

Review of Susan Dodd and Neil Robertson, eds., *Hegel and Canada. Unity of Opposites?* University of Toronto Press, 2018. 408 pages

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Preview

As is the case with most western, liberal-democratic nations, Canada's metanarratives are far from simple. Indeed, the overarching stories Canadians tell themselves are frequently qualified by the insistence (often from historians and political commentators) that there is no single narrative from which to proceed. For example, there is no straightforward story regarding the history of confederation leading up to the ratification of the British North America Act in 1867—the Act at the core of what is now the Canada Act (1982). Instead, there is a range of political viewpoints as to whether this or that policy and activity was ultimately beneficial to what was to become Canada. These viewpoints often result in opposed positions on this or that political legislation and/or practice. This goes for present day legislation and practices as much as it does for the past. For example, there is a range of viewpoints on the question of the role of the government in suppressing indigenous protest and rebellion in the new nation. This is very often associated with present treatment of indigenous populations. Indeed, one can be a proud Canadian and condone neither the historical treatment nor the present-day treatment of indigenous populations. The recent publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings (2015), particularly regarding indigenous children in residential schools, has brought together those that envision a strong Canada, distinct from other western liberal-democratic nations, and committed to democracy, pluralism, and multiculturalism. One can identify as a Canadian nationalist and profoundly regret the choices made in the enactment of constitutional laws and provisions in the BNA Act every bit as much as one can be a nationalist and support them. One can be a pluralist about immigrants and refugees in contemporary debates about the role of the government in limiting entry to certain individuals and groups over others while advising caution and reflection in the particular

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One can also either endorse metaphysical claims and programs in defense of Canadian democracy, nationalism, multiculturalism, and

pluralism, or reject these. One may see (and endorse) the nationalism and pluralism of Canada as part of a larger program, metaphysical in nature, either in terms of its ends (*teloi*), or its placement in a larger whole. One may also see (and endorse) the nationalism and pluralism of Canada as independent of such a program, or as part of a different program, one constructed socially and politically, though not metaphysical in terms of its ends or its placement in a larger whole. There is a historical tendency notable here; for it does seem the case that earlier programs and thinkers invoking Hegel drew on metaphysical ends and aims more so than do present programs and thinkers. It seems, in other words, that as Canadian democracy, nationalism, multiculturalism, pluralism, and other metanarratives common to the political discourse evolve, the metaphysical underpinnings have, and continue to, collapse.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Hegel himself has and continues to influence Canadian philosophy, particularly in matters political and historical. Canadian philosophers writing and thinking on Hegel have done so for well over one hundred years and, from the earliest expositors of Hegel in John Clark Murray (1836-1917) and John Watson (1847-1939) to the latter-day scholars featured in *Hegel in Canada: A Unity of Opposites*, continue to do so.¹ The shape Hegel has taken on this hundred-plus year journey is historically exemplified in this collection. This is a shape that has transformed from a largely British-centric and imperialist regard for weaker nations and peoples (Watson), to the herald of the modern nation-state together with its overbearing technological apparatus (George Grant), to one democratic, multicultural, and pluralist (Henry Harris, George Di Giovanni, John Burbidge, Charles Taylor, John Russon, Shannon Hoff). Likewise, the metaphysics of Hegel has transformed from transcendental, absolutist and speculative (Watson, James Doull, Emil Fackenheim) to immanentist, social, cultural, linguistic, and non-metaphysically holist (Harris, Di Giovanni, Burbidge, Taylor, Russon, Hoff). Recently, there has been a move away from consideration of Hegel as a metaphysician. Hegel has emerged as a social theorist of experience, language, society and politics rather than a metaphysician intent on capturing the world in a unified whole. And while this is not an exclusively Canadian scholarly phenomenon, Canadian scholars are in the vanguard. *Hegel in Canada* does an admirable job of showing the reader these transformations, as well as what is at stake in so evolving. The question of how Hegel scholarship in Canada shapes Hegel (for better or worse) is one that I will take up in the final section.

¹ Susan Dodd and Neil Robertson, eds. *Hegel in Canada: A Unity of Opposites* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

The Chapters

Hegel in Canada is an edited volume consisting in 15 chapters as well as an introduction and conclusion. The volume is edited by Susan Dodd and Neil Robertson. Dodd writes the introduction. The avowed aim of the book is historical-political: to assemble the thoughts of leading Hegel scholars in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond on political philosophy; to bring this scholarship to bear on Canada's nation-building ethos; and to ask if Hegel has anything to offer today, particularly in regards to Canada "as a self-conscious, historically aware, self-governing nation in a rapidly changing global scene" (1). All of this, Dodd says, is brought to bear on modern notions of freedom and the reconciliation of older with newer forms and understandings of community (2). Dodd provides a helpful discussion of post-World War II Canadian history and politics, painting a picture in broad strokes, facilitated by the rubric of nation-building vs. nation-questioning. Dodd then turns to a brief discussion of Hegel's political thought and to a short summary of important Canadian Hegel scholars working in this tradition. These scholars include Fackenheim, Doull, Grant, Taylor, and Harris. This is followed by a section on the newer generation of scholars, scholars interested in questions of political philosophy for contemporary Canada. Finally, the question of Canadian freedom is broached. Freedom, construed as the "false choice of community over self, or tradition over change," is rejected in favour of a freedom that "can affirm the manifold cultural experiences of a diverse people" (32-33). This means a shared capacity to "recollect [Canada's] history" (33). Dodd mentions the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recent publication (2015) on residential schools and the plight of indigenous peoples in Canada as beginning this journey.

Hegel and Canadian Philosophy

The chapters are divided into two asymmetrical divisions. The first is labelled "Hegel and Canadian Philosophy;" the second, "Hegel in Canadian Politics." There is considerable overlap in terms of history, politics, social issues, etc., and thinkers invoked, though I will follow these divisions in my discussion, if not always the order in which the chapters are first presented. To begin with, the first division concerns the history of Hegel in Canada, the major post-World War II Hegelian thinkers and their specific concerns, as well as what to make of Hegel in regards

contemporary democracy, pluralism, multiculturalism, and freedom. Emil Fackenheim's is probably the most transcendental of the Hegels represented in this group of thinkers, and both George Di Giovanni and Daniel Brandes' respective chapters (George Di Giovanni, "Jewish and Post-Christian Interpretations of Hegel: Emil Fackenheim and Henry S. Harris" (Chapter Three); Daniel Brandes, "Fackenheim on Self-Making: Divine and Human" (Chapter Four)) discuss his metaphysics, as well as his 'turn' from Hegel's transcendental Christian religion to Zionism, beginning in the late 1960's. Faith is an important consideration for Di Giovanni. Fackenheim's (and Henry Harris') faith is epistemic; for Fackenheim (and Harris), faith is understood as knowledge (65). Fackenheim (and Harris) was deeply concerned with evil and the roles that evil took in regards to the understanding of faith in Hegel's *corpus* (68). In contrasting these thinkers, Di Giovanni shows us that Fackenheim leaned more to the *Encyclopedia*, Harris to the *Phenomenology* (68); Fackenheim to the speculative interest of reason and the transcendental substrate of Christian religion (65), and Harris to the historical context of the modern, secular world. Neither, according to Di Giovanni, seems to have taken Hegel as an orthodox theist (69). In regards to faith, it is the case that Fackenheim read mainly from Hegel's *Religion* lectures, as Di Giovanni notes (68). And it is the case that Fackenheim's break with Hegel came as a result of the impossibility of retrieving a middle position, chiefly owing to Hegel's Christian, religious transcendentalism. Brandes' chapter concurs with Di Giovanni's in regards to Fackenheim's ontological reading of the divine and faith, though for Brandes, Fackenheim looks back to a God "beyond Being" (80). Brandes is ultimately critical of Fackenheim for his reliance on transcendence as the form of reconciliation of the finite and immanent. Brandes juxtaposes Fackenheim's Hegel with Schelling in order to demonstrate the *aporia* of relying on transcendence in reconciling with the finite. In Brandes' estimation, such reliance threatens to level our finitude, our history (83).

John Burbidge's chapter (John Burbidge, "Hegel in Canada" (Chapter 2)) examines the historical flow of Hegel scholarship from the 19th century onwards. For Burbidge, Watson and Harris reconceive the absolute spirit of community respectively, in the Christian tradition and the modern secular world (54). The trend, Burbidge notes, has been to domesticate Hegel, though not as far as to "dismiss his claims to absolute knowledge" in preference for thinkers that followed him (56). In somewhat of a contrast, John Russon (John Russon, "Conscience, Religion, and Multiculturalism: A Canadian Hegel" (Chapter 5)) does dismiss Hegel's claim to absolutism; for Russon's Hegel (and Canada's

Hegel) is pluralistic and multiculturalist in its recognition of differences rather than wholes. Russon works from *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*; specifically, “the equality of recognition” (61). The “norm of recognition” is the basis for Canada’s multiculturalism and pluralism—a “recognition of a deep experiential pluralism—a recognition, that is, that our identities are formed by participation in determinate cultures whose particular forms permanently shape our capacities for engaging meaningfully with the world” (92). Russon cites Harris and Burbidge as Hegel scholars that have advanced “conscience” as “conscientious action,” that culminates “in the practice of forgiveness” (92).

Jim Vernon’s chapter (Jim Vernon, *Conquering Finitude: Towards a Renewed Hegelian Middle* (Chapter 6)) takes its cue from Fackenheim’s project of a search for the middle between transcendence and immanence. Vernon casts doubt on the post-World War II interpretations of Hegel’s *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, and particularly readings casting it as non-metaphysical, non-transcendental in nature. Vernon draws on James Doull’s earlier explication of Hegel’s political philosophy as emblematic of an earlier reading that does not downplay Hegel’s transcendental project of infinite freedom. It was Fackenheim, Vernon thinks, that prophesied the break in the ‘Hegelian middle’ between transcendence and immanence, chiefly through labelling transcendental readings as “Right wing”, and focused on the logic and the Idea (101). The “immanentized” readings of Hegel followed with the Left-wing response to these right-wing attempts at transcendentalization (102). The historical developments of the 20th century solidified this break in Hegel’s middle and the break, at least to judge by Fackenheim, is irreparable (103). For Vernon, Canadian scholarship of the late 20th and early 21st century is largely Left-wing Hegelian. Vernon attempts to counter this by reminding that Hegel did not endorse freedom as a “merely situated choice to affirm social alignments as they exist” (116), rather, change “through the progressive, emancipatory supersession of their limiting determinations through the process of reform” (117). Interestingly, Vernon seems to take the opposite pole on a subject matter in which both he and Brandes are engaged: Hegel’s account of reconciliation. Does it or does it not require a transcendental account of (speculative) reason? Vernon wants a return to a more balanced account, while Brandes fears this will flatten finitude.

Chapter 7 constitutes Charles Taylor’s now-famous “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind” (Charles Taylor, “Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind”). As is well-known, Taylor augurs for a philosophy of mind that complements the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Central to this is an account of Hegel’s philosophy of action, an action

which is imbued with self- or reflective consciousness (136-137). And what we move towards with our actions is recognition, “reciprocal recognition, within the life of a community” (134). Hegel’s philosophy of action is not a causal theory; it is qualitative in the sense that it relies on no separate account of material or materiality needing to first be in place (130). In no case is there appeal to transcendence, or to a metaphysical or absolutist whole that overarches the account of (social) recognition and freedom. Kenneth Kierans also makes this clear in his comments on Hegel’s drive for “conceptual necessity” in Chapter 8 (Kenneth Kierans, “Negativity, Charles Taylor, Hegel, and the Problem of Modern Freedom”). Kierans deals with Taylor and Hegel on the issue of freedom (155). Kierans thinks Taylor is correct in his skepticism regarding various modern-day quests for “self-dependent freedom;” a skepticism which Kierans endorses against “absolutist advocates of “absolute freedom”” (154).

Hegel in Canadian Politics

This division examines the historical landscape of Hegel scholarship in Canada, and does so with specific political issues regarding Canada in mind. Elizabeth Trott’s chapter (Elizabeth Trott, “Early Canadian Political Culture: Hegelian Adaptations in John Watson” (Chapter 9)) examines Watson, the eminent philosopher of Queen’s University, and his role in political culture. Trott follows Watson’s thinking from abstract issues (metaphysics, logic) to practical issues of the state, Enlightenment, and finally, to the question of whether or not Watson has a system. Trott claims that Watson’s movement is akin to Hegel’s as both progressed from abstract to concrete—“abstract being to determinate particulars” (176). Watson goes further than Hegel’s merely logical system to include attitudes and tempers such as curiosity and imagination (176). Watson is said to functionalize Hegel’s logical ontology (178). Watson seems to emerge as an important medium for the ‘immanent turn’ in Hegel scholarship. Presumably, Watson tempers Hegel’s ‘absolutism;’ Trott claims Watson “rejects the finality of any explanatory system. Only education, which is perpetually renewing itself, will further the evolution of political enlightenment” (186). Robert Sibley (Robert Sibley, “Idealism and Empire: John Watson, Michael Ignatieff, and the Moral Warrant for “Liberal Imperialism” (Chapter 10)), on the other hand, presents us with a Watson that is more in line with traditional readings of Hegel (and Watson), a Watson who is a moral imperialist (209). This imperialism

consists in elevating people to the consciousness and practice of their “inherent freedom” (202). David McGregor (David McGregor, “Beyond ‘Hegel’s Time’: Made in the USA, Not Available in Canada” (Chapter 11)) follows Sibley’s imperialist line of thinking regarding Watson, and implicates Hegel as well. McGregor thinks Hegel “assembled the first modern theory of imperialism” (233). Frederick List, an American economist and student of German idealism is said to have had a decisive impact on the American economy; and Hegel is said to have a decisive impact on List (216). Hegel’s antagonism to the English Reform Bill of 1831 is of a piece with his anti-aristocratic political philosophy and List is America’s direct expositor of this viewpoint. Perhaps, McGregor avers, Hegel’s sympathies lay more with the fledgling American nation than with the colonial outpost of British aristocracy.

Neill Robertson’s chapter (“Freedom and the Tradition: George Grant, James Doull, and the Character of Modernity” (Chapter 12)) examines Doull and Grant in light of their mutual reliance on Hegel. Doull emerges as the ardent Hegelian in the debate between the two, a debate that took place less in the pages of published works and more in their correspondence. Grant’s Hegel was not static; in the 1950’s Grant saw Hegel as the philosopher of modernity par excellence. In the early 1960’s and under the influence of American philosopher Leo Strauss, Grant’s Hegel became Alexandre Kojève’s Hegel. And it was this Hegel who was philosophically responsible for the modern, liberal uptake of technology as a good, a good that neither Grant nor Strauss could abide. For his part, Doull shared Grant’s view that the United States was a technological empire. But whereas Grant, partly under the influence of Strauss, denigrated this empire, until the late 1980’s Doull appears to have concluded that the empire liberated itself (248). Doull seems to have rejected the absolute pessimism of Grant on modern technology through situating it in a larger historical and social context, a context in which technology itself could be mediated (251). Doull and Grant’s respective views of the United States, as different as they were, formed against the backdrop of a debate regarding Hegel’s legacy to modern technology and liberalism.

Grant is featured again, in Robert Sibley’s other chapter (Robert Sibley, “Grant, Hegel, and the ‘Impossibility of Canada’” (Chapter 13)). Hegel’s influence on Grant was first positive, as in his 1959 *Philosophy in the Mass Age*, but soon thereafter became negative, as Grant came increasingly under the influence of Strauss, Martin Heidegger, and later, Simone Weil (276). Grant began to see Hegel as a triumphalist and as an early endorser of manifest destiny (280). Certainly, Sibley argues, this is

how the St. Louis Hegelians in the United States were understanding Hegel (280). Sibley underscores the Kojévian reading that Grant increasingly came under as a result of his correspondence with Strauss beginning in the early 1960's, and the resurgence of interest in Plato and Christianity that characterized his last 20 years of scholarship. Grant's "end of history" was a peculiarly American trope that found its *raison d'être* in Kojève's reading of Hegel, eagerly taken up by Grant (287). Grant, reacting against Hegel, declared the impossibility of Canadian nationalism in *Lament for a Nation* (1965). This 'defeat' of Canadian nationalism had as much to do with the inevitability of the Hegelian, liberal philosophy of modernity as it did with specific economic and political interventions.

Graeme Nicholson ("Hegel and Canada's Constitution" (Chapter 14)) and Barry Cooper ("Hegel's Laurentian Fragments" (Chapter 15)) both examine Doull's and Grant's disagreements over Hegel. Nicholson does so in regards to the Canadian constitution; Cooper does so over the role that Ottawa and Eastern Canada played in carving out Canadian public policy and legislation. Nicholson argues that Doull's understanding of Hegel's prioritization of state over civil society is basic to Canadian *Sittlichkeit* (299). This is not the case with the United States, which Doull argues is regionally and ethically fragmented because it places society ahead of the state. The norms of *Sittlichkeit*, by contrast, are at work in the Canadian constitution for Doull, and constitute its unique variants of federalism, democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of minorities (303-304). By contrast, Cooper claims George Grant and Charles Taylor as "political Hegelians," Hegelians that privileged the St. Lawrence Valley, broadly inclusive of Quebec, Ottawa, and Southern Ontario, over other regions. Cooper does an estimable job of both laying out the Kojévian reading of Hegel upon which Grant relies, and the debate between Strauss and Grant which led Grant to move away from Strauss's atheistic position (318-319). Grant emerges as a British colonial subject who privileges Ottawa over other (western) regions of Canada (323).

Shannon Hoff's chapter (Shannon Hoff, "Hegel and the Possibility of Intercultural Criticism" (Chapter 16)) brings us back to the present. It stresses Hegel's account of recognition, forgiveness, pluralism, and multiculturalism in its asking of the question: can we conduct criticism in the environment of interculturalism? The answer is avowedly yes (343; 357). Human agency is tension-filled, and this state of affairs is therefore basic to sociality. But whereas some Hegelians concentrate on *social movements* in tension, Hoff concentrates on *selves*. One example where this difference makes a difference, according to Hoff, is the 2005

provincial government of Ontario's rescinding of its promise to allow alternative dispute resolution in family and inheritance law on behalf of Islamic legal principles. For Hoff, this was an opportunity to stress selves rather than movements (or groups); yet the government failed to follow through on this, with the result of "inhospitality not just to the Muslim immigrant but also the future identities of those who consider themselves to be generically Canadian" (357).

Neil Robertson, in the conclusion ("Conclusion: Canada and the Unity of Opposites" Chapter 17)), articulates two components of the "Hegel-Canada connection" (369): the causal claim that Hegel had a crucial role to play in the understanding of Canada's constitution, and the uniqueness and value of Canadian Hegel scholars interpreting and understanding Canada (369-370). What emerges in the answering of these questions is "real disagreement in this book about how to interpret Hegel" (373). This comes out not merely in the opposition, for example, of Grant's and Doull's readings of Hegel, but in the Hegel scholarship at present. The opposition for Robertson is one of liberalism against communitarianism, though, as he admits, read through Hegel this opposition blossoms into a 'unity of opposites' (373). What Canada takes from Hegel, Robertson claims, is the ability to see difference in unity and unity in difference, and that the only way to see the opposition is from the standpoint of the constitution (374). Canadian scholars of Hegel have not been content with keeping to Hegel's letter; they want to go beyond Hegel's thought and raise "speculative truth to the movement of Spirit in History" (374). I take it this means for Robertson the *immanentization* of Hegel, an immanentization that is hostile to re-appropriations of Hegel as straightforwardly transcendental and absolutist.

In terms of its avowed goals (to assemble the thoughts of leading Hegel scholars in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond on political philosophy; to bring this scholarship to bear on Canada's nation-building ethos; to ask if Hegel has anything to offer today, particularly in regards to Canada "as a self-conscious, historically aware, self-governing nation in a rapidly changing global scene" (1), the book succeeds admirably. The book is unique, both in presenting readers with Canadian scholarship on a particular philosopher, and in presenting the significance of a philosopher for Canadian historical and political issues. Furthermore, the chapters are uniformly excellent. While I didn't agree with all of the viewpoints expressed (see Part Three), I do believe that the sum of the contributions should have and will have an important influence on the interface between Canadian philosophy and Canada's history and politics.

3. The significance of Canada to Hegel

In this final section, I reverse the order of the question as it is asked by the editors. Therefore, the question I pose is not of Hegel's relation to Canada, rather what Canada's scholarship on Hegel consists in for Hegel scholarship generally. This takes me beyond the role of Hegel scholarship as it bears on Canada's politics, society, and culture, to issues of Hegel interpretation. I think it is quite clear in reading this book that the Hegel emerging from the pages chiefly (though not exclusively) supports the aims of democracy, pluralism, and multiculturalism, largely through accounts of conscience, self-consciousness, recognition, and forgiveness. This is a reading of Hegel that concentrates more on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, and less on the *System of Logic* or *Encyclopedia*. A number of Hegel scholars writing here (Harris, Burbidge, Di Giovanni, Taylor, Brandes, Russon, Kieran, Hoff) endorse this reading. Others (Doull, Fackhenheim, Vernon, Cooper) are more skeptical, and examine, or call for examination of, Hegel's *Religion*, *Logic* and *Encyclopedia* with the prospect of a more nuanced account.

Calling for a more nuanced account is often (though not always) tantamount to a re-examination of Hegel's fuller account of experience, logic, nature, right, Spirit—in other words, the account that includes the metaphysical, speculative, even absolutistic context in which his specific pronouncements are made. Fackenheim, who recognizes this metaphysical context, seems to have been the first to notice and articulate this divide. And his pronouncement seems to be that it cannot be bridged, at least if Di Giovanni and Brandes are correct (68; 83). Since then, scholarship seems to have taken the side of immanentism in regards to reading Hegel. But, as Vernon rightly points out, this reading of Hegel comes at a cost. Specifically, it drains out the wherewithal for Spirit to overcome itself, and it robs Spirit of an account of how this can take place. Fully immanentized readings of Hegel have no account beyond bootstrapping the natural dialectic to answer the question of Spirit's self-overcoming. Of course, the conditions for such an overcoming are to be found in Hegel, though they are most fully laid out in his *System of Logic* and *Encyclopedia*. Burbidge himself acknowledges this, in commenting on the speculative interest reason takes in overcoming the opposition of various logical movements.² This speculative interest of reason does not arise naturally from the dialectic; it arises in and from reflective thought. And this thought is not merely the thought that is encapsulated in and by a particular shape of Spirit. It is found in every and all shapes of Spirit and impels the

² John Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1981), p. 40.

resolution of the oppositions through unity in a new shape. To be properly Hegelian, I argue, is to find a way to connect the particular practices and activities of democracy, pluralism, multiculturalism, and interculturalism with the broader account of speculative philosophy and the speculative interest of reason therein, including self-consciousness, spontaneity, reflection, and freedom. The risk in not doing so is to beg the question that these, too, are merely particularisms—particular instances of a shape of Spirit that cannot provide an account of its own self-overcoming.

We might say, by way of retort, that Hegel's language of self-overcoming, of the speculative interest of reason, is simply unavailable to us, for we no longer countenance metaphysical claims. If Hegel meant his absolutism to be taken seriously, we cannot follow him, as Trott has Watson claim (179). We might want to say that we don't have the sort of language available to us that allows us to follow reason if it engages in a speculative pursuit, and we don't have this language because we don't have relevant facts or evidence that could support such a language. But concerns such as these miss the point. Hegel thought we have the categories at our disposal to think beyond our existing shape of Spirit, with its tensions and opposites, its particulars at odds with one another: our combined categories that Hegel details so exquisitely in the *System of Logic*, together with their content in the way of concrete historical and social practices, are precisely what we have at our disposal. What the categories and their content don't supply us with, however, is the *speculative interest*. This thinking beyond comes only with the activity of reflection—thought thinking on itself, as Harris himself has aptly characterized as basic to Hegel's account of the Absolute from at least the *Difference Essay* onwards.³ It is this speculative interest that lies beyond particular instances and practices of historical periods and specific cultures—yet does not lie beyond thought—that Hegel turns to in detailing the self-overcoming of the shape of Spirit.

This speculative interest of reason is closely allied to the movement of thought from finite particularity to the infinite, and from subjective to objective thought. It is the overcoming of the natural dialectic that consciousness has before itself. The resolution to this opposition Hegel often termed 'individuality.' This is a concrete universal (das *Konkrete*), as Hegel sometimes likes to say. But reason does not rest with the concrete universal; it seeks to go beyond this movement in consciousness, and in going beyond this movement, go beyond itself. This is the activity of *aufheben*, captured in English by terms such as

³ Henry Harris, *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp 14-22.

‘superseding,’ ‘overcoming,’ ‘sublation,’ ‘thinking over,’ and the like. In the 1817 edition of the preface to the *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel calls the interest of reason “the speculative and absolutely positive moment that apprehends the unity of the determinations in their opposition, the positive movement contained in their dissolving and transfer.”⁴ In the 1830 edition of the preface, Hegel talks of “*overcoming in thought* something, the general that is the product of such an activity encompasses the value of the *elementary content...the essential, the inner, the true.*”⁵ The speculative interest of reason is to *reflect* on the movements heralding opposition and individuation; it is the activity of thinking for oneself—spontaneity. To think for oneself, as Hegel says, is the product of (my) freedom (23). This spontaneity is not a product of the natural dialectic, nor of the various movements in consciousness; it is freedom enacted through the reflective activity of reason as it surveys and thinks beyond the consciousness of its single movements.

This question of metaphysics and the speculative interest of reason bears on the particular practices that Canadians engage in politically and socially through defining themselves as Canadian, through appealing to the Constitution Act in juridical disputes, and in the broader project of reflecting their individual identities against a purported Canadian identity. If the Canadian identity, itself a product of the social and political practices of Canadians, cannot rise above its particularistic practices, it is bound to fall apart. (It is bound to fall apart in any event, if we follow Hegel’s historical lessons.) What moves Spirit to rise above itself are not the particular practices of forgiveness, or the particular practices of recognition in a Spirit, or even the particular freedoms enshrined in a constitution; rather, it is the speculative interest of reason in uniting yet cancelling these opposed particulars. And this *is* a metaphysical accomplishment. For a reading of Hegel that is close to the spirit of Hegel, the historical accounting of these particular practices must be supplemented with an account of how they are united yet overcome; an account, that is, of the speculative interest of reason in the contemporary shape of Spirit that is Canada. While Canadian scholarship often follows American scholarship in stressing the immanent Hegel, I think it would do

⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaftslehre* (1817-1830), in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke*, 20 volumes (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1986), vol. 8, p.

⁵ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, 21. Brinkmann and Dahlstrom translate the passage as “*thinking over* something, the universal that is the product of such an activity contains the value of the *basic matter...the essential, the inner, the true.*” G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part 1: Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21.

well to return to the scholarship of Watson, Doull, and Fackenheim and re-examine the speculative aspect of his legacy.

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