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PREFACE

‘Religion and politics’, according to a waggish etiquette, are topics to be avoided in polite company. They deal with ethical absolutes and absolute questions notoriously lead to absolute disagreements - on the larger scene to violent animosities. The further question as to how religion and secular order are to be reconciled to each other is doubly contentious; for here it is no longer a matter of theoretical debate but dire practicality, since the one can so easily appear the arch-enemy of the other, a threat both to spiritual integrity and political stability. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that history has largely been about just this conflict of divine with worldly absolutes, a judgment confirmed once again by events of the present time.

The current volume of Animus presents a variety of philosophical perspectives on the relation of religion to secularity. The first four are somewhat historically directed: Floy E. Doull examines traditional Islamic and Christian views of secularity and considers their compatibility with contemporary freedom; Torrence Kirby reflects on the influence of the theologian Bullinger upon the politics of the English reformation; Simon Kow discusses subsequent ambiguities as to the separation or establishment of religion, as exemplified in a debate between Hobbes and Milton; and Steven Michel provides an account of a still-influential Nietzschean anti-Christian polemic.

Two following essays deal with aesthetic renderings of the tension between religion and secularity found in literature: Paul Epstein discerns in the plays of Aristophanes a progressive constitution of “civilization’s first secularity” carried out from the side of the Athenian divinities themselves. At the other end of history, Ken Jacobsen finds in the pop-heroics of the world of Harry Potter a dialectical relation of contemporary religion and secularity.

The final three essays are grouped as specifically Hegelian in interest. Eli Diamond untangles the mostly ill-addressed issue of Hegel’s own stance as regards the constitutional monarchy of his day and the post-national universal history of which he also wrote; David Peddle explores the difficulties encountered in current American political-philosophical attempts to reconcile religious culture with public reason, pointing to the deeper Hegelian principles upon which they depend but only incompletely realize; finally, F. L. Jackson explicates the logical underpinning of Hegel’s account of religious knowledge and of the theology and history of the ‘consummation’ of religion in a post-religious ethics of freedom.
Peace With Islam

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Introduction

Two dominant and conflicting theses concerning world order have emerged since the end of the Cold War. They have found expression most directly and perhaps naively in the writings of two American political thinkers, Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington. But the theses are far more widespread, far more divisive on the world scene, if given their full import. Under their rubric fall the differences between the European Union and the United States in matters pertaining to war and peace, for example.

The first thesis was expressed by Fukuyama in an essay simply titled “The End of History?”, published in an obscure American journal in 1989.1 By the “end of history”, Fukuyama does not mean the end of events of this world, however momentous they might be, but the end of ideologies governing political and social organization which ultimately produce the events of the world.2 This “end of history” has been achieved through the success of liberal democracy as victorious over all other ideologies, most significantly over fascism3 and communism. It is scarcely deniable that economic liberalism, “globalization” in contemporary currency, is pervasive. What Fukuyama maintains is that political liberalism, where the state “recognizes and protects through a system of laws man’s universal right to freedom” and consequently where the state exists only with the consent of the governed, inevitably follows economic liberalism. Fascism and communism, the last bastions of opposition to liberalism, showed themselves to be self-destructive, the former in its colossal failure in World War II both materially and ideally, the latter as it imploded economically and spiritually in the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Fukuyama asks, in the face of the collapse of fascism and communism, whether there are any other competing ideologies left or, what amounts to the same thing, whether there is something wanting in liberalism which another ideology might provide. He considers religious fundamentalism – Christian, Jewish and Muslim – briefly, attesting, he thinks, to the “spiritual vacuity” of liberal consumer societies, and while he recognizes this flaw in liberal secularity, he

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1National Interest, No. 16 (Summer 1989), followed in 1992 by The End of History and the Last Man, New York.. Henceforth the article will be “End of History”.
2See his “Reply to my Critics” in the subsequent issue of National Interest (Fall, 1989). Henceforth “Reply”.
3Fascism he defines as “any organized ultra nationalist movement with universalistic pretensions”, e.g. imperial Japan which sought to dominate its neighbours. “End of History”, n. 11.
does not think religiously based societies could be successful, at least not in the West. If not religion, what of nationalism and other racial or ethnic ideologies: not the benign form of a cultural nostalgia but a thoroughgoing, systematic nationalism, arising from a desire for independence from some other dominant race or ethnic group. “While they may constitute a source of conflict for liberal societies, this conflict does not arise from liberalism itself so much as from the fact that the liberalism in question is incomplete.” And while it is impossible a priori to rule out new more comprehensive ideologies or hidden contradictions in liberal democracy, two centuries of success suggest otherwise.

He considers finally the implications of the thesis of the “end of history” for international relations. Post-historical states, the liberal democracies of the West who have reached their end, can be assumed to be preoccupied with a growing “Common Marketization” in international relations, the preoccupations of the countries of postwar Western Europe, “precisely those flabby, prosperous, self-satisfied, inward-looking, weak-willed states whose grandest project was nothing more heroic than the creation of the Common Market.” This does not mean the end of international conflict because there remain states still in history who might rise up against each other, or against post-historical states – ethnic and national violence, terrorism, wars of national liberation. But large-scale war and large states still in the grip of history are what is passing away. It is, Fukuyama muses, a rather sad thing too: “The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one’s life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history.” In the rejoinder to the critics of his essay, Fukuyama returns to these sentiments, stating his unflagging support for liberalism and his passionate belief in the superiority of liberal democracy over any other political order, yet aware also that “liberal states do not refer their citizens to higher aims beyond the responsibilities of general civic-mindedness ... This failure to address the question of the content of the good life is of course why liberalism works, but it also means that the vacuum that constitutes our freedom can be filled with anything: sloth and self-indulgence as well as moderation and courage, desire for wealth and preoccupation with commercial gain as well as love of reflection and pursuit of beauty, banality alongside spirituality ... there is a side of man that despises a riskless life, that seeks danger and heroism and sacrifice.”

From the principle of freedom that inspires liberal democracy, there must be a separation of Church and State; otherwise, the state would retain an element of coercion and man would not be free in it. This might be interpreted, perhaps naively, as simply that the state is open alike to all religions, that “each is permitted to worship his maker after his own judgment”, in the eloquent words of John Tyler, tenth President of the United States. Such separation has been interpreted

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4Only Islam offers a theocratic state as an alternative to liberal democracy and “it is hard to believe that the movement will take on any universal significance,” he says!
5“End of History”, 13.
6Ibid., 5.
7Ibid., 18.
8Ibid., 28.
9“The United States have ventured upon a great and noble experiment, which is believed to have been hazarded in the absence of all previous precedent – that of total separation of Church and State. No religious establishment by
less benignly as hostility to religion and all morality associated with religion. But, as will appear in this paper, liberal democracy is itself a uniquely Christian invention. There is consequently something wanting to liberal democracy, for what is essential to it leaves its citizens adrift in a sea of possibilities, noble and ignoble, as Fukuyama recognized.

The second and opposite thesis, expressed by Huntington, first appeared in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, Summer, 1993, “The Clash of Civilizations”. From the wars of religion culminating in the Thirty Years War which ended with the Peace of Westphalia (1648) to the wars of kings and princes ending with the French Revolution and its aftermath, to nineteenth century conflicts between nation states, these giving way with the Russian Revolution to ideological wars – liberal democracy and fascism, Nazism, communism – the history of conflict in the modern world, is not over as Fukuyama supposed. Rather, wars within Western civilization will be succeeded by conflicts between “the West and the Rest”, clashes great and small between “civilizations”, broad cultural entities usually encompassing several nations with perhaps one as center, having a common culture and usually a common religion. States formerly defined by ideology are disintegrating, to be replaced by communities defined by culture including ethnicity and religion, where former animosities against those of a different culture reappear as in the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Civilizational identity is forged in opposition and hostility to an “other”. Western civilization is at the peak of its power, posing an unintended threat to other civilizations as it naively pursues its economic advantage and cultural expansion.

Huntington counters Fukuyama’s sanguine conviction that economic and political liberalism are ultimately irresistible with the observation that Western culture differs fundamentally from what prevails in non-Western cultures. “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures,” and “the values that are most important in the West are least important worldwide.” Moreover, Western attempts to spread freedom and

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11 Hegel describes Napoleon during the Battle of Jena in 1806 as “the World Spirit on horseback”.

12 Huntington quotes R.R. Palmer: “The wars of kings were over; the wars of peoples had begun.”

13 “The central axis of world politics in the future is likely to be ...the conflict between ‘the West and the Rest’ and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values.” “Clash”, 21.

14 The world’s “civilizations”, which number “seven or eight” in Huntington’s reckoning, include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African.

15 “Clash”, 30.

16 “Clash”, 45, quoting a study by Harry C. Triandis.
equality abroad, to promote free elections, for example, can backfire with quite undesirable consequences. He notes that in many Arab countries, as they reach new levels of economic and social development, autocracy is giving way to democratically elected governments which have given new power to Islamic movements. “In the Arab world, in short, Western democracy strengthens anti-Western political forces.” 17 More generally, economic globalization and the spread of Western culture are interpreted by many non-Western communities as simply the latest form of Western, or specifically American, imperialism. The United Nations Security Council and the International Monetary Fund routinely promote Western interests in the name of the world community. 18 “The very phrase ‘the world community’ has become the euphemistic collective noun (replacing ‘the Free World’) to give global legitimacy to actions reflecting the interests of the United States and other Western powers.” 19

The civilization most vigorously resistant to foreign incursion – especially Western incursion – is Islam. Unlike other civilizations which are situated in a specific territory, Muslims form the majority in several countries and significant minorities all over the globe. The umma, the worldwide community of Muslims at any given time, is a “civilization” in Huntington’s scheme: it encompasses a religion but more than a religion, a total integration of all human interests of its members. It is not limited to a nation, ethnicity or locale. Where its members do occupy a particular state, Huntington says “it has bloody borders”, violent conflicts with its neighbours (including Muslim neighbours). 20 Wherever the umma is present, it is not absorbable in larger cultures. Muslim people are “indigestible” in Huntington’s description, they do not easily assimilate. Dividing the world into dar al-islam, the “House of Submission” and dar al-harb, the “House of Warfare”, Muslims are inoculated against those outside the umma, and even when they have immigrated to a foreign culture, as in Western Europe and North America, they live in self-imposed isolation from their hosts.

Huntington maintains that Christianity will soon be overtaken by Islam as the dominant religion. Though this thesis is disputed by specialists on global religion 21 the point that Western Christianity is in significant decline over against a resurgent Islam is undeniable. Huntington’s principal thesis in this context is that Western domination economically and politically is bound to recede, to show itself as a mere “two-hundred-year Western blip on the world economy.” 22 Attacking Fukuyama head on, he declares, “The West won the world not by superiority of its ideas or values or religion ... but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.” 23 The decline of Western power will

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17 When the “free” election in Algeria resulted in a victory for the extremists, the military saw the need to take over, with continuing disastrous results.
18 The Security Council legitimated the first Gulf War, demanded that Libya turn over the Lockerbie bombing suspects and imposed sanctions when Libya refused, examples Huntington provides.
19 “Clash”, 27.
20 “Clash”, 20. In Clash, 256, he provides statistics to justify the assertion that “wherever one looks along the perimeter of Islam, Muslims have problems living peacefully with their neighbors.”
22 Clash, 88.
23 Clash, 51.
be followed by a retreat of Western culture, for even as non-Western civilizations increasingly develop and prosper, “...modernization does not equal Westernization.”

Non-Western civilizations have attempted to become modern without becoming Western. To date only Japan has fully succeeded in this quest. Non-Western civilizations will continue to attempt to acquire the wealth, technology, skills, machines and weapons that are part of being modern. They will also attempt to reconcile this modernity with their traditional culture and values. Their economic and military strength relative to the West will increase. Hence the West will increasingly have to accommodate these non-Western modern civilizations whose power approaches that of the West but whose values and interests differ significantly from those of the West.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Huntington’s anticipation of civilizational clash and violent confrontation especially with Islam seems remarkably prescient. As Stanley Kurtz writes, “This is Samuel P. Huntington’s moment.”26 If Western leaders including British Prime Minister Blair and President Bush publicly proclaim that present strife is only against an extremist fringe and not the Muslim world itself, Huntington demurs.27 He gives this further account:

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture.

Fukuyama’s optimistic vision of a universal end of history in a worldwide embrace of “modernity” characterized by liberal institutions of democracy, individual freedom and a free economy is countered by Huntington’s dark predictions of a clash of civilizations, Western liberal democracy just one among several alternatives at war with one another. Huntington predicts the non-viability of Western domination while Fukuyama expresses its total victory in the long run. Huntington warns of the dangers of Western arrogance while Fukuyama is confident that all cultures will come to embrace Western values. Fukuyama’s vision suffers from the boredom with which it ends, “... not with a bang but a whimper,” a matter not lost among thinking non-Westerners.28 Huntington envisions conflict and violence of culture against culture, driven by religion, a return in another form to the wars of religion which ended with Westphalia – wars seemingly without end. “Wherever one turns, the world is at odds with itself.”29

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25 “Clash”, 49.
27 “Muslim bellicosity and violence are late-twentieth-century facts which neither Muslims nor non-Muslims can deny.” Clash, 259.
28 As Negrzad Boroujerdi observes, “Many people contend that Western modernity resembles a Faustian bargain in which you have to sacrifice your variant and traditional familial, tribal, ethnic, religious and national identities/attachments for the tediously monotonous materialism of the present age.” “Iranian Islam and the Faustian Bargain of Western Modernity”, -----.
29 “If not civilizations...”
These two positions are in wonderful dialectical relation. Confronting the same issue and coming to diametrically opposed conclusions, neither can be refuted by the other. Neither position is falsifiable—Huntington’s because it is too nuanced with exceptions and ‘wiggle room’30, Fukuyama because he can (and does) appeal to the longer view, an eventual triumph of western values.31 As Stanley Kurtz observes, “The books [The End of History and The Clash of Civilizations] are at once complementary and irreconcilable. Taken together they frame our current perplexity.”32

What is our current perplexity? The question is can we in Western society live in peace with Islam. From our side, democratic institutions and respect for individual freedom require that we embrace Muslims among us, even as we fear we are harbouring some among them who would destroy us. From the Muslim side, the question is whether Islam can accept those outside the umma, its opposite the dar al-harb, as its equal, without succumbing to it. The reflections here will examine the relation of religion to secularity, how the Christian religion can be understood as the foundation of Western secularity, and under what circumstances Islam can support a secularity not foreign to itself but one which could tolerate Western civilization. Although the discussion here centers principally on the different relations of Islam and the Christian religion to secularity, the Jewish religion is drawn into the argument for the clarification it provides in understanding Islam.

I. Judaism, Islam And The Christian Religion

The UN “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, approved on December 10, 1948, states that we are all entitled to a set of human rights “without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. Among the rights set forth are the civil and political rights to life, liberty, security, protection against torture and arbitrary arrest, equal protection of the law, freedom of movement, participation in government, religious freedom, freedom of assembly and association, and ownership of property. The declaration offers no philosophical justification for these rights, simply stating that “the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights”. Jacques Maritain in 1951 referred to this international consensus as a kind of “secular faith”.33 But after some years, all three religious traditions we shall examine here have claimed these rights as rooted in their traditions.34 We shall be in a position

30. As Glenn Perry observes, “It becomes impossible to use facts to refute a generalization whose advocate himself proclaims that it is ‘highly simplified’, and that it ‘omits many things, distorts some things, and obscures others’ (p.29).” “Huntington and his Critics: the West and Islam – Samuel H. Huntington”, Arab Studies Quarterly, Vol. 24 (Winter 2002), 34.
31. A month after 9-11, Fukuyama wrote, “We remain at the end of history ...”
32. Kurtz.
subsequently to assess these claims. But first a brief treatment of the differences of these three religions, which unabashedly owes a great deal to Hegel’s treatment of these matters, as does the whole position of the paper.

1. Judaism

For religion to be possible there must be a difference of God and finite spirit, and there must be a relationship. Thus, deism is not a religion – it expresses no relationship. What kind of religion is Judaism? Judaism is that “stern, stubborn, incorruptible witness to divine-human nonunion”\(^\text{35}\), and yet it is a religion. In spite of the absolute difference of God and man, this is not irrelevance (as in deism) or indifference. There is still union of human and divine, as the longing of the soul for God, for conformity to the will of God, or the prophet recognizing God as Lord, himself as servant. But Judaism is antidote to those who would deny either human finitude or the Divine infinity. God is “infinite power” in Judaism precisely as power over the finite; this infinite power as divine is not then mere necessity but the “power of wisdom”, and what it produces is a work of goodness and justice.\(^\text{36}\) Human life participates in the infinite divine purpose, knowing that divine alone is what is actual. It participates precisely as a finite witness to the divine-human nonunion, and for this reason such witness could only have reality in the life of a particular people. To affirm the hidden unity of human and divine in which this difference is a moment is beyond Judaism. But that moment of difference known immediately could only be particular. Job is symbolic of God’s whole dealings with the Jews – a defense of the finite spirit as well as its overcoming, the spirit which doubts and in expressing the doubt overthrows the doubt. “Job is guiltless; he finds his misfortune unjustifiable and so is dissatisfied...He is dissatisfied precisely because he does not regard necessity as blind fate ... The critical point, then, occurs when this dissatisfaction and despondency has to submit to absolute, pure confidence. The submission is the end point. That trust in God is none other than the consciousness of this harmony between power and wisdom.”\(^\text{37}\)

Judaism thus holds together even in their contradictoriness the knowledge that God is the creator of all and that God is the God of a particular people. “This is the striking contrast, infinitely difficult, the most difficult of all. On the one hand God is universal, the God of heaven and earth, the God of all humanity, absolute wisdom and universal power; on the other hand, his purpose and operation in the spiritual world are so limited as to be confined to just this one family, just this one people.”\(^\text{38}\) But “it is this people that worship him, and so he is the God of this people, he is its Lord in fact.”\(^\text{39}\) There is nothing here to take glory in, or to boast about, “the


\(^{36}\) Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, California, 1984, ii, 427-9 [1824 Lectures]. Henceforth LPR; “Hegel and Judaism”, 164-5. “What has been differentiated has no right to be, it is outside the one, it is a manifold and therefore a limited, finite thing whose destination is not to be; that it nonetheless is, is the goodness of God.” “Justice in turn is the manifestation of the nullity or ideality of this finite being, it is the fact that this finite being is not genuine independence -- this manifestation of God as power is what endows finite things with their right.” 675 [1827 Lectures]

\(^{37}\) LPR, iii, 681-2.

\(^{38}\) LPR, ii, 436 (1824 Lectures).

\(^{39}\) LPR, ii, 684.
enjoyment uniquely confined to this one people, and the relationship of this one people to the all-powerful, omniscient God." There is no sense of obligation to bring others to this religion, no proselytizing spirit in the Jewish people. All peoples -- Jews and Gentiles -- are called upon to glorify his name [Ps. 117:1-2], but this remains only an idle wish, not a goal as later it will be for Islam. It engenders no fanaticism, as it will in Islam. “Fanaticism is found among the Jews, but only where their possessions or their religion comes under attack ...”

2. Islam

What kind of religion is Islam? This is the subject of a recent article by Alain Besançon. He observes that with respect to Islam the churches in Europe -- and here it is the same -- are inclined to an “indulgent ecumenism”. We share, after all, at least these elements in common: Islam is a monotheism, grounded like Christianity and Judaism, in a divine revelation; its revelation is recorded in a book, the Qur’ n, “biblical” as it were as is the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament; and Islam claims a common descent with us from the biblical patriarch Abraham. Moreover, Christians might remind themselves that the Qur’ n makes mention of Jesus and Mary and accords them an honoured status. Is Islam, as Judaism and Christianity, to be regarded by Christians and Jews also as a “revealed religion”?

In traditional Christian theology, “revealed religion” is distinguished from “natural religion”, the latter more generic and primitive than the former. Those who possess “natural religion” are bound by natural law and by the universal morality expressed simply as “Do good and avoid evil”. In rabbinic theology, they fall under the covenant between God and Noah, struck with those who survived the flood, that is, all humanity (Genesis, ch.9). They may have some elements of a true idea of God even within the framework of a pagan religion. Then God chose from this common humanity, in the person of Abraham, a special people with whom he made another covenant, to whom in the person of Moses He revealed himself as Yahveh. These Chosen People are bound by the Law of Moses and know God as the one eternal God, as the entirely self-determined, self-sufficient substantiality who is because he is. Finally, God established a new covenant through the person of his incarnate Son Jesus, the complete revelation of God, a covenant which will finally extend to all mankind. Thus, Judaism and Christianity are ‘revealed religions’.

But what kind of religion is Islam? After all, it proclaims Allah as One, eternal, almighty, beneficent, all knowing. It claims to have received a revelation, one which moreover it claims is comprehensive of Judaism and Christianity, for Islam shares with them a common descent from Abraham and acknowledges Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Jesus too as true “messengers” (only Mohammed is God’s prophet); and the Qur’ n makes mention of Jesus and Mary according them an honoured status. Besançon argues persuasively that the Qur’ n cannot be regarded by Jews

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40. LPR, ii, 437.
41. LPR, ii, 438.
42. “What Kind of Religion is Islam?”, Commentary, May, 2004, 42-48. Alain Besançon, the renowned French Roman Catholic historian, has written extensively on the what he regards as a false interpretation of Islam as he finds it in the Roman Catholic Church in general and the Church in France in particular. He especially singles out these two theses: that the Qur’ n is a scripture in a certain continuity with Judeo-Christian scriptures, and that Islam falls within the Judeo-Christian Abrahamic tradition.
43. Besançon, 42-43.
and Christians as continuous with their scriptures: Abraham of *Genesis* is not the Ibrahim of the *Qur’*n, Moses is not Moussa; Jesus, as Issa in the *Qur’*n, appears out of place and time and without reference to Israel. Mary (Mariam) is the sister of Aaron. Issu gives the same message as the earlier prophets, Islam, i.e. the oneness of God (certainly not the Trinity). He is neither “the Son of God” nor a mediator – in Islam there is no mediation. Muhammad’s ignorance about the elements of the Christian religion is easily explained: there was no translation of the New Testament into Arabic available to him. He relied solely on oral accounts, clearly with elements of fanciful apocrypha and heretical additions.

The message of Islam was infused into Adam, repeated by the subsequent “messengers” to particular people, and finally, because men forget the message, it was dictated to Muhammad, messenger and Prophet. Only he received a mission to all mankind. The books of the earlier messengers had become falsified, it was claimed, the writings manipulated and the meaning distorted. Thus the true Torah, the authentic Gospel is found only in the *Qur’*n, and Muslims are the true followers of Jesus. Whatever is true, then, is found in the *Qur’*n, and if it is not found there then it is false. Hegel gives this as the Muslim justification for the destruction of the noble Alexandrian library: Omar is reported to have said, “These books either contain what is in the Koran or something else. In either case they are superfluous.”

Since the *Qur’*n is neither continuous nor consistent with the scriptures of Jews and Christians, they could not regard it as a true revelation of God. But is Islam then some heretical version of one or the other, or should it be regarded rather as a “natural religion”? It has in common with natural religions a sense of God as immediately evident, so that one would have to be perverse or insane not to believe that God (or the gods) exists; one does not need faith or a revelation to know the divine, but only to know that the divine is One. Furthermore, Islamic ethics has much in common with pagan ethics. “There is a Muslim spirit of *carpe diem*, a this-worldly contentment that often fascinated Christians who may have seen in it a dim echo of the ancient, classical world. There is nothing like the doctrine of original sin in Islam ...” Moreover, eternal life as described in the *Qur’*n is not a participation in the divine life, but rather a return to Eden, “those are they brought nigh the Throne, in the Gardens of Delight (a throng of the ancients and how few of the later folk) upon close-wrought couches reclining upon them, set face to face, immortal youths going round about them with goblets, and ewers, and a cup from a spring (no brows throbbing, no intoxication); and such fruits as they shall choose, and such flesh of fowl as they desire, and wide-eyed houris as the likeness of hidden pearls, a recompense for

44. Abraham is the common father first of Israel and then of Christians, but this is Adam for Muslims. Ibrahim builds the Ka’ba temple and institutes the pilgrimage to Mecca. *Ibid.*, 45.
46. The *Qur’*n denies that Christ died on the cross, for example. He was, it states, rescued from the cross and another put in his place.
47. Besançon, 44-5. This inclination to deny the truth of whatever stands opposed to the *Qur’*n is frustrating to one who would wish to examine these differences objectively; it also accounts for the difficulty in converting Muslims, and even for moving them beyond their medieval mores and convictions. Dialogue is only possible with Muslims who have moved beyond the literal acceptance of their scriptures.
49. Besançon, 46.
that they laboured. Therein they shall hear no idle talk, no cause of sin, only the saying 'Peace, Peace!' (Qur’an, 56:15). These are the very elements notoriously promised to the martyr/suicide bomber.

Among the ninety-nine names for Allah, one will not find “Father”, or any personal name, for God in Islam is completely indeterminate. “God is himself the perfectly undefined, His activity is altogether abstract, ...the particulars produced thereby are perfectly contingent... The activity of God is thus represented as perfectly devoid of reason.” In the existent world nothing is fixed, nothing sensible exists by nature, the nature of this or that body does not entail its accidents. Rather, God creates all accidents instantaneously, without causal mediation. Only God is substantially; everything else is devoid of necessity, is absolutely changeable, changed at every instant. For example, we have not really dyed the dress red when we believe we’re coloured it with red dye; rather, at that instant God has made the red colour the property of the dress, and continuously recreates the red colour instant by instant. Scientific knowledge is also an accident of this kind: we do not know today what we knew yesterday. Hegel says, “All we can discern here is the complete dissolution of all interdependence, of everything that pertains to rationality. ...[God’s activity] is wholly abstract, and that is why the differentiating that has been posited by means of it is wholly contingent.... The Arabs developed sciences and philosophy in this way, where all is caprice.”

The Qur’an itself is similarly unsystematic. There is no doctrine beyond “there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet.” Rather, it tells men what they are to do, what to avoid, and paints the joys of heaven and pains of hell in vivid sensual images. At times polemical, at times oracular, it is also (especially in its earlier chapters) full of visionary enthusiasm. To a Western mind it leaves an impression of great confusion, repetition, sometimes inconsistency. Its chapters (s ra) can be variously ordered, and pass from one subject to another without obvious transitions. When attention is given to how it was composed, its structure (or lack of it) becomes more intelligible. Muhammad claimed that it was dictated to him piecemeal, over a long period of time, and he in turn repeated its elements to his scribes. Sometimes these repetitions were immediate, sometimes only when he later recalled them. He sometimes had bits inserted and at other times erased or ‘abrogated’ elements. And it is even admitted in the Qur’an that Allah caused him to forget some revelations. But the Qur’an is also poetry, “bold and tender in a way already reminiscent of later Spanish chivalry”, as Hegel describes it, and must be read as poetry. The Qur’an is written in a tongue which Albert Hourani calls “The Language of Poetry,” a common poetic language which emerged out of the dialects of Arabic.

Islam is a positive religion, as are Judaism and Christianity, that is, having scriptures which are taken as God’s revelation to the believer; and after a period of time, having a developed doctrine which measures who is a true believer, thus having a certain externality. Everything,

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50. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, ed. Haldane and Simson, III, 32. What is said here is true of the Asharite tradition, the tradition of the vast majority of Muslims to this day. It is not true of the Mutazilites. For their difference, see infra.
says Hegel, must initially come to us from outside. Civil laws are something positive, are simply given to us by legislators, are binding on us at first simply because they are the laws of the land. But when we have thought about the law, when we find it rational that crime should be punished, then the positivity of the law becomes our own, is valid for us rationally. The rules we impose on our children, that they must tell the truth, be polite, brush their teeth, over time become their own rules and are no longer imposed externally. The positivity of religion, its doctrines and moral precepts, need not detract from its character as rational simply because it is first posited in scriptures and doctrine. But if a religion is positive according to its nature then it has nothing rational in it. The Jewish religion has elements that seem to be irremediably positive: as Hegel observes, the most trifling regulations, those for example concerning the arrangement of the tabernacle, or those pertaining to sacrifices and other ceremonies, are given as divine command: “God says…” , and these are side by side with the completely rational Law of Moses. But the Torah presents also passages of the highest rationality: the account of creation, the Fall, God’s characterization of Himself as “I am”. Apart from its central thesis, that God is One and thus Spirit, the Qur’an presents Islam as wholly positive. Allah can turn night into day, undo what has been done, his activity presented as utterly contingent and devoid of reason.

3. The Christian Religion

The Christian religion is positive insofar as it has been given to humanity externally, from without, in history. For the Christian, it appeared “in the fullness of time”, as emerging out of the great spiritual needs of all mankind, by then entirely manifest when Christ was born into the world. But what was revealed is that Christ himself, the one who reveals God’s nature to mankind, belongs as Son of God to the nature of God. Christians believe this not on the strength of miracles or through some dictation of an angel, but by the “witness of the spirit”, as wholly commensurate with their spirit. Christ proclaims the unity of human and divine and is Himself that unity. The Christian likewise believes and witnesses to that same unity. Thus, the content of the Christian religion, though positive as given to the believer, demands that it become his own, an object of thought. It is not simply revealed but revelatory. Thus there arises out of this faith in its earliest centuries the need of an intellectus fidei, a need that cannot fully be satisfied until, after long centuries in which the faith has informed the institutions and historical life of its people, a new philosophy equal to the task arises.

St. Paul’s Epistles might be thought the first elements of that intellectus fidei. His resolution of the controversies in the early Christian communities was to a higher authority than could be tolerated in a fanatical positivism: “The letter killeth, the spirit gives life.” Patristic theology, although prompted by heresies which would undermine the unity of faith of Christians, was “the explication and discovery to the Church of what it thinks.”

In the revelation that Christ is the Son of God, that “I and the Father are one”, known to Christians by the “witness of the Spirit”, the Spirit whom the Father would send only with the death of Jesus, there is given in inchoate form the doctrine of Trinity which the Church Fathers must render intelligible. Because the Spirit is present to the community of Christ’s followers –

55. Ibid., 81-103.
present to the human spirit therefore – they can see “Indeed this man was the Son of God”, that this man Jesus is the revelation of God and is himself divine. This they know through the Spirit, the divinity in the believing community, and as the self-movement within God himself. If metaphorically they give names to the moments of this self-movement – Father, Son, Spirit – it is the theologians who must give precision to the orthodox belief that God brings forth from Himself his own opposite, his other in every way equal to himself, and knowing himself in his other, loves his other in himself and himself in his other. God therefore has an inner trinitarian life of the outpouring of himself and the reconciliation of what he has brought forth with himself. God is not merely being but living, actual, self-determined (thus free) being.

Without God’s self-revelation as trinity of divine relationships, hence of persons, in an infinite unity, given to the believer in the witness of the indwelling Spirit, he could not know this. But once it is his, reason can grasp that God must necessarily enjoy this trinitarian life, that God could not be God as isolated and alone. God must be triune. When God creates a world, it too is the self-determination, self-revelation of God, in which He knows himself. When out of the slime of that world, God brings forth man made in his image, that same trinitarian life the believer comes to know as also his life. The world which confronts him as other and external is his own externality, which in knowing he comes to know himself. But only modern philosophy understood systematically (in Hegel’s sense) is able to give precision to this.

II. Islam And Christendom: Religion In The World

Since our interest here is to explore how we in the West, Christian civilization at least in origin and inspiration, might live in peace with Muslims, we turn from the differences of these religions to their manifestation in the world. It might be noted that, after the Bar Kokhba revolt and their expulsion from Palestine in 135 AD, Jews in the Diaspora of the centuries which followed lived according to the principle first articulated by Samuel, the rabbinic authority in Babylon where many of the Jews had fled after the exile: “The law of the land is the law.” Jews regarded themselves as guests in any country where they resided in the Diaspora, and were obligated to adhere to the host country's laws. Until, as was their fervent hope, they were able to return to the land of their forefathers, there could be no civilizational expression which was properly Jewish. Let us move then to the Muslims and the Christians.

“For the first thousand years or so of the long struggle between the two world systems, the Muslims on the whole had the upper hand.” In the early centuries Muslims were largely indifferent to the “infidels”, whom they regarded as uncivilized barbarians. This was by any objective measure largely the case. While barbaric hordes were pillaging and plundering across Europe, Islam was the greatest military and economic power in the world. Its armies out of Arabia conquered Syria, Egypt, Palestine, North Africa, in the seventh century (its first century), then in the eighth century it conquered Spain and Portugal, and invaded France where the Muslims were finally turned back by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in 732. But they went on in the ninth century to conquer Sicily and invade the Italian peninsula, sacking Ostia and Rome. Islam had highly developed arts and sciences, preserved Greek science and philosophy, possessed a commercial and communications network throughout Europe, Asia and Africa. Even as

Christendom gradually emerged as a potential military rival to Islam, Muslims’ sense of themselves was that civilization and culture were one with Islam itself; that is, they understood their superiority to be directly linked to their religion. “The religion of Islam is essentially a religion of success; it is a winner’s religion”, writes Daniel Pipes. “In the year 1000, say, Islam was on top no matter what index of worldly success one looks at – health, literacy, culture, power. This association become customary and assumed: to be a Muslim was to be a favourite of God, a winner.”

1. The Success of Islam

How did this happen? There were a host of external conditions: the decline of the Mediterranean world because of barbaric invasions, agricultural failures and shrinking urban markets; the weakening of the Byzantine and Sasanian (Iranian) Empires by epidemics of the plague and long wars; and the indifference of the city dwellers of these two empires who did not care who ruled them as long as they could have a certain security, reasonable taxes and peace. When Muhammad’s new movement first appeared in Mecca, it aroused suspicion even in his own tribe. Pressures and perhaps even persecution drove him to leave Mecca for the oasis at Yathrib (renamed Medina, “the city”) where he and his followers were welcomed, the migration we know as the Ḥijra. In the Muslim calendar, the year of this migration (622 AD) is the first year in Islam. Here in Medina, Muhammad became a ruler, with political and military power to shore up his spiritual authority. Soon this Muslim city was involved in warfare with Mecca, which he conquered eight years later, establishing Islam there in place of the polytheism he had himself abjured much earlier. Medina, the umma or community, had become a state and would soon be the seat of an empire.

It was inevitable early in its foundation that Islam would be more than a religion, that a separation of ‘church and state’ would not be appropriate to it. The Qur’ n enjoins Muslims to “obey God, obey his Prophet, and obey those in authority over you”(4:59). At the death of the Prophet, the question of his successor was controversial, resulting in what came to be the division of Islam itself. First there were the Sunnis, those who believed that prophesy was then completed, and what was required was a secular succession, an ordinary person elected by the umma who would rule according to strict Islamic law. Opposed to that view were the Shi’ites who believed in a continuity of prophesy, where succeeding imams have access to divine revelation through the “hidden” imam working behind the scenes, inspiring them. Thus the division itself has at its heart a conflict between religion and secularity.

The precepts and practices of the Prophet were handed down orally for generations and later written down. These admonitions and examples are revered by most Muslims as extensions of the Qur’ n and together form the basis of the Holy Law, further interpreted and elaborated by later generations of Islamic jurists, the mufti, whose judgments or rulings are the fatw. These laws extend to every aspect of Muslim life, domestic, economic, political, social, aesthetic, as

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58. The Middle East, 52-3.
well as religious. Thus, all law for the Muslim is divine law revealed by Allah. This universalism implicit in Muhammad’s teaching and practice asserted itself even in his own day: he sent military expeditions to the Byzantine frontier and emissaries to the rulers of the day, calling on them to accept Islam. After his death, his successor, Abu Bakr, created an organized army and the enthusiasm – some might say fanaticism of the Muslims, moved by the fervour of their convictions, as also by the prospect of land and wealth, was such that the Near East was remade: the center of political life moved from the rich, populous Fertile Crescent to the small town of Medina on the western edge of the Arabian peninsula.

Two centuries after the death of the Prophet there were two distinct schools of Islamic speculative theology, the Mutazilites who in the 8th century were the first Muslims to apply Greek philosophy to Islamic doctrine, and the Asharites, the “nominalists of Islam”, followers of the 10th century orthodox theologian al-Ashari. Acknowledging the absolute oneness of God, the Mutazilites reasoned therefore that the Qur’an could not legitimately be thought the co-eternal word of God, which was the orthodox view, but was rather created. There was place therefore for a realm of truth and morality not derived from religion, a rationality or secularity not simply given in the Qur’an. For more than a century the doctrine of the created Qur’an was state dogma, proclaimed in 827 under the caliph al-Ma’mun. But in 932, al-Ashari, an established theologian, renounced the Mutazilah, broke the force of their rationalism, and using atomist principles returned to the earlier orthodoxy where God’s omnipotence is not bound by morality or causality, and therefore morality cannot be discovered by reason. There is thus nothing true, nothing good, except insofar as it was given in religion. This is the orthodox position of the vast majority of Muslims even today, especially among the Sunnis who account for approximately ninety percent of the Muslim population.

59 Theologians committed to a “reformed Islam” draw a distinction between portions of the Qur’an revealed in Mecca (where Mohammed was strictly a prophet) and those revealed in Medina where he ran a state and his successors an empire. The Medina revelation, they argue, is only one possible application of Mecca’s religious and moral principles. We shall return to this subsequently.

60 There is a fascinating story recounted by Bernard Lewis of a Muslim visitor to England in the 18th century who left an account of his visit. He described a visit to the House of Commons, whose astonishing function was to make laws and fix penalties for wrongdoers. “Unlike the Muslims, he explained to his readers, the English have not accepted a divine law revealed from heaven, and were therefore reduced to the expedient of making their own laws...” The Middle East, London, 1995.

61 “Fanaticism” is an enthusiasm for something abstract, and in the case of Islam, to have an entirely negative destructive and negative relation to the established order. Cf. Hegel, Philosophy of History, 356.

62 The apt characterization of Abdolkarim Soroush, foremost Iranian and Islamic political philosopher and theologian.

63 It is for this reason also that the Qur’an is recited rather than read. “The individual act of reading the Bible constituted an intellectually revolutionary development in that it brought about a crucial transition, which might be described as a transition from rhetoric to hermeneutics. In the Arab world traditional patriarchal culture never promoted the reading of the Qur’an, even after it became widely available following the introduction of printing in the nineteenth century. To this day it is still recited, chanted, and repeated by heart but not, or rarely, read. Interpretation has remained the monopoly of specialists or religious officials, whose exegesis, moreover, derives less from the sacred text than traditional commentaries on it.” Hisham Sharabi, Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society, New York and Oxford, 1988, 87; quoted in Mehrzad Boroujerdi, “Can Islam be Secularized?”, In Transition: Essays on Culture and Identity in the Middle Eastern Society, ed. M. R. Ghanoonparvar and Faridoun Farrokh, Laredo, TX, 1994, 58.
The Muslim Empire saw the gradual disappearance of unitary government, but nothing seemed to stop its phenomenal growth. In the 8th century, the Muslim population of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, Spain was less than 10%; by the 10th century a large part of the population was Muslim. Among the reasons for such success, we should note that Islam was by that time clearly defined, and the line between Muslim and non-Muslim sharply drawn. They had an elaborate system of ritual, doctrine and law. In order to preserve the absoluteness of Islam, the non-Moslem could at best be tolerated within the Moslem milieu. The status of the non-Muslim was therefore precisely defined as inferior in these ways: non-Muslims paid a special poll tax \((jizya)\) to live under the protection of a Muslim state; their clothes had to be of a certain kind and certain colours avoided; they could not carry arms or ride horses, but must use donkeys or mules instead; they could not marry Muslim women, their evidence was not accepted against Muslims in Islamic courts; their houses of worship could not be ostentatious nor could they build new ones; they were excluded from positions of power.\(^{64}\) Thus there were less than subtle inducements to convert.\(^{65}\) Moreover, for those who did convert, there was immediate equality with their Muslim brothers.

Another reason for the phenomenal growth of Islam was that through the conquests Arabic became a universal language. As the language of the \(Qur’\n\), it was transmitted with the religion. The language of the \(Qur’\n\) was the paradigm of classical Arabic. In the 8th and 9th centuries, lexicography, grammar, literary theory – the sciences of language – were created and studied by those for whom Arabic was a second language. Scholars collected the ancient poetry of Arabia and in the 9th and subsequent centuries poetry itself flourished. Later there was the high literature of a new kind of Persian, written in Arabic script and a vocabulary enriched with Arabic words. The epic poetry recording the history of Iran in pre-Islamic times was revived and written in the new Persian. Muslim countries were not generally interested in their pre-Islamic past.

By the 10th century, there was a recognizable “Islamic World”.\(^{66}\) We stand in awe today of its great architecture from Cordoba to Iraq – mosques surrounded by other religious buildings (courthouses, hospitals, hostels for travellers and pilgrims), shrines such as the Ka’ba in Mecca, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the tomb of Abraham at Hebron, Muhammad’s tomb in Medina, and then of course the great palaces (the Alhambra in Granada is much later, a 14th century masterpiece). Walls of public buildings were covered with decorations: those endlessly iterating geometric forms or highly stylized representations of plants and flowers.\(^{67}\) The calligrapher’s art held a special significance for Muslims, especially copying words of the \(Qur’\n\) where Allah was revealed to the world.\(^{68}\)

The great cities of Islam in subsequent centuries were the largest in the western world: Cairo and Baghdad with a quarter of a million inhabitants each were two or three times as large as any city in western Europe. Then there were Cordoba, Granada, Seville in Andalus, Fez and Marrakish in Morocco, Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, Mosul and Basra in Iraq, the cities of Iran

\(^{64}\) Albert Hourani, 47.
\(^{65}\) But the \(Qur’\n\) is quite explicit that there must be no forced conversions: “There is no compulsion in religion”, 2:256.
\(^{66}\) Hourani, 54.
\(^{67}\) Although not explicitly forbidden in the \(Qur’\n\), Islamic jurists generally held that the depiction of living forms was improper in religious buildings, reasoning that Allah alone has the power to create life. Cf. Hourani, 56.
\(^{68}\) Hourani, 56.
and of northern India, each the equal in size if not in grandeur of Paris, Florence, Venice and Rome.

In addition to this worldly success, or rather inseparable from it, we must note what Islam accomplished spiritually or religiously for its followers, and for the wider world. Initially it brought them out of the benightedness of the polytheism and idolatry of the Arabian peninsula. Then in Medina, Muhammad rejected the exclusivist claim of the Jews that they were uniquely related to the one God, proclaiming instead that Allah was the one God of all humanity. Islam brought monotheism and the whole rich civilization emanating from it to many lands and peoples, to Hindu and Buddhist as well as Zoroastrian and Manichean. But even more significantly, they offered a universal religion and universal civilization in place of particular peoples with gods peculiar to themselves.

2. Islamic Social Order

It is said that Islam is an egalitarian religion. It explicitly rejects privilege based on birth, race, wealth, rank. “O, people. We have created you from one male and one female, and we have made you into peoples and tribes that you might know one another. Indeed the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing.” (Qur’an, 49:13) Islam brought to its adherents their equality with one another. But certain western historians are quick to note that there were three inequalities sanctioned, if not sanctified, in the religion and therefore in the Islamic empires: the inequality of master and slave, of man and woman, of Muslim and non-Muslim. Each of these relations was regulated in Islamic law, accepted therefore but also mitigated and restricted in practice. To what has been said already of the difference of Muslim and non-Muslim in the Islamic world, there was the result that as Muslims were increasingly numerous in the lands they conquered, they were able to conduct their lives in virtual separation from non-Muslims. Tolerated non-Muslims (dhimm) were principally Jews and Christians, “People of the Book” in Islam and therefore possessing some elements of the revelation of Allah (however confused and misinterpreted). Other non-Muslims would more likely be slaves. The treatment of Jews and Muslims in Christendom was generally not as liberal as their treatment in Muslim states.

Slavery was a universally accepted institution, as we know, until more or less recent times. In the conquest of foreign lands, it was inevitable and anticipated in the Holy Law that hordes would be either slaughtered or enslaved by the great Muslim armies. Some slaves were drafted into the military itself, others brought into agricultural or domestic service. Slaves were also bought and sold, especially concubines (generally white) and domestic servants (frequently black). Masters were exhorted to treat their slaves with justice and kindness, and the Qur’an praises the master who would free a slave. Muslims could not enslave other Muslims, and normally did not enslave other “Peoples of the Book”. The practice was, if anything, less cruel than in medieval Christendom simply because it was based on fixed law. Although the slave

69. Given that Muhammad saw no conflict between the word of God as revealed to the Jewish prophets and to Jesus and the apostles, one might ask why he did not use the Hebrew or Greek name for God, instead of Allah, the name in Arabic for the pagan Supreme Being. This is but a consequence of the absence of a translation of the Bible into Arabic, already noted.

could not give evidence in an Islamic court, and the penalty for an offense against a slave was half the penalty for such an offense against a free man, still the slave was entitled to food, medical attention and support in his old age, and the court could order that the slave be freed if his master failed in these obligations.

The Qur’n conceives ultimately an equality of destiny for the sexes, stating of men and women, “Whosoever does an evil deed shall be recompensed only with the like of it, but whosoever does a righteous deed, be it male or female, believing shall enter Paradise, therein provided without reckoning.” (40:40, Cf.16:97. But the status of women in conduct and law was not equal to that of men. Women, except poor women, were confined largely to the home, and to the extent that a family was wealthy, powerful or respected, women in the home were secluded in that special part of the home called the harim. On the relatively rare occasions when they emerged, they were veiled. An Egyptian jurist of the 14th century reflected: “Some of the pious elders (may God be pleased with them) have said that a woman should leave her house on three occasions only: when she is conducted to the house of her bridegroom, on the deaths of her parents, and when she goes to her own grave.” The social order was predicated on superior rights and powers for men. Men could divorce their wives by simple repudiation, whereas women needed cause. Men could have more than one wife (up to four) if he could provide for them adequately, and also slave concubines up to any number. In an Islamic court, the testimony of a woman counted for only half the weight of the testimony of a man, and daughters could inherit only half as much as sons. As Bernard Lewis observes, the non-Muslim could overcome his inequality by conversion to Islam, and the slave might be freed by his master, but the inequality of the woman could never be redressed. It remains to this day the most difficult liberation to achieve in Islam.

3. Islam and Terror

It is undeniable that in the past Muslims resorted to war to bring the “infidels” under the umbrella of Islam. The Prophet was himself quite early on drawn into armed conflict against his own tribe: “When Quraysh [the tribe] became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose...He gave permission to His apostle to fight and protect himself.” But does the religion countenance the violence and terrorism of al-Qaeda or Hezbollah, or the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 against the novelist Salman Rushdie? There are significant departures from Islamic law in both cases. Concerning the actions of the Ayatollah, there are these irregularities about this particular fatwa: the ayatollah pronounced a death sentence, recruited would-be assassins, and did all this without attention to the requirement under Islamic law that the accused

71. Quoted in Hourani, 120.
72. Impotence, madness, denial of her rights to clothing, lodging, maintenance and sexual relations were acceptable causes.
73. Quoted Hourani, 18. The Qur’n: “Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal sternly with them. Hell shall be their home, evil their fate.” [Prohibition, 66:9]
74. A fatwa is not, as some might think from the manner in which this particular one was issued, a murder contract after the manner of the mafioso. It is a legal opinion or ruling on a point of Islamic law, and the Islamic jurist authorized to issue it is the mufti.
be brought to trial and given the opportunity to defend himself against the charge. And there are more serious reservations about the terrorist activities of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.\textsuperscript{75}

A Muslim sect known as the Assassins were active in Iran and Syria from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries against certain Muslim rulers whom they regarded as unjust usurpers. They called themselves \textit{fidayeen}, “one who is ready to sacrifice his life for the cause”\textsuperscript{76}. They were signally different from the contemporary \textit{fidayeen} suicide bomber. The victim was always a leader – political, religious or military – identified as a source of great evil; the weapon, a dagger, which meant that the assassin had to encounter his target quite directly. Thus, the assassin could well expect not to survive the action he took. This was not an act of suicide, but death at the hands of the bodyguards of his victim. Suicide is proscribed in the strongest terms in Islamic law.\textsuperscript{77} Moreover, the slaughter of innocent civilians, which in the case of contemporary terrorists is the objective, as in the destruction of the World Trade Center, is without precedent in Islam. For this reason, a distinction is now drawn between Islam, the religious tradition dating back thirteen hundred years, and “Islamism”, that contemporary fanaticism which has spawned suicide bombers and other such terrorists, a new ideology which clothes itself in words of old: “infidels”, “crusaders”, “Martyrs”, “jihad”, etc.\textsuperscript{78} As the Boroumand sisters put it,

... this religious vocabulary hides violent Islamism’s true nature as a modern totalitarian challenge to both traditional Islam and modern democracy. If terrorism is truly as close to the core of Islamic belief as both the Islamists and many of their enemies claim, why does international Islamist terrorism date only to 1979? ... The truth is that contemporary Islamist terror is an eminently modern practice thoroughly at odds with Islamic traditions and ethics.\textsuperscript{79}

If not Islam itself, what then are the roots of this contemporary Islamism of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the suicide bombers in Israel and other such terrorists? Are they representative of one side in the “clash of civilizations” predicted by Samuel Huntington? They do not aim in general aim to restore a strict traditional Islamic practice. Ladan and Roya Boroumand see their origin rather in 20\textsuperscript{th} century organizations of the extreme right and left. One such organization is the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna and modelled on Italian Fascist principles – its slogan, “action, obedience, silence” and its idea of unquestioned loyalty to a leader clearly are inspired by Mussolini’s “believe, obey, fight”. On the left, there was the Marxist movement founded by Maulana Mawdudi in Pakistan in the early ‘40s, opposed both to

\textsuperscript{75} On February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden, together with Jihad groups in Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, issued their own \textit{fatw} in their “Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders”, laying down that “to kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible, until the Aqsa mosque [in Jerusalem] and the Har m mosque [in Mecca] are freed from their grip, and until their armies, shattered and broken-winged, depart from all the lands of Islam, incapable of threatening any Muslim.” In Bernard Lewis, \textit{The Crisis of Islam}, 2003, xxv. Henceforth \textit{Crisis}.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Crisis}, 123.

\textsuperscript{77} Cf. this passage from the traditions of the Prophet: “The Prophet said: Whoever kills himself with a blade will be tormented with that blade in the fires of Hell. The Prophet also said: He who strangles himself will strangle himself in Hell ... etc. Whoever kills himself in any way in this world will be tormented with it on the day of resurrection.” In \textit{Crisis}, 131.

\textsuperscript{78} As well, “Islamist” rather than “Islamic”, where the former is actually in conflict with authentic Islam.

the West and to traditional Islam. These strands from left and right came together in Sayyid Qutb who called for a monolithic Muslim state led by an Islamic party which would use every violent means necessary to achieve its ends, a classless society, where the “selfish individual” is annihilated and the “exploitation of man by man” is ended -- “Leninism in Islamic dress” as the Boroumands describe it, the creed embraced by most young Islamist cadres today.80

Thus, when Muslims here or elsewhere flatly deny that Islam condones terrorism, when they assert instead that it is a religion of peace, of justice, when they are appalled that the West thinks of them as implicitly supporting terrorism, they are to be believed. Present day Islamist terrorists are as opposed to them as they are to the West. But this does not mean that the West can feel confident that Islamic civilization is on the same side as they are, or that Muslims themselves remain true to their Islamic principles.

4. The Limit of Islam

For centuries Islam was civilization itself. Muslims viewed themselves as the possessors of God’s truth with the obligation of bringing it to all mankind. If they were in a state of perpetual war against the infidel, it was war whose outcome was inevitable and certain -- the civitas dei would overcome the civitas terrena, Islam would triumph over unbelief and the whole world would be converted to it. Their convictions were confirmed with the Ottoman successes in the 15th and 16th centuries. With the loss of Ottoman territories in Europe in the 18th century, the question raised by the Ottomans was not “Who did this to us?” but “What did we do wrong?”.

The answer they gave was this, according to Bernard Lewis: “The basic fault, according to most of these memoranda, was falling away from the good old ways, Islamic and Ottoman; the basic remedy was a return to them. This diagnosis and prescription still command wide acceptance in the Middle East.”81 But as we in the West look at that same history, our diagnosis is perhaps different. Lewis, reflecting on what has come to pass, offers this account:

In the late S.D. Goitein’s felicitous phrase, the Islamic world was “the intermediate civilization” – intermediate in both time and space. Its outer limits were in southern Europe, in Central Africa, in southern and southeastern and eastern Asia, and it embraced elements of all of these. It was also intermediate in time, between antiquity and modernity, sharing the Hellenistic and Judaeo-Christian heritage with Europe and enriching it with elements from remoter lands and cultures. Of the alternative routes from Hellenistic antiquity to modern times, it might well have seemed that it was the Islamic civilization of the Arabs, rather than those of Greek or Latin Christendom, that offered the greater promise of advancing toward a modern and universal civilization.

Yet it was the poor, parochial, monochrome culture of Christian Europe that advanced from strength to strength, while the Islamic civilization of the Middle East suffered a loss of creativity, of energy, and of power. Its subsequent development has been overshadowed

81 What Went Wrong, 23.
by a growing awareness of this loss, the search for its causes, and a passionate desire to restore its bygone glories. \(^{82}\)

Over and above these reflections of an historian and the conundrum that a contemporary Muslim faces, what must be said is this, that after a millennium and a half the Christian world finally took possession of its principle, the principle of freedom. It is this principle which is asserted in the Reformation. As Hegel says, “This is the essence of the Reformation: Man is in his very nature destined to be free.” \(^{83}\) It is not from the external authority of the Church, nor of a book, but from the internal authority of conscience, now matured after those many centuries of Christianization which formed it, that man finds relation to God. Conscience had made its own those same principles which had formerly been imposed on it. As the external authority of the priest was replaced by the internal authority of conscience, so reason was emancipated from dogma and a presumed creed. \(^{84}\) But as in the first case, this was a reason formed and informed by the faith from which it freed itself. The reformed Christian knew also that the absolute truth was not only beyond the world but incarnate in the world. There was engendered an intense interest in every element of worldly life, now conducted from that same self-determination which the Christian religion had formed in men. This is the foundation of the modern world.

The principle of the European mind is, therefore, self-conscious Reason which is confident that for it there can be no insuperable barrier and which therefore takes an interest in everything in order to become present to itself therein. The European mind opposes the world to itself, makes itself free of it, but in turn annuls this opposition, takes its Other, the manifold, back into itself, into its unitary nature. In Europe, therefore, there prevails this infinite thirst for knowledge which is alien to other races. The European is interested in the world, he wants to know it, to make this Other confronting him his own, to bring to view the genus, law, universal, thought, the inner rationality, in the particular forms of the world. \(^{85}\)

The Christian revelation, of God incarnate and trinitarian, is blasphemy to the Muslim. The principle of freedom, of self-determination, given in that revelation and reaching its maturity in the lives of Christians in the 16th and 17th centuries is only intelligible to the Muslim as gross distortion of the true revelation. But has his religion then shut him off from the modern world?

### III. Religion And Secularity

It follows from what has been said that the foundation for a knowledge of human freedom is the Trinitarian doctrine of the Christian religion. Although the grounds for this knowledge were present since the revelation of the Christian religion, it required the mediation of history and the emergence of Christian institutions for this knowledge to become universally known. God’s trinitarian life as the foundation for our trinitarian life, God’s self-determination as the paradigm for our self-determination, was the source of seventeenth and eighteenth century doctrines of the

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\(^{82}\) The Middle East, 270.

\(^{83}\) Philosophy of History, 417.

\(^{84}\) Philosophy was no longer ancilla theologiae.

\(^{85}\) Hegel, Philosophy of Mind, “Anthropology”, §393, Zusatz.
equality of all men, their inalienable rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”, of a
universal humanity which transcends differences of race, language, culture and creed. Can the
Muslim have access to these principles, to doctrines of human rights, and the principle of freedom
which underlies them?

Abdolkarim Soroush, the renowned contemporary Iranian philosopher who is in the
vanguard of those Muslims who aim at reconciling Islam and the modern world, would urge
Muslims first to distinguish religion, which is eternal, and people’s understanding of religion,
which is necessarily limited to its own time and place. “It is up to God to reveal a religion, but up
to us to understand and realize it.” Religious knowledge is “entirely human and subject to all
the dictates of human knowledge.” It is “incomplete, impure, insufficient, culture bound.”
Religion is constant, religious understanding is what changes. “Constant, eternal religion begets
changing and evolving religious knowledge.” And concerning the Qur’an itself, he would
remind the hearer that not everything said by the Prophet is prophesy; not everything written by
the Prophet is religious. The Qur’an is a created thing, calling forth human interpretation.
Soroush sympathizes with those who would distinguish the elements in it revealed in Mecca, the
universal elements appropriate for all times, from those revealed in Medina, appropriate to its
own time and circumstances. To the latter belong those elements most offensive to a modern
sensibility, the three inequalities discussed earlier and the more violent and militaristic
pronouncements quoted today by angry Muslim fundamentalists.

Soroush, in the tradition of the Mutazilites, proceeds from a rationality not confined to
religion, a free and independent thought which is thoroughly modern in its assertions as distinct
from its presuppositions. “Modern humanity aims to create the world in its own image rather than
accepting it as it is. Nothing is deemed indisputably ‘given’.” This leads him to an essentially
modern view of the relation of secular government to religion. “Every government, in order to
survive and endure, needs two things: a source of legitimation and a normative framework. ... Nowdays (roughly the last three hundred years) governments derive their legitimacy from the
consent of the governed. The norms of governance too, are determined, in theory at least, by laws
established by institutions representing the people.” But Soroush’s requirement of the separation
of religion and government is motivated by “the belief in the fundamental truth of religion
coupled with concern over its contamination and profanation by political concerns”, in short, by a
conviction in the discontinuity and incongruity of the sacred and the secular, and hence an
instability in the relation. The two are not drawn into one view as in the relation of the divine and
human in the Christian religion.

In a liberal democracy we suppose that a citizen’s particular interests have a fundamental
right to assert themselves, limited only by the competing interests of others in society. The
collision of such interests is resolved in each surrendering something to the others. This might be
a solution where the particular interests are simply particular, but religion makes universal
demands of the believer. Only where a common secular life is stronger in its citizens than their

87. Soroush, 33.
88. From an address given in May, 2004, at Catholic University in Washington.
89. “The sense and essence of secularism”, Ibid., 55.
90. Soroush, 57.
different religions will such a resolution be tolerable. Modern secular culture assimilates Jew, Muslim, Christian, to one another. But this is only acceptable if it is comprehensive of their differences. Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* examines the different religions in which men have found relation to the divine, and measuring them by their conformity to what he calls the Idea, he uncovers in each of them that element which is the truth of that religion, a truth preserved in the Christian religion, the absolute or consummate religion, without which it would not be absolute. The argument for Hegel’s position must be left for another time. But here I might observe that no contemporary self-respecting Jew or Muslim is likely to find Hegel’s analysis acceptable. Moreover, even if its justification were given, it would remain theoretical and abstract until it found expression in secular life and the state. We in the West have obviously not achieved that unity of creeds in which each is preserved and manifested in a common culture. We must therefore live with what we have, a state which affirms the right of all to their religious belief and its expression, subject only to such limits as are required by the common good.

In 1790, George Washington, replying to the warm letter he had received from the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, wrote the following:

> The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

> ...May the Children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while every one shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid. May the father of all mercies scatter light and not darkness in our paths, and make us all in our several vocations useful here, and in his own due time and way everlastingly happy.

We may hope that views such as those of Dr. Soroush will find wide acceptance in Islam, so that there too other religious traditions might be respected and God addressed in many names.

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91 In the remarkable debate between Emil Fackenheim and James Doull, first at the Marquette Symposium in 1970, and then continued in *Dialogue* that same year, Fackenheim protests that Hegel had not done justice of Judaism, nor to other non-Christian religions, commenting that a Jew could only follow Hegel at the price of his religion.
The Civil Magistrate And The ‘Cura Religionis’: Heinrich Bullinger’s Prophetical Office And The English Reformation*

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I

John Jewel, Bishop of Sarum, once referred to Heinrich Bullinger as the “oracle of the churches.”¹ While Jewel’s remark conveys a pithy assessment of the Zuricher’s pre-eminent role on the stage of international Reform, it is particularly applicable to the case of England. Throughout his lengthy career as Antistes of the Church of Zurich (1531-1575), Bullinger exercised a unique influence on the Church of England both as theologian and, on a practical level, as counsellor to both princes and bishops. Given the scope of this influence and its remarkable consistency over a considerable period of time (almost forty years), it is now almost commonplace to include Bullinger among the first rank of reformers of the English Church, although this was not always the case.² Indeed it is even arguable that no other divine exercised a comparable degree of continuous influence over all of the principal stages of the English Reformation—from the Henrician and Edwardine reforms, through the crucible of the Marian exile, to the eventual implementation and consolidation of the Elizabethan religious settlement. At every stage Bullinger was engaged as a significant player, and in later years was frequently appealed to as an arbiter of internal disputes and even as a public apologist of the Church of

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² It is quite astonishing to observe that recent full-length studies of the Elizabethan church completely ignore the central role played by Bullinger in the theological definition of the Settlement. See, e.g., Scott Wenig, Straightening the Altars: The Ecclesiastical Vision and Pastoral Achievements of the Progressive Bishops under Elizabeth I, 1559-1579 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000) where Bullinger receives no mention whatever!
England on the international stage. One might even go so far as to say that Bullinger lays a fair claim to being the theologian *par excellence* of the reformed Church of England.

To employ one of his own categories, Bullinger’s distinctive role with respect to the reformation of the Church of England is perhaps best described as “prophetic.” While there is nothing out of the ordinary in the claim that the Zuricher saw his general ministerial function in such a light, our present aim is to investigate more closely the peculiarly political, even constitutional emphasis of Bullinger’s “prophetic office” with respect to England. Concerning his prophetical role Bullinger held that there is a reciprocal obligation of magistrates and ministers of religion. In the context of Zurich, the chief public function of the ministers of the Church with respect to the community at large is to proclaim the Word of God freely and uncompromisingly to all, and, in particular, to the magistrates through the formal address known as the *Fürträge*: “To the magistrate is commanded [by God] that he hear the servants of the church. On the other hand, the servant of the church should follow the magistrate in all those things which the law commands.” As I hope to show, Bullinger in a remarkable way extended the exercise of his prophetical office to include the realm of England. He repeatedly undertook to address England’s rulers in the service of true religion and for the welfare of the Church militant. Throughout the forty-odd years of his support of the cause of religious reform in England, one recurrent theme of his discourse stands out among the rest, and that concerns the very pre-eminence of the civil magistrate’s authority in what Bullinger refers to as “the care of religion” (*cura religionis*). In short, the proposal put forward is that Heinrich Bullinger’s distinctive contribution to the English Reformation is pre-eminently to be a prophet of the Royal Supremacy.

The institution of the Royal Supremacy provides what is arguably the most conspicuous focal point for testing of the function of Bullinger’s prophetic office. Bullinger’s promotion of a ‘high’ view of the civil magistrate’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Church of England can be traced back to the 1530s. In his dedication to Henry VIII of a treatise of 1538 on the authority of sacred scripture, Bullinger presents one of his earliest attempts to formulate his understanding of the royal exercise of the *cura religionis*. “First and above all it belongs to the ruler to look after religion and faith,” Bullinger exhorts, and by way of example, he encourages Henry to imitate

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4 David J. Keep did in fact go this far when he observed that “there is no theologian who so accurately mirrors the anglican settlement” as Heinrich Bullinger. See his article “Theology as a basis for policy in the Elizabethan Church,” in L.D.G. Baker (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, vol. 2 (London 1975), 265.

5 *Decades* (1849) II:6, 323


7 “Nam primum et potissimum quod ad Regnum curam pertinet est Religio ac Fides.” *De scripturæ sanctæ, dedication [unfoliated].* See Biel, 34. For an account of the reception of Bullinger’s book by Henry, Chancellor Cromwell, and Archbishop Cranmer, cf. Nicholas Partridge to Bullinger, dated at Frankfort, 17 September 1538, in *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, ed. Hastings Robinson (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1847), 610-612. See also Nicolas Eliot’s letter to Bullinger dated 21 August 1538, *Original Letters*, 618: “… this one thing you must know as a most certain truth, that your books are wonderfully well received, not only by our king, but equally so by the lord Crumwell, who is keeper of the king’s privy seal, and vicar general of the church of England.
the ancient monarchies of Israel and Judah in taking up the sword and defending the faith. (Henry, it should be remembered, had been granted the title ‘Fidei Defensor’ by Pope Leo X in recognition of his treatise Assertio septem sacramentorum, written with the assistance of Thomas More, and in which he had vigorously defended the papal supremacy!) By virtue of his sacred office as the ‘living law,’ the Prince animates the entirety of his realm, both civil and ecclesiastical. As the very ‘soul’ of the body politic the godly prince is charged with the duty of leading his subjects into the way of true religion and virtue and guarding them against the false.  

It is also noteworthy that appended to this treatise in defence of the perfection of scripture is a second argument justifying the office and function of episcopacy. In the title of this second discourse, appended to his treatment of the authority of scripture, Bullinger quite intriguingly identifies the Bishop of Rome with the title “Romanae Antistes,” the title he himself bore as chief pastor of the Church of Zurich. In the course of justifying the final juridical separation England had made from Rome through the Act of Supremacy of 1534, Bullinger lends full prophetical support to the preservation of the Henrician episcopal hierarchy subject to the Crown. In his peroration Bullinger asserts that “although the monarch certainly has the ultimate responsibility for the state of the church in his land, the bishops carry some of this weight by virtue of their advisory capacity.” The bishops propose while the king, exercising supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction, disposes. The bishops, in short, exercise a “prophetic office” of spiritual jurisdiction; whereas it is the monarch’s task to promulgate the necessary laws upon which the continued true worship of God depends.

In his Dedication to a “godly prince” of a treatise on the authority of sacred scripture, we discern an early, but nonetheless definitive instance of Heinrich Bullinger’s exercise of his prophetical office with respect to the reform of the Church of England. In imitation of the more formalised institution of the Fürträger in republican Zurich, Bullinger here initiates, mutatis mutandis, what was to become his life-long role of advising and exhorting England’s chief magistrate in the interest of promoting true religion after the pattern of the Old Testament prophets admonishing the kings of ancient Israel. From the standpoint of the unitary character of the Covenant, the magisterial function of monarch (or Council, as in the case of Zurich) was for Bullinger really a continuation of the role of these ancient kings, just as the ministerial office of the clergy extended into the present the function of the prophet as the mediator of God’s voice to the rulers.

… your writings have obtained for you a reputation and honour among the English, so say nothing of other nations, beyond what could possibly be believed. Wherefore I pray Almighty God long to preserve you in safety, and not to suffer you to lack that spirit, by which you may persevere in writing more, not only for the use and benefit of the English alone, but of his whole church.” Eliot was closely connected with Archbishop Thomas Cranmer with whom Bullinger had been cultivating links as early as 1536. Cf. Bruce Gordon, The Swiss Reformation (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 300.

8 In sermon II.7 of the Decades, 1:339, Bullinger defines the magistrate as the “lex animata,” the living law. “For laws undoubtedly are the strongest sinews of the commonweal, and life of the magistrates: so that neither the magistrates can without the laws conveniently live and rule the weal public, nor the laws without the magistrates shew forth their strength and lively force … By executing and applying the law, the law is made to live and speak.”

9 “Antistes” is derived from the Greek verb anhistemi, “to stand before or over against,” i.e. “to preside.”

10 Biel, Doorkeepers, 36

II. Royal Fürträge In Sermonum Decades

Without doubt the most influential of Bullinger’s writings in England were his famous *Sermonum Decades*. Initially published in 1552, the fifty sermons gained quasi-canonical status in the two universities after the accession of Elizabeth. A full English translation was issued in 1577 bound together with Bullinger’s explosive contribution to the Vestiarian controversy of the 1560s. The full extent of Bullinger’s influence on the self-understanding of the Elizabethan church is difficult to gauge, but it is noteworthy that at the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury held in 1586, Archbishop Whitgift required that “every minister having cure, and being under the degrees of master of arts, and batchelors of law, and not licensed to be a public preacher, shall before the second day of February next provide a Bible, and Bullinger’s *Decads* [sic], in Latin or English, and a paper book, ... and shall every weeke read over one Sermon in the said *Decads*, and note likewise the chief matters therein contained in the said paper …”

Bullinger’s royal Fürträge appears in the *Decades* most explicitly in the form of two dedicatory epistles addressed to the new Josiah, King Edward VI, and in a sequence of sermons in the second decade on “the sixth precept of the ten commandments.” Building upon Hollweg’s argument that the *Decades* were composed for a largely clerical audience, Pamela Biel has claimed that Bullinger employed these epistles with a view to supplying his clerical readers “a practical model for the prophetic role of the minister. He addressed the ruler, told him what he needed to know, and sought to win him to the cause.” In Biel’s estimation, however, the dedication serves merely as a literary convention and reflects “the conditions and business practices of sixteenth-century publishing.” Nevertheless, without the Prince himself and his Council as intended recipients of simultaneously ‘covenantal’ and ‘constitutional’ instruction in these epistles, it is difficult to imagine how the prophetical office as Bullinger explains it could otherwise hope to receive the magisterial hearing necessary to its success on his own prophetical terms.

The actual action taken by Prince and Council to reform religion may or may not be taken as a measure of magisterial response to prophetical monition. Be that as it may, the substance of Bullinger’s discourse can leave no theoretical doubt concerning the ultimate repository of religious authority. The thesis of the dedicatory epistle is categorical:

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12 *Sermonum Decades quingue, de potissimis Christiane religionis capitibus, in tres tomas digestae, authore Henrycho Bullingero ecclesiae Tigurinae ministro* (Tiguri: Christoph. Froschaueri, 1552). The first English translation was published in 1577 entitled *Fiftie godlie and learned sermons, divided into fiue decades*, tr. by H.I. (London: Ralph Newberie, cum gratia & privilegio Regiae Maiestatis, 1577); repr. as The *Decades of Heinrich Bullinger*, ed. Thomas Harding (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1849).


14 Anthony à Wood, *Historia et antiquitates universitatis Oxoniensis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1674), 1:296. The first dedication is prefixed to the third decade, *Decades*, (1849) vol. 2, 3-16. Consisting of just two sermons, the fourth decade was initially incomplete. The second royal dedication is prefixed to the third sermon of the fourth decade in fulfilment of Bullinger’s promise in his first epistle to Edward, viz. to “add the other eight sermons of the fourth decadem which are behind.” See vol. 2, 16.


16 Biel, *Doorkeepers*, 38
those kings shall flourish and be in happy case, which wholly give and submit themselves
and their kingdoms to Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, being King of kings,
and Lord of lords; acknowledging him to be the mightiest prince and monarch of all, and
themselves his vassals, subjects, and servants: which, finally, do not follow in all their
affairs their own mind and judgment, the laws of men that are contrary to God’s
commandments, or the good intents of moral men; but do both themselves follow the
laws of the mightiest king and monarch, and also cause them to be followed throughout
their kingdom, reforming both themselves and all theirs at and by the rule of God’s holy
word. For in so doing the kingdom shall flourish in peace and tranquillity and the kings
thereof shall be most wealthy, victorious, long-lived, and happy ... the prosperity
of kings and kingdoms consisteth in true faith, diligent hearing, and faithful obeying the
word or law of God: whereas their calamity and utter overthrow doth follow the
contrary.\textsuperscript{17}

In short, the ministerial or prophetical office is to interpret the law of God; the magisterial or
ruling function is to act upon the interpretation. There follows on this a potted history of the
kings of ancient Israel and Judah to illustrate the central thesis concerning the \textit{cura religionis}.
The happiness of Saul, David, Solomon and the rest, and of their kingdom, are all shown to rest
on the self-same prophetical formula. King Uzziah enjoyed “singular felicity and most happy
life, so long as he gainsaid not the mouth of God; but when he would usurp and take upon him
that office, which God had properly appointed to the Levites alone, directly opposing himself
against the word of the Lord, he was stricken with leprosy.”\textsuperscript{18} (No doubt the lesson to be drawn
here is to avoid the mixing of ministerial and magisterial functions after the manner of the
Roman Antistes or the Consistory of Geneva!)

Bullinger dwells conspicuously upon the example of Josiah since “of all the kings of Juda
he was the flower and especial crown.” For “neither stayed he to look for the minds and
reformations of other kings and kingdoms; but, quickly forecasting the best for his people, he
began to reform the corrupted religion, which he did especially in the eighteenth year of his age.
[Edward himself was fifteen at the time.] And in that reformation he had a regard always to
follow the meaning of the Holy Scripture alone, to the prescribed order of long continuance, nor
to the common voices of the greatest multitude. For he assembled his people together, before
whom he laid open the book of God’s law, and appointed all things to be ordained according too
the rule of his written word.”\textsuperscript{19} Bullinger draws his epistle to a close by referring back to his
dedication in 1538 to Edward’s father of his treatises \textit{De Scripturæ sanctæ authoritate} and \textit{De episcoporum i
stitutione & functione}. He admonishes Edward to take note of the providential
efficacy of kings’ adherence to such sound prophetical advice. The example is King Henry VIII
himself: “now by experience know, that that labour of mine brought forth no small fruit within
the realm of England.”\textsuperscript{20}—the fruit, of course, is Edward’s own zeal for evangelical reform. The
overall conclusion is that the prophet has a definitively ‘public’ office, and that the ruler who
wishes to secure his position and bring felicity both to himself and to his people cannot afford to

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Decades}, 2:4, 5
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Decades}, 2:8
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Decades}, 2:10
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Decades}, 2:15
ignore the prophetical word. Moreover, as the scriptural history is supposed to demonstrate, true religion is ordinarily brought about conjointly by spiritual and political means—first and foremost by the conversion of the magistrate through the ministerial agency of the prophetical office. Thus, on the basis of his reading of the sacred political history and “to further the cause of true religion, which now beginneth to bud in England, to the great rejoicing of all good people” Bullinger concludes that he is compelled to address himself to the Prince.21

In the seventh sermon of the Second Decade, in a more discursive (and less hortatory) fashion, Bullinger explores the extent to which the *cura religionis* pertains to the office of the Magistrate, and “whether he may make laws and ordinances in cases of Religion.”22 Bullinger leads off the discussion by referring to the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, a priest-king interpreted typologically as a messianic precursor of Christ. Once again, the history of ancient Israel is rehearsed, although with an added twist illustrative of Bullinger’s distinctive theology of the over-arching unity of the Covenant: “Those ancient princes of God’s people, Josue, David, and the rest, were Christians verily and indeed … the examples which are derived from them and applied to Christian princes, both are and ought to be of force and effect among us at this day … even now also kings have in the church at this day the same office that those ancient kings had in that congregation which they call the Jewish church.”23 For Bullinger, a single covenant links the world before the Decalogue with the world of Israel’s kings, the world of the Constantinian Christian emperors, and the world of the godly princes of the Reformation. Just as the covenant itself is one and continuous, so also the balancing of the prophetical and magisterial offices are also viewed as subject to a continuous pattern. Referring to the Old Testament account of King Uzziah’s leprosy, suffered on account of his presumption to perform the exclusively Levitical act of making an offering at the altar of incense,24 Bullinger responds to the counter argument of Tridentine polemics that kings, consequent on Uzziah’s example, presume to exercise the *cura religionis* at their peril. For Bullinger, the magistrate’s *cura religionis* is not the mixing of magisterial and ministerial functions, but rather the means of securing the distinction of these offices:

> Our disputation tendeth not to the confounding of the offices and duties of the magistrate and ministers of the church, as that we would have the king to preach, to baptize, and to minister the Lord’s supper; or the priest, on the other side, to sit in the judgment-seat, and give judgment against the murderer, or by pronouncing sentence to take up matters in strife. The church of Christ hath, and retaineth, several and distinguished offices (*officia distincta*); and God is the God of order, and not of confusion. Hereunto tendeth our discourse, by demonstration to prove to all men, that the magistrate of duty ought to have a care of religion (*cura religionis*), either in ruin to restore it, or in soundness to preserve it … The politic magistrate is commanded to give ear to the ecclesiastical ruler, and the ecclesiastical minister must obey the politic governor in all things which the law commandeth. So then the magistrate is not made subject by God to the priests as to lords, but as to the ministers of the Lord: the subjection and duty which they owe is to the Lord

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21 *Decades*, 2:15
22 *Decades*, 1:323
23 *Decades*, 1:326
24 2 Chron. 16:18, 19. *Decades*, 1:328
himself and to his law, to which the priests themselves also ought to be obedient, as well as the princes.\textsuperscript{25}

As in the dedicatory epistle, Bullinger seeks to clarify the distinction between ministerial and magisterial functions, and consequently to avoid the perils posed by both Rome and Geneva. The magisterial \textit{cura religionis} is itself the very means to secure this distinction of function, and thus to prevent the clerical presumption of magisterial jurisdiction implied by the papal pretension to the “\textit{plenitudo potestatis}”\textsuperscript{26} or, for that matter, comparable consistorial claims to juridical autonomy asserted by some adherents of Reform.

In addition to the example of the ancient kings of Israel and Judah, Bullinger cites also the ecclesiastical supremacy exercised by the Christian emperors of the early church: Arcadius and Honorius, Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius by whose example “we gather that the proper office of the priests is to determine of religion by proofs out of the word of God, and that the Princes’ duty is to aid the priests in advancement and defence of true religion.”\textsuperscript{27} Here Bullinger quotes extensively the \textit{Codex Theodosianus} and Justinian’s \textit{Novellis Constitutiones} so that scriptural authority is shown to be reinforced by early-church practice and backed by imperial authority.\textsuperscript{28}

The prophetic tone of the royal \textit{Fürträge} becomes more pronounced in the second Dedictory Epistle prefixed to the third sermon of the Fourth Decade where Bullinger takes up once again the authority of civil magistrates to reform churches.\textsuperscript{29} Is an individual prince or magistrate justified in presuming to undertake the reformation of religion within his own territory? Or, does the calling of a general council trump the magistrate’s care of religion within the boundary of his realm? What are the claims of the unity of Christendom as against those of the unity of the Covenant? Inevitably Bullinger’s prophetic theology of the magistracy must address the matter of the division of Christendom.\textsuperscript{30} On this question the primacy of the authority of scripture, and thus of the unity of the Covenant, is altogether decisive for Bullinger. “The authority of the prophets and evangelists giveth counsel, fully to absolve and perfectly to end the

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Decades}, 1:329
\textsuperscript{26} For an example of this claim, see the opening sentence of Pius V’s Bull \textit{Regnans in excelsis}: “Regnans in excelsis, cui data est omnis in coelo et in terra potestas, unum sanctam Catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam, extra quam nulla est salus, uni soli in terris, videlicet apostolorum principi Petro, Petri successori Romano pontifici, in \textit{potestatis plenitudine} tradidit gubernandam.” Transl: “He that reigneth on high, to whom is given all power in heaven and earth, has committed one holy Catholic and apostolic Church, outside of which there is no salvation, to one alone upon earth, namely to Peter, the first of the apostles, and to Peter's successor, the pope of Rome, to be by him governed in \textit{fullness of power}.”
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Decades}, 1: 331
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Decades}, 1:331. Bullinger quotes: \textit{Codex Theodosianus}, ‘de religione,’ XVI.1.2: “We desire that all the people under the rule of our clemency should live by that religion which divine Peter the apostle is said to have given to the Romans, and which it is evident that Pope Damasus and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, followed; that is that we should believe in the one deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with equal majesty and in the Holy Trinity according to the apostolic teaching and the authority of the gospel. Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius Augusti.” And also Justinian, \textit{Novellis} 3, writing to Epiphanius, archbishop of Constantinople: “We have, most reverend patriarach, assigned to your holiness the disposition of all things that are honest, seemly, and agreeable to the rule of holy scriptures, touching the appointment and ordering of sacred bishops and reverend clerks.”
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Decades}, 2:115-122
reformation of religion once begun with the fear of God, out of or by the word of God; and not to look for or stay upon councils which are directed, not by the word of God, but by the affections and motions of men.” The prophetical office has come to focus sharply on a specific matter of foreign policy. What should the protestant princes look for in the Council of Trent? For Bullinger the path is clear. Since the corruption of “the Roman See of the last four hundred years” can be perceived “more clearly than the sun,” the prophet continues the royal Fürträge in the most confident terms; he urges the young King Edward to take decisive action “without staying for man’s [i.e. the Pope’s or Emperor’s] authority:

Thou shalt, most holy king, do wisely and religiously, if, without looking for the determination of a general council, thou shalt proceed to reform the churches in thy kingdom according to the rule of the books of both Testaments, which we do rightly believe, being written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to be the very word of God. By now, that it is lawful for every Christian church, much more for every notable Christian kingdom, without the advice of the Church of Rome and the members thereof, in matters of religion depraved by them, wholly to make reformation according to the rule of God’s most holy word, it is thereby manifest, because Christians are the congregation, the church, or subjects of their king, Christ, to whom they owe by all means most absolute and perfect obedience. Now the Lord gave his church a charge of reformation: he commended unto it the sound doctrine of the gospel, together with the lawful use of his holy sacraments … Therefore Christians, obeying the laws and commandments of their prince, do utterly remove or take away all superstition, and do restore, establish, and preserve true religion, according to the manner that Christ their prince appointed them… Proceed, therefore, proceed, most holy king, to imitate the most godly princes, and the infallible rule of the holy scripture: proceed, I say, without staying for man’s authority, by the most true and absolute instrument of truth, the book of God’s most holy word, to reform the church of Christ in [thy most happy] England.  

The cura religionis—the magistrate’s authority to reform religion and worship—is a power derived immediately from heaven. This power is authenticated by the sacred history of God’s revealed word in the Scriptures (more particularly by the sacred political history of the kings of Israel and Judah), and is interpreted by the prophetical word of God’s ministers including Bullinger himself in the royal Fürträge of his dedicatory epistle.

III. Bullinger’s Prophetical Office And The Elizabethan Church

In a letter written towards the end of his life to Edwin Sandys, then Bishop of London, Bullinger recapitulates the leitmotiv of his “prophetical office” respecting the Church of England in a vigorous defence of the Queen’s jurisdiction over matters of religion or, put more precisely

31 Decades, Second Epistle Dedicatory, 2:116
32 Decades, 2:119-121
33 Sandys was one of the most influential figures of the Elizabethan establishment. Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1553, he fled to the continent during the period of the Marian exile in the mid-1550s. He visited Strasbourg and Frankfurt, and enjoyed Bullinger’s personal hospitality while resident in Zurich. Under Elizabeth Sandys was appointed successively Bishop of Worcester (1559), London (1571) and Archbishop of York (1577).
in the terms of the Elizabethan Settlement, the royal title to supreme governance of the Church.\textsuperscript{34} The context of the letter, dated at Zurich on the 10\textsuperscript{th} of March 1574, is the heated controversy then building up over the publication of the anonymous tract \textit{An Admonition to the Parliament} (1572), probably the work of two young presbyterian radicals, Thomas Wilcox and John Field.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Admonition} rejected the institutions of the Elizabethan settlement to the core and sought to achieve a “further reformation” of the English Church after the pattern of Geneva. The liturgy of the \textit{Book of Common Prayer} was castigated as “an unperfecte booke, culled and picked out of that popishe dunghill, the Masse booke, full of all abhominations” and “against the word of God;” the jurisdiction of bishops “strange and unheard of in Chrystes church, ny playnely in Gods word forbidden;” and the royal supremacy itself, a two-headed “monstrositie,” challenged Christ’s sole headship of the Church. The Archbishops’ and Commissary courts robbed “Christes church of lawfull pastors, of watchfull Seniors and Elders, and carefull Deacons.”\textsuperscript{36} A key plank in the \textit{Admonition} platform was to replace the existing system of ecclesiastical courts with a presbyterian discipline. In his letter to Sandys, Bullinger expresses marked disapproval of this platform for “further reformation” of the Church of England along lines inspired by the ecclesiastical \textit{disciplina} of Geneva, a platform which maintained, according to Bullinger’s summary, that “the Civil Magistrate can have no authority in ecclesiastical matters and, moreover, that the Church will admit no other government than that of presbyters and presbyteries.” Such claims advanced by the Disciplinarians, according to Bullinger, rested upon an understanding of the relation between the spheres of magisterial and ministerial jurisdiction “held in common with the papists, who also displace the magistrate from the government of the Church, and who substitute themselves [i.e. the papacy and the church hierarchy] in his place.”\textsuperscript{37}

The Admonition Controversy, with its focus upon the institutions of ecclesiastical discipline and the jurisdiction of both magistrate and bishops, was in many respects a replay in England of the disagreement over excommunication which erupted in the Palatinate in the late 1560s. Caspar Olevianus, Court preacher in Heidelberg, had sought a “purer” church with powers of discipline independent of the Magistrate;\textsuperscript{38} he was opposed by Thomas Erastus who

\textsuperscript{34} John Parkhurst, Bishop of Norwich, wrote to Bullinger on 21 May 59 to advise that “the Queen is not willing to be called the head of the Church of England, although this title has been offered her; but she willingly accepts the title governor, which amounts to the same thing. The pope is again driven from England . . .” \textit{Zurich Letters} I.38. The original Act of Supremacy passed by Parliament in 1534 designated Henry VIII “supreme head of the Church in England.” After an only partially successful attempt under Queen Mary to dismantle the royal headship, a new Act of Supremacy was passed in 1559 with a change of the title “Supreme Head” to “Supreme Governor,” I Eliz. I.c.1. See Claire Cross, \textit{The Royal Supremacy in the Elizabethan Church} (London 1969), 128-129. In the Thirty-Nine \textit{Articles of Religion}, approved by Convocation in 1562 and by Parliament not until 1571, the thirty-seventh reads “The Queen’s Majesty hath the chief power in the Realm of England, and over her dominions, unto whom the chief government of all estates of this realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.”

\textsuperscript{35} (Imprinted we know where, and whan [sic], judge you the place and you can [Hemel Hempstead?): printed by J.S. [J. Stroud?], 1572); reprinted in Walter H. Frere and C.E. Douglas, \textit{Puritan Manifestoes: A Study of the Origin of the Puritan Revolt} (London: SPCK, 1954).

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Puritan Manifestoes}, 11, 21-23, 33

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Zurich Letters} I, 156

\textsuperscript{38} For an account of the differences between Zurich and Geneva on ecclesiastical discipline, see Robert C. Walton, “The Institutionisation of the Reformation in Zurich,” \textit{Zwingliana} XIII, 497-515. In an article published in the proceedings of the previous Bullinger Kongress, Wayne Baker investigates the circumstances of Bullinger’s composition of the unpublished “Tractatus de excommunicatione,” Gäbler und Herkenrath, 141-159. On the
defended the magisterial supremacy. This exchange concerning the disciplinary power of excommunication escalated into a full-scale dispute over the first principles of ecclesiology and the fundamental nature of the authority of scripture. Bullinger interceded with the Elector Friedrich III in support of his erstwhile pupil Erastus and set out reasons for his opposition to the conduct of church discipline by presbyters independently of the civil magistrate which would shortly be reiterated with reference to events across the channel. The Heidelberg dispute highlights the difference between the Zurich and Geneva “brands” of Reform on the question of both the distinction and the interconnection between ministerial and magisterial jurisdiction. The result was something of a compromise between the two principal exemplars of a Reformed ecclesiology; by 1570 a presbytery had been established in Heidelberg, although its power to excommunicate was subject to the consent of the magistrate. Bullinger’s reaction with respect to the English proponents of the disciplina—such as Field and Wilcox, as well as Walter Travers and Thomas Cartwright—is to view their challenge to the Elizabethan establishment largely in terms of this continental dispute, and to assure Bishop Sandys of his solid support of the status quo. England had become yet another battleground between two competing visions of Reformed ecclesiastical polity with the Queen and her Zurich-trained bench of bishops ranged in support of the Tigurine model now openly challenged by disciplinarian critics of the 1559 Settlement, all sympathisers of the example of Geneva. Bullinger’s 1574 response to Sandys in support of the Elizabethan establishment may be taken as emblematic of the prophetic role he exercised throughout his career.

Meanwhile, on the other major front in the jurisdictional wars, and just two years prior to his correspondence with Sandys, Bullinger had argued publicly at considerable length in support of the Royal Supremacy in his refutation of Pius V’s bull Regnans in excelsis. The bull excommunicates Elizabeth and absolves her subjects of their obedience on the ground that the “pretended Queen of England” has “monstrously usurped” the supreme ecclesiastical authority.

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40 Thomas Erastus, Explicatio Gravissimae questionis vtrum excommunicatio ... (Pesclavii 1589). Although the controversy transpired in 1568, Erastus’s tract was not published until after his death. Theodore de Bèze responded to the Explicatio in the year after its publication with De vera excommunicatione et Christiano presbyterio (Geneva 1590).
and jurisdiction and has thereby reduced her kingdom to “miserable ruin.” In his refutation of *Regnans in excelsis* in the *Defensio*, Bullinger makes an extensive (and, it must be said, somewhat repetitive) argument for the view that the Queen “hath done nothing but that the Lord God himselfe hath commaunded her to do, and which all good Princes among the people of God have done before her. For … by Gods ordinaunce [emphasis added] it is lawfull for kinges and Magistrates to take upon them the care and ordering both of cases and of persons Ecclesiasticall.” For Elizabeth to bind her subjects by an oath of Supremacy “to abiure the authoritie and obedience of the Romish Byshop” is, according to Bullinger, no more than “that she ought to do by virtue of her [divinely sanctioned] office.”

Without any doubt Bullinger’s identification of the presbyterian assault on the authority of the magistrate with papal claims to the “plenitude of power” displays a sharp polemical edge within the Reformed camp, an approach which resonates closely with John Whitgift’s officially sanctioned responses to the *Admonition* and to Thomas Cartwright’s *Replie*. The conflict between Whitgift and Cartwright corresponds closely to that between Erastus and Olevianus; and both are writ large in the competing ecclesiological paradigms of Zurich and Geneva. Viewed in this light, Bullinger’s prophetical role is plainly to promote consolidation of the Elizabethan Settlement with its reformed confession and ecclesiastical discipline secured under the authority of the civil magistrate, consistently with the Zurich model. With an invocation of the Augustinian political theology of the “two cities,” Bullinger goes on to counsel Sandys “I wish there were no lust of dominion [*libido dominandi*] in the originators of this presbytery!” To the theologically trained eye, Bullinger’s reference to the *libido dominandi* implies that by seeking to exclude the Magistrate from the “cura religionis” England’s disciplinarian radicals in effect had succeeded in confusing the spiritual aims of the *civitas Dei* with the external ends of the *civitas terrena*. That is to say, the presbyterian Disciplina obscured the proper distinction between the spheres of ministerial and magisterial authority, and in such a way as to resurrect the jurisdictional pretensions of the papacy. Bullinger concludes his letter to Sandys by urging the greatest caution in preserving the “supreme power” in the hand of the civil magistrate. What is particularly revealing in the letter to Sandys is the theological weight Bullinger attaches to his arguments in support of the Royal Supremacy.

The heart and substance of Bullinger’s prophetical office with respect to England was to defend, to interpret, and to promote the Civil Magistrate’s pivotal role as the supreme governing power in the ordering of religion in the realm: the royal ‘cura religionis.’ Strange though it may
appear, the institution of the Royal Supremacy with its *hypostatic* conjunction of supreme civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Prince, constitutes for Bullinger a vivid exemplar of the unitary character of Christian polity, and thus of the cooperation of magisterial and ministerial power. From the standpoint of Bullinger’s unique covenantal interpretation of history, it is certainly arguable that the Old Testament exemplar is more completely realised under England’s monarchical constitution than under the republican conditions of Bullinger’s own city and canton of Zurich. In this sense the institution of the Royal Supremacy in the reformed Church of England provided Bullinger throughout his career with an invaluable testing ground for the principles of his distinctive hermeneutic of salvation history.
Hobbes’s Critique Of Miltonian Independency

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[John Milton’s] widow assures me that Mr Thomas Hobbes was not one of his acquaintance: that her husband did not like him at all: but he would grant him to be a man of great parts, and a learned man. Their Interests and Tenets did run counter to each other.

Vide Mr Hobbes’ Behemoth. 1

In the context of the British civil wars, a comparison of the thought of Hobbes and Milton elucidates the connections between Hobbes’s conception of the relation of church to state and his stance on freedom of religion. 2 In response to the religious warfare ravaging early modern Europe, Hobbes advocated the strict subordination of church to state—thus reuniting, as Rousseau put it, the “two heads of the eagle” rendered asunder by Christianity. 3 This prescription would seem to exclude the sort of religious liberty championed by Milton. Indeed, Aubrey’s remark suggests that the opposition between the two thinkers is effectively summarized in Hobbes’s dismissal in Behemoth of Milton as an ill-reasoning Independent. 4 As pamphleteer, secretary to Cromwell, and revolutionary poet, Milton recommended the separation of church and state as conducive to the protection and even flourishing of Christian liberty, i.e., the freedom of the Christian to follow his or her conscience in matters of faith as well as politics. 5 In other words, Christian subjects are to be free from both lordly and priestly authorities, except

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where voluntarily consented to. Joining the two, whether in Catholic, Anglican, or Erastian forms, is an affront to heaven. As the Archangel Michael prophecies in *Paradise Lost*, “Spiritual laws by carnal power shall force / On every conscience;...”

The view of Milton and others that the fusion of church and state effectively stifles religious freedom fits well, as scholars have argued, with the strongly authoritarian elements of Hobbes’s politics. Nevertheless, this paper suggests that a more nuanced understanding of why Hobbes prescribed the unity of church and state reveals a certain degree of religious freedom in his thought.

Given his deep suspicion of most religious doctrines and the innovatively mundane character of his theory of political consent, one would be mistaken in imputing to Hobbes a purely theocratic intention. Instead, an explanation of Hobbes’s Erastianism must be consistent with the fundamental goal of his political thought: to establish peace and commodious living. Accordingly, some scholars have argued that Hobbes sought to harness the power of religion for such ends. Charles Tarlton thinks that Hobbes promoted “a political education properly exploiting the ‘seeds of religion’” to deceive the majority of subjects into giving their obedience.

In his analysis of Hobbes’s history of the civil war, Stephen Holmes notes the remark in *Behemoth* that it is “not in man’s power to suppress the power of religion” and concludes that “a prudent sovereign will attempt to monopolize the pretence of spiritual power.” The divine authority of the sovereign, according to this account, should be asserted against the power of ambitious priests. Ronald Beiner argues that Hobbes reinterpreted Christianity in a Judaic fashion, in which the sovereign is invested with divine authority as in a Jewish theocracy until the eventual return of Christ the worldly king.

Doubt may be cast on these views of Hobbes as theorist of divinized authority. In commenting on the religious controversies inflamed by Archbishop Laud, the Hobbesian interlocutor in *Behemoth* remarks,

> A state can constrain obedience, but convince no error, nor alter the minds of them that believe they have the better reason. Suppression of doctrine does but unite and exasperate, that is, increase both the malice and power of them that have already believed them.

It is thus difficult to reconcile this comment with the notion that, as Beiner puts it, “Hobbes wants ultimately to re-theocratize politics rather than de-theocratize it” as an

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6 *Paradise Lost* (1667) 12. 521-522.
9 Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 82.
effective means of countering religious sedition. In the context of the civil wars, Hobbes recognized the perils of attempting to manipulate religion for political purposes.

Other scholars have portrayed Hobbes as a more liberal thinker. Edward Andrew depicts Hobbes as a defender of sceptical toleration as opposed to the rights of anarchic conscience championed by Protestant revolutionaries like Milton. Hobbes, he writes, “was the most philosophic spokesman for the tradition that combined religious scepticism with the Erastian supremacy of the state in matters of conscience.” In this tradition, which includes the thought of Hume, Voltaire, and Diderot, the state adopts a policy of sceptical indifference to religion through an established church and purely formal religion: “an established church diminishes religious enthusiasm, zeal, and even piety. A ceremonial religion tends ‘to mollify that fierce and gloomy spirit of devotion.’” Andrew challenges the identification of church establishment with religious piety on the one hand, and the separation of church and state with secular modernity on the other. Hobbes sought to counteract religious sedition through an established church, while Milton’s prescription of separating church and state arose from his passionate religious convictions.

Richard Tuck goes further in arguing for Hobbes’s liberal credentials. He contends that by the time of the writing of Leviathan, Hobbes had become a radical tolerationist along Lockean lines. For example, Tuck points to a striking passage in chapter 47 of Leviathan in which Hobbes “praised the decentralized ecclesiastical order of the new republic in England.” In effect, Tuck believes that Hobbes came to prefer a plurality of religious sects free from state regulation, and thus a fortiori from state imposition of doctrine.

Hobbes’s tentative defence of the sort of Independency officially promulgated in republican England would entail some agreement with Milton’s ecclesiastical stance. But even putting aside Hobbes’s castigation in Behemoth of the 1651 declaration of the “Free-State,” his severe critique in Leviathan of private conscience as opposed to law distances his position from Miltonian Independency as well as Lockean rights of conscience. Still, what are we to make of Hobbes’s seeming endorsement of Independency in Chapter 47 of Leviathan, given the strongly Erastian position he took in the rest of Leviathan and his other political works? I shall extend and modify Andrew’s insight that Hobbes promoted a sceptical toleration of religion through an established church by examining Hobbes’s views on certain issues relating to Milton’s Independency. Hobbes’s strategy for neutralising the power of seditious religious doctrines which were espoused by Milton and others is more complex than Andrew suggests. Milton espoused Independency in order to promote Christian liberty. Hobbes, in contrast, sought to subordinate church to state for the sake of peaceful, commodious living. But he also considered the merits of separating church and state--not, however,
out of religious zeal, but out of a recognition that encouraging privacy of religious belief and practice could, under certain circumstances, be another effective means of defanging priestly power. Examining Hobbes’s critique and qualified endorsement of Independency is a way to evaluate the liberal and authoritarian elements of his thought on religion—elements which have led scholars to such varying interpretations of his religious politics.

An examination of Milton’s Independency must begin with his views on scriptural authority. In his treatise on Christian doctrine, Milton presented himself as the exemplar of the seeker of religious truth.\(^\text{19}\) In the introductory epistle, he explained how he had sought answers to religious questions by relying on his own examination of God’s word. Arguably, the central teaching of this treatise is that the Christian should not be beholden to others in the interpretation of God’s word. Indeed, he did not insist that the reader agree with his views on subjects such as the Trinity, angels, or the Sabbath. On the contrary, he wrote, “I advise every reader, and set him an example by doing the same myself, to withhold his consent from those opinions about which he does not feel fully convinced, until the evidence of the Bible convinces him and induces his reason to assent and believe.”\(^\text{20}\) As this statement indicates, he believed that one who carefully arrives at one’s own understanding of the Bible will come to agree with his interpretation; but the method of interpretation must be examination for oneself, as he had done. In effect, he advanced a hermeneutical teaching as well as a teaching on the content of scripture.

This form of self-teaching is linked to individual salvation. Since it was for Milton the principal route to religious truth, the inward “illumination of the Holy Spirit”—what Milton also called “conscience”—is both guide to interpreting scripture and the key to salvation. Conscience is the guide to the free will, informing it of right and wrong. In \textit{Paradise Lost}, Milton characterizes conscience as “a Comforter” to the “faithful, left among the th’ unfaithful herd, / The enemies of truth...” Conscience is the promise of God,

...who shall dwell
His Spirit within them, and the law of faith
Working through love, upon their hearts shall write,
To guide them all in truth... \(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\) For the argument that the treatise may not be Milton’s work at all, see William B. Hunter, “The Provenance of the \textit{Christian Doctrine},” \textit{Studies in English Literature} 32 (1992): 129-142. See also pp. 143-166 for objections and replies. Hunter argues that the heterodoxy of the treatise is inconsistent with the orthodoxy of \textit{Paradise Lost}, putting Milton’s authorship of both under question. I do not address issues of orthodoxy; my view is that one can develop an argument about Independency based on certain ideas present in both works. Furthermore, the charge of heterodoxy is not necessarily an objection to Milton’s authorship, since his theological views were radically unconventional.


\(^{21}\) \textit{Paradise Lost} 12. 480-497.
Likewise, with respect to what one should believe, “God has revealed the way of eternal salvation only to the individual faith of each man, and demands of us that any man who wishes to be saved should work out his beliefs for himself.” Milton’s Christianity was radically individualistic, placing the burden of religious doctrine on everyone’s conscience. One may consult the advice of others in interpreting scripture, but the settling of one’s own religious beliefs depends on direct, unmediated revelation and persuasion.22

Accordingly, Milton spoke of the “double scripture,” a notion which challenges the supremacy even of the written word in its literal sense. The Gospels teach that “There is the external scripture of the written word and in the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit which he, according to God’s promise, has engraved upon the hearts of believers, and which is certainly not to be neglected.” In fact, the internal authority of the spirit may in some cases be superior to the “external” authority of scripture even as it is written in the Bible. Milton placed such certainty in the individual conscience that he believed it could revise and amend written scripture if necessary. He quite reasonably cited the corruption of Biblical scripture through the ages. After all, the books of the Bible were written at such different times and in such different places that the texts were liable to corruption. Moreover, given the Miltonian critique of established clergy, the handling of the texts by various priests added to the likelihood of the written scripture’s occasional unreliability. Milton drew this striking conclusion:

I do not know why God’s providence should have committed the contents of the New Testament to such wayward and uncertain guardians, unless it was so that this very fact might convince us that the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than scripture, and that we ought to follow it.

Milton contrasted the possible corruption of written scripture with the incorruptibility of inward spirit as a guide to the interpretation of the former. He exalted individual conscience not only over church dogma, but even over literal scripture in those cases when it cannot be regarded as the word of God.23

Despite this individualistic approach to scriptural interpretation and salvation, Milton did not abandon the idea of the church altogether. He accepted the importance of collective worship and instruction. A church, he wrote, should be “chiefly organised for the purpose of promoting mutual edification and the communion of the saints.” What Milton opposed was not churches per se but rather how they have been organized. Now, it is true of all forms of Christianity that Christ is considered the spiritual head of the church. Milton went further, asserting that Christ is also the head of the visible church. Since religious faith is a matter between the individual alone and God, no human being

23 Milton, Christian Doctrine, pp. 587-592. Milton was careful, however, not to give fanatics license to misinterpret the Bible as they please. The inward spirit may revise written scripture only in cases of glaring inconsistencies.
can set him or herself up as head or even as superior office of the church. God may commission “extraordinary ministers”—prophets, apostles, and evangelists—to “set up or to reform the church,” but any believer can be an “ordinary minister,” if possessing certain gifts. Milton did not elaborate on what precisely these gifts are, but he did cite scriptural passages referring to gifts of speech by the grace of God. The point is that the traditional clergy should not have a monopoly over religious instruction. But how will an assembly of believers know who among them is gifted to act as ordinary minister? Milton declared that ministers should be elected by the people. This assertion is consistent with his emphasis on individual conscience and his view that a minister must possess certain gifts by God’s grace. For if one is a true believer and thus moved by the Holy Spirit within oneself, then an assembly of true believers is fit to judge who by God should be elected their ministers. Thus Milton took the Independentist position that scriptural interpretation and salvation are individual affairs and that churches should be organized on that basis. A group of believers should assemble with the sole purpose of facilitating their individual pursuits of salvation. Such churches may co-operate and consult with each other, but they would be “self contained and complete.”

How can the centrality of individual conscience in religion be reconciled with the emphasis on law in holy scripture, particularly in the Old Testament? Milton regarded Christianity as a universal religion of faith displacing the old Jewish religion of law. The “new covenant through faith in Christ” abolished the old covenant of Mosaic law. In other words, the old law enforced obedience to God through the fear of divine retribution for transgressing God’s laws. This, as Milton characterized it, was a servile discipline, fit for childish creatures who could only obey God out of the fear of punishment. In contrast, for Milton, the religion of the Gospels is that of a manly freedom, in which Christians choose Christ and the promise of eternal life because of their faith. Milton pointed to the difference between circumcision and baptism as the sacred rites of the old and new religions: circumcision was a seal of righteousness, an obscure sign in the flesh that bound believers to service; whereas baptism is an initiation into the Gospel, a remission of sins and the birth of a manly freedom of service to God. Under the old religion, we were cursed, in that we had to obey the law which carried no promise, in contrast to the hope of eternal life under the new covenant. As the Archangel Michael remarks in *Paradise Lost*:

So law appears imperfect, and but giv’n
With purpose to resign them in full time
Up to a better cov’nant, disciplined
From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
From imposition of strict laws, to free
Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
To filial, works of law to works of faith.

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24 Ibid., pp. 566, 570-573, 593-594, and 601.
26 *Paradise Lost* 12. 300-306. “Shadowy types to truth” seems to evoke Platonism or Neoplatonism, but William G. Madsen argues that “it is more meaningful to describe the symbolic method of *Paradise Lost* as Christian” in that “Christ is the symbolizing center of the poem since it is through Him that the major metaphors find their significance.” For example, the Garden of Eden, Satan, and Adam’s exaltation of Eve are shadowy types (and in the latter case, a false representation) of the image of Christ in humanity, of
The precise transition from Mosaic law to the Gospel was the internalisation of the law, from external obedience to internal faith. The death and resurrection of Christ announced the possibility of salvation. Humanity now had a saviour to believe in, God’s own son who clearly justified freely chosen service to God. In him, Mosaic law was abolished but not broken: its purpose was now fulfilled in faith rather than in servile obedience. “We must realise,” Milton argued, “that only the written surface has been changed, and that the law is now inscribed on believers’ hearts by the spirit.” What was the purview of prophets and high priests is now the inner realm of faith and conscience—beyond the scope of the present ecclesiastical authorities.  

The manly freedom Milton spoke of as the result of the new inward religion of faith and conscience was the foundation of his conception of “Christian liberty.” Like Hobbes, Milton regarded law as a constraint on liberty. He applied this conceptual relationship, in a radicalized form, to the old and new religions. Hobbes considered civil law (i.e., of earthly commonwealths) as a legitimate constraint on natural right, whereas Milton described the old law (of God) as a law of slavery. In other words, Milton embraced Christian liberty to the extent that he regarded the old divine law as fit only for the infantile state of humanity in the time of the Old Testament. With the law of God inscribed on human hearts, however, Christian liberty can be attained by obeying our consciences and following the true faith. Religious liberty may certainly have been present before Christ, but its full manifestation—the religious truth in our hearts that will set us free—came about with the “advent of Christ, our liberator.”

The attainment of Christian liberty has had significant political implications. We have not, Milton warned, freed ourselves from God’s external law only to fall into the hands of unjust human law. As we noted, the religion of the Gospel is an internalization of God’s law, the acquisition of new freedom to serve God guided by inner conscience. The subservience of Christian liberty to human law would thus be the lowest depths into which the Christian may plunge. The obedience to Mosaic law may have been a servile discipline, but a necessary one for infant humanity until the latter was fit for manly freedom. The maturity to Christian liberty is thus hardly a victory “if our fear which was then servile to God only, must be now servile in religion towards men.”

Christ as “intercessor and re-creator,” and of Christ as son of God. William G. Madsen, From Shadowy Types to Truth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 83-84. In light of the contrast made between the old new religion of law and the new religion of faith in Christian Doctrine, the symbol of Christ is indeed more useful than the allegory of the cave for understanding Milton’s theology.


Ibid., pp. 123-124; Civil Power, pp. 263-265. Austin Woolrych writes that Christian liberty “frees us not only from the bond of Judaical ceremonies but from all set forms, places, and times in the worship of God,”
In a 1660 pamphlet, Milton argued that political liberty would only be attained in a republican regime guided by an aristocratic body. Indeed, Christ recommended this free commonwealth as best for humanity until the second coming. Despite the divine sanction for the free commonwealth, however, Milton insisted that the civil and ecclesiastical powers should be distinguished. On this point, he again emphasized the disjunction between the old and new religions. In the old Jewish kingdoms, political and religious authority was united in the theocratic rule of a high priest. But the same government is not applicable to the Christian era: “If church and state shall be made one flesh again as under the law, let it be withall considerd, that God who then join'd them hath now sever'd them.” Milton thought that these two spheres must be kept separate; that everyone is subject to the legitimate civil authority in civil matters, but only members of a church are subject to ecclesiastical powers, and solely in religious matters. It should be emphasized that Milton believed the two domains to be separable: political liberty and Christian liberty, and likewise civil authority and religious authority, are different spheres. He contrasted the outward force of the one with the inward persuasion of the other. They are not, therefore, exact counterparts. Although Milton was concerned to curb excessive constraints on outward political liberty, he accepted that just civil laws should be obeyed. In religion, however, the true Christian should be free from external law; and so the scope of ecclesiastical authority is severely limited because the subject matter of religion is individual faith and conscience, not law.

In his argument for the separation of church and state, Milton was suggesting that the worst evil in ecclesiastical affairs is the use of outward force in an essentially inward religion. In civil matters, it is sufficient for political liberty if force and coercion are used wisely and judiciously. In ecclesiastical matters, however, any use of force is contrary to Christian liberty. Because the realm of religion is belief and conscience, “external force should never be used in Christ’s kingdom, the church.” Civil magistrates have a duty to protect and foster religion, but not to impose belief or enforce public profession. They carry out this duty by not supervising the particular churches, which Milton regarded as largely voluntary organizations. Furthermore, the use of force in religion--by magistrates and priests alike--is contrary to God’s glory, which upholds Christian liberty, and ineffective, since conscience is the inner voice of God and untouchable by outward force. That is to say, compulsion in ecclesiastical affairs is outward violence against true believers. Thus, the proper purview of the state is non-interference in religious matters, while the instruments of church discipline should only be persuasion, demonstration, and other spiritual means--never compulsion to belief--because one’s faith is paramount, and thus one’s participation in church for the sake of following one’s own conscience must be protected. We can see why Milton did not extend the same Christian liberty to Catholics, for whom (in his view) imposition of church doctrine is part of their very beliefs.
Milton declared that he wrote “heretofore against Salmasius and regal tyrannie over the state; now against Erastus and state-tyrannie over the church.”\(^{34}\) But considering his concern that the civil power was itself controlled by certain churches (particularly the Catholic and Presbyterian), we might rather say that he wrote against the church’s use of the state’s tyranny over the churches. One may oppose the mingling of religion and politics on the grounds that there should be no religious interference in the political realm. Milton shared this view, but only insofar as he feared the use of the civil power by certain churches, to the detriment of the true religion. He regarded Presbyterian backsliding as a betrayal of the Revolution, and emphasized the degeneracy of Presbyterianism into a quasi-Catholic abuse of political power to enforce its particular doctrine. As he wrote to General Cromwell upon the establishment of the republican Commonwealth:

...yet more remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war, new foes arise
Threat’ning to bind our souls with secular chains:
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose Gospel is their maw.\(^{35}\)

The struggle against religious oppression did not end with the execution of the king. In the divine theodicy, the ultimate task of humanity is the full attainment of our manly freedom under God. Thus we are presented with the religious policy of Milton’s best regime: “This liberty of conscience which above all other things ought to be to all men dearest and most precious, no government more inclinable not to favor only but to protect, then a free Commonwealth.”\(^{36}\) In other words, while civil liberty is guaranteed by aristocratic republicanism, Christian liberty is fostered by the strict separation of church and state. The failure to achieve either in England after 1660 was doubtless a bitter disappointment for Milton, who may have cared more about such principles than the personal glory he ultimately achieved as a poet.

The points discussed above--individual interpretation, the church as voluntary association, Christian liberty, and the separation of church and state--are the pillars of Milton’s Independency. Hobbes’s teaching was opposed to Milton’s in each respect. First, Hobbes insisted that “by wise and learned interpretation, and carefull ratiocination, all rules and precepts necessary to the knowledge of our duty both to God and man, without Enthusiasme, or supernatural Inspiration, may easily be deduced,”\(^{37}\) a clear rejection of Milton’s “inward illumination of the Holy Spirit” as a guide to interpretation.

would take away from the “freedom, not of all men, but the truly conscientious.” Arthur E. Barker, *Milton and the Puritan Dilemma* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 254-255. In a limited, external respect, the Christian magistrate’s duty to protect religion would include the prohibition of abhorrent practices, such as human sacrifice.

\(^{34}\) Milton, *Civil Power*, p. 252 (Milton’s emphasis).


He was also critical of the over-rationalization of scripture: “it is with the mysteries of our Religion, as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed whole, have the vertue to cure; but chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect.”38 This statement may appear rather ironic, considering that the second half of *Leviathan* is taken up with careful consideration of scripture. But Hobbes may have intended to settle religious controversies once and for all, and thus show that abstruse theological disputes over the mysteries of religion are not fit subjects for human reasoning. If Hobbes’s reading of scripture merely confirms what he wrote in the first half of *Leviathan*, then dwelling on theological matters is a distraction from political obedience. Hobbes concluded that only two things are essential for salvation: belief in Christ, and obedience to the laws of the sovereign.40 His careful exegesis of scripture is an elaborate effort to prove to Christian subjects that these simple tenets of salvation are all they need to know from the Bible. In this way, he sought to counteract both the misappropriation of scripture by ambitious priests and the dangers of individual interpretation.

For Hobbes, the religious duty of humanity with respect to one’s actions is primarily a matter of obedience to law. Like Milton, he considered the Jews of the Old Testament to be a particular people subject to God’s law. Furthermore, Hobbes argued that the kingdom of God spoken of in Old Testament scripture was a “Kingdome properly so named,” consistent with the origins of sovereignty described in the first part of *Leviathan*. That is to say, the people of Israel covenanted with God to have him as their king. The kingdom of God was not a metaphor but a political reality for the Jews. The initial covenant took place between God and Abraham, in which Abraham and his seed covenanted to obey God as sovereign, who in turn promised them the land of Canaan. This covenant was renewed by Moses, who ruled the people of Israel as God’s lieutenant.41 The kingdom of God was a civil kingdom, in which the sovereign was instituted by a social covenant. Hobbesian and Miltonian accounts of the Old Testament are in general agreement over the point that the Jewish religion was a religion of law.

Hobbes sharply differed with Milton on the relation between the old kingdom of God and the religion of the Gospel. For Hobbes, the kingdom of God did not lose its original meaning—that of the sovereignty of god. The new covenant brought about by Christ was not a change from the religion of law to the religion of faith. In Chapter 40 of

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38 Ibid., chap. 32, p. 410.
39 J.G.A. Pocock thinks that in the second half of *Leviathan*, the sovereign is confronted by a “new system of authority” based on God’s word as revealed in history. This theological-historical account of sovereign authority “will come into direct and potentially competitive coexistence” with the ahistorical account based on reason which justified the institution of sovereignty. *J.G.A. Pocock, Politics, Language, and Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 166. But in the context of the civil wars, the sovereign’s ecclesiastical authority is derived from the ahistorical problem of resolving controversies, and Hobbes’s scriptural exegesis is largely devoted to confirming this authority in the Bible.
41 Ibid., chap. 35, pp. 442-444 (Hobbes’s emphasis). Furthermore, as David Johnston notes, “By arguing that the kingdom of God described in Scripture was a kingdom in a literal sense, Hobbes could claim that no division between spiritual and civil authority had existed in Biblical times.” David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 169. This may also help to explain Milton’s largely negative account of the religion of the Jews: the unity of civil and ecclesiastical powers in Old Testament kingdoms as a model for commonwealths generally is, of course, contrary to the separation of church and state.
Leviathan, Hobbes depicted the period between Moses and the New Testament as various changes in political authority, from high priests to kings, until subjection to the Babylonian, Macedonian, and finally Roman empires. Likewise, the new covenant of Christ marked a change in God’s political kingdom. Hobbes noted Christ’s office as redeemer for our sins. But Milton regarded Christ as a symbol of faith as opposed to law—that salvation is obtained through faith in Christ who died for our sins, not obedience to God’s law as set down by external authorities—whereas Hobbes separated the redemptive act of Christ from the new covenant. It is true that Christ did not come to earth in order to assume earthly power, but this does not mean that religion ceased to be a religion of law. Instead, he announced the kingdom of God to come, an earthly commonwealth of the future with Christ as God’s lieutenant. His mission was “to prepare men to live so, as to be worthy of the Immortality Believers were to enjoy, at such time as he should come in majesty, to take possession of his Fathers Kingdome.” Thus, the law of God was not abolished in the new covenant, but rather renewed. Milton understood the new covenant in moral and metaphysical terms, as a transformation of religion from law to faith, conscience, and love, but Hobbes saw it in political terms: the promise of a future kingdom of God of similar character to the old kingdom of God. Indeed, Hobbes declared that Christ “is to be King...like (in office) to Moses.” Christ will be the sovereign authority, not the Truth that shall set you free. Hobbes saw no maturing of humanity from the servile discipline of Jewish law to the manly freedom of Christian faith. Religious duty for him has consisted and always will consist essentially in obedience to God’s law. It is reflective of Milton’s republicanism and Hobbes’s political teaching that the one considered the external imposition of God’s law to be fit only for the servile, while the other regarded the religion of law as consonant with the kingdom of God in both the Old and New Testaments.

If Christianity is as much a religion of law as the religion of the Jews, then what laws did Christ bid us obey? Hobbes maintained that God’s law throughout scripture is compatible with civil law. Christ did not give new laws to humanity, but rather gave “Counsell to observe those wee are subject to; that is to say, the Laws of Nature, and the Laws of our severall Sovereigns.” The laws of nature, which come from God, command us to obey the laws of the sovereign; and Christ himself, when referring to the Pharisees “that sate in Moses seat” and to the tribute owed to Caesar, taught the same (though by interpreting Christ to have preached obedience to the Pharisees, Hobbes inadvertently compared Jesus to his religious persecutors). Thus, in between the old kingdom of God and Christ’s kingdom to come is for the faithful a period of observance of God’s laws which command obedience to civil law, a quiet waiting for the coming of the saviour. Although we are obviously not under God’s direct rule at the moment, part of our present duty to God nevertheless consists in obedience to the civil laws.

Moreover, human laws applies to acts, not wills. The law restricts freedom in the sense of doing what one will. This principle is true of civil law in ecclesiastical affairs as well. In the interests of peace, subjects are not absolutely free to act as their consciences may direct them. Hobbes was sceptical of the claim that individual

44 Hobbes, Leviathan, chap. 21, p. 262.
conscience is a reliable guide to right and wrong: the law is the “publique Conscience,” in that the civil law, not private opinion, is the rule of good and evil actions for members of the commonwealth. But this notion does not entail that one is bound to believe in private what the law dictates. The law commands obedience, not belief. That is to say, civil law restricts freedom of action; but individual belief is separable from free action. “For internall Faith,” he wrote,” is in its own nature invisible, and consequently exempted from all human jurisdiction; whereas the words, and actions that proceed from it, as breaches of our Civill obedience, are injustice both before God and Man.” All that a sovereign can possibly (and legitimately) command is external obedience, not inward faith. Hobbes acknowledged that some would regard it abhorrent that a sovereign could, for example, order one to deny one’s faith in public. But in the interests of peace, he argued, purely inward belief must suffice for individuals where civil law commands public profession. It is, after all, a two-way street: words and actions must suffice for the sovereign. Hobbes endorsed, in his own fashion, freedom of (inward) thought but not of speech and expression. Two decades after the publication of Leviathan, Spinoza would argue that despite the necessity for outward religion to be consistent with public peace, freedom of speech is not separable from freedom of thought. With respect to the view that acts may be restrained in accordance with peace but that free speech and thought must be tolerated, Spinoza’s liberalism was between the positions of Hobbes and Milton (who endorsed freedom of worship as well as belief and speech).

Why are words for Hobbes not exempt from jurisdiction? Hobbes linked seditious speech with rebellious activity, particularly in his analysis of spiritual authorities seeking to undermine and appropriate civil sovereignty. In general, “there have been in all times in the Church of Christ, false Teachers, that seek reputation with the people, by phantasticall and false doctrines; and by such reputation (as is the nature of Ambition), to govern them for their private benefit.” These false teachers are the agents of the “Kingdome of Darknesse,” in contrast to the light of true religion and “of the Understanding.” In particular, the seditious preachers of the Gospel interpreted scripture to prove, above all, that their church is the kingdom of God. Consequently, the persons that they deceive obey these teachers rather than their civil sovereigns. Hobbes placed enormous importance on the power of words to make human beings believe and act according to them.

It is in this context that we may assess Hobbes’s critique of the Independents and their allies. In the first dialogue of Behemoth, Hobbes named multiple sources of

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45 Ibid., chap. 29, p. 366. The characterization of law as public conscience may be linked with Hobbes’s critique of the private interpretation of scripture. In this sense, his conception of law was in part a response to Protestantism. See Mark Whitaker, “Hobbes’s View of the Reformation,” History of Political Thought 9 (1988): 49: “the whole of Leviathan can be said to be a commentary on the Reformation.”
47 Ibid., chap. 43, pp. 624-625.
49 Hobbes, Leviathan, chap. 43, pp. 609-610.
50 Ibid., chap. 44, pp. 627-630.
51 See Whitaker, “Hobbes’s View,” pp. 54-55; Holmes, “Political Psychology,” pp. 128-130. As they point out, political turmoil for Hobbes was in part a result of the misuse of language and the consequent disjunction between things and their proper signification.
religious sedition leading to the civil war, including the historical wrangles between sovereign and Pope, the Presbyterians’ collusion with Parliament against the monarchy, and even the moral philosophy of the Anglican clergy. The more radical Puritan sects in England became a significant political force only in the struggle between Cromwell and the Presbyterian-controlled Parliament. Hobbes described their “strange...and pernicious doctrines” as “out-doing the Reformation (as they pretended) both of Luther and Calvin; receding from the former divinity (or church philosophy, for religion is another thing) as much as Luther and Calvin had receded from the Pope.” But Hobbes showed no sympathy for the out-done reformers, and found a delicious irony in the fact that the Presbyterians were undermined by “this brood of their own hatching.” In other words, in preaching political disobedience on religious grounds—that the people (led by ministers), not the sovereign, are judges of God’s commands--the Presbyterians opened the floodgates for more radical sects to claim a divine right from God. In this respect, the Independents simply continued the seditious work of the Presbyterians.

Hobbes considered Milton “Christian liberty” in this light. When the Parliament was reduced by Cromwell, the Rump “voted liberty of conscience to the sectaries; that is, they plucked out the sting of Presbytery, which consisted in a severe imposing of odd opinions of the people, impertinent to religion, but conducing to the advancement of the power of the Presbyterian ministers.” Hobbes may have preferred such liberty over Presbyterian impositions, but impugned the motives of the Rump: “What account can be given of actions that proceed not from reason, but from spite and such-like passions?” The stance of the Independents was not unclouded by malice. In Hobbes’s view, not only did this act display the self-destructive consequences of the Presbyterians’ freewheeling interpretation of scripture, but it also showed the true import of the Independents’ version of Christian liberty. Milton regarded Presbyterians as half-hearted reformers of the church, because they would not advocate absolute freedom of conscience. Hobbes, however, argued that the Independents and their allies merely sought to bring to fruition the license which the Presbyterians themselves assumed in opposing the king. We saw that Hobbes regarded inward conscience as exempt from human jurisdiction, but not publicly displayed worship—which is included in Miltonian freedom of conscience. For Hobbes, then, the Rump’s act of voting of liberty of conscience merely served to reinforce sectarian power in government.

Nevertheless, Hobbes did make some remarks in favour of Christian liberty, but within the framework of the law. Despite themselves, the religious enemies of peace might have inadvertently brought about the dismantling of the kingdom of darkness. Hobbes wrote of the web spun around the religion of the Apostles, “whom the people converted, obeyed, out of Reverence: not by Obligation: Their Consciences were free, and their Words and Actions subject to none but the Civill Power.” With the rise of

54 Hobbes, Behemoth, p. 169.
ecclesiastical organizations, three knots were tied upon this Christian liberty: the early Christian presbyters (assemblies) obliging belief in their doctrines; the setting-up of bishops in every city and province; and the “whole Synthesis and Construction of the Pontificall Power” in which the universal spiritual authority was invested in the Bishop of Rome. Now the knots have been untied, beginning with the last--the dissolution of papal power by Queen Elizabeth--then the putting down of the episcopacy by the Presbyterians, and finally the Presbyterians’ subsequent loss of power. The result is a return of sorts to the “Independency of the Primitive Christians to follow...every man as he liketh best: Which, if it be without contention, and without measuring the Doctrine of Christ, by our affection to the Person of his Minister...is perhaps the best.”

Was Hobbes an Independent like Milton? It may be significant that Hobbes returned to England shortly after the time liberty of conscience was voted in by the Rump (1650). Still, this apparent endorsement of Christian liberty is qualified: after all, did Hobbes think that the freedom to follow whomever one pleases could be granted “without contention”? His analysis of religious conflict indicates that peaceful independency (though perhaps possible and even desirable) was unlikely, especially in his time. Hobbes may have strongly believed in shielding individual faith from ecclesiastical interference; but his commitment to Christian liberty was limited by his concern for peace. In light of everything else he wrote in Leviathan and Behemoth, the only Christian liberty that would be realistically compatible with his political teaching is freedom of purely inward belief. But that he made these remarks at all is indicative of a recognition that were peaceful independency achievable, it could be (like the establishment of a public religion, which he usually advocated) an effective tool against the power of the priesthood--hence his emphasis on not “measuring the Doctrine of Christ, by our affection to the Person of his Minister.” One could imagine a peaceable state whose policy is that religion is a purely private affair. Hobbes at least contemplated the possibility that there is more than one strategy for rendering religion politically safe, though he did not waver from the position that some strategies are more realistic than others.

Hobbes’s analysis of the civil wars and the benefits of peaceful independency suggest a greater complexity than has been hitherto acknowledged by scholars. It challenges the characterization of Hobbes as intolerant Erastian in contrast to secular Enlightenment theorists. It also puts into question other interpretations placing Hobbesian church establishment with sceptical toleration on the one side and the separation of church and state with Protestant zeal on the other. Hobbes pondered both options--though not equally. Moreover, the basis upon which he considered the latter as well as the former exhibits the anti-Miltonian character of his thought even when showing qualified approval of Independency. This leads us to reconsider the too easy characterization of Hobbes as an absolutist who simply sought to stifle freedom in the interests of peace. Milton, the champion of Christian liberty, was antagonistic towards the rule of law in religious matters. Hobbes, in opposing the seditious potential of such a stance, espoused a limited, regulated form of religious freedom. That he did so for principally strategic reasons should not prevent us from regarding his formulation as a pragmatic balance between liberty and authority.

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Nietzsche And The Religion Of The Future

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The waters of religion are ebbing away and leaving behind swamps or stagnant pools.¹

This article examines the place of religion in Nietzsche’s writings and how it fits with the task of a “new philosopher.” Although Nietzsche opposes all otherworldly, monotheistic religions, it is incorrect to say that Nietzsche proposes atheism as a solution. Religion, he contends, is an essential part of any healthy culture. Nietzsche’s new philosophy would fashion gods consistent with the natural order of rank and the highest aims of man.

Nietzsche conceives of modernity not as progress but an unhealthy and dangerous break with tradition that he seeks to set right. Consequently, he turns to the greatness of antiquity. Nietzsche, for example, follows the ancients in affirming the superiority of philosophy to politics. Nietzsche’s new philosophy is characterized by its ability to use—and indeed govern—religion, science, and politics for the sake of high culture. The death of god is a terrible event, but it makes possible the discovery of the will as a fact of nature and the creation of new gods. Rather than merely opposing modernity or appealing to antiquity, Nietzsche looks past modernity to create something new and greater.

I. Religion And Culture

Seeing Nietzsche as anything other than anti-religious is quite a feat. Statements in favor of religion are usually overshadowed by statements to the contrary, so it is all too easy to emphasize his anti-religious bent. His claim that “there are no moral phenomena

at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena” implies an absolute freedom for moral interpretation.\(^2\) And earlier in that work, Nietzsche refutes both god and the devil.\(^3\)

Although he is regarded as an atheist who revels in the death of god, nowhere does Nietzsche advocate an exclusively atheist agenda. For instance, he does not herald atheism as the antidote for the ascetic. As John Andrew Bernstein contends, “Nietzsche never attempted a logical refutation of the possibility of God’s existence.”\(^4\) Furthermore, Nietzsche is only reluctantly celebratory in proclaiming the death of god: he calls it “the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of all spectacles.”\(^5\) His Zarathustra, we should recall, was so bothered by the death of god that he retreated to the mountaintop where he remained in solitude for ten years.\(^6\) For all of his disdain for Christianity, the opposite is true of his stance on religion: Nietzsche wants a new faith as much as he wants a new philosophy, a view that is only now being taken seriously.\(^7\)

These two views of Nietzsche are reconciled by examining, for lack of a better term, level of analysis. Nietzsche applies the doctrine of the will to power to individuals; a people, however, needs a faith. “A people that still believes in itself retains its own god,” he writes. “In him it reveres the conditions which let it prevail, its virtues: it projects its pleasure in itself, its feeling of power, into a being to whom one may offer thanks….Under such conditions, religion is a form of thankfulness.”\(^8\) The health and growth of a people is tied to its beliefs: the strong have faith; the weak have nothing.

Of course Nietzsche is not an advocate for all religions. Certain ones, Christianity for example, remain undesirable. “Formerly [god] represented a people, the strength of a people, everything aggressive and power-thirsty in the soul of a people,” he writes. “Now he is merely the good god.”\(^9\) In a sense, Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity is made in the name of god and religion. Christianity is not only at odds with nature, but also with the very concept of what a religion should be. Good religions and just gods are

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\(^3\) Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, §37.

\(^4\) Bernstein continues: “Nietzsche never attempted a logical refutation of the possibility of God’s existence. He does not appear to have thought it attainable. What he substituted was a genetic reduction of faith, which was clearly intended to have the effect of a refutation by suspicion….Nietzsche’s implication is that the belief in God is traceable to human needs.” John Andrew Bernstein, *Nietzsche’s Moral Philosophy* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1987), 165-66.


those that reflect the needs of a people. Nietzsche refers to a desirable ruler-type as a “Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul.”

The problems with Christianity become more evident when it is compared to Islam. “Islam is a thousand times right in despising Christianity,” Nietzsche claims. “Islam presupposes men.” Christianity, by contrast:


has cheated us out of the harvest of ancient culture; later it cheated us again, out of the harvest of the culture of Islam. The wonderful world of the Moorish culture of Spain, really more closely related to us, more congenial to our senses and tastes than Rome and Greece, was trampled down….Because it owed its origin to noble, to male instincts, because it said Yes to life even with rare and refined luxuries of Moorish life.

Nietzsche blames Christianity for the inability of Islam to find a wider audience. Nevertheless, Islam, like Christianity, is an otherworldly-monotheism, the very sort of religion that his new religion points away from.

It is through Nietzsche’s examination of religion that he is able to assess the vitality of a people. “The difference among men becomes manifest not only in the difference between their tablets of goods,” he writes. “It becomes manifest even more in what they take for really having and possessing something good.” His estimation of a people is connected directly to its estimation of itself. Strong cultures relish their strengths, while weak cultures ignore even their most debilitating weaknesses, to the point of pitying criminals and using the sick as doctors. Nietzsche understands the importance of religion enough to judge among them.

Nietzsche’s view of religion is very much tied to an emphasis on tradition as the basis for culture. It is worth quoting at length.

Morality is nothing other (therefore no more!) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the traditional way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality; and the less life is determined by tradition, the smaller the circle of morality. The free human being is immoral because in all things he is determined to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition….What is tradition? A higher authority which one obeys, not


14 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, §2.10.

15 Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, §3.15.
because it commands what is useful to us, but because it commands…Originally all education and care of health, marriage, cure of sickness, agriculture, war, speech and silence, traffic with one another and with the gods belonged within the domain of morality: they demanded one observe prescriptions without thinking of oneself as an individual. Originally, therefore, everything was custom, and whoever wanted to elevate himself above it had to become lawgiver and medicine man and a kind of demi-god: that is to say, he had to make customs—a dreadful, mortally dangerous thing! Who is the most moral man? First, he who obeys the law most frequently….Then, he who obeys it even in the most difficult cases. The most moral man is he who sacrifices the most to custom…the individual is to sacrifice himself—that is the commandment of morality of custom.¹⁶

Nietzsche sees the needs of culture to be served by tradition and custom: this is the role for morality. Modern man seeks other justification for his morality. Nietzsche writes:

Those moralists, on the other hand, who, following in the footsteps of Socrates, offer the individual a morality of self-control and temperance as a means to his own advantage, as his personal key to happiness, are the exceptions—and if it seems otherwise to us that is because we have been brought up in their after-effect: they all take a new path under the highest disapprobation of all advocates of morality of custom—they cut themselves off from the community, as immoral men, and are in the profoundest sense evil.¹⁷

From Socrates onward, morality becomes a means to self-control and personal fulfillment. Modern morality serves only the individual—and not very well.

Contrary to what most interpreters would have us believe, Nietzsche does not open up the moral world to any and all interpretations; Nietzsche even warns us against doing so. What he wishes to stress is the role of philosophy in interpreting morality. Philosophers do not have the right to interpret morality as a personal preference; rather, they are bound to do so within the confines of nature and the health of a people. Hence Nietzsche calls for a radical reevaluation of the nature and purpose of morality. “High spirituality itself exists only as the ultimate product of moral qualities,” he posits. “It is a synthesis of all those states which are attributed to ‘merely moral’ men, after they have been acquired singly through long discipline and exercise, perhaps through whole chains of generations…high spirituality is the spiritualization of justice and of that gracious severity which knows that it is its mission to maintain the order of rank in the world, among things themselves—and not only among men.”¹⁸ The order of rank informs

religion, just as it informs the will. Nietzsche’s morality is a sort of “high spirituality” accessible only to those capable of knowing the standard for equality and justice as it is found “not only among men,” but primarily as it exists in nature.

Nietzsche questions all morality in light of this consideration: “Moralities must be forced to bow first of all before the order of rank; their presumption must be brought home to their conscience—until they finally reach agreement it is immoral to say: ‘what is right for one is fair for the other.’”19 Later he notes, “there is an order of rank between man and man, hence also between morality and morality.”20 Although Nietzsche depicts the victory of “good and evil” over “good and bad,” the battle has not everywhere been decided: “One might even say that it has risen ever higher and thus become more and more profound and spiritual: so that today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a ‘higher nature,’ a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values.”21

Previous moral philosophers, however, have done nothing to prevent freedom for moral interpretation. “That philosophers’ invention…the invention of ‘free will,’ of the absolute spontaneity of man in good and in evil, was devised above all to furnish a right to the idea that the interest of the gods in man, in human virtue, could never be exhausted.”22 Morality has been interpreted to advance what is low (and formerly bad) in man as good, possible, and, worst of all, necessary.

Nietzsche’s protests of other “interpretations” of morality now become clearer. He equates the Romans with strength and nobility and the Jews with its opposite, “ressentiment par excellence.”23 Nietzsche holds a high, or perhaps even higher, regard for the morality of the Greeks and the “abundance of gratitude that it exudes.”24 Continuing, he notes: “it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in this way. Later, when the rabble gained the upper hand in Greece, fear became rampant in religion, too—and the ground was prepared for Christianity.”25 Morality, Nietzsche contends, should be gauged according to how it affects the strength of a people.26 He seeks to construct or recognize a religion consistent with nature and the needs of a great people. Christian morality will be replaced by a life-affirming morality of rank, far superior with regard to nature and its service to culture.

The difference is illustrated in Nietzsche’s comparison of the New Testament with the Old. While he goes to great lengths to oppose Christianity, Nietzsche speaks with reverence regarding the Old Testament:

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19 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §221.
20 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §228.
21 Nietzsche, Genealogy, §1.16.
22 Nietzsche, Genealogy, §2.7.
23 Nietzsche, Genealogy, §1.16.
24 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §49.
25 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §49.
26 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §188; Will to Power, §151.
In the Jewish ‘Old Testament,’ the book of divine justice, there are human beings, things, and speeches in so grand a style that Greek and Indian literature have nothing to compare with it. With terror and reverence one stands before these tremendous remnants of what man once was…whatever is himself merely a meager, tame domestic animal and knows only the needs of domestic animals…has not cause for amazement or sorrow among these ruins—the taste for the Old Testament is a touchstone for ‘great’ and ‘small’….To have glued this New Testament…to the Old Testament to make one book, as the ‘Bible,’ as ‘the book par excellence’—that is perhaps the greatest audacity and ‘sin against the spirit’ that literary Europe has on its conscience.27

The difference between the two, Nietzsche argues, is that in the Old Testament he finds “great human beings, a heroic landscape, and something of the very rarest quality in the world, the incomparable naïveté of the strong heart; what is more, I find a people.”28 The New Testament did a great disservice to the great tradition of religion and faith that preceded it.

Some religions can also be used for educative purposes, including preparation for leadership. It is possible, Nietzsche notes, for some, “those ascending classes,” to “walk the paths to higher spirituality.”29 Here asceticism and Puritanism are useful. Asceticism is useful for philosophers but not for philosophizing. When applied to some, and not all, their existence becomes, not only tolerable, but “indispensable” to the advance of a people. For those incapable of rule—that is the “vast majority” of “ordinary human beings”—

religion gives an inestimable contentment with their situation and type, manifold peace of the heart, an ennobling of obedience, one further happiness and sorrow with their peers and something transfiguring and beautifying, something of a justification for the whole everyday character, the whole lowliness, the whole half-brutish poverty of their souls…it is refreshing, refining, makes, as it were, the most of suffering, and in the end even sanctifies and justifies.30

Nietzsche replaces the tyranny of modern morality with a three-fold typology. Religion can be: an instrument of rule, a means of instructing the “ascending classes” for future rule, or a means of distracting or placating those who are stationary and unfit for rule. This last quality is perhaps the only benefit of either Christianity or Buddhism, the

27 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §52.
28 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §3.23.
29 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §61.
30 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §61.
latter of which excels at it. As he contends: “Philosophy is not suited for the masses. What they need is holiness.”

This is the reason Nietzsche does not wish completely to rid philosophy of the soul. It is not necessary, he claims, “to renounce one of the most ancient and venerable hypotheses….But the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as ‘moral soul,’ and ‘soul as subjective multiplicity,’ and ‘soul as social structure of the drives and affects,’ want henceforth to have citizens’ rights in science.” It is modern philosophy and science that is truly anti-Christian and anti-soul. Nietzsche wishes not to abjure the concept of the soul, but to challenge it with other claims, or to amend it with a concern for the will to power and the order of rank. It is not possible for a rigid concept of the soul to serve knowledge. Instead, Nietzsche opens up the way for a series of alternative and competing views of the soul, each radically different from the Christian vision of it.

By interpreting morality in light of nature and the strength of a people, philosophers become legislators, or creators of value. “The philosopher as we understand him, we free spirits—as the man of the most comprehensive responsibility who has the conscience for the over-all development of man—this philosopher will make use of religions for his project of cultivation and education, just as he will make use of whatever political and economic states are at hand.” Religion, Nietzsche notes, is an indispensable tool for “the art of governance,” whether this means direct rule and obedience or the use of surrogates, as in the case of the Brahmins. In the latter instance, the philosophers then left themselves leisure for study and contemplation, free of the demands of the political sphere. Hence the new philosophers can be philosophers and kings. This view of morality and the gods means that, while god is dead, other gods are very much waiting in the wings. “And how many new gods are still possible!” Nietzsche exclaims. “As for myself, in whom the religious, that is to say god-forming, instinct occasionally becomes active at impossible times—how differently, how variously the divine has revealed itself to me each time!”

Nietzsche believes that perspectivism will renew our sense of the divine. “At times we find certain solutions of problems that inspire strong faith in us; some call them henceforth their ‘convictions,’” he writes. “Later—we see them only as steps to self-knowledge, sign-posts to the problem we are—rather, to the great stupidity we are, to our spiritual fatum, to what is unteachable very deep down.” Human nature too easily views success as a result of the will. The misunderstanding of the will to power too often

33 Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, §54.
34 Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, §61.
35 Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, §61.
36 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §1039; Cf. §1038.
37 Nietzsche, *Good and Evil*, §231.
becomes spiritual in nature—an arbitrary morality. If morality is an error, the only remedy is a philosophy open to other perspectives, including the creation of new gods.

Nietzsche warns, however, that the “other side” of religion is its “uncanny dangerousness.” Philosophers must be wary “when religions do not want to be a means of education and cultivation in the philosopher’s hand but insist on having their own sovereign way, when they themselves want to be ultimate ends and not means among other means.” Christianity and Buddhism fail in this regard as they “seek to preserve,” and in the process they have become “religions for sufferers.” It is for this reason that Nietzsche places religion—and with it politics—so delicately in the hands of his new philosophers.

Religion, it seems, is necessary for any healthy and thriving political community. Nietzsche is adamant, however, that religion be of a particular sort and, most importantly, that it be placed under the control of those most capable of understanding its proper usage.

II. The Greek Genius

Just as Nietzsche sought to rewrite, or at least to amend, the story of modernity, he also wished to revisit antiquity to assess the reality, and the totality, of Greek culture. For Nietzsche, Socrates and Plato were neither the whole nor the best of what the Greeks have to offer about life and philosophy. “I recognized Socrates and Plato to be symptoms of degeneration,” Nietzsche writes, “tools of the Greek dissolution, pseudo-Greek, anti-Greek.” More specifically, Nietzsche argues against the “Socratic equation of reason, virtue, and happiness: that most bizarre of all equations, which, moreover, is opposed to all the instincts of the earlier Greeks.” In other words, Socrates and Plato were hardly representative of the true Hellenic genius.

Socrates’ break with the Greeks is most evident in his preferred method. “With Socrates,” Nietzsche writes, “Greek taste changes in favor of dialectics….Above all, a noble taste is thus vanquished; with dialectics the plebs come to the top. Before Socrates dialectic manners were repudiated in good society.” For Nietzsche, dialectics is a barren form of No-saying. “One chooses dialectics only when one has no other means,” he writes. “It can only be self-defense for those who no longer have other weapons.”

38 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §62.
39 Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §62.
42 Nietzsche, “Twilight,” Socrates §5.
43 Nietzsche’s repeated arguments against dialectics have not stopped some from including him among its practitioners. “We take the position that his [Nietzsche’s] method is, in fact, very close to that of Marx…Nietzsche employs the technique of dialectical critiques of values and institutions and, by retracing out their history through genealogy, shows the original purpose and function for which these values were established and how, over time, they are decomposed, destroyed and fragmented.” Georg Stauth and Bryan S.
Nietzsche is not hostile to all the ancients, however; he is an admirer of Thucydides, among others. 45 Thucydides, Nietzsche writes:

takes the most comprehensive and impartial delight in all that is typical in men and events and believes that to each type there pertains a quantum of good sense: this he seeks to discover. He displays greater practical justice than Plato; he does not revile or belittle those he does not like or who have harmed him in life....Thus in him, the portrayer of man, that culture of the most impartial knowledge of the world finds its last glorious flower. 46

Thucydides presents his history of man for the sake of man. In Thucydides, the natural beauty of man is a gift to posterity.

Nietzsche places other Greeks alongside Thucydides. Greece “had in Sophocles its poet, in Pericles its statesman, in Hippocrates its physician, in Democritus its natural philosopher,” he notes. 47 Not surprisingly, Nietzsche sides with the Sophists against Socrates and Plato. “The Sophists are no more than realists,” he contends. “They formulate the values and practices common to everyone on the level of values—they possess the courage of all strong spirits to know their own immorality.” 48 The Sophists were the real Greeks, and the real Greek teachers; it was Socrates and Plato that broke with the tradition of their people. 49

Nietzsche separates Thucydides and the other Greeks from Socrates and Plato based on their choice of life over wisdom. This is not to say that the Greeks did not value knowledge, however, for “the Greeks themselves, [were] possessed of an inherently insatiable thirst for knowledge”; but they “controlled it by their ideal need for and

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47 Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §168.
49 In one of his earliest works, Nietzsche includes Socrates among the “Greek masters”: “All other cultures are put to shame by the marvelously idealized philosophical company represented by the ancient Greek masters Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Democritus and Socrates. These men are monolithic. Their thinking and their character stand in a relationship characterized by strictest necessity. They are devoid of conventionality, for in their day there was not philosophic or academic professionalism. All of them, in magnificent solitude, were the only ones in their time whose lives were devoted to insight alone. They all possessed that virtuous energy of the ancients, herein excelling all men since, which led them to find their own individual form and to develop it through all its metamorphoses to its subtlest and greatest possibilities. For there was no convention to meet them half-way. Thus all of them together form what Schopenhauer in contrast to the republic of scholars has called the republic of creative minds: each giant calling to his brother through the desolate intervals of time. And undisturbed by the wanton noises of the dwarfs that creep past beneath them, their high spirit-converse continues.” *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, §1.
consideration of all the values of life. Whatever they learned, they wanted to live through, immediately.\footnote{Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §1.} The Greeks, before Socrates at least, valued knowledge insofar as it served life. For the Greeks, life was an open question: it was not possible, they thought, to know for certain the value of life. Conversely, Socrates sought to answer once and for all that very question. As Nietzsche explains it: “judgments, judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms; in themselves such judgments are stupidities…\textit{the value of life cannot be estimated}….For a philosopher to see a problem in the value of life is thus an objection to him, a question mark concerning his wisdom, an un-wisdom.”\footnote{Nietzsche, “Twilight,” Socrates §2.} The question of life is to remain unanswered; any solution may provide some guidance, but it may come at the expense of other, potentially superior, perspectives.

There are countless other admirable qualities in the Greeks. The Greeks were, for example, non-equalitarian in nature. “Other peoples have saints; the Greeks have sages,” Nietzsche writes.\footnote{Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §1.} The Greeks knew how to honor great men, and especially great thinkers: “It has been rightly said that a people is characterized not as much by its great men as by the way in which it recognizes and honors its great men. In other times and places, the philosopher is a chance wanderer, lonely in a totally hostile environment which he either creeps past or attacks with clenched fist. Among the Greeks alone, he is not an accident.”\footnote{Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §1.} Nietzsche’s fear is not that men like Pericles will not be honored; Nietzsche fears that they will no longer exist. For Nietzsche, Pericles was “the mightiest and worthiest man on earth….\[He\] represented the visible human realization of the constructive, moving, distinguishing, ordering, reviewing, planning, artistically creative, self-determining power of the spirit.”\footnote{Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §19.} The Greeks had a strong culture because they had strong and worthy individuals carrying it on their shoulders.

The Greeks also had a different view of man and his relationship with nature. In an unpublished aphorism, Nietzsche writes:

When one speaks of \textit{humanity}, the idea is fundamental that this is something which separates and distinguishes man from nature. In reality, however, there is no such separation: ‘natural’ qualities and those called truly ‘human’ are inseparably grown together. Man, in his highest and noblest capacities, is wholly nature and embodies its uncanny dual character. Those of his abilities which are terrifying and considered
inhuman may even be the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity can grow in impulse, deed, and work.\(^{55}\)

Nietzsche goes on to mention how the Greeks represented this view.\(^{56}\) For him, the Greek view of nature is the standard by which modern culture ought to be judged.

Nor did the Greeks despise the body in the manner of modern morality. “The Greeks remain the first cultural event in history,” Nietzsche writes. “They knew, they did, what was needed; and Christianity, which despised the body, has been the greatest misfortune of humanity so far.”\(^{57}\) Far from despising the body, the Greeks pronounced even the most painful and routine elements of the body as holy, and revered it as such. The body was the source of creation; and through it “there may be the eternal joy of creating, that the will to life may eternally affirm itself.”\(^{58}\) The Greeks saw beauty in the thing most hated by Christianity: human nature. In the Greek, the body takes its rightful place among the things most revered.

### III. Gods Who Philosophize

The Greeks also had a different view of the role of religion. “The Greeks,” Nietzsche argues, “did not see the Homeric gods as set above them as masters, or themselves set beneath the gods as servants, as the Jews did. They saw as it were only the reflection of the most successful exemplars of their own caste, that is to say an ideal, not an antithesis of their own nature.”\(^{59}\)

Nietzsche also finds elements of his positive teaching in the Greeks, including the will to power: “For it is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, that the basic fact of the Hellenic instinct finds its expression—its ‘will to life.’”\(^{60}\) The will to power has its origin in Greek culture, where he claims they too valued life over truth.

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\(^{56}\) “In earlier times…the conviction that mankind was the goal of nature was so strong that it was assumed without question that nothing could be disclosed by knowledge that was not salutary and useful to man, indeed that things other than this could not, ought not to exist.—Perhaps all this leads to the proposition that truth, as a whole and interconnectedly, exists only for souls which are at once powerful and harmless, and full of joyfulness and peace (as was the soul of Aristotle), just as it will no doubt be only such souls as these that will be capable of seeking it for, no matter how proud they may be of their intellect and its freedom, the others are seeking cures for themselves—they are not seeking truth. This is why these others take so little real pleasure in science, and make of the coldness, dryness and inhumanity of science a reproach to it: it is the sick passing judgment on the games of the healthy.—The Greek gods, too, were unable to offer consolation; when Greek mankind at last one and all grew sick, this was a reason for the abolition of such gods.” Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, §424.

\(^{57}\) Nietzsche, “Twilight,” *Skirmishes* §48.


\(^{59}\) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, §114.

\(^{60}\) Nietzsche, “Twilight,” *Ancients* §4.
In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche contrasts the Dionysian will to power with the influence of the sun god, Apollo. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins describe the Apollinian as “the principle of order, static beauty, and clear boundaries. The Dionysian principle, in contrast, is the principle of frenzy, excess, and the collapse of boundaries.” These “art impulses of nature” are responsible for the greatness of Greek culture. The relationship is best explained not as a tension, but as a harmony. Nietzsche writes: “These two art drives must unfold their powers in a strict proportion, according to the law of eternal justice. Where the Dionysian powers rise up as impetuously as we experience them now, Apollo, too, must already have descended among us, wrapped in a cloud; and the next generation will probably behold his most ample beautiful effects.” The result is that “the Dionysian and the Apollinian, in new births ever following and mutually augmenting one another, controlled the Hellenic genius.” Nietzsche argues that “naive” art, such as that of Homer, is the product of the Apollinian impulse; but of course “Apollo could not live without Dionysus!” Nietzsche rejects such monotheism, or “Christian monotonos-theism,” in favor of the never-ending tension between his twin gods.

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61 On nature in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Werner Dannhauser writes: “Depending on the context, ‘nature’ in *The Birth of Tragedy* can refer either to the empirical world of appearances, or to the primordial reality which is their ground. If one thinks of nature in the former sense, then the highest art, tragedy, certainly goes beyond an imitation of it.” “Nevertheless,” he concludes later in the work, “a world view does emerge from the book. The world is a chaos and not a cosmos. A primordial disorder underlies all appearance of order. The fundamental Dionysian reality is a system of discordant energy. Man is confronted by a chaotic world; moreover, he partakes of the chaos, being a dissonance created by dissonance. The abyss surrounds him and is within him. Man’s fundamental experience is that of suffering; to live means to suffer. Life is a process of creation and destruction, a meaningless game in which man may imagine himself a player but in which he is a pawn. Life has no purpose of goal beyond itself; it is a ‘dark, driving, insatiably self-desiring power.’ The life force in man is extinct.” Nietzsche’s View of Socrates (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 117 and 119.


63 Nietzsche writes: “the word ‘Dionysian’ means: an urge to unity, a teaching out beyond personality, the everyday, society, reality, across the abyss of transitoriness: a passionate-painfuloverflowing into the darker, fuller, more floating states; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction.” In the same section, he writes: “the word ‘Apollinian’ means: the urge to perfect self-sufficiency, to the typical ‘individual,’ to all that simplifies, distinguishes, makes strong, clear, unambiguous, typical: freedom under the law.” Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §1050.

64 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, §2.


67 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, §3.

68 Michael Allen Gillespie contends that Nietzsche’s “notion of the Dionysian is derived from the notion of the Christian God in ways Nietzsche does not altogether understand, in large part because he does not recognize his conceptual debt to the earlier Romantic idea of the Dionysian and the idealist conceptions of the will. The Dionysian will to power is thus in fact a further development of the idea of the absolute will that first appeared in the nominalist notion of God and became a world-historical force with Fichte’s notion of the absolute I. This means that God is not as dead for Nietzsche as he believes; only the rational element in God is dead, the element that was grafted onto the Christian God to temper his omnipotence. Nietzsche’s Dionysus, to speak
the end of _Beyond Good and Evil_, he alludes to Dionysus and his beloved Ariadne as the gods of the religion of the future.\(^6^9\)

The problem of modernity can be defined in terms of the victory of the Apollinian, in the form of Platonic metaphysics, over the Dionysian. “This is the new opposition,” Nietzsche writes: “the Dionysian and the Socratic—and the art of Greek tragedy was wrecked on this.”\(^7^0\) Nietzsche places Socrates at odds with the spirit of the Greek culture, represented, in his view, by the healthy struggle between Dionysus and Apollo. “Consider the consequences of the Socratic maxims: ‘Virtue is knowledge; man sins only from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy.’ In these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy.”\(^7^1\) Socrates killed “the infinity of art” and with it the infinity of Greek culture.\(^7^2\) If modernity is Apollinian, we cannot live without Dionysus, the role Nietzsche seeks to play.

It must be noted that the tension between Dionysus and Apollo is less pronounced in Nietzsche’s later writings. Some have noted that the later Dionysus possesses the power for creation and destruction.\(^7^3\) This change, however, is easily accounted for without altering the basic nature of the dyad. The victory of the Apollinian in Socrates meant for Nietzsche that he had to supply the Dionysian countermeasure in the extreme. In one of the most important parts of _Beyond Good and Evil_, Nietzsche refers to Dionysus as “that great ambiguous one and tempter god,” the god who was offered Nietzsche’s first book as a sacrifice.\(^7^4\) Nietzsche remarks that he has learned much since then, and refers to himself as “the last disciple and initiate of the god Dionysus,” someone who “might begin at long last to offer you, my friends, a few tastes of this philosophy, insofar as this is permitted to me.”\(^7^5\) This explains why Apollo becomes secondary in his later writings: he came to understand more clearly that culture could only be set right through a tragic philosophy and a Dionysian philosopher.\(^7^6\) Music in

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\(^{69}\) For the best summary of Nietzsche on Dionysus and Ariadne, see Laurence Lampert, _Nietzsche's Task: an Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil_ (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), especially 262-294.

\(^{70}\) Nietzsche, _Birth of Tragedy_, §12.

\(^{71}\) Nietzsche, _Birth of Tragedy_, §14.

\(^{72}\) Nietzsche, _Birth of Tragedy_, §15.

\(^{73}\) See Kaufmann (Nietzsche's _Beyond Good and Evil_, n295) on the difference between the early Dionysus and the later one.

\(^{74}\) Nietzsche, _Good and Evil_, §295.

\(^{75}\) Nietzsche, _Good and Evil_, §295.

\(^{76}\) This is one instance of the development of Nietzsche’s philosophy. In an early work, he writes: “if philosophy ever manifested itself as helpful, redeeming, or prophylactic, it was in a healthy culture. The sick, it
general, and Wagner in particular, was no longer the answer. In Dionysian times, we might find Nietzsche as the herald of the Apollinian. In his formulation, Nietzsche is not so much a tempter-philosopher as he is our savior.\textsuperscript{77}

In speaking of Dionysus as a philosopher, Nietzsche notes, “certainly the god in question went further, very much further…and was always many steps ahead of me.”\textsuperscript{78} Dionysus understood, long before Nietzsche, that philosophy demands action. Dionysus was more capable of destruction and thus more capable of creation. Hence \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, a book calling others to action, was itself insufficient. His philosophy eventually became more political as he sought out controversies of his age.\textsuperscript{79} Nietzsche the author became Nietzsche the destroyer.

That Dionysus is related to destruction does not diminish his virtue. “The desire for destruction, change, becoming, \textit{can} be the expression of an overfull power pregnant with the future…but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, dismembered, underprivileged, which destroys, \textit{has} to destroy, because what exists, indeed existence itself, all being itself, enrages and provokes it.”\textsuperscript{80} Just as creation is not always good, destruction is not always bad. The difference lies in the goals. Destruction can be for the sake of strength and becoming, an “expression of overflowing energy,” as much as it can be the result of a hatred of life and growth. The Greek culture rested on a balance between Dionysus and Apollo that resulted in creation and destruction of the right things (truth) and for the right reason (life).

Nietzsche finds evidence to support his views elsewhere, most notably in Rome. In many respects, Nietzsche argues, the Romans are better teachers in that they stand made ever sicker. Wherever a culture was disintegrating, wherever the tension between it and its individual components was slack, philosophy could never re-integrate the individuals back into the group…Philosophy is dangerous wherever it does not exist in its fullest right, and it is only the health of a culture—and not every culture at that—which accords it such fullest right.” \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §1.

\textsuperscript{77} Rosen suggests that Nietzsche may have associated himself with Dionysus ironically, “as a concealed disciple of Apollo, the pagan god of lucidity.” \textit{Ancients}, 190.
\textsuperscript{78} Nietzsche, \textit{Good and Evil}, §295.
\textsuperscript{79} The thing most changed about Nietzsche was the tactics he used, or saw as necessary, to realize his goal; his philosophy did not change that much, certainly not as much as is commonly held. Porter, for example, writes, “Nietzsche’s writing and thinking are stranger, and more consistent, than they have been credited with being in the past.” Porter later concludes, “the most basic ingredients of [Nietzsche’s] thinking are all in place well before \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}.” James I. Porter, \textit{Nietzsche and Philology of the Future} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2 and 21.

\textsuperscript{80} Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, §846; Cf. \textit{The Gay Science}, §370.
closer to us than do the Greeks.\textsuperscript{81} The Romans, for example, are a good example of a culture that can thrive without philosophy, or at least without an extreme version of it. “The Romans during their best period lived without philosophy”; conversely, the Greeks were ruined by theirs.\textsuperscript{82} In pointing to the Romans as better teachers, Nietzsche suggests that the thing most needed in modernity is an example of a strong culture where philosophy in the platonic sense is not needed.

Nietzsche spent a lot of time looking to the past, but he does not mean to return there. To conservatives, he writes: “one must go forward—step by step further into decadence (that is my definition of modern ‘progress’). Once can check this development and thus dam up degeneration, gather it and make it more vehement and sudden: one can do no more.”\textsuperscript{83} On those who simply turn their backs on the whole of modernity, he writes: “The main thing about them is not that they wish to go ‘back,’ but that they wish to get—away. A little more strength, flight, courage, and artistic power, and they would want to rise—not return!”\textsuperscript{84} It is not possible, nor is it desirable, to return to antiquity. Nietzsche’s intent is not to resurrect the ancients, but to surpass all that has come heretofore. If is not possible to return, then we must rise.

Modernity, then, is not so much a development of the Greek as a move away from it.\textsuperscript{85} We are right in looking to the Greeks for guidance, but we looked to the wrong Greeks, and now we pale in comparison. It is no wonder that the Greek influence is often looked upon with such great disdain:

nearly every age and stage of culture has at some time or other sought with profound irritation to free itself from the Greeks, because in their presence everything one has achieved oneself, though apparently quite original and sincerely admired, suddenly seemed to lose life and color and shriveled into a poor copy, even a caricature….Unfortunately, one was not lucky enough to find the cup of hemlock with which one could simply dispose of such a character.\textsuperscript{86}

The first remedy for our shame is the acceptance of it.

\textsuperscript{81} Nietzsche, “Twilight,” Ancients §2.
\textsuperscript{82} Nietzsche writes: “The Greeks, with their truly healthy culture, have once and for all justified philosophy simply by having engaged in it, and engaged in it more fully than other people. They could not even stop engaging in philosophy at the proper time; even in their skinny old age they retained the hectic postures of ancient suitors….By the fact that they were unable to stop in time, they considerably diminished their merit for barbaric posterity, because this posterity, in the ignorance and unrestraint of its youth, was bound to get caught in those too artfully woven nets and ropes.” Nietzsche, \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, §1.
\textsuperscript{83} Nietzsche, “Twilight,” Skirmishes §43.
\textsuperscript{84} Nietzsche, \textit{Good and Evil}, §10.
\textsuperscript{85} “For Nietzsche modernity represents a decisive moment in the history of western culture, when its values are revealed to be hollow illusions and thereby lose all legitimacy. The consequent crisis is constantly threatened with a lapse into a decadent nihilism, a state of absolute passive unbelief, in which no values are legitimate, least of all those of the discredited western tradition.” Matthew Rampley, \textit{Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity} (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.
\textsuperscript{86} Nietzsche, \textit{Birth of Tragedy}, §15.
However much Nietzsche revered the Greeks, he too was overly modern in his thinking at times. “I spoiled the grandiose Greek problem, as it had arisen before my eyes, by introducing the most modern problems!” he writes. “I began to rave about ‘the German spirit’ as if that were in the process even then of discovering and finding itself again.”87 The Greek problem was the problem of nature, the problem of life, one that can never, and indeed should never, be solved.

But that does not mean that Nietzsche spoiled the Greeks forever; they still exist to be appreciated anew. As he cheers: “Greeks! Romans! The nobility of instinct, the taste, the methodological research, the genius of organization and administration, the faith in, the will to, man’s future, the great Yes to all things, become visible in the imperium Romanum, visible for all the senses, the grand style no longer mere art but become reality, truth, life.”88

At the end of Twilight of the Idols, one of his final works, Nietzsche answers the question posed by the title “What I Owe to the Ancients.” The answer, he reveals, is everything. The ancient culture is the only culture that does not possess the seeds of its own overcoming; it is “still rich and even overflowing” enough to serve as the foundation for a people.89 It can do so because it is based on a certain understanding of nature and rank; it is based on a teaching of the will and a respect for life as the standard by which it judges itself. In the Hellenic, Nietzsche finds not only a culture with a respect for will and nature, but a model for philosophy and religion.90 He closes this work by going further than he does in his other works: “Herewith I stand on the soil of which my intention, my ability grows—I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence.”91 With this statement he places himself on the same level as his Zarathustra.92

IV. The Return To Nature

Perhaps the most important element that Nietzsche drew from Greek culture was the notion of the eternal. He considered this essential in understanding the Greeks. “What was it that the Hellene guaranteed himself by means of these mysteries?”

90 Robert John Ackermann writes: “Nietzsche believed that the European culture involving the standard valuation of the Greeks, a European culture that had once been powerful and progressive, had played itself out in his time, and that continued adherence to the values embedded in European history was now reactive and even deadly. New values and a new culture were necessary, and Nietzsche tried to locate such values in a philosophical reworking of his vision of early Greece.” Nietzsche: A Frenzied Look (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 4-5.
91 Nietzsche, “Twilight,” Ancients §5.
92 “Zarathustra once defines, quite strictly, his task—it is mine, too—and there is no mistaking its meaning: he says Yes to the point of justifying, of redeeming all of the past.” Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, Walter Kaufmann, trans. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1979), Zarathustra §8.
Nietzsche asks. “Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; true life as the overall continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality.”

Of Dionysus and Apollo, it is Dionysus who more accurately represents the eternal. “Dionysian art, too, wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them,” Nietzsche professes. “We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence—yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the changing features.”

Dionysus is the god of becoming, and those who follow him are able to find joy in the passing that accompanies it. Nietzschean art, of which Nietzsche’s philosophy is a part, is Dionysian art. It celebrates eternal becoming.

The notion of the eternal has lost its place in modern philosophy, however, and being has come to replace becoming. “You ask me which of the philosophers’ traits are really idiosyncrasies?” Nietzsche asks.

For example, their lack of historical sense, their hatred of the very idea of becoming….They think that they show their respect for a subject when they de-historicize it….Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections—even refutations. Whatever has being does not become; whatever becomes does not have being. Now they all believe, desperately even, in what has being. But since they never grasp it, they seek for reasons why it is kept from them.

Philosophy since Plato lacks this Dionysian element. Philosophers are concerned only with questions of being, without examining life and truth in their strongest, most perfect forms.

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94 “What is amazing about the religiosity of the ancient Greeks is the enormous abundance of gratitude it exudes: it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in this way.” Nietzsche, Good and Evil, §49.
95 Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy, §17.
While the turn from becoming to being was done for the sake of wisdom, the result has been the opposite: nothing has been gained in terms of insight, yet much has been lost in the process. In *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche writes:

> an essential disadvantage which the cessation of the metaphysical outlook brings with it lies in the fact that the attention of the individual is too firmly fixed on his own brief span of life and receives no stronger impulse to work at the construction of enduring institutions intended to last for centuries….For the metaphysical outlook bestows the belief that it offers the last, ultimate foundation upon which the whole future of mankind is then invited to establish and construct itself.97

Attending to matters of being, in practice, only concerns matters of *our* being, for we can never know the whole of being. The better strategy involves turning our attention to the eternal, for only there can we hope to glimpse being in its purest form. As Nietzsche explains, “that everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being.”98

Contemplating being has had dire consequences for man, not only in terms of wisdom but also of perspective and will. Nietzsche writes: “as soon as we imagine someone who is responsible for our being thus and thus, etc. (God, nature), and therefore attribute to him the intention that we should exist and be happy or wretched, we corrupt ourselves the innocence of becoming. We then have someone who wants to achieve something through us and with us.”99 Concentrating on matters of being compromises the will to power. If God, Nature, or the Forms are responsible for the order of the universe and man is subservient to it, then nothing is left for the will. Being imprisons the will; becoming frees it. The will to power itself is the doctrine of becoming. It is far better that we should recognize that “all events, all motion, all becoming, as a determination of degrees and relations of force, as a struggle,”100 for only then can we realize the power and the primacy of the will and the true value of life.

This is not to say that the eternal can easily be endured. Consider what Nietzsche says of the eternal return: “If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you.”101 That the eternal return requires great strength is evident in its originator, Heraclitus. “The everlasting and exclusive coming-to-be, the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts and comes-to-be but never is, as Heraclitus teaches it, is a terrible, paralyzing thought,” he writes.102 If modernity is the story of man made weak, Nietzsche’s philosophy is a call to rank, for strength in all its

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97 Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, §22.
99 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §552.
100 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §522.
guises. However much the eternal return is “the greatest weight,” Nietzsche agrees with Heraclitus on the “innocence of becoming.” Heraclitus “discovered what wonderful order, regularity and certainty manifested themselves in all coming-to-be; from this he concluded that coming-to-be could not be anything evil or unjust.”

The amount of strength required for the eternal return means that some individuals, Nietzsche included, will view it as a release of the will; others, no doubt, will be overwhelmed. The result is that time itself is experienced in different ways by individuals according to their respective strength. “Some beings,” he writes, “might be able to experience time backward, or alternately forward and backward (which would involve another direction of life and another concept of cause and effect).…Rather the world has become ‘infinite’ for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that it may include infinite interpretations.” The notion of the eternal, and with it the doctrine of the eternal return, is the logical consequence of the will to power, Nietzsche’s perspectivism, and the order of rank. It is the height of his teaching, and the principle to which the others point.

It is only through the eternal that the will can reach its peak. No longer is it subject to ressentiment for the past, a bad conscience in the present, or an impotence for the future: “The world is perfect”—thus says the instinct of the most spiritual, the Yes-saying instinct.” Elsewhere, Nietzsche writes, “The highest state a philosopher can attain is to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence—my formula for that is amor fati.” His new philosophy loves life; it is full of gratitude and joy. Releasing the will through a love of the eternal means more than a supreme affirmation of the self; it is an affirmation of human nature in its imperfect splendor.

Although Nietzsche castigates Christianity and other moralities, in the end, his eternal return is a morality of sorts, one not inconsistent with what he says of moralities. He is not amoral or immoral; it is a certain type of morality that he rejects. He writes:

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103 Nietzsche, Gay Science, §340.
104 Nietzsche, Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, §9.
106 Nietzsche, Gay Science, §374.
108 Nietzsche, Will to Power, §1041. Also see Ecce Homo, “Clever,” §10; Gay Science, §276; Nietzsche, The Case of Wagner, §4; Nietzsche Contra Wagner, “Epilogue.”
109 “The distinctive invention of the founders of religion is, first: to posit a particular kind of life and everyday customs that have the effect of a [discipline of the will] and at the same time abolish boredom—and then: to bestow on this life style an interpretation that makes it appear to be illuminated by the highest value so that this life style becomes something for which one fights and under certain circumstances sacrifices one’s life. Actually, the second of these is more essential. The first, the way of life, was usually there before, but alongside the other ways of life and without any sense of its special value. The significance and originality of the founder of a religion usually consists of his seeing it, selecting it, and guessing for the first time to what use it can be put, how it can be interpreted.” Nietzsche, Gay Science, §353.
at bottom I abhor all those moralities which say: ‘Do not do this! Renounce! Overcome yourself!’ But I am well disposed toward those moralities which goad me to do something and do it again, from morning till evening, and then to dream of it at night, and to think of nothing except doing this well, as well as I alone can do it. When one lives like that, one thing after another that simply does not belong to such a life drops off….But I do not like negative virtues—virtues whose very essence it is to negate and deny oneself something.\textsuperscript{110}

As a morality, the eternal return includes an order of rank; it is anything but egalitarian in nature. Not only does it not negate, but also it is a profound affirmation of the self and of life. It is a religion without a church, without an afterlife (indeed, with no other life), and without a need for the divine.\textsuperscript{111} Nietzsche’s is a religion that loves gods for man’s sake.\textsuperscript{112}

\section*{V. Conclusion}

Absent from the discussion thus far has been the extent to which it is possible to combine philosophy, politics, and religion in the manner Nietzsche describes. How likely is it that philosophers of the future will fashion new gods and become legislators and creators of values? Nietzsche himself is ambivalent on the issue. Although he

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{110} Nietzsche, \textit{Gay Science}, §304. This is what Nietzsche means when he writes, “the law of the conservation of energy demands \textit{eternal recurrence}.” \textit{Will to Power}, §1063. On this point, White writes: “The doctrine of eternal return is neither bad physics nor bad metaphysics, but rather, it seems to me, accurate anthropology: it illuminates the nature of human existence. This doctrine is anthropological, but it is not moral; it tells me now I must exist, but not how I should exist….This indicates that if I accept Nietzsche’s gift, I must go beyond Nietzsche….It is perfectly fitting that Nietzsche’s gift should be not so much an answer as a challenge. The challenge to me is to create—\textit{not ex nihilo},— and not once and for all, but rather on the basis of what it already is, and as it continues to develop—a soul I will be proud of creating, a soul whose existence I can affirm. Nietzsche’s gift teaches me that I am creating my soul in any case, whether I know it or not; but it does not teach me, nor does it want to teach me, what kind of soul to create.” Alan White, \textit{Within Nietzsche’s Labyrinth} (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), 104.
\item\textsuperscript{111} This is not to say that there will be no gods. The most thoughtful statement on the nature of Nietzsche’s new religion comes from Laurence Lampert. He writes: “the intelligible character of the whole shows itself to our best penetration as a process of relentless, surging energy in which every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment—blind, meaningless, wasteful abundance that consumes whatever it generates and is lovable as it is; the highest ideal is a post-Platonic, post-modern loyalty to the earth that can learn how to assign limits to the human conquest of nature and human nature out of love of the natural order of which we are dependent parts; the only possible world-affirming divinities are pre-biblical and post-biblical, earthly gods who are male and female and are neither otherworldly nor moral but who philosophize and are well disposed towards humanity; both the gains of knowledge and the tenets of belief must submit to the test of an intellectual conscience [imbued] with a distaste for pious fraud and a gratitude for the possibility of science; the always partial knowledge of our natural history made possible by the subtle historical sense can assign the future a past of struggle for enlightenment and renaissance without clutching to any particular element of the past as if it were timeless; a proper physio-psychology can become aware of the unity of our species amid the whole array of species, and aware that all species share the common fate on our planet of appearing, flourishing, and falling extinct.” Leo Strauss and Nietzsche (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 180.
\item\textsuperscript{112} Cf. Nietzsche, \textit{Good and Evil}, §60.
\end{itemize}
sincerely hopes it will come to pass, he is fully aware that his teaching might bear no fruit. That is why he writes with such urgency and why his later philosophy is more radical.

More thoughtful observers will question whether the combination is even desirable. Tocqueville, we should recall, warned that religion is too important—and politics too easily corrupted—to warrant the dependence of one on the other. That Nietzsche does not (or cannot) describe the particulars of a religion of the future is anything but reassuring, and can only fan the flames of those who draw lines from him to fascism and the Nazis.

In any event, Nietzsche wants us to follow him in thinking that his program is possible and necessary and the only means to redirect the course of an increasingly decadent West.

Nietzsche has much to add to the discussion of religion and politics, if only because he challenges our liberal sensibilities on the need to separate church and state.
The Invention Of Secularity In Aristophanes

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The last two plays of Aristophanes show a world that for the first time in the development of Western civilization can reasonably be called secular. The secularity of Ecclesiazusae and Plutus lies in their presenting human individuality as containing in its activity the various aspects of the life of the polis, more thoroughly than the gods who presided over them. The gods do not thereby vanish but are revealed as having no true self in comparison with men. These plays complete the trajectory of his eleven plays, which began with five plays in which human subjectivity was not yet equalized with the divine life. In the plays of Aristophanes, equalization means that the human individual has as his sphere of activity the whole realm that the god presides over. Then in the sixth extant play, Birds, the human hero ‘overthrows’ even Zeus by experiencing more totally than even that great god the entire divine life, which is the effective rule of the Olympians over the Titanic gods. Three plays then follow in which human life is equalized with gods whose very existence consists in the communication of the life of the gods. Finally, in the last two plays the human subjectivity that the earlier plays had shown developing becomes itself the basis of human institutions and the gods themselves. In Ecclesiazusae no god is mentioned and it is humanity with its needs that defines the institutions of Family and State. The poet then posits Plutus as the chief god in the eponymous play, and this god has no other being than to encourage in humanity the private goods of virtue and wealth.

The peculiar character of Greek religion and its development at Athens make possible this conclusion. Aristophanes, moreover, is the last poet who presents the full content of this religion whose truest expression is through the forms of the beautiful, architecture, sculpture, and above all poetry. Poetry here is not the subjective expression of an individual but rather the inspired work of a man working under the influence of the gods. Homer, for example, appeals to the Muse to sing his tale, while both Comedy and Tragedy are presented under the aegis of Dionysus, who as the son of Zeus and a mortal woman, has in him the communication of the divine life to men. This poetical theology does not declare one creative God who presides over all things, both human and natural. Rather a history of the gods presents itself, in which out of chaos precede first the more natural gods, called Titans, then later the Olympians. No clear system unites the gods, although in general a natural and more abstract character adheres to the Titans, while the Olympians are marked by a more spiritual and ethical character; this enables

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1 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind* (CC), VII, B, c. the spiritual work of art.
2 Some of the Titanic powers have names identical with natural phenomena, e.g. Ouranos (sky) and Oceanus (ocean), while others are named after forces and tendencies, such as Nemesis, who brings low all beings who have risen too high.
3 Every Olympian god presides over a sphere of existence in which man has elevated himself above the natural; altogether vanished is Egyptian zoolatry and that confusion of man and nature found in the Sphinx. Thus Artemis
the Olympians under Zeus to overthrow the Titans. This victory allows ethical human life in the *polis*, in which a different god presides as a subject, not an allegory or force, over a different sphere of life. Each sphere moreover reflects the victory of Olympian reason over Titanic nature. Thus both Aphrodite and Hera preside over spheres of life in which the sexual instinct is civilized, Aphrodite over the immediate unity that mutual attractiveness in a man and woman produces, Hera over the deeper unity that makes the family possible. Athena presides over the life of a city as a whole, while Zeus rules over all the gods. Drama tends to unify the human hero with the polis and the gods; Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedy tends to a unification under Zeus, Comedy to a unification within the human hero. This arises in Comedy because each drama begins with the ethical ruin of the City, and the consequent impossibility of the hero’s making an aspect of the City’s life and the god who presides over it the centre of his own being.

The comic hero thus begins his career from the standpoint of an a-political individuality. Expressed in religious terms, this means that he has returned to a pre-Olympian past, and the drama shows his search for a re-affirmation of an Olympian order. In many of the plays, this experience of the disestablishment of the Olympian order is through the institutional order but in others it is through the gods themselves. Strepsiades in *Clouds* experiences the pre-Olympian world by resolving to cheat his creditors and restore his solvency. In *Birds*, the heroes explicitly invent a natural religion of birds to overthrow the Olympian religion. In *Plutus* a god is posited who while not an Olympian, predates the rule of Zeus.

This re-appearance, as it were, of the Titanic pre-supposition of the Olympian order is by no means limited to Comedy. The Prometheus plays of Aeschylus show the passage from the old order to the new in the revolt of Prometheus against Zeus and his eventual return to that obedience. In the *Oedipus the King* of Sophocles, this natural pre-supposition appears in a very curious manner. Although the play begins with Oedipus already on the throne for many years, he recounts to his wife how he became king of Thebes. Having left Corinth in fear of the oracles about his mother and father, he became a wanderer. It was in this pre-political isolation that he killed his father.

The beginning alienation of the comic hero, in which he is always representative, in some way, of his fellow Athenians, means that he can have eventually a more comprehensive experience and activity than either any Olympian god, or pre-Olympian god who has now a place in the general system presided over by Zeus. When the Olympian gods defeated the Titans, this resulted in a certain fixity of character in the sphere that each presides over. While each god often has a variety of epithets, they all fall within a certain limit. Hera, as the wife of Zeus, for example presides over marital life and childbirth. She cannot become the goddess who presides over the attractiveness of men and women to each other, any more that Aphrodite can have a sudden conversion to ‘family values’ and give up encouraging women like Helen and men like Paris. Against this fixity, a human being can explore all the spheres presided over by the gods, take part one moment in the technology of Prometheus and in another the war-like strength of an Ares. In Comedy this expansiveness of character can extend even to the powers displaced by the Olympians. Thus when the human hero attempts in *Birds* to devise a religion and city of the

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4 One commonly speaks of Apollo, for example, as the god of prophecy. This implies that prophecy has a certain self-subsistence and that a god was then devised by self-conscious reason to symbolize it. The reality is quite otherwise. Apollo is a true individual, depicted in sculpture and poetry; he it is who gives reality to prophecy.

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birds, he has returned in imagination to the time of the Titans, which is of course different from
being a Titan originally. No other spiritual being in the realm of the Olympian religion can so
thoroughly escape the fixity that attaches to them.

The ruin of the polis that allows a ‘return’ to the pre-Olympian world is not a mere notion
of the comic poet but what he sees before himself in the history of his own time. Although born
in the glorious fifty years that followed the end of the Persian Wars, Aristophanes lived his
poetical career in the midst of the Peloponnesian War and its difficult aftermath. This War
spelled the ruin not only of Athens and Sparta but of the Hellenic world insofar as that world
depended on the polis. Naturally enough the subjective principle of that world, an unreflective,
pre-moral and thus ethical relation⁵ to the great institutions of the polis, was ruined in that
general collapse. The comic poet has thus the task before him of re-uniting this broken individual
not only with the institutions of his state but also the gods who animate and preside over that
world. The history of the plays is thus an account of the development of that reunification within
poetical imagination and under the aegis of Dionysus, who presided over the drama, from the
_Acharnians_ of 428 to the _Plutus_ of 388.

That the last play represents a deeper development than the first is partly our judgement
in surveying the whole, but partly the poet’s as well in his willingness to modify the Olympian
religion beyond its original sense. Thus the positing of certain deity-like beings in the early plays
is of a different order than Plutus in the last play. Amphitheatres in _Acharnians_ might be wholly
fictitious, but as the maker of peace amongst the Greek states, he falls within the Hellenic order
and religion. Zeus presides over pan-Hellenic unity, and Amphitheus offers no challenge to his
sovereignty. Yet Plutus, as Aristophanes presents him, represents a world that neither the polis
nor the Olympian gods can contain. Classical philology has laboured in vain to discover in the
tradition a god equal to the Plutus who can overthrow Zeus and who presides over both money
and virtue. In short Plutus presides over a people who have deserted the way of life in the polis
and substituted for that a world of private interests.

From the beginning of the poet’s career, then, each play is a certain presentation of
secularity, in so far as the primary question of each play is how the representative Athenian can
find self-realization in an ethically ruined world. What makes each play not simply a
presentation of a complete secularity but rather a movement toward it, is the dependence of each
hero upon the shapes and forms of Athenian political and religious life for this self-realization,
both in its initial and final stages. Thus in _Acharnians_, the very first play, the hero is weary of the
Peloponnesian War and in the face of indifference and opposition from the established political
authority of the Assembly, determines on making a private peace with the Spartans. Even a
private peace, however, cannot occur outside the general forms of Hellenic life, and that in two
ways. The man, facetiously Just City, who desires the peace is none other than the comic poet
himself, and the mediator of the peace is the junior god named Amphitheus. The post-modern
might view the presence of the poet in his own play as a triumph of self-referentiality but this is
really to miss the point. The poet is not the ‘creator’ of his play any more than the Muses who
inspire it or the god Dionysus who presides over it. In the last extant play, _Plutus_, the criterion
for the striving individual is still an Olympian god, but an Olympian god who has been modified

⁵ ‘Ethical’ here means an habitual and unquestioning adherence to the established institutions of the polis and the
performance of all the duties associated with it. ‘Moral’ means a thinking adherence to rules of behaviour and
institutions known to be rational.
in a subjective direction. That is to say, the god Plutus has become the object of human worship. He rewards the virtuous with wealth, and of course no such god has ever existed in the Olympian religion in that form. A god of the same name exists, but he never had the centrality that the Plutus of Aristophanes has. In the play the god says of himself that he preceded Zeus, but that the latter out of jealousy has blinded him. The god is a somewhat ridiculous figure, and only human desire is the moving agency in transforming him from being a nonentity to the position of supreme god. Thus, even when secularity is achieved, it is mediated through the old Olympian religion. Secularity is indeed achieved in this latter example because the object of worship is nothing other than the reality of human well-being given divine form.

The form of human subjectivity with which each play ends is the measure of that play’s secularity; it depends on the way in which the hero integrates the topical element with the forms of polis-life and the gods who preside over them. The first five plays show the comic hero and his topical concern as contained within the life of the polis and the Olympian religion. *Birds* then shows the comic hero as opposed to the Olympian religion, and this can end only with his inheriting the full substance of this religion by having experienced it. Then three plays show the human subject as equalized with the polis and the gods who animate it. Finally, in *Ecclesiazusae* and *Plutus*, human subjectivity as formed by the Olympian order, has exceeded the gods, who are now in no way a force beyond the activity of men and women. This announces the presence of Western civilization’s first secularity, in which by imitating the gods the human individual has made their substance their own.

In the first five plays, human subjectivity exceeds the gods in point of activity, but not of content. For example, in *Acharnians*, the hero makes a pre-Olympian standpoint, his own pleasure, his goal, and in order to attain it, he must disregard and almost undo his membership in the State in a search for a more personal and natural standpoint. The hero thus first makes a private peace with Sparta through a minor god, then celebrates a City festival as a family festival, and finally establishes a trading-mart with all Greeks. His progress is thus from the political to the familial to the realm of techné and money-making. This standpoint falls within the pan-Hellenic order and its religion but it does not describe its fullness. Hereafter, the hero turns away from this limited point and moves toward the deeper ground of his enjoyment. His refusing to share his peace with a farmer but agreeing to do so with a new bride shows that peace and enjoyment are not to be found in the realm of techné but more in the realm of married life. Finally, he can find complete enjoyment only in a City festival, the Dionysian festival of pitchers. Thus the hero has made a full circle within the life of the City. He has been presented with a War fought for private and not truly city interests. Initially, he deepens this fault in his own situation, looking for a solution in the less comprehensive realms of the commonwealth, that is the family and business. For this play, international business represents that least comprehensive realm. Thereafter, he returns to the comprehensiveness of the State by again experiencing the realms of techné and family, this time as less comprehensive than the State. By experiencing these realms he has a more extensive experience than any god, whose situation is more fixed. However, the extent of his ‘revolt’ has been limited to the pre-political standpoint of barter. While no Olympian god presides over barter, neither is it an activity that belongs to a Titanic god or to the titanic world. Rather, it is a less that political activity that obtains amongst the various Greek states; it is readily contained within the Olympian order.

The sixth extant play *Birds* is the turning point in the series of plays. Here the main character is so disgusted with life in Athens that he wishes to found a city and religion of the
birds. As in the previous plays, there is then a turning away from this, and a discovery that the true meaning of being a bird is rather the exercise of the mind. This discovery means that the comic hero has in his own experience lived out the return to the Titanic order, and then the overthrow of that Titanic order. He has thus unified in himself what the older religion has depicted as two separate orders of gods, the Titans and the Olympians. This means that Zeus has effectively been overthrown, since he has not in his own being experienced the transition from the Titanic to the Olympian.

It might seem impossible to continue writing comedies after one has described a human individuality that can overthrow even Zeus. Yet it belonged to the poetic tradition that Zeus might be displaced (one sees this in the Prometheus myth) and the comic poet, as the argument has shown, cannot imagine a world without gods. They must come first, and human individuality be formed in the making actual of their nature. Various gods in the tradition have as their very being the communication of the divine life to men. In the next three plays, the poet finds these gods successively in Athena, the Thesmophoroi and Dionysus. In Lysistrata the women of both Sparta and Athens eventually become true imitators of Athena, goddess of the whole city; they enter political life and impose peace upon the warring men, to end the Peloponnesian War. They have, however, begun in a radically different mode; they have asserted their desperate need for sexual satisfaction, which the war has deprived them of by removing their husbands and lovers. To desire sexual satisfaction is something radically alien to Athena, the virgin goddess, who sprang from Zeus’s head. After this initial turn to the natural, they discover that to secure this end, they must become political and subordinate their natural desires to the restoration of both the Family and the State. The end of the play shows a humanity that has equaled the goddess in point of content and exceeded her in totality of experience.

Lysistrata has shown the human imitation of Athena. In Thesmophoriazusae one sees the human corruption of religious festivals in which the true content consists in the presentation and celebration of the Thesmophoroi, those gods who have given marriage to humanity. By the end of the play, the nature of two festivals in relation to the Thesmophoroi has been clarified, Tragedy and the Thesmophoria. The poet Euripides has learnt that he must not present corrupt women on the stage but virtuous women who encourage heroic men, that is women and men fit for matrimony. The women have learnt that the Thesmophoria consists of the proper praise of the goddesses. Earlier they had turned their festival into a women’s caucus to plot revenge on Euripides for depicting them badly in his plays. The poet had then perverted his art into a mechanism for protecting himself from the women. Thus even the proper celebration of religious festivals depends on human knowledge that arises from human activity.

In Frogs, the divine-human patron of drama is educated about the true end of drama. Dionysus initially wishes to journey to Hades so that he can bring back Euripides, the tragedian who pleases him most. This journey then indicates that the god can imitate everything from the heroic Heracles to the basest slave. Thus he has in himself that which Hades embodies, a potentiality for all things. While In Hades, Dionysus is asked to judge a ‘best-tragedian’ contest between Aeschylus and Euripides. He finally chooses Aeschylus because he can give the best advice to Athens, and the god returns to the upper world together with the poet. The god’s nature, then, as patron of Tragedy consists in his political education of the City.

His human capacity for mimesis and change has made possible the proper education of the god-man Dionysus in the realm over which he presides. Thus even this universal art that can present to the spectator’s view all spiritual beings, from god to slave, is best fulfilled in
Thus the last two plays are in a certain way beyond the Olympian religion and the social order that it animates. In *Ecclesiazusae* an experiment in a community of wives and property ends rather with the reverse. The individual family is the best medium through which universal human needs are met, and the social order is grounded not in deities who preside over it, but in the difference in man between general and particular.

Finally in *Plutus*, the action has moved beyond institutions to the motives of the private individual. It begins with a father’s concern about how his son can make his way in the world without becoming as crooked as the world is. This leads to the discovery of the ancient and forgotten god Plutus, whom Zeus had blinded. This god rewards virtue with wealth, and only human ingenuity persuades him to have his sight restored. He so draws the citizens of the Athens to himself that he displaces Zeus as the chief god of the city. Thus religion takes its shape from the desire of the human soul.

The spiritual distance covered in the plays of Aristophanes from 427 to 388 is immense. He begins with a world in which even an alienated man can rediscover a place within the Olympian order. He ends with a humanity that reshapes its divinity to reflect its own private interests. He has laughed the gods of the old order not into non-existence but irrelevance, for under their aegis he has discovered a humanity that can radically make their substance its own.
Harry Potter And The Secular City: 
The Dialectical Religious Vision Of J.K. Rowling

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Are the Harry Potter books Christian, or at least religious, and is this the underlying secret to their extraordinary popularity? This is precisely the contention of a number of writers who, to varying degrees, have enlisted J.K. Rowling’s novels under the banner of Christian literary art (e.g. John Granger, Connie Neal, John Killinger, Francis Bridger). This is a striking development, particularly given the virulent opposition to the books among some conservative Christians (e.g. Richard Abanes, Stephen Dollins, Michael O’Brien), but the trend needs to be seen as part of a larger pattern of appropriation and rejection. While religious critics might celebrate Harry as Christian hero, the books are regularly portrayed as valorizing nonreligious perspectives. Roger Highfield, for example, praises the novels as a tribute to the wonders of science and technology, while Edmund Kern argues that the books serve as primers for a non-transcendent neo-Stoicism. Conversely, fundamentalists like Abanes, who excoriate Harry as occult proselytizer and Potter-mania as Satanic conspiracy, have an almost exact counterpart in secular critics like Jack Zipes and Andrew Blake, who attribute Harry’s “irresistible rise” to forces equally invisible and evil: the “dark wizards” of corporate capitalism and the politicians who collude with them. Mainstream literary critics tend to dismiss or occlude religious considerations altogether, analysing the books exclusively in terms of their social and political effects. Indeed, it is difficult to be neutral about Harry Potter. As Suman Gupta has remarked, the reception of the books is sharply (and largely unthinkingly) polarized into obsessed fans and loathing critics, making them simultaneously the best-selling and beloved fiction of our time, as well as the most heartily despised and frequently banned or challenged (Gupta 19-20).

I find this pattern of appropriation and rejection suggestive in several ways that inform the assertions of this essay. First, like most of the writers mentioned above, I take

1 These writers tend to fall into two well-trodden categories: those who champion the books as politically progressive, subversive, or radical (e.g. Karin Westman, Rebecca Stephens, Veronica Schanoes) and those (the larger group) who regard them as ideologically confused, “retrolutionary,” or regressive (e.g. Zipes, Blake, Suman Gupta, Farah Mendlesohn, Julia Park, Elaine Ostry).
the *Harry Potter* books seriously, assuming that, despite Rowling’s aesthetic traditionalism (e.g. her reliance on archetypes and narrative devices from myth, fairy tale, detective fiction, etc.) and the novels’ categorization as children’s literature, they engage matters of vital contemporary concern. Second, it seems to me that the sharply differentiated religious and nonreligious readings of the novels might be brought into fruitful relation by organizing this discussion around the binary of religion and secularity. The *Harry Potter* novels, I argue, are deeply concerned with the complex interrelationship between religion/spirituality and secular modernity, though both are explored obliquely rather than explicitly. Third, I am struck by the one-sidedness of many of the arguments mentioned above and the extent to which the writers’ ideological affiliations cause them to dismiss or ignore countervailing evidence. This is not to say, for example, that the religious critics are deluded; the *Harry Potter* novels are indeed engaged with spiritual themes and concerns, as I hope to demonstrate shortly. But this emphasis is significantly qualified and dialectically transformed by an equally significant engagement with “secular” issues.

Indeed, it is often difficult to isolate or abstract religion or secularity in the books since Rowling characteristically intertwines or enfolds them within one another. Certainly, the books resist didactic pigeonholing or wholesale appropriation by either religious or secular ideologues. But Rowling’s aversion to dogmatism ought not to be read as either bland neutrality or fear of alienating her readers (as if there is much danger of this). Rather, Rowling’s approach strikes a powerful chord in readers who recognize both the validity and limitations of religion and secularity respectively. Her overall vision, repeatedly figured in the novels in terms of alchemical imagery and contagious magic, is dialectical: a reconciliation of finite warring contraries, an ultimate unity won at great cost. Since the series is a work in progress, it is difficult to be certain, but Rowling demonstrates that religion and secularity, like Harry and Voldemort who contain aspects of each other’s essence, ultimately transcend the condition of antithesis.

Let me explain briefly what I mean by secularity and its relevance to the *Harry Potter* books. Secularity can be defined as a set of socio-political conditions resulting from the progressive disentangling of church and state. A familiar picture results: religion loses its dominance in society, is reduced from an overarching “sacred canopy” to a social subsystem, and largely retreats from the public to the private sphere; society becomes increasingly pluralistic and tolerant toward difference, while individual consciousness is also pluralized, undermining traditional sources of authority and certainty; there is greater emphasis on human agency, freedom, choice, and individuality; there is exponential expansion of the power and responsibility of the nation-state, which adopts a bureaucratic form of administration; economic and institutional life are rationalized, leading to increased efficiency and productivity; science becomes authoritative and technique pervasive. These general conditions could be called “objective” aspects of secular modernity, and, for the most part, J.K. Rowling endorses them or at least assumes their validity. But there are other dimensions of the secular.

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2 As Edmund Kern remarks, the novels are widely popular, embraced by child and adult readers of many different perspectives, precisely because they are interpretively open and therefore unburdened by political and religious orthodoxies (25).
phenomenon to which Rowling evidently objects, particularly at the level of subjective experience. One such dimension is the ideological programme of secularism, which sociologist David Lyon describes as “a set of beliefs and practices committed to the abolition of religion in society” (Lyon 31). In place of a religious understanding of reality, secularists typically advocate philosophical materialism and its attendant premises: the denial of the metaphysical and transcendent, the radical desacralization of nature and society, and the relativity of moral values. Another dimension which Rowling’s novels sharply criticize might be called the unintended consequences of secularity: anomie, alienation, conformity, consumerism, cultural homogenization, disintegration of tradition, loss of community, diffusion of propaganda through the mass media, escalating class and ethnic tensions, and the dehumanizing effects of technocracy.

In reality, of course, it is not easy to keep these objective and subjective effects of secularization distinct, just as it is difficult to account satisfactorily for the role of religion in secularity’s development. Religion has in many ways been the handmaiden to modernity, if not, as Max Weber asserted, its own gravedigger. For example, as a vast literature attests, Protestant Christianity, in its intellectual, economic, and political orientation, prepared the way for the Enlightenment, effectively displacing itself, though it continues to shape, in a subterranean way, the institutions and consciousness of the post-Christian West. Conversely, secular modernity has arguably “produced” or at least shaped the current institutional forms of Christianity. Adequate appreciation of this dialectical, mutually constitutive history seriously undermines the so-called “strong” secularization thesis (i.e. secularization is an inevitable, irreversible, permanent process leading inexorably to the demise of religion). Indeed, Rowling’s *Harry Potter* novels harmonize in many respects with the “desecularization” thesis advanced by Peter Berger and others. Berger argues that the world is “as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever” (*Desecularization* 2). In his view, secular modernity has provoked powerful movements of counter-secularization, which, far from constituting a last-ditch defence by organized religionists, are driven by the realization that human experience without transcendent bearings is shallow, “an impoverished and finally untenable condition” (*Desecularization* 13). The *Harry Potter* books make much the same point through the trope of the wizarding world itself, attesting to the strong survival of pre-modern forms of spirituality, tradition, and community which, though not immune from secularizing influences, nevertheless maintain their vitality and viability. The overall decline of institutional “church religion” in the West does not mean that religion and spirituality per se are headed for extinction, for, from a global perspective, religious belief is thriving, in the major revealed traditions (e.g. Islamic and Christian fundamentalism, evangelicalism, etc.), in non-traditional and marginal movements (e.g. New Age syncretism, neo-paganism, occultism, “implicit” and “common” religion), and in the phenomenon of resacralization. As Mircea Eliade argues in *The Sacred and the Profane*,

The majority of the “irreligious” still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of the fact. We refer not only to the modern man’s many “superstitions” and “tabus,” all of them magico-religious in structure. But the modern man who feels and claims that he is nonreligious still retains a
large stock of camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals. (Eliade 204-205)

Religion and secularity, it seems, are just as intertwined, just as enfolded within one another, as ever.

**Gimme That Ol’ Time Religion**

Are the *Harry Potter* books religious, and, if so, in what ways? It has frequently been observed that the novels contain no explicit references to God or religious doctrines, that none of the characters attend church or pray, and this absence has been interpreted by some critics as proof that the books are secular in outlook. But this unwarranted conclusion is based on two misunderstandings. First, these critics assume that the content of religion is exclusively propositional, institutional, and moral, rather than mythical, symbolic, and experiential. Second, they fail to recognize that Rowling’s books adhere to a tradition of fantasy literature in which theology is sometimes “smuggled” in through allusion and symbol; there are, for example, no explicit references to God or religion in Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* or Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, but no one seriously doubts that these books are deeply imbued by the Christian faith of the writers.

Certainly, many aspects of Rowling’s fictional or secondary world are mythic and religious in orientation. In Mircea Eliade’s terms, the religious vision of life pivots on *hierophany* or the manifestation of the sacred, a “wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural ‘profane’ world” (Eliade 11). Hierophany reveals a fixed point or centre, often a kind of cosmic pillar or sacred temple touching both earth and sky, where a sacred order of existence is differentiated from the chaotic homogeneity and relativity of profane space (Eliade 21-22, 37). In Potterworld, this fixed point is undoubtedly Hogwarts Castle, “Perched atop a high mountain…, its windows sparkling in the starry sky” (*Stone* 83). Hogwarts, with its ceiling bewitched to appear like the sky (As Harry notes, “It was hard to believe there was a ceiling there at all, and that the Great Hall didn’t simply open on to the heavens” [*Stone* 87]), its vast subterranean vaults and dungeons, and its archetypal juxtaposition of mountain, forest, and lake, connects heaven and earth, nature and supernature, providing an opening toward the transcendent. Moreover, its architectural and decorative characteristics reify the underlying ontology and metaphysics of the magical world:

There were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide, sweeping ones; narrow, rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with a vanishing step halfway up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were doors that wouldn’t open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the right place, and doors that weren’t really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending. It was also very hard to remember where anything was, because it all seemed to move around a lot. The people in the
portraits kept going to visit each other and Harry was sure the coats of armour could walk. (Stone 98)

Evidently, this is a sacred order predicated on hiddenness, irregularity, asymmetry, unpredictability, caprice, and historical nostalgia, its incalculable complexity greatly increased by the fact that “inanimate” things have minds and wills of their own. This inclusive ontology is further extended by the inhabitants of Hogwarts and its environs (Hogsmeade village and the Forbidden Forest), the many wizards, witches, ghosts, elves, giants, hags, mermaids, trolls, goblins, gnomes, werewolves, vampires, centaurs, unicorns, dragons, etc. which suggest the plenitude of being in the magical world. Harry and others gain access to the wizarding world by means of various thresholds which, in Eliade’s terms, serve as the limit or boundary between sacred and profane (i.e. magical and Muggle) modes of being, making movement between these worlds possible and repeatable (Eliade 25, 30): portkeys (ordinary-looking objects through which wizards can be transported from one location to another), the Knight Bus (taking stranded wizards anywhere in England, jumping a hundred miles at a time), the Leaky Cauldron pub (secret entrance to Diagon Alley, a magical shopping district in the heart of London), and, pre-eminently, platform 9 ¾ at King’s Cross Station (where students catch the Hogwarts Express at the start of the school term). The sacred or hierophanic nature of Hogwarts is indicated as well by its own cosmogonic or world-making myth: the founding of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry by Salazar Slytherin, Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, and Helga Hufflepuff circa 1000 A.D.³

Hogwarts School becomes Harry’s spiritual home, the locus of objective reality, power, efficacy, and new life (Eliade 28). The existence of the magical world is first manifest to Harry by means of an apodictic sign that “introduces an absolute element…, puts an end to relativity and confusion,” and indicates “an orientation or determined a course of conduct” (Eliade 27): the arrival of hundreds of Hogwarts acceptance letters

³ The details of this myth, particularly the rift between Slytherin and Gryffindor over the pure-blood doctrine of the former, is elaborated and extended throughout the series and shapes the lives of the present-day characters in a variety of ways. For example, Hogwarts students are “sorted” into houses (named for the founders) according to their dominant characteristics (i.e. Slytherins are ambitious and cunning, Gryffindors courageous, Ravenclaws intelligent, and Hufflepuff’s loyal and hard-working), fixing to a degree their identities and destinies. The most prominent example of this determinism is the prophecy that the heirs of Slytherin and Gryffindor, Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter respectively, are destined to resolve their ancestors’ hostility in a climactic struggle in which “either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives” (Phoenix 741). Indeed, the details of the Harry-Voldemort conflict, particularly Voldemort’s mortal attack on the infant Harry, the Dark Lord’s subsequent loss of power, and the lightning-shaped scar of “the boy who lived,” attain sacred and mythic status within the wizarding world, adding a messianic and apocalyptic dimension: “Harry Potter survived, and the Dark Lord’s power was broken, and it was a new dawn, sir, and Harry Potter shone like a beacon of hope for those of us who thought the Dark days would never end, sir” (Chamber 134). Harry is himself a kind of living myth, as Professor MacGonagall says: “He’ll be famous – a legend – I wouldn’t be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in our world will know his name!” (Stone 15).
(hundreds because Harry’s Uncle Vernon keeps confiscating them), delivered by owls. The sacred order at Hogwarts is mediated in a variety of ways, primarily ritual (e.g. the Sorting Ceremony, Quidditch, the House Cup, the Tri-Wizard Tournament), a festal calendar which basically follows the Christian pattern (feasts at the beginning and end of the year, Halloween, Christmas, and Easter). Through these rituals and other magical means – e.g. Tom Riddle’s enchanted diary, the Time-Turner, the Pensieve – Harry and the other students are able to escape the dominance of profane, linear time and participate in sacred, primordial time (Eliade 70). The sacred order is also communicated by rites of initiation and passage, both the customary ones authorized by the school – e.g. standardized testing in the upper forms (OWLs and NEWTs) – and the annual ordeals by means of which Harry’s heroism is tested and confirmed: e.g. finding the Philosopher’s Stone; fighting the Basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets; battling a resurrected Voldemort in the graveyard, etc. Each of these is an instance of initiatory death and rebirth, precipitating a psychic crisis leading to Harry’s spiritual growth.

So, yes, the books are, broadly speaking, religious in orientation, but are they Christian? The critics mentioned at the outset – Neal, Bridger, Killinger, and Granger – make a convincing collective case that Rowling’s novels strongly resonate with Christianity in their implied theology, morality, metaphysics, and symbolism, though their opinions differ on whether the Christian echoes are inadvertent and merely parallel, or intentional and explicit. Granger’s two books, *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter* and *Looking for God in Harry Potter* (the latter basically a refinement of the former) make the most aggressive case for a Christian reading. Granger’s basic argument is that the *Harry Potter* books are profoundly Christian, written consciously in the symbolist Inklings tradition (Lewis, Tolkien, Charles Williams) and sharing its signature interests and emphases: fantasy literature as a “baptism of the imagination” through Christian imagery, training in virtuous “stock responses” (bravery, sympathy, perseverance, obedience, loyalty, sacrifice, etc.), and an assault upon the “materialist heresy” dominant in the secular West (Granger, *Key* xi, 79-80, 82, 149-150, 189). He argues that the symbolist perspective offers an alternative to naturalism because it allows for correspondences and points of access between the natural world and contra-natural realities (*Key* 104-106, 143). Rowling’s magical world reflects our own world “diagonally,” in order to reveal eternal qualities symbolized in the material world, thereby casting a much-needed “counter-spell to the enchantment of modernity” (*Key* 188, 337). Perhaps Granger’s most valuable contribution is his extended discussion of Rowling’s imaginative use of alchemy, which he defines as a “path to spiritual perfection: purification, illumination, and divinization within a revealed tradition” (*Key* 95, 99-100).

Granger is surely right to insist that Rowling’s implicit theology and symbolism are substantially Christian. The overarching theme of the novels is the power of love to conquer death, a central theme of the New Testament to be sure. In *Stone*, Harry learns from Professor Dumbledore, Hogwarts’s sage-like Headmaster, that his miraculous survival of Voldemort’s attempts to murder him are the result of his mother’s sacrificial death, that her love has left its protective mark in his “very skin” (*Stone* 216). Sacrificial love, it seems, is the oldest, deepest, and most potent magic of all in Potterworld. This point is underlined in another conversation with Dumbledore at the end of *Phoenix*:
There is a room in the Department of Mysteries...that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than the forces of nature....It is the power held within that room that you possess in such quantities and which Voldemort has not at all. That power took you to save Sirius tonight. That power also saved you from possession by Voldemort, because he could not bear to reside in a body so full of the force he detests. In the end, it mattered not that you could not close your mind. It was your heart that saved you. (Phoenix 743)

Because the Potter novels are not overtly didactic as a rule, such occasional metaphysical and theological affirmations possess even more weight and prominence. Aside from the efficacy of sacrificial love, Rowling’s other major religious/philosophical emphasis is the immortality of the soul, a message expressed more explicitly in each succeeding novel (Stone 215; Chamber 236; Prisoner 312; Goblet 578-579; Phoenix 761).

There are symbolic motifs as well in the novels that one might call ‘irreducibly religious’ and contextually Christian. The most significant of these are the pervasive references to the protective and atoning properties of blood. The most explicit and theologically inflected use of the motif comes in Order of the Phoenix, where Dumbledore explains to Harry the reason he placed him as an infant with the loathed Dursleys:

[Your mother] gave you a lingering protection he never expected, a protection that flows in your veins to this day. I put my trust, therefore, in your mother’s blood. I delivered you to her sister, her only remaining relative... Your mother’s sacrifice made the bond of blood the strongest shield I could give you....While you can still call home the place where your mother’s blood dwells, there you cannot be touched or harmed by Voldemort. He shed her blood, but it lives on in you and her sister. Her blood became your refuge. (Phoenix 736-737)

Another potent religious symbol in the novels is Fawkes, Dumbledore’s pet phoenix. The phoenix, as Granger reminds us, was associated in the medieval bestiaries with Christ for obvious reasons: the property of bursting into flame and rising new-born from the ashes is a suggestive parallel for resurrection (Looking 93-94). Rowling reinforces this background association by giving Fawkes a crucial, salvific function in several of the books. In Chamber of Secrets, for example, Fawkes appears in the climactic scene as a kind of theophany, bringing Harry the Sword of Gryffindor, dashing out the eyes of the Basilisk, healing Harry’s wounds with his tears, and then ascending from the subterranean Chamber carrying Harry and his companions (Chamber 233, 235, 237,

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4 In Stone, for example, Voldemort forces Quirrell to drink the blood of a “pure and defenceless unicorn,” dooming him to “a half life, a cursed life” (188), while in Goblet, when the blood of an enemy is required to resurrect him, Voldemort chooses Harry’s, both for the sake of revenge and “the lingering protection his mother once gave him” which will now reside in his veins as well (570).
5 As reminiscent as these actions are of Christian soteriology, even more compelling is the effect of the phoenix’s song, described as “eerie, spine-tingling, unearthly,” making Harry’s heart “feel as though it was swelling to twice its normal size” (Chamber 232). A force which is simultaneously immaterial, personal, and efficacious, Fawkes’s music strongly suggests the presence of God.

I concur with many of Granger’s observations, yet I can’t help feeling that he and other Christian critics often read too much theological significance into the available evidence. For one thing, Granger seems to have a rather monolithic conception of secularity (e.g. the insistence that naturalism is the de facto worldview in the contemporary world) and underestimates the degree to which the writings of a Lewis or a Rowling are produced by modernity and rely on it as a kind of imaginative resource. Another factor he underestimates is Rowling’s syncretism; she draws together elements from many cultural, mythological, literary, and religious traditions – e.g. Greco-Roman, Egyptian, Celtic, Gnostic, Hermetic, etc. – not just Christianity. Nor is it an accident that, in his favorite sport of Quidditch, Harry plays the position of Seeker, a term, argues Lyon, that epitomizes contemporary religious attitudes: “open-mindedness, individuality, and the private and polymorphous nature of belief are felt to be more important than the actual content of belief” (Lyon 89). Harry’s “spirituality” is not creedal, propositional, or institutional, but experiential, and his most transcendent experiences are intuitive, such as riding a broomstick for the first time and discovering “in a rush of fierce joy…he’d found something he could do without being taught” (Stone 111).

Further, Harry’s experience of the numinous is often poised ambivalently between the transcendent and the mundane. Consider, for example, the climax of The Prisoner of Azkaban. Harry and his friends are attacked by a hundred Dementors, ghastly hooded creatures who feed on human happiness (clearly a symbol of depression) (Prisoner 280-282). Harry attempts to repel them by conjuring a Patronus, a kind of protective animal

5 Harry has witnessed Dumbledore’s removal from office and also heard Dumbledore’s cryptic final words before leaving, “you will find that I will only truly have left this school when none here are loyal to me. You will also find that help will always be given at Hogwarts to those who ask for it” (Chamber 195), a phrasing that implies theological conceptions of presence and grace. Harry finds these words puzzling, but faced with Tom Riddle (a young version of Voldemort) and the monstrous Basilisk in the Chamber, his show of loyalty does indeed “call” Fawkes to the scene. The motif of Fawkes’s healing tears is repeated near the end of Goblet (606), and his protective role at the end of Phoenix (716).

6 For more on phoenix song, see Goblet (576, 603).

7 The sign above Ollivander’s store in Diagon Alley is telling – “Makers of Fine Wands since 382 BC” (Stone 63) – as is the list of famous wizards depicted on Chocolate Frog trading cards: Agrippa, Ptolemy, Morgana, Hengist of Woodcroft, Alberic Grunnion, Circe, Paracelsus, Merlin, Cliodna (Stone 77-78); Rowling clearly wishes the magical world to transcend particular cultural and religious traditions.

8 Similar moments include speaking Parseltongue (snake language) to a serpent without ever having learned the language and seeing the creature “miraculously, inexplicably” slump to the floor (Chamber 145), as well as destroying Tom Riddle by plunging the Basilisk fang into the enchanted diary, “without thinking, without considering, as though he had meant to do it all along” (Chamber 237).
spirit, concentrating on a happy memory and projecting the emotions of hope or happiness (Prisoner 176). But Harry’s attempt fails, and he nearly succumbs to the Dementors’ Kiss, a gruesome mouth-to-mouth encounter in which the victim’s soul is sucked from his or her body. Harry’s teacher Remus Lupin explains:

You can exist without your soul, you know, as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you’ll have no sense of self any more, no memory, no…anything. There’s no chance at all of recovery. You’ll just–exist. As an empty shell. And your soul is just gone for ever…lost.

(Prisoner 183)

At the last possible moment, however, a brilliant, silvery Patronus appears and drives off the Dementors (Prisoner 282). When Harry looks across the lake to see who conjured it, he sees what appears to be his father, who has been dead for twelve years. Hours later, Harry has the opportunity to travel back in time, and, intent on seeing his father again, he waits by the lake and watches himself and the others being attacked:

‘Come on!’ he muttered, staring about. ‘Where are you? Dad, come on–’

But no one came. Harry raised his head to look at the circle of Dementors across the lake. One of them was lowering its hood. It was time for the rescuer to appear—but no one was coming to help this time–

And then it hit him—he understood. He hadn’t seen his father—he had seen himself–

Harry flung himself out from behind the bush and pulled out his wand.

‘EXPECTO PATRONUM!’ he yelled.

And out of his wand burst, not a shapeless cloud of mist, but a blinding, dazzling, silver animal. (Prisoner 300)

As the Patronus returns to him, Harry realizes that it is a projection of his father in the form of the stag Prongs (Harry’s father James was an Animagus, a wizard who could transfigure himself into animal form), and Dumbledore later confirms this, asserting, “Your father is alive in you, Harry, and shows himself most plainly when you have need of him. How else could you produce that particular Patronus? Prongs rode again last night” (Prisoner 312). Harry, asked why he was able to conjure the Patronus in the second instance but not the first, replies, “I knew I could do it this time…because I’d already done it….Does that make sense?” (Prisoner 303).

The sequence presents mixed messages about the provenance of the sacred and the profane. Granger tries to render it intelligible by invoking multiple Christ-figures and an interpretive framework based on the Gospel of John, though the result is rather strained:
That Harry’s father appears in the form of a Christ symbol (the stag), and that Harry’s deliverance (as son) comes at his realization that he is his father (in appearance and will), are poetic expressions of the essential union of Father and Son for our salvation.

In *Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry at last comprehends his likeness with his father. By this knowledge he is able to summon a Christ figure as his salvation, in hopeful, almost certain, and joyous expectation of deliverance. (*Looking* 145-146)

But this allegorical reading flies wide of the mark, not least because the late James Potter is a rather poor stand-in for God the Father and Granger himself strenuously denies that Harry himself functions as a Christ-figure in the novels (*Looking* 114). Certainly, the passage has religious implications, affirming that human beings have souls distinct from their bodies and that the dead are present in the living. Yet these affirmations are assimilated to a crudely corporeal metaphysic – e.g. souls can be “sucked” out of one’s mouth and eternally lost as a result of an arbitrary physical encounter – and juxtaposed with clichés from pop psychology: e.g. the power of positive thinking, battling depression with happy thoughts, encountering the archetype of the father within oneself, etc..

Granger reads the passage as an allegory of divine deliverance emanating from a transcendent realm, but surely the narrative gestures in the other direction: when Harry realizes that no salvation is coming from “above” or “beyond,” he saves himself and the others. This could be read as a figure for divine immanence – “The Kingdom of God is within you” – but there is no particular indication that one should interpret it that way. That is, the passage hovers ambiguously between religious and humanistic interpretations, especially if one privileges the psychological and takes “soul” as a figurative expression for personality. As to the ongoing presence of the dead, Rowling employs a standard formula broadly acceptable to both religious and secular readers: immortality as memory and genetic continuity.

**The Way Of The World**

What then of the presentation of secularity in the *Harry Potter* books? This is a more difficult question to answer for a couple of reasons: first, secularity is commonly formulated merely as a negation of the religious, but given the irreducible religious element of the novels, Rowling clearly does not conceive the secular in this light; second, the fantasy premise of the Potter books automatically implies a critique of the mundane which is easily misconstrued as anti-modernism. I would argue that Rowling reflects on secularity in some of the following ways: a) certain aspects of secular modernity, such as the status of technology, are explored through the structural contrast between the Muggle world and the wizarding world; b) other key issues in modernity (e.g. political culture and the role of ideology in identity formation) are reflected through the wizarding world as a society in itself; c) stereotypically “secular” modes of cognition, such as rationalism and skepticism, are foregrounded in the narrative. What should be apparent from the
preceding observations is that Rowling’s engagement with secularity cuts across structural lines; no single figure, set of characters, or institution can be identified as the locus of secularity. Secularity, like religion, is a pervasive reality in the novels, yet in Rowling’s presentation, it is never autonomous, never fully dissociated from religion.

One of the main issues Rowling emphasizes is the status of technology, as exemplified in the structural contrast between Muggledom and the magical world. At a superficial first glance, the wizarding world seems totally pre-modern and pre-technological, a rejection of hyper-technological modernity. Hogwarts, located in a medieval castle in a remote corner of Scotland, has no telephones, televisions, computers, or electrical appliances of any kind. It is heated by fireplaces and lit by candles and torches, while its inhabitants wear robes, write on parchment with quills, and send letters by means of trained owls. But on closer inspection, many instances of technological application emerge: Hogwarts’ washrooms have toilets, not chamber pots; students travel on the Hogwarts Express, a steam engine (just one example of Rowling’s fetish for all-things-Victorian); the Ministry of Magic building is equipped with art-nouveau elevators, complete with golden grilles and rattling chains; wizards listen to the wireless and read newspapers like The Daily Prophet; and, under special circumstances, they drive cars, motorcycles, and buses. Rowling, then, is not constructing a Luddite utopia but an alternative world in which technological application has taken a different course than in the secular West, thus giving us a vantage point from which to evaluate modern technique, from outside rather than inside.

The wizarding world playfully inverts the claims of the Enlightenment; magic is sensible and “scientific,” while Muggle science is an arcane and defective “substitute” for magic (Goblet 476); similarly, Muggle technology is often represented as primitive, slow, or inconvenient compared to the instantaneous results effected by magic.\(^9\) Magic fulfills wishes and abrogates undesirable consequences (e.g. instant repair of broken bones and objects); moreover, characters are able to do things in the wizarding world – fly, become invisible, transfigure themselves – that, because they are impossible in a materialist universe, appeal to archetypal human desires. Rowling employs this convention for several purposes. First, it strikes a blow against technological hubris and sacralization, demonstrating that current technologies, even when judged solely in terms of instrumental rationality, are limited and sometimes inadequate.\(^10\) Second, Rowling’s method interrogates the direction of current technological applications. Wizard inventions are extraordinarily useful in ways Muggle technology is not, meeting an alternative range of human needs: consider, for example, the Pocket Sneakoscope which detects untrustworthy people (Prisoner 13), the clock in the Weasley house whose nine hands

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\(^9\) The wizard characters often marvel at how Muggles manage to live without magic or criticize the barbarity of Muggle techniques. For example, at St. Mungo’s Hospital, when Harry asks if the hospital personnel are doctors, Ron responds indignantly, “Those Muggle nutters that cut people up? Nah, they’re Healers” (Phoenix 428), while Mrs. Weasley is scandalized that anyone, even Muggles, would be so stupid as to close up a wound with stitches (Phoenix 448-449).

\(^10\) Hermione, for example, allows Madam Pomfrey to magically shrink her prominent front teeth rather than carry on with the protracted method of braces, a decision which undoubtedly hurts the professional pride of her Muggle parents, both of whom are dentists (Goblet 353).
indicate the location (and well-being) of each member of the family (*Goblet* 135), or the Pensieve, a shallow basin into which a wizard can deposit thoughts and memories for the purpose of concealment, relief, or the analysis of patterns and links (*Goblet* 518-519). Third, the retro style of wizard applications suggests a desire to preserve the best of older technologies alongside the new and to arrest the pace of change. Traditional technologies are often perfectly adequate, producing objects that are aesthetically beautiful and designed on a human scale.\(^\text{11}\) Wizard instruments, for example, are almost invariably delicate products of advanced metallurgical craftsmanship: “The instrument tinkled into life at once with rhythmic clinking noises. Tiny puffs of pale green smoke issued from the miniscule silver tube at the top” (*Phoenix* 415).

Rowling clearly relishes this critique of technology, but she also introduces complications which undermine its one-sidedness. For one thing, the magical and Muggle worlds interpenetrate one another in many ways, and Rowling delights in blurring the lines by bringing one order into contact with the other: “The Knight Bus kept mounting the pavement, but it didn’t hit anything; lines of [Muggle] lamp posts, letter boxes and bins jumped out of its way as it approached and back into position once it had passed” (*Prisoner* 32). Moreover, magical techniques are by no means universally superior, and magical mishaps provide a major source of humour in the novels. For example, by means of Floo Powder and the Floo Network, wizards can travel almost instantaneously from fireplace to fireplace, but Harry finds the method capricious and hazardous:

‘You must speak clearly, dear….And mind you get out at the right grate…’
‘Now, when you get into the fire, say where you’re going –’
‘And keep your elbows tucked in,’ Ron advised.
‘And your eyes shut,’ said Mrs Weasley. ‘The soot –’
‘Don’t fidget,’ said Ron. ‘Or you might well fall out of the wrong fireplace –’
‘But don’t panic and get out too early.’….

It felt as though he was being sucked down a giant plug hole. He seemed to be spinning very fast…the roaring in his ears was deafening….he tried to keep his eyes open but the whirl of green flames made him feel sick….something hard knocked his elbow and he tucked it in tightly, still spinning and spinning….now it felt as though cold hands were slapping his face….squinting through his glasses he saw a blurred stream of fireplaces and snatched glimpses of the rooms beyond….he fell, face forward, onto cold stone and felt his glasses shatter.

Dizzy and bruised, covered in soot, he got gingerly to his feet. (*Chamber* 41-42)

\(^{11}\) The wizarding world is emphatically a print culture, part of the “Gutenberg Galaxy,” and Rowling shows a bibliophile’s delight in the contents of the Hogwarts Library and Flourish and Blotts’ bookstore: “…the shelves were stacked to the ceiling with books as large as paving stones bound in leather; books the size of postage stamps in covers of silk; books full of peculiar symbols and a few books with nothing in them at all. Even Dudley, who never read anything, would have been wild to get his hands on some of these” (*Stone* 62).
Magical methods, we are often warned, are risky, especially for the inexperienced or incompetent. More often than not, there are built-in limitations or inefficiencies, leaving the desirability of the technique in question. For example, Madam Pomfrey, the matron at Hogwarts, can cure colds with Pepperup potion, “though it left the drinker smoking at the ears for several hours afterwards” (Chamber 94), and, although she can miraculously replace missing bones with Skelo-Gro, it is a “nasty business” which causes the patient stabbing pains (Chamber 131-132); apparently wizards have not yet discovered pain-killers. Nor is wizard technology as imaginative or original as first appears. Some gadgets, like the Omnioculars which allow the Quidditch fan to watch instant replays in slow motion (Goblet 86), do little other that mimic Muggle technology. In fact, many of the ‘magical’ objects in the novels are simply Muggle inventions that have been modified by wizards. So pervasive is this practice of bewitching objects that the Ministry of Magic requires a Department of Misuse of Muggle Artifacts (Chamber 28).

The imperfection and derivative nature of wizard technology shifts the ground under the reader’s feet. Without sacrificing her critique, Rowling manages to celebrate as well as question contemporary technological achievements. Mr. Weasley, who collects plugs, batteries, and other objects (Goblet 44-45), is fascinated by the Muggle artifacts which he, as a Ministry official, confiscates and stores in his shed at home: “Ingenious, really, how many ways Muggles have found of getting along without magic” (Chamber 37). His wife Molly, though less enamoured, admits after riding in the Ford Anglia, “Muggles do know more than we give them credit for, don’t they?” (Chamber 53-54). For some wizards, the Weasley children in particular, the magical is mundane compared to the exotic world of Muggles. Ron’s favorite comic is The Adventures of Martin Miggs, the Mad Muggle (Chamber 35), while Fred and George find “Muggle tricks” like unlocking doors with hairpins invaluable in their pursuit of mischief (Chamber 25). Implicitly, contemporary technological achievements constitute a “magic” of their own which is worthy of respect and celebration; arguably, they can be seen as the expression of the religious activity of cosmogenesis: the human spirit striving to turn its environment into a cosmos or meaningful world.

Yet, while the structural contrast between Muggles and wizards persists throughout the series, it becomes progressively less important than the magical world itself which undergoes massive metonymic elaboration. And while this world remains an alternative or parallel reality, it shares many characteristics with secular modernity. The wizarding world, for example, is racially and culturally pluralistic. Rowling’s fullest representation of this occurs in Goblet of Fire at the Quidditch World Cup:

Three African wizards sat in serious conversation, all of them wearing long white robes and roasting what looked like a rabbit on a bright purple fire,

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12 Mr. Weasley, for instance, tells the story of a couple who “splinched” themselves – left half their bodies behind – while trying to Apparate (Goblet 63).
13 Some examples are the triple-decker Knight Bus, Hagrid’s flying motorbike, the flying Ford Anglia in which the Weasley brothers rescue Harry in Chamber. So pervasive is this practice of bewitching objects that the Ministry of Magic requires a Department of Misuse of Muggle Artifacts (Chamber 28).
Wizards, it would seem, share a national identity (as well as language, customs, dress, etc.) with their Muggle counterparts, each wizard population constituting a kind of self-governing sub-culture. On the other hand, as the Quidditch World Cup suggests, they participate in a kind of global wizarding culture. This diversity is characteristic of the main setting as well; Hogwarts, despite its old-fashioned public school trappings, is co-educational and ethnically “mixed,” with students like Cho Chang, Parvati Patil, and Lee Jordan. While there are no indications of Muggle-type racial prejudice (e.g. European vs. Asian), the complex and often dysfunctional relations among the various magical races (e.g. wizards, elves, giants, werewolves, centaurs, etc.) indicate that the wizarding world, like our own, can be fiercely intolerant. Rowling persistently presents a world fractured by prejudice; members of magical minorities and “half-breeds” are persecuted not only by the quasi-fascist Death Eaters but also by well-meaning bigots like Ron Weasley. The wizard world is also divided along class lines, both in terms of the pure-blood/"Mudblood" (i.e. part Muggle) distinction among wizards, but also in terms of wealth. Like late capitalist secular society, the wizarding world is governed by bureaucratic institutions and oriented toward consumption. Public opinion is largely formed by a propagandistic mass media, which focuses on celebrity culture more than serious political discourse.

While any of these characteristics could be explored in detail, I will focus on political culture and ideology because they provide the most compelling reflections of secular modernity. British wizards are ruled by the Ministry of Magic, whose basic mandate is to keep the presence of magical society from Muggle knowledge (Stone 51). The Ministry is whimsically divided into entities like the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, the Goblin Liaison Office, and the Muggle-Worthy Excuse Committee through which Rowling satirizes the Byzantine complexity and self-importance of big government, not to mention its ludicrous aspirations to control complex supernatural phenomena through a mundane organizational structure. The early books paint the Ministry as merely bumbling and inefficient. Ministry officials busy themselves with minutiae (e.g. standardizing cauldron thicknesses) and coin politically correct euphemisms like “non-magical community” (for Muggles) and “memory modification” (for magical brainwashing). The novels also satirize bureaucratic culture through the depiction of Ministry personnel, like the archetypal civil servant Barty

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14 The major European wizarding schools are international in scope. Durmstrang, the German school, is located at some undisclosed location in the “north” but draws students like Victor Krum from Bulgaria, while Hogwarts students come from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

15 There are numerous exceptions to this rule, including the Dursleys (Harry’s relatives), Muggles like the Grangers whose children attend Hogwarts, and the British Prime Minister who, apparently, has full knowledge of the magical conspiracy (Prisoner 33).
Crouch Sr., with his “narrow toothbrush moustache [that] looked as though he trimmed it using a slide-rule” (Goblet 83) and the aptly named Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge.  

Yet, as the series progresses, the Ministry’s dubious aims and weak leadership take on increasingly sinister implications and its methods become increasingly invasive, draconian, and totalitarian. Goblet, for example, is rife with Ministry corruption and injustice, from the Crucible-like interrogation of Winky the house-elf and the multiple erasures of Muggle memories, to the deals struck by former Death Eaters for “naming names” and the rank abuses of office by senior official Barty Crouch.

Although the foregoing sketch may seem to suggest that the books are anti-government and anti-modern, this reading is too one-sided. Certainly there are recognizable parallels between Rowling’s portrait and the behaviour of contemporary politicians; Rowling even fancifully recounts an incident when the murder of twelve Muggles by a wizard is covered up by the British government as a gas explosion (Prisoner 35). But one could just as easily enumerate the differences; indeed, the Ministry of Magic’s flaws could be interpreted as a back-handed affirmation of the functionality and justice of most liberal democracies. As Susan Hall points out, the wizard bureaucracy is a deeply conflicted political structure, grossly deficient in its application of the rule of law (Hall 147-148). One basic problem is that there is no

16 Fudge’s surname which signals both his incompetence and his propensity for “fudging the truth,” covering up damaging developments and issuing prepared statements full of misinformation and “spin.” When questioned by Harry about inconsistencies in magical law enforcement, a flustered Fudge replies, “Circumstances change, Harry…we have to take into account…the present climate” (Prisoner 39). Later, when Fudge refuses to accept the truth about Voldemort’s return, we see the dark side of bureaucratic culture: “[Harry] had always thought of Fudge as a kindly figure, a little blustering, a little pompous, but essentially good-natured. But now a short, angry wizard stood before him, refusing, point-blank, to accept the prospect of disruption in his comfortable and ordered world” (Goblet 613). Dumbledore puts it even more starkly: “You are blinded…by the love of the office you hold, Cornelius!” (Goblet 614).

17 For example, when Harry receives an official warning for violating the regulations for underage magic in the Dursley home (though Dobby, not Harry, performs the spell) (Chamber 21), we perceive that the Ministry regularly combines Orwellian levels of surveillance with staggering ignorance.

18 In Chamber, for example, Fudge arrests Hagrid and sends him, without evidence or trial, to Azkaban prison, because as Minister he has “got to be seen to be doing something” (Chamber 193). In Prisoner, we see Buckbeak the Hippogriff unjustly executed and learn that Sirius Black was sentenced to life imprisonment, without a trial, for a crime he didn’t commit; when he is captured, Fudge orders that Black receive the Dementors’ Kiss, even though his protestations of innocence could presumably be corroborated by employing Veritaserum (truth potion). In Phoenix, the Ministry appoints a senior civil servant, the sadistic Dolores Umbridge, to fill the vacant Defence Against the Dark Arts position, ostensibly to ensure that “Ministry-approved curriculum” is introduced, but it soon becomes apparent that she is there to spy on Dumbledore and suppress any discussion of Voldemort’s return. Umbridge is quickly appointed High Inquisitor of Hogwarts, issuing Educational Decrees, opening private mail, and appointing an Inquisitorial Squad (composed of Slytherin students) to assist her in her reign of terror.

19 At the end of Goblet, Fudge clumsily destroys evidence for Voldemort’s return and then denies it has occurred, calling the integrity of Dumbledore and Harry into question; this willful blindness leads to a parting of the ways between Dumbledore’s loyal circle and the wizard bureaucracy.
differentiation between the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government; the Ministry subsumes all of these functions (Hall 149). There are seemingly no mechanisms of democratic or legal accountability, no checks and balances other than a generalized fear of public opinion. Inequality, slavery even, is sanctioned and institutionalized, the violation of human rights customary. These systemic flaws lead to corruption and chaos: the Ministry has enormous difficulty enforcing its own laws and ends up serving the interests of Voldemort, its ostensible enemy.

Arguably then, Rowling, through an implied contrast with the hyperbolic failures of the Ministry, affirms the desirability of strong political institutions; indeed, she has been accused by left-leaning critics like Gupta and Mendlesohn of being overly supportive of hierarchical structures of authority. Certainly Hogwarts itself is an example of a traditional hierarchy which functions well because it is ruled by benign authority-figures like Dumbledore and MacGonagall. Rowling advocates neither radical reform nor the demolition of authority structures per se but their renewal through inspired leaders who are just, merciful, and tolerant. Unless those in authority are committed to liberal values, it is all too easy, in political crises, to justify repression. During Voldemort’s initial rise to power, for example, Barty Crouch Sr. imposes a kind of martial law, killing and imprisoning suspected Death Eaters without trial: “Crouch fought violence with violence, and authorized the use of the Unforgivable Curses against suspects. I would say he became as ruthless and cruel as many on the Dark side” (Goblet 457). For Rowling, then, the ultimate failure of political institutions is not primarily systemic but personal and moral. At the end of Goblet, Dumbledore shows implicit faith that the Ministry of Magic can be a force for good, provided that Fudge provides courageous, inspired leadership:

I tell you now – take the steps I have suggested, and you will be remembered, in office or out, as one of the bravest and greatest Ministers for Magic we have ever known. Fail to act – and history will remember you as the man who stepped aside, and allowed Voldemort a second chance to destroy the world we have tried to rebuild! (Goblet 614-615)

In Potterworld, political life is never autonomous; its force and direction derive from the ethical and religious values of political leaders.

Clearly, we are edging here toward the role of ideology in both political culture and the formation of subjectivity. The exposure of ideology is a hallmark of secular modernity, but Rowling puts this motif to some unconventional and equivocal uses. Magical identities are sometimes represented as “constructed” and determined by socio-political environment and ideological conditioning; Barty Crouch Jr., neglected son of a power-hungry bureaucrat is a good example of this, as is the bitter house-elf Kreacher who, says Dumbledore, “is what he has been made by wizards” (Phoenix 733). Even Voldemort, the closest thing to the personification of evil in the novels, seems to be a by-product of dysfunctional class and race relations; born to a poor witch mother (who died in childbirth) and a wealthy Muggle father who refused to acknowledge him, he grew up in a Muggle orphanage, murdered his father in revenge, and embarked on a quest for absolute power (Chamber 231; Goblet 561). But environment and early ideological
conditioning hardly suffice as global explanations for identity formation in the novels, especially in the case of Harry, whose abusive upbringing by the Dursleys in a Muggle-centric world (remarkably similar to Voldemort’s background), could hardly be expected to produce such a virtuous and heroic individual. Clearly other factors are involved. Rowling suggests that Harry is at least partly what he is because of the two-sided phenomenon of “blood”: both his genetic inheritance from his parents and the protective sacrifice of his mother. But this explanation, which can easily take deterministic and fascist forms, is supplemented by an insistent emphasis on choice, which is also two-sided. Harry, as Dumbledore reminds him, is the sum of his choices, which “show what we truly are, far more than our abilities” (Chamber 245). But he is also unquestionably “chosen” and “singled out” from birth (Stone 66), “a marked man” (Phoenix 754) whose scar proclaims him the equal and nemesis of the Dark Lord. Choice, in the latter sense, implies a transcendent chooser and therefore a metaphysical and theological framework. Identity then, for Rowling, consists of many strands, the secular and religious intertwined once again.

Rowling, a former Amnesty International worker and an influential advocate for AIDS research and single parents, is undoubtedly a political liberal, and her books express a liberal perspective on the politics of race, exposing the insidious “pure-blood” ideology that motivates the “Death-Eaters” (followers of Lord Voldemort), who all possess a pathological contempt for Muggles and Mudbloods. In fact, Rowling comes close to defining racism as the secular equivalent of original sin, for, aside from the sheer lust for power, pure-blood ideology is the defining characteristic of all the villainous and unsympathetic characters. Conversely, virtually all of the sympathetic characters – Harry, the Weasleys, Dumbledore, Hermione – espouse tolerance toward other magical races and species. Yet Rowling’s novels demonstrate the limitations of liberal ideology itself, most pointedly in Hermione’s campaign to liberate the house-elves. Hermione struggles valiantly against the complacency of both her fellow students and the elves themselves who, with the single exception of Dobby, happily accept their lot in life as natural slaves. To her credit she recognizes that the political (and almost literal) invisibility of house-elves is ideologically driven:

It’s people like you, Ron…who prop up rotten and unjust systems, just because they’re too lazy…. (Goblet 112)

It’s all in Hogwarts: A History. Though, of course, that book’s not entirely reliable. “A Revised History of Hogwarts” would be a more accurate title. Or “A Highly Biased and Selective History of Hogwarts, Which Glosses Over the Nastier Aspects of the School”… Not once, in over a thousand pages, does Hogwarts: A History mention that we are all colluding in the oppression of a hundred slaves! (Goblet 209-210)

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20 Liberalism in the contemporary world may take the most saccharine and inane forms, such as Gilderoy Lockhart’s confession of faith: “my ideal birthday gift would be harmony between all magic and non-magic peoples…. [and] my secret ambition is to rid the world of evil and market my own range of hair-care potions” (Chamber 78).
Although Hermione is well-intentioned and “correct” in her assessment, she is curiously blind to the limitations and excesses of her liberal activism; indeed, her choice of acronym -- SPEW (Society for the Protection of Elfish Welfare) – is a vivid example of her myopia. Hermione badgers and bullies her fellow students with self-righteous zeal, steamrolling over their objections or indifference. Her quasi-religious “faith” in the efficacy of activism is both touching and, in the context of the political culture of the magical world, extremely naïve:

Our short-term aims...are to secure house-elves fair wages and working conditions. Our long-term aims include changing the law about non-wand-use, and trying to get an elf into the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures, because they’re shockingly under-represented. (Goblet 198)

Rowling portrays intransigence and inflexibility on all sides: oppressors, victims, and activists. She implies, quite rightly, that there are no simple, “magical” solutions to problems like social inequality, which resist both systemic refinements and the benign intentions of do-gooders.

In many ways, these perspectives are brought together in Phoenix, where the Fountain of Magical Brethren becomes a kind of comprehensive symbol for wizard political culture. The monument is the centerpiece of the Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, an image of the ideals which supposedly animate its activities:

A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. Glittering jets of water were flying from the ends of their wands, the point of the centaur’s arrow, the tip of the goblin’s hat and each of the house-elf’s ears. (Phoenix 117)

The fountain is the quintessential expression of wizard ideology, representing fraternity among the magical races, though not equality: the human figures are clearly dominant over the nonhuman, and the male over the female. On one level, the fountain as a public symbol tells the truth: most wizards do wish for peace, and they also desire hegemony. But the fountain, as Dumbledore later states, also tells a lie, occluding the long history of neglect, indifference, and abuse that have actually brought the magical world to the brink of civil war and violent revolution: “We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward” (Phoenix 735). Significantly, during Dumbledore’s fight with Voldemort, the statues in the fountain are all damaged or destroyed (e.g. the wizard at the top is actually decapitated) (Phoenix 715-717), symbolically denuding the ideology they reify. And yet, even in this gesture, Rowling resists one-sidedness. During the duel, the statues are brought to life by Dumbledore and come to his aid, imprisoning the Death Eater Bellatrix Lestrange and shielding Harry from harm. Rowling suggests that perhaps the ideology expressed in the fountain,
properly shorn of its hegemonic bias, can be can reanimated in the battle against a common enemy.

The Pales And Forts Of Reason

As I have tried to demonstrate, Rowling’s fictional world is only superficially pre-modern or anti-modern; the challenges, interests, and outlook of her characters coincide substantially with those of her contemporary readers. In most respects, the characters negotiate the world in accordance with the analytical categories, values, and cognitive modes characteristic of secular modernity. At the same time, Rowling often reveals in this secular outlook a submerged religious dimension.

Rationalism and skepticism, hallmarks of the Enlightenment, are normative cognitive modes in the *Harry Potter* books. It is remarkable, given the everyday familiarity of “mysterious” forces, how superstitious and credulous wizards can be. Perhaps the most universally-held superstition is the aversion to saying Voldemort’s name; he is called “You-Know-Who,” “He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” and “The Dark Lord” by virtually everyone (including his own followers) with the exception of Dumbledore and Harry. Dumbledore, in his explanation to Professor MacGonagall, epitomizes a kind of normative rationalism:

My dear Professor, surely a sensible person like yourself can call him by his name? All this “You-Know-Who” nonsense – for eleven years I have been trying to persuade people to call him by his proper name: Voldemort...It all gets so confusing if we keep saying “You-Know-Who”. I have never seen any reason to be frightened of saying Voldemort’s name. (Stone 14)

In turn, Harry and his friends succeed in the books largely because they are able to master their irrational impulses and approach apparent “mysteries” in a hard-headed rationalistic spirit, the juvenile mystery format of the books reinforcing this drive toward demystification. Encountering Snape’s riddling protective spell over the Philosopher’s Stone, Hermione exclaims, “This isn’t magic – it’s logic – a puzzle. A lot of the greatest wizards haven’t got an ounce of logic, they’d be stuck in here for ever” (Stone 207).

Nowhere are rationalism and skepticism given greater prominence than the satirical treatment of Divination and its attendant forms: palm reading, crystal balls, tarot cards, tea leaves, horoscopes. Hogwarts’ Divination teacher, Sybill Trelawney is the epitome of

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21 Ron says disgustedly of Hogwarts students, “People here’ll believe anything” (*Chamber* 116), yet Ron himself has a number of superstitions, including the Grim, a death omen in the shape of a black dog (*Prisoner* 85).

22 Later in the book Dumbledore commends Harry for persisting in using the name rather than the euphemisms: “Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself” (*Stone* 216).
New Age flakiness, while her classroom, located at high in the North Tower, has all the smoke-and-mirror theatrical trappings of the fortune-telling charlatan (Prisoner 79).

Rowling has a great deal of fun mocking Trelawney and the divinatory arts, which MacGonagall euphemistically describes as “one of the most imprecise branches of magic” (Prisoner 84) and Hermione calls “very woolly” and “a lot of guesswork” (Prisoner 85). Indeed, Hermione, normally a model of application and deference, is uncharacteristically outspoken in her criticism of Trelawney’s Divination class, dropping it halfway through her third year to focus instead on “sensible” disciplines like Arithmancy. Just before Hermione walks out of the class, Trelawney sneers, “I don’t remember ever meeting a student whose mind was so hopelessly Mundane” (Prisoner 220). The lines are clearly drawn here between mysticism and rationalism/skepticism: if Hermione, the most intelligent student at Hogwarts, is intellectually “mundane,” then so too are the author and the reader.

Once again, however, Rowling undermines what looks like a simple formula as she assiduously rehabilitates the supernatural. Even the most skeptical characters don’t rule out the possibility that oracular foresight exists, maintaining that, as the no-nonsense MacGonagall says, “True Seers are very rare” (Prisoner 84). This possibility for authentic “seeing” is realized when Trelawney herself, apparently for only the second time in her life, unconsciously delivers a genuine prophecy:

…a loud, harsh voice spoke behind him.

‘It will happen tonight.’

Harry wheeled around. Professor Trelawney had gone rigid in her armchair, her eyes were unfocused, and her mouth sagging.

‘S-sorry?’ said Harry.

But Professor Trelawney didn’t seem to hear him. Her eyes started to roll….She looked as though she was about to have some sort of seizure….Professor Trelawney spoke again, in the same harsh voice, quite unlike her own.

‘The Dark Lord lies alone and friendless, abandoned by his followers. His servant has been chained these twelve years. Tonight, before midnight, the servant will break free and set out to rejoin his master. The Dark Lord will rise again with his servant’s aid, greater and more terrible than ever before. Tonight...before midnight, the servant...will set out...to rejoin...his master...’

Professor Trelawney’s head fell forwards onto her chest. She made a grunting noise. Then, quite suddenly, her head snapped up again. (Prisoner 238)
Rowling doesn’t explore the obvious question of what or who is speaking through Trelawney (strangely, the tone of the prophecy seems pro-Voldemort), but the passage nevertheless trumps secular rationalism and skepticism. Similarly, while astrology is generally mocked throughout the novels, Rowling treats the star-gazing race of centaurs with comparative dignity. Firenze the centaur, who considers human fortune-telling “self-flattering nonsense” about “trivial hurts, tiny human accidents…unaffected by planetary movements” (*Phoenix* 531), nevertheless affirms that an authentic astrological science exists:

> Centaurs have unraveled the mysteries of these movements over centuries. Our findings teach us that the future may be glimpsed in the sky above us…. I… am here to explain the wisdom of centaurs, which is impersonal and impartial. We watch the skies for the great tides of evil or change that are sometimes marked there. (*Phoenix* 531)

Both prophecy and astrology, then, are subjected to a form of rational skepticism, not to discredit them entirely, but to distinguish genuine manifestations of the supernatural from a mass of deceptions. Rowling’s skepticism, I would argue, is Cartesian rather than nihilist or existentialist; the aim is freedom from illusions, not wholesale Weberian “disenchantment.”

Rowling goes further yet, countering her satire on faux mysticism with an insistence on the limitations of rationalism and skepticism themselves. In certain circumstances, rationalism can be folly, a mask for presuppositional prejudice or closed-mindedness, and this sort of conflict plays out repeatedly in the novels. In *Phoenix*, Luna Lovegood hits a nerve when she counters Hermione’s dismissal of her belief in Heliopaths: “There are plenty of eye-witness accounts. Just because you’re so narrow-minded you need to have everything shoved under your nose before you [believe] – “ (*Phoenix* 308). When the two clash again in the Department of Mysteries, the limits of rationalism are brought out even more pointedly. Harry is drawn to an ancient stone archway on a raised dais, “hung with a tattered black curtain or veil which…was fluttering very slightly as though it had just been touched” (an obvious and traditional symbol of death) (*Phoenix* 682), certain he can hear whispering and murmuring voices behind it:

> ‘I can hear them too,’ breathed Luna, joining them around the side of the archway and gazing at the swaying veil. ‘There are people in there!’

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23 This certainly appears to be the case with Professor Binns, the History of Magic teacher. In response to Hermione’s query about the Chamber of Secrets, Binns replies testily, “‘I deal with facts, Miss Granger, not myths and legends,” dismissing it as arrant nonsense because learned witches and wizards have searched the castle but found no empirical evidence for the Chamber (*Chamber* 113, 115). But Binns is wrong: the Chamber in question does exist, as we discover in the climactic scene. The irony is rendered even more delicious by the fact that Binns, committed “to solid, believable, verifiable fact” (*Chamber* 115), is himself a ghost; clearly, one person’s fact is another’s myth.
'What do you mean, “in there”? ’ demanded Hermione, jumping down from the bottom step and sounding much angrier than the occasion warranted. ‘There isn’t any “in there”, it’s just an archway, there’s no room for anybody to be there. Harry, stop it, come away –‘

She grabbed his arm and pulled, but he resisted. *(Phoenix 683)*

The scene is a beautifully structured clash between profane and religious perspectives. Hermione, usually reliable and brilliant, takes the materialist standpoint but is clearly wrong: the voices that Harry and Luna hear are real, just as they can both see the horse-like Thestrals (invisible to the vast majority of students), because, having seen death intimately, they are sensitized to spiritual realities.

This is not to say that Rowling simply valorizes mysticism or spiritualism. Rather, she advocates a balance between credulity and skepticism, a dialectic between religious and secular modes of understanding. This is the perspective championed by Dumbledore, Harry, and, surprisingly, the centaur Firenze. Having extolled the value of studying heavenly bodies and observing symbols in fume and flame, he ends his first class on a note of intellectual caution and humility:

…it was foolish to put too much faith in such things, anyway, because even centaurs sometimes read them wrongly. He was nothing like any human teacher Harry had ever had. His priority did not seem to be to teach them what he knew, but rather to impress on them that nothing, not even centaurs’ knowledge, was foolproof.

‘He’s not very definite on anything, is he?’ said Ron… *(Phoenix 532)*

Firenze’s lack of certainty, combined with his openness toward transcendence, represents, I believe, Rowling’s own position: true rationality, though never credulous, is receptive to divinity and mystery. In this sort of cognitive framework, Trelawney’s admonition no longer sounds out of place: “Broaden your minds, my dears, and allow your eyes to see past the mundane!” *(Prisoner 81)*.

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**Knowing Your Enemy**

In *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity*, sociologist Peter Berger writes movingly of his aspiration “to reconcile a religious quest with an honest recognition of [his] contemporary social context” (20), to avoid the orthodoxies, both secular and religious, which claim to relieve one of the burdens of modernity. The *Harry Potter* novels, I believe, aspire to such a dialectical *rapprochement* between the claims of religion and secularity. We see this figured in the central symbol of the Potter novels: the lightning-shaped scar Harry receives from Voldemort as an infant. As Dumbledore says, “Scars can come in useful” *(Stone 17)*, and certainly Harry’s scar proves both a blessing
and curse (*Phoenix* 742), a source of intense physical and emotional pain, as well as a valuable warning device. The scar’s shape signifies power; inadvertently, Voldemort transfers some of his own extraordinary powers to Harry. He also appears, through contagious magic, to “infect” Harry with aspects of his own nature – e.g. ambition, determination, disregard for rules and limits – just as Harry’s blood presumably infects the resurrected Voldemort with unspecified virtues conferred by his mother’s sacrifice. For Harry, Voldemort is not external and other; he is Harry’s shadow and, as *Phoenix* demonstrates, an aspect of Harry’s own “pluralized” consciousness. The scar further symbolizes Harry’s destiny as Voldemort’s nemesis. According to Trelawney’s first prophecy, Harry is “the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord” whom “the Dark Lord will mark...as his equal” (*Phoenix* 741), chosen, in fact, says Dumbledore, because Voldemort sees a reflection of himself in the infant.

Voldemort and Harry are connected in another way that indicates an intertwined destiny: the magical feathers in the core of their wands come from the same phoenix, Fawkes. Just as their wands are “brothers” (*Stone* 65), Harry and Voldemort have something of a fraternal relation: both are born to greatness. Accordingly, when the two wands are used against each other in *Goblet*, a strange phenomenon occurs:

A jet of green light issued from Voldemort’s wand just as a jet of red light blasted from Harry’s – they met in mid-air….a narrow beam of light was now connecting the two wands, neither red nor green, but bright, deep gold….The golden thread connecting Harry and Voldemort splintered: though the wands remained connected, a thousand more offshoots arced high over Harry and Voldemort, criss-crossing all around them, until they were enclosed in a golden, dome-shaped web, a cage of light. (*Goblet* 576)

The passage suggests, not just the equality of the two wands and their owners, but their affinity as well, their mutual participation in a larger, transcendent design. Reluctant to destroy its counterpart, Harry’s wand instead forces Voldemort’s to regurgitate its most recent spells (i.e. the ghostly forms of four people he has murdered), to “recant,” so to speak, its evil deeds. Indeed, the novels suggest that a figurative process of alchemical purification and transformation underlies each encounter between Harry and Voldemort, leading, presumably, toward some kind of golden perfection. Moreover, even though the prophecy stipulates that “either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live

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24 The clever, handsome Tom Riddle was “the most brilliant student Hogwarts has ever seen” (*Chamber* 242), while Harry is certainly the most courageous. Mr Ollivander, the maker of both wands, says, “I think we must expect great things from you, Mr Potter...After all, He-Who-Must-Not-Be Named did great things – terrible, yes, but great” (*Stone* 65), while the Sorting Hat considers placing Harry in Slytherin House because they could “help [him] on the way to greatness” (*Stone* 91).

25 In *Phoenix*, argues Granger, Harry undergoes the alchemical nigredo; he is broken down to “a formless condition akin to the prime matter of the alchemists” (Granger, *Looking* 162-163), and Voldemort is certainly an essential agent in this refinement process.
while the other survives” (Phoenix 741), there are oblique hints that Voldemort too may ultimately be transfigured by the conflict.26

Although I am not arguing that Rowling’s books are a sustained allegory of the conflict between religion (i.e. Harry) and secularity (i.e. Voldemort), it may be worthwhile, in conclusion, to consider briefly the merits of such a reading. As I have shown, Harry’s role, experience, and standpoint in the novels are consonant on many levels with religious faith, while Voldemort articulates a radically relativistic and materialist creed: “There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it” (Stone 211); “There is nothing worse than death” (Phoenix 718). Harry, possessing a “power the Dark Lord knows not (i.e. love)” (Phoenix 741), naturally finds himself in conflict the Dark Lord, yet their antithesis is never absolute. Like religion and secularity, the two are mutually constitutive, marked as warring siblings, and “infected” with one another at the level of consciousness. In Phoenix, when Dumbledore realizes this, he insists that Harry study Occlumency, the defence of the mind against external penetration. But curiously Harry does not study, leaving his mind open to Voldemort’s influence. The result is painful in some ways but illuminating in others. Harry falls for Voldemort’s deception, but he also achieves his heart’s longing: to enter the Department of Mysteries, a restricted section of the Ministry of Magic where “Unspeakables” study the great mysteries of existence such as the Mind, Death, Love, Time, and the Future. In all of their interaction, Harry never ceases to be what he is: he never becomes Voldemort. But he cannot achieve his destiny without knowing Voldemort fully, both as an external enemy and as an aspect of himself.

As a religious response to secularity, then, the Harry Potter books occupy a position in between the poles of accommodation – conforming religious faith to a secular mould – and rejection – the “Occlumency” of religious conservatives who would close their minds to all worldly influences. Without the transcendent vision and values of religion, the secular condition, like Voldemort, can easily degenerate into nihilism and murderous expediency. Conversely, a religious vision which does not embrace that which is great and intrinsically valuable in secularity predictably degenerates as well. At best, the anti-modernism of radical sectarians is inauthentic and illusory; at worst, as we sadly witness in our world, religion becomes irrational and destructive. To frame the issue more positively, like Harry’s relation to the Dark Lord, religious faith cannot know itself qua faith without secularity, without the painful but necessary rupture between church and state. As Peter Berger argues, modernity’s subversion of certainty and religious consensus actually opens up grand new possibilities for faith: “It allows an individual in quest of religious truth to make something of a fresh start” (Glory 127). The Harry Potter

26 Some of these hints include the fact that Harry has saved the life of Voldemort’s servant Wormtail, indebting the latter (Prisoner 311); the “gleam of something like triumph in Dumbledore’s eyes” when he learns that Voldemort has been reborn in a cauldron containing Harry’s ‘sanctified’ blood (Goblet 604); and Dumbledore’s insistence on addressing Voldemort as Tom, reminding the Dark Lord of his very human origins (Phoenix 718-719).
books, I would argue, are themselves a kind of “fresh start,” a re-articulation of the quest for religious truth in contemporary terms. Like Jesus’s parable of “The Wheat and the Tares” (Matt. 13.24-30, 36-43), they compel us to accept a world in which the religious and the secular must necessarily grow up side by side, often indistinguishably, separable only by the angelic reapers at the end of the age.

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Hegel’s Defence Of Constitutional Monarchy And Its Relevance Within The Post-National State.

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“The development of the state to constitutional monarchy is the achievement of the modern world, in which the substantial Idea has attained infinite form.”

To many interpreters, one of the most incredible claims of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right is found at its culminating moment: the rational justification of constitutional monarchy, determined by a hereditary principle of succession. Many central questions surrounding the interpretation of the Hegelian political philosophy hinge upon one’s understanding of the status of Hegel’s argument for constitutional monarchy as the most rational form of government in the modern world. Is the institution of hereditary monarchy a merely given and natural foundation to government that betrays the Cartesian-Kantian revolution through a return to medieval forms grounded upon what lies beyond human reason? Is Hegel betraying his own fundamental philosophical insights in order to conform his argument to the historical reality given in his time?

Many recent commentators have clarified why Hegel’s claim that constitutional monarchy is the rational modern form of government is a coherent and adequate explanation of European freedom in the 19th century. Yet they have not given a sufficient account of why, if constitutional monarchy is the most rational form of government, it has gradually receded from prominence in post-Hegelian times, and appears quite anachronistic, if not irrational, from a contemporary perspective. In the interest of defending Hegel, certain commentators have, against Hegel’s own expressed intentions, radically historicized his claim to the rationality of these institutions, without clarifying why constitutional monarchy appears unacceptable in our own times. Should this contemporary shift away from monarchy be understood as an historical refutation of the rationality Hegel sees in this form of government? Or, conversely, are our contemporary attitudes towards monarchy merely irrational prejudices from a Hegelian perspective?


2 PR, 3.
In what follows, I argue that Hegel’s philosophical defence of hereditary monarchy is the proper principle of modern European states and not some reactionary historical accommodation. Rather, Hegel’s treatment of the constitution in the *Philosophy of Right* offers the adequate institutional expression of the naturally given basis of citizenship at the very foundation of the 19th century nation-state. Yet Hegel was himself aware of the limitations of these naturally immediate national identities, and the inevitable strife that would result at the level of international relations between the European nation states. He also recognized that the constitutional monarchies of European nation states had reached a certain culmination, from which they would only degenerate and give way to a new principle of political life. Yet unable to transcend the historical situation of his own time, Hegel could only point to this future epoch.

Following the work of James Doull, I will look to North American history as the next logical development upon European political freedom. I will examine the character of the post-national state in contrast with the constitutional monarchies of the European nation states, and suggest that while the sovereignty of the Hegelian European state is preserved in these North American states, the basis of civic identity is shifted from a natural, aboriginal nationality to a common adherence to certain universal principles. In addition, the principle of federalism in these post-national states introduces a substantial union of various nations unthinkable from the perspective of the 19th century. Federalism corrects the inevitable tendency towards war between the European nation states through their exclusive particularities, and has hence been partially adopted even by the European community to resolve the tensions which exploded in the first part of the 20th century. I argue that the immediate givenness at the root of hereditary monarchy is the first principle of a nation itself based on a certain natural givenness to its citizenship, while the more ideal post-national citizenship has rendered this principle of succession obsolete to its citizens. I will conclude by considering how, despite the contemporary irrationality of hereditary monarchs, many of Hegel’s arguments for hereditary monarchy as an institution which makes explicit the separation of state from society ring true in light of certain problems presented by an elected, highly politicized head of state, and I consider the difficulty of finding a non-hereditary head of state which nevertheless stands above the political fray as the unity beyond the division of opposed factions within civil society.

The argument is divided into four sections. First, I will briefly review various prominent interpretations of Hegel’s claim that constitutional monarchy is the rational modern state. Second, through a reading of the relevant passages in the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, I will attempt to reconstruct Hegel’s argument for the rationality of hereditary constitutional monarchy, showing how he provides the adequate constitutional structure for the European state of the 19th century. Third, I will attempt to show how Hegel himself saw that this European state, having reached its culmination, would degenerate based on certain tensions within itself that it could not contain. Finally, I will consider how this analysis allows us to understand the more universal and ideal basis of citizenship of North American states as constituting a new category of political community more able to reconcile the tensions and confusions of universality and particularity inherent in the European nation state. I will conclude by considering what is the adequate institutional expression of these post-national states.
from a Hegelian perspective. Although naturally inherited roles are no longer relevant in this new political context, and although the head of state in post-national states should not be a hereditary monarch, he or she must be selected in some manner which does not subject the office to the political divisions inherent in election. Only in this way can the state as a whole properly transcend the divisions of civil society.

I Literature On Hegel And Monarchy – Approach To The Question

How one evaluates the significance and truth of Hegel’s political thought is often determined by how one understands Hegel’s claim that the most rational form of modern government is the constitutional monarchy. Evaluations of this claim vary widely: Hegel has frequently been understood to be either conforming his argument to the authority of the Prussian government to protect himself from censorship, or as conforming the realm of the political to his own abstract metaphysical logic. Some take Hegel to be pantheistically conferring rationality and eternal validity upon the contingently existent institutions of his time, thus reducing the value of his description of the state to the level of a historically relative snapshot. In direct contradiction to this reading, others understand Hegel to be taking flight in reactionary fashion from modern freedom, rejecting the modern state in favour of outdated and already obsolete medieval and renaissance institutions. They criticize Hegel for having betrayed his rational, modern insights into true freedom through a regressive appeal to the naturally given features of medieval institutions such as monarchy, corporations, and political privilege of a landed aristocracy. Other commentators acknowledge that Hegel was attempting to bring together in the ruler both institutional stability and the expression of the will of its citizens, but they conclude that he was entirely unsuccessful in locating this resolution within hereditary monarchy.

3 Both these claims can be traced back to Marx’s critique of Hegel.

4 Rudolf Haym, Hegel und seine Zeit. For a clear refutation of the pantheistic reading of Hegel’s famous statement concerning the actuality of the rational and the rationality of the actual, and a succinct clarification of the true meaning of this doctrine, see Emil Fackenheim’s “Hegel on the Actuality of the Rational and the Rationality of the Actual” in The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 164-171.

5 J.N. Findlay interprets this flaw in Hegel’s thought in a more benign light, attributing his historicism to Hegel’s unimaginative and uninteresting status as political thinker, unable to think beyond the given institutions of his time. See his Hegel: A Re-Examination (New York : Collier, 1962) 326-332.

6 Michael Levin and Howard Williams, “Inherited Power and Popular Representation: a Tension in Hegel’s Political Theory,” Political Studies XXXV (1987) 105-115. They write: “Monarchy was held to be the essential character of the modern state, yet it is hard to resolve the uncertainties in Hegel’s presentation of it. The hereditary principle appears to have no justification. Birth opens up the position to chance just as much as would elevation by popular election – which Hegel regarded as the ‘worst of institutions’” (106).
Even among Hegel’s most sympathetic commentators, there is often the need to explain away Hegel’s defence of the rationality of monarchy. In their defence of Hegel from some of the aforementioned misrepresentations, these commentators’ underplay monarchy’s importance in Hegel’s political thought, presenting a Hegelian political philosophy for which hereditary monarchy is either merely incidental or inexplicable. Recently, however, there have been several commentators who have attempted to show the rationality of the importance Hegel ascribed to Constitutional Monarchy, that it is both internally consistent with Hegel’s general philosophical principles, and that it gives the adequate expression to the political institutions of Hegel’s Europe. Mark Tunick tries to show that Hegel’s argument for Hereditary Monarchy is ‘plausible,’ although of restricted contemporary relevance, since “Hereditary Monarchy is not a live option for us in the 1990’s.” Tunick, however, while clarifying the sense of Hegel’s arguments in many respects, does not go on to explain the gulf between this plausibility and its implausibility for contemporary political thought. Bernard Yack offers a very convincing defence of Hegel’s claim that constitutional monarchy is the most rational constitution, and concludes that this argument has an eternal validity. The fact that constitutional monarchy “is especially difficult to accept in the twentieth century with the disappearance of the monarchies that Hegel’s contemporaries knew” does not indicate, on Yack’s view, that constitutional monarchy is no longer an adequately rational

7 Eric Weil finds in the monarchical element of Hegel’s state the one element that is not consistent with the rational modern state. See Eric Weil, Hegel et l’état : Cinq Conférences (Paris: Vrin, 1980). Weil writes that Hegel’s rational constitution “est l’état moderne tel qu’il existe encore aujourd’hui partout, à une exception près, à la vérité importante aux yeux de Hegel: le principe monarchique” (56). Shlomo Avineri strips the monarchy of almost all of its import, understanding the monarch as merely the “symbol of self-determination” and “a mere symbol of the unity of the state,” imagining that Hegel “must have had his tongue in cheek” when writing that the monarchical element was decisively important and the very mark of the modern world. See Shlomo Avineri, Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 185-189. K.-H. Ilting sees both conservative and liberal aspects as part of Hegel’s argument, but these are never brought together into one coherent view. Instead, Ilting identifies the text of the Philosophy of Right as conservative, while his Berlin lectures present a liberal view in which the monarch’s powers are ceremonial only, and these views “in no way agree.” See K.-H Ilting, “The Structure of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” in Hegel’s Political Philosophy, ed. Z.A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971) 90-110, esp. 105-107. Against Ilting, I understand the views in both PR and the lectures to be wholly compatible.


9 Mark Tunick, “Hegel’s Justification of Hereditary Monarchy,” History of Political Thought, Fall 91; 12(3): 482. Tunick picks this “most metaphysical (and bizarre) of Hegel’s claims” in order to show how Hegel is not merely conforming politics to metaphysics, but that the Philosophy of Right, “while metaphysical, is also political” (i.e. if this argument can be made plausible, any of Hegel’s arguments can). See Tunick, 483.

institutional expression of our freedom, but that we are simply no longer capable of sustaining the rationality and freedom of the previous age. For Yack, either there is a more rational form of government than constitutional monarchy that has developed in post-Hegelian history which proves that Hegel’s argument is simply wrong, or else Hegel’s argument is right and contemporary non-monarchical governments do not attain the rationality and freedom of constitutional monarchy.

In what follows, I will be arguing a position that does not follow either of these two options. I agree with Yack that Hegel’s defence of the rationality of constitutional monarchy adequately grasps the institutional structure of modern European nation-states, and that “his view of the rational constitution is not incorrect simply because it is not possible in our times.” Yet against Yack, I seek to show how Hegel himself understood the tension inherent in these states that would lead to their eventual degeneration. The post-national states that reached maturity after Hegel’s own time, especially the United States and Canada, are founded on a different basis of freedom for which hereditary monarchy is no longer the rational expression. Yet these historical developments, on Hegel’s own terms, are in themselves rational expressions of self-determining freedom.

II Hegel’s Account Of Constitutional Monarchy As The Rational State In Modern Europe

Hegel’s account of constitutional monarchy in the Philosophy of Right can be reduced neither to a merely historical account of European political life, nor to an ahistorically rational account. Against any defence of Hegel’s views that appeals to what Weil calls “historical excuses,” Hegel clearly describes his task in the Philosophy of Right as “an attempt to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity.” Consequently, as Weil justly writes, “the Hegelian thesis has the right to be judged according to the standard which it affirms as its own, that of reason.” Yet Hegel is clear that in order for this philosophical grasp of the rational state to be possible, this rational freedom must already be present in the world. It is therefore also important that one

11 Yack, 719.
12 PR, Preface, p. 21.
13 Weil 60.
14 Alan Brudner brings out very clearly how the constitutional monarchy outlined by Hegel cannot be associated with any particular existent regime, and how Hegel thought that this form of government had only been attained “implicitly or in embryo.” He saw this possibility especially in Germany, through the way that the German kingdoms themselves championed the principles of the French Revolution. This comes out most clearly, for Brudner, in Hegel’s essay on the Wurtemberg Estates. See Brudner, 129-130. Hegel himself makes it clear that one must not think that he is describing any particular state, Prussia, England or France, but that he is giving the universal logic underlying the modern European state in general, which is inevitably manifest in the various historical examples: “In considering the Idea of the state, we should not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind; instead, we should consider the Idea, this actual God, in its own right” (PR 258 addition). One could say that it is necessary that all the elements which Hegel describes in his rational constitution must be present in these states, and their reconciliation must be possible and implicit in these countries in order to be apprehended as real
understand how Hegel’s constitution is not some fantasy conjured up by the philosophical imagination, but that it must express the reality of political life in the European nation state in some sense already actual in Hegel’s time. In order to demonstrate how Hegel’s philosophical account of the state adequately grasps the rational freedom of the 19th century European nation state, our explanation must be both historical and philosophical. In this way we can see what in Hegel’s discussion of government is tied to particularities of the 19th century European nation states of Germany, France and England, and what is common more generally to sovereign states, whether national or post-national.

How does Hegel see the moments of his rational constitution develop in the political thought from the early modern period to Hegel’s time? Grasping Hegel’s understanding of this development will also help to draw out how for Hegel, as Houlgate rightly states, “the institution of hereditary monarchy should not be thought of as fundamentally medieval, but as an essentially modern institution.” Even with the emergence of feudal monarchies in the late medieval period, the divided sources of authority in medieval feudalism that persist through the Renaissance stand against the power of the King, who, having no central control over the administration of justice or armed forces, is consequently not sovereign over the power of corporations and communities. This results in the fragmentation of the state by natural ends which are themselves frustrated in turn by the consequent political instability. These various powers are unified into the indivisible and absolute power of the Sovereign historically with the Absolute Monarchies and philosophically in thinkers such as Hobbes and

possibilities, but whether any state actually ever realizes these possibilities is a contingent question which can neither confirm nor refute Hegel’s account.

15 “Since philosophy is exploration of the rational, it is for this very reason the comprehension of the present and actual, not the setting up of a world beyond which exists God knows where.” See PR, Preface, p. 20. This also explains why Hegel could never have outlined in detail the logic of the post-national state which I discuss below.

16 Houlgate offers a succinct summary of Hegel’s reading of this movement in political history, p. 55.

17 Houlgate, 59. As Stephen Houlgate says, “Feudalism was this ‘polyarchy’ rather than monarchy (VPW 860)” (55). See also Hegel, Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science (henceforth LNRPS), trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter G. Hodson (Berkley: University of California Press, 1995) 125. Hegel there describes how the sovereign must remove the naturally possessed rights of individuals and corporations and make them state rights which are then granted to individuals and corporations by the state.

18 (PR 278): “…these functions and powers were the private property of individuals, so that what the latter had to do in relation to the whole was left to their own opinion and discretion.”

19 The state in early feudal times “was more of an aggregate than an organism” (PR 278). The logic outlined in the section on “Abstract Right,” which is for Hegel the principle of medieval society, makes explicit the instability of these individual loci of authority, until the point where, in order for the collection of particular, natural wills to realize their desires and ends, the demand emerges “for a justice freed from subjective interest and subjective shape and from the contingency of power – that is, a punitive rather than an avenging justice” (PR 103).
Citizens, in order to escape the unstable divided flux of late Medieval and Renaissance political life, give over their individual natural wills to the all-powerful undivided sovereign will of the monarch, putting the state on a radically new and rational foundation prior to the division of various particular natural perspectives. This new foundation of the sovereign will is the condition of possibility of a self-determining sovereign state.

Having gathered all authority within the state into one unified source (the absolute monarch), the next stage of development is the self-differentiation of this unified basis of authority, both through granting rights to those spheres of life that express particularity (in relation to society), and in establishing a division of powers (executive and legislative) within the political principle itself. Crucially, the particular wills, which caused such violence and disorder in feudal systems, are now released and ordered through being granted by and remaining within the absolute power of the sovereign’s unified will.

This granting of individual freedom by the monarch builds a close bond between the monarch and his subjects, who are grateful for this newfound security and freedom.

Subsequent political history and thought, as manifested through the work of

20 This follows, on Hegel’s account, from the Protestant faith, in which all particular, natural interests that are not related to universal self-consciousness are negated. See J.A Doull, “Hegel and Contemporary Liberalism, Anarchism, Socialism: A Defense of the Rechtsphilosophie Against Marx and his Contemporary Followers,” in The Legacy of Hegel, eds. J.J. O’Malley et. al. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973) 225.

21 “This sphere of self-determination can fall within the sphere of human freedom only insofar as it occupies this supreme position, isolated for itself and exalted above everything particular and conditional; for only thus does it accord with its concept” (PR 279). This is the foundation of modern political thought in which all elements of society are drawn into the absolute power of the sovereign, just as the Cartesian cogito is the foundation of modern epistemology through drawing all reality into thought. For this reason, Hegel refers to this collecting of all the functions and powers of the state into the sovereign will as “idealism” (PR 278) in which “the right of reason has been asserted over against the form of private right” (LNPRS 125). Citizens may lose sight of this idealism of the state by taking their independent activities as having some right apart from and outside the state, but in a time of crisis such as war, “that idealism already referred to attains its distinct actuality” (PR 278).

22 See PR 270. Like the second stage of Hegel’s articulation of the concept of the free will, the monarch’s self-differentiation is the “essential moment of difference, or real rationality.”

23 Hegel saw this as a deficiency of the English monarchy of his time, in contrast to Frederick’s Allgemeines Landrecht: “In England the monarchical element in the constitution lacks that power which in other states has earned gratitude to the Crown for the transition from a legal system based purely on positive rights to one based on the principles of real freedom, a transition wholly exempt from earthquake, violence, and robbery.” See “On the English Reform Bill” in Hegel, Political Writings, eds. Lawrence Dickey and H.B Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 269.
political economists such as Adam Smith\(^{24}\) and political thinkers like Rousseau, explain how the state is in fact *strengthened* by granting as much individual liberty to pursue private good as possible. It becomes progressively clear how the universal, public good is implicit in this economic sphere, and how individuals in civil society receive a *Bildung* which, along with family life, makes possible the proper relation between state and society. Hegel claims that in his own time, the possibility of bringing these two sources (absolute monarchies and private freedom) together as one is real, and in fact these individual freedoms won throughout the 18\(^{th}\) century can only realize themselves within the unified will of the sovereign, just as monarchies can only remain sovereign by inspiring the grateful obedience of subjects through having granted these individual privileges. There is therefore for Hegel an absolute separation of the rational from the natural will, only to put the natural will on a more stable foundation in which it can realize the ends that it seeks.\(^{25}\)

Many assume that Hegel, in making appeal to institutions such as monarchy and landed aristocracy, betrays the truly modern character of post-Revolutionary Europe. Hegel wants to acknowledge fully the crucial importance of the advances made for political freedom in the French Revolution, which enshrined reason rather than merely positive authority as the power that should guide human life, and made “the will as the principle of the state.”\(^{26}\) Yet the equality of all humans as rational, in Revolutionary France, had taken on the Rousseauean ideal that the individual will become principle of the state, that the general will become the empirically general sum of individual and contingent wills,\(^{27}\) with individuals directly ruling their own affairs. The result of this view was that any distinction between ruler and ruled could not be tolerated. For Hegel, the French place the individual will as the measure of the state, thus enthroning personal opinion and caprice rather than reason as the guiding force of human affairs. Yet for Hegel, that reason rule human life is the true, positive meaning of the French Revolution. The *Philosophy of Right* argues that for reason to *genuinely* rule human affairs, citizens

\(^{24}\) *PR* 189ff.

\(^{25}\) Hegel describes how it is the essence of the modern state to bring these two sides together: “The essence of the modern state is that the universal should be linked with the complete freedom of particularity and the well-being of individuals, and hence that the interest of the family and of civil society must become focused on the state; but the universality of the end cannot make further progress without the personal knowledge and volition of the particular individuals, who must retain their rights. Thus, the universal must be activated, but subjectivity on the other hand must be developed as a living whole. Only when both moments are present in full measure can the state be regarded as articulated and truly organized.” See *PR* 260 (addition).

\(^{26}\) *PR* 258.

\(^{27}\) *PR* 258: “Here, the principle of cognition is again that of separate individuality, but not so much the *thought* of this individuality as the converse of this, namely empirical individuality with all its contingent qualities of strength and weakness, wealth and poverty, etc.”
must submit themselves to the impartial reason of those most fit to rule. 28 Hegel believed that a restored monarchy, as constitutional, would not compromise the principles of the Revolution, but stabilize their true realization. The general will as principle of society is best realized as the voluntary, self-conscious obedience to a rational form of government which would assure that the liberal principle of equality of all citizens be concretely realized in a just society.

In this way, Hegel outlines the emergence of the moments of the concept in history through describing the historical genesis of constitutional monarchy. Beyond this, he must also show how these moments can be contained in the state not merely as successive historical stages but as a coherent and stable political system. One of the principal goals of the Philosophy of Right is to articulate how the modern state can sustain the freedom of the will without having this freedom dissolve the objective world of laws and institutions. The argument of the Philosophy of Right shows how the free individual can only make his freedom real by recognizing how this freedom wholly presupposes rational institutions, which prevent this will’s collapse into purely natural and individual interests. This question of how the infinitely free will of the individual to which nothing is merely externally given does not dissolve all institutional order recurs at the level of the state. Akin to the individual, the state, as a collective organism, deliberates concerning its universal ends and desires and wills a certain course of action as a result of this communal reflection. The political formulation of the question of free will takes the following form: how is the infinite free personality of the monarch not merely a tyrannical arbitrariness destructive of a stable order of rights of institutions and individuals? Like the individual citizen who is only free within the prior context of rational institutions, the monarch’s will is truly infinite 29 and self-determining not in arbitrarily acting according to its own contingent inclinations, but through directing its activity within the structures provided by the executive and legislative powers to which its grants a certain independence. Therefore, Hegel must give an account of the state which is beyond the division of particular natural wills, while being comprehensive and expressive of them, 30 since “freedom consists solely in the reflection of the spiritual into

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28 On Hegel’s critique of a conception of equality that attempts to level the given fact of particular talents in certain individuals and the resulting hierarchies, see PR 200.

29 The will is infinite in this positive sense for Hegel in that there is nothing which is opposed to its self-referring totality. The infinite will is not limited or excluded by another, as one finite thing is the limit of another finite thing. Rather, everything exists only in relation to the infinite will, and its relationship to finite things is ultimately a relation to itself as including them within its own activity. For example, the state is infinite, since whatever might initially seem to be opposed to the state (individual wills, family, corporations, the legislative and executive branches of government, etc.) actually finds the origin and source of its legitimate existence in the state. The finite, subordinate activity does not impinge upon or limit the infinite activity, but actually brings about its concrete realization. See PR 22.

30 Yack argues effectively that this is Hegel’s understanding of what it means to show that a constitution is rational. It is not rationality in the sense of giving the best reasons for such a constitution that would be more reasonable than counter arguments. Rather, as Yack writes, “a rational structure unifies its opposing moments. Nothing can be left outside the structure, even if it appears contradictory to include it” (Yack, 711). One needs to amend this observation by noting that such a comprehensive explanation must also
itself, its distinction from the natural, and its reflection upon the latter. This is the problem to which constitutional monarchy emerges as the solution in modern European life.

Hegel thinks that the structure of constitutional monarchy is especially equipped to be both external and immanent to society. He proposes the threefold structure of constitutional monarchy composed of monarchical, executive, and legislative powers in order to achieve this twofold relation of transcendence and comprehensiveness. In what follows I will be focusing primarily on this objective, institutional component of the constitution in order to show how the structure of constitutional monarchy outlined by Hegel fulfills this seemingly contradictory task. Through the monarchical aspect of government, the state is external to and transcendent of the divided perspective of natural wills in civil society, while through the constitutional elements, the state is immanent in and comprehensive of civil society. In this way, constitutional monarchy can simultaneously overcome the arbitrary will of the sovereign and the arbitrary wills of individuals in civil society.

show that the constitution does justice to all the various elements that it reconciles, such that it no longer 'appears contradictory' once given its full articulation.

31 PR 194. This movement is seen historically as described above: the sovereign power separates itself from the divided natural powers and makes itself absolute. It then distinguishes a realm of natural pursuits from itself, within which individual wills discover the universality implicit in their natural wills through the education of family and civil society.


33 Alan Brudner brings out very clearly how the constitutional monarchy outlined by Hegel cannot be associated with any particular existent regime, and how Hegel thought that this form of government had only been attained “implicitly or in embryo.” He saw this possibility especially in Germany, through the way that the German kingdoms themselves championed the principles of the French Revolution. This comes out most clearly, for Brudner, in Hegel’s essay on the Wurtemberg Estates. See Brudner, 129-130. Hegel himself makes it clear that one must not think that he is describing any particular state, Prussia, England or France, but that he is giving the universal logic underlying the modern European state in general, which is inevitably manifest in the various historical examples: “In considering the Idea of the state, we should not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind; instead, we should consider the Idea, this actual God, in its own right” (PR 258 addition). One could say that it is necessary that all the elements which Hegel describes in his rational constitution must be present in these states, and their reconciliation must be possible and implicit in these countries in order to be apprehended as real possibilities, but whether any state actually ever realizes these possibilities is a contingent question which can neither confirm nor refute Hegel’s account.

34 Hegel does not mean by constitution merely the laws as outlined in a written document, but both the spirit of a nation as expressed in the character and habits of its citizens and the structure of social organization under which they live (PR 273-4).
The general intention of Hegel’s justification of the hereditary monarchical principle is to provide an institutional corrective to a purely liberal standpoint by demonstrating the priority of state over civil society. The head of state exists beyond the divided realm of civil society’s particular interests, and makes the citizenry conscious of this elevation of the state’s permanence above the fleeting interests of civil society. The immovable unity of the state is embodied in the undivided unity of the monarch’s rule, in contrast to the insuperable division of civil society. At the same time, however, the state must be structured such that it can both make the perspective of the particular a concern within the deliberation and activity of government, thus drawing the particular will into the universal will, while also making the universal will actual and effective within particular spheres, thus bringing the universal will into the particular.

The Monarch is both one moment of the state’s power, but also contains the whole state within itself. In itself, it is wholly beyond the division of society, but as the Crown in all its constitutional powers, the monarch’s will is immanently related to society. Hegel outlines three moments of the monarch’s self-relation, corresponding to the concept of the free will: unified and undivided sovereignty, self-determining subjectivity, and hereditary succession. These reflect the monarch’s individuality, particularity, and universality respectively.

First, the monarch, as one person, embodies the state as a unity prior to the divisions of particular interests and powers, and maintains the fluidity of these powers so that no particular aspect becomes an absolute end in itself. This points to the same total sovereignty of the state beyond all its elements which is revealed through the ethical moment of war, in which everyone is made to understand how natural ties to material, private goods, even to one’s own life, are wholly dependent upon and subordinate to the state. Hegel argues that this can be known without war through the Constitution itself. It is this rational sovereignty from natural determination that grounds the right of pardon granted to the monarch, who, rather than being bound to the natural necessity of revenge, can exercise his rational will and show that nothing is simply fated beyond this willing.

35 It is equally important, however, to recognize how Hegel demonstrates in PR that the universal, common good emerges through the particular perspectives which make up civil society and is not imposed from without by the state. See below, n. 41. A good account of this is given by David Peddle in his “Hegel’s Political Ideal: Civil Society, History, and Sittlichkeit,” Animus V (2000), 12-45 (http://www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/2000vol5/peddle5.htm).

36 This is also what is required of the activity of the individual will, which “consists in canceling the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity and in translating its ends from the subjective determination into an objective one, while at the same time remaining with itself in this objectivity.” See PR 28.

37 Hegel writes that “the power of the sovereign presupposes the other moments, just as it is presupposed by each of them” (PR 285).

38 This first moment of the monarchical principle, its unified sovereignty (276-278), corresponds to the moment of individuality in the free will, outlined in paragraph 7 of the Introduction: “the self-reference of
Second, the monarch is a subjectivity that makes decisions that are to a large extent arbitrary, in a way that is tolerable to citizens, since it is done from a perspective beyond the political fray. If decisions were made by the legislative power rather than the executive power or vice versa, or by a certain majority interest to the exclusion of others, the whole state would not be reflected in the state’s decisions. This moment of arbitrary decision is necessary, because there are always various possible ways of looking at any practical matter, and opposed opinions on these matters can create deep divisions within government. At the same time, as belonging to the well-informed thinking will of the monarch, these decisions will not be wholly arbitrary and devoid of human reason. Monarchical decisions simply reveal the inherently arbitrary moment in all human willing.\textsuperscript{39}

Neither of these two aspects of monarchical rule are difficult to accept, because a single figure representing the whole nation who makes all state decisions official through an act of will is a general feature shared by modern societies. More difficult to see is the necessity that this position be determined by a hereditary principle of succession. We have seen above that no particular power or interest in the state has any independent reality apart from the reality that the state as a whole embodied in the will of the monarch grants to it. Yet at the same time, Hegel has shown throughout his argument that legal rights of persons, the rights of moral subjects, of family, of corporations and so on, express the universal and serve to educate individuals to be willingly receptive to the common good.\textsuperscript{40} Consequently, they have the rational right to be recognized by the state. These two sides only make sense together if the authority of the Crown is reason, or the Idea, itself.\textsuperscript{41} Hegel writes in the \textit{Science of Logic} that “the Idea is the rational; it is the unconditioned, because only that has conditions which essentially relates itself to an negativity…indifferent to determinacy, [knowing] the latter as its own and ideal, as a mere possibility by which it is not restricted but in which it finds itself merely because it posits itself.”

\textsuperscript{39} This second moment of a resolving subjectivity (279) represents the moment of particularity described in paragraph 6 of the Introduction, initiating the “differentiation, determination, and the positing of a determinacy as a content and object” that is required in a free will.

\textsuperscript{40} Hegel’s account of constitutional monarchy presupposes that one has gone through the argument for the rationality of the various forms of the will and ethical institutions that leads up to his treatment of the state, an argument which reveals, on the one hand, how each discloses a universal element, while, on the other hand, how each form of ethical life other than the state, if made absolute, leads to destruction of the universal. As expressing the universal, these aspects of life are rational, and consequently deserve recognition of their legitimacy from the sovereign state. The state should therefore respect personality, the moral will, family life, civil society, and religion. Hegel even argues that, \textit{qua} rational, the more these independent spheres are accorded their due, the more they will buttress the state’s sovereignty. In return, the state is recognized by individuals as securing their own private goods, thus satisfying “the right of the subjective will,” that “the will can recognize something or be something only in so far as that thing is its own, and in so far as the will is present to itself in it as subjectivity” (\textit{PR} 107).

\textsuperscript{41} Hegel writes that the state is “the Idea of the rational will, which is rational solely because it has being both \textit{in itself} and \textit{for itself}…The state consists of the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualizing itself as will” (\textit{PR} 258).
objectivity, but an objectivity that it has not itself determined but which still confronts it in the form of indifference and externality." Rational elements within the state must be justified through the will of the monarch, but the will of the monarch, embodying the rational will itself, cannot be justified within a rational, objective context. It is reason, the rational context within which everything else has the right to be recognized. Therefore, for Hegel, the principle by which authority is bestowed upon the monarch must be wholly self-authenticating. Whereas everything else receives its authority from reason, reason itself cannot be further grounded or justified, because all ratiocination necessarily occurs within reason. It is in this sense that Hegel makes the grand claim that the state, like the Aristotelian unmoved mover, is “the absolute and unmoved end in itself.”

It is the hereditary principle of succession that guarantees this unmoved quality, the majesty of the monarch. An elected head of state, and hence the state itself, is associated with one political perspective to the exclusion of others, and generally turns the state on its head, compromising the majesty of the monarch by grounding the sovereign’s legitimacy in the attitudes and opinions of the masses, rather than having the sovereign be self-grounded and the source of the rights of the people. The natural immediacy of succession through primogeniture precludes any justificatory argument that might ground the choice of this individual as monarch, dictating that the monarch will come from this certain position in this particular family. From the perspective of the 'understanding', this seems to root irrationality in the very apex of the state, since rationality from this perspective is precisely the mediating reasons connecting two terms in an argument, in this case, the mediating connection between an individual and his station or role, whether the link be provided through popular election, individual talent, or some other form of legitimacy. On this view, a hereditary monarch subjects the entire state to radical contingency.

Hegel’s response to this argument lies in the relation of the monarchical power to the constitution’s other two powers, legislative and executive. He argues that in a fully evolved constitutional state, the particularity of the monarch, which admittedly is wholly

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42 *Science of Logic*, 755.

43 *PR* 258, 142. Yet Hegel is careful to preserve the distinction between human and divine. In the concluding sections on world history (*PR* 341-360), Hegel stresses the finitude of historical states, which pass over into a higher principle, the world spirit, or God.

44 It is for this reason that Hegel compares the justification of hereditary monarchy to the ontological argument for the existence of God. As opposed to cosmological proofs for God’s existence, which depend upon what is below God to establish the necessity of his existence, God’s existence, according to the ontological proof, belongs necessarily to his essence, making the justification wholly self-grounding without any dependence upon mediating circumstances that could either be or not be.

45 Hegel refers to other related consequences of not having a hereditary monarch as the head of state. Hereditary succession avoids faction around the throne that would be inevitable if the position of monarch were not naturally determined.
contingent, should play no role in determining the general will, since the legislative and executive powers together will propose laws and decisions which require nothing but the formal approval of the monarch to enact them. The monarch in this state acts only in concord with the other two powers, and the laws and their application are brought into existence not through the monarch’s uninformed and arbitrary whim, but only after having passed through the entire political process. For Hegel, the strength of the state cannot rely on the personal virtue of a leader, but must be inherent within the political system itself beyond such contingency.

Hegel defines the state as “the ethical spirit as substantial will, manifest and clear to itself, which thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows in so far as it knows it.” Present in this definition is the traditional Trinitarian relation of being, knowing and willing. The will of the sovereign is the immediate existence of the state outside of which nothing has any authority. Without the division of independent legislative and executive powers, government would be based on the natural impulse of rulers, yet with a power specifically designed to determine what is universal for all citizens prior to and standing independently of its implementation in particular situations, the production of universal laws becomes empirically disinterested. Because of this division, the moments of knowing and acting in this sovereign will are not the monarch’s personal opinion and impulse to action. Ultimately, the thoughts of the monarch in relation to the state are the universal thoughts of the legislative power, while the application of this thinking to the reality of society, the principle of activity, is to be found within the executive power. The actual content of the monarch’s willing comes from the

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46 Hegel writes that the monarch’s particular character is of no real importance in the decisions of a mature and fully organized state, in which “it is only a question of the highest instance of formal decision, and all that is required in a monarch is someone to say ‘yes’ and to dot the ‘i’…whatever other qualities the monarch has in addition to his role of ultimate decision belong to the sphere of particularity, which must not be allowed to affect the issue” (281). On the same point, see Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Vol. I, trans. T.M Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) 193-4.

47 See Hegel’s criticism of Montesquieu on this point, PR 273. On this point see Houlgate, 58-9.

48 PR 257.

49 Kant distinguishes government into two categories, republican and despotic, defining republicanism as that “political principle whereby executive power (the government) is separated from legislative power” (Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace and Other Essays, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983) 114.). For Kant, the despotsim of both monarchy and democracy lies in the fact that either the ruler (whether the monarch or the people) simultaneously creates the laws in their universality and implements them in their particularity. Here, the Kantian paradox of morality recurs at the level of the monarch’s will: If I must be the author of the law to which I am bound, how is the authorship itself not merely an arbitrary exercise of natural will, the will of the tyrant? Some law must pre-exist my self-legislation, but paradoxically, to be free I would also have to be author of this law, ad infinitum. The ruler’s will, as sovereign, is to include no reference to any moral authority outside its own will, yet at the same time, must not be merely an arbitrary and lawless willing. On this point, see Paul Redding, “Philosophical Republicanism and Monarchism – and Republican and Monarchical Philosophy – in Kant and Hegel,” Owl of Minerva, 26, 1 (Fall 1994) 36.
constitution as a whole: “with regard to the particular content we see that the monarch is thoroughly dependent; he has no independent knowledge of things, and can decide only according to the assessment of the situation given to him and to the laws that apply.”\(^{50}\) Through the internal relation of all three powers within the Crown, the state is sovereign and self-determining, as it acts according to its own well-considered knowledge and will with respect to every decision it makes. As with the individual will, the state is free when it acts upon rational and self-generated ends, rather than merely given, instinctive or reactive ends. This wholly self-contained character of the general will for Hegel constitutes its “infinity.”

The whole constitution emerges out of the dialectical conflict between the universal perspective of the sovereign and the particular perspective of individuals in civil society as a disorderly mass.\(^{51}\) Its end result is the identification of these two perspectives, as public opinion is purged of its mere particularity and transformed into the rational will of the whole, while the monarch’s will, though independent from public opinion, expresses what is universal in individual interests.\(^{52}\) Understanding how this is possible depends upon grasping how both sides of this opposition are fundamentally determined by the executive and legislative powers that mediate between them. This identification does not occur by imagining that individuals in civil society can directly rule themselves by assuming a universal perspective beyond their particularity (as in Rousseau or Kant), but rather through the educative function of the constitution. Only in this way is the universality of the state not merely utopian, and the individual interests and social distinctions of civil society preserved.

For Hegel, “the constitution is essentially a system of mediation.”\(^{53}\) It is the executive and legislative powers which mediate between the extremes of civil society made up of particular individuals, and the state as embodied in the universal will of the monarch. In this role, the executive power is more directly related to the universal interest of the monarch\(^ {54}\) and mediates this universal interest into civil society, while the legislative power is more directly related to the particular interests of civil society, raising this viewpoint into the state.\(^ {55}\) In Hegel’s account of the constitution, there is a fluid continuum from the universality of the sovereign’s will down into civil society, and from civil society back up to the apex of the state, so that the relation from one extreme to the other is never external and abstract.

\(^{50}\) See Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie* VI, 4: 685, 14-18.

\(^{51}\) *PR* 304.

\(^{52}\) *PR* 320.

\(^{53}\) *PR* 302 (addition).

\(^{54}\) *PR* 304.

\(^{55}\) *PR* 304.
For the sake of the present argument, it is not necessary to outline in detail the exact structure of the legislative and executive powers. The fluid continuity between sovereign and civil society can be glimpsed through Hegel’s careful account of the complete mediation provided by the independent legislative and executive powers. The sovereign must maintain this fluidity and ensure that one side is not subordinate to the other. As opposed to republican accounts of the separation between legislative and executive, Hegel shows how one of the most crucial roles for the monarch is as protector of the constitution. While the legislative power determines the universal within the state through generating laws, this power itself exists already as presupposed within the prior context of the constitution itself, which “lies in and of itself outside the sphere which the legislative power can determine directly.”

The monarch must ensure that all new laws and all executive decisions are within the spirit of the constitution. The will of the monarch is the prior context within which legislative and executive powers are essential moments.

Most importantly for the current argument, it is crucial to notice one feature of this account of hereditary monarchy, the way in which this principle of rule is particularly appropriate to the 19th century European nation-state. Though the constitutional monarchy is the regime through which citizens can be ruled by impartial reason, this is not some impartial, cosmopolitan reason identical in all constitutional monarchies, but a universality that emerges directly out of the natural basis of state unity, and which is thus different for each such state. The impartiality of rule from within the state, when entering the realm of international relations with other states, becomes a particular will among other particular wills, which together express a common universal humanity. In conformity with this basis for a political community, the European nation state demands, as Alan Brudner describes it, “the indwelling of the state’s person in one whose title rests on his simple naturalness, abstracted from all spiritual qualities and achievements.”

The basis for the monarch’s rule is based firmly on purely natural characteristics, which, through the mediation of legislative and executive powers, produces an impartially rational ruling principle. As long as the constitutional nature of government is respected, the monarch’s natural individuality should contribute to guarantee public freedom and the rule of reason within state and society. But because all intellectual capacities, moral virtues, and other spiritual qualities play no rule in the basis for the monarch’s rule, there is of course no absolute guarantee that a monarch will not flout the other constitutional powers in the constitution, confusing his particularity with his universality.

This natural particularity, which is the initially ungrounded presupposition of the monarch’s rule, should ideally in most cases be irrelevant to the actual universal will of the state, yet it remains alongside this universal will with the perpetual occasion for

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56 PR 298.
57 PR 336-340. I will expand upon this idea of the nation state as immediate union of universality and particularity in what follows.
58 Brudner, 127.
confusion on the monarch’s part between the universal will and his natural particularity. As Brudner writes, “in essence united with the universal, subjective particularity remains in fact outside of it.”59 This immediate contradiction between the universality and infinitude of the monarch’s will with his natural, finite particularity moves the historical dialectic through which the monarch progressively grants various rights to individuals, corporations and communities, in order to overcome their opposition and alienation from the monarch’s will and become genuinely infinite and comprehensive of society’s ends. But this natural presupposition of the monarch’s rule remains as a residue which can always assert itself at the expense of the universal rationality it should secure. We must now examine how these characteristics of the hereditary monarch, the presupposed natural foundation to the monarch’s rule, and the immediate identification of these natural characteristics with the rational rule of the state, are identified by Hegel as fundamental features of the nation state itself, features which Hegel understood to lie at the heart of the likely corruption of these nation states.

III Hegel’s Awareness Of The Seeds Of Degeneration Of The Nation State And The Dawn Of Something New

Hegel’s principal targets in the *PR* are two opposed yet equally dangerous political abstractions:60 the cosmopolitan,61 universalist democratic individualism driving the French Revolution to dangerous extremes, and the anti-enlightenment reactionary nationalism that locates the unity of the state in the fellow-feeling of an aboriginal *Volk* connected through its natural characteristics.62 One of Hegel’s main tasks is to show how the modern state, through the principle of constitutional monarchy, already reconciles within itself the rational equality of individuals and the felt natural civic bonds beyond the mutually exclusive abstractions of these two inadequate positions. The constitutional monarchy outlined by Hegel as the rational modern state provides a stable reconciliation of these two forces. Yet Hegel also made clear that this form of life had reached its apex, and having been grasped self-consciously in its rationality, could only degenerate from this full actuality, much as the Aristotelian account of Greek social life signified the decline of the Greek world and the dawn of a new world historical epoch. He writes in his Preface:

59 Brudner, 127.

60 Hegel writes: “what lies between reason as self-conscious spirit and reason as present actuality, what separates the former from the latter and prevents it from finding satisfaction in it, is the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated in the form of the concept” (*PR*, Preface, 22).

61 See *PR* 209.

62 See Hegel’s critique of Fries in the Preface.
As the thought of the world, [philosophy] appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state. This lesson of the concept is necessarily also apparent from history, namely that it is only when actuality has reached maturity that the ideal appears opposite the real and reconstructs this real world, which it has grasped in its substance, in the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized, by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk.  

Hegel not only indicates that modern European states have reached their point of completion from which they can only degenerate, but he concludes his consideration of the European nation state in *Philosophy of Right* with a reflection upon its inherent limitation which suggests the direction of this degeneration. He refers to the individual state or constitution as an “immediate actuality” of the Idea of the state. The world of Spirit determines itself into “immediate natural actuality,” and the states represent a series of “immediate natural principles.” Hegel writes the following concerning these immediate natural principles: “Since these are natural, they constitute a plurality of separate entities such that one of them is allotted to each *Volke* in its geographical and anthropological existence.”

Each nation is united by the natural characteristics of geography, language, character and customs particular to that state. Yet the unity of the state is not merely to be found in these natural characteristics. Hegel writes that “the nation state [*das Volk als Staat*] is the spirit in its substantial rationality and immediate actuality.” The sovereignty of each state is a unity of particular nationality with the universality of the state. Thus, beyond the natural individuality that differentiated each European state from others, Hegel identified a humanism common to the European spirit in general. Yet the natural basis

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64 *PR* 259.

65 *PR* 346.

66 *PR* 346.

67 *PR* 331.

68 In fact, against the account of inevitable conflict outlined in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (wrongly) predicted in his *Lectures on Fine Art* that this common humanism would ensure that the individual nations would no longer enter into military conflict with one another. In a discussion of what may be the topics of future epics, Hegel writes: “these might have nothing to describe except the victory, some day or other, of
for citizenship in each of these nations remains exclusive of all other nations and in tension with the universal human rights

69 realized in each of the states: “The principles of the spirits of nations are in general of a limited nature because of that particularity in which they have their objective actuality and self-consciousness as existent individuals.”

70 A state which founds the universality of its culture on its natural particularity is prone to confuse the universality of its culture with this exclusive nationality. This was a confusion which was held at bay for almost a century after Hegel’s death through the inherent stability and greatness of these nation states, but it proved itself endlessly destructive in the first half of the 20th century.

Hegel showed a remarkable awareness of this inevitable conflict of states stemming from the fact that their citizenship was founded on exclusive particularity. He predicted “ceaseless turmoil not just of external contingency, but also of passions, interests, ends, talents, and virtues, violence, wrongdoing, and vices in their inner particularity. In this turmoil, the ethical whole itself – the independence of the state – is exposed to contingency.”

71 For this reason, commentators like Bernard Yack are not right in writing that “it is still true that Hegel was wrong about the direction in which modern European states and political sentiments were developing,” since Hegel himself was aware that the decline of the nation state, with its institutional expression in constitutional monarchy, was inevitable. That “Hegel’s hopes for the continued development and spread of the rational constitution foundered on the rocks of growing individualism and nationalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” is not to be taken as a contingent historical fact that escapes Hegel’s political dialectic. It is rather an inevitable fact that Hegel himself saw to be implicit in the altogether immediate connection between universal rights and naturally determined citizenship within the nation state, the very same immediate connection that we have seen belongs to the rule of this state’s hereditary monarch.

living American rationality over imprisonment in particulars and measurements prolonged to infinity. For in Europe nowadays each nation is bounded by another and may of itself begin a war against another European nation; if we now want to look beyond Europe, we can only turn our eyes to America.” Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art II, 1062.

69 See PR 209: “It is a part of education, of thinking consciousness of the individual in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a universal person in which respect all are identical. A human being counts as such because he is a human being, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc…”

70 PR 340.

71 PR 340. Of course, this inevitable conflict in world history not only points to the limits of the nation state, but the transient finitude of historical states in general. Every state is finite and can disappear both in relation to its own internal order and its relation to other states.

72 Yack, 719.
IV Beyond Hereditary Monarchy: The Emergence Of Post-National States And Their Difference From European Nation States

In the light of Hegel’s awareness of the imminent degeneration of the rational nation states of Europe, his occasional comments about America are of great interest. For example, in the introduction to his Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Hegel writes:

America is therefore the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World’s History shall reveal itself – perhaps in a contest between North and South America. It is a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber-room of Europe. It is for America to abandon the ground on which hitherto the history of the world has developed itself…as a Land of the Future, it has no interest for us here, for, as regards history, our concern must be with that which has been and that which is.  73

Hegel’s philosophical history, as explained above, is necessarily retrospective in nature. As such he has little to say of American freedom, which in his time remained largely undeveloped. The task thus falls to contemporary political philosophers to extend the Hegelian reflection upon political life and rational constitutionalism to an analysis of North American freedom as it has emerged from post-national states such as the United States and Canada. What are the principal philosophical differences between these polities and the constitutional monarchies/nation states described by Hegel in the Philosophy of Right? In what way are these post-Hegelian developments confirmations or refutations of Hegel’s political thought, and to what degree can these states be understood to be rational and free by Hegelian standards?

Hegel makes a distinction between constitutions “that are based on nature and those based on freedom of the will.” 74 Roles in the natural state are determined by the natural factor of birth through noble families and heroic dynasties, who own these stations in life as private property handed down from generation to generation. In the modern world this divine dependence on nature has transformed into systems grounded upon the principle of freedom of the will. As Hegel writes, “Every concept begins in immediacy, in nature, and strives towards rationality. Everything depends on the extent to which rationality has replaced nature.” 75 Following the political thought of Hegelian philosopher James Doull, 76 I suggest that in the historical movement from modern European nation states,

73 LPH 86-87.

74 LNRPS 1817-18 135.

75 LNRPS 1817-18 135.

76 James Doull is a Hegelian who has attended to post-Hegelian history in order to continue Hegel’s reflection on politics into what he sees as a new ‘post-historical’ epoch. Doull articulated clearly his own relation to the Hegelian philosophy in an important 1970 debate with Emil Fackenheim entitled “Would Hegel Today Be a Hegelian?” Doull writes: “Hegel, now alive, would be a Hegelian still. Subsequent
such as England, France, and Germany, to post-national federal states, such as the United States, Canada, and eventually, the European Union, there is exactly this kind of deepened rationality described here by Hegel. With the mutual destruction of European nation states throughout the wars of the 20th century, the degeneration which Hegel saw implicit in the political life of modern European states and their mutually exclusive and potentially antagonistic immediacy, the heritage of European freedom is taken up in a more rational and universal form in the context of post-national, especially North American, states.

What is the meaning of the political category “post-national state”, and how do these states differ from the nation states interpreted and given their logical form by Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right*? Doull makes two striking claims about modern nation states in the post-modern epoch. First, “there are no longer in Europe nation states,” and, second, “in North America there are not, and never have been, nation states.”

Doull reiterates the dangerous ambiguity that Hegel identified in the European nation state: “it is at the same time a particular national community having its own language, customs, animation, exclusive of other such communities, and is founded on universal human rights which are not abstract but pervade the whole range of its interests.” While these elements of cultural particularity and universal rights were reasonably well ordered throughout the 19th century, World War I undermined this order through the collision of these states with one another. By World War II, the Nazi party had completely collapsed the distinction between the rational and natural elements of race and language exclusive of all other peoples, making these particularities the basis for political community. Through this last European conflict emerged the realization that the plurality of nations founded upon exclusive particularity could no longer maintain their sovereignty and

history would seem to have made obvious and accessible to many a way of thinking hardly any but himself could see already at the time of the French Revolution.” See “Would Hegel Today Be a Hegelian,” *Dialogue* (1970) 226. His reflections upon post-Hegelian political history are grounded on his understanding of the development of a third historical stage of the philosophical Idea, following the ancient and modern manifestations. He reads the three syllogisms outlined by Hegel in paragraphs 574-577 of the *Encyclopedia* as offering the logical outline of these three historical stages. Hegel gives the summation of the second stage of philosophical history, and can merely point to the emergence of a third stage whose development had not yet unfolded. It is to clarifying these post-Hegelian developments in history and philosophy that Doull dedicated his whole career. On the three syllogisms and the significance of post-modern philosophy from a Hegelian perspective, see Doull’s last article, “Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and Postmodem Thought,” in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, eds. David Peddle and Neil Robertson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

77 James Doull, “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” in *Philosophy and Freedom: The Legacy of James Doull*, 17. For Doull, the US has made clear the logic underlying this new post-national form of state, while Canada is still trying to self-consciously articulate its status as a post-national state. Doull writes of the US: “The United States is the first post-national state, the first state based not on national particularity but on rational principles, whose history is essentially the development of those principles. Americans were from the first conscious that they attempted something new, and of consequence for the human race: there began with their independence a “novus ordo saeclorum.” See Doull, “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 133.

consistently realize the universal rights of rational humanity without some form of common government to keep in check the destructive tendencies of European nationalism. The original aim of the first steps towards a united Europe in the 1950’s was the integration of the national economies, especially those of Germany and France, to such an extent that conflict between states would become impossible. In entering into the economic and political union of the European Union, each member nation “is no longer a sovereign nation simply but has imparted something of its sovereignty to these larger associations.”

What are the principal distinguishing features of the post-national state, upon which the post-war European community has to some degree modeled itself? I will focus upon two defining characteristics of this form of political union as it is manifested in both the United States and Canada. First of all, North American states, in contrast with European states, are not founded on nationality. From the beginning settlers on the American continent have understood themselves to forming a new country of immigrants, with no one having any claim to a kind of aboriginal citizenship status that would distinguish them from new Canadian and American citizens. Being Canadian or American is not tied to a specific linguistic or cultural community. As a result of having been founded upon a more universal foundation derived from the enlightened humanism of the European tradition, Doull writes that these North American post-national states “need not succumb to the logic which has made the nation state obsolete as the primary form of political community.”

The second aspect that differentiates post-national states from European nation states is their structure as federations. While the sovereignty of the nation state is absolutely one and undivided, embodied in the single person of the monarch, federations are structured upon the principle of shared sovereignty. Both the US and Canada are structured upon the relation between sovereign states or provinces to one another and to a

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80 A third important difference, the deeper absorption of the society of individuals into the state through democratization, will not be discussed here.

81 From Plymouth to the present day, there are of course exceptions in which citizens have understood life in America on the model of a uniform nation state, but I would argue that these remain exceptions to the general tendency of the American spirit.

82 Doull, “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 30. Doull writes the following of this more universal foundation upon individuals as human: “The humanistic and afterwards the rational-scientific culture of the modern age addressed itself to individuals as human and only secondarily as a particular nation and language. That culture, as modified by the particular bent and character of the several European peoples who had part in the occupation was the model for the new beginning in the Americas” (Doull 33).

83 See Alexis de Tocqueville, De la démocratie en Amérique (Paris : Flammarion, 1981) 195 : “La souveraineté, aux Etats-Unis, est divisée entre l’Union et les Etats, tandis que, parmi nous, elle est une et compacte; de la naît la première et la plus grande différence que j’aperçoive entre le président des Etats-Unis et le roi en France.”
unifying federal sovereignty. The constitution of each country offers a division between powers assigned to the federal and provincial/state levels of government. While the federal union has a priority over the state or provincial unions, both the federal and state/provincial unions are wholly sovereign within the specific powers designated to that level of government. The state/provincial level of government exercises sovereign power over matters determined by the particularity of its historical, geographical, and cultural situation, especially important in light of the huge size and variety of both North American countries. As sovereign in these domains of life, the provinces and states satisfy the demand that government reflect its naturally determined particularity. Yet these particular sovereignties must also transcend these differences at the level of the federal union in order to achieve their common purpose. The federal union works to ensure concord between the more regional sovereignties, individual rights among its citizens, security in relation to external threats. Clearly outlining what is common to all the sovereign parts within the union allows for a peaceful arbitration of their differences by the federal government, in contrast to the violent conflicts of the European nation states.

Both the internal and external sovereignty of states described by Hegel is retained in post-national states. Sovereignty for Hegel, as described above, is the ability of a

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84 F.L. Jackson explains this federal-provincial relationship as it occurs in Canada in the following terms: “The fact is that Canada is both one and divided, and it is one and the other equally. Sovereignty itself is shared; and because it is, the centripetal pull toward a federal unitary state and the centrifugal force that maintains provincial autonomies are counterbalanced. Canada is this tension and reciprocity.” F.L. Jackson, “The Legacy of the Canadian Confederation,” in Surviving Confederation (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications, 1986) 146. This is to be distinguished from the European Union, and its relation of particular nation states related to one another through a bureaucratic structure that regulates their common economy. The independent histories, each developing its own way of life over centuries apart from other member states, is only very difficultly brought under the union, which must, for the moment, have a merely economic unifying force. The side of universal human rights and economic super-structure is only externally related to the particular linguistic communities of the former nation-states.

85 Because of what was historically actual for Hegel in his time, the idea of a federation of these immediate states was an empty genus without the sovereign power to meaningfully gather the interests of several countries into a unified will. Without this self-determining power to know and will a certain course, this federation is empty and without any genuine right over its constituent sovereign members. In his lectures, Hegel states that beyond merely dissolving into world history through the inevitable conflict of states, “several states may form a league and sit in judgment, as it were, on other states, or they may enter into alliances (like the Holy Alliance, for example), but these are always purely relative and limited, like the ideal of perpetual peace.”(see PR 259 [addition]). Hegel denies that international alliances compromise the sovereignty of their constituent members, in whom ultimate decision rightfully lies. So long as the institutions and powers required to be a sovereign state are retained by the members of the Alliance, agreements between nations have only the status of treaties which can be broken through the sovereign will of the involved states. Conversely, insofar as independent states relinquish the powers and institutions characteristic of a sovereign state, they are deluded in thinking that they can act as a completely sovereign nation within their new nation. Post-national federations as found today in North America and currently developing as the European Union were not yet historically actual for Hegel, who could only base his analysis upon the European nation states of his time. These federations would eventually realize the rational sovereignty of nation states as described by Hegel, yet on a more universal foundation beyond the inevitable conflict of these naturally immediate actualities.
nation to gather its various and divided interests into a unified, ‘infinite’ will, which can act freely and rationally based on its knowledge and deliberation upon a course of action. Hegel defines the state as sovereign in very precise terms: “the ethical spirit as substantial will, manifest and clear to itself, which thinks and knows itself and implements what it knows in so far as it knows it.” In contrast with the rupture and loss of sovereignty of the European nation states after the two World Wars, the post-national states of North America emerge as the restoration of the unity of universalist and particularist elements described by Hegel, as preserved through federalism upon a more ideal and secure foundation of universal citizenship.

On this account, post-national states emerge as a corrective to the instability Hegel identifies at the heart of the European nation state: a merely presupposed and given foundation to citizenship and political roles, and an immediate and undifferentiated identity of these particular aspects of nationality with its universal, rational principles of citizenship, both of which lead to the inevitable confusion of universality and particularity. As we have argued, hereditary monarchy is the institutional articulation of exactly these characteristics: namely, the presupposed naturally given familial basis which grounds the hereditary principle of succession, and an immediate identification of these naturally determined characteristics and the impartial rule of reason. The nation state, united by natural characteristics, forms a kind of political family of which the hereditary monarch is the appropriate apex. Significantly, Hegel refers to both the monarch and the nation state as a whole as “immediate individualities,” “immediate actualities,” and “immediate natural principles.” Yet it is precisely these two characteristics of European nation states that determine a hereditary monarch as the suitable head of state which are transformed within North American post-national states. The ground for citizenship is not the particularity of nationality, but a principle prior to any particular nationality within which one can integrate a variety of nations or particular sovereignties into a more general sovereignty. The identity of particular national characteristics with universal and rational freedom is no longer immediately identified, but is differentiated through the federal structure, where the state-provincial level of sovereignty preserves the integrity of particular historical communities, and the federal sovereignty secures the universal rights of all citizens. It would seem therefore that the immediate principle of hereditary monarchy is no longer adequate to the political reality of post-national states like Canada, the United States, or the emerging European Union.

What then is the adequately rational principle of rule within these post-national states? If they are indeed sovereign in a Hegelian sense, government must be ordered such that the head of state, as representing the sovereignty of the whole, lies beyond the divisions of civil society. The principle of selection must therefore involve a certain givenness, since the justification and legitimacy of the state’s sovereignty as embodied in the leader should not come from any particular perspective within civil society, but as

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86 PR 257.

87 PR 280, 331, 346.
Hegel shows, should be the self-originating source of its own legitimacy. Whatever principle of selection is suitable for the head of a post-national state must therefore avoid both the extreme of the natural principle of hereditary monarchy and the elective basis of a politicized Presidency. A landed aristocracy and a hereditary monarch played important roles within nation states in making explicit the proper Hegelian relation between the state and civil society, a quality which must be somehow retained within a rational post-national constitutional structure. This head of state could be appointed based upon experience and distinguished service to the state, a figure who has earned the respect of the country as a whole beyond political or regional factions. Like the hereditary monarch of the former age, this head of state would not act and interfere beyond need in the constitutional process, but would play the role of protector of the constitution, intervening if the spirit or letter of the constitution were being compromised by either the executive or legislative powers.

Obviously, a much fuller justification for understanding this transition from nation states to post-national federations would be required beyond the one provided in the limited space above. Yet if the preceding account is plausible, the fact that hereditary monarchy appears to our contemporary perspective as not wholly rational can be accounted for by the political developments which distinguish states in Hegel’s time from our own. If this degeneration of the nation state is indeed already recognized as implicit by Hegel himself in the *Philosophy of Right*, and if the post-Hegelian disappearance of nation states and the emergence of North American federations can indeed be grasped according to this Hegelian logic, the irrationality of hereditary monarchy from our contemporary perspective can be understood neither as a historical refutation of the truth of Hegel’s rational modern state, nor as an indication that contemporary political life falls short of the rationality of Hegel’s constitutional monarchy. Rather, it would provide a

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88 See Doull, “The Philosophical Basis of Constitutional Discussion in Canada,” 130-132, for his Hegelian critique of America’s elected presidency and separation of powers. The election of the head of state and his belonging to a specific political party imports the individual, particular perspectives that characterize civil society into the realm of the state, making the president, as the person who embodies the common life of the state, subject to party loyalty, factional interests of lobbyists, corporations, and public opinion. As Doull points out, certain situations of extreme crisis and certain heroic presidents throughout American history have been able to mobilize the loyalty of Americans so strongly that “a virtual unification” of the sovereignty of the state and the office of the President as Commander in Chief is achieved. With a sovereign will beyond the division of factional strife and private interests, the priority of the state over civil society that is so often hidden from view in the American polity is made explicit (Doull, 85). Yet without the proper institutional expression of this relation between state and civil society, the sovereignty of the whole is dependent upon the particular character of the president or contingent circumstances.

89 Practical consequences of my argument include the claim that the monarchical element in the Canadian constitution is no longer adequate to its status as a post-national state, just as a hereditary monarchy could never be the first principle of any constitution adequate to the European Union, since it draws together so many disparate nations within its federation. At the same time, Britain’s constitutional monarchy, left over from its days as a fully sovereign nation state, will become increasingly inappropriate to its political reality as the country faces the extent to which this sovereignty no longer exists within the contemporary European reality. This vestige of a past national sovereignty will also interfere with the British acceptance of the European Union as a genuinely effective federal government.
deeper confirmation both of the rationality present in our own institutions and of the Hegelian political philosophy in general.
The Construction Of The Secular In Rawls And Hegel:
Religion, Philosophy And Public Reason

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It is nothing but a modern folly to try to alter a corrupt moral organization 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.7 – Hegel

John Rawls’ Political Liberalism is among the most profound contemporary reflections
on the relation between the secular and the religious or metaphysical, on the separation of church
and state.2 Rawls attempts to draw citizens of diverse religious, moral and philosophical beliefs,
what he calls comprehensive doctrines, into a consensus on a political conception of the basic
constitution of liberal democracy and its principles of justice. What is challenging in the
Rawlsian view is that it sees this consensus as itself resolutely non-comprehensive, comprised of
publicly acceptable secular ideas. After its own lights the Rawlsian position tries to draw
together the secular and the non-secular and to demonstrate the inclusive nature of the modern
democratic state.

In reading Political Liberalism one is struck that Rawls is in certain respects guided by
Hegel in his account of the genesis of the modern state though at the same time he sees himself
to be answering central Hegelian criticisms of enlightenment liberalism, devoting a section to his
“Reply to Hegel’s Criticisms”.3 It is instructive that the leading political philosopher of the
twentieth century finds it necessary to respond to the Hegelian view and it is of interest to

2. John Rawls, Political Liberalism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). While many moral and
philosophical views are themselves secular, this essay is focused on a subset of these views, that is, those which see
human existence as fundamentally spiritual. What is most striking in the Rawlsian account is his attempt to secure a
consensus on a secular conception among citizens with non-secular beliefs.
Rawls in “Hegel’s Political Ideal: Civil Society, History and Sittlichkeit,” (Animus 2000,
investigate the political thought of each thinker in the light of the other.

Section one of this essay, ‘Secularity and Public Reason’, discusses the role the concept of public reason has in the Rawlsian construction of a secular political realm.

Section two, ‘Excluding the Non-Secular: Public Reason and Abortion’, explores the limitations of Rawls’ account of the relation of secular and non-secular, by showing that even the sympathetic expansion of his view by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson fails adequately to include certain reasonable moral, religious or philosophical views, as exemplified in their consideration of the abortion debate.

Section three, ‘Concluding Hegelian Post-Script’, considers Hegel’s account of the relationship between church and state as a more philosophical account of contemporary secularity than obtains on the Rawlsian view. Both Rawls and Hegel argue that modern secularity cannot be adequately conceptualized solely from a religious standpoint and agree that the modern state emerged out of Reformation Christianity. Their accounts of precisely how this development occurred are substantially distinct however.

On the central issue of the relation between religion, philosophy and the state, the present argument indicates, following Hegel, that liberal secularity presupposes a far greater dependence on comprehensive doctrines, specifically the Christian religion, than Rawls allows. The difficulty with the Rawlsian view is that it is based on a merely subjective view of history and philosophy. Rawls assumes a too immediate liberation of individuals from the historical development they presuppose. It is insufficient to assert the subjective allegiances of individuals to a political conception of justice. In the United States, for example, the possibility of such allegiance assumes the predominance of the Christian religion and its own historical movement. The relationship between the individual and religious or philosophical doctrine has its locus not simply in conscience and will but in the objective history of institutional life; such a relationship is made intelligible from a Hegelian perspective.4

The Hegelian account of secularity clarifies the basis of pluralism in liberal democracies and goes beyond the Rawlsian perspective in showing how individuals from varying religions might gain allegiance to liberal values, precisely because these values express in certain respects the principles implicit in all religions. The Hegelian reply to Rawls shows that pluralism is in fact grounded in a deeper connection between political life and comprehensive doctrine than Rawls is able to suggest.

1. Secularity And Public Reason

Rawls recognizes in the contemporary liberal state the emergence of a political life that

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4. Here the term ‘objective’ does not represent a reified facticity which stands over and against subjectivity but rather the determinate historical and institutional correlate of the inner lives of individuals.
has been liberated in certain ways from its original relation to the Christian religion. It is a matter of history that American liberalism has deep roots in Puritanism and in the Enlightenment Christianity to which Puritanism gave way. In its Enlightened form, best represented philosophically by John Locke, there emerged a political toleration of religions from the standpoint of the free conscience of the individual. Rawls portrays the history of the United States as a process whereby individuals gained allegiance to the political realm and its underlying constitution and as a result tempered the dogmatic and exclusivist tendencies in the way they related religion to the state. Rawls’ *Political Liberalism* is, in a certain light, a sustained reflection on the separation of Church and state in the U.S. constitution. This separation gives constitutional recognition to the ethical pluralism of American life. Such a division gives expression immediately to two distinctive ethical arenas, religious association and government. And following this division there emerges, from the political standpoint, a plurality of acceptable religions.

Rawls conceives this pluralism and that of moral and philosophical views not simply as a brute fact but rather as the offshoot of the free rationality of individuals. For Rawls, the independent use of reason will give rise to differences of opinions which express moral individuality and which can be overcome only through oppression. He contends therefore that cooperative persons see that there are limits on what can be reasonably justified to others and thus they endorse some form of liberty of conscience and freedom of thought. Moreover, he contends that no citizen when considered as free and equal can grant the political authority to another citizen or association to decide constitutional essentials on the basis of a comprehensive doctrine and he concludes that such authority is without grounds in public reason. In this light he focuses not simply on the fact of disagreement but on its underlying morality. From this legitimate and permanent pluralism of comprehensive views, he draws the conclusion that such views are too diverse to serve as the basis of “lasting and reasoned political agreement”.

Rawls argues that the fundamental tensions which derive from cultural pluralism in liberal democracy are exacerbated by a longstanding conflict in liberal theory as to how the basic rights and freedoms of citizens may best express the values of liberty and equality. He contrasts the Lockean tradition which emphasizes “freedom of thought and conscience, certain basic rights of person and of property and the rule of law” with the Rousseauean tradition which emphasizes “the equal political liberties and the values of public life”. In the public culture of the United States, this difference is found in the dichotomous approaches of liberalism and republicanism.

6. Rawls states: "we are not so much adjusting that conception to brute forces of the world but to the inevitable outcome of free reason" (Rawls 1993: 37). He argues that conflicts among reasonable persons inevitably arise because of "the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgment in the ordinary course of political life" (Rawls 1993: 56).
Liberals traditionally assume the rights of the individual as prior to political life and conceive the task of politics as the aggregation of the desires of individuals within a system that respects this prior right. By contrast, republicans, while likewise emphasizing individual freedom, find in political participation the correction and completion of individual freedom, through the inculcation of civic virtues. Thus, on Rawls’s view, not only is the background culture of the United States characterized by conflict among various comprehensive standpoints, but also the public political culture is “of two minds at a very deep level”.

Still these tensions have not rendered American liberal democracy inherently unstable because even a pluralistic democracy presupposes certain common values and procedures. Rawls thus draws his basic conceptions from: “Society’s main institutions and their accepted forms of interpretation [which he sees] as a fund of shared ideas and principles.” Political Liberalism then is a reconstruction of these basic ideas of citizenship and a well-ordered society. Rawls constructs a justification of a secular political realm in an attempt to overcome what he sees as the impasse in liberal democratic theory. However, because on Rawls’ view no moral, metaphysical, or religious viewpoint can in principle hope to become a commonly agreed upon basis for deriving principles of justice, he must ground his account of justice in a non-comprehensive conception, that is in a political conception. But what precisely does he mean by political here?

According to Rawls, a political conception of justice will focus on political, social and economic institutions: “Society as a fair system of cooperation over time from one generation to the next.” Central to this conception will be two other fundamental ideas: “the idea of citizens as free and equal persons” and the “idea of a well-ordered society effectively regulated by a political conception of justice.” Essentially these fundamental ideas express the core tenets of a left-leaning liberalism focused on ensuring that the constitution conceived as basic structure does not systematically prevent the fair distribution of social goods.

Also the political conception must be defined in terms of its relation to comprehensive doctrines. He represents the political conception as a distinctively secular standpoint, what he calls a ‘free-standing view’. He states: “a political conception tries to elaborate a reasonable conception for the basic structure alone and involves, so far as possible, no wider commitment to any other doctrine”. The political conception will thus be liberated from reliance on traditional religious, metaphysical or moral views. For Rawls: “This means that it can be presented without saying, or knowing, or hazard a conjecture about, what such doctrines it may belong to, or be supported by.”

On the Rawlsian view, then, political secularity is concerned with the individual as citizen and as such the individual is viewed as having an independence from whatever religious, metaphysical or moral beliefs he might hold. For Rawls, citizens are able to form, pursue and revise their conceptions of the good and so long as such conceptions are not unreasonable, the state has no direct interest in their content. Religious conversion, for example, has no political relevance: “When citizens convert from one religion to another, or no longer affirm an established religious faith, they do not cease to be, for questions of political justice, the same person they were before. There is no loss of what we may call their public or institutional identity, or their identity as a matter of basic law.”

However, while Rawls’ political conception of justice clearly distinguishes between the secular and the non-secular, this distinction is not to be conceived as a mere opposition. He argues, for example, that his view does not criticize: “religious, philosophical or metaphysical accounts of the truth of moral judgments and their validity.”

Further he conceives the political conception as: “a module, an essential constituent part, that fits into and can be supported by various reasonable comprehensive doctrines that endure in the society regulated by it.”

Rawls’s conception of a secular public political realm, then, has a twofold relation to traditional religious and metaphysical views. On the one hand, he finds the source of secularity in the general post-metaphysical ethos characteristic of the era from the late nineteenth century to the present. It is in this light that Rawls will assert that: “political liberalism applies the principle of toleration to philosophy itself.” This toleration is based on an emergent public sphere which has liberated itself from the conflicts among moral, religious and philosophical standpoints. He wishes to liberate political philosophy itself from such divisions and develops a uniquely liberal post-modern conception of the secular; post-modern because it rests on neither empiricist, rationalist, nor idealist accounts of knowledge and human nature. Rather, it is constructivist and pragmatic, eschewing metaphysical debate for political consensus. Thus the sort of reasoning appropriate to political discourse (what Rawls calls public reason) will be explicitly secular, drawing from common sense judgments and the uncontroversial conclusions of the natural and social sciences. One might say, however, that Rawlsian public reason is more judicial than political. According to Rawls: “Public reason is the sole reason the court exercises.” Further, for Rawls, the Court is the institutional exemplar of public reason. While he does allow that

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22. Hence, for Rawls, the values of public reason are as follows: (1) Appropriate use of fundamental concepts of judgment, inference, and evidence; (2) Reasonableness and fair-mindedness (as shown in (3) below); (3) Adherence to the criteria, procedures and generally accepted beliefs of commonsense knowledge; (4) Acceptance of non-controversial methods and conclusions of science (Rawls 1993: 66-67,139,162,224).
24. Rawls 1993: 235-240. One example he provides concerns: “public financing of elections and restraints on private funding that achieves the fair value of political liberties, or at least significantly move the political process in that direction” (Rawls 1993: 235n.22). Also he states: “while the Court is special in this respect, the other branches of government can certainly, if they would do so, be forums of principle along with it in debating constitutional
other institutions may exemplify public reason, he nevertheless holds that non-judicial debates are to be measured in judicial terms. He states: “To check whether we are following public reason we might ask: how would our argument strike us presented in the form of a Supreme Court opinion?”

But on the other hand and by contrast with the post-metaphysical tenor of his thought, he pays homage to the lingering hangover from the religious and philosophical tradition of the west and insists that his conception of the secular not oppose the remnants of such a tradition in the beliefs of liberal individuals. So, at the same time as he emphasizes distinctively secular characteristics of public reason, he does not entirely exclude non-secular or comprehensive doctrines from the public sphere. Whereas, most of Political Liberalism (up to VI,7) relies on an exclusive view of public reason which disallows all reference to comprehensive doctrines, Rawls introduces an inclusive view at VI,8 which allows reference to comprehensive doctrines when they support public reason. Further in response to criticism, Rawls has expanded the notion of public reason to be even more inclusive of comprehensive doctrines. Whereas in the first edition of Political Liberalism he permitted appeal to comprehensive moral reasons in public deliberation only where there is reason to believe that it would help make society more just, in the paperback edition of the book, he explicitly revises this view. There he argues that reasonable comprehensive doctrines may be introduced in public reason at any time to support a law or policy, provided that in due course reasons which may be justifiable to all may be presented to support the same law or policy.

Significantly Rawls also contends that the allegiance which many citizens have to the political realm will be drawn in part from their moral, metaphysical and religious views, that is, from non-secular sources. He argues that only an overlapping consensus on a political conception of justice, can justify the basic structure and public policies to all citizens. In an overlapping consensus: “all those who affirm the political conception start from within their own comprehensive view and draw on the religious, philosophical, and moral grounds it provides.” He hopes to make it possible for: “all to accept the political conception as true or reasonable from the standpoint of their own comprehensive view whatever it may be.” Because the political conception of justice is not derived in any determinate way from any single comprehensive conception, it is available to all; it “may be shared by all citizens as a basis of a reasoned, informed and willing political agreement. It expresses their shared and public reason.”

questions” (Rawls 1993: 240).
2. Excluding The Non-Secular: Public Reason And Abortion

Rawls’s theory envisages a secular political order constructed in part by the avoidance of intractable moral, metaphysical and religious disagreements. Its principles are those of a pragmatic liberal humanism which sees itself as liberated from traditional philosophical disputes much as the New World might conceive itself as beyond the Old World and its religious wars. There is in his view an attempt to develop a conception of political life which can articulate the tolerant stability which seems, at least in part, the product of U.S. history. For all its social upheaval, culture wars, etc. a reasonably civil political life persists and it is this persistent public political culture which Rawls wishes to raise to self-consciousness of its own historically embedded principles. The Rawlsian view in its meditation on the division of Church and state sees political consensus as distinctively secular yet defendable from non-secular standpoints, what he calls an overlapping consensus. This is an interesting attempt to articulate the concrete ethical life of the American polis but it remains strikingly ambiguous in its portrayal of this ethical life. First the consensus itself is meant to find in practical life a union of subjective moral universality (what each individual happens to believe is right and wrong) with an objective political particularity, a specific order. But morality itself, as Hegel brings out most forcefully, is in principle abstract, that is, unable to resolve itself into a specific social order on its own moral grounds: “In morality self-determination is to be thought as the pure restlessness and activity which can never arrive at anything that is.” 31 What follows is that no specific social order will be able to meet the requirements of conscience moralistically conceived. From this standpoint it follows that the overlapping consensus cannot adequately comprehend the moral viewpoints on which its supposed justification depends.

The position articulated by Gutmann and Thompson expresses in part the limitations of the basis structure of the overlapping consensus and the unresolved difference it conceals. 32 Though following a fundamentally Rawlsian paradigm, they nevertheless recognize that political life cannot thereby eschew moral conflict. Implicit in their account is the recognition that conscience remains independent of any mere consensus. By contrast then with the Rawlsian view of an overlapping consensus which attempts to secure political stability and independence by avoiding comprehensive dispute, Gutmann and Thompson argue that there may be reasonable disagreement about both constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice. 33 By contrast with the Rawlsian view, they accept that moral conflict will permeate the public political realm. Thus, for Gutmann and Thompson, “accommodating” this pervasive conflict requires “a more favourable attitude toward and constructive interaction with the persons with whom one disagrees”. 34 They stress the development of political virtues which permit public life to flourish

33. Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 377n.44.
34. Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 79.
in the face of deep-seated and intractable disagreement. They argue for three principles of moral accommodation: (1) the principle of civic integrity; (2) the principle of civic magnanimity; (3) the principle of the economy of moral disagreement. What do they have in mind with these three principles?

The principle of civic integrity calls for consistency in speech, consistency between speech and action, and integrity of principle. What is required is that citizens support a moral position independent of circumstance, that their public and private actions mirror their publicly espoused principles and that citizens accept the broader implications of their principles.35 Civic magnanimity requires that citizens acknowledge in their speech the moral status of the positions they oppose.36 Further it requires open-mindedness, the attempt to break habits that discourage modification in one’s position.37 Finally the economy of moral disagreement requires that citizens should “seek the rationale that minimizes rejection of the position they oppose”.38 Gutmann and Thompson recognize more clearly than Rawls the persistence of moral independence and attempt to accommodate it. However, while their account indicates the limits of overlapping consensus, because their own principles of moral accommodation likewise presuppose a radical division between morality and political life, their position like that of Rawls is unable to unify morality and public life. A consideration of the approach to abortion in the thought of Rawls and Gutmann and Thompson is instructive here.

While, in Political Liberalism, Rawls limits his comments on abortion to a footnote, they are intended to illustrate how public reason expresses a reasonable balance of political values and they thus provide an important example of the application of public reason. He considers the ideal case of a well-ordered society in which a mature adult woman requests an abortion. He asserts that any reasonable balance of the political values of: “the due respect for human life, the ordered reproduction of political society over time, including the family, in some form, and finally the equality of women as equal citizens” requires that the woman has “a duly qualified right to decide whether or not to end her pregnancy during the first trimester”.39 However, here Rawls merely asserts the overriding political value of the equality of women, at least for the first trimester, and fails to show how this assertion might be convincing to proponents of the pro-life position.40

Gutmann and Thompson’s discussion of Roe v. Wade illuminates the practical application of their view of moral accommodation and their expansion of Rawlsian public reason. While the Court did not accept the pro-life argument that the fetus was a person, they did acknowledge that the state has a “compelling interest in protecting human-life once the fetus is

Gutmann and Thompson see in the decision “moral and legal consideration both for the woman and for the fetus”. They argue further that the Court would have better fulfilled the principle of moral accommodation had it followed the logic of the decision to its conclusion: increased protection for fetal life as medical advances extend viability to earlier stages of pregnancy.

However, in their further discussion of the moral economy of the abortion debate, Gutmann and Thompson run into significant problems which indicate the difficulty of conceiving the secular realm in fundamentally Rawlsian terms. Consider the following statement: “a pro-life advocate might argue that, although in a democracy she may have to perform actions that violate her fundamental moral principles (even acts she regards as murder), she should not be forced to contribute to those actions with her own funds through taxes. If her fellow citizens truly acknowledge the moral seriousness of her views, they should find some way to reduce her complicity in actions she regards as murder.” While, in this section, Gutmann and Thompson are clearly attempting to accommodate the moral interests of pro-lifers, they underestimate the depth of the pro-lifers’ stance. For many pro-lifers, the legalization of abortion calls into question the moral basis of liberal democracy itself. Supporting a system which they believe allows the murder of fetal life, is anathema and it is thus highly questionable whether it is possible for one who holds such a view to cooperate with those who disagree. But, is it actually consistent to hold that abortion is murder and to accept that those who uphold abortion as a woman’s right have a moral view? Is the principle of “civic magnanimity” realistic?

43. Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 88. This point is likewise expressed by Justice Sandra O’Connor who in 1983 said that the trimester approach of Roe v. Wade was on a collision course with itself. Quoted in Tribe 1990: 220.
44. Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 89.
Gutmann and Thompson argue that reasonable citizens will recognize that, “reason itself does not point in either direction: it is we who must point it, and we who are led by it. If you are led in one direction rather than the other, that is not because of logic, but because you respond in a certain way to certain facts [about the fetus].” However, here Gutmann and Thompson suggest that a rational person will see that neither side has refuted the other. They state: “the effect of reading and listening to the arguments on both sides, at least for citizens who are open to opposing views, has been to conclude that neither side has refuted its rival”. Yet in the absence of further argument, the position of Gutmann and Thompson is not rationally convincing. Proponents of either side in the abortion debate can either argue directly against such agnosticism or state that it too is an existential attitude towards the debate. Further, this existential interpretation of the positions in the abortion debate clearly conflicts with the view of those for whom the belief in the personhood of the fetus is a matter of conscience and natural law. On this view, a pro-life stance is grounded not in an existential response to a question which does not admit of a rational or reasonable solution but in natural law and the God-given light of reason. From such perspectives the failure to be moved by conscience to protect the fetus is not a result of the burdens of judgment but rather the product of a sinful and disordered will. In this light, the exhortation to open-mindedness is mere temptation to sin, a call to follow the weakness of the human will in the face of the unmistakable requirements of conscience. To suggest that the opponents of abortion acknowledge the moral status of the pro-choice position is thus in effect to require that they deny the morality of their own position: the burdens of judgment and civic “magnanimity” here require the negation of conscience.

A pro-lifer can admit that pro-choice advocates support a morally just value, the freedom and equality of women. But this is not the issue. The issue is one of priority, of whether the burden placed on the mother overrides the sanctity of fetal life. On this issue, the pro-life Roman Catholic must hold that the pro-choice position is immoral because it valorizes “undue burden” at the expense of life itself. Gutmann and Thompson’s integrity requirements are thus strained. There would be no conflict if abortion was not considered a matter of conscience. But on the terms of accommodation it is hard to imagine that a conscience-bound pro-life advocate, even if he could acknowledge the moral status of his opponent’s position in the public realm, which is doubtful, could avoid telling his children that abortion is murder. In this case “civic magnanimity” is likely to conflict with “integrity”.

It is not enough, therefore, for Gutmann and Thompson to state: “Deliberative reasoning is not correctly represented if it is described as giving more weight to the value of mutual respect or deliberation than to the sanctity of life. A citizen may believe that sanctity of life is more important but recognize that under current conditions her understanding of the value is not yet sufficiently appreciated by her fellow citizens and therefore cannot become the basis of public

Deliberation in this instance is defined by recognition of the burdens of judgment and acceptance of the description of the conflicting standpoints on the abortion issue as matters of choice. Such an account valorizes deliberation over conscience and mutual respect over the sanctity of life. While Gutmann and Thompson are correct that Rawlsian strictures on public reason are not adequate to the issue of abortion, it is not apparent that their conception of accommodation solves the problem, because it cannot guarantee the integrity of the pro-life position. A pro-life advocate who sincerely conceives abortion to be murder can accept legalized abortion, if at all, only as a *modus vivendi*. No ‘moral’ acceptance is possible, because legalized abortion compromises the moral standpoint of pro-life. From this perspective, Gutmann and Thompson fail to preserve a moral basis for accommodation when it comes to abortion. It is overly optimistic to believe that the civility which might reign over the discussion of abortion will be based on moral accommodation. The pro-life and pro-choice positions are entrenched on a matter of life and death and it is no surprise that the abortion issue strains the bounds of civility. From the pro-life standpoint, abortions are murder and the abortion issue itself cannot be constrained within the confines of the economy of “moral disagreement”. Thus so long as we remain within a Rawlsian paradigm which draws together the secular and the non-secular in a merely external fashion, many citizens will accept the legitimacy of the public political realm as a *modus vivendi* only, but not as an overlapping consensus. The Rawlsian concept of public reason does not adequately unify the secular and the non-secular.

### 3. Concluding Hegelian Post-Script

The preceding argument has attempted through immanent critique to indicate certain tensions in the Rawlsian approach to public reason. But a further and perhaps deeper question has to do with the historiography upon which his version of the divide between secular and the religious (cum comprehensive) is based. It is inadequate to see the historical relationship between the Christian religion and the contemporary North American state as resulting in either the Rawlsian overlapping consensus or in the *modus vivendi* which appears in the wake of its failure.

Once the divide between the religious and the secular has in Rawlsian fashion been established along private and public lines, a deep consensus between the two can be achieved only by shredding the integrity of the other. Rawlsians will argue that surely this is not the case because of the sociological fact of the existence of liberal constitutions variously supported from differing comprehensive positions and its result in a reasonably peaceful public realm. But the reason for public peace is not so much the separation of the public and the private or the secular

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47. Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 93.
48. The interest of the foregoing argument (section two) is to show that neither Rawls nor Gutmann and Thompson can adequately accommodate the views of pro-lifers within their paradigm of overlapping consensus. In what follows, I present no solution to the abortion debate as a moral issue but wish to indicate the authority of the political realm in this and other matters as having a religious ground philosophically speaking.
and the religious, but a secularity that is itself a product of the country’s religious life given shape in a public political secular realm.

As Mark De Wolfe Howe and Michael W. McConnell have argued, the “wall of separation” between church and state admits not only of secular but also of religious interpretation. Thomas Jefferson, for example, was critical of “enthusiastic” religions, favoring the rationalism of the Unitarian Church. He advocated the separation of church and state, and the establishment clause of the First Amendment to protect individuals from religious irrationalism. By contrast evangelical churches, for example, Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterian and Lutherans saw in the “wall of separation” a protection of the purity and supremacy of the claims of religious conscience. What is equally significant is that the secularity which thus emerges is not in opposition to the religious, moral and metaphysical views of citizens nor is it reflective of a weakened attachment to these views. Rather it reflects the immanent pluralism present in the Christian religion in the wake of the Reformation and the Enlightenment; here Christianity gives birth to its own enlightened secularity. In light of the historical and cultural dominance of Christianity it is only through ideology or abstraction that one fails to recognize it as a constitutive moment of the public political realm. The separation of church and state or of the secular and the non-secular is in important ways a Christian separation. Awareness of this point is important in order not to make too rigid and restrictive a distinction between the secular and non-secular but also in order to recognize difficulties which can emerge from what amounts in certain respects to a de facto establishment of the Christian religion.

Rawls’s conception of political life exploits a richly ambiguous conception of the relation of secularity to religion and metaphysics; of the separation of church and state. On the one hand, secularity consists of individuals liberated from absolute adherence to comprehensive doctrines: “It is left to citizens individually – as part of liberty of conscience – to settle how they think the values of the political domain are related to other values in their comprehensive doctrine.” From the standpoint of the Rawlsian state, freedom of conscience is both freedom to believe and freedom not to believe. On the other hand, Rawls recognizes an important historical and normative relation between the secular and the non-secular: “The history of religion and philosophy shows that there are many reasonable ways in which the wider realm of values can be understood so as to be congruent with, or supportive of, or else not in conflict with, the values appropriate to the social domain of the political as specified by a political conception of justice.” In a certain precise sense, moral, religious, and metaphysical views are seen as a

54. Rawls 1993: 140.
55. Rawls 1993: 140.
positive ground of political liberalism by securing public reason in an overlapping consensus.\textsuperscript{56} Further, Rawls allows the possibility that the ‘grounding’ of the political conception in comprehensive doctrines guarantee the rightness of the political conception: “if any of those reasonable comprehensive doctrines supports only true moral judgments, the political conception itself is correct, or close thereto, since it is endorsed by a true doctrine.”\textsuperscript{57} And: “Whatever our specific view of the truth, or the reasonableness, of moral judgments may be, must we not suppose that at least the way to truth, or reasonableness, is to be found in one of the reasonable doctrines (or some mix thereof) arising under those conditions?”\textsuperscript{58}

But while Rawls recognizes the relationship between liberalism and moral, religious and metaphysical views he does so in primarily external and somewhat negative terms. Consider his comments on Christianity. He states: “The historical origin of political liberalism (and of liberalism more generally) is the Reformation and its aftermath, with the long controversies over religious toleration in the 16th and 17th centuries. Something like the modern understanding of liberty of conscience and freedom began then. As Hegel saw, pluralism made religious liberty possible, certainly not Luther and Calvin’s intention.”\textsuperscript{59} For Rawls: “Luther and Calvin were as dogmatic and intolerant as the Roman Church had been.”\textsuperscript{60} He thus sees political liberalism as born in a criticism of religious intolerance and yet as depending on religion and other comprehensive doctrines for its ground.

One might say that Rawls provides a correct account of the relation between the secular and the non-secular, here the religious, but that his account is not therefore a true account. In his Logic, Hegel states: “Correctness is only a matter of the formal agreement of our representation with its concept.” However truth by contrast: “consists in the agreement of the object with itself, i.e., with its concept.”\textsuperscript{61} The truth of the Christian religion (and of the Reformation specifically), for Hegel, is that it is itself, in concept, a religion of freedom and equality. He states: “It was through Christianity that this idea [that the human being is actually free] came into the world. According to Christianity, the individual as such has an infinite value as the object and aim of divine love, destined as mind to live in absolute relation with God himself, and have God’s mind dwelling in him, i.e., man is implicitly destined to supreme freedom.”\textsuperscript{62} This is likewise the religious basis of equality: “Under Christianity slavery is impossible; for man is man – in the abstractest essence of his nature – is contemplated in God; each unit of mankind is an object of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{56} Rawls 1993: 169.
\bibitem{57} Rawls 1993: 128.
\bibitem{58} Rawls 1993: 129. This might be conceived as Rawls’ pragmatic post-modern re-statement of Hegel’s view that: “Since ethical principles and the organization of the state in general are drawn into the domain religion and not only may but also should be established by reference thereto, this reference gives religious credentials to the state itself” \textit{(Philosophy of Right, §270z, p. 172).}
\bibitem{59} Rawls 1993: xxiv.
\bibitem{60} Rawls 1993: xiii.
\bibitem{62} \textit{The Philosophy of Mind}, §482, pp. 239-40. Cf. also \textit{The Philosophy of History}, p. 417: “This is the essence of the Reformation: Man is in his very nature destined to be free.”
\end{thebibliography}
the grace of God and of the divine purpose: ‘God will have all men to be saved’. Utterly excluding all speciality, therefore man in and for himself – in his simple quality as man – has infinite value; and this infinite value abolishes ipso facto, all particularity attaching to birth or country.”

Christianity thus asserts in religious form what becomes the principle of the modern state. Hegel states: “The idea of the state in modern times has a special character in that the state is the actualization of freedom.” Further: “The essence of the modern state is that the universal is bound up with the complete freedom of its particular members and with private well-being.”

But this does not entail that the state is religious per se. On the Hegelian view the relation of church and state is in certain respects identical in structure to the relationship between religion and philosophy. For Hegel the religious expression of freedom occurs fundamentally through representation. He argues that representation is a thinking activity which establishes intuition not as the ground of thought but as a moment in thought’s own self-differentiation. F.L. Jackson indicates that for Hegel, representation in all its forms is a free self-reciprocal activity: “in which some immediately given content is transformed into an object posited as the subject’s own product.” The content of representation may have its source in sensation but likewise according to Hegel: “Apart from the sensible representation also has material that has sprung from self-conscious thinking as its content, such as the notion of what is right, of what is ethical or religious, and also of thinking itself.”

Nevertheless, according to Hegel, representation: “whatever be its content (from image, notion or idea) has always the peculiarity of being in respect of its content given and immediate.” Further, in the Logic he states: “If I represent God to myself, then certainly the content is purely something thought but the form is still sensible, just as I already find it immediately within me.” While the content in the representation of God is produced by thought its form is merely given and thus representation occupies an intermediate stage between intuition (in which thought is relatively determined) and thinking proper (in which thought is explicitly free).

Over and against this element of immediacy in representation, philosophy brings to religion both mediation and logical necessity, transforming it from a merely received into an explicitly rational spiritual life. Philosophy liberates itself from religious representation in

63. The Philosophy of History: 334.
65. Philosophy of Mind, §450z, p. 201.
67. Logic, §20, p. 49.
68. Philosophy of Mind, §455, p. 207.
69. Logic, §24, p. 58.
70. Philosophy of Mind, §451, p. 201.
articulating its own conceptual form, yet the content of religion is in its essence maintained and expressed more adequately. Hegel states: “Philosophy, [which gives the form of thought to the content of faith] does not thereby place itself above religion but only above the form of faith as representation.”72 The liberation of philosophy from religious representation, therefore, is not an abstract liberation or mere negation of the religious content. Hegel states: “There cannot be philosophy without religion because philosophy includes religion within it.”73

The modern state is explicitly the objective expression of the philosophical principle of freedom and demands of religion in the public political sphere that it be, in certain respects, beyond representation, that is, that it be reasonable. While Hegel recognizes that religion is the groundwork of the state, including genuine ethical content and expressing the fundamental nature of the state in terms of the divine will, he contends: “it is at the same time only a groundwork; and it is at this point that state and religion begin to diverge.”74 Further: “If the state is to come into existence as the self-knowing actuality of mind, it is essential that its form should be distinct from the authority of faith.” And: “the distinction between their forms of consciousness should be externalized as a distinction between their special modes of existence.”75 Rawls rightly indicates that for Hegel the modern state emerges out of the divisions in Christianity that became explicit in the Reformation. Hegel states: “So far from having been a misfortune for the state that the church is disunited, it is only as a result of that disunion that the state has been able to reach its appointed end as a self-consciously rational and ethical organization.”76

Here the state obtains distinction from faith because in it freedom and reason have become concrete as “the actual shape and organization of a world”,77 In terms of ethical practice then, the state, for Hegel, is more explicit and developed than the church, including as it does responsibility for welfare, law, external affairs, public works etc., and we might now add the environment. It is an ethical life, with all its tensions and compromises, made actual in the face of the obstacles of privilege and power, contingency and corruption. Thus for Hegel: “In contrast with the church’s faith and authority in matters affecting ethical principles, rightness, laws, institutions, in contrast with the church’s subjective conviction, the state is that which knows. Its principle is such that its content is in essence no longer clothed with the form of feeling and faith but is determinate thought.”78 Further: “The state retains the right and the form of self-conscious, objective, rationality, the right to make this form count and to maintain it against pretensions springing from truth in a subjective dress, no matter how such truth may girdle itself with certitude and authority.”79

74. Philosophy of Right, §270z, p. 166.
75. Philosophy of Right, §270z, p. 173.
76. Philosophy of Right, §270z, p. 174.
77. Philosophy of Right, §270z, p. 172.
The self-conscious reconciliation of these realms, however, is strictly speaking philosophical: “It is philosophic insight which sees that while church and state differ in form, they do not stand opposed in content, for truth and rationality are the content of both.” 80 The citizen, then, so far as he is enculturated in the traditions and laws of a liberal state, is engaged by an explicitly philosophical ethical project, the actualization of the principles of freedom and equality. In the liberal state citizens from all walks of life are as a matter of course drawn into all manner of debate about the relation of religion and state, the nature of ethical institutions (marriage, for example), and indeed the nature of personhood (as in the controversy over abortion). They bring with them the moral and religious resources with which they have been raised but they are called in democratic forums, so far as they wish to engage the sensibilities of their fellow citizens, to relate to and express such resources in a manner beyond the particularities of the sects from which they originate; they are called by democratic debate and criticism to transform representation into political concept. In this determinate ethical life citizens are moved from the simple givenness of their religious beliefs to reflection upon them in light of the philosophical principle of freedom. In principle liberal public reason is not related to philosophy and religion in a merely contingent or subjective manner, that is in terms of the choices and opinions of citizens. Rather it is fundamentally philosophical: in the separation of powers, for example, judicial universality and legislative particularity are drawn into relation as fundamental components of a determinate and free world, unified and made concrete in the direction given by the executive branch. The whole constitution, then, as the articulate practical expression of modern freedom, is the institutional exemplar of an inherently philosophical public political discourse.

By contrast with the Rawlsian view, then, it is not simply in an a-religious toleration that liberal secularity emerges but rather as an expression of principles which take shape in Christianity. To understand the Hegelian view of the relation between liberal pluralism and Christianity, one must see that, for Hegel, by virtue of its expression of freedom, Christianity is the consummated religion: “the religion in which religion has become objective to itself.” 81 He states: “The freedom of self-consciousness is the content of religion and this content is itself the object of the Christian religion, i.e., Spirit is its own object.” 82 Thus Christianity reveals the core of all religions, that is, the spiritual freedom of all humans. The differences among religions, then, are transformed in the Hegelian account to differences of representation; philosophically speaking all religions are moments of the concept of religion: “These determinacies are the moments, the becoming of the concept, and their resolution and return [to itself] are what constitute the concept itself.” 83 From the religious standpoint the differences of Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism etc. might appear absolute. However, for Hegel such an appearance is sustainable only so far as individuals and cultures fail adequately to develop a free

80. *Philosophy of Right*, §270z, p. 171.
philosophical spirit and awareness of the historical development of religion itself; objectively speaking, on the Hegelian account, modern freedom is in principle beyond these divisions.

For Hegel, then, all major religions are related to the fundamental principle of modern political life through Christianity and the modern state is thus the objective practical expression of the basic concept of all religions. It is not in religious life as such, where differences of representation predominate, that pluralism is grounded and sustained but in political life which is founded not on representation but on the principles implicit in all representation. On Hegel’s view, the secular state not only allows the sectarian claims of various religions but also disciplines them in light of the spiritual core of religion itself, that is, in terms of freedom and equality. But the spiritual core of religion in its philosophical expression is shorn of its representational image and dogma. Secularity has a philosophical basis only in the freedom and equality which the liberal state offers to all faiths and their adherents suitably conformed to reason. The liberal state is conceived, in this light, as freed from the particularities of religion precisely because it has its ground in the underlying principle of all religion; it is, therefore, open to comprehensive doctrines at its root. The speculative cat is out of the representational bag and it is only through reaction or sentimentality that one desires a more ‘authentic,’ pre-modern, pre-political religiosity. For Hegel, the state is the objective end of religion: “The true realization of religion in the worldly sphere is the inward realization, namely, that a just and ethical life should be instituted.”

Nevertheless, for Hegel religion belongs to absolute spirit and is not exhausted in its practical determination, though it is fundamentally informed by it. Rather modern ethical life becomes a deeper finite ground of religion in which humans are educated beyond the mere subjectivity of opinion and selfishness of desire. He states: “Genuine religion and genuine religiosity only issue from the ethical life: religion is that life rising to think, i.e., becoming aware of the free universality of its concrete essence. Only from the ethical life and by the ethical life is the Idea of God seen to be free spirit: outside of ethical spirit therefore it is vain to seek for true religion and religiosity.” For Hegel while the state is the objective end of religion it is not the absolute end. However, by liberating the secular from the religious in this light and by the self-limiting of religion at the hands of its own secularity, so far as the political sets certain guidelines for religious life and itself educates the human heart, there exists the potentiality of the recognition of a deeper faithfulness, more fully expressive of the universality of our determinate ethical life. Rawls’ vision of the public political realm, while correct in fundamental ways, grasps the dynamic of secular and non-secular in its externality only, that is, focused for example on the intolerance and dogmatism of the Reformation by contrast with the inner freedom it announces. Liberalism, conceived philosophically, is precisely the political expression of the spiritual truth of the Christian religion, that is, the freedom and equality of all humans.

85. *Philosophy of Mind*, §552, p. 283.
Hegel On Secularity And Consummated Religion

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I. Introduction

The relation of religion to secular order has once more assumed centre stage in the renewed conflict between secular democracies and a traditional religiosity turned fiercely political. The extreme development of the former had seen politics represented as the only true redemption and religion condemned as the malaise of self-alienated humanity, to be purged altogether or rendered subordinate to political-economic interests. The struggle between various forms of the humanist ideal state produced two world wars and half a millennium of deadly global tensions, issuing in what finally has been seen as the triumph of technocratic liberalism.\footnote{There are endless widely quoted contemporary variations on this theme, for example. Bobbitt (\textit{Shield of Achilles}), Huntington (\textit{Clash of Civilizations}), Fukuyama (\textit{End of History}) etc., most of which regard the present liberal-democratic order as a finality. See also D. Peddle, “The Construction of the Secular in Rawls and Hegel etc.” and F. E. Doull “Peace with Islam”. \textit{Animus} (www.swgc.mun.ca/animus/) v.9, 2004.} But as it has turned out, the end of history must be postponed as a religiosity thought to be slumbering has abruptly awakened to terrorize the global order from within, seeking the restoration of a theocratic fusion of religion and state. The question of the relation of otherworldly to worldly interests has accordingly taken on new and unexpected urgency in the confrontation between an atavistic religious extremism and the western secularism it judges decadent and satanic. A generation in the habit of thinking the relation of religion to public life had been a matter already settled finds itself obliged to consider it anew.

In his essay “Secularity and Religion”, James Doull points to the difficulty which typically besets any simplistic attempt to define this relation:

There occurs at once the difficult question as to what science it belongs to speak of these matters. For the same phenomena are generally seen very differently from one side and the other. What to religion appears a lapse from the highest human concerns ... is seen by the secular as human liberation and a more serious concern for humanity.
This cogent commonsense observation instantly renders a good deal of superficial debate irrelevant, for it is no less obvious in life than in logic that should one member in a relationship attempt to interpret or enact it exclusively on its own terms, this amounts to negating the relation itself. Moreover, should one or the other side claim its own standpoint to be wholly autonomous and comprehensive it will find its own standpoint corrupted, since the difference implied in the relation has thereby only been assimilated as an internal conflict:

The more religion denies that it and worldly wisdom are one, the more it becomes in fact more worldly, more assimilated to secular life. Contrariwise, the more secularism shuns religion and denies its common root with it, the more radically ‘religious’ a secularism it becomes.\(^2\)

For an exclusive religiosity finds its full expression only in an asceticism that is wholly hostile to worldly things; the self-denying will is thus inherently nihilistic, as Nietzsche amply describes, a living will-not-to live. Conversely, a radical humanism that eschews any appeal to a divine provenance can express itself only in an absolute subjective will that can abide nothing that would limit it, an anarchic freedom which, when it acts, can only destroy.\(^3\) Which is to say, a pure religiosity or a pure secularism are not simply difficult, but impossible to achieve since the one sustains itself only through the negation of the other, this other becoming thereby its own limit and nemesis. But nor is it unproblematic, as Doull argues, to appeal to a some supposedly objective position partial to neither side, for as Plato pointed out long ago, from the detached point of view of a ‘third man’, the division of terms and their relation will be taken as something fixed and given, so that either the terms must appear quite indifferent to their relation, or else they must be defined only relative to each other, in which case what distinguishes them is rendered moot.

Historical paradigms of all such extremes abound: the decadence of secular Rome, the worldliness of the medieval church, the tyrannical moralism of contemporary fundamentalism, the genocidal fanaticism of ideological politics, the ambiguity of a political-scientific absolute separation of church and state. They amply demonstrate how experiments in pure theocracy or secularism attain their goal only through force and suppression, while experiments in institutionalized separation of religion and politics often fail to do justice to the essentiality of their relation. A “better consideration”, thinks Doull, would more adequately recognize the strong and perennial belief that religion and practical life, even given their distinction, are in actuality one:

[its] standpoint would be that religion and secular society are primarily one and the same and that their difference and antagonism fall within that unity. Historically such a view of the matter has no doubt been far more prevalent than the opposite. That laws and social institutions are of a religious nature and not simply the product of experience and reflection is the common belief of peoples.

\(^3\) Hegel, *Phenomenology*. (BB) vi. B.III: “Absolute Freedom and Terror”.
That the secular order is independent of religion has only been definitely held by Greeks and Romans in the decline of their religions, and in Christian times.\textsuperscript{4}

To a contemporary ear, ‘unity-in-difference’ has an abstract and rhetorical ‘Hegelian’ ring. Yet even in its elementary assumptions contemporary liberalism implies just such a subsuming of a separation of religion and politics under their unity. For it assumes \textit{a de facto}, ‘enlightened’ resolution of the conflict from the secular political side, a ‘public reason’ that at once recognizes the religious mentality but distinguishes it from, and subordinates it to, its own. A secularism so qualified \textit{a priori} has then no need to oppose religion: it will only insist the latter withdraw into the background and refrain from seeking to limit, influence or usurp the interests of a public reason. A political culture that so knows itself as comprehensive of religion in this limited sense can then certainly ‘tolerate’ any variety of forms of it, from outright atheism to a plurality of particular religious traditions. It might even defer to specific traditions whose spiritual ideals claim to overlap, even to ground, those of liberalism itself. But ‘religious toleration’, ‘multi-culturalism’, ‘overlapping values’ etc. tend to presume a priority of secular concerns over the religious, so that the reconciliation proposed can amount to little more than a pragmatic accommodation.

From the standpoint of the dominant liberal secularism of the day it is never clear if, or how, there is, or could be, any \textit{essential} relation of religious to secular interests. For its freedom remains postulatory only, an ideal human condition endlessly seeking realization but never actually realized.\textsuperscript{5} It is just its inherent incompleteness that inclines liberalism ever to collapse into extremes of right and left.\textsuperscript{6} Its characteristic account of human history, both older and current, is accordingly as an ever on-going liberation of cultures dominated by the ‘closed’, absolutist perspective of religion or ideology toward the ‘open’ perspective of an economic society of free individuals, seen as a progress from a confusion of religion and state to their enlightened separation. But this same development can as readily be construed as toward the more adequate affirmation of the \textit{unity} of spiritual and secular, of freedom and its actuality, a unity only imperfectly achieved in the finite form of an interminable progress toward it. Otherwise put: if the limit of all earlier culture is to be found in the tendency to confound religion and politics it is no less problematical how, in contemporary liberal culture, the irrepressible appeal of religious truths and values can be thought to have only a superficial bearing upon the ordering of everyday life.\textsuperscript{7}

Doull’s observations have in mind Hegel’s account of the relation of religion to secularity as neither irredeemably contentious nor merely pragmatic, but an \textit{essential} relation. What an ‘essential relation’ is, however, remains to be clarified. It is to describe religion as bearing upon


\textsuperscript{5} That such a freedom should be \textit{actually} realized is for a liberal mentality a disconcerting prospect. Even Fukuyama wonders whether life at the end of history as the endless indulgence in the fruits of technocracy and the rights of the market place can satisfy a deeper human yearning. (See F. E. Doull, op.cit.).

\textsuperscript{6} Bobbitt (op.cit.) has an elaborate and often strained account of liberalism, communism and fascism as the centre, left and right versions of one and the same attempt to realize a classical political-economic view of the nation state, and represents the ‘long war’ of the past century as a battle for supremacy between them, culminating in the advent of the global ‘market state’.

\textsuperscript{7} Using ‘everyday’ in its ordinary positive sense rather than in Heidegger’s, whose critique of “Alltäglichkeit” reads like a theologian’s denigration of secular life in metaphysical dress.
secular life, not contingently, but in and of itself; and secular life as grounded in religion, not arbitrarily, but as its own essential tendency; and that this essentiality of relation is the case, not in spite of their difference, but as requiring it. Of course it remains to be shown how this contention can be squared with the evident historical warring of the one upon the other: the typical raging of religious fundamentalism against secular humanism, the contrary prejudice of scientific humanism for which religion is seen as an obstacle to reasonable human polity.

The interest of the Hegelian philosophy chiefly lies in its account of how religion and political order stand in essential relation to each other. It seeks above all to show, both logically and historically, how the maturing of an intuitive human spirituality into a religion that knows freedom as its principle, coincides with the development of the human community into a political life founded on the same principle; and how in the philosophical consciousness of freedom become general in modernity, the tension between sacred and secular wisdom and practice has been in principle, if not in actuality, resolved and transcended.

The uniting of worldly and otherworldly perspectives through the principle of freedom is more than just one of many themes in the Hegelian philosophy: it is its central theme, the whole being the systematic elaboration of just this principle. The Hegelian logic is by its own definition the logic of the idea of freedom, whose implications then form the basis for a distinctive science of nature, psychology, ethics and theology founded upon it. According to this perspective, the question of the relation of religion to secular life is only adequately addressed where seen to have its basis logically in the concept of freedom and historically in the emergence of a culture embodying this same principle. Thus if in more elemental cultures religious and communal seem more or less merged, if in classical times they become both starkly distinguished, if in Christianity they become known as both separate and the same abstractly, that is, in God — for the modern-philosophical mentality for which freedom has become the explicit basis of all thought and action, this theological unity-in-difference gains a new significance as an actual and present reconciliation of the divine and human worlds.

The procedure in what follows is to consider briefly, first, what is to be understood logically by an ‘essential’ relation, then to address more directly the epistemology, theology and history of what Hegel calls the ‘consummated’ religion — Christianity — concluding with a few observations on contemporary implications.

II. The Logic Of Essential Relation

The way relations are commonly represented amounts to a compounding of fallacies. Typically a distinction is drawn between two things, posited or given simply as ‘different’. Then additionally a relation between them is noted, but as indifferent to the distinction already made, grafted upon the terms distinguished after the fact. It is thus as if what are related had as such

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8 From the standpoint of the ruling influence of the liberal idea, the content and tenor of the Hegelian lectures on religion, politics and history many now would judge outdated and metaphysical. However it remains the case that little is to be found in the literature that so directly and concretely addresses this precise issue.

nothing to do with each other or with their being related. The first step in this procedure follows a wholly abstract rule which says: the different as different is not identical and the identical as identical is without difference. The second step, however, follows another no less abstract rule: things are unrelated so far as they are different and related so far as they are in some sense the same. These two rules contradict each other. They can hold good only where applied serially: first one, then the other.

Analytic thinking attempts to construe concrete relations as abstract ones, presuming mutual exclusivity of identity and difference and then imposing a second-order identification nonetheless upon terms so distinguished. This abstract procedure is responsible for many classical logical paradoxes — of the one and the many, substance and accident, universal and particular etc. — whose ‘solution’ consists either in an endless pyramidal proliferation of relations and correlations purporting to explain things, or lead to para-logical final solutions, such as monistic reductionism, absolute relativism and so forth. Such thinking is supposed to render matters clear, but limited as it is to a fixed distinction between identity and difference, its account of relations cannot get beyond a formal and extraneous relating of terms that are at the same time taken as exclusive of and indifferent to each other. It can thus give no account of ‘concrete’ relations in which the relating of one thing to another lies implicit in these terms themselves and springs from them, as, for example, in the relation of mother and child, or, for that matter, of a cat to a mat.  

Hegel devotes a major portion of his science of logic to precisely this question. In the so-called ‘doctrine of essence’ there is dialectically explicated how a concrete as opposed to an abstract relation is logically constituted, and what it means that a relation be essential rather than formal.  

The argument commences with a critique of relations as founded upon an abstract separation of identity and difference as if these were logically primitive concepts. What Hegel assumes in this commencement is the earlier analysis of the logic of the categories of ‘being’, which concludes with the insight that unitary being, being-for-self — ‘identity’ — has more in it than unity in the abstract sense. ‘Identity’ is rather self-relativity, unity as self-identity. Such a unity has distinction already in it, the differentiation of itself from itself, so that what ‘difference’ must concretely mean is likewise more than simple, abstract exclusion or separation. What is concretely different is distinct in itself, self-distinguished. Already in their initial logical representation, therefore, identity and difference are shown to be entirely bound up with each other, and ‘relation’ is accordingly not some further logical category brought extraneously into play, but is directly given in the same dynamic whereby in identity difference is already implied, and in difference, identity.

On this basis Hegel expounds ‘relation’ initially as in principle more than the formal superimposition of identity upon difference or seeking to discover sameness among presupposed differences. Rather, where differentiation is self-differentiation, then differences refer of themselves to an underlying identity implicit in them — to their unitary ‘ground’. And contrariwise, where identity is self-identity, this unity generates of itself the differences through

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10 Bertrand Russell preoccupied otherwise mature academic philosophers for some decades with the mind-numbing question, that given we know what a cat and a mat are, then to what in the proposition ‘the cat is on the mat’ the ‘is’ and the ‘on’ could possibly refer.

11 Enc. 112-159. The identity/difference discussion at Enc. 114-116.
which it acquires a determinate form. Relations, so far as concrete, are thus neither analytic nor synthetic but dynamic: they describe the reference of determinate differences to that which forms their proper unitary ground and conversely the reference of this same self-identical unity to the differentiae through which it has its determinate character — these being reciprocal. Relation in this concrete sense Hegel calls essential relation, in its most general sense the relation of existence to essence.

The most concrete concept of essence/existence, however, Hegel will call ‘actuality’. The abstract view of things is of endless external relations piled upon one another and all grafted upon a presumed preexisting multiplicity. Actuality rather describes things as constituted and sustained through dynamical relations internal to themselves, which are their own. Dynamic constitution in general is what one calls ‘causality’, and Hegel reviews the familiar forms of causal relation — substance-accident, cause-effect, action-reaction. But ground and consequence implicate each other, effects turn into causes and actions are also reactions, which insight brings to light the concept of ‘reciprocity’, of things as mutually constitutive. Understood superficially, reciprocity suggests an account of actuality as universal interaction, a theory of relativity. But universal relativity sees reciprocity only in terms of external relations: a multiplicity of differences is assumed and then one thing then said to evoke another which in turn evokes it in infinitivum.

The deeper sense of reciprocity, however, is not of a mutual interaction of externals — not universal relativity — but, because what acts and reacts is ultimately the same, interaction has its ground in the capacity to interact, in the inner dynamic of self-relativity. And this is what is meant by describing anything as ‘actual’, namely, as self-effecting and effected, a causa sui, something self-constituting, actively self-sustained. Expressed as one activity this yields the principle of self-determination: to be ‘concretely actual’ is to be self-determined, in-dependent. Actual identity is thus self-identity, i.e., identity as resolution to unity of an active-reactive reciprocity of moments distinguished within it.

For Hegel, the logic of relation or relativity reaches its limit and completion in the concept of self-determination as the principle of whatever is actual. So far as this principle occurs to a thinking still preoccupied with the indefinite relativity of externals, it will appear as an infinite causality underlying every finite eventuality — the ‘inner necessity’ of things.

The bond of necessity as such is identity as still inner and hidden: the identity of things considered actual but which yet have an independence that only ought to be necessary.

But grasped explicitly for what it is in itself, actuality is self-determination, the simple thought of freedom, “pure self-interaction” which is “necessity unveiled or explicitly posited”. Thus:

true necessity is freedom and true subsistence the ‘concept’: self-subsistence which, as differentially self-repelling, is yet in this repelling identical with self, and which, even in its inherent reciprocal movement, is only in relation to itself.13

12 Enc. 157.
‘The concept’, in Hegel’s lexicon, is self-determination so far as it is a *logical* principle. Otherwise, in appropriate contexts, it is ‘freedom’, or ‘spirit’. Hegel’s logic of essential relation as culminating or consummated in the principle of self-determination stands in the starkest possible contrast to the common approach to a logic of relation with its typical appeal to a wholly formalistic compounding of ‘identity’, ‘difference’ and ‘relation’ taken in their most abstract sense. Hegel affirms the opposite: these terms belong together and should be thought as such. For ultimately and concretely, all relation is unity-in-difference, that is, ‘actuality’, and actuality has its completion and consummation implicitly in the concept of necessity and explicitly in the principle of self-determination: freedom.

When in an Hegelian vein one speaks of ‘unity-in-difference’, then, this is not to be thought a piece of logical rhetoric or legerdemain: it expresses logically what an ‘essential’ relation is, a relation whose terms are wholly transparent to each other, which actively generate, invoke and sustain each other, a dynamic relativity pointing beyond itself to its consummation in a unity transcending their relativity as such. For Hegel, this is the infinite form belonging to all relations so far as they are concrete or determinate, i.e., ‘actual’ relations. The phrase specifically means to override and correct the bad habit of an abstract thinking which separates relations from what is related.

It is with such a logic of consummation in mind that the discussion can now turn more specifically the relation of the spiritual to the secular. To describe the relation of religion to a secular order of life as ‘essential’ is to say much more than that they are similar, have this or that in common, are antithetical, compatible or incompatible, or even that one is grounded in the other. It is rather to describe this relation as wholly sustained in and through their distinction and interaction, to view the worldly and otherworldly mentalities and communities as evoking and sustaining each other, to represent the relation of God to Man and of Man to God as in actuality one relation, to know that the interdependency of sacred and profane can make itself fully evident only where these are grasped in their most extreme opposition.

III. Representational Knowledge

For religion generally it is as if the divine order of things and what lies within the reach of human experience are two separate realities. Before all worlds, says God, I am, infinite and eternal, while we mortal creatures live our uncertain lives in a wholly temporal and finite world. Everything in religion thus becomes a question of how, given this absolute separation, we nonetheless somehow stand in relation to the divine, bear witness to it or ‘know it not’, turn from or submit to it, find in it only fatality and mystery or draw from it a beneficent law for personal and communal life.

From a speculative standpoint, however, this sharp division between spiritual and worldly realities that religion presents may be seen as the work of a ‘reflexive’ thinking whose characteristic act is to oppose to itself an ‘ob-jective’ world as distinguished from the ‘sub-

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13 *Enc.* 158.
jective’ world of its own thinking activity. This objective-subjective polarization yields a dual reference: to a presumed pre-reflexive order of reality ‘out there’ and a corresponding, reflexive order of thought-posed ideality — images, symbols, ideas and so forth — ‘in here’.

In the jargon of epistemology such reflexive thinking is generally called ‘representation’ (Ger. Vorstellen), and the important point about it is that the one element in the polarity — the notion of a pre-empirical reality prior to representation (a Kantian ‘in-itself’) is no less the product of this thinking act than is the other element, the represented world of a thinking imagination. It is one and the same reflection that produces both the other-worldly world of mnemonic imagination and the contrary worldly world of ‘empirical reality’, and it is only for epistemological abstraction, for empirical realism or phenomenological idealism, that attempts are made to derive the one from the other. Representation, far from a mere wallowing in the decayed residue of sensible reality, as with Hume, or a pure act of synthesis a priori, is the spontaneous, mediating art through which thinking subjectivity liberates itself from enthrallment with what is simply ‘there’ for an unreflective consciousness; which transforms this content into a form then available to the free, comprehending insight of thought. If a religious believer may lay claim to a knowledge higher than a mundane witness to things, the same can be said of the most ordinary everyday act of imagination: it confers a measure of autonomy upon what experience immediately presents as finite and temporal, allowing for its transfiguration and reconnection within the free, a-temporal medium of thought.

It is thus not just for poets that a world conjured in imagination i
s as true or truer than the prosaic one: it is the everyday epistemological fact of life. Representation is a dynamic no less intrinsic to the psychology of everyday consciousness than to science, art or religion: all bear witness to the spontaneous, positing action of thought which liberates experience to knowledge. The German ‘Vorstellen’ better captures this sense of an active transfiguration of experience setting the empirical in relation to thought, than does the English ‘representation’, which suffers from an empiricist bias. It is in this active sense that recollection, figuration, imagination, signification etc. are the first mediating steps toward a ‘higher’ knowing in which things are not simply ‘re-presented’, but ‘com-prehended’, that is, brought together under a principle.

But if imagining, symbolizing, recollecting constitute forms of knowing, the reflection that re-presents provides the initial objectification whereby the content of an otherwise witless sensibility is first set into a relation to thought. As such, representation has its distinct limit in

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14 Hegel describes the Kantian critique as “containing the propositions only of a phenomenology (not of a philosophy) of mind.” Enc. 415.
15 This reflexive ‘oppositing’ (Fichte’s term) of thinking to experience provides only for an incomplete and ambiguous form of knowing — ‘empirical’ knowledge. The Kantian limitation of knowledge to experience expresses precisely what representational thinking is, as also its limit. Kant declared the Vorstellung to be the universal form of all objects of knowing (Critique of Pure Reason, B.377), even of conceptual knowing, thus limiting all knowing a such and absolutely to a transcendental-phenomenological reference of cognitive forms to ultra-empirical things. Kant was notoriously forced to the conclusion that all knowledge is empirical and every principle hypothetical. The working through of the logic of representation, a propos of this Kantian ‘phenomenology’ of experience (Hegel’s term) that rests wholly upon it, forms the main burden and interest of the post-Kantian German idealism.
16 It is only as abstractly construed in materialist psychology that representation is made to appear a spurious incursion of a spurious subjectivity into a first-order empirical sensibility — indeed, this very distinction of first-order and second-order is itself the product of reflective thought.
that the free act of thought is not itself present in it but is manifest only indirectly in the fixed reflexive opposing of subjective to objective, of ideality to reality, image to fact, signifier to signified etc. — thus an incomplete reflection in that only a partial transition from experiencing to knowing is made. Knowing in the more complete sense requires the recognition of the subjective-objective dichotomy into which in representation everything is cast, as in actuality an essential relation, thus nothing absolute or fixed, but the active, mediating reciprocation of ideal and real on the part of a thinking subjectivity which thereby recollects, recovers and recognizes its own freedom in whatever it knows. If from a Kantian standpoint ‘comprehension’ is confused with representation, thus limited to an empiricism that ever ought to know but cannot, this incompleteness finds consummation in a thinking that recognizes the phenomenological polarization of thought and experience for the essential relation it is, takes this reciprocity into itself and by this means gains access to the principle of the thing itself. Such a knowing Hegel speaks of as philosophical in the broad sense, a knowing more concrete than that which representation and its empiricism provides since, rather than dissociate itself from the latter or oppose to it some other kind of knowing altogether, brings it to its proper completion and consummation.

**IV Religious Knowledge**

The contention ‘man is by nature free’ expresses the ordinary witness of human beings to an infinite interiority, which is to say the human animal is as such a self-conscious being, or in Spinoza’s brief axiom: ‘Man thinks’. So far as this witness to freedom is inward only it stands in problematic relation to the coincident and contrary experience of a multifarious world — given, finite, temporal. To the resolution of this experienced world to a form consistent with freedom the thinking individual is inevitably drawn. The openness to and interest in the idea of universal truth, of a ‘preordained’, objective and actually realized freedom compatible with their own — conformable, that is, to thought — is thus spontaneous and unquenchable; which is to say human beings are, in consequence of their very freedom, religious: they are aesthetically, intellectually, morally and philosophically infinitely inquisitive.

Thus if, in respect to content, much that is given to religion is subject to experience and cultivation, the impulse to religious knowledge itself is decidedly not acquired; it is a foolhardy psychology that would seek to show otherwise.\(^\text{17}\) Hegel frequently observes that religion is the form in which humanity in general has hold of universal truths, that is, as a representational knowledge through the medium of personification, parable, mythical narrative, miraculous events and so forth.

\(^\text{17}\) By materialist psychology is meant the common way of speaking of psychic life as organic reactions, brain activities and the like. It is the notorious illusion of contemporary psychology that it begs the question entirely as to how there could be a demonstrable psychological science at all were the autonomy of scientific reasoning and criteria of proof not presupposed. If ‘thinking’ were itself no more than a neurological phenomenon, then science itself would immediate lose all credibility since it would be impossible to decide what a true or objectively valid judgment would be.
That the religious content is present primarily in the form of representation is connected with [the fact that] religion is the consciousness of absolute truth in the way that it occurs for all human beings.\(^{18}\)

Its basic tendency is to distinguish sacred from secular as an absolute and fixed separation, the two standing nonetheless in relation. In this lies the premier example of the logic and limits of representational thinking so far as it does recognize that the terms it distinguishes stand in essential relation to each other. Hegel, however, takes up a position that directly recognizes the reciprocity between God and the knowing of God:

In this separation we have two elements, God and the consciousness for which God is. In representation we can thus start just as readily from the one as from the other.\(^{19}\)

When religious knowledge is described as representational, as opposed to an aesthetic or scientific thinking about universal truths, this is not to say that God is only an image: rather that religious consciousness as such consists in positing or setting-forth (Vor-stellen) an objective reality defined as absolute and infinite and the coincident distinguishing from it of the finite subjectivity whose experience it is. The relation of the latter to the former is then an ‘inward’, subjective knowing through images, signs, icons, myths, parables, legends etc. which are meant to ‘represent’ a divinity that for its part remains nonetheless posited as beyond all such subjective cognition. Thus religious knowledge is by definition a knowing and not knowing, a ‘knowing in part’, since while a knowing through images it is not concerned with these as such (unless indeed degraded into superstition)\(^{20}\) but with the absolute truth they are meant to reflect, mediate and express.

On this matter Hegel derives the important insight that the limit of religious knowing lies, not in some other standpoint outside it, but within itself, in the representational form of its knowing.\(^{21}\) By reason of its para-empirical character religious knowledge shares in the same ambiguity and limit that applies to representational thinking generally, an ambiguity by virtue of which, though intended to provide access to an absolute truth and a highest good, is notoriously the source also of the most profound nihilism, obfuscation, cruelty and corruption — a point Nietzsche and others have exploited to excess.\(^{22}\) For as constituted in the opposition of divine to human to divine, the religious mentality can never have an intrinsic guarantee of the truth of what is believed, which guarantee must therefore derive from some extraneous, positive source:


\(^{19}\) *Religion 1827*, p.129.

\(^{20}\) Common cynicism brands religion as superstition on the ground that its objects and events are fictional, not factual. But it is no less superstitiously metaphysical to take the opposite course: to suppose the distinction of factual and fictional is any more properly resolved by reducing the ultra-empirical to the empirical.

\(^{21}\) In the Enlightenment tradition the religious standpoint is generally written off as simply ‘unscientific’ and thus inherent nonsense, or, as with Feuerbach and others, it may be assimilated to a humanist metaphysics. But where the limit of religious knowledge is seen as its own, then within such limits the truth of its content remains unaffected and the transposition of its meaning into speculative terms does not entail discounting the validity of the religious representation.

a sign from heaven, the word of a holy man, a book of prophetic utterances etc. The characteristic positivity of religion derives just from the fact that the trans-empirical must yet be empirical, the evidence of things unseen be yet seen. For representation, the object of belief is known as unknown, is seen through a glass darkly, an actual face-to-face knowledge only possible hereafter, ‘in another life’.

That divinity itself and the finite standpoint of belief belong to the same religious reflection, that the relation of divine to human is an essential relation, Hegel expresses in a cryptic aphorism borrowed from a contemporary:

“God is God only as self-knowing: his self-knowledge is further a self-consciousness in man and man’s knowledge of God, which progresses to man’s self-knowledge in God”.\(^23\)

Or, more prosaically:

As God, the content [of religion], determines itself, so on the other side the subjective human spirit that has this knowledge determines itself too. The principle by which God is defined for human beings is also the principle for how humanity defines itself inwardly, or for humanity in its own spirit. An inferior god or a nature god has inferior, natural and unfree human beings as its correlates; the pure concept of God or the spiritual God has as its correlate a [human] spirit that is free and spiritual, that actually knows God.\(^24\)

To the religious representation as such of an infinite divinity there thus stands opposed a coincident reflection on the finitude of the human condition. Yet latent and implicit in this opposition is a reciprocity of one to the other, as has its picturesque metaphor in Michelangelo’s Creation of Adam, but also in many other religious images of incarnation/reincarnation, eternal return, birth and rebirth, the giving and receiving of law, the first and the second coming and so forth. But in religion itself such a reciprocity or reconciliation of temporal and eternal, worldly and otherworldly, conflicts with a divine-human disparity essential to religion. Their essential relation thus cannot be recognized in religion itself except ambiguously, that is, again as a representation, a unity-in-correlativity posited in the divine itself, in the beyond and hereafter, from which the finite human standpoint remains excluded.

That the limit of religious knowledge is not imposed from outside but lies in religion itself, in its representational grasp of its principle, is a central premise in Hegel’s account of Christianity as ‘consummated’ religion, the religion through which a free, philosophical knowing is made possible. All religion, Christianity included, represent absolute truth as a transcendent mystery made available to the believer only indirectly and para-empirically — thus determinately — through prophetic words, miraculous events, sacred signs etc. that manifest the divine but do not fully reveal it. It is the otherness of the divine to the human world that predominates, so that even their reconciliation is so only for representation, accomplished in and by God but actual for the believer only in faith, hope and ritual.

\(^{23}\) Enc. 564.
\(^{24}\) Religion 1827, p.203.
In the Christian religion, however, even while its revelation is likewise positive or determinate, this reconciliation is represented as already accomplished, and this from both the one side and the other. God himself is defined as Love, that is, is this relation of divinity to humanity, while on the human side, the recognition and enactment of a reconciliation with divinity has actually been accomplished in a world-historical individual. Accordingly, the knowledge the individual believer has, is of divinity directly self-manifest in and for his own finite mind and will, rather than through some alien medium. The uniqueness of the Christian religion lies in its characterization of the divine-human relation, not as an unbridgeable gulf between lord and servant, infinite and finite, but as an essential reciprocity, thus open to reconciliation, not from some further standpoint, but in and through itself. Even though, as religion, it may know this reconciliation only representationally, and thus incompletely, it is ‘consummated’ religion in so far as the reconciliation is represented as one actually and already accomplished, and this both in the divine itself and as well from the human side.

In and through the specific content of what is believed, therefore, Christianity implicitly knows the limit of its own knowledge qua religious, even though it knows this in a religious way. It is thus religion become acutely ambiguous, since it is conscious of what its own knowing is and thus pointing beyond its own world of myth, image and ritual to another wisdom that is at once speculative and concrete in so far as at once spiritual and human. It is religion come to know what it is, that looks beyond its own positivity, which has not only the certainty of what it believes but the awareness also of the limits of this knowledge qua religious and an openness to a more complete, philosophical knowledge springing from that belief and comprehensive of it. With that, the reconciliation of religion with a secular knowledge and life become not only possible but mandated in and by religion itself. Through the consummate form to which it attains in Christian religion, religion becomes self-conscious: it has the certainty that religion as such can go no further, and knows that its own vision of redemption in fact lies beyond all distinctions of worldly and otherworldly in an ethical disposition and order of life that religion supports and sustains but no longer dominates.

V. Determinate And Consummate Theology

It is only for a philosophical comprehension which assumes a free reciprocity of subject and object that the religious and secular worlds can be thought to reflect and ground each other. For religion the evidence of this free reciprocity can be given only positively and para-empirically, that is, in representation, ritual etc. What distinguishes Christianity as consummated religion is found more definitely in the object of its belief, in its characterization of divinity, and here again Christianity’s unique theology has implications that go beyond religion itself.

If everything in religion turns on how the nature of God is represented, this provides a further measure of what Hegel intends by the distinction between ‘determinate’ and

25 “So far as the Christian reconciliation still remains in a doctrinaire form, i.e., remains a religious representation, traditional Christianity, no less than other religious, retains the mark of spiritual dividedness even while it just the overcoming of this alienation that constitutes its principal article of faith”. J.A Doull, “The Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit”. Anmus (www.swgc.mun.ca/animus), v.8, 2004, p.4.
‘consummated’ religion. Where the divine is described as of its nature mysterious and inscrutable, where the reason and purpose for creation is not given or given only enigmatically, where the fate of man in particular is thought to lie ‘in God’s hands alone’ but is otherwise undisclosed — in all these respects God, like the ‘Being’ of Heidegger, is in his own unconcealment concealed, hidden precisely so far as manifest in finite, determinate modes and events in which he is present as abscended.

Religion is determinate so far as it knows God as only ambiguously self-disclosed, that is, as revealed in some determinate, para-empirical mode contrary to his infinity — thus not available to the believer as he is in himself but only paradoxically as an infinity manifest in some finite entity or event. And where this paradoxical finite-infinity is not merely attributed to the limiting subjective vagaries of the religious experience itself, but is posited as belonging to very nature of God himself, then ultimately this is to know a limit in divinity. Where God is known as unknowable, his presence invoked only mystically or ritualistically, then too must the reconciliation of the divine with the human remain unconsummated. This is the characteristic of all religion so far as determinate: it knows only an unknown God, a ‘jealous’ divinity which, though all-powerful, is incompletely self-revealing, revealed only through some earthly agency.

Where God is as such unknowable it does no good to seek enhanced understanding by attribution of infinite names and predicates — God as all-powerful, all-merciful, all-this-and-that. For the believer, knowing this attribution to be after all his own, knows also their utter inadequacy: the unspeakable transcendence of God must elude them all. This is how things stand theoretically in most monotheistic religions, the infinite defined as the absolute Other or Beyond of the finite. It is a prime Hegelian axiom that infinity should be defined on its own terms, not as the ‘other’ of the finite, the ‘in-finite’, which defines it only from a finite standpoint. For ‘reference-to-an-other’ is precisely what the finite is, the endlessness of limiting and transgressing of limits, the ‘spurious infinity’ (schlechte unendlichkeit) where every now is at once a then, every here a beyond, where every determination has indeterminacy attached to it.

Applied theologically, the Beyond or Unspeakable is but another name for such a ‘finite infinity’: nothing positive is affirmed in it. It renders the question of the religious knowledge of God wholly moot: in relation to an unknown God the faithful cannot really know where they stand, except to know the nothingness of their own finite humanity. A free and concrete relation to God would rather require the nature of God be likewise concretely known, but this could be the case only where the relation of divine to human is known as essential in the very concept of the divine itself, where the fullest revelation of God to the world lies in God himself as his own very nature and essential act.

For religious representation generally, again, the reconciliation of human and divine cannot be actually consummated, only accomplished virtually, that is, sacramentally and as an object of ‘hope’. In Hegel’s terminology, ‘consummate’ religion does not as such break through this limit: it does not produce or actually occupy its kingdom of heaven. It is consummate religion so far as it knows its limit as surmounted in principle, that is, ‘in God’. Put otherwise, if for determinate religion generally the correspondence between God and humanity remains at the level of miraculous possibility, religion is consummated where it has the intuition of God in himself as the overcoming of this very rift, a God who makes himself completely known to man.
According to the Christian definition, while God is posited as infinite beyond everything finite, it is not as a negativity overwhelming all things finite, withdrawing into itself and concealed. Rather God’s infinity is represented as revealed in a trinity of dynamics in which the relation of infinite to finite is expressed as both essential and necessary. In the logic of the Christian Trinity, the dynamics of God’s relation to a finite world are posited as a relation among aspects of divinity itself, such that in each the whole dynamic is implied. The strictly religious aspect has the form of the Judaic father-God whose freedom is power and upon whom everything absolutely depends. But God is also defined as freely passing into a finite, human form and given over to secularity, in and through which the latter’s alienation is overcome and its unity with the divine restored. The Christian divinity is a meticulously articulated metaphor of a God who, as both parent and offspring as well as the love binding one to the other, is known as infinitely creative, self-determinative, self-reconciliatory activity — which conceptually is the principle of freedom. Through this image of the divine, it points beyond its own religious conception to the ideal of a fuller freedom made actual and concrete, a spiritual life that is itself neither religious nor secular simply.

Latent in the Christian representation of God is thus the more complete thought of a living unity of human and divine, an ethical life in which the eternal and temporal worlds play into and confirm each other and have no independence apart from this interaction. But such a thought conflicts with the positivity of religious imagination which can do no more than represent the unity of divine and human as additional to and unaffecting their disparity. Hence, even though in the Trinity the thought of the spiritual life as a living unity of human and divine is the central tenet of the Christian religion, as religion it can only represent this unity in finite representations which are inadequate to the full measure of its meaning — in other words, only as a mystery:

The Christian religion is called the revealed religion. Its content is that God is revealed to human beings, that they know what God is. Previously they did not know this; but in the Christian religion there is no longer any secret — a mystery certainly, but not in the sense that it is not known. For consciousness as understanding, or for sensible cognition, it is a secret, whereas for reason it is something manifest.

VI. Consummate Religion

The designation of Christianity as ‘consummated’ religion does not mean its singling out as alone true: for Hegel all religions contain the same elements and intend the same general truth and differ only in their determinate content. The sense is rather historic, that in Christianity the religious mentality itself discovered its limit, revealed at the point where the terms of the relation of human to divine came to be explicitly recognized as thoroughly interactive, an ‘essential’ relation in which each term defines itself through the other: thus God self-revealed in human form, man self-knowing in God, and these as twin dynamics constituting one infinite reciprocity.

26 An overview of religion and the state as ‘mutual guarantees of strength’ is found in Enc.552.
27 Religion 1827, p.130.
The religion that came so to represent God as existing for himself in man, and man as having in God the principle of his human being, attained to a self-consciousness beyond which it was impossible, as religion, to go. Christianity is in this sense religion and more than religion, religion oriented toward another mentality, the ‘last’ religion, as indeed it spoke of itself from its inception: God self-revealed “in the fullness of time”.

From a relativistic point of view of ‘comparative religion’ nothing much can be made of the uniqueness so described of the Christian vis à vis historical religions in general. Everything rests on the crucial historical fact that Christianity did not, as most religions preceding it, originate as the spontaneous mythopoetic expression of a particular tribal or imperial people: it is not an ethnic religion. On the contrary, it arose at a time of high civilization when the ethnic religions of pre-classical cultures had reached maturity and sublimity only to be overwhelmed by the reason-based, humanistic culture of the Greeks and Romans that had subordinated all religion to its ideal. Unlike any other before it, the Christian religion took its rise significantly and specifically in response to that great experiment of classical culture and bears that experience within it.

With the Greeks there had developed for the first time in history a thinking beyond mythopoetic imagination which accounted for the nature of things and the due order of life through a representational spawning of divinities. Plato would identify the ‘idea’ as the proper object of this supra-representational thinking, and Aristotle would know all nature and culture systematically as the work of one infinite, self-animating intelligence. The Romans, remarkable for having made this free standpoint of thought their cultural presupposition, devoted themselves to putting it to practical effect. The thought of a reason “deep down things”, of a universal necessity drawing everything into it, transformed superstitious human animals into self-conscious individuals, problematically aware of a certain independence of their own pre-conscious nature as also of thought-less attachment to any particular cultural or religious regimen.

This mentality had its objective or practical expression in the ideal of a universal secular order that would give political effect to a freedom thus abstractly conceived in the form of the recognition of persons as equal under the law, in return for their absolute submission to its authority. To “the inherent freedom of the abstract ego” Hegel writes, there corresponded “an [equally] abstract ... political constitution and power over concrete individuality.” To this universal all extant cultures were likewise obliged to submit, the scattered gods of the older extant religions gathered up and pressed into service in the consecration of everyday, mundane ends.

But this external, legal freedom the Romans would attempt to realize, soon proved grossly ambiguous. The prestige and authority of the state rested on its role as guarantor of the rights of persons conscious of being absolute in their individuality. But these bearers of rights know themselves at the same time to be no more than finite, mortal and willful animals. To seek

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28 Though not the only non-ethnic religion. Islam with a similar post-Roman-imperial inception also specifically laid claim to a supra-national universality. Likewise many more modern sects.

to impose a universal objective order upon a mass of such atomic, self-interested individuals, not to speak of the cluttered residue of their barbarian cultures, proved futile. The individual who finds himself infinite in his finite skin, whose absolute ‘I’ is yet imprisoned in an animal driven as much by passion and opinion as by reason and freedom, will know this very freedom as a bondage: the very thought of a freedom so bound to nature must evoke an equal and contrary awareness of the utter contingency of actual life. On the reef of this contradiction, at once inward and political, the historical first attempt to establish a polity founded on reasonable principles came famously to grief.

Hegel describes the universal misery into which Roman secular culture eventually fell as a consequence of their attempt to graft a freedom witnessed subjectively upon an relentlessly finite given nature and world.\(^30\) As realized only superficially in externals, in the mere right to finite things, powers and property, it is a freedom that only ignited and reinforced a vivid sense of the fatality and futility of worldly life. Individuals were condemned to either giving over entirely to a pointless and deadly worldliness, or seeking hollow relief in ascetic, aesthetic or sceptical detachment or more popularly in superstition. The Romans, in Hegel’s words “were either at war with sensuous existence or entirely given over to it”,\(^31\) or as Doull puts it, they had the thought of freedom but equally of their incapacity for it.\(^32\) To this intrinsic meaninglessness of their world the Romans could find no practical solution, for, as they would discover, the aetiology of the disease did not lie in alterable circumstances but in the principle that had been disclosed to them: in the anguish of a riven, self-conscious individuality that had come to know an inner freedom it was yet impotent to realize.

Hegel’s account of what underlay this extreme perturbation that gripped the Roman soul stands in vivid contrast to the commonplace account of it as the mere contingence of a lapse into decadence, the triumph of a power-hungry materialism, a reversion into barbarism, the succumbing to the wicked lure of a willful ‘secular humanism’. This kind of moralistic view belongs properly to a later time and in fact presupposes the Roman experience. Hegel makes the opposite case: the collapse of the ancient culture was the direct result of a first attempt to establish freedom as the basis of an order of life, a freedom which, since belonging to the empirical subject only, could neither comprehend nor subdue the finite nature and world in which it found it had come to consciousness. The enigma as to how freedom is to be reconciled with actual human life was the true legacy of the Roman experiment.

It was in response to this spiritual stalemate that Christianity took its rise. The Roman enigma it wholly internalized as the issue of the reconciliation of the conflict between the inner spiritual witness to freedom and a natural human willfulness contrary to it. No mere revival of simple myth-based religion could possibly console the divided consciousness of a culture whose unique accomplishment was precisely to have already broken free of the spontaneous, ethnic religiosity of the older cultures. Even if the great classical experiment in rational freedom had failed, the standpoint it established was irreversible: there could be no turning back from thought or its freedom, no return to a pre-rational, myth-dominated condition as if the genius of Greek art and science and Roman political humanism had never been. The origin of Christianity owes as

\(^{30}\) History, p.320.
\(^{31}\) History, p.317.
\(^{32}\) J.A. Doull, op.cit, p3.
much to the cultural achievement of Rome and the predicament it presented as to the model and word of the Nazarene. As Hegel writes:

The principle of the Roman world we have recognized as finite and particular subjectivity exaggerated to infinity. The salvation of the world is born of the same principle, namely ‘this man’, [ecce homo], abstract subjectivity, but such that, in contrast, finitude is only the form in which he appears, whose essence and content consists rather in infinity, in an absolute being for self.  

Here again is the crux of what distinguishes Christianity from the ‘determinate’ form of earlier religion. It is thinking religion. Rather than the codification of spontaneous spiritual intuitions of a particular tribe or people in terms of determinate, para-empirical manifestations of divinity, it was born in a civilization that had already surpassed and comprehended that form of the religious standpoint in another which brought to light and assimilated to itself the principle of thinking subjectivity and the attempt to establish an order of life based upon it. That this enterprise failed does not alter the fact that through it the ideal, if not the fact, of a realized freedom was established in the world. There was no turning back to a spirituality experienced only in mythical terms: Christianity from its inception specifically sought the healing of a sundered self-consciousness which, though inwardly certain of its freedom, could not square its experience of the world with it.

Taking this opposition to its furthest extreme, Christianity was born in the recognition that the relation of spiritual to worldly, divinity to humanity, God to Nature was an essential one rather than a fixed and absolute disjunction. This reciprocity defines the initial Christian representation of divinity itself, no longer as an awesome but indifferent power, a necessity ruling a world in which it but ambiguously reveals itself, but rather a reconciling spirit binding the inward to the outward life from all eternity, a divinity fully self-manifest in a world and having therefore an infinite interest in it. It was such a divinely justified, consummated freedom that Christianity particularly preached, the gospel of a god-forsaken secular life in principle already overcome, and the promise of a spiritual kingdom actually realized on earth.

Christianity thus contains in its very origin and intent the idea of an accomplished unity-in-difference of sacred and secular and of a knowing more complete, more ‘face-to-face’ than what appears in the mirror of religion. From the perspective of a strictly religious mentality this is both unintelligible and heretical: it violates and transgresses the very purview of religion. It asserts that God is degraded into finite human form as a mortal individual, not merely by us, but by his own act of self-abasement. To a strict religiosity such propositions can only appear as the purest blasphemy, to compromise the very divinity of divinity, leading inevitably to the abyss of paganism or to a godless secularism that divinizes human willfulness. On the practical side, the representation of the divine purpose as actual on earth likewise offends the religious sense of the divinity of the divine, appearing to render finite humanity absolute, the ultimate hubris and indignity. To a religiosity other than Christian accordingly, Christianity can readily appear as the absolute corruption of the religious spirit itself, the religion of the Devil.

34. The most offensive being the son-ship of God and the resurrection: “unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks nonsense” - 1 Cor. 1:23.
It is the ‘salvation’ of the world nonetheless that Christianity posits as an essential moment in God. That God is defined as Love means his relation to humanity is no mere afterthought on the part of the divine, no arbitrary act of beneficence after the fact. It rather declares the relation of divinity to humanity to constitute the very essence of the divine itself, while the essence of humanity is revealed, through the resurrection, in a converse redemptive orientation and destiny. For the Christian accordingly, an interest in secular life is not something apart from, additional to, or even mandated by what is given in religion: rather it is the true aim and object of religion itself, its own impulse beyond itself to a worldly actualization of its principle. The incarnation of the sacred and the sanctification of the secular are the converse dynamics of one and the same spiritual life.

This teaching of the consummation, the unity-in-difference, of human and divine makes itself evident at the outset. But the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth concerning his Sonship, the spiritual kingdom etc. acquire absolute significance only in and through the free act of faith on the part of those who already knew both the freedom of Roman individuality and its contradictions. Again, for the religious mentality as such that divine truth should in some way be given in the private witness to it - this ‘personalization’ of religious knowledge - is absurd. But the appeal of the Christian revelation was precisely to the individual become wholly self-conscious of the abyss of human finitude, of a natural sinfulness, so that a free act of self-overcoming was as necessary to the completeness of the divine-human reconciliation as was that revelation itself. The conscious act of self-committed entry into a relation to God is essential to and reciprocates the emptying and becoming incarnate of god for the sake of man. It is this dual dynamic lying at the heart of Christian belief that qualifies it to be described as ‘consummated’ religion.

While Hegel’s lectures on religion and history are dismissed by many as outdated and metaphysically arcane they are unique in that they provide a clear and specific account of Christian history as the working out of this essential relation, both from its divine side, theologically, and from its secular side as the struggle of Christian-European culture to discover its adequate political form. In this double development the tendency of religion is toward overcoming its rigid otherworldly focus and the coincident progress of secular culture toward an ethically founded order of life. The chronicle of the life, son-ship and execution of Jesus provided the historical paradigm for the triumph of spiritual individuality and freedom over both unenlightened religiosity and the deadly scepticism of a godless secular culture. But Christianity does not primarily rest, as religion generally, on the appeal to persons, events or words alone, but ultimately on a spiritual resurrection, a ‘Pentecostal’ affirmation on the part of mortal individuals, freely choosing entry into a relationship with divinity, thereby a spiritual resurrection.

The Christian religion found its first secular realization in a spiritual culture superimposed upon a residual Roman one, a confusion of peoples, ancient and contemporary. The preoccupation of ‘Christendom’ was with the development of theological and institutional forms adequate to its belief. Otherwise the emphasis was otherworldly and monotheistic, eschatological and monastic, somewhat indifferent to the ‘earthly city’ that hosted it. Such a purely adjunctive, theocratic superimposition of spiritual upon secular persisted among the civilized peoples of the eastern empire. In the western empire, Christianity found in the
unlettered European peoples who had overrun Rome a comparatively untilled soil in which to grow a secular culture more proper to itself. This it thought it achieved in the founding of the empire that called itself both Holy and Roman.

The Church thus became imperial, a spiritual theocracy established on earth, could no longer remain indifferent to the residue of an older secular culture it saw as inherently sinful and godless, a stumbling block to its own authority and an offense to its divine mission of the saving of souls. It took up arms against it, theologically and militantly, warring against world, flesh and devil, heresy and apostasy. In the process the church became increasingly a worldly state, its pope a king, its spiritual power the power of arms, influence and wealth, entering into conflict with the similarly constituted worldly-spiritual power of Islam. The inner free spirit was corrupted into theological correctness, the basis of a spurious intellectualism and legalism enforced by inquisitorial judges and juries. Christianity in short resolved itself into a worldly power, in the very completion of whose hegemony it became thoroughly decadent.

What was sought in medieval Roman Catholicism was the total Christianization of a godless secularity it saw as opposed to itself. What was achieved was the consolidation of a rigid dualism in which church and state live their lives in each other’s shadow. Devoted to a war against worldliness, the church itself appropriates the role of a magnificent but worldly state, its inward spirit thereby corrupted. In this corruption is revealed the wholly spurious character of a rank opposition of religious to secular life: that what appear as opposed are in actuality aspects of one life, its constitutive moments. Coincident with this intuition, the Christian heart and mind revert to the original inspiration of the early church, to the inner witness to a unity of the human with the divine, but now additionally the certainty of the experience that the secular and religious cannot be opposed but belong concretely to the one standpoint. Manifest originally in a still religious form as Protestantism, this insight directly gave impetus to a more comprehensive, philosophical mentality appealing to the same spirit of reconciliation, though no longer in representational terms but more comprehensively in terms of the principle of freedom grasped in thought, and this as the basis for a rational wisdom surpassing theology as well as a vision of a new secularity founded on ethical principles.

The standpoint and spirit of modernity cannot be described as either religious or secularist simply, but as these taken up into a philosophical and political self-consciousness, a concrete spirituality, appealing explicitly to freedom as at once an inward truth and a worldly principle. In its early, Protestant stages there is much ambiguity as to the relation of religion to the state in respect of this free, philosophical spirit: whether it is through separation of church

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35. Hegel’s argument is to be found at various points in the collected lectures on religion, typically under the heading ‘the realization of religion’ which discusses the Christian ‘cultus’ or religious worship and practice as the actual carrying out of the reconciliation of the divine with the worldly life promised in faith. In the religious community generally it is effected only ‘representationally’, that is, in rites, rituals and sacraments’ more specially in the ‘confirmation’ of priests as distinct from a laity, or again in a holy life based on ascetic vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. But Hegel points out that ritual is reconciliation only in symbolic externals, that a churchly community ruled by a priestly caste contradicts the spiritual freedom of all; and that the monastic ‘holiness’ must remain unrequited since in the end a wholly subjective, nihilistically otherworldly, and thus essentially unfree spiritual condition. The true Christian cultus is the free, ethical commitment to the ordinary life of domestic, economic and political community: “The ethical life is the most genuine cultus”. (Religion 1827, p.194)
and state or confessional institutionalization that the new freedom is best ensured. There follows the general debate, by no means ended, between the tendency to resolve the new spiritual-worldly standpoint of modernity itself to one or other of its elements, to some kind of humanized religiosity or religiose humanism, a conflict between faith and enlightenment, evangelical theocracy or ideological secularism. These debates continue to rage in our own time. But they differ crucially from older forms of the conflict between religion and secularism in that, in spite of the appearance of reverting to the one side or the other, in spite of appeals to the authority of ‘traditional values’ or of ‘scientific objectivity’, they in fact presume the coincidence of inward, spiritual interests with those of secular life, justifying their positions in a language of freedom that is essentially philosophical. To this modern and post modern tension the older polarities of theological and secular have thus for the most part succumbed: what predominates is the consciousness that both religion and politics must answer to a higher measure of their legitimacy.

VII ‘Religious Secularity’

Hegel frequently refers to religion as the mode in which truth is present exoterically for the generality of humankind, a point to which, on its face, it would be foolish to object. He speaks of philosophy on the other hand as in essence esoteric, even while a comprehension more concrete and complete than that given in religious representation. Elsewhere he contrasts the role of the ancient to the modern philosopher precisely in that the former is the special self-consciousness of the few while the latter only reflects a spirit become general and embedded in the general culture. Clearly, ‘philosophy’ in its academic meaning is esoteric in the same sense as ‘theology’ is: neither is ‘for everybody’, yet both seek to crystallize intellectually what is generally known in other ways.

When Hegel describes Christianity as in essence a thinking or philosophical religion, a religion whose own core beliefs impel it beyond representation to a more adequate, face-to-face knowledge, that is not to say that only the intellectually sophisticated are saved any more than to say the Christian heaven is populated only by theologians. On the contrary, on repeated occasions Hegel extols the merit of the Christian religion to lie, not only in that ‘the gospel is preached to the poor’, but precisely that this gospel itself presents God in the plainest, most humane way, supremely available to the most naive consciousness (in lore, even to the animals): God as incarnate in an actual, historical, fully mortal individual, humbly born and exposed to the trials of life in a real-time world of pride, false witness and secular politics, and yet spiritually triumphant over them. That the Christian Vorstellung is simple in no way compromises its sophistication, however, nor does its account of itself as a thinking religion restrict its universal

37. The debate between the followers of the philosophes and of Jacobi and Schleiermacher instantiate this conflict as it stood in Hegel’s time. Hegel, however, sees it as a much broader tendency and interestingly cites Enlightenment and Mohammedanism as co-instances how, even where religion and secularity are grasped as a unity, this unity itself can resolve into opposite extremes of atheistic secularity or totalitarian theocracy.
38. See D. Peddle, the article cited in note 1.
availability. On the contrary, it is in and through its emphasis on a worldly disposition and ethic that a secular outlook and interest find their adequate religious recognition.

For where Christianity is understood as completed (vollendete) religion, this is not to mean that among all others it is alone true, but religion strained to its limit, knowing what it is, and as such overcoming its own strict religiosity; indicative of more complete comprehension and practice in which religion has a role, but as contributing to a spirit exceeding its own. The object of Christian belief awakens the need go beyond religious imagination and ritual to a spiritual life consistent with it, but realized in a more concrete and philosophical life Hegel calls Sittlichkeit — ‘ethical life’. Ethical life he defines as follows:

‘Ethical life’ is the divine spirit indwelling in a self-consciousness actually present in a people, and in the individuals comprising it. It is a self-consciousness which, withdrawing into itself out of its empirical actuality, brings what is true in the latter to consciousness; having then the certainty of itself both in its own faith and conscience as in [objective] spiritual actuality. 39

Ethical life has its subjective reflection in a religious cultivation of a conscientious disposition and mentality, its secular realization in a polity explicitly and deliberately constituted on the basis of a principle of objective freedom. On the one side:

Only from ethical life and by ethical life is the idea of God seen to be free spirit: outside the ethical spirit therefore, it is vain to seek a true religion and religiosity.

On the other side:

Ethical life is the state reflected into its inner heart and substantiality, the state in turn the development and actualization of ethical life... The state rests on the ethical sentiment and this on the religious.

Hegel is far from intending here that the authority of the state somehow derives from religion or vice versa. It is

a monstrous blunder ... [to view] the relation of religion to the state as if the latter already existed for itself — springing from whatever independent power or force — while religiosity is seen as ancillary and subjective with individuals, desirable perhaps to bolster the political bulwarks ... or treated as indifferent to the ethical life of the state...

On the other hand, religion so far as it remains stubbornly positive and denies or suppresses its essential link with secular life, becomes itself an externalizing mentality, from which externalization “flows every other phase of externality: of bondage, non-spirituality, and superstition”: religion as a mere “moving of lips”, the worship of prophets and saints, the

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39. The following series of quotations from Enc. 553.
devotion to images, bones and rituals, reliance on a scripture that itself declares that ‘the letter killeth’. It promotes holiness over freedom and

Along with the principle of spiritual bondage and the application of it in religious life there can only go, in the legislative and constitutional system, a legal and ethical bondage, and in political life, a state of lawlessness and immorality..

A free state and a slavish religion are incompatible. It is silly to suppose we may try to allot them separate spheres under the impression their diverse nature will maintain an attitude of tranquility to one another and not break out in contradiction and battle.

In short, it is Hegel’s meaning that an ethical disposition and order of life — a ‘spiritual kingdom’ in this concrete sense — is at once the measure of what can be claimed subjectively as religious ‘truth’, as also the objective principle of a reasonable secular life. That the two cannot be thought separable has much to say of the history of post-Hegelian times; whether, for example, a purely liberal-democratic secular order either tolerant or dismissive of religion can expect so easily to dispose of, or appropriate to itself, the religious instincts of peoples, or whether, on the contrary, retrogression into a more or less theocratic, literalistic religiosity can hope to hold sway against the “philosophical awakening in the spirit of governments and nations of a wisdom able to discern what is actually right and reasonable in the real world”.

VIII Conclusion

It would seem evident even on superficial grounds that the contemporary spirit is fundamentally an ethical, philosophical one driven by the ideal and certainty of freedom. Even the most ordinary, popular language of justification respecting the standards both of personal virtue, as of a justice to which every aspect of secular life should be conformed, rest on the spontaneous appeal to the principle of freedom as if to a universally intuited truth. To the extent this intuition has gained predominance, religion in contemporary life — in the old Western democracies at least and even where still prominent in family and personal life — tends for the most part to be respectfully relegated to the background; to be ‘liberalized’ as the symbolic celebration of a spirituality whose actuality is to be found in the present world of private and public life, rather than in the beyond or in the performance of ritual speech and sacrament.

For Hegel modernity is the extended, post-religious form of Christianity, its main thrust since his time having been clearly weighted on the secular, ideological side, in the attempt to realize a political order which, while freedom-driven, is in some measure independent of the inward religious spirit: an eschatological humanism, a socio-economic paradise as promised by

40. Ibid.
various doctrines and most recently by the champions of capitalist democracy. In one form or another, this ‘secular humanism’ has become the dominant global culture within which the residue of older religious cultures persists, including Christian religious culture itself. It appeals to a freedom developed mostly on its external side, as the guarantee of the civil and economic rights of empirical individuals, and realized in a state-less global marketplace sustained by universal busyness, industry and enterprise, by unrestrained technical inventiveness, and by an experimental science that represents both nature and human nature as essence-less and indeterminate, thus meaningful only as resources available to a materializing freedom.

The deeper import of freedom — its religious, spiritual or universal meaning as the governing principle no less of nature than of human history, and realized in a communality appropriate to the inner certainty of freedom, an ethical order founded explicitly on the acknowledgment of the infinite significance of personal life — this concept of freedom is certainly very much alive in modern consciousness, since it is, after all, its underlying Christian inspiration. But it finds itself undeveloped and overwhelmed by the still dominant and increasingly depersonalizing hegemony of the economic-technocratic global culture, which latter now finds itself, at the very pinnacle of its purported success, confronted by a fierce religiosity that can only seem to it perverse and even evil, while it in turn appears to that religiosity as a wholly corrupted secularity, no less perverse or evil. This new tension between the religious and secular tendencies of modernity no longer has the external character of the wars between church and state or the ideological wars between the ‘free West’ and ‘Godless’ communism or fascism of more recent times. It is rather a tension internal to modernity itself as it seeks its way toward a more adequate balance between personal and political freedom. For the non-western cultures from which this new religiosity partly emanates have already been thoroughly imbued by the Western liberal spirit, whether through colonial, Marxist or other like influences, a spirit which they currently struggle to reconcile with their own. And Western secular culture itself finds emergent within it a conflict between a liberal left having largely lost its ideological confidence and direction, and a recrudescent fundamentalist right seeking artificially to impose potted ‘traditional Christian values’ upon political issues.

This new form of the conflict between the religious and the secular spirit thus takes place entirely within the context of the universal belief in their essential coincidence; but this within a ‘free society’ that chiefly measures its success in external terms of a global market economy. The corresponding demands of the other side, of the religious-philosophical witness to a deeper, personal, immortal freedom, are less clearly met.

The authors mentioned in note 1 write as if history has reached its final form in the liberal-democratic state; they differ only in how see this new-consummated order in relation to the wider world. Bobbitt, for example, offers a power theory of the state as originating in Machiavelli’s day (curiously, no earlier); a ‘princely state’ which through a series of mutations culminates in the global ‘market state’. The troubling feature of such histories is that they seem to assume the classical political-economic theory of the state to be the final and true account of it, whereas more subtle contemporary liberal thinking is far more conscious of the ethical underpinnings of North American freedom especially: see for example D. Peddle, “Puritanism, Enlightenment and the U.S. Constitution”. Animus (www.swgc.mun.ca/animus), v.3, 1998; and “Hegel’s Political Ideal: Civil Society, History and Sittlichkeit”. Animus, v.5, 2000. For Hegel himself, economic society rendered absolute yields only the ‘external’ state (Philosophy of Right, 157-B, 183), not the ethically constituted state, comprehensive of civil society, he had in mind.