Isaiah Berlin and Charles Taylor on Johann Gottfried Herder

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Abstract

This thesis offers a comparison, which rarely, if ever, has been made between Isaiah Berlin and Charles Taylor's account of the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder on the relationship of language, culture and nationality. It argues that Berlin misrepresents Herder's ideas in emphasizing the extent to which differences in language and culture necessarily result in ethnic and national conflicts between incompatible cultural worldviews, while Taylor does correctly understand that Herder sees no reason for why such conflict between cultural entities should be inevitable either within a single state or between states. The thesis concludes by offering reasons for why Herder, properly understood, allows us to be optimistic about the future of both intrastate and interstate relationships among diverse cultural groups.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

To my grandparents: Paul and Nellie Harach. Thank you for your continual love
and support.

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Introduction

Recent political thinking has revealed a challenge regarding the conventional understanding of morality and its claim involving the existence of universal moral truths. While this dispute involves a number of aspects and a heterogeneous group of thinkers, one theme common to many of them is a mounting emphasis on the pluralistic nature of cultural and societal forms of knowledge, along with the inferred proposition that the beliefs adopted by various individuals, groups, and even nations existing within these contexts may differ sharply from one another. What this essentially points to is the notion that culturally inspired forms of diversity make it difficult, if not impossible, for human beings to co-exist, either within a multicultural society or between ethnically homogenous nations.

Co-existence is more than just avoiding clashes between people and civilizations which lead to conflict and war. It also involves providing the conditions where all people, in all social spheres, can come to recognize cultural differences as a source of ideas which not only demands respect and acknowledgment, but also as a resource which can be used to enrich their lives and improve humanity. As a result, approaches towards diversity which encourage difference-blind policies, permitting people to fight for their differences, without encouraging them to learn about others or providing them with a framework which could be used to address diversity, are unacceptable.

Allowing people to remain unaware of the diversity of others, either at national or international levels, while still permitting them to defend their differences and convictions in the face of attacks, can lead to the development of identity politics which, in turn, fosters social and political divisions that undermine stability and create the conditions which can escalate into conflict. Remaining unaware of the diversity of others can also disconnect people from larger sources

of meaning and knowledge, which are present in understanding the perspectives of others, which can prevent conflict and move humanity towards the establishment of social conditions where all cultures might flourish. What is needed, therefore, to successfully address the problems associated with pluralism is an approach towards cultural differences which meets all the requirements of co-existence.

This thesis will examine the problematic dimensions of social diversity and provide an approach which can prevent the types of conflicts which are believed to be inspired by a plurality of culturally divergent values. It will also address the challenges and requirements vital to the successful co-existence between diverse groups. This will be accomplished by explicating and analyzing the philosophies of Johann Gottfried Herder, the late Isaiah Berlin, and Charles Taylor on the subject of pluralism. Basic questions which will be explored include: Does a plurality of values necessarily entail incommensurability and, as a result, conflict? Are the differences between some communities so significant that no common position can be found? Or does common ground exist from which cooperation and conflict resolution can be initiated? In order to address these questions, ideas indispensable to Herder's philosophy on pluralism, such as his theories of language, culture, and nationalism, will be presented. Understanding Herder's usage of these ideas will be valuable in assessing Berlin and Taylor's interpretation of Herder, as well as their usage of his ideas in addressing the intrastate and interstate problems associated with social diversity.

The significance of Herder (in understanding and reconciling social diversity) for answering the questions of this thesis cannot be overstated since he is often, among his many achievements, identified as one of the first thinkers to stress the uniqueness and equal validity of cultures. Herder's philosophy is also an early example of the lifeworld turn in philosophy which claims that a human being, and the knowledge she uses throughout her life, is influenced by her situation in a symbolic or linguistically inspired world of social and cultural involvements.[1] The origin and effect of lifeworlds is a focal point for Herder, who

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[1] Herder has also been hailed as the father of the related notions of nationalism, historicism, and the *Volksgeist*; credited with being one of the leaders of the romantic revolt against classicism, rationalism, and faith in the omnipotence of scientific method; considered by many to be one of the

considers the cohesion which it can create amongst people, particularly at the national level, to be a cause of aggressive nationalism and interstate conflict. Herder's approach to pluralism, as expresssed in his theories on nationalism and avoiding national conflict, can also be applied to a variety of other social situations, such as intrastate co-existence.

Drawing on the ideas of Herder is Berlin, a man who is often credited with rescuing Herder from his relative neglect by other philosophers,[2] and his former student, Taylor. Both Berlin and Taylor draw heavily on Herder, as well as on one another, in developing their unique positions regarding the possibility of reconciling social diversity. They are also largely recognized as being the first philosophers (with perhaps the unfair exclusion of Fredrick M. Barnard[3]) who have attempted to bring Herder's philosophical importance to the attention of Anglophone philosophy.[4] Currently no academic work exists which assesses the accuracy of Berlin's and Taylor's interpretations of Herder and the relevance of these interpretations to their own philosophies on pluralism.

This thesis begins by explicating the elements within Herder's philosophy which are essential to his understanding of, and approach to pluralism. This is established in the first two chapters by focusing on ideas such as language, culture, and nationality. The subsequent chapters on Berlin and Taylor outline each of their interpretations of Herder and assess their accuracy from the standpoint of Herder's own writings. The effect which these interpretations have had on their

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most formidable adversaries of the French philosophes and their German disciples; and an important initiator in the *Sturm und Drang* movement. Isaiah Berlin, "Herder and the Enlightenment," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 359.

[2] Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 79.

[3] While Berlin and Taylor are largely credited with popularizing Herder's philosophy within Anglophone philosophy, Barnard has the most substantial collection of published writings on Herder. Despite this Barnard's importance is often considered secondary to that of Berlin and Taylor. Barnard's publications include *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (London, UK: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965); *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969); *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy*: *Rousseau and Herder* (London, UK: Clarendon Press, 1988); and *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

[4] Michael N. Forster, "Introduction," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xxxv.

own writings on pluralism is also explained and assessed. The final chapter concludes the thesis by commenting on key elements within the philosophies of Herder, Berlin, and Taylor which are useful in addressing pluralism.

The first chapter explains Herder's theory of language, as well as its relation to culture and the creation of pluralism. Herder's theory of language is marked by several insights considered to be of epochal importance since they depart sharply from many of the theories prevalent throughout his lifetime and anticipate many positions which have been pursued and clarified by subsequent thinkers. The most innovative of these insights includes the notion that expression constitutes the linguistic dimension; that language can only exist within a context of language practices, such as the *Volk* (the cultural community) which carries it; and that language not only allows human beings to have a greater awareness of things but also transformed feelings, thereby revealing new ways of responding to a variety of situations. According to Herder, this greater awareness allows for the creation of new ideas and goals, some of which could come to differ from one another. Pluralism, consequently, is both revealed and created by the awareness associated with language.

Herder's approach to pluralism is explained in the second chapter. This chapter explicates his approach by explaining its most integral elements, his theory of historical causation and *Humanität* (increased humanity). According to Herder, historical causation is determined by the choices made by individuals and *Völker* (cultural communities). These choices, as well as the interactions or social encounters which assist in bringing them out, are also guided by a transcendental force, what Herder labels *Kraft*. According to Herder, *Kraft* assists in guiding all social interactions, and thus the direction of history, towards states of increased *Humanität*.

In order to assist humanity's development towards *Humanität*, Herder proposes creating an environment in which the discussion of ideas is one of the primary social and political activities. He also recommends an education process which creates an openness towards new ideas, as well as an awareness of other cultures. Other aspects of Herder's approach towards pluralism include the

following notions: first, the need to establish a sense of social and historical embeddedness which can act as a source of cohesion between diverse groups; second, to ensure that this embeddedness also provides the optimal level of creativity possible within the various social and institutional contexts within which it is implemented, while also allowing for a communicative response (inspired by grass roots participation) to emerging problems; and third, the realization that appreciating social diversity calls for different methods of enquiry, such as methods that demand a cognitive sensitivity towards the uniquely individual and the culturally diverse.

The third chapter focuses on Berlin's interpretation of Herder, as well as his own views on pluralism. In both instances, the theme Berlin identifies as being of utmost importance is that a plurality of values, combined with a person's free will and desire to achieve her own "ends," makes the reconciliation between social values impossible. Berlin's supreme confidence in this claim influences both his reading of Herder, as well his approach to pluralism. As a result, Berlin ignores several key elements from the Herderian cosmology, such as the notion of *Humanität* and the importance of education, in favor of his own approach, which is opposed to any action associated with the betterment of humanity since such action often corresponds to a relaxing of the rules which provide people with a minimum amount of space free from coercion. For Berlin, sacrificing the latter for the former is a slippery slope which frequently leads towards tyranny.

Herder's value for Taylor and the influence which he has had on Taylor's philosophy of pluralism is explained in the fourth chapter. For Taylor, this involves the realization that Herder's linguistic innovations have assisted in bringing forth a different conception of human agency, what Taylor refers to as the dialogical self. The dialogical self involves the realization that a human being's understanding or knowledge of the world, which is brought forth through language, is dependent on a context of others. Without a context of others a human being could never have learned the languages which she uses to understand the world and without her continual interactions with others she cannot expect to advance these understandings.

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The notion of the dialogical self is useful for Taylor since he believes it creates a more situated understanding of human agency which prevents social diversity from ending up in conflict and acts against the causes of conflict: such as identity misrecognition and social fragmentation. Taylor also believes that many of the insights which Herder uses to approach diversity, which he takes and applies to the intrastate context of a multicultural society, are indispensable in effectively approaching pluralism. These insights rely largely on the importance of language and communication as a way of developing common moral positions.

The conclusion sums up the ideas used by Herder and expanded on by Taylor which are useful in approaching pluralism and creating the conditions by which diverse groups of people, both at the intrastate and interstate levels, can co-exist. For both of them, this involves the realization that the establishment of common moral positions can best be achieved, or worked towards, in a dialogical society where a dialogue process between all members of society takes primacy. For Herder and Taylor, a dialogical society allows for a communicative process to guide diverse groups, either to the development of common moral positions, or, at the very least, to an acceptance of a "best account" between their diverse perspectives. These "best accounts" are continually negotiated and recreated through a discussion process which strives to include the entire community. The innovations made in establishing common positions between diverse groups and nations can be used as a model, to be emulated by others, which can direct humanity towards greater conditions of social coexistence.

Chapter 1

Herder on Language, Culture and the Birth of Pluralism

As a thinker, Herder is situated in a unique spot in the course of Western history between the Enlightenment and the Romantic Rebellion against it. As a result, living in the 18th century provided Herder with the opportunity to address the prevailing attitudes of his time, many of which found their origins in 17th century thought, and to determine the direction his philosophy would take relative to these ideas. For Herder, this involved confrontation with two ideas: instrumental rationality and a theory of language whose basic features can be found in the philosophy of John Locke. Herder's rejection of these philosophical ideas shaped the direction of his life's work.

The form of instrumental rationality which Herder reacted against is generally recognized as rooted in the thought of René Descartes, considered by many to be the originator of modern philosophy. Descartes popularized a concept of reason based on a subject-object dichotomy in which a human subject is understood to be completely independent of all objects that she encounters. This emphasis on the subject-object dichotomy means that everything and everybody outside of the thinking subject, which is understood to be a detached individual, is viewed as an object external to it and from which it is disengaged. In other words, others and the world in which they live are viewed as things, objects or instruments to be used in the fulfillment of the subject's will or purposes. For such a detached and isolated subject reason is understood only instrumentally; that is, it is seen as a way of thinking which can most effectively realize the goals of the individual subject. Whether the goals themselves are rational tends to be of secondary concern.

The dualism associated with instrumental rationality thus encourages a way of reasoning by which human agents can analyze, categorize, and understand all

objects for the purpose of controlling and manipulating them according to their own interests. This approach achieved a burgeoning amount of success in the field of the natural sciences where variables could be isolated and controlled in order to conduct scientific experiments. The success of instrumental rationality in the sciences also resulted in it being applied to non-scientific fields such as the social sciences and humanities.

Instrumental rationality's one-sided emphasis on the subject-object paradigm, particularly when it is used to study non-scientific fields, produces a praxis which compartmentalizes, objectifies, and functionalizes human beings and nature. These tendencies can take primacy not only as a method of thinking or "reasoning," but also in the social areas which they are studying, such as those which involve the interactions of human beings.[1] One of the effects of this development is that it displaces other theories or conceptions of existence and creates a conception of human agency and the entire natural universe which is mechanical. That is, the entire world is seen to be a machine whose parts can be manipulated for the purpose of human gain. Taylor elaborates:

> Once society no longer has a sacred structure, once social arrangements and modes of action are no longer grounded in the order of things or the will of God, they are in a sense up for grabs. They can be redesigned with their consequences for the happiness and well being of individuals as our goal. The yardstick that henceforth applies is that of instrumental reason. Similarly, once the creatures that surround us lose the significance that accrued to their place in the chain of being, they are open to being treated as raw material or instruments for our projects.[2]

While acknowledging the improvements instrumental rationality allowed for when applied to scientific matters, particularly by advancing an understanding of the world and the capabilities of technology, Herder firmly opposed its usage in

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[1] This is a major point for Taylor who devotes a significant amount of attention to understanding the effects which instrumental rationality has had on human agency. See Charles Taylor, "Atomism," *Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 187-211; and Charles Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 61-79.

[2] Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1991), 5.

social or interpretative issues. As far as he was concerned, its tendency to objectify reduced human behavior and the entire natural universe to a set of common mathematical laws stripped of passion and spontaneity.[3] More significantly, however, he felt that internalizing instrumental reason as a way of understanding human beings disconnected people from the sources of meaning and knowledge present in others, thus creating a flattened conception of human existence. A final consequence of these opinions is that any philosophy which used an instrumental approach became inconsistent with human nature and detrimental to the development of humanitarian social conditions. Herder (using Descartes as a historical reference point) explains: "[s]ince *Descartes* made thinking into his entire doubting I [the signature referent of his dualism and instrumentalism], what systems have arisen, each more unnatural than the next."[4]

Human beings, Herder believed, are not "lifeless cogs of a great, wooden, thoughtless machine."[5] They are creatures whose continual development depends on their interaction and exposure to several larger social, cultural, and historical environments. Herder's aversion to the tendencies of instrumentalism corresponds with his central political idea: specifically, that a political community should not be based on an instrumental tendency which separates human beings from one another, but must presume the cooperation of all citizens within a pluralistic power scheme where power and control are not centralized but widely diffused.[6] The core of Herder's political ideas, as with the rest of his philosophy, stems largely from his theory of language.

Not only does Herder's theory of language influence the entire development of his philosophical system, but, according to Taylor, it also helps to combat the effects of cultural disengagement and myopic universalism promoted by social theories that use an instrumental approach. While the move towards a

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[3] Daniel Chirot, "Herder's Multicultural Theory of Nationalism and Its Consequences," *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Winter 1996), 6.
[4] Johann Gottfried Herder, "On Cognition and Sensation, the Two Main Forces of the Human Soul," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 181.
[5] Ibid., 301.
[6] F.M Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: From Enlightenment to Nationalism* (London, UK: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965), xix.

more situated understanding of thinking (such as being embedded in a "world" of involvements) is evident enough in the work of several later thinkers such as Wittgenstein and Heidegger,[7] Herder happens to be one of its pioneers.[8] Taylor explains, "[m]y (perhaps overdramatic) claim is that Herder is the hinge figure who originated a fundamentally different way of thinking about language and meaning."[9] While it may be true that Herder did not always draw out the conclusions implicit in the new perspectives which he adopted, his innovations have nonetheless played a significant role in the counter-thrust against instrumentalism.[10]

An important aspect of Herder's theory of language is the departure which it takes from existing theories of language which conceived language to be reflective of a prelinguistic mental or physical experience. According to this theory, certain "ideas," or "bits" of information precede the formation of language. These "ideas" or "bits" of information are eventually experienced by people who designate them with certain arbitrary symbols which become the early stages of language. One of Herder's primary objections to this theory is that its emphasis on designation of prelinguistic phenomena overlooks the type of awareness which is

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[7] Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger challenged the episteme associated with instrumental rationality by trying to recover an understanding of human agency as engaged, embedded in a culture, a form of life, and a "world" of involvements. This was accomplished by both of them through their revealing of the dialogical facets of human agency. For example, Wittgenstein indicated how a word like pain gets its meaning from the transaction between people rather than a contemplative experience and Heidegger indicated how human understanding was dependent on *das Man* (the crowd).

[8] Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997) 91.

[9] Ibid., 79.

[10] According to Hans Aarsleff, Etienne Condillac is an earlier proponent of many of the innovations with which Herder is often credited. The cause of Condillac's historical neglect Aarsleff attributes to the fact that Condillac's essay on language, "Essay on the Origin of Language (1741)," has been almost universally misinterpreted both in regard to its doctrines and its originality. Aarsleff also suggests that Condillac's essay has largely been forgotten since the debate which existed around Herder's theory of language resulted in it being ignored and caused Herder's theory to be read with very little knowledge—or none at all—of its true historical context. See Hans Aarsleff, "The Tradition of Condillac: The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berlin Academy before Herder," *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 146-210; and, or, compare Etienne Bonnot De Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, ed., trans. Hans Aarsleff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) with Johann Gottfried Herder, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 65-167.

required to use language. While sensory information or experiences are received by a human being and turned into signs, the mental state which she requires to comprehend and use these signs is left unclear.

As an attribute specific to human beings, language is seen by Herder as the central expression of a uniquely human trait, a reflective consciousness which he labels *Besonnenheit*.[11] In developing language, a human being gives shape to her inner conscious nature, formulating her ideas and preconceptions through reflection on her experiences of the external world.[12] Reflection, as a result, is the central condition necessary for a person to become a language user. It transforms her psychic life by allowing her to reflect on the signs used for language. Yet, at the same time, reflection can not take place without the sign or the most basic word which is dependent on sensation. Herder explains: "'a human being's *first* condition of taking-awareness was not able to become actual without the *word* of the soul,'" and hence "'... all conditions of awareness in him become linguistic; his chain of thoughts becomes a chain of words.'"[13] Herder elaborates:

> Let us take the whole thread of man's thoughts: since this thread is woven from *awareness* (*Besonnenheit*), since there is no condition in it which, taken as a whole, is not itself a *taking of awareness* (*Besinnung*)[14] or at least capable of being illuminated in *a taking of awareness*, since in it the sense of feeling does not *rule* but the whole center of its nature falls on *finer* senses, vision and hearing, and these constantly give it *language*, it follows that, taken as a whole, "*there is also no condition in the human soul which does not turn out to be susceptible of words or actually determined by words of the soul*."[15]

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[11] To translate Herder's concept of *Besonnenheit* in terms of "reflection" can sometimes be misleading. A more accurate understanding of the term *Besonnenheit* would be the entire economy of man's perceptive, cognitive, and volitional nature, as it is the essential condition of the working of the mind, in its totality, and not only thinking. Reflective consciousness is more than just another faculty. Fredrick Barnard, "Humanity and History: Causation and Continuity," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 115.

[12] Brian J. Whitton, "Herder's Critique of the Enlightenment: Cultural Community versus Cosmopolitan Rationalism," *History and Theory*, xxvii, no.2 (July 1988), 151.

[13] Herder, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," 131.

[14] Herder understood *Besinnung* to be the active operation of a discerning judgment that presupposed reflection. Barnard, *Herder on Nationality, Humanity*, *and History,* 115.

[15] Herder, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," 132.

While sensations (the words of the soul) are the starting point from which language acquisition takes place, they are by no means, for Herder, the sole method through which human understanding is advanced. For Herder, the process of language and concept acquisition transforms the nature of a human being's sensations. Consequently, Forster explains: "Herder's position is not that a person simply has the sensations which ground concepts first and then on that basis acquires the concepts afterward; but rather, the sensations which ground concepts inevitably undergo a transformation as the concepts are acquired, their final required nature being one which a human being can only have along with concepts."[16] Forster continues, Herder believes that human beings "were able to, and do, achieve concepts that are in a way non-empirical, namely by means of a sort of metaphorical extension from the empirical ones."[17]

According to Taylor, Herder's theory of language is marked by several important insights which signify the beginning of a shift in understanding within Western thought. The term which Taylor coins for this Herderian inspired turn, "expressivism," adequately describes the nature of the first and earliest of Herder's insights: that expression constitutes the linguistic dimension.[18] Supporting this claim, Forster notes that as early as his *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1767-8),[19] Herder had already begun arguing "that the original and fundamental roots of human language are expressive in nature rather than designative or descriptive, namely that the expressive 'language of sensation' which humans share with animals is incompatible with equating meanings with referents."[20] Reaffirming this claim, Herder explains: "[i]n education we learn thoughts through words, and the nurses who form our tongues are therefore our first teachers of

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[16] Michael Forster, "Herder's Philosophy of Language," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. LVI, no. 221 (September 2002), 352.

[17] Ibid., 352-353.

[18] In the spirit of historical accuracy it should be mentioned that Jean-Jacques Rousseau is an earlier innovator of the belief that the origins of human language are expressive in nature. Rousseau's essay on language, "On the Origin of Language" was written 22 years before Herder's primary essay on language, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," which was published in 1772.

[19] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Fragments on Recent German Literature," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33-65.

[20] Forster, "Herder's Philosophy of Language," 349.

Logic. … [I]n the whole language of common life the thought sticks to the expression."[21]

For Herder, words and rational concepts are coeval; the flow of language is ineluctably the flow of consciousness.[22] Human beings do not think in thoughts and ideas and then look for words in which to "clothe them," but in using language express the very ideas on which they are reflecting. The *telos* of language is the proper mode of expression in a human life by which people express facts and meaning through their expressions. Every mode of being is then a manifestation of meaning, with language being the articulation of modes of experiencing the universe; if no articulation, then no experience.[23] Alexander Gilles explains:

> Fundamental to all his [Herder's] efforts is the observation of humanity through its self-expression in language and literature. Language is in his eyes "a dictionary of the soul," a mirror of culture. It derived from man's special place in the cosmos and reflected his relationship to it. As a vehicle of thought language transmitted all knowledge and experience. Speech and intellect developed hand in hand. Language is both the offspring and the guide to thought. Man is, therefore, not only the creator of language but its creature as well. He reveals himself in it, and it determines his self-revelation. It expresses all the workings of his soul, and his soul is an indivisible unity of manifold powers and impulses. Language, thus, is the key to the whole understanding of man and his position within the universe.[24]

The acknowledgment that a word only has meaning within a lexicon and the context of language practices, which are ultimately embedded in a form of life, is the second insight Taylor attributes to Herder's theory of language.[25] According to Taylor, this holism of meaning is not only one of the most important and universally recognized consequences of Herder's philosophy, but it also bears a remarkable similarity to the type of thesis for which in our day Wittgenstein is

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[21] Herder, "Fragments on Recent German Literature," 48.
[22] Thomas H. Jackson, "Herder, Pound, and the Concept of Expression," *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4 (December 1983), 385.
[23] Ibid., 386.
[24] Alexander Gilles, *Herder* (London, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1945), 37.
[25] Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," 93.

frequently celebrated.[26] The most basic intuition of this thesis involves the notion

that individual words can only have meaning within the context of an already

articulated language.[27] A word only makes sense in what Wilhelm von Humboldt

(who followed and developed Herder's thoughts on language) called "the web of

language."[28]

Together, a reflective stance of understanding and the holism of meaning

create three additional transformations which Taylor derives from Herder's theory

of language. These include the inexhaustibility of language, a new dimension of

understanding, and the dependence of language on the speech community, or the

Volk (cultural community) which carries it.[29] Focusing on the first, language is

seen to be always more than what human beings can encompass. Taylor explains:

"[b]ecause the words we use can only have sense through their place in the whole

web, we can never, in principle, have a clear oversight of the implications of what

we are saying at any moment. Our language is always more than we can

encompass; it is in a sense inexhaustible."[30] Taylor elaborates:

> [l]anguage as a pattern of activity which human beings use to
> express/realize a certain way of being in the world, that which defines the
> linguistic dimension … can be deployed only against a background which
> we can never fully dominate. It is also a background we are never fully
> dominated by, since we are constantly reshaping it. Reshaping it without
> dominating it, or being able to oversee it, means that we never fully know
> what we are doing to it. In relation to language, we are both makers and
> made.[31]

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[26] Perhaps the most powerful application of this idea can be found in the later work of Wittgenstein
with his refutation of Augustine's designative theory of meaning. Wittgenstein's refutation
constantly refers to the background understanding human beings need to draw on to speak and
understand. For instance, words only have meaning within the "language" games human beings
play, which in turn can only find their context within a whole form of life.

[27] Ibid., 94.

[28] Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," 231.

[29] Herder broadly identified the *Volk* with the people who by virtue of their own industry have a
certain sense of independence in the knowledge of standing squarely in a world of their own, in and
through which they earn their livelihood. F.M Barnard, "The Hebraic Roots of Herder's
Nationalism," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-
Queen's University Press, 2003), 30.

[30] Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," 231.

[31] Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," 97.

The positions present within Herder's account of language also help to tilt the axis of human understanding. If language serves to express a new kind of awareness, then it may not only make possible a new awareness of things, an ability to describe them; it may also open new ways of responding to things, of feeling. If in expressing thoughts about things a human being can come to have new thoughts, then it also follows that in expressing her feelings she can come to have transformed feelings.[32] Hence, the revolutionary idea of expressivism involves the notion that the development of new modes of expression enables human beings to have new feelings, more powerful or more refined, and certainly more self-aware.[33]

The final transformation involved in Herder's theory of language is that language is the most natural and hence the most indispensable basis of a sociopolitical association—language creates a *Volk*.[34] The meanings which key words first have for one person are the same meanings they have for her larger community, that is, for her and her conversation partners together. Herder explains: "each nation speaks in accordance with its thoughts and thinks in accordance with its speech."[35] While language is the tool responsible for human understanding, its fashioning and growth depends principally on dialogue or, better, on the life of the speech community.

For Herder, it is clear that a human being cannot be a self on her own but only in relation to several interlocutors, in one way to those who become crucial in her continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding and in another way where her deliberations with conversation partners become essential to her own actions involving self-determination. A human being can only exist within several "webs of interlocution" which are brought forth through her continual interactions with other human beings. Elaborating on interrelatedness within all of human existence, Taylor explains its application within Herder's conception of humanity:

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[32] Ibid., 97.
[33] Taylor, "Language and Human Nature," 233-234.
[34] Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, 30.
[35] Herder, "Fragments on Recent German Literature," 50.

It is the idea of humanity as something realized, not in each individual human being but rather in communion between all humans. The essence of humanity is not something that even in principle a single person could recognize in his or her life and this is because of the finitude and limitation of this life. … The fullness of humanity comes not from the adding of differences but from the exchange and communion between them. Human beings achieve fullness not separately but together. The image Herder used was of a chorus or, we might call, an orchestra. The ultimate richness comes when all the different voices or instruments come together. It is something they create in the space between them.[36]

According to Herder, all of culture, including art, poetry, and philosophy, are an expression of the group life.[37] Together these conditions come together to form the whole from which a *Volk* then derives its sensible form of happiness. The sharing of a *Volk* is one of the most common bonds between all human beings, it is the means though which their worldview and happiness is created. Herder, in what is perhaps his most famously quoted maxim, comments on this connection: "[e]ach nation has its *center* of happiness *in itself*, like every sphere has its center of gravity!"[38]

For Herder, someone who lives her life entirely within the closed horizons of a culture will experience her norms, practices, and beliefs to be true-in-themselves (thus making it possible for her to experience a sensible happiness). Yet when viewed from the external perspective occupied by another *Volk* or Herder himself, Damon Linker explains, "a given culture's norms, practices, and beliefs can appear to be merely relatively true or true-only-for-them; they are an expression of its overall form-of-life at a particular age of its development in history and not a reflection of the world as it is in itself."[39] Herder, mindful of the apparent relativism which this realization implies, especially in the realm of social values, observes that "moral value is a phantom that appears to each person in

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[36] Charles Taylor, "A Tension in Modern Democracy," *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political*, ed. Aryeh Botwinick and William E. Connolly (New Jersey, Princeton: University Press, 2001), 90.

[37] Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 251.

[38] Herder, "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of History," 297.

[39] Damon Linker, "The Reluctant Pluralism of J.G. Herder," *The Review of Politics*, vol. 62, no. 2 (Spring 2002), 275.

another way, in another shape: a true Proteus [shape shifter] who by means of a magic mirror ever changes, and never shows himself as the same."[40]

A noticeable outcome of Herder's theory of language is the creation of a plurality of values which each *Volk* can use to determine and direct the course of its life. While language is the medium through which a human being becomes conscious of her inner self, it is also, it appears, the key to understanding her external relationships. It unites her with, but also differentiates her from, others. Herder, well aware of this type of pluralism, comments on its problematic nature: "(t)he diversity of language, ethics, inclinations, and ways of life was destined to become a bar against the presumptive *linking together* of the peoples."[41] Elsewhere, he elaborates:

> The same linking for a family which, turned *inward on itself*, gave strength to the *harmony of a single* tribe, turned *outward from itself*, against another race, produces strength of *dissension*, *familial hatred*! In the former case it drew many all the more firmly together into a single whole; in the latter case it makes two parties immediately into enemies. … Hence the slogan soon became natural: *Whoever is not with and of us is beneath us*! The foreigner is *worse* than us, is a *barbarian*. In this sense 'barbarian' was the watchword of contempt: a foreigner and simultaneously a more ignoble person who is not our equal in wisdom or bravery, or whatever the age's point of honor might be. … And there the second synonym was ready: *Whoever is not with me is against me*. [42]

While recognizing the connection between the awareness associated with language, social diversity and conflict, Herder did not consider this to be a factor that justified hopelessness. The obvious conflict involved with a plurality of values is just an effect, capable of being overcome, which is associated with living in the linguistic dimension. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in the next chapter by describing Herder's approach to pluralism and clarifying the ideas integral to it: his theory of historical causation and *Humanität*.

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[40] Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Change of Taste," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 247.
[41] Herder, "Letters for the Advancement of Humanity," 385.
[42] Herder, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," 152.

Chapter 2

The Herderian Resolution to Pluralism:
Historical Causation and *Humanität*

Herder's ideas on history and causation are inseparably joined with his doctrine of *Humanität*.[1] Far from being a fixed norm *Humanität*, in Herder's hands, Barnard explains, is "a principle of dynamic change, a kind of protean manifestation of humanity's striving throughout the ages. At any given time or place *Humanität* would reflect the particular mode in which a person aspired to achieve that attitude in social life which befitted their nature as a human being."[2] It is not a readily identifiable concept or social state, but rather the greatest amount of humanity attainable, either by an individual or a *Volk*, at any particular moment in history. Yet in order to properly understand *Humanität* and the forces which cause it to be operative throughout history requires a specific type of understanding, the very type which is vital to addressing the conflicts associated with pluralism and which Herder elucidated within his theory of historical causation.

Herder's most ambitious work, *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of the Mankind*,[3] appeared in four parts, in 1784, 1785, 1787 and 1791. A fifth part, intended to connect the historical narrative of the Renaissance to the 18th Century

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[1] Herder's notion of *Humanität* is a notoriously vague term, connoting harmonious development of all human beings towards universally valid goals: reason, freedom, toleration, mutual love and respect between individuals and societies, as well as physical and spiritual health, finer perceptions, dominion over the earth and the harmonious realization of all that God has implanted in his noblest work and made in his own image. Isaiah Berlin, "Herder and the Enlightenment," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 411-412.

[2] F.M Barnard, "Herder's Treatment of Causation and Continuity in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. xxiv, no. 2 (April – June 1963), 197.

[3] See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (London: Luke Hansard, Great Turnstile, Lincoln's-Inn Fields, 1800). A facsimile of the Churchill edition was printed by Bergman Publishers; see Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1967).

was, like most of Herder's longer projects, never completed.[4] This work was translated into English for the first and last time in 1800. With the exception of a limited facsimile in 1966 of the first English edition, it has not been republished in its entirety; in fact, the only edition which is widely accessible, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*,[5] has been one which reproduces only nine out of Herder's original twenty parts of the book.[6] As a result, anyone who could not read the German text had to depend on quotations and references found in the works of those who could, making for a very incomplete and distorted picture of Herder and his political thought.[7]

A shorter sample of Herder's writings on history, as well as some of his other main political themes, can be found in his earlier polemically entitled essay *This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* (1774).[8] Herder himself called this work a "pamphlet," but at the same time declared with pride that it contained *his* philosophy of history.[9] One of Herder's fundamental achievements within this work lies in his development of the thesis that, as Forster explains, "even within a single culture and period, human minds are deeply individual and deeply different from each other, so that there are radical mental differences between historical periods and that people's concepts, beliefs, and other propositional attitudes, perceptual and affective sensations, etc., differ in major ways from one period to another."[10]

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[4] Robert T. Clark, *Herder*: *His Life and Thought* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), 308.

[5] See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[6] Ioannis D. Evrigenis and Daniel Pellerin "Introduction," *Johann Gottfried Herder: Another Philosophy of History and Selected Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), xxiii.

[7] As Evrigenis and Pellerin point out, this surprisingly is even the case of Isaiah Berlin, who, in his famous essay, "Herder and the Enlightenment," refers to the Herder's original text while also quoting from Barnard's translation (Barnard, 1969). These references were later eliminated from subsequent editions of the essay. Ibid, xxiii.

[8] See Johann Gottfried Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 272-358.

[9] Evrigenis and Pellerin, xxiv.

[10] Michael Forster, "Introduction," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xxv.

Despite proclaiming the diversity of all peoples, Herder also insists on the contrary position: claiming that a relationship of relatedness still exists between all people, throughout all historical periods. As a result, a large portion of *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* is devoted to addressing the problem of how human beings can remain different while also relating to one another. This is done in part through Herder's theory of historical causation. The key feature of this theory involves the conviction that the teleological determinants of history are twofold: first, history is determined by the particular ends aimed at by individuals and entire *Völker*, implying that human choices and actions are important determinants within historical causation; and, second, that history is guided by an internal cause which he labels *Kraft* (a type of quasi-transcendent energy which is a manifestation of God), suggesting that the unfolding of history follows a divine plan.[11] These ideas will be referred to as the particular and universal elements of historical causation.[12]

As might be expected, both of Herder's historical causes have resulted in a somewhat muddled picture of Herder's notion of historical progress since they seem to be at odds with one another (it seems history can appear to be either divinely determined or the product of human choice but not both). Yet, despite their apparent inconsistency, one of Herder's many goals within *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* involved synthesizing these two elements.[13] Herder's synthesis involved developing a theory of metaphysics, a doctrine of vitalist pantheism, which later became influential in the thought of such Romantic

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[11] What might appear to a problem involving how human choices can remain the product of free will while also simultaneously being the working out of a divine plan is never worked out by Herder since, apparently, he sees no flaw in combining the two facets of causation. Therefore, what Herder's theory of causation seems to offer is a type of "coexistence" or synergism between historical causes.

[12] Both of these historical causes appear to satisfy what might be considered existential requirements, fundamental to the healthy operation of all human beings: that a human being's life has some type of transcendental meaning or purpose which extends beyond the duration of her life and that the choices which she makes still matter, thus possessing the power to direct her life.

[13] Herder's synthesis has created a slew of problems relating to *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity's* intended purpose. For example, Herder's apparent oscillation between the universal and particular explanations of historical causation have caused many scholars to incorrectly assume that *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* is the presentation of two philosophies of history, one of which is favored by Herder, rather than the synthesis which it in fact was.

thinkers as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**,** Friedrich Schelling and Georg Wilhelm Hegel.[14]

Fully understanding the synthesis in Herder's historical thesis has been complicated by the fact that he, as part of the dialogical approach which he employed within *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity*,[15] continually situated one theoretical position (such as the particular and universal elements in historical causation) against the other. Taking over an argumentative technique from his former teacher, the precritical Immanuel Kant, Herder felt that the best way for a philosopher to pursue the truth is by setting contrary views on a subject into opposition with one another and advancing towards the truth through their mutual testing and modification.[16] Herder also applied this idea on the socio-historical plane believing, as Forster explains, that "the way for humankind as a whole to attain the elusive goal of truth is through an ongoing contest between opposing positions, in the course of which the best ones will eventually win out."[17]

Though eschewing any belief in a completely linear sense of historical progress, Herder nonetheless viewed the passing of time as possessing elements which indicated that it was part of a purposive historical development. At its most basic level, Herder suggested that the passage of time was conducive to a type of "pressure of ideas" which have (or acquire) throughout the course of history a life of their own, carrying with them a distinctly teleological thrust which is able to

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[14] For further reading on Herder's pantheism and its relation to Goethe, Schelling and Hegel see Frederick H. Burkhardt, "Introduction," *God, Some Conversations: Johann Gottfried Herder*, trans. Frederick H. Burkhardt (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1940), 3-64.

[15] This technique was also used by Herder in the essay *How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People* (1765). See Johann Gottfried Herder, "How Philosophy Can Become More Universal and Useful for the Benefit of the People," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3-29.

[16] Herder also employed several methodological features which may have hampered the clear delivery of his message. For instance, Herder's writing style often lacks any grammatical coherence since he was opposed to any linguistic or lexical straight jacketing of language. In his view, such straight jacketing was unfavorable not only to linguistic creativity and inventiveness but also (and much worse) to thought, since thinking was dependent on and confined in its scope by language so that any linguistic restriction in his mind was a constraint on human development.

[17] Forster, "Introduction," x-xi.

convert and influence the direction of history.[18] In order to better understand such a notion of historical causation it is useful to understand the process as possessing a horizontal and vertical dimension. Within such an understanding, interaction in the horizontal sense would involve all forms of social activity whereby human beings, either directly or indirectly, interacted with one another throughout various societal relationships to create the conditions which were most representative of their time. The degree to which these conditions were then seen as being purposive, directing individuals and groups to their sequential historical ends, related to history's vertical dimension.

All the conditions which human beings faced throughout their lives, Herder classified under his concept of *Klima*. Herder, Barnard explains, "identifies *Klima* (somewhat sweepingly) with the total environment into which people are born, and includes in it elements of the most diverse nature: institutions of learning, constitutions, standards of living, dress, posture, amusements, and the arts, as well as natural products and culinary preferences; he even calls for a 'climatology' of thoughts and feelings."[19] More perplexingly, at times *Klima* is held to be a mere "medium" and, as such, incapable of initiating activity on its own; at other times, though, it is presented as the "global sphere of interaction" that reflects the effect of the interplay between human forces and their contextual molding.[20] Considering its diverse nature, *Klima* could perhaps best be understood as a type of dynamic matrix in which a human being interacted with the entire spectrum of environmental and social factors present within her specific socio-historic context with the result being that the choices which she made based on these encounters became the "ends" which directed her life.[21]

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[18] F.M Barnard, "Historical and Political Consciousness: Herder and Rousseau," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 162.

[19] F.M Barnard, "Humanity and History: Causation and Continuity," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 123-124.

[20] Ibid., 124.

[21] For Herder, the idea that every human being had the power to help direct the course of history is a recurrent and vital theme throughout his works. For example, Herder expresses this idea with his comments on Martin Luther where he insists that the choices of one human being and not those of kings, emperors or churches helped to inspire the Protestant Reformation; as well as his echoing of the famous saying attributed to Archimedes—in *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity*, *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* and elsewhere: "Give me a point outside the world I

The "ends" adopted by a human being came about in two different ways. First, in the most ideal sense, which Herder hoped would act as an ideal for all societies, these "ends" would be the byproduct of the citizens' combined social activities. This would be brought forth by a pluralistic scheme of power which included every individual, on some level, as an active part of the decision-making process. The second possibility, which is the one which he claimed has been most active throughout history, involves the "ends' adopted by a society being chosen by a few people. These people then used techniques such as fear and power to ensure that their "ends" remained accepted social dogma. In the case of the latter, these "ends"—eg., the rules of kings, empires or specific religions—were usually systemic social practices, incorporated into the education and socialization practices which proliferated throughout society.

According to Herder, a human being's grounding as an individual is impossible without an act of authority, since acts of authority are the first and only means through which a human being gained her first elements of knowledge relating to the world. This idea works at variety of levels, the most basic being that a child's disposition is usually bestowed upon her at an early age by her parents and then reinforced throughout her life by the influence of her surrounding social environment. For Herder, the ethos of any civilization is perpetuated in the values that human beings have internalized and communicated back to one another. Using the example of a mother, Herder explains how a person's "ends" are shaped by the first authority which she encounters, her parents:

> She put dispositions of *manifoldness* into the heart, and then *a part* of the manifoldness in a circle about us, available to us; then she *reined in* the human *view* so that after a small period of habituation this circle became *horizon* for him. Not *to look beyond it*, hardly to *suspect* beyond it![22]

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will move the world." See Johann Gottfried Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 314, 315; and Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 216.

[22] Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," 297.

For Herder, the grounding of a human being on a form of authority points to what he saw to be a fundamental error in the philosophies of his time: namely, that reason could be innate to a human being. Opposed to such an idea, he held that the inclinations of a human being (such as being able to reason) are taught, increasing only if she chose to or is forced to exercise and expand her faculties. Herder also felt that mental growth and the worldviews which people adopted almost always related back to qualities such as authority. A human being's first encounter with authority, he maintained, moved her away from her natural disposition—being innocent at birth, susceptible to ideas and eager to please those around her—to become the recipients of the worldview which characterized her time.[23] Herder elaborates:

> Is there not in every human life an age in which we learn nothing through dry and cold reason, but through *inclination*, *formation*, in obedience to authority, everything? In which we have no ear, no sense, no soul for pondering and rationalizing about the good, true, and beautiful, but have everything for the so-called *prejudice* and *impressions of upbringing*?[24]

The "pressure of ideas," along with *Klima*, education, and authority, all occupy a central spot within Herder's description of historical causation. Not only are they the products of human choice, thereby relating to history's particular cause, but they also reveal an important element to his historical thesis: that the striving undertaken by human beings is of necessity purposive, and hence possesses a directional force which is capable of influencing the course of history. In addition to this, Herder also claimed that history's directional process involves a type of moral unfolding, the movement of all nations and, thus, all people towards increased states of *Humanität*. According to Herder, history's movement towards *Humanität* is a manifestation of his universal cause of history; it is the movement of *Kraft*.

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[23] A human being's original nature or disposition is mentioned by Herder at the outset of *Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity* where he alludes to the impressionable nature of both children as well as the Orient, the very group with which he chooses to start off his theory of history. See Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," 272-280
[24] Ibid., 276.

Positing a universal cause to history presented Herder with two problems: the first relates to how he could achieve a synthesis between his two historical causes (especially since both seemed to elude reconciliation) and the second involves the difficulties of actually proving the existence of a universal cause. In the case of the second problem, part of the trouble lies in the fact that it is possible for Herder's particular cause, but not his universal one, to claim acceptance as an observational hypothesis. For example, while the claim that history is determined by the self-chosen "ends" of individuals and *Völker* may be considered provable by examining the interactions between people and civilizations which have yielded new historical developments, the same examination cannot verify history's moral unfolding.

In order to better understand why Herder felt the need to posit a metaphysical cause the standard view of causation should be briefly explained. Within the ordinary empirical view of causation it is presupposed that an event, a cause, which is separate from another event, the effect, and earlier than the effect in point of time, brings about or determines the latter. Therefore, when someone claims that "A causes B" it means not only that B follows A, but also that B results from A, in that A is the sufficient condition for the occurrence of B.[25] What this evidently points to is some type of causal connection involving the two events in question, the most obvious type being an external variable or additional event.

Herder was aware that an external cause (one which examined the interactions between people and *Völker*) could not be used to explain history's moral unfolding. As a result, his only choice became the acceptance of an internal cause, what he labeled *Kraft*. As an encompassing cause for all of existence, *Kraft* is held to be a single psycho-physical force which negates the distinction between mind and matter and the differences between material and immaterial "substances." It is the ultimate fusion of all natural and creative phenomena, linking together the human mind (and understanding) with historical causation. In *Kraft*, Barnard explains, "[Herder] saw both a *first cause* and the subsequent energizing power of 'becoming,' the core of all existence. And since he thought of

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[25] Ibid., 51.

this power not merely as an external force acting upon the universe but as an internal one acting through the universe, the universe itself is a manifestation of *Kraft*, the divine source of people's active being in the world."[26] For Herder, *Kraft* is both the operation throughout history of God's divine plan and the force which motivates human beings towards greater "ends." It is his way of synthesizing the particular and universal causes of historical causation.

Despite not being empirically verifiable, Herder felt that the existence of *Kraft* is a fact, the principles of which would likely be discovered some time in the future. As it happens, Herder actually took the idea of *Kraft* from the precritical Kant and Isaac Newton, who had also explicitly affirmed the mysterious nature, incomprehensible to reason, of forces such as gravity. The troublesome aspect in Herder's concept of those communicating fluids lay in the fact that for him those forces displayed an essentially active character, creating new forms of life, in a sense whose specific nature, however, he could not still define.[27] Like gravity, he felt that *Kraft* could be deduced from phenomena, with only its ultimate cause lying beyond the reach of observation. For Herder, *Kraft* was then objective in the sense that it presented itself in the world of external forms, while at the same time (like gravity, electricity and other material-immaterial substances) placing itself beyond the senses.[28] Herder comments on *Kraft*:

> Certainly I know that I think, yet know not my thinking faculty; as certainly do I feel and feel that I live, though I know not what the vital principle [*Kraft*] is. This principle is innate, organical, and genetic: it is the basis of my natural powers, the internal genius of my being.[29]

To a large degree, *Kraft* eluded proper understanding because the study of history largely focused on explaining causation exclusively through "external causes," such as the proceedings of kings or great men. Such an orientation,

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[26] Barnard, "Humanity and History: Causation and Continuity," 113.
[27] Elias Palti, "The 'Metaphor of Life': Herder's Philosophy of History and Uneven Developments in Late Eighteenth-Century Natural Sciences," *History and Theory*, vol. 38 no. 3 (October 1999) 334.
[28] Ibid., 335.
[29] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Book VII," *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968), 179.

Herder maintained, prevented human beings from recognizing the true causes behind historical causation, thereby serving as barrier which prohibited human beings from cultivating the many insights which would be evident once history's moral trajectory was properly understood. With history being understood solely as a process which is determined by the actions of great men, a fundamental characteristic of humanity remained continually obscured: that *all* human beings try to attract and cultivate as much happiness as their socio-historic situations will permit them. This continual striving towards happiness, as well as the virtues which were associated with such a process, Herder tried to explain with his concept of *Humanität*.

For Herder, *Humanität* is something which human beings alone are capable of, learning and developing it within themselves, throughout their lives. The supreme aim of all human activities was thus to discover and define *Humanität* and to point towards its achievement.[30] Moreover, since history is the process wherein human beings encounter the idiosyncrasies specific to their socio-historic context, trying to cultivate the degree of *Humanität* which is possible within those conditions, the proper study of history, for Herder, also became one of the primary aims of philosophy and social education.[31] Briefly described, this "proper" study involved the capability of viewing each culture as being its own "whole" which responded to its given *Klima* in way that is influenced in part by its specific socio-historic context, as well as its distinctive *Volk* culture. The proper study of history required an "inner study" of all historical events and social situations.

According to Herder, this new orientation in philosophy and education required a certain capacity fundamental to properly understanding all social situations, both historical and present. Herder believed that if a human being is to be properly understood, in all her activities and productions, then she must be understood in her complete entirety. For this a capacity is required which he was the first to call *Einfühlung*. The process of *Einfühlung* entails "entering" or "feeling your way into" the subject before you. It is a total outlook which includes

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[30] Alexander Gilles, *Herder* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1945), 80.
[31] Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," 342.

the projection of oneself into a variety of subjects including the individual character of a person or an artistic movement, a literature, a social organization or institution, a people or nation and culture or a period of history.[32]

As might be expected, *Einfühlung* relates directly to the discovery and cultivation of *Humanität*. Since *Humanität* is not a fixed concept that can be identified in any given context, a practical type of understanding or sensitivity involving what it is to be human in a variety of diverse situations is required. One aspect of what this sensitivity involves—negatively expressed—is an enlarged imaginative grasp of the pervasively painful and humiliating.[33] What this basically entails is viewing the history of other human beings and *Völker* in such a way that you can truly "understand" not only their goals, triumphs and joys but also their fears, failures and pains. When applied either to an educational endeavor, such as the study of history, or an everyday occurrence, *Einfühlung*, Herder felt, could then help a human being to deepen her *Besonnenheit* (reflection), her potential to enhance that sensitivity which Heidegger has called *Mitsein*, the perception of being in a world shared with others.[34] Herder explains:

> Every nation must gradually come to feel it as unpleasant when another nation gets disparaged and abused; there must gradually awaken a *common feeling* so that every nation feels itself into the position of every other one. People will hate the impudent transgressor of foreign rights, the destroyer of foreign welfare, the brazen abuser of foreign ethics and opinions, the boastful imposer of his own advantages on peoples who do not want them.[35]

For Herder, *Einfühlung* is made possible by the capabilities involved with the capacity for language. According to Herder, a human being is able to acquire concepts by means of a sort of metaphorical extension from empirical ones. The

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[32] Roger Hausheer, "Three Major Originators of the Concept of Verstehen," *Verstehen and Humane Understanding*, ed. Anthony O'Hear Royal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53.

[33] F.M Barnard, "Nationality and Humanity: Heine and Herder," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 77.

[34] F.M Barnard, "The Dynamics of Culture and 'Globalization,'" *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 130.

[35] Johann Gottfried Herder, "Letters for the Advancement of Humanity," *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 406-407.

birth of language in a human being (one of her first applications of self-reflection and creativity) is a process where she creates meaning from experienced sensations by way of metaphorical extension.[36] As a result, Herder holds that since all humans share certain physiological characteristics with one another, as well as certain spheres of understanding which are connected by a wealth of effective historical connections and consequences, that reflective thought could be used to draw on such commonalities to "feel" or better understand the perspective of others. This, he held, could then open the way for a deepening of sympathies involving others and in this manner allow for the recognition of certain destructive patterns of thought and action which typically precede situations which hinder the development of *Humanität*.

Einfühlung is also Herder's most direct approach of overcoming the belief that one's own perspective or *Volk* is the best and most correct. While this attitude can take many forms and can be caused by a number of variables, Herder felt that it could usually be traced back to an improper education, which focused on self-centered tendencies and not being-with-others. For Herder, these "self-centered" tendencies typically included attributes such as "ignorance or pride (two dear sisters who never leave each other's side)," which, in turn, cause human beings to reject new "manners of thought and comprehension."[37] In actual fact, it would be no stretch to claim that the degree to which these two sisters are present either in an individual or a *Volk* typically correlate negatively with the degree of *Humanität* which is present within those same circumstances. Where these attitudes flourished *Humanität* typically could not. Herder explains:

> Where there is evil the cause of evil is the *corrupted character* of our species, not its nature and character. Sloth, impudence, pride, error, callousness, causelessness, prejudices, bad education, bad habit—through and through evils that are avoidable or curable if new life, diligence for

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[36] For Herder's account of how sensation and cognition are linked together to produce understanding see Johann Gottfried Herder, "On Cognition and Sensation, the Two Main Forces of the Human Soul (preface)," *Herder Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167-178; and Johann Gottfried Herder, "On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul," *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178-187.

[37] Herder, "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity," 248.

good, reason, modesty, justice, truth, a better education, better habits from youth on, arrive individually and universally; ... it is the *purpose* of our species, the goal of our destiny, to free ourselves of this *corrupted character*.[38]

An additional characteristic which could hinder the development of *Humanität* is the viewing and judging of others from a set of standards which is thought to be universally true for all humans. What Herder finds extremely revolting with this approach is that it is typically accompanied by a form of myopic universalism which is inclined to judge every variant from itself as being deviant, thereby denying the openness which is necessary for progress (for example, the type which could be gained through the consideration of alternative ideas or ways of being). Such an approach Herder not only saw throughout his lifetime evident in those social theories which, using instrumental rationality, tried to reduce human behavior to a set of common mathematical laws, but also throughout history, whose chronicle gave evidence of countless situations where similar attitudes hampered the development of *Humanität*.

Since Herder held that the conflicts associated with a plurality of values are typically the byproduct of a poor education, his approach towards pluralism focused on addressing that problem. Herder explains: "[i]n the case of radical evil, attack the roots; they bear the tree with its top and twigs."[39] Broadly categorized, the Herderian approach to pluralism depends on the following notions: first, the need to establish a sense of social and historical embeddedness which can act as a source of internal cohesion between diverse groups; second, ensuring that this same sense of embeddedness will allow for the optimal level of creativity possible within the given circumstances, thus allowing for a communicative-based response to emerging problems; and lastly, the realization that coming to grips with moral diversity may not only call for different methods of enquiry, such as methods that demand a cognitive sensitivity towards the uniquely individual and culturally diverse, but also the need for an educational process which advocates virtues such as open-mindedness, tolerance and self-restraint.

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[38] Herder, "Letters for the Advancement of Humanity," 421.
[39] Ibid., 422.

Herder's national-political thinking rests on his belief that human beings should feel as if they are *embedded* within a larger whole which forms a matrix (in the most literal sense of the term) that surrounds their existence and development.[40] This whole is thought of not in terms of a homogeneous *substance* but rather as an *ensemble* made up of a great variety of smaller wholes which are self-regulating units in their own right. What he envisioned, therefore, is not centralized collectivism, in which constituent parts are forged into unity by a dominant centre of power, but a kind of partnership between distinct institutions and associations within a political structure free from any major center of pressure.[41] Involvement in this political association involves participation within a diffuse framework constituted by diverse bases of activity and power which are energized by the group and not the individual as the core representative unit of political association.

Within Herder's group-pluralism, the most active political participants and effective sources of multiple powers are the representatives of the diverse groups and institutions which sustain the political culture in a narrow sense.[42] These representatives are to be selected by their peers as the best persons for certain projects, with their sphere of competence and range of power being strictly limited, starting and ending with the tasks which had been allotted to them.[43] In this way Herder's conception of an institutional structure for a political community tries to avoid the creation of social divisions, or a sense of alienation, which might occur by way of a highly centralized or preferential political apparatus, by focusing instead on a pluralistic scheme of power which strives to be both institutionally diffuse and overtly inclusive.

Required in the maintenance of Herder's pluralistic system is a sense of embeddedness whose origins can be traced to his linguistic theory. The basic

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[40] F.M Barnard, "The Hebraic Roots of Herder's Nationalism," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 27.

[41] Ibid., 27.

[42] According to Barnard, Herder's pluralism is unique in that it sought to combine an essentially communitarian ethic with the liberal idea of individual rights and freedoms. This, interestingly, makes Herder an early proponent of the type of group pluralism which many contemporary thinkers, such as Will Kymlicka, have tried to develop. See Barnard, "The Hebraic Roots of Herder's Nationalism," 37.

[43] Barnard, "The Dynamics of Culture and 'Globalization,'" 157.

nature of Herderian embeddedness can be recognized as falling on a continuum which moves from the social level, inspired by grassroots participation, through the political, and into the historical (or transcendental). In the social realm, a human being comes to realize her importance within the larger collective whole through various forms of communicative interaction. In a typically liberal fashion, Herder believes that open public discussion and freedom of speech allows for contested ideas to compete with one another in order to create better ones. Boundless, but totally inclusive, social activity, free of any coercive power, then helps people to coexist by creating social cohesion through the realization that the entire speech community participates in creating the policies which come to be the collective "ends" of the community.[44]

The historical sense of embeddedness follows from the policies which are adopted by a *Volk*. Just as the "ends" adopted by a *Volk* are the byproducts of an elaborate process of interaction and discussion, so too are those which direct the course of nations and history. Together, all social interactions, starting with those between individuals and moving to the larger ones between nations, are part of the process whereby the pressure of ideas determines the course of history. As a result, the addition of *Kraft* into Herder's theory of historical causation is his way of ensuring that the social differences present in individuals and cultures have a divine purpose: specifically, they are the a cultural source which supplies the ideas, knowledge, and experiences needed to create greater conditions of *Humanität*. Herder explains: "[t]he original form, the *prototype of humanity* hence lies not in a single nation of a single region of the earth; it is the abstracted concept from all exemplars of human nature in both hemispheres."[45]

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[44] The exact forum in which the discussion of ideas could take place seems to operate at two basic levels for Herder. At the initial level, he holds that the daily interactions between individuals and groups could act as a very basic and informal means of discussion on relevant issues. These ideas, as well as others, could then be taken up later at the more formal level of public discussion. One proposal which Herder offers for this level is that discussion could occur in public halls similar to the town halls which were used in ancient Greece city states (*prytaneion*) to celebrate Olympic athletes and other distinguished citizens.
See Forster, "Introduction," xxxi-xxxv; and Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," 322.

[45] Herder, "Letters for the Advancement of Humanity," 395.

In order to initiate the process whereby human beings view other cultures as a resource useful in cultivating *Humanität* requires instilling the necessary attitudes within the public's mind, such as attitudes conducive to free discussion, tolerance, open-mindedness, and so forth. To accomplish this Herder proposes an extensive education process. The means through which this process is to take place involves harnessing the very attitudes present within a human being's original nature. Briefly recalled, Herder claims that a person's natural disposition (such as the one which is evident in the outlook of a child or humankind's forefathers, the Orient) is one characterized by qualities like innocence, a susceptibility to new ideas, and an eagerness to please. In a way similar to how parents and early historical despots took advantage of these qualities, Herder also suggests that this disposition should be used to induce the necessary, Herderian inspired, worldview. The only difference with Herder's suggestion is in the fact that the precise policies used to actualize this ideal would be determined by the entire political community.

The core channels by which Herder saw this *Humanität*-inspired education program being formed and perpetuated involved language, religion, and history. While it is clear that Herder's philosophy of *Humanität* is an eloquent affirmation of the hope that the "ends" chosen by societies could come to achieve the status of meaningful ethical universals, in terms which people everywhere might strive to emulate, it is also apparent that he was not blind to the realization that this hope relied heavily on its acceptance by other human beings. If the truth be told, the entire philosophical ideal of *Humanität* and its social application is contingent on its acceptance by human beings in such a way that its flourishing depends on a collective agreement of self-restraint and moral exploration. That is, *Humanität* requires the development of virtues and moral arguments which could be used to guide the lives of people. For Herder, the potential to engage in this activity first emerged in the capacity of language and reached its highest actualization in religion.

According to Herder, the first germ of attaining a true consciousness of humanity involves the recognition of the limits within which a human being could

choose. Language and religion, as such, went together for Herder, and both, in his view, promote the attainment of a consciousness of limits. Of the two, language constitutes the basic causality, in that religion seems impossible without the existence of language.[46] For example, while language enables human beings to form concepts, to reason and to think, its emergence and growth is largely connected with the perception of being in a world which is shared with others. Without language, consciousness itself would not be what it is and without consciousness, or its first emergence, religion could not be born. Herder indicates that while language is, as it were, the ground upon which religion grows, religion, in turn, is the source on which a consciousness of limits and moral exploration feeds.[47]

Herder's approach to religion, as with every other facet of his social philosophy, is largely ecumenical. It could not be exactly the same for two people, let alone for two different cultures, but still played an important part in a larger transcendental purpose.[48] Religion is an ongoing process in which a human being, through her innermost linguistically inspired awareness, becomes aware of herself as a part of an ongoing historical universe. Associated with this awareness are considerations such as what she should do or strive to "become" throughout her life, how she should go about doing it and, most significantly, how she should act as a human being. Religion is the continual conscious growth which a human being undergoes by trying to determine her social obligations, as well as the limits within which she could act. Herder explains: "[r]eligion is supposed to affect nothing *but purposes through human beings* and *for human beings*—whether it is leaven or treasure, each human being carries it in his container, mixes it with his dough!"[49]

Worthy of mention is that for Herder religion and the church are not one; while religion unites, he felt theological dogmas divided, breeding fanaticism and intolerance. Religion is not a matter of external organization but rather the

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[46] F.M Barnard, "Humanism and Titanism: Masaryk and Herder," *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 93.
[47] Ibid., 93.
[48] Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought*, 90.
[49] Herder, "This Too a Philosophy for the Formation of Humanity," 305.

innermost concern of each individual. It couples together autonomous self-direction with self-restraint to create the inalienable sphere through which a human being's highest nature (her *Humanität*) could be most fully developed. Religious values, in short, are the way of producing the perimeters needed for the growth and understanding associated with *Humanität*.

Accompanying the religious virtues used to promote a consciousness of limits is the proper study of history and literature. Herder believed that through the study of history and literature several benefits could be gained which would aid in an individual's edification. For example, by studying people's minds through their literature, visual arts, etc., the possibility exists whereby a person might enhance her sympathies for people at all social levels, including lower ones. Moreover, an "inner" study of history and literature (that being one which uses the capacity of *Einfühlung*) could also act as an important instrument for self-improvement, such as serving to enhance a human being's own self-understanding.[50] One reason for this is that it is by, and only by, contrasting one's own outlook with the outlooks of other peoples that one recognizes what is universal and invariant in it and what, by contrast, is distinctive and variable. Another very important reason is that in order fully to understand one's own outlook, one needs to identify its origins and how it developed into its present form.[51]

In a very important sense, the study of history and literature allows a human being to enrich her own ideals by understanding past ages and diverse circumstances frequently captured within various literary works. What this points to is Herder's recognition that dialogical situations, especially in the reflection on what may appear to be Other, proves to be decisive for a human being's own identity formation. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has formulated it, one's historicity is achieved in the *effective history* of those one encounters, who occasion in us a redefinition of our own horizons.[52] In accordance with dialogical nature of

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[50] Forster, "Introduction," xxviii.
[51] Ibid., xxviii.
[52] John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 340.

knowledge, Herder advocates the study of other cultures' effective histories and literary works, as well as the cultivation of one's own, in order to advance one's own understanding, while also producing the material which could also assist in the growth of others.

Herder's final response to the questions associated with pluralism should now be clear. Can common positions be established within a pluralistic age? For Herder, the plurality of values and the conflicts which it could cause is an inescapable aspect of living within the linguistic dimension. Given the relativistic nature of his entire philosophy it also seems unlikely that Herder believed that a *truly* universal set of morals could ever be established. Nevertheless, it is obvious that he believed that working towards such a goal is worthwhile and should be pursued; but with an awareness of the integrity of other cultures. In fact, Herder's entire philosophy is a reaffirmation of the hope that human beings could eventually come to coexist with one another, celebrating and learning from each other's differences, while also working together to create a better world. What he vehemently disagreed with was the systematization or creation of a moral system which restricted communication or was completely static; since such systems, he felt, had to continually grow and change with the people to which they are bound.

The incommensurability of values did not entail immediate conflict for Herder, but rather resulted in such a state only when a human being strayed from her better nature. While it is true that he felt that some pursued "ends" would inevitably result in conflict, he also recognized that in many circumstances people would come to agree that some "ends" are preferable to others. Capacities which he associated with the emergence of language, combined with the fact that human beings are connected by a wealth of shared physiological, social and historical experiences, are only a few of the qualities he felt are common amongst all peoples. Harnessing these similarities as a way of establishing common positions, as well as advancing humanity, is assisted by an education process which uses *Einfühlung* to promote virtues associated with the betterment of humanity, such as tolerance, communication and increased political participation.

Chapter 3

Isaiah Berlin

In 1965, Isaiah Berlin published his first essay on Herder. A series of republications, with minor alterations, soon followed. [1] One of the primary accomplishments which Berlin is credited with within these works lies in his introduction of Herder to the Anglophone world. This is largely achieved through his exclusive focus on what he finds truly original in Herder's views, what he labels *populism*, *expressionism*, and *pluralism*.[2] Briefly summarized, Berlin identifies populism as the belief in the value of belonging to a group or a culture, which for Herder, at least, is not political but perhaps even anti-political. Expressionism (or what Taylor labels, taking his lead from Berlin, expressivism) involves the notion that human activity (in general) and art (in particular) express the entire personality of the individual or group, while pluralism includes the belief in the multiplicity and incommensurability of different cultures, and, in addition, in the incompatibility of equally valid ideals, together with the implied

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[1] Berlin's first work on Herder, *Herder and the Enlightenment*, first began as a lecture delivered at Johns Hopkins University in 1964. See Isaiah Berlin, "Herder and the Enlightenment," *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, ed., Earl R. Wasserman (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965). It was later revised and reprinted several times; see *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York: Viking, 1976; London: Hogarth Press, 1976); "Herder and the Enlightenment," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed., Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998); and lastly, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000; London, UK: Pimlico, 2000).

[2] By focusing exclusively on Herder's original ideas, Berlin acknowledges that it is unfortunately necessary to omit much else which is relevant and interesting: for example, Herder's dominant influence on Romanticism, vitalism, and existentialism, and, above all, on psychology, which he all but founded; as well as the use made of his imprecise, often inconsistent, but always many-faceted and stimulating thought by such thinkers as the Schlegles and Jakob Grimm (especially in their philological excursions), Savigny (who applied to law Herder's notion of organic national growth), Görres (whose nationalism is rooted in, even if it distorts, Herder's vision), Hegel (whose concepts of becoming and of the growth of the personality of impersonal institutions began their lives in Herder's pages), as well as historical geographers, social anthropologists, philosophers of language and history, and historical writers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Berlin, "Herder and the Enlightenment," 361.

revolutionary corollary that the classical notions of an ideal human being and of an ideal society are intrinsically incoherent and meaningless.[3]

According to Berlin, each of the previous ideas is relatively novel since each is incompatible with the central moral, historical, and aesthetic doctrines associated with the Enlightenment. While acknowledging that each of these theses is ineluctably bound up in Herder's thought, Berlin signifies populism to be the most relevant. Berlin explains: the whole thrust of Herder's doctrines is systematic relativism which, both in his early and later works, "… is to show and celebrate the uniqueness, the individuality and, above all, the incommensurability with one another of each of the civilizations which he so lovingly describes and defends."[4]

Herder's importance for Berlin lies in the notion of cultural distinctiveness which he uses to understand the whole of Herder's thought. Elements of Herder's philosophy which are not indicative of this thesis are dismissed as being the by-products of a thinker who at the best of times was far from clear in explaining precisely what he meant or dismissed as being incoherent with the larger relativistic trend readily identifiable throughout his work. If Herder's notion of the equal validity of incommensurable cultures is to be accepted, Berlin alleges, "concepts of an ideal State or of an ideal man become incoherent."[5] Consequently, ideas which were vital to the Herderian cosmology—such as expressivism, the continual striving towards the ideal of *Humanität*, the social and transcendental sense of embeddedness which he tried to create with his theory of historical causation, and the education process which his entire system entails— are either not carefully considered by Berlin or quickly discarded based on their alleged inauthenticity in light of Herder's relativistic thesis.

Berlin misrepresents Herder in such a way that his thought appears more closely aligned with Berlin's own theory of pluralism, rather than the system which Herder had in fact intended. While recognizing that Herder did write with optimism and eloquence about a human being's ascent to the ideal of *Humanität*,

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[3] Ibid., 367-368.
[4] Ibid., 427.
[5] Ibid., 428.

Berlin does not believe, as he explains: "… that anyone who reads Herder's work with the *Einfühlung* for which he asks … will sustain the impression that it is this ideal … that filled his mind."[6] The heart of Herder's thought, Berlin felt, is the theme of relativism to which he constantly returned:

> [T]hat one must not judge one culture by the criteria of another; that differing civilizations are different growths, pursue different goals, embody different ways of living, are dominated by different attitudes to life; so that to understand them one must perform an imaginative act of "empathy" into their essence, understand them "from within" as far as possible, and see the world through their eyes.[7]

Once accepted, the idea of incommensurability for Berlin dispenses with the notion that a perfect civilization in which a human could realize her full (or greater) potentialities could be actualized either as a determinative state or one which could act as an ideal to be continually strived for. The idea of a process where one striving state continually replaced another, drawing humanity onward to greater "ends," Berlin alleged, is patently absurd; constantly running the risk of sliding into states such as conflict, annexation, and tyranny. As a result, the picture which Berlin leaves of Herder is of a thinker who praised the diversity of different cultures so much that their distinctiveness appears to exclude any possibility at reconciliation between diverse social "ends."

In Berlin's rendering of Herder no common grounds appear to exist between diverse cultures—whether linguistically, physiologically, or historically—which could be used as a starting point to avoid conflict and establish common social positions. By trumping Herder's theme of *Humanität* with his notion of relativism, Berlin does away with a central aspect of the Herderian philosophical system, thereby eliminating his entire formula for addressing social diversity. The impression then produced is one where Berlin's own views on pluralism can be easily read into Herder's thought. Berlin's views on pluralism include his central belief that values are incommensurable and run the risk of immediately sliding into conflict. He attributes this slide to three factors: methods of thinking which relate everything in reality to a single vision or philosophical system; various

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[6] Ibid., 428.
[7] Ibid., 429.

circumstances which are operative in the cohesion of aggressive groups; and,

lastly, social actions which are associated with positive liberty or actions involving

self-determination.

For Berlin, the incommensurability of values is a fact which he feels is evident

from history's vast chronicle of conflict, the origins of which are always

attributable to a human being's own free will. Quoting Fichte, Berlin explains:

"'freedom itself produces the greatest and most terrible disorders of our race; man

is the cruellest enemy of man.'"[8] Conflict results because an individual's free will,

accompanied by her creativity, allows her to either generate the "ends" which will

come to direct her life or internalize ones which have been created by others.

Berlin, consequently, ceaselessly draws attention to this point, claiming that there

is no such thing as a universal set of moral rules which are true for all humans but

only those "ends" which people themselves have either created or chosen to

accept.

The anti-universalistic notion of ultimate "ends" is an important theme

throughout Berlin's work, frequently being invoked as an argument against any

system of thought or cultural group which claims to have achieved moral

objectivity. According to Berlin, the belief in moral objectivity is a fallacy which

is continually perpetuated throughout Western thought. Berlin explains:

> If I may be permitted an almost unpardonable degree of simplification and
> generalization, I should like to suggest that the central core of the intellectual
> tradition in the West has, since Plato (or it may be Pythagoras), rested upon
> three unquestioned dogmas: (a) that to all genuine questions there is one true
> answer and one only, all others being deviations from the truth and therefore
> false, and that this applies to questions of conduct and feeling, that is, to
> practice, as well as to questions of theory or observation—to questions of
> value no less than to those of fact; (b) that the true answers to such questions
> are in principle knowable; (c) that these true answers cannot clash with one
> another, for one true proposition cannot be incompatible with one another; that
> together answers must form a harmonious whole: according to some they form
> a logical system each ingredient of which logically entails and is entailed by all
> the other elements; according to others the relationship is that of parts to a

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[8] Isaiah Berlin, "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry
Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 570.

whole, or, at the very least, of complete compatibility of each with all the others.[9]

Since these dogmas have been incorporated into the majority of social and theoretical systems prevalent throughout the West, Berlin claims that the ideas which they proclaimed, in one way or another, have become entrenched in conventional thought. Conflict is therefore caused by the very fact that a human being could not dispense with the notion that her "ends" are objectively true, not only for her but for all peoples. Berlin explains: "[w]hat is clear is that values clash—that is why civilizations are incompatible. They can be incompatible between cultures, or groups in the same culture, or between you and me."[10] In every instance where conflict develops, the same basic dynamic can be seen at work: two or more parties are involved in a situation where each holds their views or "ends" to be superior to those of others. Thus, the further their "ends" diverge from one another the more likely that they are going to, on some level, find themselves in conflict.

Accompanying the slide into conflict is the tendency to relate everything in reality to a single vision or philosophical system, what Berlin refers to as being a hedgehog. According to Berlin, there are two types of people: "those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system … which they understand, think and feel" according to, seeking to fit all of their experiences into it; and those, on the other side, "who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related to no moral or aesthetic principle."[11] The first kind of personality are hedgehogs, while the second are to be considered foxes.[12] What Berlin finds problematic with hedgehogs is that their mindset bears a remarkable similarity to the type which he also associates with the dogmas

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[9] Berlin, "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," 555.

[10] Isaiah Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 10.

[11] Isaiah Berlin, "The Hedgehog and the Fox," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 436.

[12] This idea is best presented by Berlin in his essay on Tolstoy and history where he starts by quoting the Greek poet Archilochus who says: "the fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." See Berlin, "The Hedgehog and the Fox,"436-498.

prevalent throughout Western thought, since both involve the same type of inflexible mindset where a person believes her values, understanding, or approach towards existence is true, not only for her, but for all peoples.

For Berlin, the tendencies which cause conflict can also be heightened once a person becomes a member of a group. He explains, "[t]he need to belong to an easily identifiable group has been regarded, at any rate since Aristotle, as a natural requirement on the part of human beings: families, clans, tribes, estates, social orders, classes, religious organizations, political parties, and finally nations and States, are the historical forms which involve the fulfillment of this basic human need."[13] Yet by fulfilling this natural requirement, the danger exists that cohesion (provided that certain circumstances are met) can quickly slide into an area where the group might become uncontrollable and dangerous. The best example of group cohesion which has proven to be destructive can be found in the aggressive forms of nationalism and ethnic-inspired conflicts which have plagued the world, most noticeably in the last century.

The causes of the type of cohesion which results in the formation of aggressive groups can be attributed to many sources, such as the destruction or threatening of a person's social life, depriving people of their emotional security, dehumanization, as well as various other phenomena which produce feelings of alienation, spiritual homelessness and anomie. In all of these instances, or any other where a person believes that they are being deprived of something significant, the typical response usually entails trying to fill the "void" with some type of emotional, psychological or physical equivalent. In the case of the formation of an aggressive group, as in the case of nationalism, this vacuum, Berlin explains:

> [Is] filled neither by professional associations, nor by political parties, nor by revolutionary myths … but by the old, traditional bonds—language, the soil, historical memories real and imaginary—and by the institutions or leaders

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[13] Isaiah Berlin, "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 586

which function as the incarnations of men's conceptions of themselves as a community.[14]

In extreme instances, where a group has been, for instance, emotionally, psychologically or economically deprived over a prolonged period of time, the need for an "equivalent" can result in feelings of aggression towards the group or sector held responsible for creating the given deprivation. For Berlin, these feelings typically lead to the beginning of some form of political anthropomorphism where the group, nation or a process of history is transformed into a super-sensible agent, whose unbounded will the members of the group identify with their own finite desires.[15] The group, consequently, becomes a way for its members to understand themselves, their significance, and what they should and could be when they are at their best. According to Berlin, the next sequence in this development is that any individual or group who is not a member of the newly formed group is typically held to be a hindrance or rival to the actualization of its will. The response to such a dilemma is obvious: since ultimate values conflict, conversion or conflict between groups become the only options.

Underlying the cohesion of a group and its slide into conflict is the subtle but extremely influential sentiment of recognition. Berlin elaborates: "[w]e often speak of demands for liberty made by oppressed classes or nationalities. But it is not always individual freedom, nor even individual equality, that they primarily want. … What they want, as often as not, is simply recognition."[16] Berlin continues: "[w]hat most groups desire which resort to aggressive tactics is simply recognition of their class or nation, or colour or race—as an independent source of human activity, with a will of their own, which they intend to act in accordance with (whether it is good, or legitimate, or not)."[17]

While satisfying the demand for recognition may appear to be a viable option for addressing moral diversity and forestalling conflict, it is nonetheless, Berlin

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[14] Ibid., 601.
[15] Berlin, "The Apotheosis of the Romantic Will," 570.
[16] Isaiah Berlin, "The Search for Status," *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 195.
[17] Ibid., 195.

maintains, inescapably bound up with the incommensurability of values and its relationship to self-determination. The ability to pursue the "ends" determined by one's will, whether they are the by-product of one person or those of an entire group, Berlin classifies under the term positive liberty. Positive freedom refers to a specific capacity: a "freedom to," for instance, be one's own master. As a result, positive freedom's "positiveness" often involves the conditions necessary for a specific type of freedom—whether that is the possession of various material resources, a level of social enlightenment, or the opportunity for political participation—but in all instances it is characterized by the ability, in some form, to be one's own master. It is involved in the answer to the question "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do (or be) this rather than that?"[18] At the same time, it is also associated with education, self-actualization, and any other pursuit which attempts to bring a human being closer to some type of ideal or improved state.

The basic problem with recognition is that all human beings, in groups or not, want recognition, as well the eventual actualization of their individual or collective "will," whatever that may be. Yet achieving these goals depends on the ability to pursue one's own "ends" which Berlin ultimately envisions as always culminating in forms of oppression. Berlin explains: "'[f]reedom for the pike is death for the minnows;' the liberty of some must depend on the restraint of others."[19] As a result, in order to protect people from the boundless pursuits of positive liberty, the ultimate source of all conflict, Berlin suggests that people submit themselves to its opposite, negative liberty.

As a counter to positive liberty, negative liberty is involved in answering the question: "[w]hat is the area within which the subject—a person or group of persons—is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons."[20] It is the choice among alternatives or options that

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[18] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 194.
[19] Ibid., 196.
[20] Ibid., 194.

is unimpeded by others;[21] while, at the same time, also being the physical area in which a human being could interact freely. Forms of negative liberty have had a long historical presence within social situations, being the customary way by which pursuits associated with positive liberty have been blocked from sliding into domination. For example, the basic principle of negative liberty can be seen throughout the legal frameworks which have protected and continue to protect humans from one another. Berlin explains his preference for negative liberty:

> Pluralism, with the measure of "negative" liberty that it entails, seems to me a truer and more humane ideal than the goals of those who seek in the great disciplined, authoritarian structures the ideal of "positive" self-mastery by classes, or peoples, or the whole of mankind. It is truer because it does recognize the fact that human goals are many, that not all of them are commensurable, and in perpetual rivalry with one another. To assume that all values can be graded on one scale, so that it is a mere matter of inspection to determine the highest, seems to me to falsify our knowledge that men are free agents to represent moral decision as an operation which a slide-rule could, in principle, perform.[22]

Berlin's views on pluralism clearly differ from those of Herder. Herder traces the origin of pluralism to a linguistic beginning, believing that a plurality of values and the conflicts which they sometimes caused were the byproduct of an awareness which was capable of self-reflection, creative thought and, most importantly, the formation of new ideas. For Berlin, however, pluralism is not linguistic in origin but rather philosophical. Berlin states this view when, in the course of arguing about the origins of doubts and disputes concerning social values, he claims that "[t]hese questions are not purely technical and empirical, not merely problems about the best means to a given end, nor are they mere questions of logical consistency, that is, formal and deductive; but properly philosophical." [23] Consequently, this belief caused Berlin to concern himself only with the philosophical problems which are a part of pluralism and not the awareness which is associated with their origin.

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[21] John Gray, *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15.
[22] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 241.
[23] Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist," *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. Henry Hardy (London, UK: Pimlico, 1998), 67.

Pluralism occurs for Berlin when a person adopts a position (typically philosophical in origin) and incorporates it into her own agency. Berlin's conception of human agency differs from Herder's in the sense that, while he does acknowledge that people are dialogically dependent on their larger surroundings, he conceives of this dependence and its influence as being almost secondary to the power of a person's will. As Grey points out, Berlin's conception of human agency is "of man as a self-transforming species which invents a variety of natures for itself."[24] What distinguishes this conception from Herder's is, Grey continues, that "human nature is not, for Berlin, something within us all that awaits discovery and realization. It is something invented, and perpetually reinvented, through choice, and it is inherently plural and diverse, not common or universal."[25] As a result, Berlin dismisses Herder's belief that human nature is a teleological ideal which all people, whether they realize it or not, continually work their way towards. At the same time, Berlin's dismissal of teleology also denies humans the metaphysical comfort, which itself may come close to being a universal need, whereby particular forms of life are conceived as having a providential purpose.

The approaches Herder and Berlin offer for addressing pluralism are both consistent with what they believe to have first caused it. In Herder's case, qualities which he associates with a linguistic awareness are the basis from which the problem of conflicting values is addressed. Since all humans are linguistic creatures whose understanding relating to the world is brought forth by an act of authority, Herder believes that a similar act accompanied with qualities common to all peoples, such as being connected by shared experiences, could be used within an educational process to address the problems which might be caused by social diversity. For Herder, education is indispensable in creating a stable political environment where all human beings are included as integral parts.

Berlin attributes pluralism to a human being's free will, as well as to various acts associated with self-determination, which likely direct his decision towards curbing the boundless pursuits of positive liberty with negative liberty.

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[24] Grey, 10.
[25] Ibid., 23.

Yet at this point, for some reason, Berlin chooses to stop; offering no suggestions (which are obtainable from Herder) as to how negative liberty might be applied or improved within a social situation. For example, while acknowledging that demands involving recognition often relate back to feelings of dissatisfaction and deprivation, he does not address in detail how these claims might be used to promote social cohesiveness and prevent conflict. Furthermore, others elements which might be used to prevent the conflicts associated with pluralism, such as educating a human being to increase her awareness about diversity or creating a social sense of embeddedness, are not addressed at all by Berlin.

According to Kocis, this is because it makes a difference for Berlin as to how any policy which would be used to address pluralism is justified. Kocis elaborates: "to implement a policy using an argument for some higher good was not necessarily evil; to the contrary, it was just that these policies are often so compelling that, in pursuing them, we inevitably lose sight of the more basic liberties of the negative kind."[26] As a result, Berlin's insight, Kocis explains, is that "the always-present desire for some higher good or another readily provides some people with justifications for present indignities by appeal to some future good."[27]

Berlin's exclusion of factors which might be useful in addressing diversity, as well as his refusal to draw out or expand on how negative liberty might be applied in social situations, also stems largely from his belief that positive and negative liberty are severable from each other. He believed that, in historical terms, the two liberties have developed in such a way that they often come to stand for distinct values, goods, or conditions; so distinct that their actualization often results in them becoming rivals or competitors.[28] As a result, Berlin became extremely unsettled by any social or political policy which resembled positive liberty. In his mind, "forcing people to be free" through an education process (or any other policy associated with the teleological aspect of positive liberty),

[26] Robert Kocis, *A Critical Appraisal of Sir Isaiah Berlin's Political Philosophy* (Lampeter, UK: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd, 1989), 179.
[27] Ibid., 179.
[28] Grey, 18.

regardless of the conceived social benefits, "was the argument used by every dictator, inquisitor and bully who [sought] some moral, or even aesthetic, justification for his conduct."[29]

According to Berlin, the problem with positive liberty lay in the historical fact that subsuming all people under one goal typically laid the foundations for violence. If there is one teleological ideal toward which all are to develop, then any one who fails to see the truth of this goal is ignorant or irrational, thereby making the pursuit of any other end subversive in light of the pursuit of the one right end. As a result, any persons who pursue other ends could be classified as perverse: not knowing what is truly good for them.[30] For Berlin, while positive liberty is geared to providing people with the capacity to become better—aiming at creating a new, and better, society—it frequently results in tragedy.

Berlin's choice to focus exclusively on negative liberty as the only viable means of addressing pluralism—a choice reinforced by his associating positive liberty with the excessive anti-freedom of totalitarianism—appears needlessly preemptive, especially considering that many current arrangements provide several groups with degrees of positive freedom without the conflicts which he envisioned. What Berlin therefore seems incapable of acknowledging is that the two liberties can and do successfully co-exist. After all, many democracies today offer their citizens, to varying degrees, both: providing their citizens with some minimum amount of space free from coercion, while also, through various state-sponsored policies, providing them with a way of preserving their distinctiveness for future generations.

It is not inconceivable that if Berlin had not established the link between positive liberty and the excessive anti-freedoms of totalitarianism that his approach towards pluralism could have taken on an entirely different direction. Clearly, this is significant since Berlin's linkage directed him into adopting a very one-dimensional approach which excludes all alternatives associated with positive liberty based on their alleged causality with an immediate slide into oppression.

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[29] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 222.
[30] Kocis, 183.

The narrowness of Berlin's approach to pluralism demands answers to the following questions: why did he feel the need to draw a distinction between the two liberties and what caused him to maintain this division?

The basic cause of Berlin's linkage between positive liberty and totalitarianism is likely due to the fact that he, like many academics throughout the Cold War period, was intent on trying to understand the authoritarian trend spreading throughout the world. What interested Berlin most was the false consciousness associated with movements such as fascism and communism, as well as their method of indoctrinating the masses of people into abandoning their own judgments. In order to better understand these phenomena, Berlin explored, in great depth, history's most sobering example: how the Nazis had deceived the Jews into peacefully going to their deaths through the suggestion that they were being taken to a "re-settlement" in the East. What perplexed Berlin with this case was why the executioners' deception, even if it may have in fact eased the anguish of the victims, caused him such discontent.[31] His response was straightforward: the source of discontent stemmed from the realization that the victims were denied the power to choose, they were not allowed the choice of facing their destruction with fear or courage. With this idea in mind, Berlin came to believe that there is a continuum involving the denial of human rights, such as the right to know one's fate, and situations which involved atrocities against humanity.

The Holocaust, nonetheless, was not solely responsible for fixing this theme at the centre of Berlin's thought; rather, it was a confluence of pressures which put it there: the rise of Marxist politics, the bi-polarization of the Cold War world, the subliminal thought of his own people going blindly to their deaths and, above all else, the fear that this atrocity could occur again. Together these forces catalyzed the link between positive liberty and tyranny within Berlin's mind, moving it from being only a theme, to a conviction which he pursued throughout his life. Berlin's biographer, Michael Ignatieff, explains: "[t]he fox had discovered that he was a hedgehog after all. He had found 'the one big thing' that

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[31] Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1998), 200.

was to order his intellectual life thereafter: the theme of freedom and its betrayal."[32]

For better or worse, Berlin's pluralism is clearly informed by his understanding of freedom and its betrayal. Within this understanding, a plurality of values almost always entails incommensurability and conflict since a person's free will ensures that the "ends" which she adopts can be as diverse as the choices which she is capable of making. These "ends" can also not be rated or sorted in some type of hierarchical scheme since any ordering sequence which seeks to actualize certain "ends" does so at the expense of displacing others. Free will, consequently, makes the development of common moral positions exceedingly difficult and problematic.

Since Berlin felt that free will is the ultimate cause of social diversity and conflict, he approached pluralism by seeking to curb what he believed to be freedom's most destructive form: positive liberty. Accomplishing this, nonetheless, required vigilance since it took on a variety of forms, often through the guise of optimistic outcomes which could better humanity. With this idea in mind, Berlin took on an uncompromising position: all actions associated with positive liberty were to be controlled by the limits set by negative liberty, through some form of legal framework or social contract. Ensuring that a human being's rights are continually upheld is the best approach towards pluralism.

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[32] Ibid., 201.

Chapter 4

Charles Taylor

Taylor's usage of Herder, as a source of ideas which are useful in understanding and addressing the problems associated with pluralism, differs significantly from Berlin's. While Berlin identifies the systemic theme of relativism as the sole theme of importance in Herder's thought, Taylor focuses on his innovations in language as one of his most crucial contributions to philosophy and pluralism. According to Taylor, while it may be true that Herder was not the most rigorous of thinkers, the insights captured in his linguistic innovations have nonetheless inspired other, more philosophically exigent minds, to more exact formulations of his ideas.[1] In one way or another, Herder has had a tremendous impact on modern culture.[2]

Herder's value lies in the fact that his linguistic innovations have assisted in swinging the conventional thought about language into a different view, what Taylor refers to as the Herderian inspired revolution. The primary insights which Taylor associates with this revolution, which have already been explained in Chapter One, include the following notions: that expression constitutes the linguistic dimension, that language can only exist within a context of language practices, such as the *Volk* (the cultural community) which carries it, and, lastly, that language not only allows human beings to have a greater awareness about

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[1] Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 79.

[2] Taylor explains this idea by noting that "deeply innovative thinkers don't have to be rigorous in order to originate important ideas, since the insights they capture … can inspire other, more philosophical exigent minds to more exact formations." This, he continues, is exemplified in Herder's relation to Hegel, as well as his seminal role in the creation of post-Romantic thought and culture. Ibid., 79.

things, but it also transforms feelings, thereby revealing new ways of responding to a variety of situations.[3]

Herder's innovations paint a radically different picture of human agency; one which, while departing from the views prevalent in Herder's life time, also, and perhaps more importantly, reacted against a way of thinking which Taylor suggests has "colonized the common-sense positions of our civilization."[4] This point should be explained since Taylor gives it a significant amount of attention; claiming, for instance, that the Enlightenment played an important part in creating a form of rationality, exemplified in instrumental rationality, which has affected the modern notion of selfhood and increased the circumstances which lead social diversity into conflict.[5]

While acknowledging the gains which the Enlightenment helped to initiate, particularly in technology and the physical sciences, Taylor claims that the method which it employed to make these advances caused an "ontologizing of rational procedure"[6] which results in human beings thinking and acting as if they are separate from their larger surrounding environments. This severability Taylor attributes to the basic characteristics of instrumental rationality, such as the adoption of an approach where information or other variables are isolated into singular components, to be added or removed, so that true causes and objective understandings could be established. Indispensable to this approach is a neutrality

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[3] The innovations which Taylor attributes to Herder are generally agreed upon by a wealth of other scholars. For instance, both Forster and Barnard (more so in his latest work) support Taylor's claims. See Michael Forster, "Introduction" *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael Forster, "Herder's Philosophy of Language," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002; F.M Barnard, *Herder on Nationality*, *Humanity*, *and History* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); and Michael Morton, *The Critical Turn: Studies in Kant, Herder, Wittgenstein, and Contemporary Theory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).
[4] Charles Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 63.
[5] In actual fact, several of Taylor's essays, as well as his largest philosophical work, *Sources of the Self*, are devoted to understanding the historical origins of factors which have affected the formation of the modern conception of selfhood. Two accounts of this exercise in historical recovery include Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," 61-79.
[6] Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," 61.

in information processing where the validity of the experiment depends on maintaining some form of observational disengagement.

While instrumental rationality is undoubtedly useful within science, allowing variables which might influence the outcome of the experiment to be isolated so that reliable theories can be created, it applications within social situations, Taylor suggests, is extremely problematic. According to Taylor, it offers a picture of agents who in perceiving the world take in "bits" of information from their surroundings, and then "process" them in some fashion, in order to emerge with the "picture" of the world they have, through a "calculus" of means and ends.[7] Put in another way, it creates an understanding of human agency where people are motivated entirely by self-centeredness, with no immediate concern for or conceived dependency on their larger social and physical surroundings. Taylor elaborates on three effects of disengaged rationality:

> The first is the picture of the (human) subject as ideally disengaged, that is, as free and rational to the extent that he has fully distinguished himself from the natural and social worlds, so that his identity is no longer to be defined in terms of what lies outside of him in these worlds. The second, which flows from this, is a punctual view of the self, ideally ready as free and rational to treat these worlds—and even some of the features of his own character—instrumentally, as subject to change and reorganizing in order the better to secure the welfare of himself and others. The third is the social consequence of the first two: an atomistic construal of society as constituted by, or ultimately to be explained in terms of, individual purposes.[8]

For Taylor, the instrumentalism associated with this form of rational procedure fosters an outlook which is detrimental to human agency, particularly because it suppresses the realization that selfhood is a dialogical creation. What this results in is a monological conception of human agency where people think and act as if they had been severed from their larger social and cultural world of involvements. They have, for instance, become unaware of the specific "backgrounds" which influence their various "understandings" of the world, coming to believe that theirs is the only one. Taylor elaborates:

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[7] Ibid., 63.
[8] Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 7.

To take an instrumental stance to nature is to cut us off from the sources of meaning in it. An instrumental stance to our own feelings divides us within, splits reason from sense. And the atomistic focus on our individual goals dissolves community and divides us from each other.[9]

Taylor is opposed to the modern notion of monological human agency for reasons which Herder would also support. Since both believe that the genesis of the human mind and the development of a human being could not be something which each person could accomplish on his or her own but must involve a dialogical process negotiated partly overtly, partly internally, with others, the monological ideal, according to these opinions, is both unacceptable and untenable. It constitutes a bar from ever attaining the force, depth, vibrancy and joy which comes from being connected with others. For Herder and Taylor, what is needed is the discarding of the monological ideal for a more situated understanding of human agency, such as the one found in Herder's theory of language.

For the most part, there have been two common and related sorts of arguments aimed at discrediting the monological ideal. The first consists in articulating a part of one's background understanding, in such a form that one's reliance on it through thoughts, perceptions, experiences, or languages becomes clear and undeniable. The second approach then attempts to show that the articulated background is incompatible with crucial features of the instrumental approach, for instance, by pointing to the impossibility of an atomistic construal of human agency. A human being, critics maintain, cannot and does not sort or gain her information in a singular and computational way, but is always subject to a wealth of sensations and social experiences which, whether she realizes it or not, shapes her understandings.

While Taylor acknowledges that there have been many pioneers of this type of argument which others have followed in developing their own refutations, he draws attention to the fact that within Herder's theory of language the basic elements of this argument can be found, making his philosophy of pluralism one of

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[9] Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 500-501.

the first attempts to refute the instrumental picture and address its social ramifications. Taylor claims that while "the move toward a more situated understanding of thinking is evident enough in the work of Wittgenstein and Heidegger … Herder is one of its pioneers. He constantly stresses that we have to understand human reason and language as an integral part of our life form."[10]

In a manner very much akin to Herder's own thought, Taylor suggests that the dialogical nature of the linguistic dimension is influential in creating a plurality of values.[11] As he explains, "there are [a] variety of goals that we express in languages of qualitative contrast, which are of course very different from each other."[12] Some of these are universal, while others are obtained within a more limited collectivity such as the nation, while yet others are more particular and specific to cultures or groups. Consequently, within any person's life there is always a multiplicity of goods to be recognized, acted upon and pursued. These goods are not only plural in the numerical sense but also in an ontological sense; they are of qualitatively different types from one another and, because of this, cannot always be harmoniously combined, ranked, ordered or reduced to some more ultimate or foundational good.[13] What is required to engage successfully in their ranking is a different approach towards thinking and reasoning about differences.

For Taylor, pluralism has become an issue of increasing importance since its contact with instrumental rationality has caused several socially destructive transformations. Besides the monological ideal, these transformations include the notion of foundationalism—understood by Taylor as the belief that universal moral principles can be established and applied to all people as a way of allowing people to co-exist—as well as various attitudes which result in identity misrecognition and cause social fragmentation. To begin with, Taylor suggests that the tendency towards believing that universal moral positions can be

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[10] Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," 91.
[11] For a concise account of the educational and theoretical influences which shaped Taylor's ideas on language see Nicholas H. Smith, "Linguistic Philosophy and Phenomenology," *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 18-35.
[12] Charles Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods," *Philosophical Papers II: Philosophy and the Human Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 244.
[13] Ruth Abby, *Charles Taylor* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12.

established is heightened when instrumental rationality begins to take on canonical proportions, causing its usage to deceive people into believing that their moral principles are correct and should be applied to all peoples. This, as both Herder and Berlin would agree (albeit with some minor differences),[14] can create the early grounds for conflict. Taylor elaborates:

> Berlin has tirelessly pointed out the irreconcilable conflict that we frequently face between different goods which we cannot help to subscribing to. The modern vogue of ethical thinking, which tends to try to derive all our obligations from some single moral principle, has tended to hide and muffle these conflicts. His reminders have been salutary and important, but too little heeded. I very much agree with him on this: human beings are always in a situation of conflict between moral demands, which seem to them to be irrecusable, but at the same time uncombinable.[15]

An additional association involving instrumental rationality that has had a detrimental transformation has been its political application, what Taylor refers to as the procedural republic. According to Taylor, proponents of the procedural republic (who may loosely even include the likes of Berlin)[16] typically point to the fact that in face of the prospect of having to bring together so many differences of culture, origin, political experience, and identity, that it may be more beneficial to define a common understanding more in terms of "liberalism," rather than self-rule; that is more and more in terms of a procedural republic which focuses on individual rights and democratic and legal procedures, and less in terms of civic virtue.[17] The benefits of this approach point to the fact that if you understand citizenship in terms of roles and rights you avoid endorsing the views of some at

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[14] While Herder seems to attribute foundationalism to self-centered tendencies, combined with sentiments such as ignorance, pride and an improper education, Berlin holds it to be a part of the intellectual tradition in the West which since Plato (or perhaps Pythagoras) has derived all of its moral understandings from foundational principles.

[15] Charles Taylor, "Charles Taylor Replies," *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*, ed. James Tully (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 213.

[16] Berlin may be considered an advocate of the procedural republic since he is a strong supporter of addressing differences almost exclusively through methods associated with negative liberty, such as individual rights and legal procedures. Empowering people to greater understandings or social improvement through positive liberty and education, he believed, was a dangerous path.

[17] Charles Taylor, "A Tension in Modern Democracy," *Democracy and Vision: Sheldon Wolin and the Vicissitudes of the Political*, ed. Botwinick Aryeg and William E. Connolly (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2001), 87.

the expense of others. "Moreover," Taylor explains, "you find an immediate common terrain on which all can gather. Respect me, and accord me rights, just in virtue of my character, outlook, or the ends I espouse, not to speak, for example, of my gender, race, or sexual orientation."[18] Taylor elaborates:

> The act of abstraction here benefits from three important considerations. First, in an age of (at least menacing, if not actual) skepticism about moral views, it retreats from the terrain where the arguments seem the most dependent on our interpretations, the most contentious, and the most incapable of winning universal assent; whereas we can presumably all agree that, other things being equal, it is better to let people have what they want, or to respect their freedom to choose. Second, this refusal to adopt a particular view of the good life leaves it to the individual to make the choice, and hence it fits with the anti-paternalism of the modern age. It enshrines a kind of freedom. Third, in face of the tremendous differences of outlook in modern society, utilitarianism and Kantian deontology seem to promise a way of deciding the issues we face in common without having to espouse the views of some against others.[19]

The procedural republic also gives support to a form of liberalism espoused as the liberalism of neutrality. One of the basic tenets of this liberalism is that a liberal society must be neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life. Taylor explains: "[t]he good life is what each individual seeks, in his or her own way, and government would be lacking in impartiality, and thus in equal respect for all citizens, if it took sides on this question."[20] This, Taylor suggests, brings us to the most obvious point against the procedural republic: "that no one has yet devised a procedure that is seen as neutral by everyone. The point about procedures, charters of rights, or redistributive principles is that they are not meant to enter into the knotty terrain of substantive differences in ways of life; but there is no way in practice of ensuring that this will be so."[21]

Thus, Taylor maintains, the approach used by procedural liberalism is not a very good way of living with difference, principally because it calls on people to abstract from differences, while simultaneously pushing the difference-blind

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[18] Ibid., 89.
[19] Ibid., 88.
[20] Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2003), 17-18.
[21] Taylor, "A Tension in Modern Democracy," 91.

approach to unwarranted lengths. The effects of this approach involve some of the most central concerns of the 20th Century, including those of identity politics. The idea that people should suppress their differences for the sake of fitting into a dominant mold (be it a particular notion of citizenship, or a certain understanding involving social and political "correctness") has been the source of considerable controversy. This has been brought to further light recently by the demands made by various groups such as feminists, cultural minorities, and homosexuals who have challenged such entrenched understandings, through the open disclosure of their differing beliefs and values. What these groups have revealed is that the identity of a group and its recognition (or *mis*recognition) by others can be a source of great animosity and even conflict.

Identity misrecognition is also a clear sign and early indicator for other types of exclusion. If one cannot understand the grievances associated with the misrecognition of a group's identity then it is also likely that group is not or will come to be an accepted or integrated part of society. For Taylor, this is only compounded by the fact that a procedural republic's focus on rights (such as the ones espoused within negative liberty) does not encourage people to learn about each other's differences, but creates instead a culturally ill-informed approach to addressing diversity. Such ignorance encourages interactions where a misrecognized identity can be projected back onto an individual or group creating a sense of worthlessness, while also depriving them of a sense of well-being and human dignity. As this cycle of misunderstanding continues, so too does the process which reinforces the cleavages which add to social fragmentation.

Since there are no simple ways to address these situations once they occur, one of the major objectives of democratic politics should be aimed at their prevention. Thus, since misrecognition and fragmentation find their roots in a circular way through the failure of the democratic initiative itself (through, for instance, an exclusive focus on rights and negative liberty) one of the objectives of any multicultural society should be to address these failures. To accomplish this Taylor, similarly to the approach advocated by Herder, favors an education process which involves positive liberty. The primary elements of this approach

involve overcoming the effects of instrumental rationality; becoming aware of the dialogical conception of selfhood, as well as all of its implications; and, encouraging governments to act as facilitators (and not dictators) in the discussion of what should constitute the "good life." For Herder and Taylor, this commonality marks a significant departure in their approach towards pluralism from that of Berlin's.

Taylor's approach towards positive liberty differs from Berlin's in the sense that he draws attention to the fact that if negative liberty involves a choice among alternatives free from obstacles, then it must in certain circumstances share a common root with positive liberty. He explains: "there seem to be cases in which the obstacles to freedom are internal and, if this is so, then freedom cannot simply be interpreted as the absence of *external* obstacles," but must also include internal constraints which relate to the capacity of positive liberty to assist a person in attaining an improved state or understanding.[22] For Herder and Taylor, positive liberty is indispensable in introducing into society attitudes and goals which are useful in addressing problems related to pluralism.[23]

The focal point of positive liberty's usage involves the replacement of the foundational style of reasoning derived from instrumental rationality with a form that acknowledges the pluralistic nature of moral goods. Since understanding could not take place without the context of others and its advancement is largely tied to those encounters, as well as contemplation of the Other, recognizing the pluralistic nature of goods relates almost entirely to accepting the dialogical nature of knowledge. Amongst its many related aspects, this requires that people learn how to reason about social values and problems in a way that does not try to disprove some radically opposed first premise, but rather shows how the policy (or issue of contestation) is "unconscionable on premises which both sides accept."

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[22] Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," *Law and Morality: Readings in Legal Philosophy*, ed. David Dyzenhaus and Arthur Ripstein (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 287.

[23] Berlin does not deny the existence of the common root of the two liberties but rather chooses not to focus on it, concentrating instead on how the justifications for positive liberty often leads to the relinquishing of the legal frameworks associated with negative liberty resulting in violence.

Taylor explains: "[y]ou can't argue people into accepting an ultimate end, utility or any other, if they in fact reject it."[24]

What Taylor proposes to address this concern is a different method of approaching moral diversity, what he (taking up a theme from Gadamer) refers to as a fusion of horizons.[25] The objective of a fusion of horizons involves a broadening of a human being's own understanding in regards to the "background" which she and others use to derive their knowledge and judgments. Taylor explains: "[w]hen we struggle to get beyond our limited home understanding, we struggle not towards a liberation from this understanding … but toward a wider understanding which can englobe the other undistortively."[26] The final aim is not to escape from a human being's own horizon but to enter into a fusion with others: that is, fully comprehending others from the standpoint of her own background and coming to realize what is invariant, or universal, with all. It is the continual challenge which involves altering and enlarging her own understanding, remaking its forms and limits, so the background which she uses to guide her interactions and give shape to her judgments is continually being enlarged.

A fusion of horizons also involves a practical form of reasoning directed at the participants in conversation and at the things they posit or value. Rather than using the approach used by instrumental rationality, practical reasoning proceeds through comparison, questioning, and the re-articulation of different views, to attempt to achieve some reconciliation of differences or to persuade the interlocutors that they should come to agree that one position is better. Thus, practical reasoning is reasoning in transitions. It is inherently a comparative

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[24] Charles Taylor, "Explanation and Practical Reason," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 36.

[25] Taylor's choice in turning to Gadamer in order expand on Herder's approach towards pluralism, specifically in developing methods of cognitive sensitivity and increased understandings to address social diversity, is interesting since, as Forster points outs, "there are some things in Herder which can suggest such a view." Nevertheless, while Herder's position may appear to make him a sort of proto-Gadamer this was not his intended position; thus, possibly indicating why Taylor felt the need to turn to Gadamer over Herder to properly articulate this theme. See Michael Forster, "Introduction," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xx; and Michael Forster, "Johann Gottfried von Herder," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2001. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/herder/> (Retrieved 11 November 2003), 8.

[26] Charles Taylor, "Comparison, History, Truth," *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 150-151.

enterprise and proceeds in stages by showing why one position is stronger than the alternatives in terms that all the parties can be induced to accept.[27] At the same time, practical reasoning is also accompanied by the realization that even when a position is assented to that it should only be conceived as the "best account," rather than any final or definitive truth. Ruth Abbey explains: "[t]he outcome can only be the best account, because the possibility always remains that it may be superseded by a superior, more encompassing perspective."[28]

For Taylor, the Gadamerian perspective allows for the idea of an "omega point," or a de facto universal, as it were, where all cultures and times would be able to exchange perspectives and come to share an undistortative horizon.[29] But, since new perspectives are always emerging and cultures can always be left out of the decision-making process by mistake or choice, a fusion only points the way to an inclusiveness which overcomes ethnocentrism and works towards the establishment of universal truths. According to Taylor, inclusiveness is the only possible course towards objectivity, since objectivity can only be achieved after everybody has been included in the discussion process.[30] Inclusiveness and practical reasoning provide the atmosphere useful in deciding whether one ethical position or social perspective is better than another.

While acknowledging that the historical development of cultures and civilizations has not, for the most part, been modeled on trying to achieve a social environment of inclusiveness, Taylor still suggests that some progress towards moral consensus has been made. He explains: "[h]istory seems to exhibit some irreversible developments. … I'm talking about changes that seem irreversible because those who go through them can't envisage reversing them, because they become standards for those who come after them."[31] For Taylor, any progress towards a moral consensus or social development is likely due, in part, to the

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[27] Abbey, 167.

[28] Ibid., 168.

[29] Taylor, "Comparison, History, Truth," 151.

[30] Ibid., 151.

[31] Taylor does not clearly explain what these developments might be. Instead, he offers several basic examples of what he believes to be historical advancements. One example which he offers is that higher civilizations tend to put a greater focus on avoiding suffering. Certainly we are much more sensitive on this score than our ancestors of a few centuries ago—as we can readily see if we consider the barbarous punishments they inflicted. Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 12.

compelling nature of the given innovations. In many instances, the ontological

similarities shared by all peoples allows for social agreements and improvements

to be made even when an inclusive discussion has not taken place. Nevertheless,

Taylor still maintains that the best way to work towards the development of

common positions and social improvements is through such a process. For a

clarification of what this might entail within a social environment, Taylor turns to

the Herderian political model. Taylor elaborates:

> The model which I myself adhere to, and would like to spell out has been
> invoked, among others, by Herder. Its crucial idea is that people can also
> bond not in spite of, but because of, difference. They can sense, that is,
> that the difference enriches each party, that their lives are narrower and less
> full alone than they are in association with each other.[32]

What this pushes us towards is the idea which Herder and Taylor believe is

the key to facing the dilemma of exclusion creatively: the idea of sharing identity

space. Taylor explains: "[p]olitical identities have to be worked out, negotiated,

and creatively compromised between peoples who have to or want to live together

under the same political roof (and this coexistence is always grounded in some

mixture of necessity and choice). Moreover, there solutions are never meant to

last forever, but have to be discovered or invented anew by succeeding

generations."[33] This requires that all people must come to the realization that any

progress—whether it is a movement towards moral consensus or just increased

understanding—is contingent on their knowledge and interactions with others.

While this ideal has not yet been consciously applied in many political

situations, Taylor does suggest that aspects of it can be found in current situations.

What he points to are circumstances where the internal debate of groups has

spilled over to influence the national agenda. In recent decades several parties

have had this function, but the most striking examples are found in some of the

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[32] Taylor, "A Tension in Modern Democracy," 89.
[33] Charles Taylor, "Democratic Exclusion (and Its Remedies?)," *Citizenship Diversity & Pluralism: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. C. Allan Cairns, John C. Courtney, Peter MacKinnon, Hans J. Michelmann and David Smith. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 281.

"new social movements": for instance, the feminist (to the extent that one can speak of feminism as singular), and ecological campaigns. These movements have not impacted the political process the ways interests usually do, who mobilize their efforts behind some agreed public stance and keep their internal discussion to themselves, but have allowed their internal debates to exist for all to see. The success of this approach is evident in the fact that it is in part through this feature, as well as through the global impact of their message, that they have helped to reshape the public agenda.[34]

While it is not clear how this would be implemented within a political context, Taylor does offer a few brief suggestions, such as making the boundary between the political system and the public sphere as porous as possible. He also advises that while in any sphere dominated by large and powerful actors maintaining political neutrality may seem ideal, it may in fact be disastrous for genuine debate. Since it is obviously easier for national networks, or prestigious newspapers with a national reputation, to take on the power-holders, these groups and similar groups, he seems to imply, should assume the responsibility of actively criticizing current power elites.[35] What Taylor, therefore, seems to envision is not centralized collectivism but a kind of partnership between distinct institutions and associations whose interactions continually assist in determining what would come to constitute the good life.

The value of a shared conception of the good life is a notion which Taylor shares with Herder, but not Berlin. For Herder and Taylor, having a conception that some goods are higher than others is an inescapable aspect of reality, influencing both individuals and communities to move towards their attainment as if they were teleological ideals. While Berlin rejected this notion due to its connection with positive liberty, Herder and Taylor felt that within the *proper* circumstances it could be a useful in creating social cohesion. Taylor envisions this process occurring in a "dialogical society" characterized by a pluralism of religious faiths, beliefs and moralities, and by a non-dogmatic attitude to the

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[34] Charles Taylor, "The Dangers of Soft Despotism," *The Essential Communitarian Reader*, ed. Amitai Etzioni (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998) 48.
[35] Ibid., 49.

possession of truths. The "reality of pluralism" would also enter into the varied beliefs of the citizens of the dialogical society. A dialogical society would put dialogue in the central position which, in earlier societies, had been typically occupied by an established religion and in totalitarian societies by an official ideology.[36]

For Herder and Taylor's approach towards pluralism to work the presumption of equal worth must become an ingrained ideal. People have to come to realize that there are other cultures and that they will have to live together more and more, both on a world scale and commingled in each individual society.[37] What this necessarily involves is the stance of equal dignity: a stance which is taken once people acknowledge the dialogical nature of knowledge and embark on the study of the other.[38] The precise basis, from which this presumption can be grounded, however, remains unclear. One ground which has been proposed, by Herder for instance, is a religious one. Taylor explains it is the view of divine providence, "according to which all this variety of culture was not a mere accident but was meant to bring about a greater harmony" in society and history.[39] For Herder, a transcendental theory of history was his way of grounding a moral system which tried to secure a person's responsibility for others by encouraging them to learn about all that is other.

While Taylor admits that he cannot rule out this view, he suggests that it is reasonable to suppose that such a system may have an ontological foundation. If accepted, this would mark a significant difference in the foundation of his thought on pluralism as compared to Herder's.[40] What Taylor suggests is that merely on a human level one could argue that cultures that have provided the horizon of

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[36] Smith, 195.

[37] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 72.

[38] Ibid., 72.

[39] Ibid., 72.

[40] Taylor's precise position on this point is rather vague. While he suggests that to be fully responsible to the other people (other-responsibility) through the apprehension of the Other as prior to the self is the highest form of self-realization, he does not specify what he believes the origin of this belief might be. Within *Sources of the Self*, for instance, he offers several suggestions that it may be religious in origin but does not outrightly state that this is the case. What he instead promises is to look into this question in greater detail within another work.

meaning for a large number of humans "are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject." To put it another way, "it would take a supreme arrogance to discount this possibility *a priori*."[41] What we therefore may need is only a sense of our own limited part in the whole human story to accept the presumption of equal dignity. This requires not "preemptory and inauthentic judgments of equal value, but a willingness to be open to comparative cultural study of the kind that must displace our horizons in the resulting fusions." Above all else, it must also entail the admission that we are far away from the ultimate horizon from which the relative worth of all cultures might be evident.[42]

Taylor's final approach towards pluralism is very similar to Herder's. For both, the incommensurability of goods is an inescapable aspect of the linguistic dimension. While incommensurability does not necessarily entail conflict, the tendency to derive one's reasoning from foundational moral principles does cause people, more frequently than not, to find themselves at odds. This tendency is assisted by various factors (which in Taylor's case are related to instrumental rationality) that cause people to become unaware of the dialogical nature of selfhood. Overcoming these factors and establishing the dialogical model within conventional thought is the way to achieve the revolution in self-understanding needed to overcome diversity and establish common moral positions.

While both Herder and Taylor believe that people could agree that some "ends" are preferable to others, Taylor presses this conviction further by claiming that some "ends" could perhaps, or have already, become universally accepted. Continual progress on this front could be achieved primarily through an enlargement or fusion of understandings, as well as establishing the political and institutional conditions which allowed for a communicative based response to emerging problems. For this Taylor turns to the Herderian political model whose fundamental premise involves the partnership between distinct intuitions and associations free from any center of power. For Herder and Taylor, a

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[41] Ibid., 72-73.
[42] Ibid., 73.

communicative process which continually strives to be socially inclusive is the best way of creating the sense of embeddedness needed to address pluralism and establish common moral positions.

Conclusion

The primary convention employed by Herder and Taylor in approaching social diversity and creating the conditions where co-existence can flourish involves the dialogical society. Opposed to the monological ideal where human beings and the entire natural world are compartmentalized in such a way that they can be manipulated in order serve a person's own interests, the dialogical society views all of existence as an inseparable whole whose parts demand acknowledgement and respect. Achieving these attitudes is assisted through Herder's concept of *Einfühlung* where a human being tries to project herself into the context of another person's socio-historic background. This "projection" assists people in better understanding and appreciating the distinctiveness of others. Entering into communicative exchanges with an openness to others and willingness to use *Einfühlung* is indispensable to all interactions within a dialogical society.

For Herder and Taylor, a dialogical society is dependent on acknowledging the teleological disposition of human nature. The vast array of social differences present throughout history and various social situations exist as a resource to improve human understanding and advance humanity. Herder explains, "[n]o individual human being exists *for himself*; 'he is *inserted into the whole of the species*, he is *only one for the continuing series*.'"[1] Human nature, accordingly, is always something more than one person or *Volk* can encompass. It is the process by which a human being continually enters into social exchanges which increase her understanding and add to an ongoing historical process which improves humanity. She, as with all human beings, is an important and vital link in an ongoing historical chain. What she learns and passes on to others, no matter how trivial, helps future generations. Herder elaborates:

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[1] Herder, "Treatise on the Origin of Language," 141.

Each individual is a human being; consequently, he continues to think for the whole chain of his life. Each individual is a son or daughter, was educated through instruction; consequently, he always inherited a share of the thought-treasures of his ancestors early on, and will pass them down in his own way to others. Hence in a certain way there is '*no thought, no invention, no perfection which does not reach further, almost ad infinitum*.' Just as I can perform no action, think no thought, that does not have a natural effect on the whole immeasurable sphere of *my* existence, likewise neither I nor any creature of my kind can do so without also having an effect with each (action or thought) for the kind and for the continuing totality of *the whole kind* and for the *continuing totality of the whole kind*. Each (action or thought) always produces a large or small scale wave: each changes the conditions; always has an effect *on others*, changes *something in these* as well—the first thought in the first human soul is connected with the last thought in the last human soul.[2]

Since communication and social exchanges are the processes which advance humanity throughout history Herder and Taylor both suggest that a political community should be structured in such a manner that discussion and deliberation can flourish. While the degree to which these conditions can be actualized will differ from community to community, the starting point in all instances involves accepting the dialogical nature of knowledge. Accepting the dialogical nature of knowledge challenges the monological ideal and changes the trajectory from which human interactions typically take place. It promotes a process where people begin to seek out new experiences and conversations with an openness to others and eagerness to expand their understandings. The unrestricted flow of information, free from censorship or the desire to exchange information for a profit, is an additional element associated with the dialogical nature of knowledge. A final element involves the cultivation of all things associated with communication and expression (such as literature, art, and poetry) which can improve human understanding.

Another aspect integral to a dialogical society is an education process which involves historical and cultural studies. These studies include a forward and backwards looking dimension. Looking backwards into history and understanding

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[2] Ibid., 155.

(using *Einfühlung*) the difficulties, similarities, and reactions of different peoples, in a variety of socio-historic contexts, allows those engaged in the discussion process at hand to make more informed decisions. It allows for a better understanding of others which is vital in the ongoing fusion of horizons since those engaged in the public debate can draw on a larger wealth of information to formulate their "best accounts."

Qualities common to all human beings can be found in their associative linkage through language. All human beings are connected by language and its related qualities. These basic qualities include the need to give expression to feelings and concerns, the need to communicate these with others, acknowledgement that knowledge is not only dialogical but also dependent on a socio-historic context, and a desire to move beyond (or expand on) the understanding encapsulated within this socio-historic context by interacting with others. These qualities shared by all human beings also reveal the principal characteristic of human existence: that the flourishing of the human species depends on its communication and co-existence with others. Herder explains: "[t]he distinctive characteristic plan which governs a human race has been pointed out: that through the chain of instruction parents and children become one, and hence each link only gets shoved by nature between two others in order to receive and to communicate."[3]

It may seem that the emphasis on a more situated understanding of human agency, with its belief in the linguistic origin of identity and teleological explanation of human nature, could lead to a set of policy innovations with a socially inclusive hue. In actual fact, however, the move towards successful co-existence is hampered, most notably, by those who refuse to accept the perspective brought forth by Herder's linguistic insights, as well as the complications and lack of clarity which is involved with implementing these insights as a political model. Amongst those involved in the former category are various people who find themselves aligned more closely with Berlin's rights-based approach than the dialogical position which is exemplified by Herder and added to by Taylor.

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[3] Ibid., 155.

A fundamental problem with the rights-based approach is that it often finds itself in opposition to the empowerment of groups which is required by the Herderian model. Simply stated, advocates of the rights-based approach typically maintain that rights should be applied equally and universally to all peoples. A major complication with this approach is that it runs counter to the Herderian model's recommendation that, in certain circumstances, it may be necessary to empower groups, perhaps even granting them additional rights, to ensure that they can equally participate within the political process. For those who adhere exclusively to a rights-based approach, this aspect of Herder's group pluralism is an unacceptable violation of their notion of equality. Convincing advocates of the rights-based approach to accept group pluralism is a clear challenge to the implementation of the Herderian perspective.

Nevertheless, the linguistic dualism and multicultural nature of Canada has motivated many recent Canadian political philosophers, especially Will Kymlicka, to argue that the recognition of group rights, far from violating the principle of human rights, is essential to their fulfillment. Since a good human life is one lived within the context of a cultural community which one has inherited, measures designed to promote the continued existence of such communities are essential to maintaining or improving the quality of a person's life. However, these philosophers also believe that group rights must not be permitted to "trump" fundamental human rights.[4]

Related to the tension between individual rights and group pluralism are several difficulties associated with implementation of the Herderian model. For one thing, full implementation involves achieving the utmost degree of democratic inclusiveness. According to Herder and Taylor, this involves self-rule in all political areas. Society should be a collection of self-governing citizens and

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[4] Kymlicka has argued for this position in numerous works, but the clearest expression of it can be found in his *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Charles Taylor has long been an advocate of group rights. A useful statement of his position and critical responses to it can be found in *Multiculturalism*, edited and introduced by Amy Gutman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Indeed, the concern with multiculturalism and group rights is coming to be identified as forming the basis of a distinctly Canadian political philosophy. See, for example, "Introduction," in Ronald Beiner and Wayne Norman, eds., *Canadian Political Philosophy* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001).

identity groups who actively and more directly participate in all areas of the political process. What is required to achieve this ideal is that a considerable amount of political power must come to be decentralized.

In the Canadian context, decentralization would likely involve regional and neighborhood alignments, as well as ethnic and linguistic groups becoming empowered members (to a larger extent than they currently are) of the political process. As a result, one of the key problems to be addressed involves how to attain the right balance between the "centrifugal" forces needed to direct political power outwards, towards the plurality of identity groups, and the "centripetal" forces required for efficient state governing in a country as large and diverse as Canada. Aside from the difficulties associated with attaining the right balance of powers, additional complications, such as ensuring that the empowerment process is fair, inclusive and, most importantly, socially understood and accepted, would certainly be an ongoing challenge.

This problem is further compounded by problems relating to the redistribution of societal powers. Particularly speaking, in the Canadian circumstance this involves the further and continual displacement of several power holders within society, such as results from the influence which Eastern Canada has on the political process in Western Canada, the similar relationship which Anglophone Canada has over Francophone Canada and the First Nations Peoples and the Federal government's control of policy areas which might best be dealt with by the Provincial governments. Additional complications also include the management of the economy and its stakeholders by the collectively negotiated needs of the citizens.[5] Needless to say, in all of these instances relinquishing one sphere of power or influence in order to empower another is a delicate and

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[5] For Herder and Taylor, an economy which operates closely to the free enterprise model, that is, a politically unregulated system of economic production which is shaped largely by market forces, is unacceptable. The autonomy which the free enterprise model grants to economic interactions, making all economic pursuits free from political interference, whether that is from the state or another form of citizen representation, is in direct conflict with their communicative and inclusive model of democracy. For a brief account of Herder's and Taylor's views on economics see Johann Gottfried Herder, "This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity," *Herder*: *Philosophical Writings*, ed., trans. Michael N. Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 328; and Nicholas H. Smith, *Charles Taylor: Meaning, Morals and Modernity* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 183-192.

complicated process. This is especially the case when the parties in question are not familiar with or cannot properly understand each other.

A further complication involving the implementation of a dialogical society relates to its confrontation with the power holders and social attitudes that can affect the functioning of the communication process. For example, power holders can use their resources to influence the agenda and topics of discussion debated by the speech community. Also related to this concern is the seduction of the speech community by ideological doctrines which can be detrimental to genuine social debate. Naturally, within a dialogical society preventing such situations is an ongoing challenge.

Despite the complication involved in establishing a dialogical society it is clear that a political process which uses dialogical ideals, asserting the primacy of communication and discussion, is advantageous. Evidence of this fact can be seen within the Canadian context whose vast array of differences, at times, has seemed on the verge of tearing the country apart. In the face of constitutional wranglings which have frequented Canada's political past, as well as the bilingual and regional related disputes which are a continual problem, Canadians have continually established common positions and found reasons why they should continue to co-exist. Furthermore, this process is almost always done in a civil and peaceful way. The Canadian experience exemplifies an essential theme in the perspective shared by Herder and Taylor; namely, that improving the communicative process is the most effective way of creating conditions where human beings can continue to co-exist.

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