructive of parliament. The elected members of the Commons have no longer to interpret the public interest but to acquiesce in the polls and the propaganda. They are no longer parliamentarians but have in principle the function of members of a supreme soviet – to agree with the leadership. ... Patriation is a mocking and empty legalism if achieved against the provinces and the constitution itself. What is one to say of it, if the end of colonialism is made the beginning of a technocratic despotism.

James traveled to Newfoundland to spend Christmas 1980 with his Newfoundland friends. On Dec. 27, after a day spent reading the *Paradiso* together, quite wondrously and unexpectedly from all sides, James and I were drawn inevitably to the decision to marry. He was thus led from the practical contemplation of the state in the Constitution debate to the simultaneous contemplation of the family, and these two preoccupations, family and state, would be the intellectual and practical work of the rest of his life. We were married in Newfoundland two months later, on Feb. 21, 1981. But back to the chronology of events in these critical times.
After the Christmas break, James returned to Nova Scotia in early January and continued to battle to save the country on that front. He discussed with Wayne how they might try to move the Nova Scotia government, occupied it seemed with trying to extract an agreement with Ottawa on offshore resources, to a better position on the Constitution. By this time, the eight dissident provinces challenged the unilateral patriation attempt in the courts of Manitoba, Quebec and Newfoundland. The decision of the Court of Appeals of Manitoba came out in early February, 1981, three to two in favour of the Federal position, hardly the endorsement the Government needed; and things could only get worse in the courts of Quebec and Newfoundland.3

James was very pleased with the threatened revolt against the “package” in the Senate: “Clearly they have been reading my letter!” he wrote on Feb.6, 1981. From the press it appeared that the Liberal plot in the House of Commons was now falling apart; and there were even more damaging reports from Britain: the leaked record of the discussion between McGuigan, Minister of Justice, and Pym, the British High Commissioner, showed that so called “British assurances” of easy passage were entirely false. Pym gave no assurance that even if the government won all three cases, the Trudeau package could be got through the Commons and the Lords. Hilary Armstrong, writing to James from England at this time, comments: “I’m glad you think we’re not doing too badly over the Canadian Constitution. I was rather pleased myself, especially with our Commons Committee. Even if Maggie the Mammonite ... did do some sort of deal with Trudeau she’s in too deep trouble, even in her own party, to get away with anything.” [18 Feb. 1981] Thus, in the Senate of Canada and in Britain, matters seemed to be going well.

What was still required was to provide to the premiers a clear sense of provincial sovereignty, and then to offer useful comments to them on the amending formula and on the proposed Charter of Rights. Lin published the excellent article, “Newfoundland’s Sovereignty and the Case of the Provinces” [Daily News, Feb. 28, 1981], which he sent to every premier, and James produced “Provincial Sovereignty and the Canadian Constitution” [1981]. James, preoccupied with the Charter of Rights, had a strategy session with Wayne, and wrote to me: “There is need of several attacks on this. Partly we shall draw two former students now doing law and somewhat read in the relation of the Charter to the legal tradition – what it will do to this tradition, how revolutionary a break is proposed, etc. Then something more simply and briefly on the principles. I shall try to get something done this week.” [9 March 1981]. He intended also a brief statement on the amending formula, both to be sent to the premiers. It was most
important that the premiers be firm: they would be negotiating from a position of strength if they held together and were secure in their position.

The judgment of the Newfoundland Court of Appeals came out at the end of March, clearly affirming the spirit of Canada as was defended by Lin, James and their associates. A reference to the Supreme Court of Canada was made at the end of April, and we waited its decision, with the hope that, like the excellent judgment in Newfoundland, it would not hang on legalisms and technicalities. The decision came down on 28 September 1981, stating that unilateral patriation, though legal, was inconsistent with constitutional convention which required “substantial” consent of the provinces. In the Canadian way, they meant neither unilateralism nor unanimity. It was a decision described by one scholar as “bold statecraft based on questionable jurisprudence”, and by Trudeau in this way: “No doubt believing in good faith that a political agreement would be better for Canada than unilateral legal patriation, they blatantly manipulated the evidence before them so as to arrive at the desired result. They then wrote a judgment which tried to lend a fig-leaf of legality to their preconceived conclusion.”

It was not a very satisfactory judgment, but it achieved the desired result as far as we were concerned; the Federal government could not unilaterally patriate the Constitution. I looked to Lin and to James, and thought, perhaps naively, that those two had by great effort organized and led an opposition to the Trudeau package which saved the country, at least for the time being. We had won the battle, but as it later turned out we would lose the war.

Negotiations between the Federal Government and the provinces recommenced at a first ministers’ conference on November 2, 1981. Shortly before this, James had sent to the premiers the paper, “What Can the Provinces Concede to the Federal Government in the Coming Constitutional Conference?” He described the production of the piece in a letter to me dated October 26, 1981:

This morning I worked in my office, then got the piece being typed, and helped Mrs. Cooley to make copies of it and sections from an earlier article on the amending formula and the Ch. of Rights. When we had everything put together and addressed I took it to the P.O. and got it in the afternoon mail – marked first class. So [the premiers] should have my piece and be encouraged to do their bit for the advent of the new era when Ontario will be a province like all the others. Better to seem to lose next week then to give away anything that could be used to stabilize the moribund system which drives Quebec, Alberta, Nfld. to separate or wish they could!

The strategy of the Government of Canada was, as one might expect, “divide and conquer” – try to win over the three “moderate” premiers of Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, or failing that, try to break the common front, the “Constitutional Accord” of the eight dissident provinces which would patriate simply with an amending formula. The results are well enough known, the “night of the long knives” which gave to us the Constitution Act of 1982 with an amending formula and the Charter of Rights, both unacceptable to Quebec. But as James knew from his attention to these things, the Charter of Rights understood as prior to government was inconsistent with parliamentary government, indeed with political institutions per se. Thus, in addition to the alienation of Quebec there was a fundamental flaw in the Constitution Act of 1982. The only relief from this inconsistency was the “Notwithstanding Clause”, thought by Trudeau and his cohort as a blemish which should be removed from the Constitution.

In 1984, the Mulroney government came to power and indicated its willingness to redress Quebec’s grievances with the Constitution under the proviso that there be precise terms to be negotiated. Later that year Robert Bourassa’s Liberals were elected in Quebec, and in May, 1985, Gil Rémillard announced Quebec’s five conditions for accepting the Constitution Act 1982: recognition of Quebec as a “distinct society”, a constitutional veto for Quebec, provincial participation in the nomination of Supreme Court justices, opting out of federal programmes under provincial jurisdiction with compensation, and strengthened provincial powers over immigration. We thought these conditions eminently reasonable, and looked favourably therefore on the “Quebec round” called for by the premiers in the Edmonton Declaration of August, 1986, federal-provincial negotiations using Quebec’s five conditions as the basis of discussion.

What was produced was the Meech Lake Accord [1987], which accepted the five conditions and that in a transcendent way – universalizing them and in the process nullifying the principal flaws in the Constitution Act of 1982. A constitutional veto extended to every province over changes to fundamental institutions, opting out with compensation for every province – these elements acknowledged the fundamental sovereignty of provinces. In addition, the “distinct society” clause imposed constraints on the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, not explicitly but in principle. It implied that for Quebec, as indeed for any sovereign polity, rights are not prior to government. We were ecstatic with the result of the work of the premiers.

But the Meech Lake Accord began to unravel on several fronts: concerns from the West about the Amending Formula which would make Senate reform very difficult, concerns from various interest groups – women’s organizations, aboriginal peoples, multicultural groups – who complained their interests had been ignored or undermined, and an unease about the “distinct society” clause. Moreover, between 1987 and 1990, the terminal date for the passage of the Accord in all provincial legislatures, three provinces had new governments either hostile to the Accord [the Wells government in Newfoundland], desirous of adding to the Accord [the McKenna government in New Brunswick], or with internal problems threatening passage [Manitoba]. To address the concerns of those who felt excluded from the Accord the McKenna
government insisted that passage of the Accord in New Brunswick required the addition of the “Companion Resolution”. When the House of Commons established a committee headed by Jean Charest to hold hearings on this “Companion Resolution”, Lucien Bouchard promptly resigned from the Mulroney government at what he took to be betrayal. James wrote to him urging patience. At the Charest hearings held in Newfoundland, James presented a submission, “The Opposition to the Meech Lake Accord and Premier McKenna’s ‘Companion Resolution’”[1990], drawing out the incongruity between the “Companion Resolution” and the original Accord. Lin and I also presented submissions. Lin and Marion, James and I, together in Nova Scotia on the fateful day, June 22, 1990, saw the Accord die when Clyde Wells refused to let the matter come to a vote in the provincial House of Assembly. We had been in constant contact with James Ross Hurley, Director of Constitutional Affairs in the Privy Council, but there was little anyone could do.

The subsequent efforts to salvage something of the Accord centered on addressing the problems with the Amending Formula of Meech Lake and on including those who felt excluded from Meech Lake. We (James, Lin and I) dutifully presented submissions to the two joint commissions of Parliament addressing these matters, the Beaudoin/Edwards Commission on the Amending Formula⁵, to address the difficulties principally of the West with the provincial veto, and the Beaudoin/Dobbie Commission on a Renewed Canada⁶. We held out hope for what might come of these efforts, and were relieved when the Charlottetown Accord was defeated in a national referendum. Thus, James’s active political efforts came to a close. He remained convinced that some form of the Meech Lake Accord would someday be constitutionalized if Canada were to amount to anything. But that he left to the operations of the World Spirit.

From 1981 to 1987, James led a very active life, commuting between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland at least every three weeks during teaching terms, engaging with others in the political battles described here, teaching a full range of courses, directing graduate students, and at the same time devoting himself to thinking and writing about the two institutions which were his great preoccupations – family and state. This is explicitly undertaken, of course, in “The Christian Origins of Contemporary Institutions” published in Dionysius. Part I in 1982, Part II in 1984, quite wonderful histories of the ancient world and the early Christian world to St. Augustine. The second concludes with “To be continued”, and indeed the argument was continued, although not in as explicit a way as in the two aforementioned pieces. How are the other elements of his bibliography to be understood? What concerned him practically from 1980 was the preservation and renewal of Canada and the consolidation of his family. What he writes during those years grows out of those primary practical interests, and in turn comprehends and sustains them. These are not new interests, but in his last twenty years they have a new focus

⁵. James’s submission was titled, “The Amending Formula and the Constitution of Canada”.

⁶. James submitted “The Relation of the ‘Canada Clause’ to the Canadian Constitution”.

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and intensity. All his thinking, all his writing, when entirely self-initiated and self-determined are toward the clarification of these two great human institutions, family and state, historically and in relation to the Christian religion.

Of course, sometimes he would have obligations to produce something on a given theme, for a Festschrift, for example, or as an invited speaker at a conference. In 1982-83, we both were on sabbatical leave and living in Chester. We would be in the “blue room” together, I working on Leibniz and he working for part of the time on “The Concept of Enlightenment”, a Festschrift piece for his friend, Peter Michelsen, a scholar of English literature, particularly 18th century literature. The piece treats of the English Enlightenment, the “immediate form of Enlightenment”, partly through the principal literary figures of the 18th century: Henry Fielding, Lawrence Sterne, and finally of Jane Austen whom he regarded as the logical completion of the insufficiency and mutual dependence of sentiment and abstract reason as present in that literature. The afternoons and evenings we would often spend reading this great literature to each other: Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, Tristam Shandy, Emma, Persuasion, a practice which continued long after the piece was finished. The Festschrift piece in honour of George Grant, “Naturalistic Individualism: Quebec Independence and an Independent Canada” [1983] was, of course, both very appropriate to George’s work and came out of James’s own interests of that time. I don’t remember him writing the piece, so I assume it was already in the hands of the press before I was part of his life. About the Festschrift piece for Findlay, “Findlay and Plato”, Dennis House can give an interesting account – not precisely of that piece, but of the one which was first written for the Festschrift, stillborn until Dennis recently resuscitated it [Dionysius XIX (2001), 10-25]. Again, this was before my time.

In 1985, James was invited by Clifford Orwin to present a paper at a conference at the University of Toronto, “Hegel’s Critique of Antique Virtue”. In that piece, later published in Dionysius, James devotes a section of four pages in a relatively short paper to the topic of “The Source of Contemporary Difficulties with Hegel’s Critique”, drawing out the impediments from the side of existential interpretations and from Marxist interpretations on the other side. I had noted this sort of reflection before. From the first piece on Christian Institutions, he seemed compelled, or rather found it necessary, to begin with a critique of contemporary modes of understanding to show that from their standpoint the position he would expound could make no sense. These contemporary modes fell roughly into a liberal or socialist – at its extreme, a Marxist – understanding on the one side, and an existentialist – at its extreme, a fascistic – form on the other. In this case, speaking as he was to a largely Straussian audience, there was a very good reason to caution them, since as he says in the paper, the Straussian sees all from the existential side, rejecting the Marxist technical side, whereas the Hegelian philosophy “shows as unified the elements which are in them most strongly divided,” [Dionysius IX (1985), 8]. James

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7. In “The Christian Origins of Contemporary Institutions”, Part One, Dionysius VI, this critique is found from pp. 112 to 118.
knew that all philosophy, and the Hegelian philosophy in particular, would be read in this divided way. He knew that commentaries on it, roughly Marxist or existentialist, would mislead. Hence these critiques to warn the reader that what he will read will strike him as eccentric or possibly unintelligible; and perhaps the problem is with the reader. This division in interpretation plagues all of contemporary life – even, I might add, constitutional issues in Canada.

James’s ongoing concern with the Canadian Constitution and more generally with the philosophical dimension of constitutional discussion in Canada, precisely what kind of polity Canada is from its history, how it differs from the European Union on the one side and from the United States on the other is addressed in the article, “The Relation of the Charter of Rights to the Canadian Constitution” [Machray Review 2 (1992)], and more comprehensively in “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada” [Animus 2 (1997)]. It was a topic he loved to discuss, and many evenings were spent with Lin and Marion Jackson, and with David Peddle whenever he was about, discussing Canadian politics and its possibilities.

Several have noted that James’s view of the United States changed over the years – even suggesting facetiously that this had something to do with him taking an American wife. Those writing in Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull understand the matter much more seriously. Let me add this to the argument. One can notice a difference in his appraisal of the American Republic even in the two pieces mentioned above. In the 1992 piece he persists in detecting an unresolved contradiction between “rights” Americans everywhere assert and a stable government on which they rely but which is undermined by the “separation of powers” in the American Constitution. Canada in this respect might be thought potentially a more perfect polity if it could recognize the folly of asserting Charter rights as prior to the state. But in the later paper, looking at the whole history of the American republic, he is able to write:

In a recognition of the priority of the state to society the relation of powers would be seen differently ... When and in what ways they might find an acceptable response in continuity with their political traditions is for the future to disclose. One who attends to American freedom and the spirit moving in their institutions can hardly doubt that, whenever it might be, they will resolve appropriately also this most difficult of divisions. It is sufficient for the present inquiry to have shown that the whole movement of American political history is toward the reversal of an assumed priority of society to state.8

8. Animus 2 (1997), 131-2. What is “society” as understood here? It is the community of “free individuals” where the free individual has himself as his end, and an interest in others as likewise having their end in themselves. Cf. 63.
Although Canada from its history enjoyed the right relation of society to state\textsuperscript{9}, the 1982 Constitution undermined that relation. After the failure of Meech Lake, Canadian politics was not very exciting for us. The malaise in Canada was the direct result of the Constitution Act of 1982 and the failure of Meech Lake. James had the keenest interest always in what the country had been and could be, if it could come to know its principle. And in this the American Republic becomes for Canada the model, not in the details of the American Constitution but as a state whose history gives the greatest reason for confidence in its ultimate success. Canada, if it can find its way similarly to institutions in agreement with its history, and the tendency of that history, might also achieve success appropriate to itself. But as I remember our discussions about Canadian politics and its possibilities, James did not have the same confidence that Canada would succeed as he had about the United States. But he would not give up on Canada, as is very clear in the 1997 article.

In 1994 he was invited to participate in an international conference titled: “Mysticism, Rationalism and Empiricism in the Neoplatonic Tradition”, held at Maynooth, Ireland in the summer of 1995. He began to work on his paper for that conference almost immediately, and worked assiduously for eighteen months, longer and harder than I had ever seen him work. Exercise books of notes piled up, and as a year passed I grew somewhat concerned that he had not actually begun to write the paper. Then there were the beginnings but not yet the proper form of the paper. I would ask, tentatively at first, then perhaps with more concern, when he might begin the paper itself. He would reply blissfully that he could only do so when moved by the Muses, and I would retire to my own work in some combination of consternation and amusement. I too had to wait on the Muses, but when I set pencil to paper, and the first sentence was on the page, the paper seemed to write itself, all footnotes completed, without need to revise. I was fairly certain that my first sentence, which called forth the rest, was entirely a contingent matter. When he actually began to write a piece, he would read sections to me as they were completed, and if he were sufficiently satisfied he would give them to me to be typed. I knew that James would rewrite several times over – drafts which to me were perfectly clear he would discard. It was the logic of the piece that had to be there before him, and I could tell that for him there was only one way this Neoplatonism paper could be written. He would say affectionately, “My dear, if only I could write as you do ...,” but I knew better – that this method of his was necessitated by the fullness of his comprehension and the logic of the subject itself. Still, I would be typing the final pages of his paper, it seemed to me, almost as we were boarding the aircraft to take us to the conference, or on the very last day the paper could be submitted to the publisher. Partly this was the consequence of his immense erudition, partly the comprehensiveness of his knowledge. But he could not treat of a subject except with complete thoroughness, and papers tended therefore to run away with him.

\textsuperscript{9}“At the same time, as the argument has shown, there is great need in the United States that the relation of society to state approach more nearly the Canadian model,” \textit{ibid}, 205.
Take the treatment of human institutions, for example. He intended, as is clear in the second part of “The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions”, to treat of Ancient Christianity, of Medieval Christianity, of the older modern age, and finally of contemporary culture. Indeed he was writing toward that end in the second part. But ancient Christianity, treated with the depth and thoroughness evident in that piece, already consumed a third of the volume of *Dionysius*, and took him the better part of a year to write. But what writing! I recall how exciting I found the first part, its treatment of ancient Judaism, the Hellenic religion and literature, Roman religion, and emerging from that the announcement of the Kingdom of God. It was an education in the whole of the classical world, and the emergence of ancient Christianity from that world.

But what about the rest? He regarded his long piece on Neoplatonism as providing what he would have done of Medieval Christianity, as the next installment then of the theme of the Christian origins of human institutions, and as leading inexorably to the Cartesian philosophy and the older modern age.

James was required to write something on Plato for *Animus* Volume 4 of *Animus*, and so began his treatment of *Parmenides*, the argument to the “hypotheses” appearing in that volume (1999). The continuation of the argument of *Parmenides*, “The hypotheses of Plato’s *Parmenides*”, was written for inclusion in *Philosophy and Freedom*. But the work to which he always turned when nothing else was required of him was Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, to which he returned several months before he died. He was writing an article for *Animus* “on the lesson of Hegelian phenomenology for an understanding of post-modern philosophical and political culture”, in Lin’s words. James left four drafts or fragments with considerable overlap, but each having elements not found in the others. From these Lin reconstructed as best he could James’s final paper, “Hegel’s Phenomenology and Postmodern Thought”. James’s interest in this paper is not to begin a commentary on the internal argument of the *Phenomenology*, but to show it as the logical statement of the standpoint of modern philosophy and as introductory to a new post-modern philosophical perspective, as calling it forth from the logic of the older modern philosophy. In the outline of how he would treat of human institutions stated above, indeed in the very title “The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions”, the final paper would find its place as gathering the whole thrust of the older modern age and ushering in a post-modern, post-Christian philosophical spirit. In the emergence of this post-modern spirit, its first appearance as “externalized spirit”, as James puts it, there is the inevitability of its dividing into existing individuals on the one hand, or as humanity on the other; their “rights” on one side, their “cultures” on the other. Thus, the older philosophy and the Christian religion are inevitably misunderstood in this division in one or other abstraction. That Canada cannot find its way to a proper sense of itself is likewise to be expected, caught as it is in the conflict of “rights” on one side and the state on the other. What might be surprising is that the Hegelian philosophy had provision in itself for this third development. About the present state of affairs, James writes:
The history of the post-Christian, post-modern world has since run its course to the point of a scepticism which no longer knows whether philosophical thought is possible at all; whether there could be a free self-consciousness where mind is assimilated to body and their relation a mystery. In the practical realm, universal rights are ascribed to individuals as prior to all institutional relations; but what the universality of right and its articulation as a plurality could mean from this standpoint of externalized spirit is not intelligible. The meaning of rights and their application becomes in this context a matter of arbitrary and shifting judgment. Institutions as predicated on indeterminate rights lose their cohesion and capacity to unify divided opinions, the exercise of power tending therefore to be arbitrary and tyrannical.

James’s writing in his last twenty years achieves a roundedness and completion in this final, posthumous publication.

Let me end with this. When on that extraordinary day, Dec. 27, 1980, James and I determined to marry, I knew that, apart from obligations to my two young children, I was prepared to die, so comprehensively did that decision integrate my whole life – spiritually, practically, philosophically. I told him that almost immediately. Later in a letter he confessed a like sentiment, but with this reservation, “when my work is done.” In some way I could understand what he meant, but still found the words puzzling. He and I were engaged in similar work, I thought, and I knew that I could lay down my pencil in mid-sentence without any particular loss to anyone. Moreover I knew he had no illusions about the likely effects of his writings on a general or even a philosophical audience. He only wrote, he often told me, for those few among friends and colleagues who might find something useful in what he had to say. Did he, I wondered, have some work within him, a magnum opus of sorts, needing only the Muses to bring it forth? Were the projects he had set out before him – an exposition of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, a commentary on Plato’s Parmenides, the commentary on Hegel’s Phenomenology – more to him than just the next thing he would turn to when what he was working on at the time was done. Our life together, “in one way austere and totally serious, then also immediate, laughing, free,” as James once described it, was a continuous meditatio mortis, as is fitting for those engaged in philosophy. So I would occasionally ask him, after the children were grown, did he think he was ready to lay down the burdens of this life at any time, as I was. And his answer would be the same – “...if my work is done.” A year or so before he died he told me that he hoped for a bit more time in this world because what he thought about was so much clearer to him now. His “work”, I knew then, was not what he wrote, but the thinking itself. When it was evident to him in his last days that he could not work – he could not think in the ICU with that clarity that had been his – he told me he wanted to be moved to palliative care. There he lay down his life with courage and dignity.

10.”Hegel’s Phenomenology and Postmodern thought”. 15
An Introduction To James Doull's Interpretation Of Aristotle

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My goal in this paper is a modest one: I want to draw your attention to what I see as some of the central aspects of James Doull's interpretation of Aristotle. My treatment of these points will remain fairly general and it will not even approach being comprehensive. My intention is to provide one possible entry into Doull's interpretation, not to encapsulate it. Those who have studied Doull's work closely will recognize the limitations of what I have to say. I will attempt to introduce Doull's interpretation using language and categories which, if not my own, are at least familiar to me. This will make it difficult for me not to fall into the kind of one-sidedness that it was Doull's virtue as a philosopher to overcome. (Whether he does so completely is a deep and difficult question which is beyond the scope of this paper.) Doull is similar to Aristotle and Hegel in that his language is so scientific and so precise that one finds oneself, having tried to express his thought in other terms, often coming back to his own as the most appropriate form to its content. Hegel criticizes those interpreters of Aristotle who rely too heavily on Aristotle's illustrative similes (such as the simile of the wax and the signet-ring in the discussion of sense-perception in the De Anima, commonly taken to be a straight-forward statement of empiricism).\(^1\) Hegel's point is that these are meant by Aristotle to illustrate one aspect of a particular thought but are not sufficient to the whole thought. I fear that what I have to say about Doull is similar, latching on to the easier images, though this is not quite the right way to put the matter, because in Doull there are no images (this is a virtue of his thought and necessary to it, but for us it is part of the difficulty in comprehending it). My fear is that the attempt to grasp his thought in categories inadequate to it is to make something like an image of it. However, Aristotle wisely says that we must start with what is most intelligible to us and progress to what is most intelligible in itself. In relation to Doull's thought this paper is at the beginning of that process, but perhaps for that reason it will be helpful to those less familiar with his work.

Professor Doull developed a comprehensive understanding of Aristotle which reveals a certain kind of systematic and dialectical thought in Aristotle's philosophy not commonly held to be present by recent scholarship. The systematic nature of Aristotle's thought is not explicit in the form of his treatises, but is to be found in the content which emerges from them. Doull argues that the speculative character of Aristotle's thought is lost sight of in Aristotle's immediate successors and is not fully recognized again until the modern period.\(^2\) Doull's idea, I think, is that in the tradition which develops, Aristotle is taken as the spokesman of what Hegel (as he is usually translated) calls the 'understanding' ('Verstand') while Plato is taken as the complementary spokesman of what Hegel calls 'reason' ('Vernunft'). This is to reverse the relation of the original Platonism and Aristotelianism, for in this it is Aristotle, Doull argues, who has successfully moved from the penultimate to the ultimate standpoint in Plato's simile of the line, from \textit{dianoia} to \textit{noesis}. (This is not only Doull's judgement. In the \textit{Metaphysics} Aristotle says that the Platonic dialectic is merely critical while philosophy knows.)\(^3\) I will say something about the first insight (that is, the systematic and dialectical nature of Aristotle's thought) and I will say something about the last point regarding Aristotle's achievement, but I am not competent to elucidate nor to judge Doull's interpretation of the Hellenistic and mediaeval reception and incorporation of Aristotle.

Important to Doull's interpretation of Aristotle is an argument that there is a continuity and development from Plato to Aristotle. Contrary to most standard interpretations, Doull argues that Aristotle not only understands Plato but is sympathetic to Plato's specific philosophical aspirations.\(^4\) Aristotle is understood by Doull to arrive at a first principle which is actual and is an effectual teleological principle. This is what Plato was seeking and had poetically expressed in the middle dialogues but was frustrated in articulating in its logical form (that is, in thought rather than image) in the later dialogues from the \textit{Parmenides} on. I should note that Doull accepts, on philosophical grounds, J.N. Findlay's division of the Platonic dialogues into four groups according to the extent to which the Platonic philosophy is disclosed in them: 1. Socratic; 2. ideological (\textit{Meno, Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus, Republic}); 3. stoicheiological (\textit{Cratylus, Theaetetus, Parmenides, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Epistles}); and 4. Plato's philosophy of the

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concrete (Timaeus, Critias, Laws, Epinomis). However, Doull would make an important correction to Findlay's view about the Platonism which is gradually revealed in the dialogues:

While certainly Plato nowhere reveals his philosophy directly in the Dialogues, as would be incompatible with that literary form, it would not depart far from Findlay's view to think that the same Platonism can be elicited from them as in the Unwritten Doctrines - that the sin of those who depend solely on the Dialogues for their account is also that they read them in a capricious, selective manner, and with assumptions quite arbitrary about the developments and changes in Plato's thought. If the Dialogues are read speculatively and with the knowledge that, as Hegel says, the philosopher does not possess and use such philosophy as Plato's, but is rather possessed by it and must disclose it, then one can find this Platonism also there.6

Doull's interpretation brings into question the predominant interpretation of Aristotle as an empiricist in contrast to Plato the idealist. He challenges us to ask whether the terms of this supposed opposition between Aristotle and Plato are not anachronistically imposed on Aristotle's texts.7 An important factor in the tenacity of accepting the assumption of an opposition between Aristotle and Plato as a starting point of interpretation can be found in the influence of Werner Jaeger's developmental hypothesis which claims to find a multiplicity of irreconcilable strands in Aristotle's thought and to explain these in terms of significant shifts in his philosophical views and preoccupations.8 The multifarious and often diametrically opposed conclusions about Aristotle's intellectual development arrived at by scholars employing Jaeger's methodology have revealed the limitations of that methodology. However, the general view that there is a multiplicity of divergent strands in Aristotle's thought has continued to have a pervasive influence. In particular it is often assumed that aetiology (the science of causes), ontology (the science of being qua being), ousiologist (the science of substance) and theology (the science of God) do not sit well together in the Metaphysics.9 What is important in this is that if we assume


6 "Findlay and Plato", 255.

7 Cf. "The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions", 141: the original Aristotelianism could not be "an empiricism contaminated still with a mythological remnant, especially in its theology and psychology" because "there was not then a reason so well settled into finite interests as to see the principal questions of an older philosophy as mythical, linguistic, speculative in a bad sense; to take as standard a mathematicized logic which had lost the power to discriminate categories; to look for a knowledge of the soul through its powers fragmented and frozen into various empirical attitudes."


9. The alternative to this view need not be, and surely is not, the naïve view of "Aristotle as a man born with a golden system in his mind" to use the words of John M. Rist, The Mind of Aristotle: a Study in Philosophical
that at different stages in his intellectual development Aristotle contradicts himself or has
different interests then it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to rely on the content of Aristotle's
thought itself as our interpretative guide. Thus such an assumption lends itself to construing
isolated sections of Aristotle's texts in the categories of later philosophical debates, and in
particular encourages the dismissal of or inattention to Aristotle's theology. Doull, by contrast,
argues that the articulation of God as the concrete actuality of self-thinking thought (noesis
noeseos) is central to the illumination of Aristotle's works (and indeed to the illumination of
philosophy itself), rather than an anomaly or a remnant of superstition in them. Doull argues that
it is the development of pure categories of thought which allows Aristotle to succeed where Plato
had been frustrated, allowing him to explicate the first principle and to understand nature and the
soul in their distinction from and relation to that principle.

Crucial to Doull's interpretation of Aristotle is his philosophical judgement that
Aristotle's philosophy has its genesis in the problems with which Plato is struggling by the time
he writes the Parmenides and the attempt to answer these problems in the dialogues which
follow the Parmenides. This judgement, of course, involves as much an interpretation of Plato
as it does of Aristotle.

In what follows I am going to try to give a somewhat schematic view of how Doull
understands the problem facing Plato in the later dialogues. I will then say something about
Aristotle's reformulation of this problem. And then I will try to make some headway in
understanding how Doull understands Aristotle to have come to a resolution of Plato's problem.
My idea in following this course is that if we can understand the nature of Aristotle's resolution
as Doull sees it, then we will be in a better position to understand Doull's interpretation of
Aristotle more generally. In this I am following Doull's lead. He argues that to understand the
original Aristotelianism we need to understand its genes in the Platonic philosophy.

The central problem facing Plato in the later dialogues is to show how the (Platonic) One
is productive of what is other than it. Doull says of J.N. Findlay's systematic Platonism and
Heidegger's pluralism that they are complementary rather than exclusive attitudes towards Plato.
Doull comments that in Plato "to be systematic, while it depends on an enlightenment and
insight, is also a choice whether one will regard the ambiguous phenomena primarily according
to their eidetic order and limit or as indeterminate and disordered. In Timaeus, the Demiurgos
himself is represented as making that choice".10 I think Doull's point here is a two-fold one.
First, Plato's system, as it stands by the time of the later dialogues, is susceptible to falling into
either one of these extremes and is inadequate when it does. But second, Plato's intention is to
hold the two together. We might state this second point by saying that Plato, in the dialogues
from the Parmenides on, is trying to comprehend how the (Platonic) One is the (Platonic) Good.


Growth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), xi. For a detailed discussion of Jaeger's method and
influence, and a response to this cf. G. Reale, The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of
In the middle (ideological or *eidetic*) dialogues, when the Forms are laid down as hypotheses, their principle is what Socrates refers to as the Good. In the later dialogues, which concern themselves with an examination of the elements or principles of the Forms, these principles, Doull argues, are properly thought of as what Aristotle refers to as the One and the Dyad.\(^{11}\) Plato moves in this direction because he takes unity to be a substantial principle. There is a tension between the one principle of the middle dialogues and the two principles of the later dialogues, and this is a frustration for Plato. What he wants and incipiently knows is necessary, is that he be able to come to one principle which is productive of determinations which are self-determinations. This is how Doull understands the imagery of the *Republic*: the Forms are the self-determinations of the Good. In the *Phaedo*, Plato has Socrates give his intellectual biography.\(^{12}\) In this he tells us how excited he was by the reports about Anaxagoras' discovery that it is *nous* (mind) that produces order and is the cause of everything. Socrates says: "This explanation pleased me. Somehow it seemed right that mind should be the cause of everything, and I reflected that if this is so, mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual thing in the way that is best for it".\(^{13}\) It is significant here that we have an identification between the rational and the Good. Socrates continues: "I assumed that he [Anaxagoras] would begin by informing us whether the earth is flat or round, and would then proceed to explain in detail the reason and logical necessity for this by stating how and why it was better that it should be so. … if he made this clear, I was prepared to give up hankering after any other kind of cause".\(^{14}\) In his commentary on the *Phaedo*, Dennis House has very nicely summed up what is at issue here, and so I will quote him at length:

Socrates obtained Anaxagoras' books hoping that he would find how *Nous* is effectively the total cause of Becoming. He expected Anaxagoras would generate the cosmos from *Nous* explaining that it is best and rationally necessary that the heavenly bodies and each phenomenon in turn be of such and such a nature and arranged in such and such a way [*Phaedo* 97d5 - 98b6]. The knowledge Socrates sought would explain how *Nous* is cause both as that from which all things are derived and determined, and as that to which all things are returning. In other words, Socrates hoped to discover how *Nous* is implicitly and explicitly the determined end of all the objects of nature.\(^{15}\)

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Now it is not Plato's primary concern to save the phenomena. However, it is a primary concern of his to save the self-identity (the substantiality) of the many Forms, to know how there can be anything other than the One. Doull argues that in the dialogue Parmenides the character Parmenides (for clarity let us call him, as Doull does, the Platonic Parmenides) challenges Plato on this very point. Zeno had argued that a plurality of sensible beings is unthinkable. His argument is in the form of a reductio in support of the historical Parmenides' one undivided being. In the dialogue Socrates has listened to this argument in a reading of Zeno's book. And Socrates' response is to accept the contradictoriness of the sensible but to claim that in the plurality of Forms we have proper, stable objects for thought. The Platonic Parmenides then directs Zeno's criticism to this realm of the Forms and the relation of participation through which Socrates would save the sensible. Doull's interpretation is that Plato is not satisfied with either Socrates' position or with the position of the Platonic Parmenides.\(^\text{16}\) If Plato can show how the One is the Good, then he will have moved beyond the opposition of Socrates and the Platonic Parmenides.\(^\text{17}\) The dialogue Parmenides does not successfully resolve this opposition. Doull argues that the reflections in the dialogues Sophist and Philebus move closer to knowing what a resolution would be, but still fall short of it. That they do fall short is evidenced in the last dialogues. Doull interprets these dialogues as attempting to give a philosophy of nature and spirit: "In these writings Plato has before him the relation of Nature, and then of human life and history, to the principle—their separation from the principle and relation as separate to it."\(^\text{18}\) But these works are found ultimately to be inadequate to their task. There is need, in the Timaeus for example, of a demiourgos who brings what are naturally opposed principles together to produce the world (to produce nature and the soul). That there is a return to myth in the Timaeus is itself evidence that an adequate resolution of Plato's problem has not been grasped. The mythical

\(^{16}\) Here, of course, I am referring to the position of the Socrates of the dialogue. In the criticisms of participation the logic of the deuteros plous (literally 'second sailing' though not incorrectly translated as 'second best method') is being tested. Commenting on Doull's interpretation of the Parmenides House writes: "What is present in the doctrine of participation, but hidden in it, is the problem of how one effectively brings together both in knowing and in the known the elements of identity and otherness or difference. The language of [sensibles] 'sharing and not sharing in' [their Ideas or Forms] hides the fact that the connection of the positive and negative moments is not expressed." ("The Criticism of Plato's Doctrine of Participation in Parmenides", 152). In each of the criticisms Socrates emphasizes the former element (undivided unity) while Parmenides emphasizes the latter (endless dividedness). In this we can see the opposition of the principles which Aristotle refers to as the One and the Dyad. For a concise account of Doull's view of the common structure of the criticisms in the Parmenides cf. "Plato's Parmenides", 91.

\(^{17}\) Doull's considered judgement of the second section of the Parmenides which treats of hypotheses dialectically is as follows: "Out of [Parmenides'] criticism of Socrates emerges a new dialectic which for the first time attends seriously to the logic of the production of a kosmos or finite order from one or more archai. The new dialectic attempts to express in a perfectly universal form or logically that the principle cannot be an abstraction beyond its product but must also be comprehensive of it; secondly what the division of product from its cause is logically; and thirdly the relation and dependence of the caused or, as Plato calls it, 'the others' is to the Principle. The result of the dialectic would thus be to have shown the Good as principle." James A. Doull, "The Problem of Participation in Plato's Parmenides," Dionysius XIX (2001), 13.

\(^{18}\) "Findlay and Plato", 258.
element here is not, as John Cooper, the editor of the recent complete works of Plato, would have it, a rhetorical display rather than Plato's usual straight-forward philosophizing. Rather it is Plato's philosophical honesty in treating matters which are not yet within his theoretical grasp. The importance of Plato's images is that they allow us to stand in relation to something which, even if it is intelligible (even if it is the most intelligible of all), we as yet do not understand. For Doull, the impulse of philosophy is to free oneself from a dependency on such images and enter into a pure thinking. Plato's images then could be called a 'third best method'. These are very different from the more circumscribed role of image in Aristotle as illustrative. Even the final myths of Platonic dialogues are not illustrations of a logic which has been adequately explicated earlier in the dialogue. They are Plato's intuitive grasp of what lies beyond the argument and awaits full comprehension.

The problems in the Timaeus are even more evident in the Laws. Here there is an incapacity to reveal adequately the embodiment of rationality. J.N. Findlay was of the opinion that the confusion of the Laws was consequent on a mental failure of Plato's - perhaps a stroke or seizure. Doull responds to this suggestion with the following: "may one not accept Findlay's judgement of the philosophical quality of the Laws and see the explanation of it in the difficulty, or perhaps impossibility, of bringing the Platonic principle concretely into the half-reality of political life?"

Aristotle's interest, according to Doull, is to resolve the central problem of the Parmenides and the dialogues which follow this. His interest is to understand the finite in relation to the infinite in a way in which the finite is not simply nothing. (This needs to be qualified and I will come back to it later). Doull used to say that the problem of the One and the Many is the problem of philosophy. This is to use the language of Plato. When Plato's principles have been revised and corrected by Aristotle, it becomes clearer to speak in terms of the infinite and the finite (though these are not Aristotle's own terms for his comprehensive principle and the principled). Philosophy's question is how we do not just have the infinite or just have the finite. Aristotle's great achievement, according to Doull, is that he has resolved Plato's problem. This is to say that Aristotle is Plato's greatest disciple. He is this in part because he is Plato's greatest critic: he has seen the force of Plato's self-criticism and has not retreated from the demands that this makes.

Aristotle can move beyond Platonic imagery, philosophy can be truly scientific for the first time, because, Doull argues, Aristotle has found a way to unite the sensible and the intelligible. From the standpoint of Aristotelian actuality, Doull writes: "the separation of ideal and sensible is known as within their unity, the sensible known as realizing the potentiality of the


universal and returned to it in its difference". This is to say that the Platonic chorismos, the radical separation of principle and principled, is overcome. Plato's image of participation becomes Aristotle's concept of substantial unity. What is distinctive in Doull's interpretation of this is that in it, to express it somewhat crudely, it is not that Aristotle has drawn the Forms down into the sensible, but that he has drawn the sensible up into the intelligible. Form in Aristotle is not a mere property of a thing. Form in Aristotle is an intrinsic teleological principle. It is physis. In this intrinsic teleology thought and life are united.

I will now turn to a restatement of Plato's problem from the standpoint of a developed Aristotelian science. Aristotle says in Metaphysics B that the most difficult aporia of all is "whether unity and being, as the Pythagoreans and Plato said, are not attributes of something else but the substance of existing things". In Metaphysics A Aristotle says, somewhat cryptically, that Plato's principles are posterior to what they are supposed to be principles of. That is, rather than accounting for the many Forms, or the sensibles which participate in these, the One and the Dyad are abstractions, and as such are posterior to that from which they are abstracted. Aristotle says further that all of his predecessors "make all things out of contraries. But neither 'all things' nor 'out of contraries' is right". In the Parmenides Plato has recognized these criticisms but has not found a way through them. Dennis House draws these points together as follows: "If there is an actual concretion of self-identity and 'otherness' in the eide [Forms] then the eide are what is primary and the One and the dyadic Principle are posterior abstractions. But if the Principles are truly principles what is other than them must be constituted out of absolute identity and pure indeterminacy, which is impossible, because contraries do not combine". We could say in the latter case that the efficacy of the principles cannot be thought but only imagined by a third principle, namely, the activity of the dialectician who separates and unites. I take this to be Doull's point when he writes: "To use the Eleatic forms, abstract and inadequate to what one would think by them was indeed inevitable for Plato so long as he took for principles the 'one' and the 'indeterminate dyad' and on the assumption of their difference sought their unity through an external reflection and did not know their relation as the intrinsic self-determination of an original unity or as actuality."

Aristotle's answer to the aporia about unity and being is that they are not substances, not principles, but rather the highest abstractions. And they are correlative abstractions: whatever is

23. Metaphysics Book B, ch. 1, 996a5 ff.
one, is and whatever is, is one. And what is, is substance. Unlike his predecessors, Aristotle begins with what is one: substance. This is not a contrary, but is receptive of contraries.

In looking back at the history of philosophy Aristotle can see this history as bringing out the elements of substance. The course of the history is, for Aristotle, made up of haphazard opinions. It is, he says "the truth itself" which has been moving it. The four causes are imperfectly discovered by his predecessors. The inadequacies of previous accounts of these reveal that they are not separate, independent things. Taken separately, they are abstractions. Known as distinct yet united, relative to each other, they are the rational elements of substance. This is why Aristotle says that while "in a sense they have all been described before, in a sense they have not been described at all." Doull would correct Aristotle on this point: "one would have to say of the successive attempts to think the finite that there was in them not one or more of the causes but them all and an incapacity of the category constitutive of a particular position to contain them." The difference here is subtle. I think what Doull means to stress is that the previous philosophers have had substance before them but have not recognized it. Each position has been unable to recognize the unity in and through diversity which is substance because of a deficiency in the category through which it was trying to think the world.

What we have in the four causes are pure principles of thought. These ultimately reduce to two: form and matter, and these in turn are more properly understood as actuality and potentiality. In Plato, matter falls outside of thought. But in Aristotle, what is other than form is nothing without form: matter is form potentially. Non-being is steresis - the privation of a determinate form. And form is relative to matter in that it needs the underlying. In contrast to Doull's interpretation, standard accounts of Aristotelian matter continue to treat this in the way of the Presocratics: they take matter to be a thing. Aristotle criticizes this. As an example we can look at what he says of Anaxagoras in Metaphysics A. Anaxagoras attempts to explain the world with two principles which are absolutely separate from each other in the beginning: nous (mind) and the 'indeterminate'. When he tries to articulate what this 'indeterminate' is, he says that it is 'all things mixed'. Aristotle's criticism is that 'all things mixed' must be posterior to 'all things unmixed'. Why is this? Aristotle's point is that we must first think the determinate elements of the mixture and then take them as mixed in order to have a mixture. If 'all things mixed' were prior, it could not have any form or determination. But if we were to extract form from the world completely, we would not be left with an unintelligible residue, but rather with nothing at all.

Metaphysics G expresses this in terms of the law of the excluded middle: between two contraries there is no middle indeterminate term. To be is to be determinate. Matter, Aristotle says, is always pros ti. It is always relative to form. This is why Aristotle comes to speak of it as potentiality ( dynamis) and comes to express the criticism of Anaxagoras in terms of the priority of the actual to the potential. With this in mind we can see that the causes are not elements in the sense of independent principles, but are, rather, the intelligible structure of substance. Aetiology (the science of causes) is taken into ousiology (the science of substance). Ontology is likewise taken into ousiology if the accidental categories are seen as dependent upon substance. The first aperia of Metaphysics B asks whether one science investigates all the causes. Aristotle answers this affirmatively because substance is the first genus of being to which the other genera are related.32

In Metaphysics G Aristotle discusses the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. Part of what is being accomplished here is that he is working out what is a possible object for thought: the law of non-contradiction expresses that the object of thought cannot be self-contradictory, that is, it must have a unity proper to itself (it must be self-identical). The law of the excluded middle expresses that the object of thought must be determinate, it cannot be an intermediary between contraries. We are then in a position to judge whether finite being can be thought. If these laws hold for what is, no less than for thought, then what is can be an object for thought. Aristotle's point is that in substance we have such an object. But this is not the whole account. Metaphysics G ends with a dense and cryptic paragraph which denies the simple, immediately self-identical being of the historical Parmenides on the one hand and a pure pluralism on the other, and refers us to the unmoved mover.33 Doull is equally dense. He writes: If Aristotle can discover the presence of an unmoved mover in all the genera of nature, that is because division and syllogism, as well as the categories, are for him the form of what is other than the divine self-thinking.34 I can only make an inadequate attempt to say what is involved here. I have stressed the relativity of matter to form since this is where I think Doull's interpretation is strikingly different from standard interpretations. But it is important to see that matter and form each, if taken as separate and independent, are abstractions. United in their mutual relativity they are substance understood as the (incomplete) activity of motion (at the level of inanimate nature), and substance as the activity of life and thought (at the level of animate nature).35 Aristotle allows the distinction of matter and form but then negates this in the sense that they are moments within one activity. This activity is determinate because it has within it a determinate end. This is what makes it, strictly speaking, an activity. Using

32. I will note later the relation of theology to aetiology, ousiology, and ontology.


'actuality' instead of 'form', Aristotle expresses this in the *De Anima* as follows: "Unity has many senses (as many as 'is' has), but the most proper and fundamental sense of both [of 'unity' and of 'is' or 'being'] is the relation of an actuality to that of which it is the actuality."  

I said earlier that Doull takes Aristotle's thought to be dialectical. This is brought out in his interpretation of substance as activity: Aristotle spends much time in the *Metaphysics* arguing on one side that substance is matter, on another that substance is the composite of matter and form, and yet another that substance is form. One might take his texts simply to be leaving the solution to this open. But as Doull interprets it, Aristotle is bringing out the truth in each claim, but then negating their independence from each other.

It is in the *De Anima* where we most clearly have the view of what is and is one as substance, understood as activity, worked out and thus where we best understand just what that activity is. The vegetative soul is the first grade of actuality of a body having life potentially in it. What it means for there to be life in the plant is that its principle of unity is found within it. There is a real concretion of form and matter. The growth of the plant is not the mere chance aggregation of elements. The plant takes in what is other than it, organizes it and makes it into itself. There is, we can say, an incipient freedom in the self-relation to which the plant attains. The limitation of this self-relation at the level of the vegetative soul is that it is realized, not in the individual, but in the species. The individual decays but it reproduces another individual. Aristotle says in the *De Anima*: "it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something like itself - not numerically but specifically one." Doull notes that at each level of the soul Aristotle treats of the relation of subject to object and he argues that "The powers of the soul which appear in this development are not faculties of substance but the unfolding of substance itself." The sensitive soul, like the vegetative, takes what is other than it and makes it its own, though it does not initiate this. Rather, when it is presented with an actual object, it takes on the form of that object without its matter. In the act of sensation there is a unity of subject and object in relation to which the sense organ and the sensible object are potencies. There is passivity and externality here. The rational soul, or

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37. Cf. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 1, 412a20-29. This definition results from the endeavour "to give a precise answer to the question, What is soul? i.e. to formulate the most general possible definition of it." (ibid., 412a 5-6). Among commentators it is uncommon to equate the most general definition of soul with the definition of the vegetative (or nutritive) soul. I thank Eli Diamond for pointing out to me a notable exception to this in the argument of Johannes Hübner, "Die aristotelische Konzeption der Seele als Aktivität in *de Anima* II 1", *Archiv Für Geschichte Der Philosophie*, 81, Band 1999, Heft 1.


40. *De Anima* Book B, ch. 4, 415b5.

intellect, Aristotle says, has no peculiar nature of its own except in being the potency to think all things (hence it must be separable from body, for if it were not, it would have particular qualities). Once it has become its objects (as the potential man of science has become a man of science) the intellect is free to think its objects which are not other than itself. It can actuate itself and is thought thinking thought. The passivity and externality still present at the level of the sensible is overcome. The distinction between subject and object is not obliterated, but their unity is complete. This comes out in Aristotle's comment that the intellect cannot be overpowered by an object too strong for it, as can the senses. To the extent that we are this activity, we partake in the divine activity.

In each of the levels of soul we can discern the desire for actuality, the desire to be in complete possession of oneself. To be so is to be free, to be self-determined. The accomplishment of this necessarily involves one in a relation to what is other, and a movement to overcome the externality of the other, to lose one's passivity in relation to it. In this sense God, the pure actuality of self-thinking thought, is moving all things, and so, even at the level of the plant, Aristotle can say in De Anima: "as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible." It is in this sense that ousiology necessitates theology.

I will not say anything about the Nicomachean Ethics except to note that we find a similar hierarchy in the productive, practical and theoretical activities in which there is found an increasing freedom, an increasingly complete possession of the end moving the activity.

I said earlier that Doull discovers Aristotle's thought to be systematic. It is not, however, a systematic philosophy that would explain why there is the plurality of finite genera of being. But, presupposing this plurality, Aristotle can think it, as Plato could not, in its relation to the first principle. To use the image of a descent from and a return to that principle, Aristotle can think the finite as a return to the infinite. That there is a descent or fall away from the principle is only implicit in the universal desire to be that principle.

There are two sides to Aristotle's solution to Plato's problem: on the one hand everything, understood through the category of substance, is comprehended through its relation to the divine; on the other hand there is found to be a substantiality in the rational soul. Regarding this last point Doull says of all the genera of nature that "The argument shows them in the end to be a nullity, to pass into the divine self-consciousness." Doull then says that to this "there is found one exception. The true division of God from himself which can stand in free relation to him is

42. De Anima Book B, ch. 4, 415b1-3.


44. Ibid., 146.
the rational soul." I find this distinction between the rational soul and all the other genera of nature difficult to grasp though its significance is obviously profound. At a minimum I can say that by 'nullity' is meant that the externality of nature is completely overcome in divine activity. There is nothing which stands opposed to the divine self-consciousness. This explains why Aristotle says that God could not be jealous. The substantiality or freedom of the human in relation to the divine I cannot adequately give an account of. Hegel comments with respect to this that the human soul is neither simply finite nor simply infinite. There are three very dense pages in “The Christian Origin of Contemporary Institutions” where I take Doull's point to be similar. It is this human freedom which Doull takes Aristotle's immediate successors to assume but without an understanding of how it is grounded, of how it is a hard-won result in the Aristotelian philosophy rather than a dogmatic beginning point.

45. Ibid., 146.


Neoplatonism And The Hegelianism Of James Doull

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I

At the end of his introduction to “Neoplatonism and the origin of the Cartesian subject”, James Doull makes a final preliminary point about the character of Neoplatonism:

…something of the Aristotelian noesis noeseos eludes this return to it from the temporal freedom of the Hellenistic sects [i.e. through Neoplatonism]. Aristotle speaks of a divine thinking where what is divine is not so much divine because it is absolutely one as because it is the active nous which having all the intelligible in its possession is the actuality of that unity itself. There is in this concept, to speak theologically, an equality of persons and not a primacy of the paternal or substantial. Thus if Neoplatonism is for Hegel a realization of the Aristotelian idea it prepares also for the disclosure of another philosophy of what more that idea contains.

Doull accepts Hegel’s reading of the history of philosophy, for which the Neoplatonic schools are a necessary moment between the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, and the Modern. For him, the culmination of the history of philosophy is to be found in Hegel’s own system, where what is implicit in the Aristotelian idea of God as self-thinking thought has become fully explicit in Spirit. Aristotle’s God is the pure actuality which serves as the telos of all things, but that God cannot also be the efficient cause of the divided world of becoming. What Neoplatonism supplies is an account of the One as

\footnote{I would like to thank Bernard Wills and Eli Diamond for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.}

\footnote{\textit{Animus}, vol.4 (http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/1999vol4/doull4.htm), par. 14; p. 222. This essay is also published in slightly altered form as chapter five of \textit{Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull}, edited by David G. Peddle and Neil G. Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 219-249. In this volume the essay is entitled “Neoplatonism and the Origin of the Older Modern Subject”. References are to the paragraph number of the \textit{Animus} version followed by the page number of the \textit{Philosophy and Freedom} version.}
comprehensively the principle of all things, as the efficient and final cause of the universe, from which all divided being and becoming unfolds, and to which it returns. However, because the Neoplatonic One is indivisible simplicity, according to Doull it is not an adequate principle of the divided reality which comes from it. What is needed, and what is supplied in Modern philosophy, culminating in Hegel, is to see that the divisions which unfold from the principle of all things are present in the principle itself, as its own self-articulation. In short, according to Doull and Hegel, the truth is a principle in whose self-thinking thought the divisions of all of reality are contained, from the structure of individual self-consciousness to the movement of history.

Professor Doull's exposition is meant not only to explain how Hegel thought Neoplatonism contributed to the constitution of Modern subjectivity, but by implication, is meant to justify this Hegelian reading of the place of Neoplatonism in the history of philosophy. Doull's reading goes hand in hand with his acceptance of the Hegelian system itself as the completion of the movement which he is explaining. What this means is that in order to accept Doull’s article as an accurate account of this part of the history of philosophy, one must also accept the Hegelian system. Such an acceptance would pose a problem for most people now.

It was the distinctive virtue of Professor Doull not only to have had the courage needed in the English-speaking world to take Hegel seriously, but to have dared to think in a Hegelian manner. He founded a school of thought, centred at the Dalhousie department of classics and spread elsewhere by his students, whose Hegelian inspiration dictates a study of the history of philosophy through a close reading of Ancient and Medieval texts with an explicitly philosophical eye. There is an interpenetration of philology and philosophy in this school which is indeed a great virtue, and which is sadly the exception rather than the rule among contemporary departments of philosophy or classics. However, the Achilles heel of the particularly Hegelian way of reading philosophy is its need to see all previous movements as leading towards Hegel himself. This is the problem with Doull's article on Neoplatonism which I cited at the beginning of this paper. The historical investigations of the last century have allowed us to have a more accurate account of the details of Neoplatonic philosophy than was available to Hegel. This would likely not have troubled him, for what Hegel thought he understood was Neoplatonism's animating principle. But this is precisely what is at issue. Is it proper to see Spirit as the animating principle of Neoplatonism, as of all philosophy? Or does a more historically accurate account of Neoplatonism reveal that the One is a different sort of principle, and that to situate Neoplatonism as a moment between Aristotle and Descartes in a Hegelian manner is fundamentally to misunderstand its character?

My earliest philosophical studies were at the Dalhousie department of classics, beginning just after Professor Doull retired. My interest in and further work on Neoplatonism would not have been possible without the foundation I received there. It is an indication of the absence of dogmatism in that school that my contribution to this volume of Animus in Professor Doull's honour is critical of his approach. In this study I will show how Neoplatonism is not properly understood as a moment within the Hegelian dialectic. The Hegelian analysis obscures both the true character of the Neoplatonic One,
and the Neoplatonic account of the relation between thought and its object, because it treats these positions as deficient versions of itself. We must remember that the Neoplatonists had before them the long tradition of Aristotelianism and Middle Platonism, in which the first principle was a self-consciousness. They did not elevate the One beyond Nous simply because of the precedence of Plato's Parmenides; rather they interpreted that text from what they considered to be philosophical necessity. They thought that it was philosophically superior to conceive of the First as One rather than Nous/Being. And just as in Hegel, I think, the decision of this school as a whole to write of the First in this manner has its origin in their analysis of human consciousness.

This topic is obviously a very large one, and I will make only a few points. I will look at a few of the most important reasons why the Neoplatonists themselves rejected Nous as a first principle. But I will also point out a few virtues of Neoplatonism which have only become open to us today. I will suggest that a sort of Neoplatonism that takes into account the history of philosophy in the Modern and Post-Modern periods might exhibit the virtues of both Hegelianism and Heideggerian phenomenology while avoiding their pitfalls, in that it gives a plausible account of human finitude, while allowing for a metaphysics based on what in us is more than merely human.

II

Hegel's respect for Neoplatonism is clear from his Lectures on the History of Philosophy. However, Hegel disagrees fundamentally with the Neoplatonists over how to conceive of the first principle of all things. Neoplatonism elevates the One beyond Nous, an elevation of the one over the many which is imitated at all levels of the system. Hegel, on the other hand, holds that the divisions which emerge in the dialectical movement of Spirit are divisions of Spirit itself. With regard to Professor Doull's Hegelian criticism of Neoplatonism, the most important thing to examine will be how this logic plays out in the Neoplatonic structure of consciousness. I will show below how it dictates both the internal structure of Nous and Soul, and the relation between these two thinking hypostases.

First, however, we should examine how Hegelianism looks from the Neoplatonic perspective. It will appear deficient, just as Neoplatonism looks deficient from a position

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4 For example, Doull says of Damascius that his position advances beyond Proclus, because the transcendence of the One over the many begins to be broken down (“Neoplatonism and the Origin of the Cartesian Subject”, par.78; p. 236): "The primary opposition of 'ontic' and 'henadic' is all but dissolved in a concept of what is not one as first of all unified - not 'limit' as opposed to 'unlimited', but transcending this division in relation to the undivided. The intelligible is thus not the product of prior 'henadic' elements but itself equally 'henadic' or divine. It comes into view with this knowledge of a unified division that the ideal world is in truth not a second level below the One but rather, as taught by the Oracles and other revelations, the One itself as triune. An intelligible world more within the grasp of a human thought subject to exclusive contraries can be thought no more than that: a world of human discourse."
which thinks of the First as self-thinking thought. The first problem with Hegel's system, from a Neoplatonic perspective, is that it seems to lack a fundamental ground. The Neoplatonists would recognise in the spontaneous and free self-unfolding of the Hegelian notion the counterpart of their *Nous* and Soul. But they consider thinking to be an unfolding of a transcendent unified ground just as much as it is a spontaneous self-unfolding. So, for example, the thoughts of Soul are about *Nous*, because without *Nous* as a source, Soul would have nothing to think. The object of thought precedes the thinker, and the thinker's thoughts are an unfolding of this object, which remains prior. Put in simple terms, the Neoplatonists would ask Hegel what Spirit's thought is about, because it cannot be about itself.

They would also see in Hegel, as in all philosophy of the Modern period, a flattening of perspective. The distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus* bequeathed to the Moderns by the Latin Medievals maps onto the Greek distinction between *dianoia* and *Nous*, but it no longer plays the same ontological and epistemological role. *Ratio* is not thought to unfold *intellectus* in the way that the Soul's *dianoia* unfolded *Nous* as its fertile source. From the Neoplatonic perspective, *ratio* in the Modern period is orphaned, and without *Nous*, is seeking another source of truth. It would be in this light that they would think of the employment of a criterion of truth in thinkers like Descartes or Kant. On the other hand, Hegel does not think that thought can have an external criterion of truth, and in this is closer to the Neoplatonic mark. However, from their perspective, the Hegelian system would seem to conflate *Nous* and *dianoia*. In Neoplatonism, *dianoia* is an unfolding of *Nous* in Time, but it is not the emergence of the noetic Forms themselves into *genesis*. Rather than a sort of reduplication, it is the creation of an entire new level of intelligibility, a level more multiple and divided than is *Nous*. Because of this, the Neoplatonists would be critical of the historical aspect of Hegel's system. It would not seem possible for them that the moments which Spirit possesses in itself could also be manifest in history. Their most obvious objection would be that *Nous* as the self-thinking thought which creates the first determinations of all things has a self-transparency which simply does not exist on the level of *dianoia*.\(^5\) However, even if they could accept Hegel's higher level of isomorphism between the historical and ahistorical aspects of Spirit or the Idea, they would still have a problem. In order for the temporal and atemporal movements to be the same, it would seem that one of the two must become like the other: either the atemporal development of *Nous* should be infected by historical

\(^5\) See *Enn*.V.8.4., speaking of *Nous*: "For it is 'the easy life' there, and truth is their mother and nurse and being and food - and they see all things, not those to which coming to be, but those to which real being belongs, and they see themselves in other things; for all things there are transparent, and there is nothing dark or opaque; everything and all things are clear to the inmost part to everything; for light is transparent to light. Each there has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, so that all are everywhere and each and every one is all and the glory is unbounded; for each of them is great, because even the small is great; the sun there is all the stars, and each star is the sun and all the others. A different kind of being stand out in each, but in each all are manifest." See also *Enn*.V.1.4.: "*[Nous']* blessedness is not something acquired, but all things are in eternity, and the true eternity, which time copies, running round the soul, letting some things go and attending to others. For around Soul things come one after another: now Socrates, now a horse, always some one particular reality, but Intellect is all things. It has therefore everything at rest in the same place, and it only is, and its 'is' is for ever..."
contingency, or individual thinkers in their historical appearance must be necessitated by the atemporal movement of Nous. It is not simply a question of the moments of Nous eventually being discovered by contingently existing human beings, or even a question of something like the Soul of the Cosmos rolling through the noetic moments in its circling activity around Nous. Rather, to use Neoplatonic language, Hegel seems to be speaking of contingently existing human beings, in their historical collectivity, exhibiting the noetic ideas themselves in the same order as they appear in Nous. This only seems possible if either the historical movement is necessitated, or if the universe is upside down and Nous is created by history. Neither option is palatable to a Neoplatonist.

Related to this is the question of the end of history, thought of as the completion of this development. If we are supposed to regard the Phenomenology as presenting the complete course of the determinations of Spirit, then it is difficult to see how Hegel can avoid the Heideggerian criticism of covering over Being by taking its historically contingent determinations as necessary and complete. In Neoplatonic terms, Hegel seems to be saying that when humanity reaches a certain completion of its development, Nous can be known in dianoetic terms. This implies that the universe has a transparency to dianoia, to philosophy, which leaves the door open to Heidegger's criticism of technology. Heidegger is correct, it seems to me, to point toward the more fundamental attitude which lies behind what he calls technological rationality, that will to master human and non-human Being. This more fundamental attitude is one which sees all of reality as completely transparent to human consciousness. The truth of Heidegger's own position, it seems to me, is to recognise the limits of human understanding. He aims to show that in principle there are possibilities in Being which are not yet open to human thinking, that this will always be the case, and that because our thinking about Being is in principle not exhaustive, the premise of technological rationality which sees Being as completely transparent is mistaken. The more fundamental danger is not a technological nightmare world, but rather the cessation of human thinking which brings such a world about. Heidegger and Neoplatonism are on the same page at least in their contention that human thinking is in principle never complete, and so must always return to its source.  

III

I will sketch in a very simple manner two tendencies in the development of Neoplatonism. One can think of its history as containing two very general streams, one which is able to use the name Being to refer to the first principle, the other which prefers to call the First only the One or Good. If we exaggerate the difference between these two streams we could talk of an ontology, opposed to a henology. To be sure, this manner of

6 They differ, of course, in how they conceive of human thinking and its source.

speaking captures an important distinction within Neoplatonism, but it is part of my argument that these tendencies are complementary rather than opposed.

The ability to call the first principle Being can be traced back to Porphyry’s use of the infinitive *einai*, “to be”, as an adequate name for the first principle. This is at the origin of the stream of Neoplatonism which enters the Latin West most influentially through Augustine. This is the strand of kataphatic, or positive theology, in which the names by which we name God do in fact signify in some way what he is. The other strand, stemming from Iamblichus and Proclus and moving through the Pseudo-Dionysius, names God as the One. But even this name does not tell us anything positive about God. It is rather only a name which, because it approaches most closely his simplicity, allows us to remove from our thinking any positive conception of God. This is seen clearly in the conclusion of Proclus’ commentary on the *Parmenides*, where even the negations concerning the One must be removed, so that we may approach it in silence. This is the apophatic, or negative theological tradition.

The traditions meet, among other places, in Aquinas. From Dionysius, Aquinas receives a Procline logic of procession and return which allows him to order his treatment of the names which apply to the whole Godhead, as well as to the Trinitarian procession of persons within the Godhead, and the procession into creation. However, from the Porphyrian/Augustinian tradition, Aquinas can call God *ipsum esse*, Being itself. The use of the infinitive, *esse* or *einai*, is not meant to call God abstract Being. Rather, it is meant to elevate God above determinate beings, while at the same time drawing them together, because the determinations of being which emerge in creation have their seat in the simple self-relation of the pure act of Being which is their source. *Ipsum esse* is simple, because it is not divided into existence and essence, as is the case in creatures. But it is also Being, and so exhibits internally the procession and return which structures being.\(^8\) This conception allows Aquinas to contain his Procline logic within a Godhead conceived as the simple act of Being, in a manner which would be impossible for Proclus or Dionysius.\(^9\) So for Aquinas, God is the simplicity demanded of the Neoplatonic One, while holding within this simplicity the Being of the Neoplatonic *Nous*. This picture is

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\(^8\) The primary appearance of remaining, procession and return is in Plotinus’ analysis of the emergence of *Nous/Being* from the One. See, for example, *Enn.V.1.7.*: "But Intellect is not that Good. How then does it [the Good] generate Intellect? Because by its return to it it sees: and this seeing is Intellect."

\(^9\) See W.J. Hankey, "Aquinas' First Principle: Being or Unity?" *Dionysius IV* (1980) pp.133-172; see p.169-170: "But no reversion, not even self-reversion, can occur in the One without destroying its essential simplicity [in Proclus]. This is not so in Aquinas. The *exitus-reditus* form is found at all levels of his *Summa*...Thomas has moved beyond his predecessors. He has pushed the logic of the finite up into the divine unity itself. As described above, the questions on the divine substance are ordered so as to flow out from the simplicity and return to the unity. This logic is effective in the content as well. God's being is self-relation. The highest is self-subsistence...Descending, the self-subsistent *esse* progressively unfolds its simplicity to reveal itself as knowing and willing, a Trinity of Persons and finally, as creator and saviour of the world."
complicated in Aquinas by his Aristotelian epistemology.\(^{10}\) We can only know in this life that these two aspects are one in God without knowing how this can be true.\(^{11}\)

A Hegelian reading of this history could see in it the conditions for the truth of Modern philosophy. God as the simple pagan One is incapable of containing any determination. But the transposition of Nous into the One holds the seeds of the later development, in which the principle itself contains the determinations which spring from it. There can be no consciousness in the One, but from a One/Nous there can develop the absolute idealism which Hegel articulates. Therefore the Neoplatonic philosophy, insofar as it conceives of the First as one comprehensive cause, is a stage towards the development of Hegelianism.\(^{12}\) But this has led, of course, to the Heideggerian reading of the same history, which sees Being turned into a being, the perfect being, *ipsum esse subsistens*, with all of the criticisms of onto-theology and technological rationality which it implies.

We have here two opposed understandings of the same history, with complementary dangers. If the first principle is a One/Nous, and hence eventually consciousness, then according to Hegel we can have speculative philosophy, because the determinations of our own thinking are also the determinations of the principle itself, and of all that emerges from the principle. But according to Heidegger, this philosophy is merely a covering over of Being with the contingent historical determinations of human thought, specifically those which turn the world into a mere object, and lead to the mastery of nature in technological rationality. Heidegger's solution, however, is no more palatable than that of which he accuses Hegel. *Dasein*’s openness to Being may avoid technological rationality, but it exacts too high a price. Finitude, historicity, language - these are poor substitutes for the aspirations which philosophy has had since Plato. Further, contemporary retrievals of Neoplatonism which seek a direct relation of the human soul to the One beyond Being as their principle, and so, by de-emphasising or


\(^{11}\) So Doull speaks in “Neoplatonism and the Origin of the Cartesian Subject” (par.83-105; p. 237ff.) less of Aquinas, than of a movement from Eriugena to Nicholas of Cusa, situating Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham in between.

\(^{12}\) See Doull’s “Neoplatonism and the Origin of the Cartesian Subject”, par.103-104; p. 242: "[regarding Cusanus]...The simple intuition of the One, which was for ever for Neoplatonists the only unqualified truth, has no longer below it another thought which moves to it through oppositions. The docta ignorantia reduced all discourse to scepticism. The conclusion was then drawn that division and difference reside in and belong to the actuality of the creative good. [104] He is then dissatisfied with this name [the non aliud] as not indicating clearly that God is not only the indifferent foundation of difference but the primary division and actuality. That infinite potentiality which also is he thinks might better be named ‘possest.’ But that name has the inconvenience that it suggests a difference and not the absolute unity of these moments. The most appropriate name he therefore finds to be ‘posse’, so far as this indicates the infinite actuality of infinite potentiality." See also par.106; p. 242: "The new philosophy [the Modern] began where the old ended, namely where the One beyond all else passed into the self-consciousness which knew the finite as its own..."
omitting Nous, seek to agree with Heidegger while avoiding his criticisms, seem only to fall into the same historicist position.\textsuperscript{13}

IV

This has been a lengthy preamble to my examination of the Neoplatonic logic of the one over the many as it governs the structure of thought, but it was necessary to suggest what is at stake. My examination will focus in particular on two aspects of the philosophy of Proclus, but I intend my observations to apply to all Neoplatonism. The first aspect is the relation between unity and multiplicity in the activity of thinking, and the second is the crucial distinction between noetic and discursive reason.

With regard to the first point, the relation between unity and multiplicity could be conceived in the following terms: either the One stands completely aloof from the multiplicity which it generates, or somehow that multiplicity can be found as the moments within the One itself. Here is the source of seeing mutually opposed apophatic and kataphatic traditions. Doull sees the first tradition as a necessary moment leading to its completion in the second. However, I think these two traditions can be seen as complementary in a manner which does not smuggle the noetic multiplicity into the One, and so does not have to posit the seeming impossibility of a simple One which also contains in itself a triadic self-reversion.

Professor Doull describes the activity of knowing in Neoplatonism in the following manner: “The knowledge the noetic self-consciousness has of itself and of its world as its own is abstract so far as the moment of division or mediation is transitional only and lost in the return.”\textsuperscript{14} In Proclus both Nous and Soul are structured according to a remaining in, procession from, and return to their cause: the One for Nous, and Nous for Soul. This triadic motion structures not only the relation between the various orders of Proclus’ system, it gives the internal structure of what has become orders or taxeis, which correspond to the Plotinian hypostases. Doull’s reading of this threefold activity is that in the moment of return, the division which emerges in the moment of procession is lost, and hence the principle cannot contain the divided procession, which becomes only a vanishing moment. It is in order to correct this that he thinks philosophy moves towards Hegel, whose principle is self-dividing.

But the mistake here which Doull makes is in his characterisation of the moment of return. I have studied this relation before, and I make here some of the points which I


\textsuperscript{14} “Neoplatonism and the Origin of the Cartesian Subject”, par.43; p. 227.
have made in another place. Proclus’ Nous is divided into three moments: noetic, noetic-noeric, and noeric, or intelligible, intelligible-intellectual, and intellectual. These three moments are hierarchically arranged according to the priority of the object moment over the subject moment, in a motion of remaining, procession, and return. But the same logic governs the internal structure of each moment. Within the intelligible moment, we find the One-Being, Eternity, and the Autozoion. The One-Being is the single principle which is Being, as pure determination or the idea of determination. Before this principle we find the One itself, Limit and Unlimited, and the henads, because they are not determined to be one thing as opposed to another. The One-Being is the principle that all below it will be determined to be this as opposed to that, or contain the moment of difference within their self-identity. Eternity is the principle of procession or fertility, it is the One-Being considered not in itself, but as productive of a multiplicity of determined beings. The Autozoion is the paradigm to which the Platonic Demiurge in the Timaeus looks when fashioning the world, so Proclus considers it to contain the highest forms, or megista genê of the Sophist: Being, Same, Other, Rest, and Motion. The Autozoion, as the third moment, has proceeded from the One-Being through Eternity, and is the moment of return. According to Professor Doull, it should be a transitional moment only, and lost in the return. But this is not in fact what we find. Rather, the Autozoion as containing the megista genê is the principle of the further unfolding of the Neoplatonic cosmos, because all further multiplicities are unfoldings of the five primary Forms which it contains. What is going on here?

Nous is a thinking principle, and in the movement from the One-Being to the Autozoion we have a thinking movement. For Proclus, and I think for all Neoplatonists, thought is an unfolding or dividing motion. Unfolding requires three moments. It requires a principle to be divided, which is spoken of as remaining, and it requires the double activity by which that principle is divided, which is spoken of as procession and return. The moment of procession shows that the unfolding activity is not itself the principle, and the moment of return shows that this activity, which is itself that which has unfolded, has a principle. The activity of thinking is grounded in the remaining moment as a proximate unity, in this case the One-Being, but in its own activity it produces a multiplicity which it refers back to the unity in which it remains, because the multiplicity has come from there and is ultimately about that unity. But that does not mean that the divided result vanishes. This thinking is a free activity precisely because what emerges is not precontained in the principle in which it remains, and it does not vanish because what emerges just is what the thinking activity has produced with this particular unity as its ground. This can be stated in the strongest possible terms. In Neoplatonism, to know is to unfold a unity and produce a multiplicity which is not that unity. Knowing leads to loving, and the fulfillment of the moment of return, not because the cognitive multiplicity vanishes as an act of knowing, but because the purpose of knowing is an affective union higher than knowledge. Professor Doull thinks that the divisions which emerge in


16 With the exception that for external reasons the noeric moment is a hebdomad, not a triad.
procession vanish in the return. Rather, the divisions stand in the return, but at the end of
the activity the thinker puts aside the cognitive divisions, not because they are untrue, but
because he puts aside thinking itself.

Proclus speaks of the Forms existing prôtôs and deuterôs (primarily and
secondarily) in Nous and in Soul,17 and he speaks of the logoi in the Soul's essence as
existing before its energeia in a 'hidden' or 'secret' manner.18 This does not mean that the
principle of thought already contains what emerges in the thinking activity, but rather
thought is an activity by which the thinker makes itself into a divided image of its
principle. Soul is not a copy of Nous, it is a divided image of it. The one is the
foundation of the many, which are its image and which point back to it. The many are
contained in the one only in the sense that they are bound to it as their origin and end.
Plotinus expresses this well at the beginning of Enn.V.2.:

The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the
principle of all things, not all things, but it is all things as their principle;
for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but
they will be. How then do all things come from the One, which is simple
and has in it no diverse variety or any sort of doubleness? It is because
there is nothing in it that all things come from it: in order that Being exist,
the One is not being, but the first generator of Being.19

To posit the emergent content as already contained within the principle is not an
acceptable solution to the question of how real novelty comes to be in the unfolding of
the universe from its principle, for the Neoplatonists.

So does the Autozôion know the One-Being? The answer to this is both yes and
no. It does not know the One-Being, only in the sense that the divisions of the Autozôion
are not themselves the One-Being, and were we to think that the megista genê were the
content of the One-Being we would be confusing the end-point of an activity with its
beginning or ground. But in another sense the Autozôion does know the One-Being,
because to know simply is to produce freely a multiplicity beginning from a unity. The
Autozôion knows the One-Being because it is the end point of an activity which has its
beginning in the One-Being, and we call this activity knowing. The mistake made when
we oppose the negative and positive aspects of Neoplatonism is that we oppose the
beginning and ending moments of the same activity to each other. If we forget the

17 El.Th.prop.194.

18 In Eucl.46.1: "It possesses them all in an essential and secret manner"; In Eucl.56.13: "But
whatever exists secretly (kruphîôs) in it is brought to the imagination with extension and with parts."

19 Enn.V.2.1. Armstrong translates the first sentence as, "The One is all things and not a single
one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have that other kind of transcendent
existence [italics mine]." The italicised section translates all' ekeinôs panta. I find this a questionable
translation, and have rendered it as, "but it is all things as their principle."
continuity of the moments of remaining, procession, and return, then we think of the unity and multiplicity as simply other than each other. And hence the knowledge which we have does not touch the One-Being in any manner, and we have apophasis. If we assimilate the return to the remaining, collapsing their distinction, we have a kataphasis which makes superfluous the activity itself, for what is arrived at in the result was present at the beginning all along. Rather, this triadic motion is both apophatic and kataphatic, apophatic because what is thought is not the One-Being, but kataphatic because it is what is thought about the One-Being. I am speaking here of the relation between the three intelligible moments of Nous (the One-Being, Eternity, and the Autozôion), but the observation holds generally in Proclus' system: for the total structure of Nous in itself, for the relation of Nous to the One, and for the relation of Soul to Nous.

You will notice here that I am arguing against a certain interpretation of Aristotle’s idea that thought and its object are one, or that thought rests in its object. This may also seem to be contrary to the Neoplatonic position that we have as our aim to rest in our causes, and ultimately in the One. I think that thought does not rest in its object in Neoplatonism. Rather, thought is always an unfolding of its object. And while it is true that we have as our aim to rest in Nous, and then the One, and that this resting comes about to a great extent through thinking, it is not as thinking, but rather by remaining silent after a great effort of thinking that we come, as Proclus says, to the paternal harbour.

After these [explanations], then, let us take up the fourth way of solving the aporia. <It is not lawful> that the soul ascending to Intellect ascend with its multitude of powers, but it must let go of everything which is akin to it and whatever divides its activities. And having mounted on high and come to be there, and having come to anchor in the One-Being, it must bring itself towards the One itself, and make itself one, not being curiously busy about many things and not inquiring "what is it not or what is it?," but rather closing its eyes altogether and gathering together all its activity and being satisfied with unity alone. And it is exactly this which Parmenides is imitating, when at the end he removes even the negations and every account, wishing to conclude the argument on the One by moving towards the unspeakable. For the anchorage must be the end of the journey towards it, the "abiding" the end of the ascension, the unspeakable the end of all speech, and unification the end of all knowing.20

I should qualify this statement by saying that by us I mean souls, and am referring in this instance to the discursive thought, or dianoia, which is properly psychic. But for Nous as well this holds. It is through its thinking activity that it divides itself from the

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One, and the entire content of its thought is about the One, but it rests in the One through that in it which is above thinking.

What this analysis of the structure of thinking in Neoplatonism shows, even if the Neoplatonists themselves could not have described it in these terms, is that the dichotomy of apophatic and kataphatic which we are presented with is a false one. It is for this reason that Porphyry thought he could call the first principle \textit{einai} and still think of it as One, and for this reason Proclus can hold that the One itself escapes all thought and all names, and yet still write massive volumes about it. In Neoplatonism the One is not itself a movement of thought, but rather the ground of thought. It does not and cannot contain within itself the moments of consciousness, and so cannot be a sort of \textit{Nous}/Being which eventually turns into Spirit. But neither is the One a simple null-point, as over against an endless historical contingency, as the Heideggerian inspired henologies might seek to produce. Rather, the multiplicities which emerge from the One, as activities of thinking, are not contained within the principle, but they are all about the principle. They are joined to it as the end point is joined to the beginning, and as such are images which point the soul beyond itself back to its origin.

\section{V}

The Neoplatonic logic of the one over the many also allows them to have a plausible account of how philosophy can have a history. This is not an account which they themselves gave, but it follows from their principles, and comes to light only in the face of the mutually opposed historiographies of Hegel and Heidegger. What allows a history of philosophy in Neoplatonic terms is our second point, the distinction between \textit{Nous} and \textit{dianoia} as atemporal and temporal mind. For Proclus, as for all other Neoplatonists, the proximate object of discursive reason, of philosophy, is \textit{Nous}, not the One. It is only \textit{Nous} which has the One as its proximate ground for thought. The combination of freedom and necessity which Hegel sees both in the development of the moments of consciousness in itself and in history, for Neoplatonism belongs properly within \textit{Nous}. But because it is atemporal, there is no need to find the moments of \textit{Nous} unfolding in history as they do in itself. The emergence of \textit{Nous} from the One is an absolutely free unfolding, and so the freedom of thought which Hegel sees as the truth of thought is present in Neoplatonism. The One does not precontain the \textit{megista genê}. Rather, the \textit{megista genê}, and the determinations of the other two orders of \textit{Nous}, are the free, unplanned, expression of the thinking activity of \textit{Nous}. They are the thinking activity of \textit{Nous}, and the contents of \textit{Nous} are in this radical sense \textit{what actually emerged}. In itself this is a free activity. However, the thinking of \textit{Nous} is also the necessary foundation of philosophical thinking, because \textit{for us} it is necessary. \textit{Nous} is grounded in the One, and in turn is the ground of \textit{dianoia}. The Ideas in \textit{Nous} do not change, and so they constitute the necessary object of a philosophical thinking which since Plato and Aristotle has understood this object to be unchanging and universal. \textit{Nous}, as the atemporal ground of philosophical thinking constitutes a total system of living determinations, an order in the cosmos which we attempt to grasp in thinking. This grasp takes place through philosophy, through \textit{dianoia}.

Philosophy takes place in time, through contingent human beings, and therefore has a history. Philosophy is the discursive attempt to articulate to ourselves, in non-
noetic terms, the ordered content of *Nous*. As such it requires that there be a *Nous*, with an internal articulation, in order to be carried out. For this reason the undifferentiated Being of Heidegger cannot ground a metaphysics. The immediate relation of historical thinking to a One would also be only vanishing moments, and so historicity. But the relation of philosophy to *Nous* is that in *Nous* it finds an ordered, unchanging cosmos of Forms, which it unfolds, and whose necessity and constancy give a unity to the philosophical project. It is for this reason that philosophy has a history, but is not a historicity. But the modern mistake is to think that philosophical thinking has the necessity and completion which only belongs to the noetic.

As we saw in our analysis of remaining, procession, and return, philosophy as a return upon *Nous* is not a vanishing moment. What we articulate in philosophy is in fact about *Nous*. But also what we articulate is not already contained in *Nous*. So the history of philosophy is, quite literally, the history of what we have thought about the order of the cosmos. But there is no necessary order within the history of philosophy itself. Rather, it comes to be through a succession of contingent thinkers, all of whom are unfolding one or another aspect of the noetic principle. This activity has a history, because in principle it can never be complete, but contrary to the Hegelian idea, there is no end to this history. The desire for completion or an end to the history of philosophy is a mistaken desire to assimilate the moment of returning to its origin in the remaining. And because philosophy is not *Nous* but has *Nous* as its object and ground, it does not turn Being into a set of static and dead categories as Heidegger thought. Rather, there is always more to be thought about *Nous*.

If these tentative points about Neoplatonism are correct, then we might find in Neoplatonism resources for a philosophy which lies between Hegel and Heidegger, one which can take into account contingency and history in philosophical thinking, but does not do this by destroying its own possibility. Further, I hope it is apparent from this that the Neoplatonic principle is not best understood as a moment on the way to Hegelianism. There is more in it than a movement towards a principle in which the emergent determinations are already present. Rather, the Neoplatonic One is the principle of the free self-determination of the intelligible, which itself is the ground of history.

VI

I would like to make one final point. For Proclus we are essentially souls, but we are also grounded in *Nous* and the One. I have tried to set out in this paper what he means by this. The implication of this is that philosophy is not the highest approach to divinity. It is needed, because to turn the eye of our soul towards our principles is to engage in the activity of thinking about them, and that is philosophy. But if thinking is about principles, and not identical with principles, then at the end of our philosophical activity we must come to an affective rest in those principles. It is to try to get us to do this that Plotinus wrote in the manner in which he did. In his *Enneads*, which present the limits of the discursive activity of philosophy so clearly, he tries to turn his readers’ souls towards *Nous* such that they may cease to philosophise and become *Nous* itself.21 And

21 See for example, *Enn.* V.8.
beyond this movement to a thinking beyond philosophy is the shedding of all multiplicity for a unity with the One itself. But in this Plotinus is not urging us to go anywhere, because the principles are completely present to us. “There is nothing between but the fact that they are different,”²² as he says. So after our effort of turning our soul towards our principles philosophically, we find that the god does not “come as one expected, but came as one who did not come: for he was seen, not as having come, but as being there before all things, and even before Intellect came.”²³ If that were not the case, then our effort of philosophising would be impossible.

²² Enn. V.1.3.
²³ Enn. V.5.8.
James Doull On Theology And Public Life

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Let me begin with a personal reminiscence. The incident occurred in the late 1980s when I was a doctoral student in theology. Through a variety of circumstances, it happened that James Doull had read some of my writing relating to Hegel and contemporary theology. We arranged to meet, and had a discussion, in part of that part of my research, in part of my plans for the future. At the end our conversation about the academy and the church, I was asked whether I did not wish to go into politics instead. It was a surprising question, though not a defining moment in any sense. I did not (thanks be to God) become a politician but remained, then as now, an academic and a theologian. I recall the incident in this context mainly because it helps to illustrate something of the extraordinary character of Doull the man, and to make concrete something of his understanding of religion and public life. For throughout his work, Doull took up just this theme, insisting that religion and secularity are not separate but are to be taken together.¹

Now there are various ways in which such a question, and with it, an insistence on the organic relation of secular to religious and vice versa, might in principle have been understood. It could have been intended, for example, that since the real object of religion is the betterment of human existence, and since such betterment is best pursued through secular rather than religious means, that the ultimate upshot of religious principle would best be served by a kind of conversion to the cause of praxis. Equally, but to the contrary, it might have been intended that, contemporary political culture being what it is, public life can only be saved by an infusion of grace, so that a kind of redemption of the secular order from its reckless pride would then be in view. One suspects that the second, rather than the first, comes somewhat nearer the point made by Doull, though in the end we must say that neither of the two options really reflects his thinking. Just what his position was, however, is a rather more difficult thing to state, given the labyrinthine logic of his writings and the difficulty of his prose.

At the outset, then, it might be wise to quote the source, from an essay entitled “The Logic of Theology since Hegel”:

It was idle, said Hegel, to look for true religion where there were not true secular institutions. There had come into being a reconciliation of subjective freedom and institutional order which gave experience in the world of the same incarnate Trinitarian reason as was the belief of the Church. ... [However, this] had hardly occurred in Hegel’s time when it was succeeded by a new revolution which is still with us.²

In these few, happily perspicuous lines can be recognized the beating heart of Doull’s position on the matter in question. Several related ideas stand out. There is, for example, the point already noted, that Doull’s philosophy recognizes an authentically Christian expression of the secular state. What would be surprising to the outsider, however, is the idea that this realization in the state of the logic of Christian revelation did not appear earlier, let us say, in the Constantinian triumph of the church, as was once argued by Constantine’s “court theologian” Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius not only argued that Hellenism in general and the Roman Empire in particular had been a preparatio evangeli, but also that Constantine himself as the godly imperator was an image of the eternal Son of God, the pantocrator, who mediates God’s fearful authority in the world. Thus the political order, for Eusebius, comes at last through Constantine to represent the eternal, spiritual order, and is seen to be grounded in it.

Such theological claims, of course, loom large in critiques of religiously-based politics in our own time (witness, for example, recent coverage of the US Presidential election by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, where George W. Bush was described as “a self-confessed born-again Christian” – quel horreur!). The assumption is that religion is automatically a corrupting influence in politics, that it leads to moral bias (“intolerance”), and thus to a distortion of political vision. Furthermore, authoritarianism is seen as the inevitable outcome of all attempts to ground politics in religion. It is not only Karl Popper who views religion as an enemy of the open society; critical and feminist theories of the state also take up the refrain. It has thus become an article of faith in liberal and progressive politics that rooting politics in religion is “a very horrid thing” indeed, or that, to paraphrase Popper, we have an obligation at this point not to tolerate the intolerant. Hence, it could be said, the CBC finds itself obliged to describe the winner of the US Presidential election in what are hardly morally neutral terms.

It ought to be striking, therefore, to encounter in Doull a far more eirenic view of the relation of political to religious life. For Doull, furthermore, the key moment in which the realization of Christian revelation in the political sphere occurred was in the context of Enlightenment, the logic of which Doull, following Hegel, explicitly understood to be Christian, an expression of “incarnate Trinitarian reason.”³ Implicit in the quotation with which we began a moment ago, then, is the notion that this “authentic reconciliation” of religion and secularity was


hard won, and a long time in coming - indeed, that it could only have been such. The Constantinian empire, therefore, achieved only a very partial and imperfect realization of the logic of Christian revelation, precisely because it was exclusive of all but the emperor as the locus of divine reason in the political realm; to use Hegelian language, the imperator was free, but none else. The fuller realization appeared, paradoxically, only in Hegel’s time with the genesis of the idea of modern political freedom – but this in an age which, on most accounts, reckoned itself to have left the logic of the Christian incarnational and trinitarian revelation behind. The reconciliation, then, whatever it is, is not apparent to all, not even to many or most of the participants in the unfolding drama, but can only be grasped from a more comprehensive standpoint. The fact that the long view is taken in this standpoint ought not to be lost on us, particularly as we consider the import for the present century of the revolutionary movements of the 19th and 20th, “which, as some Sampson [sic], have brought down in ruins the temple of Christian belief and philosophy.”

In sum, Doull understands his own position and, with it, the entire problematic of the relation of the religious to the secular in our time to be a product of this same history, so that here, we may say, we have a dynamic that is both unintelligible and insoluble apart from the “long view” taken.

One particular feature of the quotation that I wish to note, however, is that Hegel does not say quite what Doull has him say. “It was idle to look for true religion where there were not true secular institutions,” Doull paraphrases, referring in an extended footnote to §552 of the *Enzyklopädie*. The original discussion to which we are here referred concerns the development of the relation in Western thought between religion and the moral fabric of the state. Hegel’s ultimate point is that political freedom was to be found in the Protestant state, not in the Catholic state, and this because in Catholicism the God who ought to be known “in spirit and in truth,” is insufficiently related to self-conscious spirit. Arguing from a polemical treatment of the Tridentine doctrine of the Mass (an argument that appears with great regularity in Hegel’s writings), Hegel maintains that a trail of externality, non-spirituality and superstition extends throughout the length and breadth of Catholic piety, binding people under “an externalism by which the very meaning of spirit is perverted and misconceived at its source.” Relics, for example, are also mentioned. This perversion of spirit is then inevitably expressed also in unfree political institutions, in a “legal and moral bondage,” the reality of which, as Hegel tells us, was apparent in Europe in the early 19th century, where Rome bitterly resisted the new movements for political reform. The argument, then, is not that it is vain to look for true religion where

4. James Doull, “Heidegger and the State,” unpublished manuscript, p. 5; I have not had access to the published version of this paper in David Peddle and Neil Robertson, eds., *Philosophy and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).


there are not true secular institutions, but quite the reverse: it is idle to look for true secular institutions where there is not true religion:

It is nothing but a modern folly to try to alter a corrupt moral organization by altering its political constitution and code of laws without changing the religion, – to make a revolution without having made a reformation. To suppose that a political constitution opposed to the old religion could live in peace and harmony with it and its sanctities, and that stability could be procured for the laws by external guarantees—at best it is only a temporary expedient—to seek to separate law and justice from religion. Those guarantees are but rotten bulwarks against the consciences of the persons charged with administering the laws – among which laws these guarantees are included. It is indeed the height and profanity of contradiction to seek to bind and subject to the secular code the religious conscience to which mere human law is a thing profane.  

For freedom to obtain in the state, therefore, freedom must already obtain in religion. What is meant by freedom in religion in this context can perhaps be put in a number of ways. It is, first and foremost, religion in which what is affirmed is affirmed as truth for self-conscious thought rather than a truth recognized on the basis of external authority. There is a nice illustration of the lengths to which this can be taken in Protestantism in the theology of John Calvin, who in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* discusses, as might be expected, the basis of the authority of holy scripture in theology. St. Augustine, among others, had taught that one believes on the strength of the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, so that faith is itself defined as intellectual assent given on the basis of authority. The church was understood to be the divinely-appointed channel of truth, with a teaching office given it by God.

Medieval scholasticism developed this same idea in relation to the question of the authority of scripture. One believes the teaching of holy scripture on the basis of ecclesiastical authority, technically because the church defines the canon of scripture. Calvin’s initial response to this is readily anticipated: the foundations of the church rest on the authority of prophets and apostles – i.e., scripture – rather than scripture upon the church. This is a classic Protestant theme, and Calvin speaks accordingly of the “impiety” of the medieval view. But if one then asks why holy scripture is taken as authoritative by the church, Calvin gives a more surprising answer. Scripture is authoritative by virtue of what Calvin calls the “inner witness of the Holy Spirit,” by which it is affirmed as truth in the consciousness of those believers who together comprise the church. In a certain sense, no reference beyond the believing consciousness is needed, no appeal to external authority, since the point is that the believer is made by grace to perceive the truth himself or herself through the gift of faith.

8. Ibid., pp. 287-288.

A second approach to this question might begin with a source more important to Hegel: Martin Luther. There is a pronounced tendency in Luther and in classical Lutheranism generally to claim that God can only be understood at all insofar as what is grasped in God in relation to us. This is known as the pro me principle in Lutheran theology, and it is developed in a variety of classical loci in Lutheran thought. For example, in the Loci Communes of 1521, Luther’s deputy Philipp Melancthon coined the slogan, “hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere,” which among other things signifies that to speak of the second person of the Trinity known in revelation at all is to speak of the incarnate one, the Word of God in its extraordinary condescension to the creature in time, rather than of some “discarnate” Word of God from all eternity. The most influential and arresting development of the theme, however, occurs in the Kleiner Catechismus of Luther, where the three articles of the “Apostles’ Creed” are elaborated on in similar fashion. For example, the article, “I believe in the Holy Spirit” is not treated, say, as a claim concerning who or what God is in the divine trinitarian life, or even as an affirmation of confidence that the Holy Spirit is present in the church, but rather, as affirming that one’s very believing the first two articles concerning God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord is itself the work of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, the gift of faith is a matter of grace; or, to put the same thing another way, it is God’s own doing, and not mine, that I should believe at all.

Hegel, of course, was thoroughly trained in Lutheran theology, and though in his youth he reacted strongly against the arid scholasticism of his theological training, he remained through life a profoundly Lutheran thinker. Indeed, one of the marks of “freedom” which becomes explicit in his understanding of Protestant Christianity is just this classically Lutheran understanding of the trinitarian question. What, after all, would be required in Hegelian terms for the principle of freedom to be realized in a religious position? One would above all require a content that is not an alien imposition on rational consciousness. The content would have to be “ownable” by consciousness itself, in accordance with its own nature, so that, to employ an Hegelian expression in an odd kind of way, spirit would here know itself as all reality. But this would have further implications. Most importantly, if the object of knowledge is God, if God is only knowable on Lutheran terms in his relation to the conscious self, and if God is not alien to thought but is supremely rational, then my very knowledge of God is a divine relation to consciousness. To use more philosophical language, in this knowing content and form would need to be identical, and both would need to be infinite, so that here at last thought might have an “adequate idea.”

Hegel’s argument, we have seen, was that the free political order coming into existence in his time had clear roots in Protestant Christianity. The claim made by Doull is that this “Protestant” principle of spiritual freedom has been internalized in our culture in a variety of ways outside the bounds of religion as such. In a manner of speaking, we are all Protestants now. Doull, then, adapts Hegel’s argument to his own purposes, though undoubtedly in the light of the shape of the development of nineteenth and twentieth century culture, but in this context, it

10. Much the same position is developed in relation to the knowledge of God in general by Calvin in Institutes, 1, 2.
is interesting to note that he does reverse Hegel’s line of thought. It is as if Doull wants us to see that today, in a context in which the principle of spiritual freedom has been thoroughly secularized, an index to the adequacy of a given theological culture can best be found in the political institutions to which that theology is attached.

Thus the sheer existence of a society like ours, in which the sovereign individual rather than an objective order of law and truth takes central place, indicates that our religion has to be similarly distorted, that in our thought and practice alike we are not found in a right relation with God. The current debate concerning the legal definition of marriage in Canada and the United States provides and excellent example of this, for in this debate, churches are found in the vanguard of the defence of the principle of subjective freedom. Now a consistent Hegelianism would suggest that no alteration of a political or legal system is possible except on the basis of a correlative alteration in religious understanding, since the ultimate sanction for law is conscience, and since at this point the inner truth and moving force of both religion and law are found to be one and the same. Doull unquestionably takes this view, and it is partly for this reason that he seeks to take theology so seriously, not out of an antiquarian or private interest, but as a question of the utmost public concern. His little reversal of the order of Hegel’s thought concerning the relation of religion to secular institutions, on the other hand, seems to indicate that the converse is also true: that there can be no adequate treatment of the religious question in our context that does not grapple with the notion that a religious principle of spiritual freedom has been expanded to become the dominant culture in global civilization.

Anyone at all familiar with the shape of Doull’s philosophy will know the thrust of his thesis concerning the development of Christian theology after Hegel. As a religious thinker, Hegel is understood to have provided a philosophical account of the divine outreach by which God and humankind are reconciled, and by which the mediation of this reconciliation in the incarnation is recognized and lived in the Spirit. In Hegel’s philosophical system, there is an all-important recognition that God, or more specifically the logos of God, is not something alien to humanity, but is by virtue of its specific historical mediation in Jesus Christ the inmost truth of human existence. Both to and from this “seminal” logos, as we might put it, the whole of human history pulsates with life, circulating ceaselessly and with ever-clearer rhythms. Hegel takes the view, however, that this incarnate and spiritual principle that is historically mediated would be neither divine nor spiritual were it found exclusively in Christian consciousness or faith. To be what it is revealed as being, it must be in all things both in time and in eternity.

The great theme of Doull’s philosophy is to expand upon this vision, and to find in post-Hegelian philosophy a development by which the same seminal principle continues to work itself out. By this very logic, a “revolution” occurred in the philosophy and theology of the 19th and 20th centuries, as a result of which the consciousness of this mediation of the divine reason was submerged. Both in its existentialist-subjectivist adaptation in Kierkegaard and his heirs, and in the tradition of Feuerbach and of subsequent humanism, it is assumed on the one side that the rational mediation of the divine is purely mythological, and yet, paradoxically, on the other, that the “myth” mediated, the attitude of spirit according to which the Absolute is not something alien to humanity, is nevertheless still to be assumed. To cite an argument repeatedly encountered in Doull’s work, what this entails is not quite what the 19th and 20th century revolutionaries intended. In Hegelian logic, no negation stands on its own; rather, all negation assumes and
logically contains what is negated. Thus the position advanced does not, and cannot, ultimately have abandoned the incarnate trinitarian reason it claims to have rejected. The upshot is that what in Hegel’s terms was understood as the result of a long historical, theological and philosophical mediation is now present in a hidden form, as a kind of presupposition implicit and unrecognized, and for this very reason all the more potent. Rather than being a negation of Christian culture, the revolution contains the structures of Christian belief implicitly in itself.

This also, however, is the source of Doull’s fundamental optimism concerning the future of Christian theology. According to Doull, who it seems to me never wrung his hands in despair over this question but insisted again that we take the long historical view, the recognition that humanity is not something absolute of itself is logically as well as existentially inevitable, since the notion of such an independent humanity is unsustainable, even farcical. Though the mediation of God as understood in the Christian religion has fallen on hard times, paradoxically, it is not unpresent in the general outlook of our time and in the intellectual systems that surround. To take a trivial but pervasive example, when our media use language arguably inspired by Strauss and Feuerbach to speak of charity as “humanitarianism,” the fall from a more robust Christian humanism is only apparent. The reason, after all, why the word “humanitarian” is used to connote the moral Good in our culture is because our culture implicitly recognizes human nature as the locus of the absolute Good itself, so that not only is “the divine” in “human nature” in some generic sense, but there is a concrete human nature in God. Only a culture that has taken from Christian faith the idea of the infinite caritas of God, welling up in human history in the extraordinary fashion that it does, can say so. For us to recognize this, however, is already in a small measure for the Christian religion to have made its return from exile, where it may then await the return of its own prodigal child, contemporary secularity.

The problem, however, is that the partial, one-sided—Hegel would say abstract—grasp of this in contemporary culture as a presupposition rather than as the result of a mediation means that culturally, we labour in our thinking under a very considerable handicap. For Doull, we are rather like people hopping along on one leg, convinced that we have no need of two; such hopping can be done, obviously, but it is a less than elegant mode of transport, and one that can frequently lead to injury. The use of the leg on which we stand together with the other it is meant to accompany would be vastly preferable, but that would require that the other leg, the forgotten and disused one, be valued for what it is. To return to my more concrete example, contemporary humanism would be far more secure in itself, less open to abuse or distortion, and a good deal more compelling, were it not suspended in mid-air without foundation, and were its real roots understood.

This is not to say, however, that secular humanism is altogether a bad thing. Here I return to a point made earlier. One important feature of Doull’s approach to these matters is his optimism. Just as the Absolute, in Hegel, must pass over into its opposite in order precisely to be itself, it seems that, in Doull’s adaptation of Hegelian principle to post-Hegelian history, the divine must similarly empty itself into the secular, again, in order to be itself. Through the “revolution” there will be, then, on Doull’s reading, a realization of the Christian religion beyond that of earlier times, just as, in Hegel’s philosophy itself, there was also such a realization as a result of Enlightenment’s painful consciousness of the “death of [the old] God.” By this token, then, the religious sources must be enriched, and must thus be seen in a new light, by virtue of
their secular translation. That is to say, the realization of a truly free secular culture is to be seen as a profoundly Christian concern, the outworking of the incarnational and trinitarian logic of the Christian revelation. If in the realization of secular freedom Christianity has suffered a kind of death, it was so that it might live again, comprehending this secular freedom in some richer way in itself.

James Doull quite clearly took the view that the renewal of our political culture and public institutions cannot take place without a renewal in religion. It was for this reason that, as a philosopher with an avid commitment to the quality of our secular institutions, he took so seriously the task of theology and the life of the Christian church. I should also like to say, however, that it was as a Christian that Doull was equally committed to the quality of public life, and that the two sides of this are inseparable. This was, I think, the reason for the query with which I began, the question posed to the young theologian whether he ought not to enter politics. The point was that a theology that speaks of the incarnation of God, which insists that even death, the apex of finitude, is not something alien to God, must engage with this *saeculum* on its own terms. What is at stake in not doing so is nothing less than the very universality of truth, or “incarnate Trinitarian reason,” as Doull puts it. The fact that existential theology has mainly resigned from its public obligations, and the fact that the theology of praxis has proven unable to relate itself to the content of Christian trinitarian faith, are seen as evidences of the one-sidedness of Christianity since the time of Hegel, of the abstraction that it has become.

Here, finally, it seems to me that there is much constructive work to be done, indeed, a mountain to be climbed. However, there is reason to think that the kind of comprehensive effort required to reassess the Christian roots of Western political consciousness might today, for the first time in a very long time, be received with public interest. For the question of the relation of religion to politics is today alive and well in the geopolitical sphere. It is likely to be among the most important questions facing the human race in the present century. I refer, of course, to the contemporary conflict between the West and Islam. It is not insignificant that the roots of this conflict can be traced in some ways to a crisis in Islam generated by its encounter since Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt with Western ideas of spiritual and political freedom. On the one side, there is the fact that the excesses of “abstract” freedom are understandably repellent to Muslims; on the other, there is the contemporary insistence in radical Islam that law and politics are theological through and through, and that law in particular is divine and not human. Against these claims stand the Hegelian theme that the concrete concept of freedom is something infinitely richer, and a profoundly Christian concern, that must have implication for the questions of political life.

Informed theological treatments of the roots of freedom in contemporary Christian thought are surprisingly rare. All the more reason, therefore, for a renewal in political theology that takes our theme seriously, and that takes up the question that in so many respects lies at the centre of James Doull’s own philosophy. Perhaps it must be though a painful encounter with a religious culture which denies the concept of freedom in the specific sense developed in Hegel’s thought, and this nowhere more clearly than in its conception of legal and political institutions, that the Western world can rediscover something of its own distinctive wisdom.
Hegel And The Holocaust

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My topic is the debate between Emil Fackenheim and James Doull on the question: would Hegel today be a Hegelian? The debate was originally published in 1970, and took its departure from Doull’s review of Fackenheim’s book *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*. Doull called the book the most valuable work on Hegel he had ever read, but in the review he also defended Hegel and Hegelianism against a number of criticisms Fackenheim had raised. What brought these two thinkers together was the belief that understanding Hegel is indispensable to understanding the history of philosophy since Hegel. What set them apart was the question of the viability of Hegelianism today, after the holocaust.

I will begin with a brief summary of Fackenheim’s career, for those unfamiliar with his work, and of his argument in the debate. Then in sections IV-VII I will take up and defend Doull’s response.

1. I first wrote this paper for oral presentation, and since I have made no substantial changes to the structure or content of its argument, I feel that a disclaimer of sorts is in order. I make a fair number of rather sweeping claims in this paper, about Hegel, about the holocaust – about topics, in other words, that resist such treatment and about which I cannot claim anything close to expertise. While I admit to being overly sweeping, I sincerely hope that I have not been facile. And I trust that my claims will be taken as they were intended, a stab at a topic about which I have given a fair bit of thought, but which also continues to elude my thoughts. Many thanks to Eli Diamond, Dorota Glowaka, Graeme Nicholson, Joanna Polley, John Russon and the participants and audience members of the book panel on *Philosophy and Freedom* at the meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association in Halifax, May 2003.


I. Fackenheim: Life And Work

Fackenheim was a German-born Jew, and a rabbi, who came to Canada in 1940 as a refugee from Nazi Germany. He spent over 30 years on the faculty of the Philosophy Department at the University of Toronto, before moving to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Before 1967, there were two important but separate strands in Fackenheim’s thought: one was his renowned scholarly work on German Idealism, and the other was his work as a Jewish thinker. These two strands came together, so the story goes, as a result of the 6-Day War in 1967, after which Fackenheim felt compelled to think more and more about the holocaust. This debate, published in 1970, comes, then, at a very interesting point in Fackenheim’s career. Here we find him bringing together the two strands of his work – German philosophy and Jewish thought – in a sustained philosophical reflection on the holocaust. In fact, it is this question – the relation of German philosophy, especially Hegel’s, to Judaism and to the holocaust – that animates Fackenheim’s argument in this debate.

Fackenheim addresses two related but distinct questions. “Would Hegel today be a Hegelian?” essentially means (1) “can a Jew be a Hegelian?” and (2) “can anyone today, ‘after Auschwitz’, be a Hegelian?” I want to make a few remarks about the first question and then examine the second in greater depth.

II. Can A Jew Be A Hegelian?

Briefly put, Fackenheim argues in this debate and elsewhere that the answer to this question is no. He has two reasons. The first is that one must be a Christian to be a Hegelian. This is because, according to Fackenheim, the standpoint of Absolute Knowing or Hegelian science that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* would educate its readers towards is infected with, and inseparable from, Hegel’s particular religious commitment to Lutheran Protestantism. Moreover, Hegel’s system depends upon the living historical presence of Lutheran Protestantism, not to mention the Prussian state, both of which have since passed away. This “passing of Hegel’s Germany” makes the Hegelian system as a whole irretrievable today to anyone at all, and its religious taint makes it inaccessible to Jews in particular.

4. For a more detailed biography, see Fackenheim: *German Philosophy and Jewish Thought*, ed. Louis Greenspan and Graeme Nicholson (University of Toronto Press, 1992) 3-12.

Fackenheim’s second reason for arguing that a Jew cannot be a Hegelian is that Hegel’s philosophy fails to do justice to Judaism. (This theme of philosophy or thought ‘doing justice’ to what it thinks will become important below.) It follows that a Jew must choose either Hegel, who has an inadequate understanding of the Jewish faith, or Judaism, which falls short of the final standpoint that the Hegelian phenomenology reaches, just because this final standpoint is an essentially Christian one. One cannot have both full-blown Judaism and full-blown Hegelianism; Fackenheim’s allegiance is clear.

I want to bracket the vexed issue of Hegel’s interpretation of Judaism, including Fackenheim’s denial that a Jew can be a Hegelian, and Doull’s defence of Hegel on this point. I will, however, make one brief remark before moving on to the central question of this paper.

It is worth noting that Doull’s response to Fackenheim on this question is unconvincing in at least one important respect. Doull writes: “Certainly Christianity is for Hegel the absolute religion, but philosophy shows the absolute religion as unable to exist adequately to its concept unless the other religions are also present, preserved as well as transcended.” (229; 336) He goes on to argue that Hegel does not look forward to the assimilation of Judaism into Christianity (which Fackenheim fears). Rather, Hegel looks forward to “the dissolution of the antagonism between Judaism and Christianity.” (229-30; 337) However, since the result of this dissolution is Christianity Hegelianized, for a member of the Jewish faith, e.g. Fackenheim, the difference between assimilation and dissolution of antagonism could never be a meaningful difference at all. Here Doull shows himself strangely insensitive to a basic fact of human psychology: people, e.g. members of religious faiths, will tend to resist being told that they are necessary but subordinate moments in a system whose truth they do not recognize. This, of course, says nothing about the accuracy of Hegel or Doull’s account of Judaism. It only expresses some doubt that Fackenheim would have found Doull’s response at all convincing, and some bewilderment that Doull could have thought that he would.

III. Can Anyone Today, ‘After Auschwitz,’ Be A Hegelian?

This is the question that I want to focus on. Here again Fackenheim’s answer is no. He argues that the demand of the Hegelian philosophy is that it not only comprehend and mediate all things but that it also do justice to them. The problem is that, in relation to the holocaust, it becomes impossible to fulfil both sides of this demand. If one tries to comprehend the holocaust in the Hegelian sense, it becomes impossible to fulfil both sides of this demand. If one tries to comprehend the holocaust in the Hegelian sense, one will fail to do justice to the utter uniqueness and incomprehensibility of the demonic evil that transpired there; to do justice to the holocaust one must give up any claim to absolute comprehension. For this reason, Fackenheim urges that we give up the “god-like self-confidence” (226; 334) of the Hegelian system. He thinks that Hegel alive today would himself give up this self-confidence, and so Hegel today would not be a Hegelian, and neither can we. Instead,
Fackenheim argues that philosophical reflection on the holocaust finds itself in an aporia that it cannot overcome but must endure: philosophical thinking cannot remain silent about the holocaust, but neither can it claim to fully understand it.

Now it is important to note that Fackenheim insists that philosophy must think the holocaust and attempt to do justice to it. His claim, in his debate with Doull and elsewhere, is that this thinking about the holocaust cannot be a Hegelian thinking. This gives us the question that I want to pursue in the rest of this paper: what kind of thinking thinks the holocaust in a just manner? And can it be a Hegelian thinking? I want to pursue this question by saying a few things about what I take Hegelian thinking to be, and why I think it can do justice to the holocaust. This is the position that Doull defends in the debate, and I am, therefore, largely in agreement with him. Though I will be defending Doull’s answer, it is important to recognize that it is very much Fackenheim whom we have to thank for the question – for ensuring that it occupies an important place on the contemporary philosophical scene, and for provoking Doull to formulate a response that is, I believe, of enduring value.

IV. Hegel’s Account Of Evil

Fackenheim’s position on the relation of Hegel’s philosophy to the holocaust rests on two principal claims. The first is that Hegelian thinking cannot do justice to the holocaust. The second is very much related to this. Fackenheim argues that nowhere in Hegel’s work is the demonic evil that transpired in the holocaust anticipated or accounted for. Fackenheim repeatedly claims that ‘the kingdom of Auschwitz’ is not of this world; its evil is wholly otherworldly, and, therefore, incomprehensible through Hegel’s philosophy. Two aspects of Fackenheim’s criticism of Hegel on evil can thus be discerned. The first is that evil is not afforded a central place in Hegel’s thought; the second is that Hegel mistakenly attributes demonic evil to human nature – it is, for Hegel, all too worldly. Let me begin with the former claim.

Fackenheim would seem to have us think that Hegel ignores, diminishes or tries to explain away the importance of evil. When one reads Hegel on evil, however, one finds the very opposite. Hegel everywhere insists, against contemporaries and predecessors, on the prevalence of evil, in modern life especially. This insistence reaches an almost polemical fervour in sections 139-140 of the Philosophy of Right, which is his most sustained discussion of evil, though all of his most important works contain some treatment of it. His account is the same throughout. Like Kant before him, Hegel defines evil as the self-conscious or freely-willed decision to pursue one’s particular ends which one knows to be in conflict with the universal good. Hegel insists that human beings are
intrinsically evil – evil in our “innermost being.” More specifically, “evil is located in the act of cognition, in consciousness.” Since Hegel puts evil at the heart of human consciousness, Doull rightly points out that it lies too at the heart of his science of the experience of consciousness, i.e. the Phenomenology of Spirit. As Doull says: “the [Hegelian] system has its origin in the consciousness of radical evil.” (227; 335)

This brings us to the second aspect of Hegel’s account of evil that Fackenheim rejects. Evil, for Hegel, is part of human nature. More specifically, it has its source in human knowing or thinking, and it is most prevalent in the form of thinking embodied in modern life, where individuals have a greater sense of their power as self-certain, thinking subjects capable of self-consciously subordinating the universal good to their particular desires and inclinations. For Doull, then, who defends Hegel’s account of evil, the demonic evil of the holocaust is one of the modern world’s own-most possibilities, though it is also a failure of the modern world to reach its deeper possibilities. Against Fackenheim, Doull, following Hegel, puts the holocaust kingdom firmly within the human, and the modern, world.

In what follows, I am going to defend this claim that the evil of the holocaust is not other to human nature, and especially not other to human nature as embodied in the modern world. To do this, I want to turn to Fackenheim’s other criticism of Hegel: that Hegelian thinking cannot do justice to the holocaust. My argument is going to be that the holocaust demands at least two things from those who would think it, demands which Fackenheim himself articulates. The first is that we bear witness to the evil and suffering that transpired there; the second is that we obey in thought the holocaust’s own command that it never happen again. I am going to try to show that a distinctively Hegelian thinking is the thinking that fulfils both of these demands.

V. Worries About Hegel

Fackenheim’s claim that Hegelian thinking cannot do justice to the holocaust rests on the following worry. Since Hegel does not have an adequate concept of evil, and since Hegelian thinking is too ambitious in its attempt to comprehend and do justice to all things, it will come in from outside, so to speak, in thinking the holocaust. Faced with either flight from the world of the holocaust or fidelity to it, Fackenheim argues that Hegel would stay with the actual and demonic essence of the holocaust, seeking, in Fackenheim’s words, what little “comprehensiveness and transcending wisdom as remain


within its grasp.” (226; 334) The thought implicit here is that if Hegelian thinking were to hold to its claim to absolute comprehensiveness in thinking the holocaust, it would fail to do justice to it. Hegelian thinking, unfettered, would be intolerably external to the holocaust, imposing its will to understand and its inadequate categories and concepts onto it from outside.

Fackenheim’s worry can be rephrased in such a way as to bring it into line with an oft-expressed concern about Hegel’s philosophy. For Fackenheim, the demonic evil of the holocaust stands as the absolute ‘other’ to thought, especially to Hegel’s thought. The holocaust is that event in which rational thought cannot possibly find itself. But as Lin Jackson writes: “The comprehension of otherness in self and self in otherness is . . . precisely what [Hegelian] thinking is; . . . an absolute Other cannot exist for it.”

Jackson’s formulation is particularly helpful, since, for Fackenheim and many postmodern thinkers after him, this is exactly where the problem with Hegel lies. The holocaust is the absolute other to thought, and so the thought that comprehends or identifies itself in the holocaust could only annihilate its demonic essence; it could only reduce the holocaust’s utter uniqueness to a subordinate moment in the system, and thereby fail to do justice to it.

VI. Immanent Thinking

Let me try to answer these concerns, starting with the problem of thought’s alleged externality. It seems to me that Fackenheim’s view fails to notice the extent to which Hegel himself is sensitive to this very worry and misses what is distinctively Hegelian about Hegelian thinking. The thought that would come in from outside and impose itself externally onto the holocaust, or any historical event, is indeed present in Hegel’s philosophy, but as a form of consciousness which he criticizes, namely, the Understanding. Hegel writes:

Instead of making its way into the inherent content of the matter in hand, understanding always takes survey of the whole, assumes a position above the particular existence about which it is speaking, i.e. it does not see it at all. True scientific knowledge, on the contrary, demands abandonment to the very life of the object, or, which means the same thing, claims to have before it the inner necessity controlling the object, and to express this only.9


Fackenheim’s fear, it seems, is that a Hegelian thinking would impose a concept or law onto the holocaust external to its nature. However, for Hegel, as Graeme Nicholson says, “knowledge does not impose forms of its devising upon an alien material. It recognizes the Begriff [concept] as it has become constituted in life. And what we find here ... is the very quintessence of Hegelianism.”\textsuperscript{10} John Russon interprets Hegel in much the same way: “The truest definition of [Hegel’s] dialectical method is the method that lets the other speak for itself”.\textsuperscript{11} And in Hegel’s own words:

[Spirit is not] a tertium quid which casts distinctions back into the abyss of the Absolute, and declares them all to mean the same there. On the contrary, true knowledge lies rather in the seeming inactivity which merely watches how what is distinguished is self-moved by its very nature and returns again into its own unity.\textsuperscript{12}

These passages demonstrate that Fackenheim fails to address adequately the demand that Hegelian thinking imposes on itself to think everything, including the holocaust, from within. Contra Fackenheim, my interpretation suggests that Hegelian thinking would be an immanent thinking, one that would abandon itself to the life of the holocaust kingdom and watch as the event articulates its own concept. In so doing, it would respond to the holocaust’s own demand that we bear witness to it in thought. As I have noted, “bearing witness” is surely a criterion for any thinking that will do justice to the holocaust; it is a demand that Fackenheim himself recognizes, and one that Hegelian thinking fulfills. Finally, we might note that immanent thinking is what is so distinctive about Doull. We find him often and rightly praised in Philosophy and Freedom for thinking the history of philosophy from within, for understanding the figures he studies on their own terms. And this is also what is so distinctively Hegelian about Doull’s thought.

\textsuperscript{10} Nicholson, “The Passing of Hegel’s Germany” (in Fackenheim, ed. Greenspan and Nicholson) 47. Nicholson perfectly states this point again in the closing lines of his Preface to Philosophy and Freedom: “Philosophy is the cognition of that which is – for instance, ourselves – by way of a concept and an idea. But the ground for that cognition is that which has already been informed by a concept and an idea from the start.” (Philosophy and Freedom, xv) Nicholson says this in reference to Doull, but I think he would agree that it applies just as well to Hegel.

\textsuperscript{11} Russon, The Self and its Body in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit (University of Toronto Press, 1997) 114.

\textsuperscript{12} Hegel, Phenomenology (trans. Baillie), 804.
VII. Self-Consciousness

This brings us to the other distinctive feature of Hegelian thinking to which I would like to draw attention. Hegelian thinking is perhaps above all the thought that thinks itself. The demand that we come to greater and greater self-consciousness of ourselves as the lived embodiment of our age is a demand that Hegel and Doull impose on themselves and on us. Doull writes: “The Hegelian philosophy is accessible because it is the philosophy of the scientific-technical age, the demand and necessity that this come to an adequate consciousness of itself … The [Hegelian] system is the self-conscious thought of the modern age.” (230; 337-8) When Lin Jackson writes about Hegelian thinking as the thought that comprehends itself in otherness and otherness in itself, I take him to be making the same point. Hegelian thinking is the thinking that seeks to know or identify itself as embodied in what appears—but is not in fact—other to it, namely, human history and experience. Thus Hegelian thinking would demand that it know or identify itself as embodied in the holocaust, albeit in an utterly degraded form. This identification, moreover, would not be an annihilation of the holocaust’s essence but obedience to its demand that it never happen again.

Let me expand on this last point. The demonic evil of the holocaust would appear as the absolute other to human thought and human nature – this is Fackenheim’s position. But the thinking that knows itself not as utterly alien to the holocaust but as embodied therein as a form of human consciousness utterly degraded, this is the kind of thinking that sees in the holocaust a possibility that remains alive for it today. This recognition, I believe, is our best guarantee that it never happen again, and it is one that comes out of a distinctively Hegelian thinking. Hegelian thinking, then, is the thinking that sees the holocaust as a former human actuality that remains a real human possibility, one that it must be absolutely vigilant in guarding against. ‘Never again’ cannot just be a practical demand, to be fulfilled, for instance, in the founding of the state of Israel. It must also be a philosophical demand that human thought take responsibility for the form of life it came to embody in the holocaust. This is exactly Doull’s point in his response to Fackenheim. In the holocaust what is good in modern thought and life was utterly renounced and forgotten. Our response to this should not be less of the kind of immanent, self-conscious thinking that Hegel prescribes, but more of it, just because this is what best meets the holocaust’s own demands that we bear witness to it and never again renounce and forget ourselves and our deeper possibilities so completely. This is the kind of thinking that does justice to the holocaust, and it is a distinctively Hegelian, and Doullian, thinking.

Conclusion

One frequently encounters the following concern about Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a version of which I discussed above. In the *Phenomenology* we lose contingency because all forms of consciousness, other than the standpoint of the
Absolute, are reduced to necessary but subordinate moments in the system. In thinking through this very legitimate worry one needs to bear in mind a point about Hegel that cannot be over-emphasized. The demand, if not the result, of the Hegelian phenomenology (though I think in many ways the result too) is that any given form of consciousness generate its own concept. If such a concept entails the subordination of the relevant form of consciousness to a moment in the system, then the demand of the Hegelian phenomenology is that this subordination also be brought about by that form of consciousness itself; the demand is that it be a self-subordination, not one brought about by some external logic. What justifies Hegel’s claim and makes necessary this subordination is again not some alien logic, but the very logic of human experience, namely, the dissatisfaction we ourselves feel with the forms consciousness takes in common, everyday experience. This is a point Doull makes eminently clear. He writes:

To make the elevation to science possible the forms of experience must all be capable of receiving scientific form ... To make it necessary there must be in ordinary consciousness a dissatisfaction with the forms of experience and a tendency to the scientific standpoint.

Surely in reflecting on the holocaust, thought experiences not simply dissatisfaction with itself, but utter disgust with the evil form it took there. Thought’s immediate inclination is to take flight, but as both Fackenheim and Doull agree, this is an unsatisfactory response. Fackenheim would leave Hegel at this point, and remain sceptical about thought’s alleged tendency to the scientific standpoint. Doull, on the other hand, adduces compelling reasons for staying with Hegel. He shows that we have in Hegel the demand that, in facing the kind of demonic evil that transpired in the holocaust, thought’s proper course is to turn on itself and recognize the evil it encounters there as one of its own most possibilities. When our thinking can hold together the knowledge of the holocaust as one of the deepest failures of human existence with the recognition of itself as embodied therein, then we will have finally done justice to it. That this is the only means by which human consciousness can fulfil its deeper possibilities and realize itself as Spirit, Hegel himself clearly recognized:

[T]he life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains

13. Fackenheim, of course, saw the flaw in this objection as well as any one, and knew that the Hegelian philosophy was entirely beholden to the contingent (see for instance The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought (Indiana University Press, 1967) 24). Ultimately Fackenheim does, however, recognize and exploit the distinction between the demand and the result of Hegel’s philosophy (see again Religious Dimension, 24). But he shows against tendencies still alive today that this discrepancy cannot be assumed as a forgone conclusion. Rather, “[i]t is the question most in need of examination.” (Religious Dimension, 24)

itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive which closes its eyes to the negative ... , on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it.\textsuperscript{15}

James Doull On What It Means To Be A Philosopher In Canada

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“There only now begins to be an indigenous historical scholarship in Canada, and that at a time when the political unity of the country and its cultural survival are uncertain.”

In his editorial comment for the first issue of Dionysius, the Dalhousie University journal of Hellenic, Patristic and Christian philosophy that he co-founded in 1977, James Doull offered a reflection upon the significance of starting such a journal in Canada. Two striking claims underlie his reflection. First, Doull understands there to be, tied to our situation as Canadians, a particular kind of access to the historical study of the intellectual tradition. Second, he argues that a recovered understanding of this intellectual tradition is of central importance to the political survival of Canada. Since it seems fair to say that most philosophers and most Canadi
ers would not see any connection between the survival of Canada and Doull’s commentary on Plato’s Theaetetus in the same issue of Dionysius, some clarification of his views on the connection between philosophy and Canada is in order.

Doull is not the first to have noticed an emphasis on the history of philosophy in Canadian thought. Already in 1950, on the occasion of the first ever symposium on Canadian philosophy, John A. Irving, a professor at the University of Toronto, wrote about the “Philosophical Trends in Canada Between 1850 and 1950.” Irving contrasts Canadian thought with the emergence and dominance of the various philosophical ‘isms’ in American philosophy:

Whether fortunately or unfortunately, no such luxuriant native growths have sprung up in Canada. Faced with the multitude of American and European ‘isms,’ Canadians have emphasized anew the importance of the history of philosophy: the thing most worthwhile is the famous

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1 I am grateful to Neil Robertson for providing me with some of Doull’s unpublished works on Canada, and to Ian Angus for indispensable references to other works on Canadian philosophy.
3 Connected to this emphasis on the history of philosophy, it would also be of interest to consider why there has been such a strong and consistent Hegelian emphasis in Canadian thought.
philosophical literature of the past. The history of philosophy must be thoroughly mastered before critical and speculative activities can be profitably undertaken.4

This emphasis on the history of philosophy5 is part of what Irving characterized as the attempt in early Canadian philosophical work “to resolve the conflicting ‘isms’ through the achievement of a balanced philosophy.”6 The theme of a conservative, balanced philosophy resonates through much English Canadian thought. French Canadian thought, developing almost wholly independently of English Canadian work, shares with this other solitude an avoidance of positivism and materialism, focusing rather, due to its strongly Thomistic character, on a classical education. Important works on the history of philosophy in English and French Canada by Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott,7 Roland Houde,8 Yvan Lamonde,9 and Raymond Klibansky10 among others11 have studied the various forms of philosophy in Canada throughout our history.

Though these studies are of great interest for the question before us, Doull’s focus on philosophy in Canada does not refer to an already existent body of scholarship,12 but

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6 Irving, “Philosophical Trends in Canada Between 1850 and 1950,” 239.
10 Raymond Klibansky and Josiane Boulad-Ayoub (eds.), La pensée philosophique d’expression française au Canada (Québec, Presses de l’Université Laval, 1998).
12 In fact, Doull was quite disparaging at the actual state of academia, despite its vast proliferation of articles and books on every subject. See “Naturalistic Individualism: Quebec independence and an independent Canada,” in Modernity and Responsibility: Essays for George Grant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983) 37: “The human spirit seems to itself rich when in truth it is empty and impoverished. For the past is not studied as educative and corrective, but as what one is already done with and liberated from. It is the object of an abstract and superficial reason that can without trouble rise above whatever content: and the arts and other works of the present endlessly repeat the same tale that between reason and the endlessness of the natural there is no congruity and true expression. There is sharing and communication of experience in which nothing is in truth shared or communicated, since that would be a true object and an offence thus to freedom.”
to the potential for an important Canadian scholarship. His conception of this philosophical potential emerges from his reflections upon the Canadian spirit as it is reflected in our constitution and other institutions. For this reason, rather than focusing upon this or that Canadian philosopher, I shall instead restrict myself to Doull’s understanding of the contemporary difficulties facing the retrieval of an adequate understanding of the philosophical tradition. For Doull, the situation of Canadians both brings to light how these philosophical obstacles to understanding our intellectual tradition can be overcome, and urgently demands that we do so.

It is clear from Doull’s approach to the history of philosophy that the obscurity of previous philosophies to our own time is not the result of certain universally inescapable, structural impediments to our understanding of previous ways of thinking, which would require the philosophical sub-field of hermeneutics. The problems of the foreignness of previous philosophies can only be solved through a systematic reading of the whole history of Western thought, which serves to give the contemporary positions clouding our understanding of the past the status of passing moments in a wider historical dialectic. An understanding of the presuppositions that dominate contemporary thinking, combined with careful historical, philological, and philosophical attention to older texts, is sufficient to avoid naively reading modern attitudes into the past. Against those who might retort that Doull’s own approach to texts is philosophically naïve, being absent of hermeneutical reflection upon the structural incompatibility of different forms of thought and historical epochs, Doull said the following: “it is as though what Plato, Aristotle, or some other philosopher thought is not by us thinkable so far as we are also human! Their thoughts may be difficult for us, but the difficulty is partly in ourselves in that we are uncritical and cannot question our own dogmas.”

There is no doubt that for Doull, reason is universal and transcends the ages, and that through sufficient study of the great thinkers and the historical context to which they were responding, we can see beyond the dogmas of our own time and make contemporary interlocutors of these older texts.

What then are the contours and the limits of the contemporary philosophical landscape according to Doull? He sees contemporary dogmas as splitting in two the unity of life and thought that he locates in the Christian Trinitarian principle, in which nature as primary is negated and thought discovered to be true grounds of our freedom, within which nature and the natural aspects of life can be restored and recognized as grounded in the rational. Once this unity is broken up, there is on the one side an abstract, calculative thinking which is indifferent to any particular content, manifested in numerous ways: liberalism’s adherence to individual rights prior to any mediating

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13 Peddle and Robertson note that Doull and George Grant wrote “within the expanded horizon of the long history of western philosophy and culture, from the ancient world to their own twentieth century” (“Lamentation and Speculation: George Grant, James Doull, and the Possibility of Canada” in Animus, vol. 7 [2002]: http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/2002vol7/peddleandrobertson7.pdf, 2).
15 See for example “Naturalistic Individualism,” 33.
institutions, Marxism’s classless society beyond all difference, abstract and centralizing bureaucracies governing without respect for local traditions and customs, analytic philosophy’s application of abstract and mathematized symbolic logic to older philosophical texts irrespective of their own internal logic and assumptions. In all these cases we have a thinking which excludes the dynamic character of life and nature. Diametrically opposed to these are various forms of existentialism, concerned with respecting nature, culture, and language, as opposed to an abstractly dominating reason. Doull sees this perspective as in turn emphasizing the flux of life apart from the order and stability of thought. For Doull, it is the task of philosophy throughout the ages to break down the separation of these kinds of divisions, and discover how life and thought are inherently connected. If one approaches the history of philosophy assuming the trans-historical universal applicability of modern symbolic logic as exhaustive of what reason is, or the Heideggerian view that the tradition is at its core the suppression of life and nature by a technical reason, the way that both sides can be held together with varying degrees of success will remain obscure. Only if philosophy can approach the past without our own pre-conceptions of the definition and limits of reason can we open ourselves to the truth in all forms of spiritual expression, “not only philosophical doctrines but poetical and other literary works, religious doctrines, and institutions.”

This assessment of the contemporary is directly connected with Doull’s assessment of Canada and the United States. In their contribution to *Philosophy and Freedom*, David Peddle and Neil Robertson have traced the development of Doull’s interpretation of the United States, and the resulting change in his understanding of Canada. Until the mid-1980’s Doull identifies the U.S. with the pole of a naturalistic, consumer-driven liberalism, destructive of nature and the existence of distinct cultures and communities. Having broken with European tradition and started radically anew with the Declaration of Independence, the U.S., in Doull’s earlier view, has lost the depth of European culture, and the political capacity of the 19th century nation-state to unify the various ends of individuals in civil society. It is relative to this negative assessment of the United States that one should read Doull’s original understanding of the peculiar task for Canadian philosophy.

Doull writes in the above mentioned editorial comment to the first *Dionysius*:

To have hold of their tradition and proper culture, while it is the common need of the present time, is peculiarly necessary to young Canadians. This country subsists in independence of the United States so far as Canadians have another and more conservative relation to the common European tradition.

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16 “Editorial Comment,” *Dionysius*, 3. In the Doull-Braybrooke debate, Doull states that “the recovery of the tradition must be through the study of texts literary, religious, historical as well as philosophical…” (p. 7).
Because the United States is here viewed as bound to the technocratic liberal side of the contemporary divide, the individual is prior to institutional life, and novelty is privileged over tradition. American philosophy, so long as it remains with contemporary liberalism’s confidence in the immediate freedom of the natural individual, has no access to the richness of earlier European thought. Canada, in contrast, is founded upon the rejection of this American rupture with Europe and the embrace of radical democracy. Our preservation of European institutions gives us a fuller access to the more comprehensive reason of the European tradition. As such, Canadians can avoid the pitfalls of both American political life and of American philosophy by defining “their rejection of technological naturalism by means of the old tradition.”

Peddle and Robertson bring out the problem of this analysis: why is Canada not subject to the same fate of 20th century European states if it is distinguished from the American state merely through the stability of its European tradition? Why would we be able to preserve the stability of this rational state while the European versions degenerated into fascism?

Doull elaborates this question further in a 1974 public debate at the University of King’s College addressing the question “What is the proper business of philosophy today?” Doull made the following comments about the relevance of our national identity to the question of philosophy’s true purpose:

We are not carrying this debate on the moon or at Harvard or Oxford but in Canada. Our question more exactly is, what is the ‘business’ of philosophy at present in Canada? In Britain or the United States the same question would be answered almost inescapably within a particular philosophical tradition. For Canadians there need not be the same restriction. Indeed if we are to be an independent country politically and culturally, we have to acquire another and more adequate relation to our traditions than simply through the British philosophy and its American extension. That is obvious from our English-French duality. We cannot be one country with the French if we build on our British colonial past alone, but only if we enliven our whole European inheritance.

I believe that in this statement we have the key to what would eventually distinguish Doull’s earlier reading of North American states from his final word on the issue. That Canada is beyond being simply another version of the European nation-state is seen by the simple fact that the political union between French and English Canada after the Conquest would be unthinkable from a European perspective. Articulating a genuinely common political spirit between the French and English traditions in Canada would prevent a nation from falling back upon its merely natural characteristics as the primary foundation of the state and its citizenship, in isolation from the universal freedom of its rational institutional life. For this reason, Doull’s view of Canadian philosophy’s capacity for a more objective view of the intellectual tradition cannot be labeled

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19 “Naturalistic Individualism,” 50.
20 Doull-Braybrooke p. 8.
nationalistic, because it is precisely in Canada’s capacity to transcend nationality that he sees this potential. Its access to historical truth does not lie, for example, in a traditionally romantic appeal to our languages as having a deeper access to truth, as with the Heideggerian privileging of German and Greek as philosophically richer than languages at the disposal of other nations. Doull is of course critical of the naturalistic and relativizing view of philosophical positions as being inextricably bound to a particular national culture, as if they could only have been discovered or even understood by members of that culture. National character does not limit what can be grasped by the universality of thought, but only disposes\(^{21}\) a thinker to apprehend a certain principle with clarity, though other principles or perspectives are far from inaccessible. The Canadian philosopher, not bound to one European national tradition, but without having radically broken off from European thought, should be disposed to consider more objectively the common European philosophical legacy.

This is not at all to say that cultural particularity inherently obscures one’s grasp of history, as if a hypothetically nation-less philosopher would provide the most comprehensive point of access to the history of philosophy. There is something much more particular to the English-French duality which constitutes the Canadian state which might afford such a perspective on European intellectual history. Of the difference between the French and English traditions in Canada, Doull writes that it is “[n]ot just any difference, but that of the two peoples who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries discovered and brought into being the rational democratic freedom of the modern age.”\(^{22}\) I think Doull here concurs with Hegel’s assessment of the relation between British and French thought.\(^{23}\) Hegel himself thought that the German national character unified French rationalism and its ability to make explicit abstract universal principles, with British empiricism’s attention towards the particular of sense and intuition.\(^{24}\) Doull seemed to understand Canada as an even clearer and more stable reconciliation of the British and French character than Hegel’s ascription of this potential to the German national character. With the German reconciliation of French and British character, the problem remains that this reconciliation itself belongs to a particular nation, exclusive of other naturally defined European nations, and thus one can easily fall into a confusion of its rational comprehensiveness and its natural exclusiveness. In Canada, by contrast, the British and French components constitute sovereign parts, but the unity of them is beyond either particular natural tradition, granting a certain protection against this confusion: “The different spirit of French and British culture and the consequent collisions and misunderstandings of the two not only sharpen in each the sense of its

\(^{21}\) “It is no longer in thought and a rational belief that Europeans and Americans have their essential tradition, but in the natural and the particular. One speaks, for example, of British, German, or some other national philosophy, as though national differences divided essentially and did not only dispose to the discovery of one rather than the other principle,” in “Naturalistic individualism,” 42.


\(^{24}\) On the “logical” temper of the French and the “empirical” temper of the English, see “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 435.
difference but permit a recognition of the common European freedom which our federation and the American would variously realize.”

Yet in his later political thought, Doull argued that this federal unity which is prior to any particular nationality but can take into itself many such nations is common to both Canada and the U.S. In fact, he argues that the U.S. has a much clearer sense at this point in its history of this supra-national sovereignty than Canada, since Canadians still struggle to articulate how the particular sovereignties can be held within the federal sovereignty. It seems that this shift in his political analysis should have important consequences for Doull’s view of the access of Canadian philosophy to a true grasp of the history of philosophy. American thought is no longer seen as inherently bound to a particular national tradition, and is, in its own political history, a synthesis of British and French political thought (although one which leans heavily towards its British origins).

In fact, insofar as we have not yet articulated how a common European humanism exists between French and English Canada, providing the basis for a genuine federal sovereignty, it seems as though American political life might in fact have a more explicit access to the history of thought. The possible access to the history of philosophy once ascribed by Doull to Canadians would seem, judging from his later political thought, to be fundamentally North American and not distinctively Canadian.

Despite this shift of emphasis from considering the virtues of the Canadian version of freedom as against the one-sided American version, to considering Canadian political life as belonging with the United States to the larger genus of North American freedom, Doull always kept in view certain particularities of Canadian political life which indicate that preserving the Canadian federation as a distinct form of North American freedom is not only worthwhile but has a certain world historical importance. Having the foundational French element which must be accommodated in its distinctness demands a place within our political life for “the more intellectual spirit of French culture” beyond the overwhelming British empirical orientation of the American spirit (however informed by the French tradition it may be). In contrast to both the United States, where the

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26 “Those who designed the institutions of the American republic were often well acquainted with the French culture of the time. Americans in their subsequent development have drawn also on other European cultures and can with reason regard themselves as heirs to the whole European tradition, however much they continue to be regarded by some Europeans as barbarians.” (“The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 394). Concerning the formula of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” Doull writes that “the basis of American independence as expressed in this formula and explicated afterward in the Constitution is the British freedom of that time as conceptually clarified and concentrated by French political thought” (“The Relation of the ‘Canada Clause’ to the Concept of Quebec as a ‘Distinct Society’” [unpublished], 2).

27 “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 394. It seems to me that the difference between the rationalist French tradition and empiricist British tradition goes a long way towards explaining the differing reactions in English Canada and Quebec to our constitutional impasse. Quebecers expect an explicit and written resolution of our national question, included in the constitution itself, which expresses their understanding of their distinct and foundational place in the Canadian federation. Quebecers are so attached to the explicit resolution of the question of its place within Canada that a significant part of their population are willing to risk the existence of one of the world’s most envied
multiplicity of its European heritage is combined into something more homogenous in which the elements have no independent institutional expression, and to the European Union, in which the various nationalities understand themselves as having the same independent national status they held prior to entering into their common political institutions, in Canada French and British versions of European freedom have each been given a degree of autonomous, institutional expression, such that both can be preserved in order to animate the whole. Doull writes that “such a relation of the two peoples as exists imperfectly in Canada, and threatens to dissolve, is without precedent.” Perhaps as a result of needing to balance the English and French elements in confederation, all the Canadian provinces have developed a stronger sense of their sovereignty than the American states. In terms of the philosophical perspective implied by this political reality, one might expect a less overwhelmingly empiricist tendency in Canadian thought than in American thought, since the French rationalist component has its own continued separate existence. Further, the relation of individuals to the state differs in the Canadian and American versions of North American states. The freedom of the individual is given primacy over the state in the U.S., leading to “an unresolved tension...between individual freedom and a recognized obligation of government to correct and complement the competitive economic society.” This antagonism between individual and state is largely absent from Canadian political life, though not generally at the expense of free individuals. This can provide a particularly Canadian perspective on the debate between liberal and communitarian which dominates contemporary debates in political philosophy.

But a fundamental question presses itself upon us. One may ask: why should the thoughts of a philosopher be restricted by a national experience? On what basis does nationality have any bearing on an individual’s philosophical perspective? If the contemporary philosopher reads books by authors from various national perspectives, travels to internationally attended conferences, has cosmopolitan exchanges with scholars from all over the world, then how can one even talk about one’s particular national history as constitutive of what philosophical truth can be apprehended by these individuals? We have already seen that for Doull, by the mere fact of being human, there remains for us the basic possibility of access to any form of thought. Yet Doull does clearly associate particular philosophical standpoints with certain national characters (each having a “characteristic temper and mentality”), as philosophical perspectives

democracies. English Canadians tend to regard such a demand as abstract in the face of how the country functions (more or less) well, its recognition and respect of fundamental freedoms, the prosperity of the majority of its citizens. It tends to recognize Quebec’s distinctiveness through individual gestures and agreements, without grasping the legitimacy of the need for explicit rational expression of how there can be one political community inclusive and respectful of the two founding peoples. Doull writes: “The exasperating immobility of Canadians of British culture in the face of an impending ruin to their country has in part a like explanation: somehow Canada will remain together, the constitutional problem is not as bad as it appears to be, that is, an undefined solution is assumed” (“The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 449).

29 Ibid. 405.
30 Ibid. 399.
emerge from a comprehensive national spirit which pervades all aspects of a nation’s existence.

Take the example of European thought in the 20th century. For Doull, these philosophical positions arise out of the experience of the contradictions and tensions of life in declining nation states, just as Hegel’s philosophy could only arise at the height of these very same states. As Doull formulates the tension, the natural finitude and particularity of language, custom and geography which form the foundation of these nation states is so immediately identified with the common universality of human rights which they render possible, that the instability and destruction of these states are implicit in their very greatness. Heidegger’s understanding of poetry’s importance and Wittgenstein’s language games are for Doull philosophical expressions of the twilight of the nation state, where the primacy of the particularity of language as separated from universal human reason and any rational basis for individual human rights becomes the exclusive basis for a unified political state.

The French post-modern skeptical tradition of Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida, attending to the endless otherness of a purely linguistic unity, expresses the logic underlying the impossibility of these nation states, along with the apparently impossible unification of the communities subsequent to their destruction as sovereign nations. Their distrust of genuinely comprehensive universality comes out of their experience of the transition towards European unification, in which the humanism common to European countries is present only abstractly through economic associations and as rights wholly prior to government. The most complete deconstruction is the one which can reveal the contradictions which result in locating sovereignty and freedom on the side of the finite apart from the infinite, or the infinite to the exclusion of the finite, while also showing the contradictions of a perspective which seeks to show how the finite and infinite can be thought together. In this sense, Doull confirms the relative truth of post-modERN positions, by the fact that these thinkers give rational expression to the political aporiae confronting the thoughtful European. However, if these thinkers have given us the logical form of their political culture at present, this does not mean that they will be able to grasp the fullness of the intellectual tradition from their perspective.

For Doull, this negative result of contemporary European political life provides inadequate categories for grasping the truth of the Canadian or American experience. For example, Doull is critical of Richard Rorty for his appeal to an “alien logic” which distorts the significance of the negative result of New Deal policies in America. Since

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31 Ibid. 401.
32 Ibid. 401, 462 (n.3).
33 Here and throughout I use the distinction between infinite and finite in the Hegelian sense. Something is infinite in the positive sense for Hegel when there is nothing which is opposed to its self-refering totality. What is infinite is not limited or excluded by another, as one finite thing is the limit of another finite thing. Rather, everything finite exists only in relation to the infinite, and its relationship to finite things is ultimately a relation to itself as including them within its own activity.
34 This logic is particularly evident in Derrida’s work. For its clearest formulation, see his later work on hospitality and forgiveness, in which he treats the relation between the unconditional and the conditional.
Roosevelt’s social policies have been felt as an encroachment upon civil society, Rorty denies the possibility of a complete society uniting within itself the diverse ends of individuals in society, what Hegel would call the infinity of the state. The infinite is absent from our lives, according to Rorty, as proved by the endlessly unsuccessful process of unifying all these disparate ends in society.\footnote{Doull characterizes Rorty’s position in this way: “that the ‘pragmatic’ individual is cut off by an ever-recurrent negativity from an ascent to the universal” (“The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 421). For Rorty’s political thought, see especially Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-century America (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) and Philosophy and Social Hope (New York, N.Y.: Penguin, 1999).} John Rawls is commended by Doull, in contrast, for bringing American thought in the right direction through turning to the Enlightenment tradition upon which its constitution is based, reflecting upon American political reality rather than contemporary European abstractions inadequate for the analysis of North American post-national states.\footnote{From the perspective of Enlightenment, there is no absolute division between infinite and finite, precisely because the enlightened individual is able to immerse himself in nature and experience without losing his unity and rationality in the process. In the Hegelian sense, the Enlightened individual is free in what is other, and is thus already beyond the mere separation of infinite and finite.} From this appropriate beginning with Enlightenment, American political thinkers need merely to reach a fuller grasp than one finds in Rawls of the Enlightenment spirit as a whole in order to understand their freedom more adequately. Both Canadian and American thinkers must not think through the philosophical and political problems not in a vacuum, but with reference to the history and institutions underlying their freedom.\footnote{“The true implication of patriation is that we have to give up looking to Europe as a model and guide to the independence whether of Canada or Quebec. It is still a species of colonialism…” (“The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 395).} As we have seen, Doull might even have viewed his earlier interpretation of the United States and Canada as somewhat guilty of this application of a foreign logic to North American reality.

A few words should also be said about how Doull’s conception differs from many other Canadian understandings of what might constitute Canadian philosophy. In a book entitled Is there a Canadian Philosophy? Reflections on a Canadian Identity, a particular understanding of the philosophy to be drawn from the Canadian experience is clearly articulated which has become dominant within many Canadian discussions. The authors’ central thesis is that “the Canadian civic philosophy is one that articulates a way of life and philosophy of pluralism within a framework of individual rights.”\footnote{G.B. Madison, Paul Fairfield, Ingrid Harris (eds.) Is there a Canadian Philosophy? Reflections on a Canadian Identity (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000) 3.} This view is extremely characteristic of English Canadian formulations of the ideas underlying our political life, though Quebec thinkers have in general clearly understood that this Trudeauite preservation of culture as a right predicated of free individuals, if institutionalized, would be the dissolution of French culture in Canada. I think that Doull’s resistance to understanding the Canadian spirit as founded upon a philosophy of multiculturalism, a philosophy of pure non-identity at the level of the state, in no way seeks to deny the multicultural character of our country. Rather, Doull would want to say that before we change the fundamental character of our institutions to conform to this
vision of Canada, we must look to our history and grasp what it is in our constitution, institutions, and political life that made Canada so open to various cultures in the first place. For example, if our openness to a plurality of cultures emerged through the constant tension and interplay between English and French Canada, and between sovereign provinces and the federal government, tension which prevented Canadian citizenship from being based directly upon some exclusive nationality, then undermining what made this openness possible could be destructive of the individual freedoms multicultural doctrines seek.

What distinguishes Doull’s account of Canada from the one articulated by the authors of *Is there a Canadian Philosophy?* is the weight afforded to the concrete history of Canada. If one were simply to look at the result of this history, it could seem that their multiculturalist interpretation of Canadian identity is the more adequate formulation of our national spirit than the seemingly outdated concepts in Doull’s account, such as the necessity of the sovereignty of Parliament. As they write, “adoption of the Charter put an end to the British doctrine of the sovereignty of Parliament that had hitherto prevailed in Canada, an age old doctrine that Britain’s venerable *Economist* has rightly called ‘anachronistic’.”\(^40\) For the authors, true to their pluralistic logic, “community and identity is itself an imagined construct,”\(^41\) since it is in perpetual evolution and could never be unanimously articulated by its members. Yet as Leslie Armour notes, it is crucial to distinguish between “states of mind of those who think of themselves as Canadian” and “those ideas which, whether anyone consciously attends to them or not, are dispositional states which large numbers of Canadians have in common and which shape, to one degree or another, our communal life.”\(^42\) The latter provide the wider background within which revolutionary and counter-revolutionary moments of a nation’s history occur, which lie beyond but are also determinative of the changing self-understanding of its citizens. This larger institutional context can only be grasped by a more fully historical account of Canada (though careful attention to what is contradictory in contemporary freedom, independently of a historical account, should also be able to point towards the resolution of our current situation, since on a Hegelian account the past stages of a development are always implicitly present in what follows).\(^43\) Doull does not merely assert the country’s origin against its present self-understanding as having a more adequate grasp of the Canadian spirit. If this were the case, Sir John A. MacDonald’s highly centralized vision of Canada could merely confirm many of Trudeau’s reforms most detested by Doull; or in another context, Doull would be arguing not for the importance of institutions, but for the essentially polemical attitude towards institutions present in Christianity’s origins. In the thoroughly historical nature of Doull’s analysis,}

\(^{40}\) Ibid. 19
\(^{41}\) Ibid. 100.
\(^{43}\) See Peddle and Robertson, “(“Lamentation and Speculation: George Grant, James Doull, and the Possibility of Canada,” 14: “But equally for Doull, the contemporary is the fullness of the whole historical development.” A historical perspective makes the true apprehension of the present easier, but this is obviously not to say that thoughtful observers of the present, without a comprehensive historical perspective, cannot see the limits of the contemporary and offer true solutions.
which necessarily includes a systematic analysis of Canadian history from its early
settlement to the present day, what is authoritative is neither the present nor the origin,
but the historical movement itself taken as a whole. Only then does it become clear how
“there is not only a separate history of Quebec and another of a British ‘nation’; there is
also a common Canadian history more basic than either of these abstractions.”

It seems to me that Doull’s conception of the potential of Canadian philosophy
makes certain demands upon the direction of philosophical study in this country:

1) A substantial engagement between the philosophical activity in French and
English Canada must be encouraged, which should take the form not merely of
individual engagement with the work of the other side, but also of institutionally
entrenched opportunities for real exchanges between students from universities in
both Quebec and the English provinces. This engagement of course presupposes
promoting the knowledge of the other language in the university curriculum.

2) In general, political thought should not be abstracted from a serious reflection on
the country’s history, and should include a particular focus on the concrete
institutions of our political life.

3) Doull encourages thoughtful recovery of our Canadian history within the larger
context of the development of the West as a whole. This is where careful study of
the history of philosophy is absolutely crucial. Within the Canadian context, this
demands the careful study of European history and thought, so that we can better
understand the genuine differences which exist between Quebec and other
English-speaking provinces, differences which originate in the difference between
the French and British traditions. This broad perspective would also aid the
understanding of the common European heritage which alone can instruct us how
the French and British approaches to contemporary political life are different but
complementary.

4) This historical approach to political thought would help to move us out of our
contemporary naturalistic assumption that the external aspects of a people’s
identity, its language, cultural traditions, music and so on, are primary. If one
remains with these natural aspects of culture, English and French Canada are truly
two separate and particular entities with no real relation. The connection can only
be found through recovering the rational, Enlightenment foundations of each
culture, without neglecting the justified criticism of the abstract nature of the

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Dufour, Le défi québécois (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000) for an argument against viewing
Quebec and Canadian history as two separable narratives.

45 Doull refers to these as “the linguistic and other natural expressions of a vanishing order”
(“Naturalistic individualism,” 31).

46 See “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 401: “Rights were
predicated formerly of individuals in virtue of their common rationality. According to the latest European
thought such individuals do not exist.”
Enlightenment’s self-understanding. Only then can we understand how the English and French were able to come together in one country in the first place.

5) Beyond the focus on European and Canadian history and thought, an emphasis on American history would be crucial for several reasons: to understand this new genus of North-American freedom which has emerged most clearly through American history in the form of post-national federations; to understand our difference from American political life; and to understand the history of their nation at the point where secessionist movements appeared likely to tear the country apart.

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I would like to conclude this reflection upon the connection between Doull’s political and philosophical position by citing Hegel’s own closing words in his inaugural lecture at Heidelberg in 1816:

We older men who have grown up amid the storms of the time may call you happy who in your youth can devote yourselves undisturbed to truth and philosophy. I have consecrated my life to philosophy and I rejoice to find myself now in a situation where in higher measure and a wider sphere of work I can co-operate in diffusing and vivifying the higher interest of philosophy and especially can contribute to introducing you to it. I hope I may succeed in deserving and gaining your confidence. But in the first place I may not claim to do more than to bring you above all to confidence in philosophy and in yourselves.

It seems that these words could have been just as well spoken by Doull to young Canadian scholars. In both his theoretical and practical writing, it is just this confidence, what Peddle and Robertson call a “speculative hope,” which Doull seeks to inspire. It is a confidence in our own Canadian freedom which allows us to discover what is implicit in our history rather than simply abandoning it in lieu of some logic external to our experience. For Doull, everything points us beyond the abstractions that have gripped contemporary consciousness for so long, abstractions which served to conceal the meaning of our institutions and the intellectual tradition which provides the only context for understanding the self and society.

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47 See Doull’s “Faith and Enlightenment” and “The Concept of Enlightenment” for his analysis of the consequences of Enlightenment thought.
48 On avoiding anachronistic interpretations of the original union of French and English in Canada, see “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 435.
49 For Doull, Canada is at the same stage as the United States around the time of its Civil War and the discovery of a true basis for substantial unification of its parts both constitutionally and in the hearts and minds of its citizens. See “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 393, 418.
51 Peddle and Robertson, (“Lamentation and Speculation: George Grant, James Doull, and the Possibility of Canada,” 24.
within which they can become fully coherent to us. In respect to the work of philosophy and the future of Canada, Doull’s work is an inspiration on both counts through the unity of the theoretical and practical that it exhibits. As Floy Doull has shown us in her presentation,\textsuperscript{52} these are not for James Doull separate interests, but rather, the preservation of his country depends upon a better understanding of the common European tradition behind our two-fold national origin, and the grasp of past philosophy is made possible thanks to the fact that this common tradition is already implicitly present within and moving Canadian freedom. If Doull is correct, and solving our constitutional impasse is primarily a question of properly understanding the already existent principles of the country,\textsuperscript{53} then Canadian philosophy has an important role to play in preserving the future of Canada.

\textsuperscript{52} Floy Elizabeth Doull, “Towards an Intellectual Biography: James Doull’s work from 1980-2001,” \textit{Animus}.

\textsuperscript{53} “…we have less need to amend than to understand the principles of our freedom…To live with a constitution which is not grasped in its principles, given conceptual and written form, is however unworthy of a cultivated people.” (“The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 435).
Heidegger, Self And State: Doull, Nicholson And The Problem Of Postmodern Politics

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In the context of Heidegger’s thought it is not easy to say what the state is.¹

I’d like to begin by expressing sincere appreciation to Eli Diamond for organizing this session and inviting me to be part of it. The philosophical life is at bottom, I think, a life of gratitude. As Heidegger himself said more than once, denken ist danken. But I am thankful, in particular, to have been touched by the legacy of James Doull before encountering it explicitly in the handsome volume David Peddle and Neil Robertson have now produced.² My parents were students at Dalhousie in the early 1950’s when Doull and George Grant were developing, in classes and informal dialogue, the modes of intellectual engagement that would have such profound impact on Canadian philosophy in the decades to follow. Their recollections of those days shaped my earliest expectations of philosophy and university experience. Much later on, as a doctoral student trying to break into the job market, I made a presentation on Nietzsche and Heidegger at the 1989 meeting of the CPA. My commentator was F.L. Jackson. In a brief correspondence running up to the Congress he sent me a substantial paper he had written on the revolutionary nature of contemporary thought.³ I came back to it for years in trying to work out my own orientation in the history of philosophy. I am happy to acknowledge here the influence of that Doull-inspired piece. Finally, my Ph.D. supervisor at the University of Toronto was none other than Graeme Nicholson. In relation to some details of Doull’s vision he seems to have taken very seriously the Nietzschean maxim that one repays one’s teacher badly by remaining merely a student. But in a deeper sense, he displayed for me and many others over the years that Socratic commitment to the examined life, to philosophy as a dynamic conversation, that seems to


² Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull

me now the very heart of Doull’s project and the secret of its enduring power. I’d like to preface closer discussion of the Doull/Nicholson chapter on Heidegger’s politics with a more general remark on that power. It seems to me an important frame of reference for an approach to *Sein und Zeit* and other texts that ventures far beyond the borders of what we might call orthodox Heidegger scholarship.

Although Doull’s philosophical interests span the entire history of the West, he is not a polymath of the kind Heraclitus criticizes—i.e. a tourist breezing through territories in which others have made a permanent home. On the contrary, his written works elaborate a single vision. To call that vision bold would be an understatement. It is nothing less than a narrative of human experience. On the evidence of *Philosophy and Freedom* this narrative lit a fire under the best students of five or six generations—engaging them, shaping their own scholarly labours, calling them back to certain points (sometimes over the course of an entire working life). The commentaries collected in the volume—their range of tone and approach notwithstanding—all bear its marks. In effect, the narrative itself is something like a country of origin. And so Doull’s interlocutors have in them something of Plato’s attitude toward the lore of Greece. They respond to him as if caring for a birthright, coming back to a series of foundational stories and celebrating their power of accommodation, their imaginative depth. In this respect, I have come to regard Doull’s work as mythic in the best possible sense. There is, in its daring settlement of history, a kind of intellectual hospitality, an invitation to think for and against its detailed claims, to explore it precisely in order to establish one’s own bearing.

In the Heidegger chapter especially, all of this is very much in evidence. Doull doesn’t read Heidegger on his own terms. Instead, he assigns him a special role in the story of postmodern selfhood and its concomitant political possibilities. Nicholson returns to that story, acknowledging its fundamental insights, pushing its limits—and in the end—crafting in dialogue with it an orchestration of the problem of political engagement that sets the matter of Doull’s critique of postmodernism before us in an optimally forceful way. I will review these developments now in more depth.

From the standpoint of Doull’s narrative, the first and most important point to make is that the name ‘Heidegger’ designates a moment in the dialectic of selfhood that frames all significant social and political developments of the 19th and 20th centuries. This dialectic has its origins in the collapse of the vision of culture as the accommodation of reason in the world expressed most convincingly by Hegel and the German Idealists. Indeed, it is precisely the aftermath of that collapse. The kind of thinking at work in the aftermath—itself flattened, and so reductively unaware of its own poverty and limitation—Doull calls revolutionary. Its historical forms vary (each generation seems to produce new configurations). And it stretches across the political spectrum from extreme left to extreme right. But it always manifests, in one way or another, a divided or alienated self. That is to say, revolutionary thinking, in all of its forms, is grounded in the un-interrogated presumption that reason cannot be accommodated in the world, that we must choose—in the process of shaping and realizing a self-understanding—between ideality and nature. In other words, the post-Hegelian, postmodern world—the stage
upon which Heidegger makes his appearance, and so the most significant context of his thought—is defined by the rupture of the ideal and the natural self.

If he is not entirely convinced by this story, Nicholson seems to me profoundly sympathetic to it. The first section of his piece is dedicated largely to supplementing the abstractness of Doull’s dialectic with a discussion of concrete historical forms and events. The ruptured self, he tells us, is already visible in “the individual Victorian” who “combined a stern personal morality with an unprecedented rapacity in business affairs”, in the contradictory tendencies toward “national states and languages” and “world economic order”, and in the simultaneous push toward the political ideals of socialism and the radically naturalist counter-movements of “buccaneer capitalism” and “Nietzschean will”.

In and through the First World War, this ruptured self... pass(es) into the general culture, congealing shortly thereafter into the activist idealism of international Communism, which would enshrine the victory of universal man over nature, and ... Fascism, which celebrated the natural will and one’s particular national heritage, denying the unity of mankind in the name of racial theories.

Gathering up the historical result of 19th century revolutionary thought with a view to framing specifically the moment of Heidegger’s arrival, Nicholson writes:

... with the rupture of the natural self from the ideal self, with the unprecedented violence of the First World War, there emerged new ideologies that made it the business of the state either to conduct revolutionary warfare worldwide in the name of the new Communist man or to guard the nation or Volk and breed it for the future. The rational, enlightened works of humane reform could wait. Reality was threatening and strong measures were needed.

What could Heidegger himself have seen as possibilities of selfhood and statehood standing in that moment? On this question, with the frame of Doull’s story about the postmodern world now clearly in view, Nicholson moves from commentary to dialogue.

Let’s begin again with Doull’s view. Heideggerian phenomenology comes on the scene at the crucial point of transit between 19th and 20th century revolutionary thinking. It arrives, we might say, in the quiet eye of the storm. Inasmuch as this eye opens as a


5 Ibid. 379.

6 Ibid. 380.
result of the crisis of the First World War, it affords Heidegger and others a certain
critical perspective on the aspirations of the 19th century. Looking out on a world that
has left natural man (especially the German) at the mercy of a punishingly indifferent
global economy, he sees the futility of existential and political idealism. However,
caught between cycles of revolution, he cannot aspire to criticism of the reductionism of
revolutionary thinking itself. Accordingly, as a new and more terrifying cycle of that
thinking begins, he stakes his claim in defense of natural man and the politics of the
Volk. The definitive statement of this claim comes in the Daseinsanalytik of Sein und
Zeit. There genuine selfhood is located in the heroic act of refusing the idle talk of
unspecified and metaphysically indeterminate others (the mirage of an international
community) and taking responsibility for possibilities handed down in the specific drama
of a local (national) history. Authentic politics belongs to the natural man—ideality,
globalism, internationalism, what Heidegger later famously calls Technik, is inauthentic.

I would like to make two observations before moving to Nicholson’s nuanced
response to this position. First, it seems to me that Heidegger is precisely the sort of
monster for Doull that Nietzsche is for Heidegger, i.e. someone whose dissatisfaction
with his own tradition makes its failure explicit but who, thrown back on the resources of
that tradition, entrenches it at a deeper level. If this is indeed the case, then Heidegger is
an indispensable character in the story of the postmodern world. Standing between the
19th and 20th century cycles of revolutionary thinking, he both speaks to and is entangled
in the rupture of self we ought to take as philosophy’s central concern. Whether in
Doull’s or some other terms, I cannot but think that this will be the judgment of history.

Second, it seems to me that Doull’s contextualization of Heidegger, its lack of
orthodoxy notwithstanding, resolves with challenging clarity a problem more sympathetic
readers have found utterly vexing—viz. why, bracketing the polemical and tactical
endorsement of National Socialism as Rector at Freiburg so much discussed in the past
15 years, Heidegger’s philosophy seems so politically inscrutable. The assumption of
such readers is that Heidegger must have had something new and enlightening to say on
the question of the state—as on the questions of being, time, mood, understanding, death,
anxiety, conscience, history and so on. If Doull is right, however, then Heidegger is
inscrutable precisely because the dialectic of the ideal and the natural self reduces his
political insight to the poverty of its age, to the blind repetition of an inherited ‘either/or’
(i.e. either naturalism or idealism, authentic nationalism or inauthentic globalism—
ultimately either Fascism or Communism). If Doull is right, sympathetic commentators
have found nothing new and enlightening in Heidegger on the question of the state
because there’s nothing new and enlightening to find.

Nicholson, whose own contributions to discussion of Heidegger’s politics have
been significant,7 is, not surprisingly, reticent about accepting this conclusion. He argues

7 See especially “The Politics of Heidegger’s Rectoral Address,” Man and World 20 (1987), 171-
87.
persuasively that the *Daseinsanalytik* of *Sein und Zeit* stands in the service of a fundamental ontology, that departing from a tradition unjustifiably convinced that the self (whether ideal, natural, formal or existential) constitutes the inexhaustible material of thought, it tries to recover philosophy’s original concern. This is pivotal to the conception of the problem. Doull appears to proceed on the assumption 1) that Heidegger’s engagement of National Socialism (in the *Rektoratsrede* for example) is a fairly straightforward philosophical endorsement, and 2) that that endorsement expresses the politics latent in *Sein und Zeit*. That is to say, he reasons from what is admittedly the most obvious interpretation of Heidegger’s behavior as a public figure to the re-reading of his phenomenology. Nicholson, conversely, here and elsewhere,8 insists on keeping things in order. His claim is 1) that *Sein und Zeit* comes first, prior to Hitler’s rise to power—indeed oblivious of all that is coming and concerned only with what we might call the condition of the possibility of politics, and 2) that a nuanced reading of the public statements of ’33 and ’34 shows that they are not straightforward endorsements of National Socialism (certainly not its political science and racial policy) but “reciprocative rejoinders”—philosophical responses—to what Heidegger imagines (wrongly) as an authentic possibility handed down to Germany by its history. On Nicholson’s view, in other words, we oughtn’t consider Heidegger’s phenomenology latently political in any determinate sense. Fidelity to chronology and sensitive interpretation of texts and circumstances suggest rather that his politics is latently phenomenological—that he sees in National Socialism’s call for reformation of institutions, and of the university in particular, principally a chance to recover “[w]hat was in the beginning the awed perseverance of the Greeks in the face of what is”.9

The notion of a phenomenological politics, of the *Rektoratsrede* and its companion pieces as attempts to “inject the resolute questioning of academia into the midst of the state, sharpening the self-knowledge of the Volk”10 does not excuse Heidegger’s blindness to the violence and intolerance of Hitler’s regime (already manifest in 1933), nor his naivety in thinking that such a questioning might change its direction. But it undermines the interpretation of *Sein und Zeit* as a “classical exposition”11 of contemporary naturalism and so the effortless reduction of Heidegger’s political vision to the terms of Doull’s dialectic. Its entanglement in the struggle between the ideal and the natural notwithstanding, there is a subtle remainder in what Heidegger says about the human community that must be addressed.

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8 Ibid. 172-75.


11 “Heidegger and the State”, 366.
Doull’s conditioned acknowledgment of this remainder comes in discussion of the later Heidegger—in particular, assessing the alternatives of Technik and poetic dwelling. Here, the principal themes of his reading return in slightly different garb. The ideal self characterized in the early period in terms of an inauthentic, indeterminate, international public now returns, refined but essentially unchanged, as “global technology”\(^\text{12}\); the natural self, originally an aggressive, Prometheus, German Dasein is the poetized community of thinkers and poets waiting for the epiphany of being, for what Heidegger sometimes calls Ereignis. Just as the existential analysis of inauthenticity provides a partial critique of the aspirations of the ideal self in the global economy of the 1920’s, the metaphysics of Technik says something germane to the cultural situation of post-Second World War Europe and North America. But the later Heidegger, like the earlier, is compromised by his entanglement in the very dialectic he sees “through a glass darkly”. The thinkers and poets of the post-technological community renounce the revolutionary spirit of Sein und Zeit, and so differ from it, at the price of surrendering control of politics to Technik altogether. Consigning all institutions of government (and indeed the university itself) to the domain of commodifying bureaucracy, they become post-political, regarding philosophy and nurture of the state as antithetical. It would be quite wrong, on Doull’s view, to see in this renunciation (its subtler quietude notwithstanding) an escape from the rupture of the self. On the contrary, it makes that rupture absolute. To give up on the institutions of government, on science and learning, on the spirit itself, is to make of Technik an ineluctable destiny, to condemn thinking and poetry to the status of perpetual (and perpetually unsuccessful) counter-movements. Heidegger might have known better. He observed often enough that you can’t overcome metaphysics if overcoming is itself metaphysical. By the same token, in Doull’s story, you can’t escape the dialectic of the ideal and the natural if the terms of your release are set by that dialectic. “No one can jump over his own shadow.”\(^\text{13}\)

I said at the outset of this talk that Nicholson crafts, in dialogue with the Doullian account of postmodernism, an orchestration of the problem of political engagement. It reaches a climax of sorts precisely in weighing his teacher’s critique of the later Heidegger:

... the following challenge may be put to Doull: perhaps the current reality of the state really does not incarnate to any credible degree the true idea of the state as the great tradition of philosophy conceived it. We would need a fuller investigation to determine this question. But my appeal to Doull would be that, surely, one could not go so far as to claim that if post-modernity gives us nothing better than a government of administration, micro-management, etc. (i.e. the Heideggerian Technik), then our true and

\(^\text{12}\) Ibid. 368

universal interests would still lie more with that state than with a poetic life lived under a god-filled sky. If Heidegger were right in seeing the state as part of Technik, das Ge-stell, it would not be here that our true interests are found. I am in agreement with Doull, if I understand him correctly, that the Platonic-Aristotelian view, and the Hegelian view, are better than what came after them. But what if reality were in discord with Platonic, Aristotelian and Hegelian philosophy?  

The tone here is respectfully hypothetical. Nicholson asks with disarming directness: What if Heidegger is right? What if the possibility of an authentic state is indeed crushed by the advance of Technik? How will Doull deal with the evidence—plentiful in our daily lives—that the ideal will Heidegger sizes up, perhaps inadequately, in his talk about technology seems now in the grip of a logic of degeneration that makes genuine political engagement almost impossible to imagine? What will he say, for example, in the face of a pervasive “legislating for freedom”\(^{15}\) the sole motivation of which is obsession with private property and personal autonomy? Or a “legislating for justice”\(^{16}\) directed principally if not exclusively by the desire for litigation? Or a “legislating for welfare”\(^{17}\) that yields “a virtually infinite bureaucracy of social work, interventions, payments, redevelopments, redistribution, affirmative action, and employment equity”?\(^{18}\)  

To such penetrating and urgent questions, it would be best, of course, to have Doull himself respond. But my grasp of his narrative—and of the finer contours of the texts in Philosophy and Freedom—is too tentative, at this point, to orchestrate such a thing with any confidence. Instead, I’d like to conclude with a remark of my own prompted by consideration of Doull’s project at a very basic level.

At the beginning of my talk, I suggested that we might regard this project as mythic in the best possible sense, i.e. as having offered generations of students philosophical accommodation, giving them their labour and an original space for reflection on their own lives. I think mythic writing is prompted by a mythic vision of the world. If Doull didn’t already see the world as a home, if he didn’t already perceive in the cosmos spread out in front of him an invitation to know, he couldn’t and wouldn’t have reproduced this invitation for others. But the cosmos opens up to human beings out of culture and its institutions. For the mythic thinker, these things too are inviting—

14 “Heidegger and the Dialectic of Modernity,” 388.
15 Ibid. 389.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid. 390.
18 Ibid.
essentially, irresistibly. A great tragedy of modern and postmodern history—no doubt framed by the struggle of the ruptured self—is its progressive sanctioning of the view that the ideal or perfect institution is uninhabited, free of the idiosyncrasies of selves and subjects, anonymous and insensitive in its working, a warehouse of human resources. In spite of his penetrating criticism of modern metaphysics, of the modern ethos—or perhaps because of it—Heidegger too held this view. It is the issue, in the end, that separates him from Hegel and German Idealism. The later Heidegger’s flight from political engagement is conditioned by the modern/postmodern aesthetic of the empty institution. This, it seems to me, is ultimately why “in the context of [his] thought it is not easy to say what the state is.”

If having cast the problem in this light, we return to Nicholson’s hypothesis, what’s to be done? Could a defender of institutions, unconvinced by Heidegger, undeterred by the real degeneracy of the ideal will, produce respectable counterevidence? Probably. But mythic thinkers I have known have done something far better. They have simply made themselves at home in institutions, enlivened them, revealed their depth by insisting they be what they are, shaped and renovated them for their own good and the good of others.