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**The Political Theology of the Concept of Unity
or
How we got into this constitutional mess.**

Moderns' self-understanding is that humans' moral dimension is autonomous, free of either natural constraints or supernatural regulation; this freedom assigns to humans the task of creating meaning and values, to create a human realm of significance within the realm of nature which itself lacks both values and meaning. So extreme has this self-interpretation become that now the proposition that one's physical endowment, one's body, does not constrain even one's sexuality; the claim that sexuality, sexual difference, and gender, are social construction without any corporeal basis is often set forth as a simple truth.

In a similar vein, literary theorists argue that Strachey's mistranslation of the German word "Trieb" by "instinct" in the Standard Edition of Sigmund Freud's writings had the unfortunate effect of biologizing a theory that was designed to reveal that mental operations that are fundamental to our make-up as human beings are formed within social relations and are not natural—and they argue this in utter disregard to Freud's lifelong ambition, put forward in his early and uncompleted work, A Project for a Scientific Psychology, was to discover the biological basis for mental phenomena, and of Freud's continuing insistence even in his later writings that every "drive" has its origin in a physical condition. There is too, that piece of standard wisdom, that differences in ethnicity and gender are so insignificant in the formation of the subject that it utterly vile for civil society to accord them any consideration whatsoever.

All these features of modern existence reflect the privilege that traditional metaphysics accorded to unity over difference, and to spirit over matter. Traditional metaphysics was essentially an activity of uniting, of reconciling discord, or showing the underlying similarity amongst items that seem, prima facie, diverse. Thus Hegel could write of Spinoza's system

What constitutes the grandeur of Spinoza's manner of thought is that he is able to denounce all that is determinate and particular, and restrict himself to the One and this alone.

The result of this method is the abstracting of featureless unities from the rich diversity of contingent actuality. And among the diverse contingencies that it expels from consideration are concrete bodies.

While the germ of the modern self-understanding already lay in traditional metaphysics, it waited for the developments of the new science of the seventeenth century to develop. The new science that spread widespread altered peoples' belief about their relation with other material bodies. The traditional view of nature was a synthesis (and not an untroubled synthesis, to be sure) of Greek, principally Aristotelian, physics and Biblical doctrines of God and creation. It depicted nature as a cosmos—a finite, ordered whole in which every existent has a determinate purpose and place. God created this cosmos and arranged its order largely for the benefit of humankind, which He had created after "His own image." The Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation was not consistent with Aristotelian physics, for Aristotle had taught that cosmos was eternal. Thinkers such as Maimonides and Aquinas who attempted to reconcile Aristotle's philosophy with the teachings of scripture basically added the scriptural teaching that God made each thing the type of thing that it is so that it might serve some determinate purpose within creation to the Aristotelian doctrine of "natural kinds" (the teaching that there are distinct types of substances, each of which is divided into fixed genera, each with

a fixed nature and following its own set of laws.) Each existent obeyed the laws of its own “natural kind” so that it might serve its appointed purpose, which God had allotted it, according to His providential scheme. In principle, such a world is perfectly intelligible; if we knew God’s purposes fully, we could discern why things happened as they did. However, we do not know God’s plans for His creation, or for us, in all their details, and so nature remains difficult for us to decipher.

The science of Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and Newton dispensed with the belief that nature is ordered according to a providential scheme; in fact, it dispensed altogether with teleological explanation of natural occurrences. Whereas Aristotelian physics had spoken of a number of different substances and many different natural kinds, the new physics depicted the physical universe as made up of one type of substance obeying a single set of laws. Explanation in physics consists of accounting for the position and velocity of material bodies. One consequence of this has been the subject of frequent comment, and that is the picture of the universe that modern science offers discredits any reality claims that might be made for the rich variety of experiences the senses give us. Thus, experience only discloses how reality affects us, not what reality is really like; reality itself is colourless, orderless, tasteless—simply “bodies” (metaphysical abstractions, really, engendered by the new mathematics and new physics) moving in space (another mathematical abstraction.)

Another effect the new science also left nature ungrounded. The new science depicted matter as purposeless stuff in a cosmos without any final mind. Its substantiality was no longer rooted in the purpose God had for making that type of thing, and so, in time matter came to seem insubstantial. Out of this developed the idea of a reality that becomes insubstantial, and of the thinker’s quest to find certainty to protect him/herself against the despair engendered by the experience of seeing all that is solid melt into air that is most movingly presented in the philosophy of Descartes. The experience leads to distrust of the senses, to the impulse to rise above the partial and contradictory evidence of embodied experience to the timeless realm of necessary truth, to lift oneself out of the painful temporal realm into the eternal, to overcome the fallibility of imagination, the untruths of inadequate ideas, the perplexity of uncertain evidence, beyond the shifting truths about those things that undergo change and into the realm of certainty and changelessness.

The biological realm is a realm of transience, contingency, and accident. So the unfolding drama led inexorably to the now celebrated vision of the post-biological future. Gerald Jay Sussman, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is on record as saying, “If you can make a machine that contains the contents of your mind, then that machine is you. The hell with the rest of your physical body, it’s not really very interesting. Now the machine can last forever”

The legendary M.I.T. artificial intelligence pioneer, Marvin Minsky predicts that when machine intelligence reaches the general intelligence of human beings, an occurrence that is almost certain to happen soon.

Minsky’s outlook is technocratic; it is governed by a concept of technique, that is, as Jacques Ellul defines it, a “totality of methods rationally arrived at,” having as its sole criterion of the Good, the end of efficiency in every domain of life. In this respect, his outlook coincides with the dominant paradigm of American social thought. His ethical position, evolutionary relativism, is also in accord with that of American-type liberalism.

When it comes to downloading [a person’s mind onto a computer storage device], you could make up ethical problems easily enough. There are always ethical problems with anything. Ethical problems depend upon people’s ethics. I don’t believe in any absolute ethics anyway. Ethical problems are actually political and evolutionary problems. “Thou shalt not kill” is senseless if you think

in terms of competition term of between species. I think the importance of downloading is just allowing creation to proceed. And evolution seems to be leading us to a machine consciousness.

Here Minsky is simply the voice of liberal thought. Liberal thought denies that values have objective reality, and instead attributes to them the same sort of “relative”, intersubjective existence as beliefs in magical powers, in chthonioi, in seilenoii and satyrs, in earth gods and river gods and tree gods. It acknowledges that a community’s shared belief in these values provides that community with a degree of cohesion that it otherwise would not have and regulates human behaviour, making it predictable, but they do not accord these beliefs the status of descriptions that accurately represent the conditions of actual entities. In doing so, it discredits them in a subtle way, for they point out that while people cherish such beliefs, these beliefs are not universal, and had history been other than it was, these beliefs would be different. Thus liberal argue for the mutability of these beliefs; this is why the liberal spirit throughout its history has been progressivist, for it offers no reason these beliefs should not be changed, especially as more up-to-date attitudes develop. In the end, liberalism serves to justify the sacrifice of moral beliefs to the “advancing spirit” of capitalism as the most current economic order.

In the quest for what perdures, the life-world whose temporality is precisely that of the life-cycle exists as a pre-given fundament for consciousness now has been obscured, even all-but-completely concealed, by the rise of technologism and modern science (that group of modern intellectual disciplines that provide the “pure” conceptual basis for technologism.) The scientific conception of reality is the conception of a totally objective realm. But whatever is perspectival, dependent on how a person is situated, must be recalcitrant to public scrutiny by its very nature. Because it is not objective, the modern world-view, which is founded in science and technology, ascribes to whatever is perspectival the status of being less real than actual material objects. And subjectivity is perspectival; it really does the feature that the pathetic Guiliama of Antonioni’s Il deserto rosso notes, viz. , “I prick my finger, you don’t feel my pain. “ The existential phenomenologist, having noted, like Antonioni, the radically perspectival character of thinking and of the radical differences among our perspectives, made much of the idea that every consciousness is so radically isolated that its principal characteristic is its ontological solitude. I can feel my pains, but you cannot. I can see the world from my point of view, but you cannot. I am aware of having thoughts and feelings that others are not privy to.

So here we really do seem to have a distinction between objectivity and subjectivity of the sort that traditional metaphysics posited. So many came to this conclusion that a whole generation of scholars, seemingly, has decided that conceptual understanding of individuality, is not possible. Individuality, like situated existence, embeds contingency at core, and so is outside the realm of changeless law which alone is a proper object of inquiry.

Thus liberalism emphasis the difference between the public realms of science and economic administration, whose propositions are concern universal laws and private realm of variable spiritual and moral commitments. In doing so, it clears away concern with the realms of spiritual and moral commitment from the province of public affairs, and so place economic interests at the centre of public life. Given the great importance of our moral values, our religious convictions, our symbolic identifications, our symbolic differentiation from other groups —that “narcissism of small differences” that Freud spoke of, that it so terribly important to our sense of identity the liberal view on these matters would surely be conspicuously preposterous did it not accord so well with the ideology of laissez-faire capitalism.

To accept this division between the public and private, between the individual and the state is to succumb to the lingering influence of that ontotheology that is most familiar to us in the form of traditional metaphysics. Only the influence of that ontotheology can explain why people

attribute greater reality to that which comes into presence in the public sphere to than to that which does not. The founding concepts of traditional metaphysics engendered a false distinction between 'objective'

and 'subjective' according to which these terms are co-terminus with, respectively, 'public' and 'private' and, more loosely, with 'real' and 'merely mental.' Thinkers whose thinking moved within the orbit of traditional metaphysics proposed that almost no descriptions that apply to material objects do not apply to the contents of one's inner life as the inner and the outer realms have almost wholly opposite features: The inner world does not have spatial extension while the outer world does; the contents of the inner world are massless while objects belonging to the outer world all have mass; the contents of the inner world are colourless, odourless and tasteless while material objects are rich in sensuousness; a mental event relates to a physical event only as an intention relates to an action, while an antecedent, conditioning physical event relates to its consequence as a cause relates to an effect.

It is in the philosophy of René Descartes that we first see the ontological difference between the cogito and the world posited as an absolute. Thus his is the philosophical system that gave the modern paradigm its first philosophical formulation, at least in its full blown form. In his philosophy, too, we discover the earliest evidence of the intimacy that would develop in the modern era between philosophical thinking and narrative. Descartes expounded his philosophy in form of quest journey; he used that form because it allowed to cast the autonomous self as a sensitive being set against the world and engaged in a search for a certainty that will confirm its identity. His narrative even has its moment of crisis—a complete despair and universal doubt that approaches a condition of madness—and ends with affirming the triumph of the individual's will-to-knowledge. His use of narrative also set a precedent for philosophers of the modern era have turned time and again to narrative because narrative invited them to depict the self as opposed to the world and inasmuch as the self's quest is driven by a higher faculty, will—the will to understand—rather than by appetite, is superior to reality.

Descartes quest for certainty came to its end in one's acquaintance with one's own existence. Premoderns, people of the Greek Era, the Medieval Era, even the Renaissance, believed that the True and the Good could be discovered in the meaningful order of the cosmos and that it was our participation in the meaningful order of the cosmos that endowed human being with its significance. But the self of modernity, the self that is opposed to the world of matter withdraws from the world and turns inward in its search for knowledge, for certainty, for justification.

The effects of this are pandemic. The theories of political authority of liberal thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and the American constitutionalists, propose that all moral and political obligations proceed from the isolated, individual subject. Empirical philosophers such as David Hume proposed that the self must be the ultimate ground for any possible reconstruction either of knowledge or of social relations. So it is not surprising that the modern world-view proposes that the self must free itself as much as possible from all constricting restraints, or corrupting influences, even those of tradition and society—in sum from its Situation. Above all, it must not allow itself to be imposed upon by external authority.

In the Enlightenment, the quest for the was is universally true was extended to take on the form of was is (though is acknowledged to be) a political theology. Its teaching was founded in the concept of universality humanity—a concept of what characterizes all humanity, what humanity is when all the accidents of resulting from belong to a particular culture, a particular era in history are removed—what is belongs essentially to humanity all times, in all places. Thus Enlightenment thinkers held forth as a hope the teaching that humans should set aside all traditional allegiances and divest themselves of their local identities and join together in a universal civilization based on universal humanity and rational morality.

This is the dream of universal civilization based on universal humanity constitutes the

unconscious of the political discourse of our time. This can be discerned in the extravagantly disincorporated and unsituated concept of the person that is so prevalent in the sociological and political discourse that issues from the liberal universities. That political discourse refers to human beings as individuals or persons, the sociological discourse, more tellingly, as social agents or social actors. Talcott Parsons provides the paradigm of the conception of human being; these discourses furnish, for in Parson's functionalism, social agents are defined in terms of their social location, their beliefs and their values. No notice is taken of the consequences of the fact that these agents are bodies, nor, in any but the most perfunctory way, of the situated existence. So we have a denatured conception of human being, that goes under the name of universal humanity, but that cannot recognize that human beings are bodies, located in place and time and possessing concrete relations to others and that the influence of the specific locations to which individuals belong and the relations into which they enter (together with the localized nature of the relations that predominate in a person's life) create many different types of humans.

A most important discipline in German university from the 17th century until well after Hegel's time was the study of jus naturae, or natural law. The discipline's field of inquiry was really much broader than we today understand the province of natural law to be. The title of Hegel's exposition of the political thinking of his maturity, Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse (Basics of Natural Law and Science of the State), in its opposition between natural law and the science of state, hints at the discipline's scope. Its object was to define the relation between private rights and public rights or to decide on the proper relation between the rights of the individual and those of the state in the ideal polis.

Another discipline, one inaugurated by Thomas Hobbes, now enfolds it. The object of this larger discipline was the reconstruction of the entire political and juridical order, taking as the starting point of the rebuilding process the nature of the individual. It is because he believed that reconstruction of society must be founded on an understanding of the character and needs of the individual that Thomas Hobbes began his philosophy. Thomas Hobbes begins with an inquiry into the nature of body, proceeds to study of the individual and culminates in an examination of that grand body, the state. Hobbes' system bears conspicuously the marks of traditional metaphysics. Hobbes insisted that all reality is corporeal and determined by causal law; that only efficacy of actual events can possess causal efficacy, by which motion transmitted itself from one body to another; and that the most refined material that exists is ether for the idea of spirit or soul is an impossible concept for it amounts to the notion of immaterial material—a notion which, like the idea of a square circle is contradictory and therefore cannot refer to any actual entity. Hobbes also proposed that thinking is essentially computation with words. Most importantly, Hobbes portrayed the difference between natural law and civil law as the difference between the disadvantages of the state of nature and the advantages of civil society. To be sure, Hobbes did allow that the law of nature (which in Hobbes encompasses the operations of reason as human being's natural endowment) and civil laws contain each other and are of equal magnitude; however, he also added that while the former is constituted only of "qualities disposing men to peace and virtue," the latter, because they are written down, are enforceable. In sum, Hobbes' philosophy manifests the supersession of natural law by the social contract.

Even in the writings of our contemporaries who rethink liberal political philosophy most cogently, people like John Rawls and Bruce Ackermann we can discern the patterns of argument that Hobbes first assembled. For them, as for Hobbes, political philosophy is essentially using moral principles to decide principles of statecraft; and moral principles are understood as the universal principles of reason that elevate thinking to an impartial standpoint. The greatness of the principles is that they do not rely on any particular set of loyalties or any specific conception of the good, but rather rest on universal principles of

justice.

For liberals political philosophy is not what it was for Plato or Aristotle or Augustine. For them, political philosophy was an inquiry into statecraft, into what for political organization is suited to humans, and so proceeds from an analysis of human nature, as Plato's Republic reveals. Rather, it is inquiry into justice that proceeds from abstract conception of human existence—an ahistorical conception a person separate from the inheritances of time and place.

Hobbes' description of the state of nature is telling. He speculates that in the state of nature, human existence would be "war of everyman, against everyman," that self-interest would be the universal rule and so life there would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Two features of this description merit demand comment.

The first is Hobbes' description life in the state of nature. Hobbes' describes that life as pitting individual against individual. But this assumes that society's does not play a constitutive role in forming individuals, that even if they were isolated from society, individuals would have a character and could even to think rationally and calculate which course of action would to their greatest advantage. And what could form individual, if not sociality? Why, the body of course; it was to show exactly this that Hobbes initiated his project with an inquiry into corporeality—into bodies, both physical objects and human bodies. But the human body that Hobbes discusses is not fundamentally a body of passion, of loyalties, a body that understands its place in time. It is, in the first place, body of the sort that newtonian physics discusses: "Given a body of mass X proceeding at a velocity of Y in the direction of . . ."—a body whose actions can be accounted for in terms of universal principles of reason.

The second feature concerns a consequence of Hobbes' theory of obligation, namely that there is no other basis for values than reason and reason is only an instrument for calculating the best available course of action; it is not means of disclosing the actual order of thing. Thus they are without grounds in the ordained order of the cosmos.

This last implication had momentous consequences. With the single exception of the Sophists, from Greek antiquity to Hobbes, political thinkers made a distinction between a purely conventional right and a right that is in accord with nature To evolve their political philosophy, they rose above the notion that tradition alone furnishes us with the norms by which we live to discover another, higher basis for the organization of the polis namely the order of nature or, what is the essentially the same, the order of the cosmos. Political philosophy was born in the distinction between convention and nature; and, as the penury of political thought in America makes abundantly clear, it flourishes only when the prevailing political order can be measured against an order ordained by a higher authority. Human societies and human legislation are measured against the Good and approved or found wanting; imperfect legislation is emended to bring it into conformity with the Good.

The ancients also maintained that an isolated individual could not attain perfection. Because their Weltanschauung was so thoroughly teleological, they considered that the essence of human being emerges only through its full development; hence they held becoming truly human is an accomplishment toward which one strives. Human arête is not something given but something aimed at. Moreover their are conditions that must be met if humans are to even approximate the ideal of full development. Human being develops only in community, because humans are by nature political animals. Only within the polis can human perfection come close to being attained.

Human perfection is not given in the nature of human being, as divine perfection is given to gods. The conception that humans must strive to attain their arête has as its groundwork the belief that a terrible distance separates what humans ought to do from what they actually do. Living within the polis was though to have the pedagogical purpose of guiding human being towards its essence. Friendship and community, even, as Plato's Symposium tells us, the best form of erotic love (that is, love men harbour for the souls of young boys) lift

humans out of the violence of their basic animal inclinations and guide them towards the Good. The conviction the community fosters the virtuousness of particular human beings made the questions about the best possible form of social organization so pressing for Greek thinkers.

The modern view of the self, of the self as an atomic isolate, relies on the conception that the primary factor that determines the nature of consciousness is the body even while it denies the most important facet of consciousness' embodiment is the situated character of consciousness. This view considers thought to be a purely neurophysiological phenomenon. People think, feel, imagine and perceive they do because of their somatic constitution, because of physical nature of nature of their sensory mechanisms, nervous system and brain—in short because of the way they are wired up. Or, in state this proposition in its epiphenomenal variant, thinking arises from the body and the primary factor that determines thinking's nature is the nature of the body to which it belongs. Some thinkers, representing the individualistic strand of the modern paradigm, celebrate thought's corporeal origins and point out that just as every person's body is different from everybody else's, so every person's thinking must be different from all everybody else's. Others, representing the technocratic strain of the modern paradigm decry it and point out that the body is a hopelessly biological, i.e., nonmechanical, thing, subject to breakdown and hard to repair.

We have woefully misconceived that pivotal distinction that undergirds traditional metaphysics, the distinction between 'self' and 'other.' We must realize that our 'private' thoughts take their form from our relations with others. Among the 'others' that we have a relation to are our forbearers who, collectively, constitute our tradition; this relation is of utmost importance in the forming of our subjectivity, We think as we do because are the heirs of the Greek tradition, of the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, for example, in whose celebration of mathematics we can discern early evidence of the tradition's tendency to take reckoning as the paradigm of thinking. We must recognize that thinking that situated, that the "accidents" of our inheritances from the time and place we occupy are "essential" to our being.

But in truth the fundament of consciousness is the life-world. The mode of temporality of this fundament is anticipation; to grasp the character of the life-world, we must apprehend as full with the future. The structure of the life-world's temporality is that of events that harbour possibilities and of promises made before events' being, or not being, actualized. Anticipation, which organically relates the perception of the actual to the recognition of future possibilities, also binds our lives to our deaths. That anticipatory resoluteness, that courage to assume responsibility that distinguishes the authentic human being, is the total commitment of the whole self as it looks forwards toward death. Thus this temporal mode allows us to grasp the essential finitude of human of human temporality.

Finitude, contingency, situatedness are the qualities of human being, despite the distaste that traditional metaphysics has for these them. Perhaps it was Rainer Maria Rilke who has described most fully this temporal mode. In a letter written in 1915, Rilke stated "Lovers do not live out of the detached here-and-now . . . for being full of life, they are full of death. There is no "Were reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind," in the corpus of Rilke's work, for there Death is no alien figure that steals up and seizes us in the midst of life. Rilke saw that Death resides in the most intimate recesses of life. Rilke commented in another letter, "Death . . . is probably so near us that we cannot determine the distance between it and the life centre within us without its becoming something external, dearly held back from us, lurking somewhere in the void in order to attack this one and that according to its evil choice."

If we disavow a death as our own, as belonging intimately to us, as the closeness that gives our lives form, we make the here-and-now of our concrete existence just so much poorer. When we exclude the sense of death from our experience of objects with which we have daily intercourse, when we fail to feel their provisional and fleeting nature, then we experience them as merely mechanical objects. They become the "empty, indifferent things . . . pouring across

[from America], sham things, dummy life” in contradistinction to the marvellous possessions of childhood that in their enigmatic departure, prepared one for relationships in the world and with people, including their deaths.

The temporality of authentic, situated existence is anticipatory because it awaits the outcome of our existence. Only by recognizing—by feeling—the finitude of one’s future can one acknowledge and accept one’s past. Conversely authentic acknowledge of one’s past (and one’s present) demands acceptance of the finitude of one’s future. It is the recognition of my limits that brings me to acknowledge that I am a finite being and so to acknowledge that my past also defines me as limited and determinate. For that which informs my determinateness and makes it to be what it is precisely my past; as Guiliana of Il Deserto Rosso, states at the very moment of her individuation, “I have to think that everything that happens to me is my life.” It is my personal history, but also the collective history from which I hail. My acceptance that my existence is finite and determinate is what restrains me from dreaming such impossible—and technologist—dreams of indefinitely extended human existence.

But the Modern Age does seek to understand what constitutes a person through recognizing what is contingent, accidental, particular and situated, The Modern Age is defined by a peculiar, even paradoxical conception of Universal. The ancient conception of what is universally true of political existence—a conception which persisted right through to the early modern philosophers—was at least clear and precise, however deleterious its legacy. Since humans first gathered in organized groups, surely, certain question have been asked by thoughtful people. “Should I live by toil or theft?” “Should I submit my actions to the decisions of group or some other person, or should I do as I think is just.” “Does happiness consist in wealth?” “In power?” “In virtue?” “In the respect of others?” “Or does nothing other than the spirit condition it?” “Should I act to please myself, other people, my rulers or my god?” “What happens if my desire to please myself conflict with the desire to please my god?” “What degreee of loyalty can the state command?” “If I disagree with those in authority over me, have I the moral right (or even moral responsibility) to defy them and to follow my conscience?” To these questions, the ancients offered many different answers; but all the thinkers who deal with these questions shared a common assumption, namely that there are answers to these questions that were universally true—true for all those who are fully human, wherever and whenever they may live.

What is more, the ancients and medievals believed that questions of the sort that these are have objective answers, i.e. that they could be answered as matters as fact—indeed, it is because their answers are like matters of fact, they are true for all human beings. They differed on the means by which humans could become acquainted with such truths. Some believed that such truths could be known by reason and some believed such truths were revealed truths; in addition, there were those who considered that they are acquired by piety or ecstasy, and still others, as we have noted, believed that they are acquired through participation in the affairs of good community. But while they differed means by which these truths are known, they did agree that humans had some form of access to these truths. The world had an order, and that order includes the order of values. It is a cosmos and not chaos. Questions concerning that order have objective answers, and these answers can be determined by human beings.

For the ancients and the medievals, questions such as “Should I seek wealth, or knowledge, or to do good, or to create beauty?” could be answered with statements of fact because their order to existents in which thing (or event) had its appointed purpose. All such questions devolve into the question “What is the purpose of the event or object I am pondering?” or “What is that event or object fitted for?” The cosmos consisted in interlocking events and objects with interlocking purposes, and its order derived from reason or mind or, at least, something like mind. Because the cosmos is a perfect, harmonious unity, these do not conflict; nor can the answers to these ethical questions. It is therefore possible, in principle at

least, to apprehend the perfect order of life of humans everywhere, just by synthesizing the answers to this fundamental questions about the ends to which objects and events serve. This perfect order of life is just what Plato inquired after in the Republic, and it is obviously the duty of people everywhere to strive to discover this perfect order and to bring it into existence.

This fundamentum of previous Western épistèmes has been rejected by moderns. Moderns do not believe that the cosmos constitutes an objective moral order and that humans can answer questions about the goodness by discerning the purpose which the object or event they are inquiring after is fitted to serve. They do not believe that the question “What should I seek to do in my life?” can be answered by examining what human beings are fitted for. The modern era saw the idea that the form of appropriate to anything depends upon its objective essence shrunk down until it had purchase only in the realm of aesthetics.

The most basic change that occurred with the development of the modern paradigm was the repudiation of the conception that there exists a harmony between mind and cosmos. The image that dominates the modern paradigm is that of nature as other than mind and of the mind as alienated from nature but striving to impose its order upon nature through labour (of whatever form.) When Descartes, in Meditations on First Philosophy describes the confusions into which he fell and the torment he experienced when he rejected as unfounded the certainties that previous philosophers had accepted, he is presenting as autobiographical narrative the condition into which the European mind collapsed when the classical and medieval paradigms broke down. His famous description of the way the world dissolved into phantasms tells it all.

The consequences of the repudiation of the teleology is most evident in the Romantic conception of subjectivity. That Romantic conception demonstrates how change that the repudiation of teleology constituted effected a change in the conception of truth, at least so far as the content of the human sciences are concerned, from objective to subjective. Whereas premoderns believed that the answer to question about what is good for an individual to pursue had objective answers, moderns have argued that answer depends on the subject himself or herself—that, when all is said and done, “doing good” means “following one’s inner light.”

Yet, while altering the status of claims of the truths of human sciences, the modern paradigm maintained the classical notion that truth should be universal. This concept had been used, even in Greek and Medieval philosopher, to ground the principle that human being should rise above its specific circumstances to participate in an eternal, unchanging, universal order. Thus, like Hobbes and Spinoza, and like Rawls and Ackermann in our time, liberal thought has attempted ground political philosophy in the universal principles of justice that reason is capable of calculating. However, while the classical view had a content, derived from strong philosophical anthropology, that assured that human reason could grasp the answers to political and moral questions as objective truths, modern liberalism has only a metaphysically deracinated concept of a person, a person altogether lacking what belong to him or her contingently, as a result of the accidents of belonging to a certain culture in a certain period on which it might base its method. Given this emptiness of the philosophical anthropology that is basis of its content, it is not surprising that liberal theory has proved so impotent, so incapable of instructing in the gripping political issues of our time.

The classical conception of unity pertained to the structure of cosmos and the harmony between mind and cosmos that allowed humans to grasp its eternal order. The liberal concept of unity is the empty concept of based on evacuated notion of human being—they idea that political philosophy concerns reconciling differences between individuals or groups by setting aside all that particular loyalties by taking up universal principles of justice. Not surprisingly, its notion of difference is simply the complement of its notion of unity, and just as empty. The notion of difference currently is put to use with alarming frequency in defence of minority cultures and of multiculturalism. Where are the roots of the policy of multiculturalism? They lie in liberalism’s emphasis on the rights of humans; it is the notion that there are inalienable

human rights that is ordinarily forms the basis of a demonstration that any discrimination, whether against races, classes and genders, illegitimate. As a weapon against racism and sexism it has been a mighty force, deployed in an indisputably just cause. Still we must ask, "What is the basis of the liberal idea of human rights?" The answer is unfortunate—it is the empty idea of a universal humanity—the idea that human beings have the same essential nature, that the essence of human being is reason, that it was reason that enabled human beings to discern that the character of life in the state of nature is "violent, poor, nasty, brutish and short" and that the means of escaping from the state of nature was to form covenants that constituted state authority, so that state might make and enforce laws for the benefit of all. The advocates of multiculturalism are ensnared in inconsistency, for while they advocate of difference they speak for unity, for the unity of a universal human nature that transcends the shaping influence of place and history. In the name of difference they promote a thoroughly denatured humanity, characterless because it is uninfluenced by history and unaffected by its circumstances. They offer us a deontic theory of state grounded in a nullity.

Brian Mulroney figures prominently among the advocates of multiculturalism. We need not seek far to find the reason why. One of the ways of expressing ideology of universal humanity is as follows: "There are not Blacks, or Asians or Whites; there are not Indians or Palestinians or Canadians. We are all of a common type." How well this ideology conforms to Mulroney's economic ideal of that modern incarnation of laissez-faire capitalism, globalism! This "universal humanitarianism" is the ideological basis of a pseudo-morality that justifies free trade, open borders and global competition. Of course, when it comes to economic competition between developed countries such as the United States and undeveloped countries such as Bangladesh, it's not hard to predict who will win. This is really what globalization is about, and its what multiculturalism is all about.

The architect of the Canadian version of the policy was Pierre Trudeau. Trudeau's reasons for advancing it were incontestably moral. The principal theme of Trudeau's political thinking was the relation between nation and state. Trudeau feared the consequences of the state's becoming an instrument of some national group; he had, after all witnessed the consequences of that happening in Germany in the 1930s and 40s (when the Aryan nation claimed the German state as its tool of self-assertion) and in Quebec, where, during the same period, the Roman Church fostered a hideously reactionary nationalism that isolated Quebec from international currents of industrial and economic development, with the pauperization of Quebec's people as the main result. Trudeau's stalwart and unbending desire to avoid the cruelty he saw nationalism resulting in indicates a moral will for which one can only feel awe. But one must not allow this awe to obscure the lacuna in Trudeau's political philosophy. Most prominent among these is his wretchedly unevolved theory of freedom which provides no place at all for the anthropogenetic role of social existence.

The conceptual problems inherent in their position become clearer when we weigh their claims against the idea of fate. The notion of fate encapsulates most ramifications of the idea that one's being is relative to his or her situation. It encapsulates the idea that I think the way that I do because I live in culture whose provenance is very largely the Western European tradition. A specific history has shaped my mode of thinking. I think as do because I am an heir to the culture formed out of a particular convergence of Judaeo-Christian and Greek thought that, among other things, has influenced the way that I think about human and non-human nature and about the Divine. It was also my fate to be born into modernity, into a culture whose conception of reason has been given its shape by technology in a certain phase of its development; as a result the mode of reasoning that is given to me to practice (and, truly, I do not invent reason, but practice those forms of reasoning in which I am trained) is calculation. As a modern, I am fated to consider reason (at least when I thematize reason and take its nature as a problem to be deliberated upon) as the instrument for deciding what strategies I might use

to accomplish those end that I ordinarily, but mistakenly, think that I set for myself (they are, of course, set for me, for actually my circumstances have enabled me to conceive of them.) I was also born into a time when the hegemonic phase of the forms of thinking I have been indicating has just past; that is why their character has been exposed and why I can speak of them.

To speak of thinking as being situated is to acknowledge that the fatedness of our thinking; it is to acknowledge, for example, that I cannot think of my relation to nature in the same as the original people on this continent did. It is also to acknowledge that I belong to a time and place, that it has me. In thinking, I do not because I exercise some universal capacity that transcends the effects of time and place; rather, I think as I do because I belong to culture that has specific bearings in time and place. What is more, I acquire my identity by being acknowledged by this culture. When I communicate, profoundly but without words, with people who share my background, I feel my self being acknowledged as theirs as they recognize our commonality in a symbolic exchange that is none the less real for being unspoken. The codes that we share in order to participate in such unspoken, but profound exchange, as intricate; and they are rooted in the stuff of our being.

Humans are not fully alive when they want for a intimate form of relation with a strong, highly developed and powerfully anthropogenetic symbolic realm. It is a truth borne out in history, in the pride that strong cultures have taken in powers of its art, literature, music, and even language to stretch its peoples towards a more complete realization of their possibilities. But it is a truth that the universalism of liberalism and multiculturalism cannot admit. The force that bind an individual to a community, and the give the community its cohesion are the same force that makes a person free. We become what we are in reading the literature, listening to the music, looking at the paintings that form a part of our cultural heritage, and sharing values and beliefs deeper than the belief in the nobility of the culturally neutered, metaphysically deracinated humanity, and in becoming what we are, we become bound to a community—to the particularities of a place and time. This proposition is anathema to liberals. Nonetheless, the strength of any culture has been proportionate to the extent to which this human truth has been recognized; the failure to acknowledge has resulted in the moral debacle of America.

Participation in a community that shares a set of beliefs, traditions, symbolic codes. is a form of education, for it draws out aspects of human being that would go undeveloped but for such social involvements. Participation in a community is liberating, for it allows people to fulfil potentials that would be unactualized if such involvement were not possible. It is this that justifies our saying that participation in the symbolic is necessary for human beings to become fully human. It is this that justifies, too, our earlier claim that identification with a strong, highly developed symbolic dominion is anthropogenetic. It is liberating, because it allows people to develop their potential. This view, that a being is free if it has the power to express itself, is the classical view of freedom, now frequently referred to, following Berlin, as the positive view of freedom. This conception of freedom takes proper account of how intimate the relation between a being and its circumstances really, for it states that a being (e.g. a human being) is free with the conditions exist that allow it to fulfil its potential. However, liberalism does not espouse the positive view of freedom; its view of freedom is what is commonly known as the negative conception, on which freedom is freedom from conditions that would prevent someone from doing just what he or she desires. Accordingly, liberal thought can understand the deepest, most human significance either of engagement in the life of polis or of rootedness in a tradition—its enormous pedagogical value, its value in encouraging humans to realize their potential, to make humans being human.

Liberal thought. does not understand human being as being shaped in the conditions of its existence. It conceives human being as something that given, not something that develops through experience; as a result, it cannot acknowledge that involvement in the specific realities of one's situation is required if humans are to realize their potential (their potential to become

fully human, that is) In doing this, they deny the important role of engagement in society and, especially, of involvement in the realm of symbolic relations. In doing so they involve themselves in the egregious absurdity of denying that there is any essential difference between the human enfolded in history and the human set apart from history. This is absurd in itself, but it is even more absurd for liberals to espouse than for others, given the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of liberalism. For in speaking of a being that removed from history and time, they employ propositions of an essentially speculative character, propositions whose criteria for verification would be difficult to specify, while liberalism is really the political philosophy of empiricism.

Though this tenet is unverifiable, it became embedded in liberal ideology; and since the last two hundred years and more (the time of Locke, Hume, Spinoza and Rousseau, since the French and American Revolutions and since) has been the era of liberalism, the historical process has now worked out most of its implications. Most importantly of all, the historical process engendered the proposal that reason is a transcendent universal whose character is unaffected by the accidents of history. (We notice, accordingly, that the empiricists, who so militantly opposed metaphysics' claims to real [scientific] knowledge accepted a view about the nature of reason that was itself highly metaphysical.) This proposal is wrapped up in a highly reductive concept of human being, because both the proposal and the concept of human being with which it has become associated derogate the significance of our involvement in a field of symbolic relations. This proposal relies on a spurious notion of human essence that is, like all notions of essence, part of the legacy of traditional metaphysics, for it depends on distinguishing between that which is enduring and unchanging and that which comes to be in the concrete specificities of a time and place. It accords that which is universal and unchanging (essence) greater reality than that which is contingent and variable. It thus devalues the concrete Situation, including our relations to culture and to history. It is in such a metaphysical legacy, sad to say, that the concept of "essential human rights is grounded.

The advocates of multiculturalism have made the concept of difference a weapon in their struggle against the forces of homogenization—forces they recognize as basic to the mode in which our form of social organization thinks and acts. This is most important, for the greatest political danger we confront is that danger with which the policies of Mulrooney confront us—the belief that the history is evolving the form of governance best suited to humanity is the universal homogeneous state, a world without borders, without trade barriers, without distinctions between nations, where universal humanity can flourish. Yet, as we have seen, their arguments rely on belief in a basic enduring human nature. The very idea of discovering something "more basic," something that is essential and perdures through changes, some underlying unity that subtends all change is a legacy of the traditional metaphysics, that system of concepts that founds our ideology. In this sense, their thinking is complicit with the dominant ideology. Furthermore, what is "more basic" finally emerges as "human being" stripped of all that emerges through one's relations to a specific, concrete situation. The privilege of unity, that bastion of the metaphysical tradition that is so fundamental to our ideology, is unassailed by multiculturalism's notion of difference. In sum, theirs is a concept of difference that does not make a difference.

Or, at least, it makes no difference to the metaphysical tradition, within which it rests comfortably and unthreateningly. It does make a difference to our self-understanding, for it reduces human being to nullity that premodern thinkers considered their condition before they actualized their potential. In disparaging the educational role of social relations, it teaches that human being in its condition of unrealized potential is utterly sufficient, without need of being drawn out. In discounting the shaping role of situation and the formative influence of tradition, it locates human essence in a metaphysical realm set apart from concrete social practices. It leaves human being in a realm separate from symbolic relations.

How does human being appear when stripped of its relations to the symbolic realm? Exactly as one of the great founder of liberal thought, Spinoza, described it: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its own being." Each being, and each person, will do it can to maintain itself in its present state of existence. The essence of a thing as its power or force of being, that is as the power to maintain that being in existence. It was this, and nothing else, that made a being what it is. However humans, because they are more complex than other beings have more intricate needs if they are to preserve themselves in their current state. Giving these metaphysical application in social theory, "all men are born ignorant" but with a right to life; so in the state of nature, they are obliged to

preserve themselves as far as they can by the unaided impulses of desire. Nature has given them no other guide, and has denied them the present power of living according to sound reason . . . whatever, therefore, an individual (considered as under the sway of nature) thinks useful for himself, whether led by sound reason or impelled by the passions, that he has a sovereign right to seek and to take for himself as he best can, whether by force, cunning, entreaty, or any other means; consequently he may regard as an enemy anyone who hinders the accomplishment of his purpose. It follows from what we have said that the right and ordinance of nature, under which all men are born, and under which they mostly live, only prohibits such things as no one desires, and no one can attain: it does not forbid strife, nor hatred, nor anger, nor deceit, nor, indeed, any of the means suggested by desire.

If they lack in relatedness to the symbolic realm, humans are impelled by will alone, into a relentless quest to maximize what advantageous to themselves. They are, in other words, driven by greed. But the depiction of human being that advocates of liberalism and multiculturalism offer is entirely consistent with Spinoza's portrayal of the human animal in the state of nature. For, once having expelled from the concept of essential human nature all that a culture provides, they go on to depict humans as an essentially economic animal driven by desire for wealth and security and nothing more. They recognize the no legitimacy to any regulation that does not ensure the safety of their person or property. In their view the state must enforce no laws whose purposes are pedagogical or spiritual rather than material. Education is reduced from a process whose end is spiritual development to the passing along of technique, as study of a tradition of thought is banished in the name of difference. In the end, the liberals who advocate multiculturalism have argued for, and I fear, had adopted, policies that would result in a spiritual impoverishment so great that our culture no longer has the resources to halt the practices of greed. Multiculturalism levels culture to clear the way for unbridled greed. It first destroys those cultural activities the draw human being out into the fuller realization of its potentials and substitutes for it the simulacra of culture for true culture; it gives us Buddhist dances performed in a shopping mall in the place of a strong, anthropogenetic culture. In doing so, it empties the centre of our existence of any real culture. In the place of culture, it substitutes economic interests as the core of our existence. It teaches that values are culturally relative and that nothing that is culturally relative can be generalized to apply everywhere throughout a multicultural society and does so to assure that no moral considerations restrain economic activities. This is the economic of agenda of multiculturalism; recognizing the agenda makes clear why Mulrooney provides the policy with vigorous support.

As he has on so many other matters, George Grant provided us with the beacon-light to guide us through the darkness of the liberal obscurantism that is occluded our understanding of ourselves and our relations with others. Grant told us, simply and forcefully, that love begins with love of one's own. But like so many simple, human truths, this one enfolds a great

complexity, as Grant surely knew. For Grant was a strong reader of Plato and so would have known the dilemma that confronts the lover in Plato's philosophy—and the quandaries that will ensnare philosopher who attempts to understand it. Indeed Grant, in his great modesty professes (in true Socratic fashion) to understand nothing of love, for that understanding is vouchsafed only to the saints (such as Simone Weil.) Yet he contemplated both Plato's epistemology and the human passion of love so deeply that was able to see that in Plato's allegories of the divided line and the cave

sight is used as a metaphor for love. Our various journeys out of the shadows and imaginings of opinion into the truth depend on the movements of our minds through love into the lovable. Indeed there are many ways of thinking about Socrates' 'turn around' from interest in such phenomena as the clouds to his later interest in human matters. But one of these is his recognition of the interdependence between knowing and loving.

What is more, he counsels us that sweet-minded distinction between eros and agapé commonly is too strictly-drawn, and that the love that Socrates/Plato discusses the Symposium is eros—erotic love. Thus love he knew was the passion that drives all needful quests, and that as humans, one of our needs is to know the Good, for the lack of knowledge of the Good is not ignorance, but madness.

Is it true that love begins with love of one's own? Is it not something beyond us, something other than ourselves that has the power to transform us? By staking the claim for the value of loving one's own, is Grant not justifying a smug self-satisfaction that is unable to open itself to the transformative experience from the beyond? These questions about love bring us up against the paradox of human existence that Weil thinking was able to encompass, though logic cannot. The paradox, simply, is that the Beyond is also what is most intimate to us, and that what we know of what is most intimate to us opens us to the Beyond. So difficult is it to fathom this claim that modern reason has rejected; yet what it discloses is crucial to comprehending the relation between self-understanding and knowledge of the Good that was so central in the philosophy of the ancients. To know oneself is to know the Great Mystery, for our being is His image.

When we accept, and cherish, our finiteness we participate in the Endlessly Perfect. This is not a truth the reason can fathom, and it is given to us only by revelation. But the apprehension of the Order of Things which reveals itself everywhere, and without limit, provides us with the understanding of our proper limits, and through accepting our limits we participate in the Providential Order. The revelation vouchsafed to us that God's creation of the world is an act of His Love (for His being and His doing and His goodness are not different, nor are they different than His love) and has as its end the perfection of His being; hence the goodness of finite beings is to participate in His goodness which made them. Thus to apprehend the goodness of finite beings is to apprehend their finite participation is to apprehend their finite participation in His infinite goodness, and even, to experience that it is good that we apprehend His good in finite form. It is to experience both that the goodness of finite beings is that they are directed towards a transcendent end and that the goodness of infinite end the serve is immanent in their finite determination. The revelation discloses our fealty to a law that finite nature

commands us to obey, for the goodness directs us the Good which made them, which they serve and which they call upon us to serve. Love of the One who is infinite and beyond all change begins with love of what is given to us, in its finiteness, to cherish.

The Song of Solomon praises the lovers' deep interest in the others' bodies; it is a hymn of affirmation of the body. In its acknowledging that body is vulnerable and subject to death (8:6)

and in its use of the motif of lover's desperate search for the beloved, it suggests the transience of that which we experience as having of ultimate value, and so the inevitability that anxiety have a place in our most profound loves. The extremely personal quality of speech affirms the ultimate value of particularity and diversity—features which traditional metaphysics placed little value upon and whose reality traditional metaphysics tended to deny so that it might grant reality only to their superordinate universals. Most importantly, it describes a conjugation of differentiated terms in which the pair are yoked together in the most intimate way, but from which no "higher unity" emerges and to which the pair do not concede their apartness. If, as Rosenzweig proposed, the lovers are a particular human and the Divine, that the two lovers maintain their distinctness, that the bride does not lose herself in the Divine Bridegroom seems all the more amazing; but this is really only because traditional theology, confined as it has been within the orbit of traditional metaphysics, cannot speak of a relation between incommensurates in which each maintains its apartness and in which, moreover, the universal and a highly particularized individual (particularized precisely by the lover's love for that individual) enter into the most profound relation imaginable and yet in which the particular remains autonomous even while being created by the universal. If the language of traditional metaphysics fails us here, and perhaps even renders such a form of relation inconceivable, we can talk about in the language of poetry and love; it is this that explains the appearance of such explicit love poems in the Canon of the Sacred Scripture.

If this considerations seem oddly placed in political tract, it is, surely, only because we have taught that we must consider political questions using only the universal principles of reason—that consideration of particular loves and loyalties have no place in political thinker, no does a philosophical anthropology that acknowledges the importance of finitude, contingency and situation. Considerations such as these appear as folly to traditional metaphysics that claims that which commands our most profound love is beyond change; as (inter alia) Spinoza's opening remarks in Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect makes explicit, this is very reason it merits being loved, for only that which is eternally supremely good can provide certain, unending joy. Yet this paradoxical metaphysics is one of great strength, and its propositions are a valuable antidote to the vacuities of liberal social thought. Here the relation of particular to universal is more strongly conceived than in liberal thought, in which the particular is emptied to assure that privilege of the universal.

When such strong thinking becomes ours, we will understand: why the policy of multiculturalism is empty; why constitutional proposals that do no more than to attempt to reconcile divergent interests by divesting individuals of specific affiliations and particular loyalties to take up the universal vantage point of reason; why a Bill of Rights predicated on the universal rights of metaphysically deracinated individuals will be club that batters what belongs to us by virtue of our particular tradition; why the courts, which operate by applying the universal principles of reason to particular cases will not make better law than an elected body of fellow citizens that represent our particularities; why constitutional democracy is weaker form of government than what we had before, a democracy that operates according to complex, albeit unruly, lot of precedents that continually adjust themselves the vicissitudes of our situation. And by then, it will be too late.