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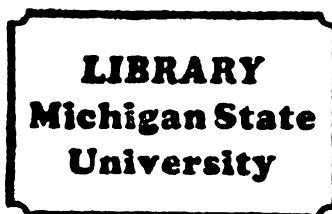
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ETHICAL AGENCY IN MODERNITY

By

Nancy Ruth Crocker

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ABSTRACT

ETHICAL AGENCY IN MODERNITY

By

Nancy Ruth Crocker

The motivating problem of the dissertation is modern ethical skepticism. The problem of ethical skepticism is presented as it has been articulated by Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre understands the problem in terms of the interminability of ethical discourse. Ethical argumentation is interminable because of the absence of consensus concerning norms. Norms function as the premises in ethical arguments. Where consensus on norms is absent, argument cannot proceed to a reasoned conclusion. Consensus concerning norms is based on the sharing of coherent ethical traditions and ways of life. This analysis suggests that the pluralism of modernity is fatal to coherent ethical agency. The dissertation explores and ultimately opposes the idea that a single, shared, coherent ethical tradition is necessary for ethical agency.

The aim of the dissertation is to determine, at least in a general way, what kind of community, institutions or institutional arrangements within a community might provide the conditions for coherent modern ethical agency. I pursue this aim through two levels of analysis: the relationship between self and community, and the relationship between practical rationality and historical conditions. After two initial chapters, relevant work by Kant, MacIntyre, Hegel and Habermas is explored and applied.

It is my conclusion that MacIntyre's initial insights are correct, but I argue that Habermas provides a more consistent and compelling analysis

of both modernity and practical rationality. I rely on Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation as my model of the conditions which must obtain in modernity if coherent ethical agency is to be realized. Institutionalization of the ideal speech situation will not entail the development of a new, worldwide substantive ethical community. Instead, realization of the ideal speech situation will entail a society in which multiple substantive ethical communities flourish, and a political system functions which allows conflicts among communities to be resolved in a way that can be accepted as legitimate by all. Realization of the ideal speech situation is itself conditioned upon the real possibility that all persons and all groups can participate effectively and equally in discourse. This condition would require greater economic equality and a wider scope for democracy than is currently practiced.

To Jay

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Introduction

Contemporary Moral Skepticism

Alasdair MacIntyre argues that contemporary moral skepticism is the result of the repudiation of the moral tradition of the virtues in conjunction with the failure of Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers to successfully discover "new rational secular foundations for morality."[1] He combines his claims about contemporary moral skepticism with a description and diagnosis of what it is to be a person specifically in the modern world. This combination powerfully demonstrates that ethical action in the modern world is problematic. We must act, but we lack a coherent framework of ethical principles and traditions which might guide our action. His analysis of contemporary "ethical" agents reveals the interconnections among the notions of selfhood, community and rational ethics. Although MacIntyre is critical of Kant's efforts to provide a foundation for ethics, he articulates his own view of right action in Kantian terms.

> For Kant - and a parallel point could be made about many earlier moral philosophers - the difference between a human relationship uninformed by morality and one so informed is precisely the difference between one in which each person treats the other primarily as a means to his or her ends and one in which each treats the other as an end. To treat someone else as an end is to offer them what I take to be good reasons for acting in one way rather than another, but to leave it to them to evaluate those reasons. It is to be unwilling to influence another except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good.[2]

In contrast to Kant's intuitions about morality there is the more recent doctrine of emotivism. Emotivism is a theory about the meaning of moral

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[1]MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 117.
[2]Ibid., p. 23.

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judgments. It claims that moral judgments are merely the expression of preference. It finds that values are not rational and thus, while we might be able to give a causal history for our preferences, reasons cannot be given in support of moral judgments. MacIntyre does not find emotivism tenable as a theory of the meaning of evaluative statements, but he argues that it has become true as a description of the *use* of evaluative statements in contemporary Western culture.[3] The importance of MacIntyre's contribution is not so much that he has presented a refutation of emotivism as that he has pointed out that emotivism has become embodied in contemporary Western culture. MacIntyre argues that the rational basis for ethics has dissolved and that we live in an emotivist culture. Indeed, we have become emotivist selves.

MacIntyre describes two key characteristics of the emotivist self. The two are related. First, the emotivist self lacks any ultimate criteria by which he or she can justify ethical judgments. Second, because the emotivist self lacks ultimate ethical criteria, he or she is unable to distinguish between manipulative and non-manipulative interaction with others. The distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative interaction with others has been obliterated because, as we saw above, that distinction is made in terms of the ability to offer another person reasons. If we cannot defend our ethical claims with reasons, then we can never do more than merely persuade or manipulate one another with our "ethical" claims. The distinction is no longer viable because only one term remains a possibility. MacIntyre is gravely disturbed by his own diagnosis and calls our time "the

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[3]Ibid., p. 13.

new dark ages."[4] He calls for "the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained."[5] I will discuss MacIntyre's argument more fully in a later chapter.

MacIntyre defends his claim that we live in a time of moral skepticism by pointing to the interminability of contemporary moral argumentation.

> The most striking feature of contemporary moral utterance is that so much of it is used to express disagreements; and the most striking feature of the debates in which these disagreements are expressed is their interminable character. I do not mean by this just that such debates go on and on and on - although they do - but also that they apparently can find no terminus. There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture.[6]

In *After Virtue,* MacIntyre gives examples of the interminability of contemporary moral argumentation. It is disturbingly easy to find examples of what MacIntyre means by the interminability of contemporary moral argumentation. We have found such an example when we have found a set of valid arguments for conflicting conclusions. Excellent arguments can and have been made for conflicting conclusions concerning such issues as the justness of modern war, the right of a woman to abortion, and the obligation of government to provide the conditions for equality of opportunity. MacIntyre claims that the reason that contemporary moral argumentation is interminable is because the rival arguments are conceptually incommensurable.[7] The problem is that valid arguments can be given for differing conclusions to the same problems. The usual rational procedure in such a case is to examine the premises of the arguments. Conflicting

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[4]Ibid., p. 261.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Ibid., p. 7.
[7]Ibid., p. 8.

contemporary moral claims are defended by arguments which can be found to ultimately rest on premises which are the expression of normative claims. For instance, equality may be the ultimate value of one argument which is being compared with an argument which is shown to ultimately rest on an appeal to liberty. What makes moral arguments incommensurable is that there seems to be no way to argue for the ultimate normative claims or concepts which function as premises in the chain of arguments in which one finds oneself engaged.

MacIntyre claims that these ultimate normative claims are justified, not by intellectual arguments, but by ways of life. They are embodied in traditions. What we find in incommensurable moral arguments is the clash of incommensurable moral traditions. It is one of the characteristics of modernity that moral discourse has come to unwittingly incorporate incommensurable moral claims into the currency of a single discourse. Contemporary ethical agency is undercut by folding into a single discourse incommensurable and conflicting values.

MacIntyre's argument is reflected in a wider context in the concern that contemporary American culture is in a state of crisis because of growing cultural diversity. That diversity was always present, but now minorities and women are beginning to have the power and voice to refuse to be falsely homogenized or simply ignored. The image of the melting pot is wearing thin and being replaced with a debate about how to preserve diversity and plurality while avoiding uncertainty about ethical values. The central value of respect seems to require that every ethical tradition be made room for and yet this very practice has resulted in the apparent undercutting of the coherence of each tradition. This matter is discussed most frequently as the

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problem of the conflict *among* divergent communities. The assumption here is that persons are pure representatives of distinctive, intact and coherent traditions. The power of MacIntyre's analysis is that he points to the incompleteness of this presentation of the skepticism reflected in contemporary ethical discourse. As people from differing moral traditions interact, they pick up pieces of one another's traditions and incorporate them into their own discursive repertoire. This process is similar to the way in which languages incorporate words which originally came from other languages. Indeed, this "corruption" of language is one of the ways in which persons take up values at odds with those expressed in their predominant ethical tradition. As in the case of language, notice that this process occurs cumulatively through time as people hand down traditions which embody values at odds with their current way of life or the culture they are incorporating into the value schema which informs their choices. This process would be harmless except that it produces agents who are multilingual in moral traditions which contain conflicting or simply different values. Thus, the problem of the uncertainty about ethical values arises, not only because persons from divergent traditions can find no common ground, but because individual ethical agents have become the repositories of conflicting values. The modern ethical agent has become incoherent and is likely to become increasingly so.

The above argument makes it clear that ethical skepticism cannot be banished by eliminating diversity, nor by allowing or encouraging it. The current debate about difference ignores MacIntyre's insight that the incoherence is within individual ethical agents as well as among them. Thus, the problem of contemporary ethical skepticism is three-fold: it is the

problem of the doubt cast on particular ethical discourses by the plurality of discourses; it is the problem of the difficulty of coming to agreement for persons who stand within differing ethical traditions; it is the problem of the incoherence of individual ethical agents.

Self and Community

It should be apparent from the preceding discussion that the approach I am taking is one that is sensitive to history. The contemporary crisis in ethical reflection is not simply a matter of establishing the correct ethical principles. The work of ethicists may be construed as the business of determining the correct ethical principle or principles and the process of applying this principle or these principles correctly. This is not the kind of project in which I want to engage. Indeed, it is my contention that these projects are merely the justifications and elaborations of ethical principles already at work within a particular culture. My project is rather to explore the way in which communities provide the condition for ethical agency.

Communities may provide the condition for coherent ethical agency in one of two ways. First, the practices of the community may embody a coherent, single set of values. In this case, individuals come to reflect these values in their own judgments by participating in the institutions of the community. Among these crucial institutions are the family, the economic system and the church. When all of these institutions embody a consistent, coherent and single set of values, the individuals shaped by participation in these institutions will reflect this coherence. Such a community may be said to be a substantive ethical community and to embody substantive values. In such a community, particular values can be articulated as the values of the

community. It will be my argument that modernity cannot support such a community. I will present this argument in the following chapter.

The second way that a community might provide the conditions for coherent ethical agency can again be described in terms of institutions. In this case, the institutions may act as the means of mediation among persons with divergent substantive values. If such institutions were adequate and successful, then they would mitigate the difficulty of persons coming to agreement who come from differing ethical traditions *and* they would also have an impact on the incoherence of individual ethical agents. I have already introduced the notion that institutions shape individuals. What I hope to demonstrate is that institutions might provide individuals an opportunity to develop skills which enable them to mediate among their own conflicting substantive values. These skills may themselves embody values, but values of a higher order than what I will call substantive values. Thinking historically is especially crucial for my project because I contend that there is a sense in which persons have evolved as ethical agents. This evolution can only be revealed if the relationship between self and community is itself followed as an evolving relationship with influence on ethical agency. My discussions of Hegel and Habermas will concern these issues.

The relationship between self and community as it bears on ethical skepticism and ethical agency will provide the focus in the following chapters. This relationship is especially interesting because many other issues and concepts depend on it. For instance, exploring this relationship is an entry point to the notion of the distinctively modern self. The notion of the distinctively modern self can be revealed by considering the way in which

this self can be disentangled from his or her community. Indeed, the modern
ethical agent, as articulated and clarified by Kant, is precisely that self who can
make ethical judgments in abstraction from all worldly influences, including
those stemming from his or her particular community. While the possibility
of such abstraction was conceivable for earlier thinkers and agents, it only
came into full flowering and operation in modernity. Thus, the distinctively
modern individual is baptized in the diremption of self and community.
Because Kant is the figure whose work best represents this view of the agent, I
will carefully consider his work on this subject. Kant sets the stage for ethical
reflection in modernity.

I will be engaged in analyzing the relationship between self and
community as presented in the ethical and social theory of four philosophers:
Kant, Hegel, MacIntyre and Habermas. I will be especially interested in their
conceptions of practical rationality and the way in which they find practical
rationality related to historical conditions. Each philosopher has a specific
conception of the self as a being which is capable of practical rationality. I will
demonstrate each philosopher's conception of the connection between
practical rationality and historical conditions. Thus, I will be engaged in a
theoretical project which focuses on the following two central themes: the
relationship between self and community, and the relationship between
practical rationality and historical conditions. However, I have said that my
aim is to discover the conditions for coherent ethical agency in modernity. By
'ethical agency' I mean simply being in a state of acting in a situation with
ethical implications or in a situation which is most adequately described by
reference to ethical categories. In light of my historical approach, it should be
clear that these conditions are not theoretical "conditions," i. e. dependent on

the discovery and implementation of the correct ethical principles. Whether one analyzes ethical problems and ethical agency in terms of history, conceptions of practical rationality or in terms of principles, one is engaged in theorizing. However, my historical approach to the question of agency suggests that the conditions for coherent ethical agency can only be brought about through practical interventions in the world. Thus, while I will be engaged in a theoretical activity, the results of my theorizing will have implications for practice and will only be fully tested and filled out by practical activity.

Let me close this brief introduction with a restatement of my aim and signposts for how I will proceed. I hope that this introduction has made clear the meaning of my aim and the sense of the path chosen.

In light of the failure of modern Western communities to provide the conditions for coherent ethical agency, I am interested in attempting to determine, at least in a general way, what kind of community or what institutional arrangements within a community might provide the conditions for coherent modern ethical agency. In pursuing this project, I will attempt to clarify the relationship between self and community which I maintain is the basis of ethical agency.

Before suggestions can be made for the conditions for modern, coherent ethical agency, two key tasks must be performed. The relationship between self and community must be explored as it relates to ethical agency, and the character of modernity must be explored. These two tasks are clearly interrelated since modernity is itself a distinctive context for persons and communities. While some general comments can be made about the relationship between self and community, since different kinds of

communities are the condition for different kinds of agents, the relationship between modern selves and modern communities must be specifically explored.

Virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism have been the most influential ethical theories in the Western world. All three of these contain an analysis of the relationship between self and community. Such an analysis is necessary since most ethical quandaries center on the impact of one person's actions on another person or persons. Furthermore, in different ways these theories explain how ethical agency is possible and the content of ethical action. The least obvious case is that of deontology, but even here the self is located within a community. Each theory contains a particular conception of human nature and demonstrates the claim that the self is always determined in relation to some community. Below I would like to introduce three kinds of selves which are inscribed in their respective moral theories.

The Virtuous Self

When Socrates was offered the choice of suicide or exile, he chose suicide. This choice reflects the relation between self and community embraced by virtue ethics. In choosing suicide Socrates affirmed that to be a person was to be a citizen of one's country and that citizenship was not a cloak one could throw off and remain a person. This community-rootedness is characteristic of virtue ethics. The following three claims may be said to characterize virtue ethics: (1) To be a person is to be a member of a particular community. (2) 'Good' and 'right' are defined by the norms and values of one's community. (3) Ethical knowledge can be conveyed by examples and narratives. The conception of the self embraced by virtue ethics contrasts with the Stoic conception of the self. The difference between these two conceptions of the

self can be explained in terms of the different communities of which the self is claimed to be a member. The Stoics do not reject the notion that the self must belong to some community. The Stoics only disagree with advocates of virtue ethics as to the community to which the self ultimately belongs. The Stoic view is that the self is a citizen of the universe. Thus the relevant community is the "community" of all persons. This notion suggests the equality of all persons as opposed to the notion of person as a member of a particular *polis* or particular community. It may be odd to refer to membership in the class of rational beings in the universe as membership in a community. The notion of community connotes sharing of particular ways of life. However, the suggestion in the Stoic notion is that contents might be derived from the simple fact of rationality.

Kant builds on this conception in his notion of membership in a realm of ends.[8] The Stoic notion appeals beyond the particularity of a historical community to what is common to all human beings. In contrast to this notion is the insinuation of the citizens of Athens, at least during the time of Pericles, that those who were not citizens of Athens were not quite human or at least not human in the way in which they were human. The implication of this view is that if there is a content to the notion of good, the only place it can be found is within one's own particular state or community. Given this location, there can be no way of conceiving of the good of the individual, or what is right for the individual apart from or prior to the good for the community or state. Thus, two conclusions are drawn: (1) the good of the individual is subordinated to the good of the state or community and, (2) the

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[8] Kant, Immanuel, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 51 - 52.

individual has no appeal beyond the state or community. 'Good' and 'right' are thus defined by the norms and values of one's community. Furthermore, the particularity of the norms and values cannot be expressed in abstractions, but only in concrete individual actions embedded in concrete narratives. Thus, Aristotle instructs us that if we want to know what the right thing to do is, we should consider what the great man of the community would do in the situation at hand.

It is important to notice that reason is appealed to in each of the three major Western ethical theories and especially to notice that reason means something quite different for virtue ethics and Stoic ethics. Reason must be the same for all those who are members of the relevant community. Since the community which is relevant for ethical agency for the Stoics is the community of all persons, then reason must be the same for all persons. Since the community which is relevant for ethical agency for virtue ethicists is a particular, historical community, then reason cannot be the universal, ahistorical reason of the Stoics. When Aristotle wants to explain what he means by reason, he does so by referring to a particular agent in the community: the prudent man. It is meaningless to refer to some ideal agent. Finally, all that Aristotle can tell us about how reason determines the mean is that it is determined relative to all relevant elements of the situation as the prudent man would determine it.

The Autonomous Self

The autonomous self of Kantian ethical theory is clearly the descendant of the Stoic conception of the self. This is the conception of the self which has come to be predominant in Western thought. It is interesting to note that

while there was already a tradition of dualistic thinking about the self in ancient times, the discourse of the self as at least partially a pure, rational agent takes a different turn in Kant. One difference between the Stoic conception of the self and the modern conception of the autonomous self is that the Stoic notion assumes the unity of nature and reason.[9] The rules of nature are rational and discoverable by reason. By the time Kant takes up the notion of the rational self, the natural rationality of the self has come to mean something that was not part of the Stoic conception. The view of human nature which accompanied the burgeoning capitalism of modernity was the notion, articulated by Locke,[10] that the propensity toward unlimited accumulation was natural and rational. Kant's efforts may, in part, be seen as attempts to sort out the natural and rational elements of the human self which are conflated in the new psychology.

Theories of ethics tend to rely heavily on particular conceptions of the subject. Kant's system is an especially clear example of this employment of the concept of the subject. Kant's conception of ethics is founded on the notion of an autonomous self whose rational will is free and imposes moral obligations on itself. Contemporary critics have rejected this conception of the subject. Foucault claims that this conception is a fiction which arose and developed in particular historical situations and thus cannot be used to found a transhistorical ethics. This raises the question of the justification of moral decisions and the possibility of justifying moral decisions without an ethical theory based on a conception of an ethical subject.

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[9]Davidson, William L., *The Stoic Creed* (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company Publishers, 1979).

[10]Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), section 35.

In contrast to virtue ethics, Kant maintains that ethical decisions may be justified by reference to universal laws. Kant attempts to provide an objective grounding for ethics by requiring that the ethical subject possess an autonomous will which gives itself only those laws which it can also will be universal laws. "That is to say, I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law."[11] Kant believed that in making this move he revealed the objective basis of ethics. He identifies universal standards with objective standards by arguing that a universal standard is valid for all rational agents.

One aspect of Kant's conception of the ethical subject, and the basis of his ethics which has been considered a fundamental flaw, is that he finds it necessary to introduce two kinds of causality: natural causality to account for the phenomenal or sensible world and the will as a kind of causality which is the power of rational beings to produce effects in the phenomenal world. Furthermore, Kant argues that in order to account for the rational will there must be a reality other than the phenomenal world with its laws of cause and effect. There must be a timeless world, the noumenal world, in accordance with which rational agents will. The necessary positing of such an unknowable world has seemed objectionable to many thinkers. Thus Kant's views have the theoretical difficulty of resting on an ontology which assumes a necessary unknown.

The Moral Hero

Although utilitarianism and deontology have traditionally been presented as the most opposed of ethical theories, they share a common view of the self

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[11]Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 70.

in opposition to virtue ethics. The utilitarian principle defines a good action as that action which will bring about the greatest happiness for all who may be influenced by the action in question.[12] This principle implies that the securing of one's own happiness or the happiness of one's family or friends is not more important morally than the securing of the happiness of strangers. Only to the extent that our actions may have greater impact on our own happiness or the happiness of those close to us can we take this special relationship into account. This principle maintains a view of the self like that of deontology in so far as both detach the self from its particular location and from its feelings. It is paradoxical that utilitarianism, which *prima facie* is concerned with feelings of pleasure and pain, discredits the moral value of other feelings. Love is not to be counted among the moral reasons for any action. Thus, one must go through argumentative gymnastics to justify saving one's mother from among a group of drowning strangers. The fact of special relationship is not relevant apart from the issue of what action will bring about the most happiness for all. Utilitarians have been able to make the case for saving one's mother over strangers, but only by arguing that if everyone cares especially for one's family, then we will all be happiest in the long run. If this were not the case, and often in particular cases it is not, then there is no moral reason for particular attention to one's self or one's family, neighbors or community. Indeed, if one must choose between saving one's elderly mother and a young brain surgeon, the clear morally correct choice is the young brain surgeon. Deontologists can also find clever ways to defend special obligations, but not on the basis of feeling or special connection. The deontologist justifies special obligations by awkwardly drawing them out of

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[12]Mill, John Stuart, *Utilitarianism*, ed. George Sher (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishers, 1979), Chapter II.

some formulation of the categorical imperative. Thus, both utilitarianism and deontology rest on a view of the self which is only accidentally related to its historical location.

Utilitarianism is distinguished from ethical egoism by its claim that the good action is that which will bring most happiness to the greatest number. This ambiguous statement at least is clear in denying that the happiness of the agent is what counts exclusively. However, it leaves as completely mysterious what would motivate the agent to act ethically. For both Mill and Kant, moral motivation is problematic. The modern conception of the self, with its psychological assumption described above, severs the self from its community and thus presents the specifically ethical agent as self-sacrificing in ethical action. The sharp distinction between action for self and action for others is a gulf which presumes the isolation of the self from others. By contrast, a virtue ethics, with a view of the self as internally related to his or her community, does not have to explain moral motivation or require moral heroes. A person who sees him or herself as organically a part of his or her community does not make such a sharp distinction between good for self and good for community members. Claiming that the price of widgets should be higher because their low price reflects the abject poverty of some third world worker may be experienced as a selfless, moral act. However, factories in the United States are increasingly moving to third world countries to exploit the willingness to work for very low wages. An unemployed factory worker who realizes the link between his or her unemployment and the exploitively low wages of third world workers may campaign for increased wages for that worker. The campaign will not be in the spirit of the selfless moral hero or the selfish amoral person, but may reflect a recognition that the good of both

is linked. The modern conception of the self, and the conditions of competitive capitalism which make it experientially true, give rise to the conception of the moral as the self-sacrificing.

The Emotivist Self

The issues which link the question of the self with the problem of agency and community are beginning to emerge. I would like to introduce these in terms of the discussions of the virtuous self and the autonomous self. The first discussion describes the self as obtaining its content from its community and thus understands agency in terms of some particular community. The second, the modern view entailed in the notion of the autonomous ethical agent, denigrates the influence of the self's concrete setting and invokes a rational, ahistorical self as the locus of ethical agency. The first analysis stresses that to function in an ethical world requires a particular social and historical location. The agent attains the capacity to act ethically by discovering what ethical action means in his or her social setting and practicing ethical judgment and behavior in that setting. Alternatively, the second theory understands ethical agency as the ability to perform the correct decision procedure which will produce the correct ethical choice. One is able to do this because one is rational. The condition for ethical agency for both is a rational system. For the autonomous self this means that one really can deduce the correct ethical action, i.e. that the decision procedure is determinant and produces a single outcome. For the virtuous self, rationality must be concretely inscribed in the practices of the community.

I would like to demonstrate through analysis of two examples how the view of the self which I have called the 'virtuous self' explains the rationality

of ethical agency. These demonstrations will serve as the basis for the beginning of the evaluation of the conditions in the modern world which undermine ethical agency and thus will open the way to consider conditions which might support ethical agency in the modern world.

Two Examples

There was a Native American tribe which maintained the social practice of excluding from the protection of any of the members' tepees any older woman who had neither a living husband or living sons. This practice would result in the woman's eventual death from exposure. This was the common practice of the tribe and considered morally acceptable by the members of the tribe. This practice is considered immoral behavior by contemporary Westerners. However, one might come to understand, if not condone, this practice by considering how the members of this tribe understood their own identity. If one asked an older woman who was a member of this tribe and had neither a living husband or living sons who she was, she might have no answer or she might answer that once she was the wife of so-and-so and the mother of such-and-such sons, but now she is no one. The members of this tribe were completely identified with their social roles. A woman such as we have described no longer has a function in her community and so has lost her identity. She considers herself an aberration of nature - a living dead person, a ghost who still walks the earth. She is considered in this way by the other members of her community and in this light it is quite understandable that no one treats her as they would a real living person who should be sheltered from the cold. We might feel that we better understood this practice when we discovered that this was a nomadic

tribe and realized the difficulties of survival for such a tribe. It is interesting to notice that such a consideration would not be counted as a reason which justified this practice by any member of the tribe. Such a reason might explain the social evolution of this practice, but not how it functioned as a reason for those involved. The woman is already dead because she no longer has a social function within the tribe. It is somehow perverse to help to maintain the dead in a twilight life.

In this example we can see how social practices can provide the parameters within which a person can establish his or her identity. The tribal woman knows who she is in terms of the practices which define her role in the tribe and prescribe her duties and rights. That she is a *good* woman can be objectively determined within the practices of the tribe in terms of whether or not she has fulfilled the duties which define her. There is consensus among the tribal members concerning the duties of each member. Objective criteria for evaluating actions and making decisions can be made by reference to this background consensus. The evaluation of some practice is not simply an arbitrary matter. But neither is it a completely ahistorical matter. The evaluative status of some practice is not determined by the self-conscious decision of some group, although something like this infrequently happens when new things are discovered or novel situations occur. The fact of some practice's evaluative status is an objective matter and still the result of human agreement in an historical manner. The evolved agreement of generations of persons has provided the background upon which objective agreement, here and now, can be based. Similarly, it was generations of evolved historical and social practice that provided the worldview that made action in the tribe described above an objective matter.

The above example serves to illustrate the connections between self identity and ethical agency and demonstrate the way in which the rational basis for agency is inscribed in an individual's social setting. I would like to turn now to the contemporary Western world. What is it to be a modern person? Perhaps the best way to begin an answer to this question is by considering a person who we can accept as representative, in ways relevant for our inquiry, of many contemporary persons. Let us imagine what this person might tell us about himself. His answer will give us insight into his self-understanding of his identity. In response to our asking Scott to tell us about himself, he mentions the following things: (a) he was born in Abilene, Texas; (b) he is a student at Southwestern University; (c) he has a sister who is a student at the same University; (d) he is a member of a fraternity at the University; (e) he has two pets: a goose and a dog; (f) he likes to ride a motorcycle without wearing a helmet; (g) he has a part-time job in a local pharmacy, and (h) he is a member of the United Methodist Church. One thing that is interesting about such an answer is that people really respond with this unorganized and unhierarchized set of details about themselves. This answer does not reveal any single primary source of identity for Scott or even any sense that he considers some things more crucial to his identity than others. Of course, this may be because of Scott's age and status as a college student. It would be interesting to compare the answers of people in different age groups and types of societies to the request to describe themselves.

Another point of interest about Scott's response is that it demonstrates the interaction of his social environment and his subjective experience. This draws attention to the need to clarify the way in which the social setting of an

individual contributes to his or her identity formation. Scott's response gives us evidence for and insight into the socialization of individuals. What is particularly striking about Scott's answer is that everything he has told us about himself consists of things which are *not* Scott. We might press Scott and complain that we asked him to tell us about himself, but all he has done is to tell us about locations, universities, siblings, fraternities, animals, motorcycles, part-time jobs and churches. These are clearly things that exist without Scott and would continue to exist without him. We asked Scott to tell us about himself, not about all these other things. Scott might try to tell us some more intimate details about himself, but we could respond in a similar vein. If Scott tells us he is five feet and ten inches tall, we might object that now he has referred us to a standard of measuring which has nothing at all to do with the individual person Scott. Our point is that whatever Scott tells us under the rubric of describing himself will be things that point away from Scott to his world. We will be learning as much about the world Scott lives in as we will about Scott himself. An excellent way to learn about the way the world was two hundred years ago would be, if it were possible, to ask someone who lived two hundred years ago to tell us about him or herself. Our point is that the social setting of an individual is not at all external to him or her, but a substantial feature of identity formation. This is true in traditional societies as well as modern societies.

As a rational actor, the self must have principles of some sort to motivate action in the various spheres of his or her life. These principles vary with the particular setting. This fact already undermines the simplistic conception of the atomistic self which portrays the self as motivated only by self-interest. When Scott goes to work, he understands that he must conform to certain

expectations. His entire orientation to his experience is altered by his understanding of his role. He is actively alert for cues from his environment that he might not even notice in a non-work setting. Now he watches for shop-lifters or the boss and is careful to be courteous. Thus, the differing settings within which he acts influence the way he experiences his environment and prompt selective behaviors from him. Different settings bring with them different organizational and motivational principles which figure into experience and action.

Let us consider an occasion in which Scott lies to protect a fraternity brother. Given that Scott thinks it is morally right to lie to protect a fraternity brother, if we ask him why he believes this, the answer to our question will give us insight into the principles organizing fraternity life. The idea of a fraternity is to create a social unit with its own identity within the larger framework of a university. Loyalty to one's fraternity brothers and action which will not disgrace the fraternity are values which express the idea of a fraternity. They are principles within which the idea of a fraternity is articulated. Given these coupled motivational and institutional insights, we can see how lying to protect a fraternity brother can be justified as something that is morally right within the fraternity setting. But notice that Scott's world does not consist entirely of his life in the fraternity. Let us consider three other features of Scott's life. He has a part-time job in a local pharmacy, he is a member of the United Methodist Church and he is a member of a family. The principle which organizes economic life and thus provides motivation and explanation for behavior is the "bottom line." In a capitalist economic system, a businessperson must act for the maximization of self-interest. This principle does not only operate to motivate the behavior of the

single owner of a business, but permeates the entire economic sphere and those behaving within it. The principle which organizes religious life is the principle of selflessness. Here we are instructed not to think only, or even primarily, about ourselves, but to lose ourselves in God's purposes and service. The principle which organizes family life is that of concern for the other members of the family, i.e. mutual nurturance. As we justified Scott's lying for a fraternity brother, we might justify practices within the spheres just mentioned by reference to the principles governing these spheres. The problem with this mode of justification concerning its application to the modern world is that it requires a separation of the different spheres of our lives in a way that cannot practically be accomplished.

Consider the value orientation which underlies action in accordance with The American Dream in juxtaposition with the minimum conception of morality. The American Dream is to succeed as an individual. This is generally understood in terms of either power or money. This is a value which motivates and justifies behavior. The minimum conception of morality is the idea that we should treat other people with respect. These two imperatives often come into conflict. The minimum conception of morality does not exempt those moments when we have an opportunity to get ahead by, for instance, deception. Certainly to deceive someone is to not respect him or her. This conception of morality applies to all time and all people. Current moral dilemmas in the workplace highlight this problem. Employees face choices of the following kind: obey the boss's order to dump toxic waste into a river or be discharged. Employees faced with this dilemma are often able to perform deeds which they would never have performed as private persons because of their facility in shifting from one sphere of their

lives to another. This is a psychological defense mechanism produced by the exigencies of modern life. Logically, we cannot keep the different spheres of our lives separate. The modern world is not a coherent whole, but is made of spheres which operate according to conflicting values. The clash of the principles which organize moral and economic life are the most obvious examples of this clash.

> Suppose I ask the economist: am I acting in accordance with economic laws if I earn money by the sale of my body, by prostituting it to another person's lust (in France, the factory workers call the prostitution of their wives and daughters the *n*th hour of work, which is literally true); or if I sell my friend to the Moroccans (and the direct sale of men occurs in all civilized countries in the form of trade in conscripts)? He will reply: you are not acting contrary to my laws, but you must take into account what Cousin Morality and Cousin Religion have to say. My *economic* morality and religion have no objection to make, but . . . But whom then should we believe, the economist or the moralist? The morality of political economy is *gain*, work, thrift and sobriety - yet political economy promises to satisfy my needs. The political economy of morality is the riches of a good conscience, or virtue, etc., but how can I be virtuous if I am not alive and how can I have a good conscience if I am not aware of anything? The nature of alienation implies that each sphere applies a different and contradictory norm, that morality does not apply the same norm as political economy, etc., because each of them is a particular alienation of man; each is concentrated upon a specific area of alienated activity and is itself alienated from the other(s)[13]

What is characteristic of the modern way of life is that we live at once within several conflicting institutional frameworks which carry with them their own rationalities providing for motivations and responsibilities. The typical contemporary person attempts what cannot be done: to keep separate the motivational principles which govern the different parts of his or her life.

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[13]Marx, Karl, *Karl Marx Early Writings*, translated by T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 173.

The result is a peculiar confusion and defensive blindness resulting in individuals who are well-functioning schizophrenics with a set of selves discernible in terms of the behavioral norms they embrace.

A developmental notion of the self is of a subject which synthesizes its experience and is the locus for the integration of outer and inner experience which provides the basis of action. This self is confronted with the modern social world and attempts to integrate the conflicting value spheres of the modern world. The picture of the modern self which emerges is of a deeply incoherent self. The modern self is incoherent in the sense that when one tries to integrate the values of the modern world, one cannot succeed and yet one must act and continue to try to make sense out of a world which makes contradictory demands and asks us to justify our actions as though there were a coherent scheme to which one could refer. The modern world lacks a unified ethical life within even the complex social subsystem in which a single person lives. This is concretely seen in the example of the employee faced with discharge if he or she refuses to participate in illegal environmental pollution. Workplace dilemmas like this illustrate the complexity of the problem because they often involve the interweaving of ethical and prudential values. To meet one's obligations to one's family is an ethical imperative. The employee in this situation may be confronted with a conflict of duties: duty to the common good and duty to one's dependents. However, the origin of the conflict situation resides in that set of values which is inscribed in the imperatives of economic activity. There does not exist in the modern world any overarching ethical principle or hierarchy of principles which unifies ethical life and thus provides the basis for rational decision-making. The notion of the lack of a unified ethical life refers to the

broad sense of ethics as encompassing all value orientations which motivate and justify actions. In the modern world we find competing and contradictory spheres of values which preclude rational integration. In this sense, the modern world is irrational.

If the above analysis is correct, the problems of the irresolvability of ethical disputes and of the personal and arbitrary character of ethical problems and choices are not problems which reflect the failure of ethical theory. Instead, they are problems which reflect the absence of conditions for coherent ethical agency. The above analysis locates the source of the problem in the conflicting rationality spheres of the modern world. This immediately suggests that in order to have coherent agency, we must eliminate, overcome or mitigate this plurality. MacIntyre and Hegel confront this issue. Before evaluating their suggestions, I would like to outline issues in the debate between a transcendental as opposed to an historical basis for ethical agency and prepare for a deeper understanding of the modern world by discussing Kant. The discussion of the historical basis for ethical agency is consistent with the previous discussion of the virtuous self while the discussion of a transcendental basis for ethical agency is consistent with the previous discussion of the autonomous self.

The Historical Rationalization of Valuation

The historical analysis claims that values attain a kind of objectivity through community consensus. One problem elucidated above is that such rationalization may fail when there is institutional conflict. The result is an incoherence built into the valuation inscribed in the plurality of institutions which organize a way of life. This problem, although an extremely difficult

one for the modern world, at least does not vitiate this way of justifying valuation. There is a deeper and more substantial problem.

The historical analysis explains and in some sense justifies ethical claims *within* a culture by showing how the claims cohere with cultural life. This kind of justification is more along the lines of aesthetic argumentation. An ethical claim is true if it complements or reflects the culture within which it is made in such a way that the whole is enhanced or at least undisturbed. There are two problems with such a means of justification. First, it cannot allow for immanent critique. Second, when cultures come into contact with one another and some ethical dispute arises, there is no rational way to settle the dispute. All that can be done is to have each side try to persuade the other to accept his or her vision of the good life as a whole. To persuade you that my ethical claim is true, I must paint for you a picture of my way of life that shows its beauty and enlist you in a conversion in which you come to appreciate the beauty of my way of life. When you have been won over to my picture of the good life, then you will be in a position to understand the truth of my ethical claim.

Rorty has described this process of "justification" as a matter of learning a new vocabulary and argues that change and the endorsement of features within a culture is possible, but that this change or endorsement is also a matter of accepting a new way of speaking.

> To offer an apologetic for our current institutions and practices is not to offer a justification of them, nor is it to defend them against their enemies. Rather, it is to suggest ways of speaking which are better suited to them than the ways which are left over from older institutions and practices.[14]

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[14]Rorty, Richard, "The Contingency of Community," in *London Review of Books*, no. 24, July 1986, p. 10.

What Rorty is denying is that reasons can be given for ethical claims or political forms of life. He argues that this result follows from the rejection of foundationalism in philosophy. Foundationalism involves the assumption that there is a standpoint from which we can judge particular claims.

> To accept the claim that there is no standpoint outside our own particular historically-conditioned and temporary vocabulary by which to judge this vocabulary in respect of rationality or morality is to give up on the idea that we can reach agreement on good reasons for using new languages, as opposed to good reasons, within old languages, for believing statements within those languages.[15]

Rorty is content to accept that good reasons cannot be given for choosing among the conflicting norms of diverse societies. He is content to accept that discussion about the value of institutions or norms within a society is a matter of showing the goodness of that way of speaking. Rorty does not tell us much about how we recognize goodness or better ways of speaking, but of course, that would probably involve offering reasons. Rorty involves himself in a dilemma because sometimes he does see fit to offer arguments, but sometimes, in the name of anti-foundationalism, he does not. Of course, if what we are pointing out here is Rorty's inconsistency, then we are invoking a norm of rationality. Rorty might not recognize this value, indeed, his position requires that he not be concerned with consistency. Consistency is, after all, not only the "hobgoblin of small minds," but the crux of rational argumentation. It is hard to know what to do with Rorty and those like him who follow Nietzsche in a totalizing critique of reason. It is not possible to win against them, but only because it is not possible for them to lose.

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[15]Ibid.

The great advantage of the transcendental analysis, as noted in tracing its Stoic origins, is that it provides a way of criticizing values. The historical analysis seems to immunize a community from self-criticism or external criticism. This makes nonsense of our own criticisms of our past. Surely we want to say that slavery was wrong even when it was accepted as a moral practice, but the historical analysis does not allow for this claim. According to the historical analysis, slavery is ethically correct, if it is consensually accepted and inscribed in a way of life.

The historical analysis claims that values arise through a social process. But how does this process occur? I have given some indication of the process. This process always occurs within some particular, concrete setting and is carried on through a system of language, gestures and other symbolic structures. These structures are tools and media. In any large society, subgroups can be identified within the larger group. In our own society there are conflicts of interest. Overt and covert political battles ensue over these interests. One way in which these battles are fought is through the appropriation of symbols. "Draping oneself in the flag" is a technique for bolstering one's position. This technique involves identifying your position or cause with the value of patriotism. No one wants to be seen as unpatriotic. If one is successful in identifying one's cause as a patriotic cause, then one's opposition must confront this. Whether or not one's cause is patriotic, successful association of the cause with patriotism will be beneficial. So, political battles often devolve into battles over the means of presentation and interpretation.

Examples of the importance of controlling the presentation of an issue abound. The battles over names provide examples of the importance of

controlling the presentation of an issue. Terms like 'pro-choice', 'pro-life' and 'African-American' are politically loaded terms which have substantial impact on how groups communicate with the public at large. Furthermore, as with the battles over the use of 'women' as opposed to 'girls' and the current contest between 'black' and 'African-American', the introduction of new terminology provides an opportunity for members of the groups whose names are contested to re-examine their own self-understanding and the content of their individual and group identity. It is clear in these examples that names *do* matter and are not simply flags that the user is keeping up with the latest fashion. The battle over the terms 'Mexican-American', 'Chicano', 'hispanic' and 'Latin American' are especially instructive. The use of the term 'Chicano' in the 1960's was an opportunity for members of that community to examine their own relationship with their Indian history and consciously recognize their own devaluation of that history.[16] It was also an opportunity to openly discuss discrimination as a cause of that devaluation and thus became a nodal point for political action.

The term 'African-American' is rapidly replacing the term 'black' in common usage. The very rapidity of this change reflects the growing power of African-Americans. It indicates that African-Americans have more power than in the past over, not only concrete issues, but their own self-understanding. The historical analysis of the arising and justification of values fails in so far as it does not provide a way of criticizing the values internal to a community. The above examples provide a preliminary indication that an internal critique is possible when one recognizes that not

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[16]Mirande, Alfredo and Enriquez, Evangelina, *La Chicana* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 10 - 11.

all groups of a community have equal access to control over the development
of valuation.

> Suppose it were the case that dominant groups within society -
> here I include class and race dominance as well as gender
> dominance - had a privileged relation to what I shall call "the
> socio-cultural means of interpretation and communication."[17]

To insist on being called 'Chicano' was to confront the devaluation of

Indian ways of life and to refuse to collude in one's own oppression.

However, raising the issues that accompany contests over names requires

media access. Most obviously, one needs access to print, electronic media,

stages and artistic venues. To obtain such access, one must obtain validation

from whomever controls these access points. Access will tend to be more

difficult in proportion to the subversiveness of the issue at hand. Given the

way in which the historical analysis describes the creation and sustenance of

meaning, a message which conveys a value at odds with the dominant value

complex may simply be unintelligible. It may not be recognized as a

meaningful statement. Someone brought up in a community in which all

goods are held in common may simply not comprehend the value of gain

exclusively for oneself. Aristotle considered gain for the sake of gain to be a

vice, pleonexia, however, this goal is considered by many in contemporary

culture to be acceptable and indeed to be the main principle which explains

behavior.

The problem for the historical method of analysis of the apparent

impossibility of internal critique or of transcultural critique of values is that it

does not provide tools for evaluating the power relationships which

determine what value or which set of values become current in a society.

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[17]Fraser, Nancy, "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity," *Praxis International*
5:4 January 1986, p. 425.

The ability to decode the interests embedded in various values suggests that the inscription of values in institutions is not a procedure best understood in terms of accidents and aesthetic principles. The procedure itself has normative implications. Thus, the historical analysis need not fail and be superseded by a transcendental analysis or emotivism, it requires the incorporation of theoretical tools for the analysis of political struggles associated with social movements. The first step on this path is a fuller understanding of Kant's conception of the autonomous self.

The Autonomous Self

I would like to restate key points from the preceding two chapters. I began by noting the irresolvability of contemporary moral argumentation. Analysis of a concrete moral agent illustrated the existence of conflicting principles instantiated in contemporary institutions and the way in which this conflict vitiates coherent agency. Lack of social consensus on value issues was explained in terms of the institutions in which individuals gain their self understanding and develop motivations and justifications for action. I argued that the conflicting institutionalized principles are related to the capacities of individuals to make moral decisions in practical settings. This line of argument suggests that the moral consciousness of a single individual is not the appropriate unit for the analysis of contemporary moral reflection.

I have argued that the self obtains the particularity of its content from its social and historical setting. Of course, the self is not a sponge which simply repeats in itself what is presented to it in experience. Rather, the language taught to an individual, the social institutions within which an individual is socialized and the entire symbolic setting of an individual life is the context for his or her experience. If this is true, then it has profound implications for agency. Surely, the drastically different settings of modernity and premodernity must be relevant for agency. In terms of the broadest strokes, I locate the difference between modernity and premodernity in three developments: industrialization, capitalism and science. These three developments dramatically changed the lives of individuals. A person socialized in an environment in which these were not the major contexts of life must be significantly different than a person socialized within them. Kant, born in 1724 in Prussia, is poised at a time when these changes were

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beginning to show themselves in the ways in which people thought. The problems resulting from the implications of modernization were beginning to be felt. Kant is particularly disturbed by the dark implication of the new science that persons are natural machines. Kant is caught between the following: a premodern worldview in which nature and society were not clearly distinguished and thus values and norms were conceived of as quasi-natural and therefore objective; the social structure of feudalism with its clear social positions and obligations, and the newly evolving modern science with its assumption that everything can be explained in terms of unthinking matter in motion. The nature of agency and especially ethical agency is challenged by the new scientific assumption and the social ground of moral obligation drops from the everyday consciousness at the same moment.

The other element which is crucial for Kant's thinking is his Christianity. The view of ethical agency contained within Christianity is the idea that each person stands alone with his or her conscience in front of a judging God. Oddly, the individualism suggested in this conception of the relationship between individual person and God is resounded in the social relations entailed in the newly growing capitalism. Each economic agent is on his or her own in the market. This is quite a different economic order than that of feudalism. Kant's moral philosophy attempts to make sense of moral agency in light of the loss of the experience of objectivity concerning values and norms, the new individualism and the new mechanistic science. His solution to the puzzle was to develop the conception of the autonomous moral agent. The keystone of this conception was the notion of autonomy.

Kant's influence on contemporary moral argumentation cannot be overly stated. Contemporary moral argumentation relies heavily on the concept of

autonomy. This concept locates the single individual's capacity for independent judgment as *the* necessary ingredient for distinctively moral judgment. Notice that this concept is at odds with the claims I have made. My analysis indicates that the level of the individual is not the appropriate level for an inquiry into the conditions for modern agency. However, the notion of autonomy does seem to cohere with the social setting of modernity. Thus, the concept of autonomy must be examined and, I will argue, rehabilitated if progress is to be made on analysis of the conditions for contemporary moral agency.

In this chapter I would like to discuss the distinctively modern conception of the moral agent and its autonomy as developed by Kant. This conception of the moral agent divorces the conditions for moral agency from the historical and social setting of the individual. I will argue that this conception fails to address the practical dimension of moral action by creating an unbridgeable gulf between the concrete possibilities of the agent and an ahistorical moral subject. The Kantian conception of moral agency posits an antagonism between the individual and community and disallows moral justification in terms of appeals to historically conditioned frameworks and justifications. However, since Kant's conception of moral motivation cannot provide content for practical action, Kant's view of moral agency leaves no basis for agency. I will argue that Kant's conception of moral agency fails because of the gap between the practical agent and the noumenal self and that this view of agency undermines ways of conceiving of the relation between self and community which might provide an alternative framework for moral discourse and justification. My discussion will be divided into five sections. First, I will present Kant's conception of moral agency. Second, I

will criticize Kant's account of moral agency by discussing the gap between concrete agency and ahistorical subjectivity. Third, I will comment on Kant's use of the notion of respect. Fourth, I will suggest that Kant presents a false dichotomy of the self. Finally, I will draw the implications of the first four sections for my overall project.

Kant's Conception of Moral Agency

> Pure reason is practical of itself alone, and it gives (to man) a universal law, which we call the *moral law*.[18]

As was his strategy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant proceeds to develop fundamental ethical principles from the facticity of ordinary experience. The ordinary and universal experience of interest concerning practical reason is the experience of moral obligation. The experience of moral obligation is the experience of being commanded to perform some particular action. The linguistic form associated with commands is the imperative. Thus moral commands take the general form of imperatives. Kant clarifies the nature of moral experience by distinguishing it from another kind of imperative.

We have experience of two kinds of imperatives: hypothetical and categorical. Hypothetical imperatives are practical rules that direct us to take some particular action given that we desire some end, e.g. if you desire good health, then you should exercise regularly. Reason is here informed by the laws of nature. We observe natural regularities and determine how we can intervene in the chain of natural causation in a way that will bring to pass the end we seek. If we cease to desire the end of some hypothetical imperative,

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[18]Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Practical Reason*, translated by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1956), p. 32.

then the imperative ceases at that moment to be an imperative for us. However, Kant thinks that we experience another kind of imperative.

> If the action is good only as a means to something else, the imperative is hypothetical; but if it is thought of as good in itself, and hence as necessary in a will which of itself conforms to reason as the principle of this will, the imperative is categorical.[19]

We sometimes experience imperatives as not dependent upon our desire for some end. Such experience is distinctively moral experience. It is the experience of command to perform an action which is not dependent upon our desire to achieve some end. This is the experience of obligation or "ought." Kant's moral philosophy is an attempt to account for this kind of experience.

> Everyone must admit that a law, if it is to hold morally, i.e., as a ground of obligation, must imply absolute necessity; he must admit that the command, "Thou shalt not lie," does not apply to men only, as if other rational beings had no need to observe it. The same is true for all other moral laws properly so called. He must concede that the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of man or in the circumstances in which he is placed, but sought a priori solely in the concept of pure reason[20]

Kant argues for a distinctly ahistorical conception of the nature of moral experience for two reasons. First, he thinks that we experience moral commands as unconditional. To clarify this, consider how an alternative view of moral experience might characterize our experience. A religiously based moral theory might argue that we deduce correct action from beliefs about what God commands. Thus, moral experience is construed as having the character, "Do x, if you wish to conform to God's laws." However, this

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[19]Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 31.
[20]Ibid., p. 5.

imperative is clearly hypothetical. Kant thinks that this formulation does not capture the nature of moral experience because it allows for the possibility that the end, or condition, of the proposed action may be eliminated. We may cease to desire to conform to God's laws. Such a possibility indicates to Kant that any conditional formulation of "moral" imperatives is based on contingent and subjective determinants. He maintains that our distinctively moral experience is experience of a command which is not dependent on subjective inclination which can be altered. Subjective inclinations are always the result of conditions in the phenomenal world. Their origins can be described and explained in terms of natural laws and human nature. Human beings are creatures whose experience all occurs within the forms of intuition of time and space; thus, moral experience always takes place for human beings at particular time/space locations. However, moral experience is ahistorical in that it is not conditioned by any occurrence in the phenomenal world. Moral commands are the deductions of pure reason.

The second reason for Kant's insistence on the ahistorical nature of moral experience concerns the formal necessity of moral consciousness. Moral consciousness is strictly rational and thus applies, not only to human beings, but to any rational agents. Thus, Kant's moral subject represents the ethical analogue of the Cartesian epistemological subject.

> The moral subject is understood to constitute a "sphere of absolute origins" that is at least *capable* of providing determining grounds of action in isolation from all contexts of historical and social dependence. Just as Descartes' epistemological subject can directly apprehend his independent existence as a thinking substance through simple reflection in the form of "I think," Kant's practical subject can directly apprehend his independent existence as a morally accountable

agent (i.e., a rational *personality*) through the universal experience of moral obligation in the form of "I ought."[21]

Kant argues in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* that any moral principle which holds for human beings must also hold for any rational beings. If lying is morally prohibited, then it must be prohibited, not only for human beings, but for all rational beings.[22] Thus, moral principles and imperatives cannot be derived from human nature or human conditions, but from pure a priori principles of reason.

Kant's explanation of moral experience introduces a radical distinction between a phenomenal and noumenal realm. The phenomenal realm is the realm of all objects which appear in time and space. The noumenal realm is the realm of freedom, reason, and morality. Our moral experience does not have the character of being imposed from outside. The category of the moral only arises for creatures who are free. Only if we are free can we be held accountable morally for our actions. Thus, the noumenal realm cannot be a realm which is imposed on us as determining our action in an external way. Instead, Kant argues that we have a dual self: an empirical or phenomenal self and a noumenal self.

Kant's argument can be reconstructed in the following way. His initial premise is simply that human beings can act. Action is different from the movement of animals which proceeds from instincts and different from change of place in the inanimate world which proceeds from mechanical and chemical changes. Movement from instinct can be reduced to movement from mechanical and chemical processes. Human beings can act on the basis of reason; they can instantiate principles in their actions. To act on the basis

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[21]Stern, Paul, "The Problem of History and Temporality in Kantian Ethics," *Review of Metaphysics*, Volume 39, March 1986, p. 544.

[22]Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 5.

of reason is to be free from the necessity of mechanical causes. There is a more positive meaning of freedom in addition to this negative meaning. One acts freely when one is moved only by oneself and not by external causes. Kant argues that we have the capacity to act freely because we have a rational nature. Reason is not external to ourselves. We *are* rational beings. Thus, when we act rationally, we are acting from principles identical with ourselves. These principles are not ours as individuals. We are dual selves: part phenomenal and part rational. The rational part participates in principles which are valid for all rational beings. Thus, when we are acting rationally our individual identity ceases and we are identical with the being of all rational agents. That "being" is ahistorical. All that is particular about us is located in our phenomenal, historical being. It is significant that our phenomenal, historical being is not our moral being.

One way of understanding agency is to conceive of the agent as a set of motivational principles from which issue actions in concrete settings. The task of developing a theory of agency then becomes the task of determining where these principles originate and how they are applied in the world. Since Kant focuses heavily on the idea of the moral self as acting on principles, his view seems consonant with this approach. The Kantian moral self, then, is a set of motivations and principles. However, according to Kant, when we act morally, we do not act as concrete individuals, but as agents who can apply a single set of principles in action. Moral action is precisely that action which every rational being would endorse. Thus, when we act morally, we do not act as concrete individuals who each have different motivations and principles obtained through experience. Instead, we act as agents who can apply a single set of principles in action. If we locate a self in terms of a set of

motivations and principles which explain that self's action, then in moral action, according to Kant's view, agents are all the same. If concrete individuals are sets of motivations and interests, then the Kantian moral self is the same in all of us. Personal histories fall away and what remains as agent is endlessly repeated in each individual. Platonic language suggests itself here as more accurately capturing this conception: each historical individual participates in a single moral self. Thus, historical, phenomenal selves are individuated, but the moral self is not individuated.

This interpretation is open to the criticism that Kant did not claim that persons ceased to be individuated as rational beings. "By "realm" I understand the systematic union of different rational beings under common laws."[23] However, if we continue with the passage just quoted, a perplexity arises.

> Because laws determine ends with regard to their universal validity, if we abstract from the personal difference of rational beings, and thus from all content of their private ends, we can think of a whole of all ends in systematic connection, a whole of rational beings as ends in themselves as well as of the particular ends which each may set for himself. This is a realm of ends, which is possible on the aforesaid principles.[24]

What remains after one abstracts "the personal difference of rational beings, and thus from all content of their private ends?" What ends could a concrete person have if everything which contributed to personal differences among persons was disregarded? One could not have a duty to someone to whom a promise has been made since the occasion of promising to that person is a personal difference between oneself and others. The objection raised here is that particular duties arise only because of particular facts about

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[23]Ibid., p. 51.
[24]Ibid., pp. 51 - 52.

particular agents in concrete situations. If we bracket our personal differences, then there is nothing left onto which to anchor duties. Surely it is a personal difference between two people that one is a parent and another is not, or that one has made a promise and the other has not. If these are not "personal differences," then it is not clear what *would* count as a personal difference.

Above I have discussed Kant's conception of agency and argued that there are some problems with it. I would like to continue this argument in the following section. I will argue that Kant's view of the self and agency eliminates consideration of factors necessary for a concrete person to have a basis for making choices. In particular I want to show the interconnection of the self's setting in a historical community, the consideration of future possibilities for the concrete individual and ethical decision-making. I will argue that Kant's view establishes an unbridgeable gap between the concrete agent and the Kantian moral subject.

Concrete Agency and Ahistorical Subjectivity

We have seen above how Kant fragments the self into a rational self and an empirical self. The rational self is the locus of morality. The empirical self is the self which suffers inclinations. Kant is certainly right that our needs and desires are conditioned by our historical and social locations. Marx clearly makes this point. Every sense of a human being is informed by experience. The human eye and the human ear see and hear differently according to the social experience to which they have been exposed. Music, for instance, is only heard by an ear which has been trained to hear music instead of disconnected sounds or noises. Our most primary experience is not of a "natural" world or a scientific world, but of a human world. That means

that what we experience has been influenced by those human beings who have preceded us and left us with a particular history. "The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history."[25] Language and other social practices are the carriers of the accumulation of human history. Our inclinations are shaped by our cultural experiences. When we are hungry we do not simply desire food, but food prepared in a particular way. All of our desires and inclinations are mediated by our cultural experience. Kant misunderstands the distinctiveness of being human in so far as locates our humanity in our power for rationality. We might instead locate the distinctiveness of being human in the very plasticity of our desirous natures. One may argue that many non-human animals demonstrate a capacity for rationality.[26] Human being may be unique, not in possessing the capacity for rationality, but in the fact of the social construction of their experience. Kant's rejection of the empirical part of our selves is thus mistaken, if his goal is to locate our uniqueness in our rationality.

In so far as we do not choose the historical and social settings into which we will be born, Kant is correct that we are not free in determining our inclinations. Since Kant connects freedom and morality, he claims that our empirical self cannot be the locus for morality. Our rational self is our moral self. Our empirical self is partly constituted by needs which are socially constituted as objects of experience. It is important to notice that our historically shaped inclinations provide us with our goals. What we desire is to obtain something in the future and our choices about what actions to perform are influenced by our concrete goals. Our concrete goals inform the

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[25]Marx, p. 161.

[26]Rowan, Andrew N., *Of Mice, Models and Men* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 258.

choices which we make. However, Kant insists that *moral* choices can only be made on the basis of respect for the moral law. Acting out of respect for the moral law requires that we do not include in our deliberations any consideration of our inclinations and goals which we posit for ourselves in the concrete world. We must make our choices only by considering what we could will that any rational agent do. Kant articulates the moral law as follows: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[27] Clearly, I must abstract from my personal situation and goals if I am to act according to a maxim which I could will to become a law by which every rational agent must abide. I would like to argue that this abstracting eliminates the content necessary for any agent to make choices in the world because Kant's conception divorces the concrete agent from real future possibilities of action. Let me provide an example which illustrates this problem.

Let us consider a concrete example of a moral dilemma which has captured contemporary ethical reflection in the United States as paradigmatic of a moral problem. Consider a woman with an unwanted pregnancy who is considering abortion. If she were to follow Kant's recommendations for how to make a moral choice, she would respond to her situation by considering possible alternative actions and determining the maxim instantiated in each. She would act on the maxim which applied the moral law, e.g. the action which she could will at the same time to become a universal law. This would require that she not include in her deliberations elements of her own particular situation which concern her desires and inclinations for herself. The absurdity of this method becomes clear when one considers that the

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[27]Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 39.

construction of the problem itself must necessarily include a reference to possible futures for the agent which are based on goals shaped by inclinations which in turn reflect the social and historical setting of the individual. Pregnancy is a biological state. It is constructed as a problem, or not a problem, only within a particular social and historical setting. Contemporary women in the United States often find pregnancy to be a *problem*, as opposed to a simple biological fact, because it impacts on the futures which they have chosen for themselves. It is constructed as a problem only because of the very particular social situation currently existing in the United States. This problem is that pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing are often incompatible with pursuit of a career. The biological fact is reconstructed as a problem only in the reflected light of posited goals within a particular social setting. The moral problem of whether or not to choose an abortion is thus not a problem that an abstract, ahistorical agent can have. It is only a concrete person in a concrete setting with particular goals and envisioned future selves which can have this particular problem. It is absurd to attempt to apply Kant's moral law because choice of whether or not to have an abortion must bring into consideration what future self the agent has posited as a goal. Thus the possible future for a particular person must be considered. Abstract considerations are not relevant. Furthermore, the social setting of the individual must be invoked as establishing the possible choices of the individual and what those choices mean. To choose to have a child in a society without adequate child care is an entirely different choice than to choose to have a child within a society which does have adequate child care or to choose to have a child in a society in which there are no options for work outside the home or in which an extended family offers built-in child

care as the norm. Therefore, the Kantian fragmented self posits a moral agent

from whom is divorced considerations which are constitutive of the actual

character of presenting moral problems and who is denied consideration of

those elements which might actually inform decision-making.

These results flow directly from Kant's conception of the dual self and

particularly the ahistorical moral subject. As noted above, the moral subject

does not exist in time. Paul Stern clearly articulates the problems which

result for moral action from splitting the self into a timeless and a historical

self.

> The ascription of atemporality to the moral subject is misguided
> because it fails to grasp the *internal* connection between the
> object of an agent's practical choice and his own future
> possibilities of action . . . If the decision is divorced from this
> futural horizon of possibilities of action, it loses its specifically
> *practical* dimension.[28]

Respect for Others and Temporality

Concrete moral choices not only involve decisions which affect our own

futures and thus necessarily reflect our desires and historical horizons, but

they involve decisions about how our actions impact the futures others have

chosen for themselves. Kant's moral theory emphasizes the importance of

respect for others. The choices of others are to be respected because human

beings have dignity. This dignity has its source in our rationality and ability

to embody the moral law in our practice. However, concrete application of

the dictum of respect for others presents a quandary similar to the one

described above. Persons make choices based on their historically conditioned

desires for themselves and others. To respect the choices of others, according

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[28]Stern, p. 533.

to Kant, is not to respect the historically conditioned self, but the purely rational self. Why should I not steal someone's savings through a confidence game? The Kantian answer might be one of the following. (1) If people could not trust that their savings were safe, then the practice of saving would cease and thus it would not be possible to steal anyone's savings. Thus, the practice of stealing savings, if it were to be universalized, would annihilate itself. (2) I cannot will that someone steal my savings through a confidence game; thus, I cannot universalize the maxim on which I would be acting in this case. Where is the element of respect in these considerations? Surely the common sense notion of respecting others is based on the recognition that others have their own goals and plans with which I ought not to interfere. Why? The source of Kant's respect for humanity is his recognition that human beings are ontologically unique in being the locus of origination of action. Tables and chairs do not initiate action. Human beings are creatures who inspire awe because they produce action from nothing. They are originators. Again we hear the Cartesian self echoed here. Kant locates this power to originate in our rationality. It is the rational in us that is worthy of respect. However, if we think about the content of person's choices, Kant's mistake is revealed. The actual choices people make for themselves are conditioned by the historical and cultural options available to them and by their own personal histories. When concrete agents in the world consider action which might impact the bringing into being of some other agent's choices, they must consider the conditioned choices which that other has made. In respecting the other, one must respect that other's conditioned choices. In determining my concrete action, I honor the agent, not as a purely rational self, but as an embodied self which is the possessor of historical

choices. It is wrong to steal someone's savings because such action would interfere with the future that person has chosen for him or herself. That future is a future for a historical self, not an ahistorical self.

Kant's False Dichotomy

It is crucial for later argument to note that Kant poses for himself a false dichotomy between the self as simply a bundle of contingent, "personal," facts and the self as ahistorical, timeless rational being. He follows the new scientific thinking of his time that nature and values belong to separate realms. Nature is conceptualized as the realm of inanimate necessity and not itself a source of worth. He accepted the distinction, newly made, between values and facts. He clearly argues that morality cannot legitimately result from the merely contingent. His project in his ethical writings, and perhaps the whole of his philosophy, is to explain and justify the obligatoriness of ethical imperatives.

Kant is working with only two conceptions of the self: the self as contingent and the self as universal. He can conceive of only these two possibilities because he has accepted the view of Bacon and Hobbes. He has turned the epistemological corner with the new materialists. Once he accepts that human beings in the phenomenal world are subject to the laws of nature, like other objects in the phenomenal world, and thus are as devoid of meaning and value as are other objects, then moral necessity can only be derived from outside this sphere of contingency. He must reinvent persons as existing outside of the phenomenal world if he is to save ethical agency. The crucial assumption he makes is that the materialists are right in applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social phenomena. It is

assumed that the smallest particles of matter have properties of their own which can be studied in isolation from other particles. The movement of particles can then be understood as a function of their own properties in conjunction with forces which may act on all particles. The interaction of particles is understood in terms of each particle's inherent properties plus the forces which act upon it. This conception is fallaciously applied to human beings.

The abandonment of Aristotelian teleology and acceptance of a mechanistic view of the phenomenal self leads Kant to a false dichotomy concerning the self. He conceives of only two possible views of the self and the self's relationship to its historical community. Later I will present and argue for another possibility. Within the limitations of these views of the self, ethics presents itself as either grounded in personal peculiarities or in timeless reason. Given that Kant conceives of human communities according to the model of isolated physical atoms, he cannot conceive of individuals as internally related to their communities or social collectives. This later view of the relationship between individuals and communities can provide a way of conceptually fixing the unboundedness of modern subjectivity. Lacking this view, Kant supports a scheme which banishes historical facts about a person from the realm of the moral.

In Kant's view we can see a rehabilitation of some basic Aristotelian concepts and at least a partial recapture of the lost orderly universe. In a sense, life, on the Kantian view, expresses a purpose or idea. Order has been restored to the universe in the form of universal rationality which is expressed in contingent sub-subjects. The modern twist is that the order does

not exist separately from the subjects. Agents are legislators and subjects at once.

> This legislation, however, must be found in every rational being. It must be able to arise from his will, whose principle then is to take no action according to any maxim which would be inconsistent with its being a universal law and thus to act only so that the will through its maxims could regard itself at the same time as universally lawgiving.[29]

The Aristotelian conception is different than the Kantian in so far as the Aristotelian conception of the self refers to a form of self which exists independently of the particular selves which may or may not realize it. The modern Kantian self does not aim at conforming with an external form of human being but of expressing in action its self-identity. Thus the self is free from the givenness of instinct, mechanism and transcendental forms. Modern subjectivity is bounded only by itself. The self is autonomous.

The radical freedom of this self is exhilarating, but the price is high. Kant's view splits us in two and puts the two sides in perpetual struggle. The givenness of our historical locations and our needs and desires as creatures provide us with inclinations which are frequently opposed to duty as determined by ahistorical reason. Our radical freedom is bought with the alienation of our natural and historical selves.

Temporality, Imagination and Action

In the introductory chapter I argued that to be a person is to be a social and historical creature. I also tried to indicate, in a preliminary way, the impact our social and historical character has on our capacities as ethical agents. I also argued for the importance of the temporal dimension of our experience

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[29]Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 52.

for ethical agency. I would like to elaborate on those thoughts and bring them to bear on my claim that the Kantian view of the ethical subject is problematic because of its atemporality. In particular, I want to clarify the way in which these considerations impact on the connection between the self, ethical agency and community.

A concrete moral problem is not an absolute or determinate given which presents itself as self-constituted to a passive subject. When a concrete person acts, the occasion which prompts action functions merely as a nexus which is variously constituted according to a number of parameters. The constitution of the problem in its particularity necessarily involves temporality. Sartre has emphasized the temporal dimension in the determination of the meaning of action.

> The meaning of a conduct and its value can be grasped only in perspective by the movement which realizes the possibles as it reveals the given.
> Man is, for himself and for others, a signifying being, since one can never understand the slightest of his gestures without going beyond the pure present and explaining it by the future.[30]

Several elements are involved in the construction of a moral problem. (1) The desired futures of all those who might be affected by action taken in response to the occasion. (2) The objective elements of the presenting occasion. (3) The possible futures which might result given the actions which might be taken. (4) The possible actions which might be taken.

While Kant emphasizes freedom as the fact necessary for morality, I would argue that it is our ability to imagine counterfactually which is the fact crucial for making morality possible. The Kantian conception of the fact of

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[30]Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Search for a Method*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1968), p. 152.

freedom, i. e. that we can will according to pure reason, is secondary to the fact that we can conceive of possibilities which might come about given various actions. It is because we can conceive of various possible futures and the impact our actions will have on producing those futures that we can be held accountable for our actions and the effects of those actions. Without the possibility of accountability, there is no morality. An occasion takes on the character of a moral problem when we compare (1) and (3) in light of (4). If we might take some action which would effect the possible future selves of ourselves or others, then we become part of the causal chain which is partially productive of that self: our action becomes part of the history of the resultant self. What is crucial to notice is that present actions are internally related to future selves. This is only to emphasize the historicity of the self. The freedom of the self is not absolute. I can only become an airplane pilot if I live in a time in which there are airplanes! Socrates was not free to become an airplane pilot. Indeed, Socrates was not free to take up a stance toward this absent future self. The self's freedom consists in two elements. First, its ability to partially construct situations by taking up a stance in response to comparing possible futures reflected through the objective elements of the occasion and the desired future or futures. Second, its capacity to take up a number of responses to the constructed situations. Kant's presentation of the moral realm is of a static realm of determinant moral problems and maxims among which only one could be universally willed. Clearly, this presentation misses the mobile character of the construction of moral problem situations. It is ironic that it was Kant's Copernican revolution which was itself the historical antecedent of this kind of thinking.

Kant's conception of ethics is inadequate because it fails to articulate and incorporate a social and historical analysis. Kant is blind to the ways in which the agent is socially and historically constrained. All four elements of a moral problem situation have social determinants. (1) The desires which agents have for particular futures are socially conditioned. Future selves are marked by the valuation inscribed in the agent's community. The agent may choose to accept or reject that valuation, but that acceptance or rejection itself is only intelligible in light of some narrative history in which the agent's social interactions loom large. (2) The objective elements of the occasion are partially socially constituted. The objective elements include social institutions, language and the social meaning of elements of the occasion. All of these elements are objective in the sense of being intersubjectively fixed, but also historical in that they are the result of social choices and development through time. (3) The possible future selves are partially socially determined given that they depend on social institutions, the interaction of others and the recognition of others. (4) The action possibilities are partially socially constrained in so far as they take place in a social milieu, are based on socially acquired competencies and have effect because of their social meaning. Thus, ethical agency can only be understood when we realize that agents act, not as isolated individuals or pure rational agents, but as concrete members of particular communities. It is the agent's community which provides the key to understanding the meaning of the presenting occasion and the key to understanding the futures which reflectively construct the particularity of the occasion as having an ethical dimension.

Two things are indicated by the above comments. First, whenever a person acts, that action is intelligible as a particular action only on the backdrop of that person's community. Thus, discussion of agency must locate the agent within a particular community. The condition of the possibility of *action*, as opposed to simple change of place, is a community which is a bearer of meaning and provides the setting within which action may occur. On a less abstract level, we have seen that communities provide the basis for principles and motivations for action. Second, while agency necessarily relies on community, a community may be more or less adequate as the condition for coherent agency. Problems with agency immediately implicate the agent's community. An analysis of the inadequacy of contemporary agency requires an analysis of the social and historical conditions which vitiate coherent agency. Proposed solutions to the problems of agency must address how conditions might be changed so that the conditions for coherent agency might be established. Although Kant was not trying to provide such an account, his analysis of ethical principles cannot function as a guide here because of his failure to root agency in community. MacIntyre takes a historical approach, argues for the inadequacy of contemporary agency and makes suggestions about conditions for adequate agency. I would like to turn now to MacIntyre's analysis and proposal.

The Rejection of Modernity

Kantian moral philosophy retains the Stoic notions of universality in reasoning and the true self as a member of the community of the universe of rational agents. These notions have the great value of explaining how historical moral traditions can be criticized and of providing a yardstick by which moral progress can be measured. They are emancipatory in so far as they can be employed in these ways and in so far as they imply the equality of all persons. Thus, a great benefit of Kantian moral philosophy is that it provides a standpoint from which to criticize historical moral traditions. This is something any moral theory must be able to do. It may seem that a historically sensitive account of ethical questions cannot have the resources to criticize local norms since it is committed to the view that standards for resolving ethical questions derive their validity from local traditions.

MacIntyre clearly appreciates the historical character of valuation and ethical agency.

> For it was Vico who first stressed the importance of the undeniable fact, which it is becoming tedious to reiterate, that the subject matters of moral philosophy at least - the evaluative and normative concepts, maxims, arguments and judgments about which the moral philosopher enquires - are nowhere to be found except as embodied in the historical lives of particular social groups and so possessing the distinctive characteristics of historical existence: both identity and change through time, expression in institutionalized practice as well as in discourse, interaction and interrelationship with a variety of forms of activity. Morality which is no particular society's morality is to be found nowhere.[31]

Although MacIntyre is committed to the historical specificity of values, he does not think that this commitment leads to the conclusion that moral

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[31]MacIntyre, pp. 265 - 266.

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traditions are insulated from criticism. Others have criticized moral

traditions on the basis of coherence, consistency or the availability of

institutions which provide an opportunity for consensus formation on moral

issues. While MacIntyre mentions these kinds of criticisms, the real key to

his critique is the concept of virtue. MacIntyre seems to be walking a

tightrope between an historical analysis and a universalist analysis. On the

one hand, he argues forcefully and persuasively that moral traditions are

historically specific. On the other hand, he argues that all moral traditions

and the communities which embody them can be criticized by a single

criterion. That criterion is whether or not they provide the conditions in

which the virtues can flourish. The virtues are those dispositions which any

human being needs in order to live a satisfying human life.

We can use the distinction between primary and secondary human nature

to understand how virtue theorists walk the tightrope.

> On classical theories of the virtues, such as Aristotle's, a morally
> well-ordered second nature is a manner of realizing an end
> intrinsic to man's primary nature. The latter is constituted of a
> complex group of capacities and powers. The former is an
> ordering or disposing of them in specific ways.[32]

Virtue theorists argue that there is an end shared by all human beings,

qua human being. That end provides the anchor around which social

critiques can be developed. That end is often referred to as human

flourishing and is described in terms of the "capacities and powers" possessed

by all human beings. There are perhaps an infinite number of ways that

human communities might develop the conventions and institutions, i. e.

second nature, within which human flourishing might occur. I hope these

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[32]Jacobs, Jonathan, "Practical Wisdom, Objectivity and Relativism," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume 26, Number 3, July 1989, p. 200.

introductory comments suffice to indicate that MacIntyre's historical account need not be immediately dismissed as leading to a relativism which is incapable of providing a critique of current social conditions. Indeed, MacIntyre is drawn to rehabilitate Aristotle's moral theory because he recognizes the inadequacy of present conditions to support human flourishing and the ability of agents to function as coherent moral agents. In this chapter I will explore MacIntyre's conception of the self, his indictment of modernity and his conception of a community which could be the condition of coherent moral agency. I will evaluate MacIntyre's arguments and the usefulness of his concepts. I will consider the model of ethical agency implied in MacIntyre's views and present two inconsistencies in his analysis of modernity and modern ethical agency.

The Narrative Self

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre argues that moral argumentation is interminable because the language of moral debate is hopelessly disordered. We lack a background of moral consensus which could function as a stable point in discussion of particular moral problem situations. In moral debate, terms are employed whose meanings are distorted because they have been abstracted from contexts and traditions which were partially constitutive of their meanings. Furthermore, arguments employing terms from one moral tradition are set against arguments employing terms from a different moral tradition. Arguments are incommensurable and not amendable to rational discussion. Thus MacIntyre usefully draws attention to the language of contemporary moral discourse as itself an obstacle to moral argumentation. His focus on language and the linguistic dimension of human interaction is

extended to his discussion of the self. MacIntyre's focus on the linguistic dimension provides him with a way to relate issues of the self, community and agency in a fruitful way.

MacIntyre argues that the self is inherently historical and that the development of a conception of our selves is crucially linguistic. Knowing who we are involves knowing ourselves as characters in the stories which are our lives. Thus, if we are to be coherent moral agents, we must be able to tell a coherent story about what we did or will do. The setting of the story which is a human life is a historical human community. We learn who we are by discovering our roles in our communities and discover what we ought to do by learning what is appropriate for someone having that role to do. The idea of storytelling is important for defining moral terms. MacIntyre argues that the meaning of moral terms can only be conveyed in the context of stories.

> It is through hearing stories about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings, wolves that suckle twin boys, youngest sons who receive no inheritance but must make their own way in the world and eldest sons who waste their inheritance on riotous living and go into exile to live with the swine, that children learn or mislearn both what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are. Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words. Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources.[33]

MacIntyre calls his conception of the self the 'narrative concept of selfhood'. The key notions in this conception are setting, intelligible action and accountability. MacIntyre focuses on our roles as actors, story-tellers and authors. If we want to understand what it is to be a self, we must understand

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[33]MacIntyre, p. 216.

what selves do. To be a self is be co-author of the story of one's own life. Any human life is made up of innumerable actions. To understand any one of those actions we must consider the setting within which it occurs and we must be aware of the short and longer-term intentions of the actor. Describing even the simplest human action, for instance, planting a tulip in a garden, involves us in ascribing beliefs and intentions to the planter. The planter plants because he or she *wants* a tulip to grow in that particular spot; the planter *expects* the tulip to grow if planted properly. If a squirrel digs up the tulip, then the response of the planter to that occurrence can only be intelligible in light of the planter's beliefs and intentions. The planter's action of planting a tulip would become even more intelligible if we knew of the planter's longer-term goal of creating a pleasant garden. It is "more intelligible" because we might now be able to answer more of the questions we might ask about the planting of the tulip. Now we can begin to understand why the planter chose this particular color of tulip or why the planter chose this particular spot to plant the tulip. We can even begin to understand why some of our questions are relevant and some are not. MacIntyre's point is that in explaining any particular action we become involved in relating a narrative. We explain by constructing the story within which the action becomes intelligible. The narrative must include a reference to the setting within which the action occurs. Furthermore, by invoking intentions and expectations, the narrative involves a certain teleological character.

> There is no present which is not informed by some image of
> some future and an image of the future which always presents
> itself in the form of a *telos* - or of a variety of ends or goals -

towards which we are either moving or failing to move in the present.[34]

Thus, to be a self is to be a lived narrative, i.e. to be the co-author of a living story which is the tale of action rendered intelligible by its teleological character and particular historical and social location. We are only the co-authors of our lives instead of the single authors because we enter a setting which pre-existed us and thus the stage of our lives is already largely determined by factors which will constrain what story we can create. Also, the natural world is somewhat unpredictable due to our lack of knowledge and the limitations of time. Worse, the actions of the human beings which share our setting and contribute to it are in principle not strictly predictable.[35]

What follows from the narrative conception of selfhood is that persons are accountable for their actions. Because our actions are intelligible and teleological we can be expected to account for them. I can be held accountable, not just for today's action but for yesterday's or last year's because I am the co-author of a continuing story which is the story of my entire life. My own past actions become part of the setting for my future self. Thus, the narrative conception of selfhood provides for a way of conceiving of a person's life as a unity. I may be a very different person than I was twenty years ago, but I am still the co-author of the actions I performed then and those actions are part of the story which is my entire life. Similarly, we can hold other people accountable for their actions only because of the narrative character of human life.

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[34]Ibid., pp. 215 - 216.
[35]Ibid., pp. 88 - 108.

The Self and Community

MacIntyre's view of the self connects the issues of agency and community. Our moral starting point is always given to us by our historical community. Our very sense of who we are is permeated with relations with others which are not chosen and which are imbued with moral implications.

> I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point.[36]

This view of the self assumes that selfhood is a distinctively social concept. One cannot be a self if one has not been brought up within a community and developed an identity which is distinctively social. This means that one has relations with others. Those relations can be expressed in terms of roles, goals, obligations and what is owed to one by others. Since these notions cannot be described without using value expressions such as 'ought', it is clear that to be a person on this account is to be inherently a moral being. Furthermore, these concepts are functional concepts. This means for MacIntyre that on the basis of agreement upon the obligations and duties owed which define any role, objective claims can be made about whether the bearer of the role has fulfilled those obligations or received duties owed. Thus, the correct understanding of what it is to be a person leads to the conclusion that moral issues are an objective matter. Our conception of the self is thus important, especially if we relate this issue to our previous

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[36]Ibid., p. 220.

comments about the connection between the contemporary disorder of moral discourse and what it is to be a self.

> To call a particular action just or right is to say that it is what a good man would do in such a situation; hence this type of statement too is factual. Within this tradition moral and evaluative statements can be called true or false in precisely the way in which all other factual statements can be so called. But once the notion of essential human purposes or functions disappears from morality, it begins to appear implausible to treat moral judgments as factual statements.[37]

According to MacIntyre, the notion of moral obligation was originally a notion which was part of a moral tradition in which it was accepted that to be human was to have a necessary connection to a community in which all members had roles whose meanings were intersubjectively secured. These roles were defined in terms of clear obligations. Part of the disorder of contemporary moral discourse is that the notion of 'human being' and 'ought' have been abstracted from this tradition, which the modern world owns as part of its history. Once the idea, that was already present in the Stoics, that the self was self-defining and not primarily a member of a particular historical community came to have theoretical and practical hegemony, the concept of morality developed above continued to live on in distorted concepts. Recall that I have argued that one cannot derive practical moral implications from the view of ethics which derives from the Stoics and Kant. Given this, MacIntyre darkly concludes that moral discourse currently functions only to bully and manipulate. True moral reasons refer to roles and a particular conception of what it is to be a person. Without these, what passes for reasons can only be the masks for manipulation.

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[37]Ibid., p. 59.

MacIntyre does not think that it is an accident that the disorder of moral discourse occurred. He connects it with the contemporary modern way of life. In order to understand his social critique, it is necessary to first discuss his conception of a practice.

> By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.[38]

An internal good is one which can be achieved only through participation in the related practice. An internal good is contrasted with an external good. An example of an external good is money. Money can be obtained in a great variety of ways, for instance working, cheating, stealing, borrowing, counterfeiting, etc. An example of an internal good is the enjoyment of performing a piece of music well. I may be able to achieve the renown associated with being an excellent pianist by blackmailing critics or paying off an audience, but I cannot actually *be* an excellent pianist unless I practice the piano and *become the person* who is an excellent pianist. Being an excellent pianist is an example of a practice. The notion of a practice is important to MacIntyre's conception of a virtue because the exercise of the virtues is required in order to participate in a practice. To become an excellent pianist I must become or be a virtuous person. Justice, honesty and courage are key virtues. Without these no one can proceed to actually become a participant in a practice. The virtues of justice, honesty and courage enable persons to recognize their shortcomings in the exercise of any art, sport or other kind of

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[38]Ibid., p. 187.

practice and act to overcome them. We only become excellent in any practice by accepting the rules of the practice and submitting ourselves to the achievement of them. Thus, in entering a practice we submit ourselves to a tradition which is the accumulated standards of judgment and procedure of the practice. In order to achieve the internal goods of enjoyment, pleasure, self-expression and competence which accompany participation in a practice and find their unique manifestations in particular practices, one must accept the canon of the practice and become virtuous. Thus MacIntyre emphasizes the need for a tradition as a field in which human life can be joyfully and fully lived. In light of this view of human well-being, the challenge of Nietzsche to creatively make our own way and values can only seem a call to enter a nether-world in which nothing can be distinctly seen or known. To someone of MacIntyre's persuasion, it is as though Nietzsche invites us to make a pot, but places us in a world without clay. MacIntyre's debt is to Hegel as well as Aristotle. It was Hegel who suggested the need for a resisting material to give us an opportunity to change ourselves by laboring on it.

The point of MacIntyre's discussion of a practice is to reveal the connection between the enjoyment of the good life and the cultivation of the virtues. The two end up to be one and the same endeavor. Here MacIntyre is clearly Aristotelian. To be a person is to engage in the process of living well. The virtues are the key to living well. They have a critical dimension because they give us a basis for judging the adequacy of our communities to foster the development of the virtues in its members. While agency necessarily relies on community, a community may be more or less adequate as the condition for coherent agency.

MacIntyre's Material Analysis

MacIntyre argues that one crucial reason why contemporary communities cannot be the condition for true ethical agency is because their institutions are no longer the bearers of practices. MacIntyre introduces an analysis of the material conditions of life in order to locate a key moment in the history of the downfall of communities as conditions for fostering the virtues.

> One of the key moments in the creation of modernity occurs when production moves outside the household. So long as productive work occurs within the structure of households, it is easy and right to understand that work as part of the sustaining of the community of the household and of those wider forms of community which the household in turn sustains. As, and to the extent that, work moves outside the household and is put to the service of impersonal capital, the realm of work tends to become separated from everything but the service of biological survival and the reproduction of the labor force, on the one hand, and that of institutionalized acquisitiveness, on the other.[39]

When the household was the locus of economic activity, persons tended to produce goods or provide services for their own families and their local communities. This enabled workers to see their work as directly tied to the good of their communities. The blacksmith would see his handiwork enjoyed by his neighbors. The miller worked for his neighbors. The needs of the community were met largely by persons who could be identified as community members. Seeing the fruits of one's labor benefiting one's community gives a sense of connectedness among the members of the community. Neighbors are not simply accidentally connected by proximity as they are in contemporary communities. Community members need and rely upon one another in ways not currently experienced. This provides a sense

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[39]Ibid., p. 227.

of real community and may be the basis of seeing one's own good as internally related to the good of others. The modern view of the self as an isolated atom which is not internally related to the members of its community can thus be related to this material reality. This view of the self truly represents modern individuals. However, this truth and the reality it expresses can be seen as the product of material conditions which are not necessary. MacIntyre does not clearly state these conclusions, but they are implied in the argument he does make.

Pre-capitalist households are not merely places of rest, but centers of material production as well as family life and thus the basis for an experience of human life as having a unity. Perhaps more importantly, in capitalist societies work outside the home is predominately not experienced as an opportunity for the enjoyment of internal goods. The unity of effort, pride and enjoyment of the result of work is largely absent from the working conditions of most contemporary workers. Thus, modern productive activity is not the occasion for a practice in MacIntyre's sense. MacIntyre clearly relies on Marx for these insights.

> We arrive at the result that man (the worker) feels himself to be freely active only in his animal functions - eating, drinking and procreating, or at most also in his dwelling and in personal adornment - while in his human functions he is reduced to an animal. The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal.[40]

The result for MacIntyre is that work is removed as an opportunity for the pursuit of internal goods and thus for the development of the virtues. The only realms which remain for practices are science and art and these are not enjoyed by the great majority of persons. This constitutes a sweeping

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[40]Marx, p. 125.

indictment of modernity. One would expect that MacIntyre would end *After Virtue* with an appeal for the end of capitalism. However, he does not. Instead, he vaguely calls for "the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us."[41] Either he is so pessimistic about the possibility of abandoning capitalism that he does not find it worth suggesting or he has not realized the implications of his analysis. Let me briefly restate three premises relevant to this part of MacIntyre's argument. (1) Coherent ethical agency depends on communities within which the virtues can flourish. (2) Capitalist market economy is destructive of communities which could support the virtues. (3) The moral tradition of the virtues is the only one which can support coherent ethical agency. Given these premises, the conclusion would seem to be that, if we desire coherent ethical agency, then capitalist market economy must go. MacIntyre has located a material base for the problematic state of moral argumentation in the contemporary world. MacIntyre's appeal for local forms of community, without addressing the issue of the material causes he has established, is inconsistent and cannot be productive on his own account. His appeal in the book following *After Virtue, Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* [42], similarly ignores his own analysis in his new stress of the importance of church authority in creating a viable moral community. The general criticism which can be made of MacIntyre along these lines is that he ignores his own claim that history matters in the production of moral

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[41]MacIntyre, p. 263.

[42]MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

communities and moral meanings. Another way of saying this is that MacIntyre mixes ideological and material analyses in a capricious way.

MacIntyre does indicate a kind of solution for the failure of contemporary moral reflection which elaborates on his call for "local forms of community" and which may provide an answer to the puzzle of why MacIntyre does not explicitly follow through on his material analysis. I would like to turn to that now. In MacIntyre's discussion of the connection between the virtues and practices, in his comments about the lack of moral consensus and in his connection of socially recognized roles and objective moral claims, it is clear that he is arguing for a community characterized by organic unity as the condition for true moral agency. The shattering of the unity of an individual life and the shattering of the unity of community life are related.

> . . . modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behavior. So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, the corporate from the personal. So both childhood and old age have been wrenched away from the rest of human life and made over into distinct realms. And all these separations have been achieved so that it is the distinctiveness of each and not the unity of the life of the individual who passes through those parts in terms of which we are taught to think and to feel.[43]

The partitioning of modern life is significant because it impedes an individual's ability to think of him or herself as a narrative unity. Recall MacIntyre's insistence on the narrative conception of the self. He argued that human lives are only intelligible as stories in which each person is the subject of his or her story. This conception of personhood has the virtue of intimately connecting moral agency with the idea of what it is to be a person. Because our lives are narratives which have a beginning, ending, and

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[43]MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 204.

subplots along the way, we can make sense of holding others and ourselves accountable for actions. To ask someone to give an account of their actions is to ask for the story within which the action was done. This story must include reference to intentions and the actual results of actions. We have seen that MacIntyre argues for communities within which practices can be pursued. Practices are necessary for the development of the virtues and the human end of living well. Indeed, Aristotelian moral categories, and MacIntyre is providing a modified Aristotelian view, are not autonomous in respect to the notion of human happiness or flourishing. The Kantian tradition severs the issues of happiness of moral action, but the Aristotelian does not. In the Aristotelian tradition, one will be happy when one is performing one's function. Happiness is supervenient on excellence. Moral evaluations of actions indicate whether or not one is acting in such a way that one's happiness will be assured. The tricky part here is that one's happiness often involves others. Indeed, there is a tension in Aristotle between the life of the philosopher who has little need for others and Aristotle's conception of the human being as an inherently social animal. Even the contemplative life of the philosopher assumes the existence of a well-ordered community and others with whom one can discuss philosophical contemplation. Individual happiness is intimately tied up with the well-orderedness of one's community. Having a well-ordered community means that everyone does his or her part. Thus, *contra* the experience of moderns, individual happiness and fulfilling one's duties so that one's community can be sustained are inherently related. The difficulty comes in the fact that one's roles and duties are multiple. Even in the pre-modern world one could be faced with a multiplicity of roles and practices. Even in a community which

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adequately fostered the virtues, persons engage in more than one practice at once. This may result in conflicting demands made on one person who attempts excellence in all the practices in which he or she engages. For instance, the life of a painter may take time away from the life of a parent or spouse. The notion of a practice gives no way of coordinating or establishing a hierarchy among the demands of diverse practices and thus throws the person back on apparently criterionless choices which are the nemesis of moral life. Thus, the problem of the partitioning of modern life and the conflicting principles mentioned earlier, has a parallel even in pre-modern life and requires a solution.

This problem indicates the need to have a wider context. MacIntyre argues that this wider context is provided by the narrative conception of a self plus the notion of the *telos* of a single human life. The wider context within which persons can arrange the pursuit of the goods internal to the practices in which they participate is in terms of the *telos* of a single human life. By having a single conception of the overarching goal at which one aims, one can see the particular practices engaged in as subsumed under this single goal. The *telos* will then provide an objective means by which ordering of conflicting practices can be done as well as providing a basis for change within a practice and the recognition of some practices as evil. MacIntyre articulates this *telos* as "the life spent in seeking for the good life for man."[44]

The notion of a practice and the notion of the narrative unity of a human life are part of MacIntyre's three-part reconstruction of the concept of virtue. These two parts must be augmented by yet another notion in order to complete the core conception of virtue. An individual's life story necessarily

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[44]Ibid., 219.

involves other people. An individual's story is not a soliloquy but an enacted narrative in which other people are crucial actors. An individual cannot engage in a practice in complete isolation. Also, our stories are often interrupted or altered by other's expected or unexpected participation in them. An individual's *telos* is thus necessarily interrelated with the *telos* of others. Given this fact, a single *telos* for a single individual is inadequate. What is required is a *telos* of human beings as such. This wider context finally provides the backdrop for an objective evaluation of choices and actions. The *telos* for human beings is a quest for the good of human beings as such. This quest will be informed by a moral tradition. It is the absence of a shared moral tradition which is responsible for the current plight of ethics today. A moral tradition, in turn, is not a free-floating entity which can be discerned rationally or invented through the free consent and choice of a people. It is grounded in pre-existing ways of life and in the ongoing locations and accompanying commitments of the social and historical situations into which we are all born. MacIntyre points out that we are all bearers of a moral tradition and that this moral tradition can be perceived in the circumstances of our social identities.

I think we can now explicate MacIntyre's conception of a community which is adequate as the condition for coherent moral agency. It must be one in which practices can be pursued, persons can experience their lives as a unity and all members share a single moral tradition. Furthermore, it must be one in which there are clearly defined social roles which are the backdrop of moral discussion. It must have institutions which are the bearers of practices. Now the question must be whether or not the modern world can be the place for such communities. Given that MacIntyre locates market

economy as the distinctive feature that begets the fragmentation characteristic of modernity, we must ask whether or not MacIntyre finds it necessary to argue explicitly for the end of market economies and if not, why not. If the recognition of the *telos* of an individual human life could provide a way of ordering conflicting practices within the tradition of the virtues, then perhaps it can do the same within a market economy. Resolving these issues will lead us to the more pressing questions of whether or not MacIntyre's conception of the self and community are viable for the modern world and if they indicate the necessity for a thorough-going rejection of modernity.

Resolving the questions raised above involves answering the following questions. (1) What is the difference between a traditional society and a modern (or postmodern) society? (2) Can we return to a pre-modern society? (3) Is it necessary in order to have coherent moral agency to return to a traditional society? I will address these questions in turn.

Traditional Society

I would like to begin by looking at what MacIntyre says about tradition.

> To appeal to tradition is to insist that we cannot adequately identify either our own commitments or those of others in the argumentative conflicts of the present except by situating them within those histories which made them what they have now become.[45]

MacIntyre is making the very reasonable point that problems are imbued with the particular meaning they have only in light of a past which constrains how the situation can be interpreted. This is not an extraordinary claim. It is good advice. However, this approach to problem evaluation does not imply an indictment of modernity. Surely even in the contemporary

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[45]MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?*, p. 13.

world we can evaluate conflicts in terms of their histories and obtain a deeper understanding of our commitments by examining the history of such commitments. We do not need to abandon the contemporary world or retreat anywhere in order to do this or even to do it fairly well. There must be something more that MacIntyre is calling for.

The distinctive feature of modernity, and the same holds true for postmodernity, that MacIntyre is concerned with is the fragmentation of contemporary life which he claims makes it impossible for persons to conceive of their lives as a unity. Such a conception is the second part of his description of the core conception of a virtue. The first part was the notion of a practice. He claimed that the notion of a practice was not sufficient to establish the core conception of a virtue. One reason he offered for its insufficiency was that persons may engage in more than one practice at once. If one can conceive of one's life as oriented to a single goal, then the diverse practices can be ordered by the standard this introduces. However, the divisions of modern life make it impossible for us to conceive of our lives as a unity and thus as aiming at one thing as a single goal. Thus, the divergences of practices must be of a different sort than the divergences in modern life. MacIntyre must make clear what the difference in kind is between the differences introduced by multiple practices which can be unified by the conception of a *telos* for a single human life, and the multiplicity of modern life. I find MacIntyre dealing with this dilemma in two different ways: one way really does indicate the necessity to return to a traditional society and the other does not.

MacIntyre argues that since one enacts one's life in a drama which always includes others, the *telos* of a single human life necessarily leads to the

notion of a *telos* for human beings as such. That shared *telos* will be particularized within historical communities. The community provides the larger framework within which one can live. Thus, there is a hierarchy here: good for human beings as such, good for community, good for individual. The community has established, before individuals come on to the scene, what the available roles for each individual are. We are, then, already defined by our communities in terms of the obligations into which we are born. This is our moral starting point.

> In many pre-modern, traditional societies it is through his or her membership in a variety of social groups that the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others. I am brother, cousin and grandson, member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belong to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover 'the real me'. They are part of my substance, defining partially at least and sometimes wholly my obligations and my duties.[46]

Here MacIntyre indicates what he has in mind as a traditional society. It is one in which social roles take on the character of givenness. The society must have an organic unity which provides the basis for coherent moral decisions. Moral matters become objective because of the high degree of social consensus which is obtained by the level to which individuals accept their identities as established by social roles. The question, "what should I do?" is answered by first answering the question, "who am I?" which is answered by determining what my role is in my community. One does not have to think much about what the right action is. The right action is circumscribed by the demands of one's role. Here, we can see how the plurality of the modern world is destructive in a way that the plurality of practices within a traditional

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[46]MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 33.

society need not be. The traditional society already prioritizes our obligations for us. The conflicting principles I described above as inscribed in modern spheres do not exist in a traditional society which must be based on internal coherence. The correct action must flow from consideration of one's role and situation just as it is "necessary" to move one's chess piece to only a single square if one is in a game where that move is the only move which will result in checkmate. Thus, a traditional society is one in which there must be a high level of coherence of social roles and options. If it has the real conflicts which are present in modern societies, it cannot function to provide the conditions for coherent agency. The difference between the kind of traditional society MacIntyre requires and modern society is that a traditional society is characterized by an organic unity while a modern society is characterized by fragmentation. Thus, according to MacIntyre's analysis, modernity really must be abandoned if there is any hope of establishing the conditions for coherent agency.

In *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?*, MacIntyre seems to indicate that we need not return to a pre-modern world not characterized by conflicting and fragmenting spheres. This is possible if we accept the authority of the Catholic Church. Presumably, such acceptance will provide us with a way of making coherent choices. Here the givenness of the traditional community which provides the basis for choice is replaced by the givenness of the Catholic Church.

Can We Return to a Pre-Modern Society?

The trite, though true, answer to this question is a simple "no." The salient feature of traditional society is that it is not something that one can

choose. If one does not find oneself in a society within which tradition provides concrete and definitive roles and a coherent framework, one cannot choose to become a member of one. What is most debilitating about modernity is that it provides choices which are groundless. One cannot choose to become a member of a traditional society. One may form local groups within which one strives to establish such a society, but this effort is vitiated by the fact that one it cannot have in place the kind of coherent, organic unity of roles and thinking which characterize a truly traditional society. I can remove myself from a "chosen" tradition in a way a truly traditional person could not.

While MacIntyre claims to be sensitive to history and find it necessary to understand current problems in the light of history, his historical account is rather sketchy and selective. If we turn to Weber to complete the historical account, we may find the connection between his apparently different solutions: return to traditional society or embrace the authority of the Catholic Church. Weber explains the process of modernization in terms of 'disenchantment'. Persons are interested in understanding their environment. The different ways in which they structure their explanations can be compared. Traditional societies are those which explain through myths or magical thinking. This kind of explanation contrasts with modern scientific thinking and explanations. Modernization comes about as societies grow, become more complex and enjoy an increasing level of specialization and differentiation. The growth and concentration of the human population brought about the difference between city and country and the need to have farming as a specialization. Ways of life have developed such that people do not produce all of their needs for themselves but depend on an intricate and

widespread set of interrelations in order to have their needs met. We now enjoy the fruits of specialists in the arts, sciences and a realm of endeavors. As people become specialists in providing for the complex needs of society, different spheres of endeavor and ways of structuring reality separate off and become autonomous. One thinks as an artist in a way different from the politician or the scientist. This brief history indicates that the fragmentation of modern society can be traced back the increasing size of societies and the improved abilities to provide for the basic needs of persons and thus create the leisure for concerns beyond basic survival. Concomitant with the differentiation of these spheres of endeavor, norms and principles specific to each developed. These are the conflicting realms of the contemporary world. Again, it would seem that if this historical picture is correct, it is impossible to return to a traditional society unless we are willing to give up large societies, surplus and the well-developed divisions between political activity, art, religion, science, economic activity and pleasure. MacIntyre himself notes that these divisions were not clearly made in ancient Greece.[47] MacIntyre's solution of a common *telos* is an idealist solution to a historically and materially rooted problem.

Habermas reconstructs this history in a way that reintroduces the question of the conception of the self by explicitly discussing the changes in subjectivity which accompanied these historical developments. Modern subjectivity is characterized by its ability to differentiate among three basic orientations: the objective, the social and the subjective.[48] The objective world is delimited as

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[47]Ibid., p. 138.

[48]Habermas, Jurgen, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One, Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), p. 52.

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the world of external facts which can be determined through instrumental reason. This is the world which science investigates. The social world is the cultural world of intersubjectively secured norms and meanings. Ethics is concerned with this world. The subjective world is the expressive world of art.

The lack of clear differentiation of these worlds can be seen in many examples of the world of the past. In ancient China, a volcano or severe storm was interpreted as indicating that the Emperor was no longer worthy of serving. Here there is confusion about the objective world and the social world. In the Western tradition, not until late Renaissance art do we find the aesthetic sphere functioning autonomously from religious traditions and art works being bought and sold in the market. These differentiations are associated with the increased rationalization and universalization.

In traditional societies, like that romantically yearned for by MacIntyre, there is a lack of differentiation between the objective world and the social world. Another way of saying this is that nature and culture are not clearly distinguished. Thus, the organic unity of traditional society has a given quality which cannot quite be raised to the level of explicit consciousness and made the object of question.

> In traditional societies, worldviews (and contexts of action and interpretation) are more or less completely fixed in the spell of religious cosmologies and, at the same time, the stuctural (sic) correlates of the lifeworld are fixed in traditional kinship structures and in the economic structures of subsistence agricultural production. Under these circumstances the background convictions that guide interaction and communication come into play in a highly reified and 'nature-like' way.[49]

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[49]Pusey, Michael, *Jurgen Habermas* (New York: Ellis Horwood Limited, 1987), p. 60.

For MacIntyre's traditional society to provide a context within which social norms can appear as objective, social roles cannot be subject to scrutiny. The fact that Jones is a daughter indicates that certain things are expected of her and due to her. MacIntyre treats this as if it were an objective matter, just like some fact of nature. The differentiation of objective world, social world and subjective world are features of modern subjectivity which cannot simply be discarded. Once we have achieved the competence to think in these ways, we cannot simply turn our backs on this achievement and choose not to do so. MacIntyre engages in bad faith in his romantic desire to reject the achievements of modernity. Here a new conception of the self is suggested: a specifically modern self characterized by the irreversible achievement of these three basic orientations.

In traditional societies, the differentiation between social world and subjective world is not clearly made. It is not clear that an individual can present to him or herself a realm of thoughts and feelings which are distinctively his or hers as opposed to being continuous with the social world or the objective world.

> Only to the extent that the formal concept of an external world develops - of an objective world of existing states of affairs and of a social world of norms - can the complementary concept of the internal world or of subjectivity arise, that is, a world to which the individual has privileged access and to which everything is attributed that cannot be incorporated in the external world. Only against the background of an objective world, and measured against criticizable claims to truth and efficacy, can beliefs appear as systematically false, action intentions as systematically hopeless, and thoughts as fantasies, as mere imaginings.[50]

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[50]Habermas, p. 51.

The close identification of self and social roles which MacIntyre seems to think is necessary for coherent moral agency reflects a pre-modern understanding of the self which has not entirely differentiated the objective, social and subjective worlds. The "ghostly" self MacIntyre attributes to Kant is a self which can distance itself from its given social roles. This is the distinctively modern self. Habermas' view of the self relies on the work by Weber which posed the differentiation of spheres in the modern world. This differentiation is reflected in modern subjectivity. If Habermas is right about linking this modern self with the historical account of Weber, then returning to a traditional world or traditional selves. Habermas thinks the modern self is an advance of the traditional self. Whether this is true or not, retreat to a pre-modern world does not seem to be a live option.

Is the Pre-Modern World the Only Condition for Moral Agency?

Whether or not it is possible to abandon modernity, it might be the case that modernity cannot support coherent moral agency. We have seen that the fragmentation of the modern world is not a peripheral feature of it that might be repaired, but a constitutive feature. The question remains whether or not such a society can be one which can support coherent moral agency.

MacIntyre envisioned a society of organic unity in which each member had an immediate relationship with that society. Clearly, the modern world is far from having this kind of immediacy. Given that we appear to be stuck in the modern world, we should turn our attention to possibilities for overcoming the diremptions of the modern world which MacIntyre accurately represents as disrupting communities and impairing agency. MacIntyre's view has the benefit of recognizing the importance of history in

the formation of values. His conception of the self as a narrative is fruitful and represents a way of conceiving of agency which is lacking in Kant. His conception of the importance of community as the condition for agency is fruitful. However, his introduction of the notion of a *telos* for each individual as well as for human being as such, seems unnecessary. Larmore has argued that this move on the part of MacIntyre represents a mistaken introduction of epistemological foundationalism into ethics.[51] What is important to retain from MacIntyre is the issue of relationship of individuals to community. MacIntyre shapes this relationship in a way which does not do justice to modern subjectivity. Moderns are able to distance themselves from their communities. MacIntyre errs in accepting Kant's apparent conclusion that modern subjectivity is severed from its community.

Our challenge now is to conceive of a viable modern community which can be the basis for individuals who are able to shift among differentiated spheres. What can be the basis of identity for a modern community? MacIntyre's organic community provided the condition for coherent agency, but modern communities are discontinuous and made of spheres which are not internally related to one another. As a seeming alternative to return to a lost traditional society, MacIntyre suggests the Catholic Church as an institution which can mediate, through its authority, the diverse spheres of modernity. Thus, he points to mediating institutions as possible ways of providing the cohesiveness necessary for modern coherent agency. However, appeal to religion fails as the basis of modern communities if only because modern communities are made up of people of diverse faiths or a purely secular orientation. Although MacIntyre's candidate for mediating

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[51]Larmore, Charles E., *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 28 - 29.

institution fails, the idea is sound. In the next chapter I will turn to Hegel who explicitly argues for the state as the mediating institution which could have a role similar to that envisioned by MacIntyre. Hegel's secular institution seems more appropriate for a largely 'disenchanted' world.

MacIntyre's central notion of a moral tradition was insufficient in part because it represented a purely ideological solution for what MacIntyre proposed as a situation at least partially caused by material conditions. While ideological and material elements interact, it does not seem to make for a good explanation to simply raise material issues and then drop them forever. If Hegel's solution is to succeed, it must better integrate ideological and material accounts.

If modern individuals are to be coherent agents, then some social force must enable them to overcome the diremptions of social differentiations. In MacIntyre, the individual mirrors the coherence or lack of coherence of the society. MacIntyre's conception of the unity of an individual needs to be reconstructed so that it makes sense given the achievements of modern subjectivity. Hegel's suggestion is that the state provides the modern individual a way of mediating the conflicting spheres of modernity in such a way that the individual can move through the various spheres with their conflicting rationalities and yet not dissolve into a set of selves without any unity to orient coherent action and valuation.

The Practical Syllogism or Rational Deliberation

I began this work by noting the current state of ethical agency. It is characteristic of modernity and postmodernity that persons live and act within a variety of spheres which provide motivations and principles for

action which conflict with one another and thus undermine the validity of all. The coherence of the self as agent is undermined in the same stroke. Four crucial and related questions can now be articulated and addressed. Are the differentiations characteristic of modernity fatal to ethical agency? Can the notion of autonomy be rehabilitated in such a way that the importance of history and community for ethical agency are incorporated into it? How is agency possible? If agency is socially conditioned, under what conditions is agency possible?

The close relation of these last two questions can be seen in the following interpretation of the historical view of the self and agency. The view of the self as a historical product can easily devolve into a mechanical view of the self. Here we imagine the self as consisting of the following three parts: a window which lets in experiences; a sorter which sorts the experiences in accord with principles derived from earlier experiences, and a stacking device which loads the sorted experiences onto the appropriate mental shelves for later retrieval and consultation. To be an agent, according to this model, is to mechanically categorize incoming data and deduce the correct action from the stores of past experiences. Indeed, 'choice' as arrived at from conducting a practical syllogism provokes this image. What is missing in this picture is any conception of freedom or agency as activity. The notion of the freedom of the agent and agency as activity are linked. To 'freely choose' has a different connotation than 'to deduce a necessary result'. To freely choose is to arrive at a conclusion following engaged, rational deliberation. The agent is not peripheral to the process of rational deliberation. Two different choices made by a single agent in a single situation might result and be defended as the result of rational deliberation by the reconstruction of two different

narratives. To be an agent is not simply to be a warehouse for one's

experiences. An adequate conception of agency must account for the

historicity of the self without reduction to such a mechanical view.

In his eagerness to establish an objective basis for ethical judgment,

MacIntyre succumbs to the mechanical view of agency. MacIntyre argues that

the meaning of 'good' has changed and with that change moral judgments

have ceased to be factual statements.

> Within the Aristotelian tradition to call x good (where x may be
> among others things a person or an animal or a policy or a state
> of affairs) is to say that it is the kind of x which someone would
> choose who wanted an x for the purpose for which x's are
> characteristically wanted. To call a watch good is to say that it is
> the kind of watch which someone would choose who wanted a
> watch to keep time accurately (rather than, say, to throw at the
> cat). The presupposition of this use of 'good' is that every type of
> item which it is appropriate to call good or bad - including
> persons and actions - has, as a matter of fact, some given specific
> purpose or function.[52]

MacIntyre claims that ethical language originated at a time when it was

accepted that human beings had an essential function and that the particular

roles a person had also were clearly defined in terms of function. Thus,

moral evaluations of persons and ethical choices were all factual matters.

Given this view of ethical evaluation, it seems clear that a computer might

deduce the correct moral judgment as well as a person. What is disturbing

about this view is that it eliminates the need for deliberation. There seems to

be no need for an agent at all. Agency is reduced to mere calculation.[53] If

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[52]MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 59.

[53]See Martha Nussbaum, "Recoiling from Reason," *The New York Review*,
December 7, 1989, p. 37 for a critical discussion of MacIntyre and Aristotle on
rational deliberation and the practical syllogism.

spinning out practical syllogisms is the model of ethical agency, then the agent as a unique, active individual is lost.

In rational deliberation, which might result in more than one defensible choice, the agent is actively involved. The activity of the agent is apparent because in the reconstruction of rational deliberation the agent demonstrates how his or her own self-conception is involved. The process of rational deliberation often involves a reappraisal of the agent's self-conception and may involve a change in the agent's self-concept. Thus, in going through rational deliberation an agent might go through a process of self-change. The story of the agent's past may be understood in a new way given the provocations of the situation which calls for rational deliberation. Thus, in rational deliberation as the model of ethical choice, the temporality of the agent is invoked. The notions of autonomy, as self-determination, and narrative are linked through the process of self-recreation for which a situation demanding ethical choice functions as occasion. The choice to be acted on in the future can only be presented as the result of the rational deliberation of an agent given that particular agent's past. Thus the moment of choice is a fluid moment in which not only the future, but the past can be created. To "create" one's past is to decide what the objective events of one's past mean. It is to choose to be the person in the present or the future whose past has a particular meaning. Thus, an alternative to Kant's conception of autonomous action is suggested. To make autonomous decisions is to be actively involved in a process of ethical decision-making which involves the agent in self-determination through reappraisal of his or her own self-narrative. Of course, there are constraints on what human actions can mean. Those constraints are largely social. An example of the connection between

autonomy and social context can be seen in pointing out that narratives are stories told in language. Obviously, individuals obtain their language from others and language reflects the history of those who used it and contributed to it in the past. It is Hegel, not MacIntyre, who provides the more adequate account of how social and historical contexts enter into value judgments and the construction of agency. While MacIntyre's account eclipses autonomy, Hegel accounts for individual autonomy in terms of social conditions. In the next chapter, I will discuss Hegel's account.

MacIntyre does claim that the good life is the life spent seeking the good life and such activity surely involves deliberation.[54] But here MacIntyre seems to be wanting it both ways. Only if there is fairly well established agreement about ends can there be a context within which value judgments have objective status as this status is envisioned by MacIntyre. Thus, either there is deliberation and active agency, or there are coherent, objective value judgments. According to MacIntyre's own account, we cannot have both. The lesson to be drawn from these considerations is that any account of agency which attempts to accommodate a historically sensitive notion of the self must beware of the danger of devolving into a mechanical view of the self which eclipses agency as distinctively human activity. Integral to such an account must be an explanation of how an agent can be both free and historically conditioned.

Kant and MacIntyre on Difference

In approaching these questions and considering the relationships among the issues of self, community and agency, it is easy to see Kant and MacIntyre

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[54]MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 219.

as two sides of a coin. Kant represents the attempt to clarify the notion of the
autonomous self who is free from the heteronomy and contingency of a
historical community. Thus the conflicting spheres of modernity are
rendered irrelevant. There is a single principle of ethical action and that
principle, respect for the moral law, cannot be derived from the empirical
world and thus is oblivious to the conditions of modern life. This rescue of
the ethical self is accomplished by doubling the self and designating only one
of the doubles as the locus of moral action. The moral "true" self is the one
which is purified of natural and historical elements. MacIntyre is repulsed by
the image of such a ghost self and redraws the self as so completely defined by
its community that its identity is absorbed. On the one hand, the self is so free
of its history that it stands eternal. On the other hand, the self is so time-
bound that movement and progress is arrested. Either the self as an absolute
and self-contained agent is productive of ethical choices or the community as
bearer of a moral tradition provides the standards for choice. If we accept the
self as pure ethical agent, then rationality itself is identified as the basis of
morality. If we accept the ethical self as historical, then narrative becomes the
crucial concept. On the one hand a rational element can be abstracted from
the contingency of a creature's situation; on the other hand the narrative
contains within itself the guide to action. Notice that both views find the
multiplicity of real selves problematic. For Kant, we are dual selves: natural
and rational. These two selves are in battle as far as ethics is concerned.
Kant's solution is to shun and silence the natural self. For MacIntyre,
multiple selves are insinuated from the diversity of practices always available
and, in modernity, to the conflicting partitions of modern life. Again,
multiplicity cannot be tolerated. MacIntyre eliminates the effects of

multiplicity by unifying it in an ultimate *telos* and a single moral tradition. Thus, difference no longer makes a difference. Both Kant and MacIntyre are plagued by difference and find it necessary to smother it. Indeed, their own differences seem less significant in light of their flight from difference. The lesson to be drawn here is that an adequate account of agency and the conditions of agency must countenance the multiplicity of the self and the differentiations of modernity associated with its multiplicity.

Another important relationship exists between Kant and MacIntyre. The primary way in which MacIntyre articulates the crisis of contemporary moral reflection is in terms of the loss of the distinction between offering good reasons during a moral argument and simple manipulation. As he saw it, only a coherent background of moral consensus and a community within which the virtues flourish could be a community within which it was possible to actually offer good reasons. His critique of modernity is motivated by the obliteration of the distinction between offering good reasons and manipulation which he characterizes as crucial to the notion of morality.

> . . . the difference between a human relationship uninformed by morality and one so informed is precisely the difference between one in which each person treats the other primarily as a means to his or her ends and one in which each treats the other as an end. To treat someone else as an end is to offer them what I take to be good reasons for acting in one way rather than another, but to leave it to them to evaluate those reasons. It is to be unwilling to influence another except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good. It is to appeal to impersonal criteria of the validity of which each rational agent must be his or her own judge. By contrast, to treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my purposes by adducing whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion.[55]

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[55]Ibid., pp. 23 - 24.

Thus, the whole point of establishing a particular kind of community is to re-establish what is distinctive about moral relationships. Recall that one of MacIntyre's arch villains is Kant and Kant's conception of the autonomous individual which MacIntyre thinks is one of the keys to the destruction of communities which might be the support of coherent moral agency. MacIntyre does mention that his indictment of contemporary "moral" discourse in terms of offering reasons as opposed to manipulation is Kant's way of characterizing morality. He claims that other earlier moral philosophers characterize morality in this same way, although he does not mention them. What is so striking in terms of MacIntyre's later argument for a virtue ethics is that this criticism of modern moral discourse is firmly planted in the primacy of respect for the autonomous individual. The characteristic feature of Kantian ethics is the focus on respect for the autonomous individual. One cannot derive this indictment of moral discourse from a virtue ethics. The notion of respect entails a conception of the individual which is distinctively Kantian and distinctively modern. No rehabilitation of Aristotelian ethics can produce this critique which is central to MacIntyre's diagnosis of the disorder of modern moral discourse. Indeed, Aristotle's portrait of the ideal person requires use of other persons as means in the most blatant way.

> Aristotle's self-sufficiently happy man can reach his political or contemplative perfection only if he is rich, fortunate, honored, and supported by slaves who do all the work that is not compatible with the aristocratic ideal of leisure and purity.[56]

MacIntyre notes that Aristotle's treatment of slaves and women is less than desirable, but he treats this as separable from an overall theory of the

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[56]Shklar, Judith N., *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 232

virtues. My argument is that Aristotle's view of slaves and women reflects the complete absence of the notion of respect for others which is crucial to the modern conception of ethical agency and that this conception is so central to contemporary moral discourse that even MacIntyre cannot argue without it. In his formulation of the problem of modernity, MacIntyre locates himself within a tradition which he indicts as productive of that problem. Thus MacIntyre cancels his own critique and succeeds in appearing persuasive only by equivocating on the articulation of the problem. Rather than throw out the notion of autonomy and the autonomous self, I would like to rehabilitate these notions as indicated above. Kant based his notion of autonomy on the divorce of the historical self from the rational self. However, it seems possible to articulate the notion of autonomy in a way that does not employ this diremption and the effects for agency which have already been noted. In developing this rehabilitation, MacIntyre's conception of narrative proves useful. His conception of narrative may also be useful in conceiving of how the contemporary self can move among the differentiated spheres of modernity without dissolving. Such a conception may save us from positing an essence of the self without admitting a self which is merely a heap of disparate selves.

The two glaring inconsistencies in MacIntyre's *After Virtue* are his surreptitious use of the notion of the autonomous subject and his capricious employment of material analysis. These inconsistencies reveal that MacIntyre cannot legitimately condemn the idea of autonomy or the fact of differentiation in the modern world. The challenge in developing a conception of the conditions for coherent moral agency in the modern world is to accept both the idea of the autonomous individual and the fact of

differentiation. I would like to turn to Hegel as a thinker who accepted the challenge just posed. Hegel accepted that the agent is rooted in his or her community, but also recognized the distinctive nature of modern society. His view aims at accommodating differentiation while retaining a coherent agent

The Possibility of Ethical Agency in Modernity

Hegel argues that the practice of modern moral engagement with others is a historical achievement causally related to social differentiation. Social differentiation brings about changes in the competencies of individuals. These competencies include the formation of a self which is distinct from any of its social roles or occupations. Hegel argues that material changes, far from destroying the possibility of moral interaction, have been the historical basis for its maturation.

MacIntyre has a paradoxical relationship to modernity. He recognizes that the market is a key element in modern life, but his suggestion for a return to the immediacy of a premodern community ignores the fact that modernity brings new forms of social interaction and that these new forms are the basis for distinctly modern individuals. Hegel has a profound and thoroughgoing understanding of modernity. MacIntyre argues that the development of market economy shattered the bonds which held premodern communities together. Hegel takes seriously the disruption of community which occurs with modernity and begins his political theory with the individual. The normative order of premodernity was destroyed. However, it remained and remains true that coherent ethical agency requires a social basis. Hegel argues that for the modern individual, this kind of community has to be a conscious achievement. Thus, Hegel combines the idea of the need for a coherent ethical community with the idea of the freedom of the individual to be responsible for his or her moral basis. Hegel takes Kant's notion of the necessity for morality of the autonomous will and removes it from the sphere of the individual. Hegel demonstrates that the autonomy of the

moral will is a social achievement. It is not based on caprice, but it is based

on individual choice. Hegel achieves these seemingly contradictory aims by

beginning with the individual will and showing how a unified ethical

community is derived out of the capriciousness of the individual will. Thus

he develops a theory which allows for individual autonomy, modern social

differentiation and a community which is the basis for coherent ethical

agency. I would like to reconstruct Hegel's argument by discussing his

reconstruction of the progress of social forms of being in the *Philosophy of*

Right.[57]

The *Philosophy of Right* is divided into three sections: abstract right,

morality and ethical life. The movement through these three sections shows

how individuals become concrete agents as they attain membership in social

groups. Hegel demonstrates how modernity solves the problem of allowing

for individual autonomy without that autonomy merely being an expression

of arbitrariness. Thus Hegel shows how the autonomy of the individual

requires the concrete setting of social groups without the surrender of

individuality.

Abstract Right

Kant's moral philosophy purports to demonstrate the necessity of a

timeless realm as the basis of moral action. For Kant, the will must be capable

of determining itself if we are to be included in the category of moral agents.

Kant defines the will as "a faculty of choosing only that which reason,

independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e. as

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[57]Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, translated by
T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

good."[58] It is only by having a will that we are distinguished from amoral creatures and beings. Amoral beings are such because they are not accountable for their actions. They are not accountable because they are not the authors of their actions. Thus, the determination of the will is crucial. Since human beings are capable of determining their will, failure to do so is the heart of immoral action. For Kant, the autonomy of the will was only exercised when the will was determined by reason only. This is so because only reason is its own foundation.

Hegel accepts Kant's starting point, the will, and even accepts that freedom is to be understood in terms of the will's self-determination. He also accepts that the merely arbitrary will is not really free. In so far as our choices are on the basis of arbitrary impulse and inclination, there is a sense in which we are acting freely since we can proclaim and identify the willing as our own. However, Hegel agrees with Kant that an arbitrary will is not really free in so far as it is determined by something other than itself.

> If we hear it said that the definition of freedom is ability to do what we please, such an idea can only be taken to reveal an utter immaturity of thought, for it contains not even an inkling of the absolutely free will, of right, ethical life, and so forth. Reflection, the formal universality and unity of self-consciousness, is the will's abstract certainty of its freedom, but it is not yet the truth of freedom, because it has not yet got *itself* as its content and aim, and consequently the subjective side is still other than the objective; the content of this self-determination, therefore, also remains purely and simply finite. Instead of being the will in its truth, arbitrariness is more like the will as contradiction.[59]

Here Hegel seems to be accepting Kant's point that the notion of freedom of the will which defines this freedom as the ability to act on one's impulses

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[58]Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 29.
[59]Hegel, p. 27, Paragragh 15.

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is not freedom at all because the impulses themselves are not freely chosen. Thus, freedom to follow impulses is the contradiction of freedom of the will. However, Hegel moves beyond Kant in pointing out the concrete ways in which the arbitrary will is not free as simply an individual will. According to Kant, an individual may be autonomous whether or not the content of one's willing actually becomes objectively realized. It is the will which is good or not. Ethical judgment does not focus on action or the consequences of action. The status of objective states of affairs is irrelevant to the question of whether or not one is free. Here Kant and Hegel part company.

According to Hegel, autonomy is denied if the content of the will is not realized. The freedom of the will is only implicit if it is not given some external form. The freedom of the will is immediately contradicted if the will is not able to actually do what it posited or possess what it willed. We might first think of the freedom of the will as the ability to imagine anything or to desire anything. However, if I will something and am not able to obtain that thing or bring about the willed event, then, according to Hegel's view, the freedom of will is contradicted. The free will begins as pure indeterminacy in contrast to the determinacy of a thing. As free will I am able to will anything. As free will I am not limited. However, this freedom is purely implicit or abstract. It is an expression of my freedom to will that some event come to pass, but if I cannot actually bring that event to pass, then the obstinacy of existence demonstrates that I am not free. The content of my free willing, e.g. to bring x into existence, is the thought that I will have x. This very willing is shown to be false if I find that I cannot bring the content of my willing into existence. If I am unable to make objective the object of my willing, then within self-consciousness there are two contradictory contents. There is that

object of self-consciousness which is my subjective desire. This object occurs in imagination. There is also the actual state of affairs which I make an object of self-consciousness. Thus the object posited in subjective imagination and the object which presents itself as the objective state of affairs are both objects of self-consciousness. These objects both are within self-consciousness. They are compared and discovered to be contradictory. This difference between Kant and Hegel can be explained by pointing out that while Kant is a dualist, Hegel is a monist. For Hegel, the subjective and the objective both occur within self-consciousness. Thus, according to Hegel, we are free only if we are able to make objective the contents of subjective aims. The condition of individual freedom is then whatever enables the move from subjective to objective to occur.

Recall that Kant defines the will in relation to reason. To be rational is to avoid self-contradiction. But what is the self? The Kantian true moral self is not the historical and natural self. Kant's ontological dualism posits two kinds of existents: things and selves. Things have determined natures. They are not free. Selves do not have a determined nature. They are free. But to not have a determined nature does not mean to be indeterminate. An existent cannot be indeterminant. A self is self-determining. According to Kant, since only reason is its own foundation, a self is living reason. The key to understanding the Kantian notion of self is the idea of living reason. From this orientation to Kant, it is easy to see how Hegel takes up this notion. Hegel, too, is fascinated with the idea of what it would mean for reason to live. For reason to live is to introduce reason into the world of the determined and the chaotic and to transform this irrational existence. Human beings have the capacity to negate determinant existence. But Hegel

differs from Kant in seeing that reason cannot be separated from its content. Form and content can be separated, but to do so is to introduce an abstraction. A cardboard box is not the idea of a three-dimensional square and cardboard. An agent is not pure rationality plus a set of circumstances.

Hegel accepts the will as living reason and that reason is non-contradiction. But he redraws the distinction between the given and reason. The rationality of the will consists in choosing. The principle of choosing is non-contradiction. But reason by itself cannot dictate action. It is only the principle of non-contradiction. What is to not be contradicted are contents of consciousness. An ethical problem presents itself as a situation opposed to some ideal. In ethical action, reason is confronted with the existing situation and the ideal. For Hegel, reason lives as the impulse to eliminate the contradiction of the objective situation and the ideal. It is the activity of the will to resolve that contradiction. "The will's activity consists in annulling the contradiction between subjectivity and objectivity and giving its aims an objective instead of a subjective character. . ."[60] Such resolution is the freedom of the will. Thus, the very idea of the free will, in contrast with Kant, shows that it must be able to move from subjective imagination to actually bringing the thing into existence or possessing the thing. Otherwise, its freedom is contradicted.

Hegel is able to move beyond Kant because he rejects the notion of a thing-in-itself. For Hegel, everything occurs within consciousness. There is not a noumenal world which is implicated by the experience of moral obligation. It is the fact that everything occurs within consciousness that enables Hegel to demonstrate that freedom is a dialectical movement of the will. The fact that

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[60]Ibid., p. 32, Paragraph 28.

Kant required an unknowable realm appears to Hegel as an affront to our freedom. That which cannot be known must remain a contradiction within self-consciousness. It is known but it cannot be known. The rendering of all contents as knowable is another aspect of the freedom of the will. Since all objects of self-consciousness occur within self-consciousness, any object which presents itself as unknown takes on the character of an alien object. It is a contradiction for self-consciousness to find a foreign object within self-consciousness since all objects are marked as "mine" by the fact of being an object of self-consciousness. The marking of an object as unknown must be resolved. Thus, Kant's thing-in-itself is an affront to freedom. A world in which there is something necessarily unknowable is a world in which freedom of the will is denied. Thus Hegel finds that Kant's philosophy, which requires freedom, is problematic.

Hegel introduced the social realm by showing that making my free will objective involves other people. If I will to become a plumber, and being a plumber requires by definition that other people call me to work on their plumbing, then my will is only realized if other people in fact do call me to work on their plumbing. Thus, the idea of the free will brings into play the sphere of social relations. Hegel exemplifies this notion primarily through the notion of private property.

> A person puts his will into a thing - that is just the concept of property, and the next step is the realization of this concept. The inner act of will which consists in saying that something is mine must also become recognizable by others. If I make a thing mine, I give to it a predicate, 'mine', which must appear in it in an external form and must not simply remain in my inner will. It often happens that children lay stress on their prior willing in preference to the seizure of a thing by others. But for adults this willing is not sufficient, since the form of subjectivity must be

removed and must work its way beyond the subjective to objectivity.[61]

The freedom of abstract right is the freedom associated with the overcoming of Hobbes' "state of nature." In the state of nature one had a right to all things, but that right was only implicit because in a lawless world the claim to things could not secured. I might obtain some object but be unable to keep it and thus its status as 'mine' was never secure. Making the object "mine" requires the recognition by others that it is mine. Such recognition implies that others accept that they do not have a right to that thing. In order for anyone to possess an object securely, the right to all things must be given up.

Hegel accepts with Kant that rationality is the key element in true freedom. However, Hegel constitutes an advance over Kant because he understood rationality, not simply in terms of an individual, but in social terms. Kant argued that one was autonomous only when one's will was not influenced by social, historical or natural influences. The possibility of such a separation falls with Hegel's assumption of monism. Hegel demonstrates in the section on abstract right that the possibility of securely possessing objects, and thus making objective one's desires for objects, requires social organization. My freedom to have certain objects can only be realized in a social context. The overcoming of the contradiction expressed in the right to all things occurs through the creation of a new form of social being. In order to express my free will and overcome the contradiction of its subjectiveness, individuals make explicit terms of association with others. Laws are made by the mutual consent of individuals for the purpose of ensuring that property can be secured. In so doing, my free will can actually be expressed in the

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[61]Ibid., p. 237, Addition to Paragraph 51.

securing of property. In establishing laws, individuals can move from implicit freedom to explicit freedom. Hegel introduced a conception of rationality which is social. Individuals in pursuit of their aims can only actually achieve these aims if they construct a system within which their achievements are secure. Laws concerning property are essential. The freedom to have objects is not trivial for Hegel. It is essential to being a subject that one possess objects. One demonstrates that one is not an object by showing that one has a will. To possess an object to the exclusion of others is an objective demonstration that one has a will and is thus a subject.

The idea of these laws is that they apply to everyone. Thus, the idea of rationality as universal application of law is made concrete through the legal institution. Individuals are now brought into an order with one another and this orderliness is itself an expression of reason. Furthermore, because of the objective existence of the law and its application to everyone alike, persons can think of themselves in a way they could not think of themselves before. Persons can now think of themselves, not simply as bundles of desires and satisfactions, but as instances of a universal. An achievement in self-consciousness has occurred. This achievement constitutes an achievement for freedom in two ways. Individuals can experience themselves not merely as the *subjects* of their desires, but as formal individuals who can distance themselves from their desires. Individuals can reflect their desires through their conception of themselves as universal beings, i.e. as rational beings who can choose on the basis of reason. The achievement of freedom thus requires that we move beyond the false freedom associated with acting on impulse. We now introduce a *rational* element into our choosing. The objects which we choose to pursue are not those which we passively suffer as whims, but

are mediated through our realization that not all objects are available. Freedom is gained in the sense of our consciously being able to determine what the objects of our pursuit will be. This gain occurred through the institutionality of positive law and norms. These externalizations reflect agreements with others and create a new unity: an ethical community. Thus, Hegel demonstrates that the rationality which is necessary for freedom is not the rationality of another world, but the rationality expressed in concrete human relations and made objective in laws. Furthermore, since these laws are the conscious products of an individual or individuals, rationality is demonstrated as not a foreign influence. Kant's requirement that freedom is obtained only on the basis of choice which is its own foundation is secured through the conscious choice of persons to establish laws within which freedom may be expressed. Thus, Hegel demonstrates that freedom is not an otherworldly phenomenon, but a social creation. The freedom of the individual cannot be experienced except within a community of living persons. From the very idea of the autonomy of the individual, Hegel demonstrates that that autonomy can only be made actual in a community and that in forming that community the individual is transformed.

The objective institutionality of positive law and norms creates an ethical community. The individual now includes in his or her self-concept the idea of being a member of the group of individuals who are subject to the laws and norms which define the group. What is crucial in realizing the way Hegel internally connects the notion of individual autonomy and community is to see that the very ability of the individual to know him or herself as an individual requires participation in a group. Through identification with the group, the individual can think him or herself.

The self-consciousness which purifies its object, content, and aim, and raises them to this universality effects this as thinking getting its own way in the will. Here is the point at which it becomes clear that it is only as thinking intelligence that the will is genuinely a will and free. The slave does not know his essence, his infinity, his freedom; he does not know himself as human in essence; and he lacks this knowledge of himself because he does not think himself. The self-consciousness which apprehends itself through thinking as essentially human, and thereby frees itself from the contingent and the false, is the principle of right, morality, and all ethical life.[62]

To think is to generalize, i.e. to grasp a universal. The individual reflects his or her free indeterminacy through the idea of the group and *knows* him or herself as an instance of the universal. Thus, Hegel identifies knowing and being. Furthermore, in light of Hegel's understanding of ourselves as posited through our self-knowledge which requires reflection through a universal, Hegel's claim that we are moments of the ultimate universal, Spirit, is less mysterious. The fact of our realization of ourselves indicates the priority of some universal through which our individuality acquires determinacy.

The results which can be drawn already from this consideration of Hegel are an enriched conception of the relationship of self, community and ethical reflection. While I noted earlier the connection between self and group identity, Hegel's analysis implies that perhaps multiple group identities are not to be lamented. The conception of the self I am developing is of a self whose being is established through group identity in a deeper way than previously indicated. Furthermore, my hypothesis is that further investigation of Hegel will suggest that the space of the self and the very being of the self is enriched through participation in conflicting groups. Only in light of the conflicting groups of which the self is a member does the "I"

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[62]Ibid., p. 30, Paragraph 21.

develop a self-concept as completely distinct from any particular group of which it is a member. Thus, Hegel criticizes ancient Greece for the immediacy of the relationship between individual and community.[63] Indeed, the very consciousness of a 'moral problem' reflects conflicts among group norms. In so far as we identify ourselves with a particular group we know ourselves *as* a member of a group. We recognize that we have certain rights, duties and obligations as defined by our position in the group. If we only belonged to a single group, we would never experience those conflicts which result from conflicting duties. We would never be able to conceptualize a situation as a 'moral problem'. If we could not experience moral problems, then we would not be able to see ourselves as abstracted from the groups of which we are a member and posit ourselves as not simply a member of a group, but a being in its own right. Thus, the 'self' is both an abstraction formed in the interstices of our situations within the ethical communities of which we are members and a set of competencies for moving among those communities. Our selves as individual, knowable selves are constructs and sets of competencies carved out and developed in the space created by the multiplicity of modernity. Thus, MacIntyre's dislike of the Kantian autonomous self and his call for a return to polis-like communities threatens our very ability to know ourselves as selves. MacIntyre's call is tantamount to self-annihilation, to suicide. Perhaps MacIntyre is the true nihilist. Fragmentation and the havoc its poses to ethical reflection is a problem, but the solution of self-erasure is not the virtuous action. It is not courageous.

It is important to emphasize that Hegel's account is a historical account of the development of the modern individual. Whether or not we ultimately

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[63]Avineri, Schlomo, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 111 - 112.

accept Hegel's view that it was *necessary* that individuality develop, his account demonstrates that it was *required historically*. Even without bringing in any of Hegel's metaphysics, his arguments show that the talents and desires of human beings posed certain problems to them which were solved through institutions like the legal system. The problems of human beings might have been addressed in different ways, but since the legal system was instituted, it became part of the historical legacy of human beings and had the effect of creating a new form of social being and a new way in which human beings could know themselves. This turn then posed new problems and the historical solutions to these problems had effects again for social interaction and individual self-awareness. Hegel's story is itself a narrative which tells us who we are. It locates us in a wider human history. Hegel's version is clearly teleological, but even without his metaphysical teleology it has a beginning, a middle and leaves us with obstacles which point to possible futures. The overcoming of those obstacles, or the failure to overcome those obstacles will create our future. The narrative within which MacIntyre invites us to locate ourselves, e. g. the tradition of the virtues, is challenged by Hegel's narrative. Hegel's narrative provides us with a much wider framework. MacIntyre's inconsistencies obfuscate the history of the moderns. His flirtation with material analysis and his unacknowledged use of the notion of the autonomous individual as the key to the notion of morality make his own narrative incoherent. His own history cannot provide us with a coherent basis for ethical reflection. I would like return to the discussion of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, test the hypothesis described above and consider Hegel's solution to the fragmentation of modernity.

Morality

Abstract right is that system of minimum rules which create a space for pursuit of individual aims. Everyone who is subject to it can realize its rationality. This system becomes actualized in the institution of the legal system.[64] The first glimmer of a notion of morality arises here through the idea of conforming to the laws of the system. However, this system is merely external. It operates through formal laws and the threat of penalties as much as through the recognition of its necessity and rationality. In abstract right, there is only external conformity to the legal system. The development marked by the stage of morality is the introduction of the notion of individual conscience. At this stage true subjectivity develops.

> The standpoint of morality is the standpoint of the will which is infinite not merely in itself but for itself (see Paragraph 104). In contrast with the will's implicit being, with its immediacy and the determinate characteristics developed within it at that level, this reflection of the will into itself and its explicit awareness of its identity makes the person into the subject.[65]

The social occasion of the development of moral subjectivity, according to Hegel, is the punishment of crimes. The punishment of crime may be experienced as just another wrong.[66] However, since an impersonal judge metes out the punishment, the idea of justice before the law is not the idea of personal vengeance. The criminal has not wronged the judge. The judge is merely the mouthpiece of universal law. Thus in the institution of the judge the idea of equality before the law is expressed. A new relationship among

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[64]Pelczynski, Z. A., "Political Community and Individual Freedom," in *The State and Civil Society*, (ed.) Z. A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 66 - 67.

[65]Hegel, p. 75, Paragraph 105.

[66]Ibid., p. 333, The Translator's Notes are very helpful in understanding this move.

persons is expressed. Persons are now formally equal and can think themselves in this way. Again, a social institution establishes new social relations and new ways for individual self-understanding and social being.

In the section on abstract right, laws and norms are described as externally imposed on individuals. People obey the laws because they fear punishment, not because they recognize their rightness apart from the threat of punishment. The movement from abstract right to morality is the move from acting according to law or norms because of fear of external correction to acting according to law or norms because of the internal recognition of the rightness of such action. Hegel introduces the movement to the section of *Philosophy of Right* on morality by pointing out that the idea of the impersonal judge detaches the notion of transgression of law or norms from the realm of the merely personal.

The wrong of the criminal is not a violation of any individual will, but of an idea expressed in the law. In the state of nature, one's behavior concerning others was moderated by fear of individual retribution. However, with the idea of the law came the idea that the wrongness of one's action was not a matter of harming another person, but was a matter of transgressing the idea of the law or norm. The wrong was against an idea, not a particular person. Conceiving of this abstraction occurred with the concrete practice of the judge. Furthermore, every judge should make the same judgment. It was not the personality of the judge which issued the judgment. Thus, enforcement of norms was detached from the physical ability of the person wronged and from the personality of the judge. Since judgment was detached from any particular person, judgment became autonomous. The criminal could now judge him or herself on the very same grounds as the judge. The

criminal could realize the judgment as right through his or her own understanding. This meant that the criminal could judge him or herself and even evaluate whether or not some particular judge had made the proper judgment. Thus, Hegel demonstrates that the social institution of the judge suggested the autonomy of right and wrong, whether legal or moral. With this objective and concrete institution, individual persons began to be able to think about their relationships in objective terms. With this objectivity a revolution in self-consciousness occurred. Now persons became able to internalize the idea of the judge and the idea of judging oneself became possible. The external judge and the internal judge must judge according to the same rational principles. Thus, one's internal judgment could overrule, for oneself, the judgment of the external judge. With this revolution, the subjectivity of the moral subject is born and the freedom of the moral subject. Now the subject can evaluate his or her own future or past actions and choose to act on the basis of that evaluation. Furthermore, since judgment is based on ideas, not personalities, no one's judgment is better than anyone else's. The idea of the conscience and the primacy of obeying one's own conscience has now entered the scene of the drama of human development.

> No one can break in upon this inner conviction of mankind, no violence can be done to it, and the moral will, therefore, is inaccessible. Man's worth is estimated by reference to his inward action and hence the standpoint of morality is that of freedom aware of itself.[67]

The idea of the law thus leads to the idea of the importance of intention in evaluating action. What Hegel is doing in *Philosophy of Right* is telling the story of human moral development as it unfolds from the idea of the freedom of the will. This story shows the inherent connection of the

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[67]Ibid., p. 248, Addition to Paragraph 106.

development of freedom and objective social institutions. Freedom is the starting point, but it is not a fixed thing. Freedom qualitatively develops through concrete human relationships as mediated through objective institutions. Even morality, which for Hegel is an internally directed stage of freedom, is possible only as a social achievement. Indeed, the very inwardness of morality is contradicted by its genesis. This is the stage at which Hegel finds Kant. According to Hegel, Kant theorizes on the basis of the stage of morality. However, as with abstract right, morality contains contradictions which must be resolved. Abstract right is the stage of externality; morality is the stage of internality. Clearly, these are stages of a dialectic which must be superseded.

Hegel's criticism of Kant and the stage of morality is that the notion of morality is contentless. As argued above, one cannot determine morally correct action in the abstract.

> Good in the abstract evaporates into something completely powerless, into which I may introduce any and every content, while the subjectivity of mind becomes just as worthless because it lacks any objective significance.[68]

Hegel demonstrates that the idea of individual conscience as the final appeal for moral decisions was gained through objective social institutions. In his story of the development of human freedom, Hegel shows how each stage is superseded by the next. However, something is retained from each stage. In giving content to the idea of right, the importance of conscience is not lost. What is necessary is to give it some content. How does one decide what is the right action in some situation? Certainly each individual must do what he or she determines is right, but how is that determination made?

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[68]Ibid., p. 258, Addition to Paragraph 141.

Kant argued that the ground of obligation lay outside of the natural and historical world. Hegel argues that the ground of obligation lies within that world. Action is justified by reference to the institutions of which individuals are members. It is through membership in these institutions that persons gain concrete personhood. Thus, membership in them is not peripheral to who one is. The reasons which present themselves as legitimate in the theater of conscience are mediated by the particularity of each individual's concrete personhood. Hegel does not eliminate the precious autonomy which is secured in morality, he argues that that autonomy is itself mediated through human history and each individual's particularity. For the modern person, the crucial institutions which give content to his or her personality are the family, civil society and the state. At this point Hegel moves from the stage of morality to the stage of ethical life.

Ethical Life

Avineri describes the family, civil society and the state as three modes of human interaction: "particular altruism - the family; universal egoism - civil society; universal altruism - the state."[69] To be a member of a family brings with it certain duties and rights. My duties to the members of my family are different than my duties to persons who are not members of my family. The content of those duties are socially and historically determined; they are culturally specific. It is important for Hegel that everyone grows up in a family or some type of a setting in which individual desires are mediated by the needs of the group. Thus, we are weaned from the arbitrariness of our individual desires and gain control over our desires. Each family member

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[69]Avineri, p. 134.

must sometimes put aside his or her desires for the good of the family as a whole or some other member of the family. For Hegel, this is part of becoming human.

The family, civil society and the state are forms of social life. The family is based on shared feeling and the immediate unity of the members. Civil society brings persons into relations with one another in quite a different way.

> Civil society is the sphere of universal egoism, where I treat everybody as a means to my own ends. Its most acute and typical expression is economic life, where I sell and buy not in order to satisfy the needs of the other, his hunger or his need for shelter, but where I use the felt need of the other as a means to satisfy my own ends. My aims are mediated through the needs of others: the more other people are dependent on a need which I can supply, the better my own position becomes. This is the sphere where everyone acts according to what he perceives as his enlightened self-interest.[70]

Civil society is the realm of human interactions based on the needs of individuals. It is the realm of production and exchange. Hegel clearly distinguishes civil society and the state. In civil society everyone aims at their own good and that good is often in conflict with the good of others. There is no consciousness of unity of purpose among the members of civil society. The state is similar to the family in so far as it is a community in which the members can realize themselves as united. However, the unity of the state is based on reason, not feeling.

Hegel argues that civil society multiplies needs as persons cultivate and pander to the needs of others. Wherever a niche opens in the market, entrepreneurs are eager to fill it. With this multiplication of needs there arises a division of labor. Civil society thus leads to various groups who are

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[70]Ibid., p. 134.

differentiated from one another by the kind of work they do and the accompanying development of different life styles and values.

> The infinitely complex, criss-cross, movements of reciprocal production and exchange, and the equally infinite multiplicity of means therein employed, become crystallized, owing to the universality inherent in their content, and distinguished into general groups. As a result, the entire complex is built up into particular systems of needs, means, and types of work relative to these needs, modes of satisfaction and of theoretical and practical education, i.e. into systems, to one or other of which individuals are assigned - in other words, into class-divisions.[71]

I have already discussed differentiation as the multiplicity of ethical communities of which a single person may be a member of many. A single person may be a member of a family, a church, a social club, a political party and a company or other employment group. The principles and interests of these may come into conflict and the agent be unable to rationally choose a course of action. Now Hegel introduces the notion of class differentiation. This kind of differentiation is divisive for a society as a whole because different socio-economic and work status involve the development of various lifestyles. Various lifestyles lead to various values. People of various classes are related to one another through the system of needs, geographical location and as members of the same political units. Thus they are classifiable as members of the same groups as determined by these classification schemes, but this membership is an external matter. It is especially through the kind of labor one does that one develops a particular identity. Thus, people who do the same kind of labor will share an internal relatedness. The kind of work one does and the labor class one belongs to are the bases for concrete community.

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[71]Hegel. pp. 130 - 131. Paragraph 201.

In Hegel's analysis of classes, he provides a compelling explanation of why communities provide the background consensus necessary for coherent agency and why material analysis is important in understanding agency. MacIntyre mentions that modern labor practices are the key to the disruption of communities, but he stops short of the fuller explanation given by Hegel. MacIntyre's incomplete analysis allows him to suggest a solution which does not address the problem adequately. The question he sidesteps is whether or not the class differentiations associated with the division of labor must be fatal to shared values and agency.

Class differentiation and division of labor are not specific only to the modern world. Aristotle's time knew even more dramatic class and lifestyle differences than are practiced in contemporary modern society. I am referring to the practice of slavery and the role of women. Hegel is like MacIntyre in arguing that the divisions of society must be overcome. However, he argues that a different kind of synthesis is needed in the modern world as opposed to the ancient world. As we have seen, Hegel claims that modern subjectivity is inherently different than ancient subjectivity. The idea of conscience which is expressed in Christianity and the experience of complex market society produce individuals who experience themselves as individuals in a way unknown to members of the ancient world. The idea of conscience, which Hegel locates as developing at the stage of morality, would be incomprehensible to ancient persons. It is the idea of the individual as the ultimate and unimpeachable judge. This modern idea has its seed in the ancient Stoics, but is different from their idea of natural law. The ancient Stoics understood natural law in terms of an objective order. In the modern idea of conscience, the idea of an external, objective order of the universe to

which humans should align themselves is replaced by a subjective notion. One must listen to one's own conscience and make one's own way and this can be achieved without reliance on an objective order which precedes the individual. Even Hegel's Spirit does not precede the individual as does the Stoics' objective order of the universe. Furthermore, the experience of market economy gives individuals the experience of striving for themselves alone in opposition to others. These two conceptions make for a more complex and individual subjectivity than that experienced by the ancient Greeks.

Hegel saw the ancient Greeks as overcoming the divisions of their society by sharing a conception of the good life. They immediately identified with their society in a way impossible for moderns with their enriched individuation. "A state in which everyone is immediately identified with the principle of common life in the same way, this was possible among the ancients, but not with the more complex moderns."[72] Hegel argues that the ancient Greeks, and the members of traditional societies in general, can immediately identify themselves with their larger community and see their activities as contributing to the life of that larger community. However, the more complex subjectivity of moderns and their more diverse activities make it impossible for moderns to identify themselves directly with the larger community within which they live. Notice the contradiction here. Civil society creates greater and greater interdependence among persons. This can be easily seen in the way in which factories obtain raw materials and parts from others areas. These materials are worked with and turned into products which will be sold in places the workers may never go. A problem with the

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[72]Taylor, Charles, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.434.

production of these raw materials, their transportation or the selling environment of the final product directly impacts the factory making the final product. The members of civil society are concretely interrelated, but their experience is an obstacle to their identification of themselves as interrelated. The factory worker who spends eight hours a day installing the inside, rear, right-hand doors of hundreds of cars has no experiential base for identification with the complex set of interdependencies his or her employment actually involves. The contradiction here is that although the worker is concretely connected to workers and consumers all over the world, this concrete truth can only be experienced as an abstraction. This is important to Hegel as he tries to conceive of how the differentiations of modernity can be overcome so that a coherent community can be produced and experienced as such.

Hegel accepts that agency is rooted in the concrete activity of the agent and the agent's particular community. Thus, the implications for agency of the deep social divisions of modern life were starkly apparent to him. His solution was not to call for the annihilation of such differentiation, but to articulate the state as an institution which mediated the differences among individuals. Before presenting Hegel's solution to civil society and his solution to the modern, incoherent self, we must first understand his notion of *Geist* , which is translated Mind, Spirit or God.

Hegel argues that wherever we look, experience presents us with contradictions. We saw earlier that when Hegel encountered a pair of conceptual oppositions, he discovered that they revealed a concept that overcame their opposition. He demonstrates that if you begin with the simplest concept you can imagine, e.g. being, you will find a contradiction

within it which will lead you to realize that both can only be made sense of when considered through a concept which includes both. Finally, Hegel demonstrates that this progression continues until we realize that nothing is immediate, i.e. nothing stands on its own, but everything is interrelated and finally establishes a whole. That whole is *Geist*.

Geist is Hegel's answer to Kant's thing-in-itself. *Geist* is that totality which eliminates the necessity of positing a thing-in-itself. *Geist* is not a reality which exists independently of a world of appearance, but is embodied in this world. Thus, Hegel can overcome the opposition of appearance and reality. *Geist*, however, is not simply identical with the world. It is the movement of oppositions through which complete freedom is realized. It is the development of self-consciousness. It requires embodiment so that it might know itself, just as individual persons know themselves as different from any particular object. But just as a person must go through the process of learning to become, for example, an expert potter through working with clay and actually making pottery, *Geist* comes to know itself as free by knowing itself in the world.

My interest in Hegel's theory of the state lies in his claim that the state mediates the fragmentation in modern society. Hegel claims that the modern state is a unity which transcends the competing and conflicting rationalities in other parts of society. If Hegel is correct, then he can show us how the apparently incoherent modern individual loses his or her incoherence by membership in the state. Let us turn now to the details of Hegel's state.

Hegel's state is a constitutional monarchy. There is an assembly of classes the purported function of which is to permit the participation of all citizens in the state. The assembly acts as the representative of all of the citizens.

Citizens enter the state through their particularity, i.e. their class membership.

> The circles of association in civil society are already communities. To picture these communities as once more breaking up into a mere conglomeration of individuals as soon as they enter the field of politics, i.e. the field of the highest concrete universality, is *eo ipso* to hold civil and political life apart from one another and as it were to hang the latter in the air, because its basis could then only be the abstract individuality of caprice and opinion, and hence it would be grounded on chance and not on what is absolutely stable and justified.[73]

The assembly of classes is made up of two houses. The Upper House is not elected, but is composed of all of the landed aristocracy. This group obtains its livelihood from its inherited land and thus is not likely to be swayed by desire for gain. The members of this group are in a position to think about the good for all.[74] The Lower House is elected, but the basis for election is a very different manner of elections from what we have in the United States currently. Citizens would not vote as independent persons in a nationwide election or even in state and local elections as we know them. People would not consider themselves an electoral unit because of their geographical proximity. The basis of an electoral unit would be commonality of work.

The problems of civil society include alienation, social fragmentation and poverty. However, civil society provides individuals with new social roles and a new level of individuality and freedom. Hegel's task was to show how the institutions of the state can overcome the problems of civil society without losing its benefits. He did this in the state by the formation of social groups out of the atomism and antagonism of the system of needs. These groups were based on experienced commonality. By being institutionalized as

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[73]Hegel, p. 198.
[74]Ibid., p. 199.

a group which functions as a single body, the commonality could be recognized by others and experienced by the members. I am referring to Hegel's corporations. The atomization engendered in civil society would be repeated in the state if persons participated directly in government. Instead, in Hegel's ideal state, citizens who participated in civil society - this excluded the aristocracy and the farming peasants - engaged in political practice through the mediation of corporations. Corporations were organizations of persons who did the same kind of work. Thus, they could identify with one another on the basis of shared productive activity. Instead of citizens voting for government representatives on the basis of geography or other arbitrary commonality, members of civil society would vote for representatives through their corporations. The representatives would represent the corporation in governmental deliberation. Through this vehicle, the atomized individuals of civil society could form themselves into recognized communities within which individuality was both preserved and overcome. The corporations are ethical communities in so far as they are unities in which values are shared. They mediate the atomistic individualism of civil society and the unity of the state.[75]

The remaining part in Hegel's state is the monarch.

> Sovereignty, at first simply the universal *thought* of this ideality, comes into *existence* only as subjectivity sure of itself, as the will's abstract and to that extent ungrounded self-determination in which finality of decision is rooted. This is the strictly individual aspect of the state, and in virtue of this alone is the state *one*. The truth of subjectivity, however, is attained only in a subject, and the truth of personality only in a person; and in a constitution which has become mature as a realization of

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[75]Walton, A. S., "Economy, Utility and Community in Hegel's Theory of Civil Society," in *The State and Civil Society*, (ed.) Z. A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 258 - 259.

rationality, each of the three moments of the concept has its explicitly actual and separate formation. Hence this absolutely decisive moment of the whole is not individuality in general, but a single individual, the monarch.[76]

The monarch is the symbol of the unity and freedom of the modern state. The actual role of the monarch is empty as regards the functioning of the state. The monarch only signs his name to legislation and makes appointments to offices. The individual who will be the monarch is determined by inheritance. Whereas elected representatives and appointed officials should be chosen for their individual abilities, the person of the monarch need not be chosen according to his particular attributes because he does not really do anything. The monarch is essential because only in a particular subject is the subjective unity of the state experienced. Recall that *Geist's* purpose is to objectify itself and know itself as self-subsistent. Only in the self-consciousness of a particular subject can *Geist* know itself as completely self-determined and thus free. In the monarch all the particular moments of the state are brought together through the various mediating institutions. When the monarch says "I will," his will is an individual subject's will as mediated through the institution of monarchy. The "I will" of the monarch represents the unification of the individual willing of all of the citizens. The willing of the monarch has been purified of all the irrationality of the particular willings of individual persons in civil society and the family. The instrument of this purification is the state. Thus, the monarch can give a rational content to the empty, arbitrary willing of civil society. The state is rational because its institutions provide a way of filtering out the irrationality of particularity. The state is necessary to the citizens because in it they find their own rationality. They still have they their

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[76]Hegel, p. 181.

ungrounded and irrational whims, but in the state there are no arbitrary whims. The institutions of the state provide the means for citizens to know themselves according to who they are - peasant, businessman, civil servant - but in light of how they make possible the unity of the state. Of course, I have described a circle, but that is required for self-subsistency. Hegel's system is self-subsistent and thus subjectively and objectively free because the system sustains itself. It begins in simple subjectivity and ends in a subjectivity which knows itself as the ground for its own being.

Evaluation of Hegel's Solution

I would now like to briefly evaluate Hegel's solution, especially as it concerns the project of determining the grounds for agency in the contemporary world. Hegel argues that differentiation need not be fatal to agency. Differentiation is part of the development of human subjectivity and autonomy. Differentiation and conflict are not fatal *if*, according to Hegel, they are contained by some overriding unity. For Hegel that unity was *Geist* and the state.

Avineri[77] points out that even Hegel could offer no solution to the problem of poverty. Hegel argued that poverty is an unavoidable result of the operation of civil society.

> When civil society is in a state of unimpeded activity, it is engaged in expanding internally in population and industry. The amassing of wealth is intensified by generalizing (a) the linkage of men by their needs, and (b) the methods of preparing and distributing the means to satisfy these needs, because it is from this double process of generalization that the largest profits are derived. That is one side of the picture. The other side is the subdivision and restriction of particular jobs. This results in the

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[77]Avineri, pp. 148 - 154.

dependence and distress of the class tied to work of that sort, and these again entail inability to feel and enjoy the broader freedoms and especially the intellectual benefits of civil society.[78]

Poverty is an important problem for Hegel because the propertyless cannot objectify their personhood. The unemployed poor are unable to develop their human powers through labor and cannot engage in social and political activity which is necessary for the realization of autonomy. The poor are atomized and alienated from the larger community. The intractability of the problem of poverty indicates that the nature of the market is such that it creates social conditions which preclude autonomy.

Marx criticized Hegel's advocacy of constitutional monarchy as locating the state itself as the vehicle of the perpetuation of the divisions it is supposed to reconcile. Civil society is the realm in which individuals are obliged subjectively to act only for themselves. It is a contradictory sphere because it is the sphere in which individuals establish concrete interdependencies and produce products which are the result of these objective interdependencies. Thus subjective intention contradicts objective action. In civil society each thinks for him or herself, but acts with all. The state is supposed to overcome this contradiction by being the sphere in which subjectivity and objectivity coincide, e.g. the conscious intention is to organize society with all members in mind. But constitutional monarchy cannot be the sphere in which subjectivity and objectivity coincide because not all members participate equally in it, if they can be said to participate at all. And, of course, in monarchy the word of the monarch is what determines the law, not the will of the people. Even though Hegel's monarch will only "dot the i's and cross the t's," the idea of a monarchy is the same. Hegel's state is

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[78]Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 149 - 150, Paragraph 243.

not all acting for all; it is some or one acting in the name of all. Not only does Marx claim that it is an illusion that some can act for all, but equally importantly, he demonstrates that the separation of state from civil society introduces a separation which codifies and supports civil society as the realm it is. Furthermore, rather than unifying the members of civil society, the state only introduces another division.

> The question whether "*all as individuals* participate in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern" arises from the separation of the political state from civil society.[79]

> The political state and civil society are separated. In that case it is not possible that *all as individuals* participate in legislative power. The existence of the political state is *separated* from that of civil society. If all were to be legislators, civil society would have to abolish itself.[80]

Marx employs Hegel's dialectical method, but with the important difference that he does so as a materialist. This difference reveals to Marx that a real overcoming of civil society is not accomplished by the addition of another sphere, but would manifest itself as the dissolution of civil society. A democracy in which all participated equally would mean the dissolution of the separation between the political and economic spheres. What are matters that concern everyone? Everyone is concerned about their material reproduction and civil society has created the conditions in which everyone's material needs are met through objective interrelations. It is the politicizing of the economic sphere which is the overcoming of the contradictions of civil society.

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[79]Marx, Karl, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, translated and edited by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967), p. 199.

[80]Ibid., p. 200.

> By making its *political existence* actual as its *true* existence, civil
> society also makes its civil existence *unessential* in contrast to its
> political existence. And with the one thing separated, the other,
> its opposite, falls. Within the *abstract political state* the reform
> of voting is the *dissolution* of the state, but likewise the
> *dissolution of civil society.*[81]

Hegel's state is only the illusion of the overcoming of the contradictions of civil society. What must coincide are the subjective and objective sides of civil society. In practice this means that economic decisions are not left to the irrationality of particular individuals' decisions, but are the object of conscious decision-making by all. Marx proposes that economic matters be deliberated on democratically and thus civil society, as the sphere of decisions made by individuals for their own self-interest only, will disappear. Thus, the dialectical process Marx focuses on is the modern opposition of civil society and the state which, in his view, can only be overcome by the dissolution of both and the development of a new form of social being.

I would like to highlight four valuable contributions which Hegel's analysis of modernity makes to the question of the conditions for modern coherent agency, and by reviewing my criticisms of Hegel's conception of the state as a way of overcoming the divisions in society which threaten ethical agency. First, I will discuss the valuable contributions.

(1) Through Hegel's reconstruction of the development of modern subjectivity, he makes it clear that modern subjectivity is internally related to social institutions. The kind of person we can become is inherently constrained by the kind of social institutions available to us. Social achievements like modern law were the conditions for new forms of social being within which modern individuals emerged. Thus, my stress on the

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[81] Ibid., p. 202.

importance of social institutions as the context and condition of modern agency is strengthened by Hegel's account. This indicates that institutions like the law, civil society and the state are not peripheral to an account of moral agency. The capacity for agency of individuals does not spring from nowhere. It is influenced and fostered by objective social institutions because these institutions bring into being specific patterns of interaction among people. Through these patterns of interaction individuals come to develop specific capacities and personalities.

(2) I would like to highlight the notion of the corporation as introduced by Hegel. In the idea of the function of the corporations, Hegel articulates the importance of group membership for self-identity and makes it clear that membership in an institution which might truly mediate the divisions of modern society must itself be approached through membership in concrete communities like corporations. Thus, Hegel is in agreement with MacIntyre's notion that the basis for coherent moral agency must be communities. However, by bringing in the notion of labor, Hegel clarifies the material basis of community. If we set aside Hegel's metaphysical commitments, the suggestion remains that modern differentiations need not vitiate modern agency, if ways for all persons to participate in a vehicle which *effectively* shapes their social environment is developed.

(3) Hegel's analysis of the modern subject reveals that the modern subject is distinctively different from the premodern subject. This difference allows for the possibility of a different kind of practical rationality for the modern subject as opposed to the premodern subject. Here we see the beginning of the development of an alternative to MacIntyre's conception of practical rationality which reflects on the relationship between practical rationality and

historical conditions. This alternative will be pursued in my discussion of Habermas.

(4) The fruitful idea expressed in the notion of Hegel's state is that it is a single vehicle which everyone participates in and through that participation everyone can recognize themselves as, through their labor in participation, developing for themselves the widest context which is the basis of their particularity. In premodernity and for premodern subjects, coherent ethical agency is conditioned by coherent communities. Hegel sees that modernity breaks up these communities. However, the state, as an institution through which political processes can proceed, introduces a new ethical standpoint which overcomes the plurality of the standpoints of modern life. Hegel errs in conceiving of the state as constituting a super-community. The state does not have particular norms like a true community does. There is a sense in which it constitutes a community, but the important point is that it can perform a function which is quite different from a standard community. I will attempt in the next chapter to show how Habermas picks up on this idea and develops it in a way which is very promising. I would like conclude by reviewing my criticism of Hegel.

Recall Hegel's claim that freedom must be objectively realized. On this point he differed from Kant. Hegel's point about the importance of objective realization can be used to criticize his view of the state. It is not true in Hegel's state that all citizens participate actively in the state. Large segments of society do not participate in the state except in the most indirect way. Farming peasants do not participate, the propertyless poor do not participate and, although this was not previously mentioned, it is clear that women do not participate. Thus, these groups are excluded from full personhood. Their

capacities as agents can only be developed, according to Hegel, in so far as they actively participate in the state. It is through participation in the state that individuals forge concrete connections with those others they are separated from in the differentiations of modernity. Furthermore, the differentiations introduced by civil society are not overcome by the state. Activity in the marketplace remains divisive. Only through the device of *Geist* can Hegel imagine that the oppositions inherent in marketplace activity are overcome. In short, Hegel's suggestion of the modern state as a way of overcoming the fragmentation of modernity fails. His failure draws attention to the stubborn problem of the role of the economy in disrupting coherent ethical communities, introducing norms which conflict with other spheres, and, most importantly, introducing distinctions and material inequalities among people which preclude participation in political institutions which mediate conflicts.

Communicative Rationality and Ethical Agency

Summary of the Argument

I have argued that the crisis in contemporary ethical reflection can be traced back to the failure of communities to provide the conditions for coherent ethical agency. In light of this claim, my project has been to determine, at least in a general way, what kind of community or what institutional arrangements within a community might provide the conditions for coherent ethical agency in western modernity. I would now like to apply the work of Jürgen Habermas to this project. Below I will briefly introduce the arguments which I will make in this chapter. In this introduction I will use the special terminology employed by Habermas without explanation. In my elaboration of the arguments, I will explain these terms.

Habermas argues that the *colonization of the lifeworld* by the modern subsystems of capitalist economy and the bureaucratic state produces pathological side-effects. I argue that one of these side-effects is the crisis in contemporary ethical reflection. In terms of my discussion of MacIntyre, we can understand this colonization as disrupting the background which might provide the basis for rational discussion of ethical issues. Habermas argues that systems disrupt the lifeworld by organizing relationships among persons in terms of instrumental imperatives instead of communicative imperatives. A crucial question in evaluating Habermas's argument and applying it to my problematic is: How particular is the lifeworld as the basis of consensus? Here there are two possibilities. First, Habermas sometimes indicates that the lifeworld is very particular. This interpretation makes Habermas sound very much like MacIntyre and presupposes that coherent, modern ethical

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reflection requires a single, coherent tradition as its basis. Second, Habermas sometimes suggests that the lifeworld contains principles of communication which are much more general than any single tradition. If the first interpretation is correct, then it may be that the conditions of modernity are incompatible with coherent ethical agency. If the second interpretation is correct, then it may be possible to evolve an institutional setting in modernity which might support coherent ethical agency. I will argue that both interpretations are correct, but that the implications I mention for the first interpretation need not hold.

Habermas's theory of social evolution, his discussion of society-wide learning mechanisms and of stages of moral consciousness suggest the second interpretation. In relation to my problematic, Habermas's work may be used to support the claim that communities may be able to support a level of moral consciousness which could oversee disputes on the level of substantive or particular ethical systems as these disputes are played out between cultural groups and within single agents. This would not require the elimination of difference or the complete homogeneity of individual subjects. The requirements for the kind of community which would support this level of moral consciousness can be derived from the principle of communicative action itself. The primary requirement would be for equality of opportunity for meaningful engagement in discourse about ethical issues and social arrangements. This would require addressing whatever blocks such equality and would require institutional support.

I will now turn to an elaboration of these arguments and explain the special terminology employed by Habermas. I will begin by explaining

Habermas's theory of the rationalization processes associated with modernity and his theory of communicative rationality.

Rationalization Process

A broad characterization of Habermas's project might describe it as an effort to understand the evolution of human society in terms of a process of increasing rationalization. By 'a process of increasing rationalization' is meant the subjection of dogmatic principles to critical reflection and their replacement by increasingly universalistic principles. Habermas follows Weber in explaining the passage from traditional to modern society as a process of rationalization. Habermas stresses that this process unleases opportunities for collective learning which have offered us greater control over our environment through the development of technology and science. Weber argues that modernization occurs through the breaking of the power of myth and religion. Weber called this 'disenchantment'. It is a crucial part of the rationalization process. When a society is under the sway of a mythical world view, all things are understood as connected and part of a single totality. All explanations refer to the world view. When the power of the world view is broken, the method of explaining in terms of unifying principles (God, Being, Nature) dissolves.[82] The highest principles, which were prereflectively accepted, now become questionable. In premodernity, the prereflective world view provided the basis for social consensus. This consensus had been the basis for the unity of premodern communities. Thus Weber argues that the disenchantment which is the hallmark of modernity is the end of community. If the basis of coherent ethical agency is social

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[82]Habermas, Jürgen, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), p. 105.

consensus and social consensus depends on a community based on a prereflective world view, then modernity is indeed coextensive with the disruption of ethical agency.

The dissolution of world views occurs as a single framework of explanation and rationality splinters into three categories of explanation and rationalization. This differentiation was first recognized by Kant as the differentiation of science, morality and art. The unity of theoretical reason and practical reason, e.g. science and morality, becomes an acute problem. In so far as these differentiations are characteristic of modernity and seamlessly connected to the disruption of world views, Weber identifies them with the destruction of community and ethical agency.

Neither Weber or Habermas claim that the premodern, Western world was dominated exclusively by a single monolithic worldview. Western modernity evolved from precursors which were propelled by tremendous changes in the way people lived. The new inventions and techniques made possible by scientific methods and assumptions translated into great economic success. The influence this success made possible helped to cushion and transform the antagonism between advocates of scientific views and advocates of anti-scientific religious views.[83] The success of science and its handmaiden, capitalism, swept through social relations and subjectivity leaving a diluvial rubble (and rabble) in its wake.

Instead of a single world view, modernity ushers in an experiential and explanatory framework which separates out three distinctive worlds. This process is called 'decentering'. Each world is demarcated, in part, by contrast

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[83] An illustration of this symbiotic relationship between capitalism and science can be seen in the story of the Wedgewood society. See Miller, Jonathan and Van Loon, Borin, *Darwin for Beginners* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), pp. 46 - 49.

with the others.[84] The different worlds are the objective world, the social

world and the subjective world.[85] Weber argues that it is a distinctively

modern achievement to be able to clearly take up the attitudes associated with

these worlds. Pre-modern individuals may confuse the objective, social and

subjective worlds.

> We can recognize here the cognitive, normative, and expressive
> elements of culture that are differentiated out; each according to
> one universal validity claim. In these cultural value spheres are
> expressed the modern structures of consciousness that emerged
> from the rationalization of worldviews. As was pointed out
> above, this rationalization led to the formal concepts of an
> objective, a social, and a subjective world, and to the
> corresponding basic attitudes in relation to a cognitively or
> morally objectified external world and to a subjectivized inner
> world. . . . The structures of a decentered (in Piaget's sense)
> understanding of the world that are decisive for modernity can
> be characterized by the fact that the acting and knowing subject is
> able to assume *different basic attitudes toward elements of the
> same world.* [86]

Successful communication requires that participants in communication

share a background. Obviously, participants must share a common language,

or communicate through an interpreter who shares the languages of the

participants. The sharing of a language entails the sharing of many

assumptions which are not articulated, but which are presupposed in

communication. This background constitutes the sharing of a way of life

which provides meaning for utterances. Habermas calls this shared

background 'the lifeworld'. As rationalization processes occur, the lifeworld

becomes problematized. Practices which make sense in terms of a unified

worldview live on with practices which reflect the new decentering.

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[84]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume One,* p. 51.
[85]Ibid., see Figure 10, p. 237.
[86]Ibid., pp. 235 - 236.

Modern linguistic practices show the mark of decentering. Moderns can perform different kinds of speech acts associated with the three worlds and the attitudes appropriate to each. Moderns may intend to (1) convey some information about some objective state of affairs; (2) make some claim about a normative issue, or (3) express some experience to which the speaker has privileged access. These correspond, respectively, to the objective, social and subjective worlds.[87] A child is taught to make these distinctions as he or she is taught language. These attitudes are inherently connected.

Habermas claims that different validity claims are imbedded and thematized in the three different kinds of speech acts and their associated attitudes. A speech act is performed with the goal of communicating. The speaker only bothers to speak for the purpose of establishing a relationship with another person. Communication occurs successfully when the hearer accepts the message. There are three different kinds of speech acts because there are three different ways in which a hearer can accept the propositional content of speech acts. Acceptance means something different depending on which world is being referenced. The objective world is referred to in a constative speech act. Here it is implied that any neutral observer could verify the claim made. The subjective world is referred to in an expressive speech act. Here it is implied that only the speaker can verify the claim since he or she is expressing a content to which he or she has privileged access. However, the hearer can question whether or not the speaker is sincere or has made an accurate portrayal. Finally, the social world is referred to in regulative speech acts. Here it is implied that reference is made to legitimate

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[87]Ibid., p. 307.

expectations.[88] The general idea of a validity claim is that it is the implied promise that reasons can be offered in support of a speaker's utterance. However, Habermas argues that there are three particular validity claims, so it is not simply the idea of the possibility of offering reasons. Part of becoming a socialized, modern individual is the mastering of sorting out the three worlds and engaging in the practice of challenging validity claims and responding to the challenges of others.

Theory of Communicative Rationality

It should be noted that Habermas is combining Weber's theory of rationalization processes with speech act theory to develop a theory of rationality. It is crucial to notice that this theory of rationality entails that one can rationally argue about a normative matter as well as a matter concerning the natural world. The core notion of rationality has to do with the offering of reasons which may be accepted or rejected by a partner in argumentation. Rational argumentation which thematizes the objective world and aims at securing "truth" or successful intervention in the objective world is paradigmatic of modern western rationality,

> But there are obviously *other* types of expressions for which we
> can have good reasons, even though they are not tied to truth or
> success claims. In contexts of communicative action, we call
> someone rational not only if he is able to put forward an
> assertion and, when criticized, to provide grounds for it by
> pointing to appropriate evidence, but also if he is following an
> established norm and is able, when criticized, to justify his action
> by explicating the given situation in the light of legitimate
> expectations. We even call someone rational if he makes
> known a desire or an intention, expresses a feeling or a mood,
> shares a secret, confesses a deed, etc., and is then able to reassure

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[88]Ibid., pp. 305 - 319.

critics in regard to the revealed experience by drawing practical consequences from it and behaving consistently thereafter.[89]

Habermas argues that rationality is embedded in the structure of communication itself. Reason is not some other worldly entity, but is the very process of making statements expressive of validity claims which can be subjected to the challenge to discursively redeem those validity claims. To be rational is to be able to successfully communicate or to successfully intervene in the world. It requires certain competencies of speakers and hearers. The competencies necessary for communicative rationality are relative to the communicative community, i.e. to be rational in the modern or postmodern world is different from being rational in the pre-modern world. For moderns to be rational, we must be able to distinguish the three worlds mentioned above; to make claims which refer to one of the worlds, to thematize one world in each statement and be able to respond to validity claim challenges and challenge the statements of others. This complex is referred to as 'communicative rationality'.

'Communicative action' is action which is oriented to reaching understanding. Clearly, for all three kinds of speech acts to succeed, they must be understood. Notice, however, that I may fail to properly use language and thus fail to be understood. I may also utter some words which are identifiable as part of some language, but without the aim of being understood. Certainly, both possibilities are derivative of the aim of the use of language, which is to be understood, and may be considered failures or deviant. We presuppose in non-deviant communication that the point of utterance is to be understood. Of course, most utterances are not a matter of making a single speech act, but function in an exchange of speech acts. Here it

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[89]Ibid., p. 15.

becomes possible to begin to list certain presuppositions of discourse.

Following R. Alexy, Habermas has listed some of these.

> (1.1) No speaker may contradict himself.
> (1.2) Every speaker who applies predicate F to object A must be prepared to apply F to all other objects resembling A in all relevant aspects.
> (1.3) Different speakers may not use the same expression with different meanings.[90]

(2.1) Every speaker may assert only what he really believes.[91]

I may shout "Fire" in a crowded room, not because I believe that there is a fire in the room, but because I wish to clear the room for some purpose other than the promotion of the safety of its occupants. If the room clears immediately, then we would say that my speech act was understood, but that I had violated one or more of the presuppositions of speech usage. I may be criticized for violating at least 2.1. However, there is some sense in which I have been understood. How should we distinguish the difference between (a) shouting "Fire" in a room in which there is a fire, (b) shouting "Fire" in a room in which there is not a fire, but shouting "Fire" successfully produces some intended result? Habermas introduces the notion of strategic action to make this distinction. Strategic action is dependent on communicative action is so far as it depends on the employment of a speech act which is understood in light of a shared linguistic background. However, strategic action can be distinguished from communicative action in so far as the success of a strategic action is evaluated in terms of successful intervention in the world.

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[90]Habermas, Jürgen, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on Philosophical Justification," in Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr (eds.), *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990), p. 84.
[91]Ibid., p. 85.

Habermas does not need to invoke the philosophy of consciousness in order to make the distinction between communication action and strategic action. This distinction can be made in terms of speech act theory. I do not even need to frame the difference in terms of intentions. Rather, the distinction can be made in terms of the evaluation and presuppositions of the evaluation of the success of various kinds of speech acts. Strategic action is action which aims at successful intervention in the social world. It employs communicative action for this purpose. Strategic action and instrumental action share the same orientation and aim. Instrumental action aims at successful intervention in the objective or non-social world of things. Here we can see that Habermas is explaining the Kantian distinction between a subject-subject interaction and a subject-object distinction by focusing on the performative aspect of speech. The crucial point is not that strategic action is essentially unethical because it entails a subject-object relationship. What is crucial for my problematic is that when communication occurs in the mode of communicative action, the orientation to understanding implies reciprocal agreement. This means that both parties must be able to question whatever prevents agreement. This opens the way to discourse about problematic assumptions. Rationalization processes create problems in the lifeworld. In the mode of communicative action, these problems can be discursively addressed and a new consensus reached. It is in this way that the lifeworld can be repaired. In the mode of strategic action, discourse about problematic assumptions are blocked. The orientation is not toward reaching understanding, but successfully intervening in the world. This blockage occurs in three ways. One, as strategic discourse, as embedded in the systems of capitalist economy or bureaucratic state, constructs issues in such a way that

the raising of certain questions is ruled out. Two, the competency of subjects to engage in discourse is disabled by their participation in these systems. Three, inequality among participants precludes consensual discourse.

In relation to the distinction between lifeworld and system and the thesis of colonization, the distinction between instrumental rationality and communicative rationality assists in determining just how ethical considerations are blocked in systems. The colonization thesis maintains that problems resulting from rationalization processes have tended to be reduced to technical problems which can be solved by instrumental rationality. The problem is that some of these problems are problems of social integration. Habermas argues that problems of social integration cannot be adequately addressed by instrumental rationality. Within a systems paradigm, one approaches objects of inquiry from the standpoint of instrumental rationality. This means that one's goal is the successful bringing about of a chosen state of affairs. The range of states of affairs which are appropriate to choose to bring about are themselves determined within the standpoint of instrumental rationality in conjunction with the particular system within which one is operating.

Communicative rationality aims at understanding. In a sense, of course, all communication aims at understanding and thus instrumental rationality is subsumed under communicative rationality. However, systems constrain what issues may be raised as legitimate areas of discourse and in this sense, systems contradict, by their rationality structures, communicative rationality. Thus, we find ourselves perplexed when we ask such questions as: is it right that wealthy people are able to choose housing locations safely away from dangerous landfills while poor people are unable to stop the introduction of a

dangerous landfill in their neighborhoods or move when one is discovered?

Is it right for thousands of people to die of dehydration when the amount of

the money that could save them is spent on sustaining one person's life

through extraordinary means, with a poor quality of life and short life

expectancy? Instrumental rationality and system imperatives block

discussion.

The Lifeworld

Before the possibility of repair of the lifeworld in modernity can be

explored, the notion of the lifeworld must be further explicated. Sometimes

Habermas suggests that the lifeworld is both very particular and inclusive.

> Members of a social collective normally share a life-world. In
> communication, but also in processes of cognition, this only
> exists in the distinctive, pre-reflexive form of background
> assumptions, background receptivities or background relations.
> The life-world is that remarkable thing which dissolves and
> disappears before our eyes as soon as we try to take it up piece by
> piece. The life-world functions in relation to processes of
> communication as a resource for what goes into explicit
> expression. But the moment this background knowledge enters
> communicative expression, where it becomes explicit knowledge
> and thereby subject to criticism, it loses precisely those
> characteristics which life-world structures always have for those
> who belong to them: certainty, background character,
> impossibility of being gone behind.[92]

The lifeworld is that stock of definitions and understandings that cannot

be thematized or made explicit without ceasing to be part of the lifeworld.

The lifeworld is that context for living of which we cannot become conscious.

Perhaps we can become conscious of something that was part of the lifeworld,

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[92]Habermas, Jürgen, "The Dialectics of Rationalization," in Peter Dews (ed.), *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 109.

but at precisely that moment it ceases to be part of the lifeworld. The lifeworld is "the horizon within which communicative actions are "always already" moving."[93] Language and culture constitute the lifeworld. One cannot thematize the lifeworld as one can the objective, social or subjective world because it is the context within which such references can occur.

The lifeworld is socially transmitted. It is the reservoir of interpretation which allows particular situations to be commonly understood by members of a communicative community. Of course, disagreement can occur, and when it does, the resources of the lifeworld are employed by participants in order to achieve agreement about the meaning of the situation. Habermas's 'lifeworld' is more inclusive than a background of normative agreement and role agreement. It encompasses the "preinterpreted domain of what is culturally taken for granted"[94] and thus constitutes the background for experience, agreement and disagreement in the objective, social and subjective worlds so far as these are related to consensus concerning norms, values and ends. Habermas augments this description of the lifeworld by adding that individual skills, or "know how," are also part of an individual's lifeworld.[95] The intuitive knowledge of how to behave in particular situations, of problem-solving strategies, socially acceptable practices and reliable expectations are all part of the lifeworld.

The above view of the lifeworld suggests that it is particular to a communication community. The sharing of a lifeworld is indicated by the ease with which two persons or more communicate. Furthermore, the lifeworld is constantly being reworked through communication. New

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[93]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume Two*, p. 119.
[94]Ibid., p. 125.
[95]Ibid., p. 135.

meanings are established and new connections forged. As this process occurs, new groups and communities are being constructed as the sharers of a lifeworld. This means that as modernization processes occurred, the lifeworld came to include the differentiations which are characteristic of modernity. In so far as we view the lifeworld in this inclusive way, the lifeworld itself comes to contain the differentiations of modernity, including science, morality and art and their respective rationalities. Thus, a simple lifeworld/system distinction is untenable.[96] The lifeworld itself must contain whatever must be presupposed in order for communication within even the mode of instrumental rationality to be meaningful. What, then, are we to make of the colonization thesis?

First, notice that Habermas does provide a way of understanding the incoherence of modern ethical reflection. As rationalization processes occurred, rationality itself was split in a way that cannot be put back together. The lifeworld, which is our reservoir of meanings, contains conflicts which disable communication. Since our role as agents in the world is not a single role, but a role in which we sometimes have our feet in different and conflicting rationalities, we cannot act as rational agents. We choose to be ethical, or to be efficient, but there is no standpoint from which we can act rationally. The problem resides in conflicts which are so basic to us that they usually cannot be seen. It is only as they erupt in the seams between lifeworld and system, e. g. in pathologies like identity crises, social disintegration and conflicts reflected in questions raised in business ethics and medical ethics.

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[96]For a summary of criticisms of the lifeworld/system distinction, see David M. Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 45 -54.

Through the steering media of money and power, social relations in the lifeworld are monetarized and bureaucratized - 'juridification' (*Verrechtlichung*) is Habermas's word for the latter process - and thus relentlessly adapted to the functional requirements of the system. However, this *colonization of the lifeworld* strikes back at the whole process of rationalization and becomes pathological when it endangers the symbolic reproduction of society. This is, for example, precisely what happens as consumerism and competitive individualism create such intense pressures for 'achievement' and for the utilitarianization of all values that family structures collapse under the pressure and/or produce other pathological side-effects in gender relations and the like. In a similar way, the 'juridification' of client and citizen roles through the welfare state turns acting subjects and rightful claimants into dependent objects of bureaucratic regulation in a way that impairs autonomy, psychological health, and symbolically structured affiliations and memberships.[97]

Three different pictures of the lifeworld are presented to us by Habermas: (1) the lifeworld as the background for all meaningful utterance, (2) the lifeworld as consisting of functional resources for cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization, and (3) the lifeworld as the consisting of the principles which regulate communication. It is my contention that the way to understand these three pictures is in terms of the historicity of the lifeworld itself.

It is clear that Habermas associates the lifeworld with communication. Habermas understands communication through language use as a historical development of the human species. The human species is the only historical species, e.g. creating their way of life through the handing down of learned ways. Thus, the processes of social reproduction, social integration and socialization are necessary prerequisites for distinctively human being and the reproduction of the human species. It is crucial to notice here that the

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[97]Pusey, Michael, *Jürgen Habermas* (London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987), p. 108.

material reproduction of human beings as a species is premised on symbolic reproduction which in turn is premised on communication. This is crucial because it entails that the same competence for communication is distinctive of the human species, e.g. a species-wide competence. This is important because if an ethical ideal can be shown to underlie communication, then this same ideal is presupposed in all communication. This ideal could *not* supply particular norms and values, but it *could* supply an ideal process of discursive argumentation *about* particular norms and values when these are problematized and thereby made objects for discourse. The condition for modern ethical agency would then be coincident with the conditions for this process.

In so far as language is necessary for these processes, the lifeworld has a history as the possibility for particular languages and particular schemes of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization. If we think of the lifeworld as itself historical, then we find that the lifeworld of every human being, throughout time, has always contained the structures which enabled language and cultural reproduction. Thus, we might say that these structures are always already there in the lifeworld. Here we find that the lifeworld is both historically particular and transcendental. It is transcendental only in the sense that every communicatively competent human being shares the basic structures of the lifeworld. It is historically particular since the particular human beings always have particular and historically determined languages and techniques for symbolic and material reproduction. When the lifeworld is thought of in this way, then the three pictures of the lifeworld, which I describe above, can be accommodated. Let me pick up the thread of the discussion of rationalization and its effects.

The Theory of Colonization

Quite a long way down the road of humanity, the rationalization processes of modernity occurred and are still having their effects in western modernity. Magical worldviews played a key role in symbolic reproduction, e.g. in justifying social relationships and legitimizing leaders. As worldviews became disenchanted, what was to replace them? Instead of leaders being legitimized by divine placement, and hierarchical social policies being reinforced by a view of a hierarchical natural order, Habermas's work suggests that the communicative structures of the lifeworld held an alternative. That alternative is premised on the language game of argumentation. The game is that the conclusion resulting from the best argument will prevail. This game is the basis of rationalization itself: magical worldviews are debunked as they come into the light of good reasons. Here legitimation is based only on the "force" of the better argument. Argumentation can provide a means of social cohesion because all can put aside particular biases and interests, according to the rules of the game, and attend only to the "authority" of the better reasons. Since, of course, no one can put aside his or her interest, and since rational agreement requires consent only on the basis of the better argument, then only generalizable interests can be the object of rational agreement. Here we find that Kant's principle of universalization is rediscovered as a presupposition of argumentative discourse concerning norms.[98]

The theory of colonization suggests that rationalization processes produced and produce a crisis in cultural reproduction. Traditions which

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[98]Habermas, Jürgen, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on Philosophical Justification," in Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr (eds.), *The Communicative Ethics Controversy*, p. 90.

ground social reproduction and social integration are exposed as irrational and lose their legitimacy. Political systems supported by traditions falter and thus are unable to unite a society in an organistic way. Two systems evolved in the Western world both in response to the crises caused by rationalization processes and as fuel for those same processes. These systems were representative democracy and capitalism. Hegel clarifies the new patterns of social interaction engendered by capitalism and their effects on subjectivity and agency. Habermas argues that the bureaucratic state contributes to the destruction of traditions by taking many of the tasks of socialization and social integration, especially the tasks of the family, e. g. through childrearing tasks, now taken over to a great extent in the schools.[99] This furthers disrupts the lifeworld as a reservoir of consensus upon which ethical reflection must draw. Debates like that over the teaching of evolution in public schools may be interpreted as pathological responses to the felt encroachment of an impersonal system on keystones of social integration. The sharing of religious views through the generations is a way of maintaining social continuity. As this continuity is felt to be lost, individuals experience isolation, alienation and loss of meaning. That shared reservoir of pre-articulated assumptions disintegrates and communication is thereby disabled. Habermas calls this process 'the colonization of the lifeworld'.

> At every level, administrative planning produces unintended unsettling and publicizing effects. These effects weaken the justification potential of traditions that have been flushed out of their nature-like course of development. Once their unquestionable character has been destroyed, the stabilization of validity claims can succeed only through discourse. The stirring up of cultural affairs that are taken for granted thus furthers the

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[99]Habermas, Jürgen, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), pp. 68 - 75.

politicization of areas of life previously assigned to the private sphere. But this development signifies danger for the civil privatism that is secured informally through the structures of the public realm.[100]

So, the state takes over traditional functions and as it does it further weakens the hold of traditional worldviews and thus creates greater need for traditional functions to be taken over. The democratic state is itself legitimized by the consent of the people. The government is there for the people, all of the people, and thus it is accepted and supported. However, Habermas points out that the state also has the function of supporting the economic sector. "But this development signifies danger for civil privatism that is secured informally through the structures of the public realm." The problem here is that the state at once supports two opposing sectors: the economic sector which is premised on private gain and the public sector which is premised on the good for all. The problem occurs as citizens detect that the government is supporting the private economic success of a certain portion of the population. This delegitimizes the purported purpose of democratic government. Recent outrage and fights over taxes evidence this problem. Habermas's claim is that the combination of capitalism and democracy creates a crisis for government which will not go away: economic growth is the function of private goals of profit maximization, not the generalizable interests of the population. Thus the state has the contradictory aims of supporting private profit maximization and the generalizable interests of all citizens. Habermas calls this general state of affairs *the legitimation crisis*. While democracy is premised on generalizable interests which can be determined by open argumentation, private profit maximization is not. Thus, the potential exists for democratic government to

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[100]Ibid., p. 72.

be the institution which can enable the repair of the lifeworld, but as matters stand, this potential is unrealizable.

Habermas's analysis of the legitimation crisis is important to my problematic because rationalization processes have produced disturbances in the lifeworld which disable coherent ethical agency. These same rationalization processes held the potential for reworking the lifeworld in a way that might have led to a new consensus over norms. Argumentation may itself produce consensus. Democratic institutions might well have played the role of institutional support of the production of this consensus. However, because of the development of capitalism and the bureaucratic state, this potential was derailed.

The problematization of ethical agency in modernity does not necessarily result from the differentiations of modernity. Instead, this is a matter of the particular, historical development of modern, western institutions. The processes of coordinating action are correspondingly altered as systems imperatives come to supplant lifeworld processes of consensual interpretation and action coordination. Instead of consent and agreement functioning as the norm by which action is determined, action is determined according to the demands of the relevant system. Habermas's claim is that the development of alternative or modified institutions is not *a priori* precluded. The analysis of modernity in terms of lifeworld and system is useful as a basis of critique of modern institutions and might be used in the development of alternative institutions.

The Ideal Speech Situation

The lifeworld offers argumentation as a way of repairing itself by producing valid outcomes. The validity of these outcomes are premised on the presuppositions of argumentation itself. The very idea of argumentation is that the best reasons win the day. The production of the best argument presupposes a particular process of communication. The presentation and effect of good reasons cannot be repressed. Thus, a certain situation for argumentation is presupposed. Habermas has called this situation *the ideal speech situation*. That this situation holds is presupposed in every occasion of argumentation.

> The very act of participating in a discourse, of attempting discursively to come to an agreement about the truth of a problematic statement or the correctness of a problematic norm, carries with it the supposition that a genuine agreement is possible. If we did not suppose that a justified consensus were possible and could in some way be distinguished from a false consensus, then the very meaning of discourse, indeed of speech, would be called into question. In attempting to come to a "rational" decision about such matters, we must suppose that the outcome of our discussion will be the result simply of the force of the better argument and not of accidental or systematic constraints on discussion. This absence of constraint, this exclusion of systematically distorted communication, Habermas argues, can be characterized formally, that is in terms of the pragmatic structure of communication.[101]

Following R. Alexy, Habermas has formulated the following rules which capture the presuppositions of discourse.

(3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to   take part in a discourse.

(3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.

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[101]McCarthy, Thomas, "Translator's Introduction," in Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. xvi.

    b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion
whatever into   the discourse.

    c. Everyone is allowed to expresses his attitudes, desires
and   needs.

(3.3) No speaker may, by internal or external coercion, be
prevented   from exercising his rights as laid down in
(3.1) and (3.2).[102]

While these rules may never be fully implemented in real argumentative

discourse, they are presupposed in argumentative discourse and thus present

ways to critique actual situations of discourse.

It is part of the rationalization process that the lifeworld becomes

progressively rationalized. This occurs as norms become problematized. An

unproblematic norm is one which is taken for granted unreflectively by some

community. Such norms are part of the lifeworld. Unproblematic norms are

unreflectively accepted as valid. There is no question about their validity.

The problem of the validity of norms only arises when the taken-for-

grantedness of the norm is disrupted by some event. Then, the validity of the

norm is open to question. As they become problematized they lose their

taken-for-grantedness and are made the object of inquiry. I have drawn

attention to the distinction between an unproblematized norm and a

problematized norm to emphasize that ethical deliberation always results

from the raising of some question. It is this process which opens the way to

the rationalization of the lifeworld. As objects of inquiry, problematized

norms are subjected to rational inquiry.

My goal of determining the conditions for coherent ethical agency in

modernity was motivated, in part, by contemporary skepticism concerning

ethics as witnessed in the interminability of ethical discourse. This

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[102]Habermas, Jürgen, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on Philosophical Justification," in Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr (eds.), *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990), p. 86.

interminability revealed the crisis in ethical reflection and the incoherence of the modern self. I accepted that the breakdown of traditions was part of the crisis in ethical reflection. My understanding of the process of this breakdown is deepened by the understanding of the rationalization processes which brought modernity about. In discussing the lifeworld, we see that it contains a resource for the repair of normative structures. That resource is argumentative discourse. The ideal speech situation and the rules of discourse outlined above present the parameters within which problematized norms may yield legitimized norms.

The ideal speech situation is not simply an exposition of the logical requirements of argumentative discourse, but has ethical content in the form of an ethical ideal. It is very important to notice *what kind* of an ethical ideal is invoked in the claim that communication embodies an ethical ideal. The ideal speech situation represents a procedural or situational norm as opposed to a substantive norm. A substantive norm might be a concrete conception of the good life or the concrete norms associated with a particular kinship role in a particular society. A procedural or situational norm establishes that some event or claim is to be endorsed if it results from a certain procedure or setting. The validity or "goodness" of some event or claim is in direct proportion to how closely the procedure or setting dictated in the normative ideal is approximated. Notice that Habermas's conception of reason in general is a *procedural* conception.[103] Thus practical or normative claims admit of truth in the same way that do claims about the objective world.[104] Habermas can maintain a modern and useful distinction between social and

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[103]Habermas, Jürgen, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 314 - 315.
[104]Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* , p. 111.

objective/natural phenomena while explaining the validity of normative

claims. Different kinds of phenomena are referred to, but the procedure or

setting which establishes the rationality of the claims and the grounds of

criticism is the same. This is extremely important for explaining the

"objectivity" of normative claims. Habermas can avoid an untenable

dualistic metaphysics like that Kant was required to construct, as well as

MacIntyre's claim of the necessity of a functionalist conception of persons and

his blurring of the social and objective worlds. Habermas can also avoid a

teleological philosophy of history like Hegel ultimately must lean on to make

sense of normative appeals. The difference between substantive and

procedural norms suggests a model of ethical agency which is appropriate for

modernity. The implications of this difference can be articulated by

discussing different senses of 'community'.

Community

I have used the term 'community' ambiguously. I would like to clarify

the two ways in which it has been used.[105] Individuals obtain the norms and

values which they employ in action and evaluation through communication

with others. This process is evident in the use of 'community' to refer to all

those who share substantive norms and values. This sense of community

may be unambiguously referred to as a 'substantive ethical community'.

Although individuals in a substantive ethical community take up norms and

values through communication, this occurs in a prereflective way. Norms

[105]In what follows I am indebted to Fraser's discussion of a distinction which she finds in Habermas's work between normatively secured and communicatively achieved action. See Fraser, "What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," *New German Critique*, no. 35, Spring/Summer, 1985, pp. 120.

and values are prereflectively incorporated into an individual's personality during childhood socialization. In this process, communication functions as the vehicle for the reproduction of social consensus. In reference specifically to a substantive ethical community, norms and values are not problematized; they are assimilated, employed and referred to. They are accepted as valid without that validity having been challenged.

In modernity, individuals interact and coordinate actions with others from diverse substantive ethical communities. Furthermore, even within substantive ethical communities, norms and values constitutive of the community may become problematized. When this occurs, a metalevel discussion may be necessary before action or evaluation is agreed on. This move to the level of discourse represents the move from *normatively regulated action* to *communicatively achieved action*.

> The concept of *normatively regulated action* does not refer to the behavior of basically solitary actors who come upon other actors in their environment, but to members of a social group who orient their action to common values. The individual actor complies with (or violates) a norm when in a given situation the conditions are present to which the norm has application. Norms express an agreement that obtains in a social group. All members of a group for whom a given norm has validity may expect of one another that in certain situations they will carry out (or abstain from) the actions commanded (or proscribed). The central concept of *complying with a norm* means fulfilling a generalized expectation of behavior. The latter does not have the cognitive sense of expecting a predicted event, but the normative sense that members are entitled to expect a certain behavior.[106]

The move to communicatively achieved action represents a rupture in a substantive ethical community. A substantive ethical community in which such ruptures accumulate, unresolved, is one in which the social consensus

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[106]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One*, p. 85.

of norms and values is disrupted and can no longer unproblematically serve as the condition for individual and collective action. MacIntyre's analysis of modern "communities" as unable to provide the basis for ethical action is very similar to this analysis of substantive ethical communities in which normatively regulated action has broken down.

The second sense of 'community' refers to what Habermas calls an 'ideal communication community'. In the ideal communication community the capacity of modern agents to raise validity claims in speech is developed. This is a capacity which is enjoyed despite differences in the substantive ethical communities to which individuals belong and despite the level of disruption of an individual's substantive ethical community. It is a universal moment. It constitutes a community to which all modern speakers belong because it designates a capacity all possess. Furthermore, this commonality has a pragmatic dimension in so far as it can be used to critique efforts to repair disruptions in substantive ethical communities or effect consensual action among individuals in diverse substantive ethical communities.

Habermas's theory of communicative action suggests that it is the very procedure of obtaining agreement which confers validity upon some claim. Communicative rationality is formal in the sense of being empty of any normative content except that which indicates the conditions under which agreement must be made. The content comes from the specific cultural norms and values of the participants. While this conception is sensitive to the claim that norms and values always reflect particular historical communities, it has a universal moment in its specification of the formal conditions which must be met. What this means practically is that

normative validity is achieved by reference to the relationship among participants which ensures that each is free and able to challenge any claims made. The challenge to modernity is to actually develop a society in which all members are able to participate fully in argumentation. There are two related requirements. (1) That individuals have the competence to engage in communicative action. (2) That institutional arrangements ensure that mechanisms exist for full and free participation in discursive argumentation *in a modern society.*

We have seen how economic inequality is an obstacle for the state as the institution for the reworking of the lifeworld. However, economic inequality is also an obstacle for the pursuit of open argumentation because it entails unequal access to the means of communication. Access to universities, publishing houses, mass media and expert discourses are overwhelmingly aligned with access to money. Rule 3.3 requires the right to equal participation in discourse. Here, again, we find that the potential of the state is undermined. The state produces a system of clients and dependents who are defined by those with the power of the state. In itself, this represents an inequality in participation in discourse and undermines the potential for competent participation on the part of clients.

The condition for coherent ethical agency in modernity is an institutional arrangement which will facilitate the reworking of the lifeworld. Such reworking can only be brought about in modernity through the process of argumentative discourse within the parameters set out in rules 3.1 - 3.3. The bringing about of the setting described by these rules will itself require institutional change. The constraint on discourse brought about by capitalism must be challenged. This need not entail the elimination of markets, but

must widen the range of topics open to public discourse and action. In so far as economic inequality impedes equal access to discourse, economic inequality must addressed. Coherent ethical agency in modernity requires the practical implementation of a setting for discourse which will enable the participation of all concerned and thus confer legitimacy on the results of discourse.

Problems and Questions

Habermas's conception of practical rationality, as expressed in the notion of the ideal speech situation, is promising as a conception of practical rationality which might to be adequate to the historical conditions of modernity, the distinctively modern subject and the relationship between self and community which obtains in modernity. However, several problems and questions, some of which are mentioned above, remain. In the following chapter, I will consider these problems and questions. Three specific issues will be addressed.

First, I will consider the objection that Habermas's ideal speech situation constitutes an empty formalism and thus is susceptible to the same objections that plague Kant's conception of practical rationality. The ideal speech situation represents a procedural, as opposed to a substantive, notion of practical rationality. The concern is that the absence of substantive content will leave no norms to guide ethical reflection. I have argued that norms arise out of particular communities or ways of life. The ideal speech situation seems to ignore this insight and thus presents the impossible task of making ethical judgments without any normative standards to inform decisionmaking.

Second, I will consider the problem of institutionalizing the ideal speech situation. I have criticized MacIntyre and Hegel for not adequately addressing the institutional embodiment of their conceptions of practical rationality. In considering the first problem I recognize that Habermas must be able to escape the criticism of Kant; in considering this problem, I recognize that Habermas must be able to escape the criticisms of MacIntyre and Hegel, at least on the issue of the concrete realization of practical rationality in modernity. The notion of the ideal speech situation contains two specific requirements for institutional embodiment. The institutional embodiment must enable the participation of all in discourse and eliminate coercion from discourse. The colonization thesis will be important to consider in meeting these specifications.

The third problem is related to the first problem. The colonization thesis maintains that the subsystems of state bureaucracy and capitalist economy have participated in the destruction of substantive ethical communities. One might object that the institutionalization of the ideal speech situation will have a similar effect. The worst case scenario is that the subjection of particular norms to rational critique will entail the destruction of particular communities. What will remain will be a mass society which will lack resources for the production of meaning and thus motivation for action. The successful institutionalization of the ideal speech community would thus entail the end of community, the end of the individual and the end of ethical agency.

Responding to these problems and questions is a task which I will not be able to accomplish fully . However, I believe that I can respond to them in a programmatic way which will, at least, allow for a tentative evaluation of the

success of the proposal that the notion of the ideal speech situation represents a conception of practical rationality adequate for modernity. I will consider these matters in the next chapter. I will preface my discussion with a statement of how the Habermas proposal relates to the problem of modern ethical skepticism and to MacIntyre.

Ethical Skepticism

I originally presented the problem of modern ethical skepticism as the problem of the interminability of modern ethical reflection. I suggested, following MacIntyre, that this problem resulted from the absence of consensus concerning norms. I maintained that norms arise from particular ways of life which are shared by members of a substantive ethical community. The conclusion which MacIntyre draws from these considerations is that modernity precludes coherent ethical reflection in so far as it disrupts small communities within which consensual norms can develop. MacIntyre finds that the bureaucratic state and capitalist economy contribute to the disruption of these communities and thus he is in agreement with Habermas to a great extent. The special problem which MacIntyre's view entails is the problem of the pluralism of modernity. For MacIntyre, the maintenance of consensual norms is precluded in modernity, not only because state bureaucracy and capitalism disrupt communities, but also because as persons interact with others from diverse traditions, they incorporate pieces from those traditions into their ethical frameworks. These pieces cannot be melded into a coherent whole and thus ethical subjects are incoherent. The problem of ethical skepticism then, is a problem of the "purity" of cultural and moral traditions. Thus MacIntyre's only advice is to form small groups. Within these groups, coherent, pure ethical schemes may develop.

Now we can clearly see why MacIntyre's view is pessimistic concerning ethical agency in modernity. On MacIntyre's view, coherent ethical agency cannot tolerate a plurality of traditions. When persons interact, the

coherence of their ethical schemes is disrupted and they become incoherent ethical subjects. Ethical discourse is interminable because this incoherenceprecludes a set of consensual norms which might function as premises for argumentation. Three solutions suggest themselves. (1) The formation of small substantive ethical communities which are isolated insome way from other communities. (2) The formation of substantive ethical communities, not necessarily small, which are impervious to "contamination." (3) The formation of a worldwide single moral tradition. All of these suggestions depend on substantive ethical communities as the basis of coherent ethical reflection.

In the notion of the ideal speech situation, Habermas offers a way of conceiving of coherent ethical reflection and agency in modernity which is not dependent on the exclusivity of substantive ethical communities. The ideal speech situation describes a formal setting which expresses a conception of practical rationality unbound from particular substantive communities. The ideal speech situation is not an alternative to substantive ethical communities. The ideal speech situation is purely formal; it does not express any substantive ethical content. Only substantive ethical communities, coherent or otherwise, can provide normative content. The ideal speech situation describes the setting within which substantive norms can be subjected to critique in terms of the setting. The ideal speech situation describes the conditions under which rational reflection and argumentation can occur. Conclusions resulting from the setting are accepted as valid, not because they can be deduced from foundational premises, but because they have survived open rational argumentation. Before proceeding, it may be useful to recall the two primary characteristics of the ideal speech situation:

(1) speech may in principle include all who might be affected by the matter under discussion; and (2) coercion is absent. Habermas claims that these characteristics will have the result that only proposals which are in the general interest will be legitimized. Reasoned consensus would emerge only for generalizable proposals.

The ideal speech situation does not require that participants in discourse share a tradition. Ethical decisions can be made piecemeal; they need not reflect a coherent approach, except for that expressed in the ideal speech situation itself. If the ideal speech situation is adequate as a conception of practical rationality for modernity, it still remains to be seen whether or not it can be embodied and made operative. However, before this challenge can be addressed, an objection to the adequacy of the ideal speech situation for practical rationality must be considered.

First Objection: Empty Formalism

The ideal speech situation provides a purely formal setting. It provides no ethical content except that which can be discerned in its commitment to rationality and equality. The notion of equality is expressed in the provision that everyone be allowed to participate effectively in discourse. However, this meager proscription hardly provides the kind of content which can guide normative discourse. Here we find that the ideal speech situation is open to the very criticism which revealed the inadequacy of Kant's conception of practical rationality. Both Kant and Habermas provide conceptions of practical rationality which embrace a universal rationality. If we are to accept the ideal speech situation as capturing a conception of practical rationality which is adequate for modernity, the charge of empty formalism must be

answered. In developing my criticism of Kant on this issue, I raised the following problems. (1) Kant's conception of practical rationality relies on a conception of the moral subject which eliminates any basis for agency because it posits an unbridgeable gap between the concrete, historical agent and an ahistorical moral subject. (2) Kant's test of universalizability ignores that the construction of a state of affairs *as an ethical problem* necessarily refers to a particular social and historical setting. (3) Kant's conception of the self falsely dichotomizes the self into a purely rational being and a bundle of irrational desires.

Response to the Charge of Empty Formalism

I will argue that Habermas can successfully respond to the charge of empty formalism. Indeed, the great advantage of the ideal speech situation is its lack of content. Since the ideal speech situation lacks content and only provides a framework for discourse, it can function as the setting in which persons from diverse communities can engage in settling normative disputes. It thus directly responds to the problem of the pluralism of moral traditions which for MacIntyre signals the end of practical rationality. However, the charge of empty formalism is a serious threat to Habermas's conception of practical rationality since it suggests that the absence of normative content will have the result that nothing will be settled in the ideal speech situation. Perhaps the best way to approach an answer to this objection is by reviewing Habermas's own criticisms of Kant, discussing whether or not Habermas escapes these criticisms and, if so, what this means for the charge of empty formalism. I find that Habermas makes two distinct criticisms of Kant. The

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first objects to Kant's project of universalizability on the grounds that a single subject cannot successfully perform this task by himself or herself.

> Subjects capable of moral judgment cannot test each for himself alone whether an established or recommended norm is in the general interest and ought to have social force; this can only be done in common with everyone else involved. The mechanisms of taking the attitude of the other and of internalizing reach their definitive limit here. Ego can, to be sure, anticipate the attitude that alter will adopt toward him in the role of a participant in argumentation; by this means the communicative actor gains a reflective relation to himself, as we have seen. Ego can even try to *imagine* to himself the course of a moral argument in the circle of those involved; but he cannot *predict* its results with any certainty. Thus the projection of an ideal communication community serves as a guiding thread for *setting up* discourses that have to be carried through *in fact* and cannot be replaced by monological mock dialogue.[107]

Habermas is arguing here that valid normative conclusions can only be achieved through *actual discourse with others*.[108] The single subject cannot take the attitude of a disinterested absolute subject and bracket his or her interests, particular norms and desires in performing the thought experiment described in the test of universalizability. Habermas's conception of the self, in contrast to Kant's conception of the self, informs this criticism. While Habermas claims that the modern self is capable of rational argumentation, he conceives of this capacity as belonging to an embodied individual who has interests, commitments and desires which cannot be divorced from the self as practical reasoner. The self brings his or her embodied individuality to the ideal speech situation as do the other participants. The self cannot assume an Archimedean standpoint from which to judge any particular norms or

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[107]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume 2, p. 95.
[108]Sissela Bok's Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, applies this insight in an interesting and fruitful way. Bok, Sissela (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

claims. The ideal speech situation is not a thought experiment, but an actual engagement with others. The requirement that all persons may engage in the ideal speech situation is not a nicety to ensure good will, but an essential component of normative discourse. It is the process of subjecting normative proposals to actual critique which confers validity upon successful proposals. Habermas's procedural conception of rationality in general is witnessed here. Both claims to scientific truth and to normative rightness are fallible and subject to revision. Neither pretend to absoluteness, but only claim to represent the best rational judgment of a community of inquirers.[109] That community of inquirers is always a particular community composed of only a certain set of persons. The upper limit on participants is that set of persons alive at the time, although the interests of future generations, or past generations, may be represented by living participants. Thus, the community of inquirers does not pretend to tap into the absolute Truth or absolute Rightness, but only the best judgment which can be achieved through rational argument. In the absence of a pure rational nature which may be tapped by particular agents, the presence of other arguers provides the test which Kant conceived of in terms of a single agent. "What was intended by the categorical imperative can be made good by projecting a will-formation under the idealized conditions of universal discourse."[110]

Habermas's second criticism of Kant charges Kant with employing the assumptions of the philosophy of consciousness.

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[109]The acknowledged influence of Pierce on Habermas is apparent in Habermas's conception of rationality. See Pierce, Charles Sanders, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931 - 1935), 5.311, pp. 186 - 187.

[110]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume 2, p. 95.

Kant and the utilitarians operated with concepts from the philosophy of consciousness. Thus they reduced the motives and aims of action, as well as the interests and value orientations on which they depended, to inner states or private episodes. . . In fact, however, motives and ends have something intersubjective about them; they are always interpreted in the light of a cultural tradition. . . But if motives and ends are accessible only under interpretations dependent upon traditions, the individual actor cannot himself be the *final* instance in developing and revising his interpretations of needs. Rather, his interpretations change in the context of the lifeworld of the social group to which he belongs; little by little, practical discourses can also gear into this quasi-natural process. The individual is not master of the cultural interpretations in light of which he understands his motives and aims, his interests and value orientations, no more than he disposes over the tradition in which he has grown up. Like every monological procedure, the monological principle of Kantian ethics fails in the face of this. . .[111]

Again we can understand the difference between Kant's and Habermas's position in terms of their different conceptions of the self and the relationship between the self and its community. The philosophy of consciousness mistakenly posits the self as able to produce its motives and aims out of itself. This ontological and methodological individualism is refuted as soon as one realizes that the meaning of the individual's motives and aims are intelligible only in light of reference to that individual's social and historical setting, and the community or social groups which constitute the individual's sphere of action. I made a similar argument in Chapter Two. If we think simply about how the agent conceives of his or her aims, we discover that the articulation of these aims points to a universe of discourse which transcends the individual and employs terms which refer to the individual's social setting.

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[111]Ibid., pp. 95 - 96.

> The fact is that people are more than animals, and what makes up the extra is their self-understanding, the understanding in terms of which their plans and aspirations are formed. But this understanding is itself *social*. People think of themselves and their lives, including those career plans which are most properly called 'self-chosen', in irreducibly social concepts. For example, a life as self-concerned as one devoted to making money and owning property is necessarily conceived in terms of 'buying', 'selling', 'banking', 'interest', all of which are social not individualistic concepts. In fact, deprived of social relations, it is doubtful if the individual could have a recognizably human life at all.[112]

Habermas argues that Kant treats motives, aims, interests and values as private possessions when in fact they are always the attributes of a community. While we may experience motives, aims, interests and values as our private possessions, this experience is illusory. The content of this experience has a social character and thus presumes and depends on a community outside of the agent.

The illusion of the ahistorical and personal character of value experience supports the notion that the subject is a point of absolute valuation and thus cannot be challenged. Valuation arises magically under this view or as a result of the givenness and unfreedom of our instinctual natures. Once this conception of the relationship between self, the self's value experiences and the self's community is debunked, and valuation is exposed as a public experience, then a universalist ethics quite different from Kant's can be envisioned.

The difference between Kant's and Habermas's rationalism is clarified by giving appropriate weight to Habermas's reference to will-formation. Engagement in discourse in the ideal speech situation is a process in which there is not a sharp distinction between achieving a conclusion to an

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[112]Graham, Gordon, *Contemporary Social Philosophy* (Oxford, UK and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 33.

argument and participating in the modification of one's affective states. Desires, motives, aims and norms are modifiable through argumentation. Thus, Habermas does not conceive of a rigid dichotomy between the rational self and the affective self. This dichotomy is dissolved by recognizing the social character of reason and affect. Our "personal" desires and values are educable. That educability demonstrates for Habermas the inadequacy of Kant's monological test and argues for its replacement by public normative discourse.

Habermas's universalist ethics does not posit a fundamental antagonism between the good life and the happy life as does Kant because it presents motives, aims, interests and values as themselves modifiable through rational normative discourse. For example, suppose one discovers that the grapes one enjoyed yesterday were purchased at the cost of the health of farm workers. This discovery may influence one's future desire, or lack of desire, for grapes. Here there is an implicit argument which appeals to the normative claim that good health for all has moral weight. There is clearly a universalist appeal here. The health of everyone is important. If we imagine this issue being made the subject of normative discourse in the ideal speech situation, we will have an example of how normative content is brought to the ideal speech situation, as well as exemplifying the intermingling of affect and reason. Here normative argumentation is initiated by the report of actual conditions and the claim that these conditions are intolerable. Normative content is brought to the argument by the claim that the value of good health for all has moral weight. This universalist appeal need not rely on the imagination or moral sophistication of a single person engaged in solitary ethical reflection. The ideal speech situation requires that all persons

be allowed to state their case. Thus, the claimants will be present to make the case that they believe that their health is just as important as the health and pursuit of livelihood of others. Grape growers may object that their livelihood would be threatened if the methods of cultivation of grapes were changed in order to accommodate the health concerns of the workers. This argument will require empirical data as well as appeal to normative claims and subjective experience. This example demonstrates that argument in the ideal speech situation will always be particular argument and that the particularity of the argument and the arguers will determine what norms are appealed to and the actual course of the argument. The intermingling of affect and reason is witnessed as well. We can imagine that the success of the farm workers' case may depend on obtaining a recognition on an affective level by the growers that the experience and health of the farm workers has moral weight on a par with their own interests. Habermas's criticism of the assumptions of the philosophy of consciousness entails that rational argument is not antithetical to hermenuetic and affective engagement. Resolution of normatively charged problem situations which does not proceed through rational argument can only proceed through coercion. Coercive resolution is clearly not ethical resolution. Thus, however difficult the process of ethical argumentation may be and however often the process may fail, the alternative is coercion and force.

These two criticisms which Habermas makes of Kant demonstrate the great differences between their views. Kant's formalism amounts to the imaginative application of the standard of consistency by a single agent; it cannot pick out some particular action as the ethical action without assuming some particular setting and assuming some particular ethical content. Kant's

formalism issues ethical judgments only through the surreptitious importation of ethical content.

The ideal speech situation does escape the charge of an empty and impotent formalism. While the specifications of the ideal speech situation are purely formal and lack particular normative content, content is not lacking because it is brought to discourse by the participants. Content is not surreptitiously smuggled in; no veil is applied. Participants engage as interested parties. The commitment of the ideal speech situation is that participants in a dispute over a normative issue engage in appeal to reason which an *embodied* agent could accept as having force. Coercion and exclusion are ruled out. Participants must engage in the hermenuetic task of presenting their points of view and reasons in a way that can be accepted by the other participants. Rational agreement is reached when all members have agreed to the force of the better argument. Legitimacy is thereby conferred upon the result. Here we see the importance of the relationship between practical rationality, self and community which Habermas projects in the notion of the ideal speech situation. The very project of engagement in the task of presenting and evaluating arguments impacts the subjective experience of the participants. Thus, the process of argumentation is not a process in which pure rational agents engage. The process of participation in the ideal speech situation is an educative and self-transformative experience for participants. The motives, aims, interests and values of the participants cannot be left on the coat rack as participants enter the ideal speech situation. Embodied, full-blooded, particular participants engage in discourse.

Second Objection: The Problem of Institutional Realization

How is the ideal speech situation to be embodied? I would like to begin an answer to this question by considering Habermas's own discussion of counterinstitutions.

Counterinstitutions

Habermas suggests that counterinstitutions have taken on the task of providing a social space wherein discourse approximating the ideal speech situation can occur. Habermas uses the term 'counterinstitution' to refer to conflicts and protests which are *not* issues of distribution; they are not demands for a different distribution of goods.

> In the past decade or two, conflicts have developed in advanced Western societies that deviate in various ways from the welfare-state pattern of institutionalized conflict over distribution. They no longer flare up in domains of material reproduction; they are no longer channeled through parties and associations; and they can no longer be allayed by compensations.[113]

These conflicts and protests fall outside the usual way of talking about justice in liberal societies.[114] Since these conflicts and protests are not about money or the distribution of services, they are not easily interpreted as the irrational and arbitrary expressions of selfish, single individuals. Where this later kind of interpretation is possible, potentially normative claims are reconstructed as interest-group conflict which is not amenable to rational discourse because it is based on the irrational desires of merely private individuals. Interest-group conflicts construct individuals as clients or consumers who must be dealt with strategically, not as persons raising

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[113]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume 2, p. 392.
[114]Young, Iris Marion, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press: 1990), pp. 16 - 18.

normative issues which are resolvable only through rational, consensual discourse about those normative issues. Where conflict and protest can be constructed as about distributive issues, normative discourse is derailed and a case of colonization of the lifeworld occurs.

> In its process of conflict resolution, interest-group pluralism makes no distinction between the assertion of selfish interest and normative claims to justice or right. Public policy dispute is only a competition among claims, and "winning" depends on getting others on your side, making trades and alliances with others, and making effective strategic calculations about how and to whom to make your claims. One does not win by persuading a public that one's claim is just. This strategic conception of policy discussion fosters political cynicism: those who make claims of right or justice are only saying what they want in clever rhetoric.[115]

The conflicts and protests which Habermas calls counterinstitutions are unlike interest-groups in that they are about ways of life and distinctively normative issues which resist translation into terms which might make them appear resolvable by instrumental reason. Thus, they constitute moments of resistance to the colonization of the lifeworld. The issues raised by counterinstitutions "have to do with quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights."[116] Habermas claims that these issues are raised by the peace movement, the antinuclear movement, the environmental movement, religious fundamentalism, the tax-protest movement, the women's movement, minority movements, e.g. the elderly, gays, the handicapped and other movements.[117] Certainly in the United States, movements associated with racial[118] or ethnic differentiations

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[115]Ibid. p. 72.

[116]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume Two, p. 392.

[117]Ibid., p. 393.

[118]I use the terms 'race' or 'racial' with hesitation. I recognize that there are difficulties with these terms.

are among the most important in raising the kind of distinctively normative issues that Habermas associates with counterinstitutions. Habermas also includes as having international importance "autonomy movements struggling for regional, linguistic, cultural, and also religious independence."[119] Habermas means by 'counterinstitutions' these kinds of movements.

Habermas's discussion of counterinstitutions is very brief. However, I find that the notion of counterinstitution suggests that these movements have at least three different functions. These three functions are: (1) to provide resistance to the colonization of the lifeworld, (2) to provide a place for normative argumentation, e.g. a place in which the ideal speech situation is approximated, and (3) to provide an opportunity for the development of social groups which might be the locus for development of the capacity of individuals to engage in effective normative discourse and for the recognition, articulation and development of group norms which might provide content for normative discourse. I would like to focus especially on the third function.

The movements respond to problems and fears which raise questions about ways of life and specific normative issues, but they also respond to the "cultural impoverishment" of everyday life.[120] Here I interpret Habermas as drawing attention to the reduction of opportunity for communicative interaction which occurs as the colonization of the lifeworld proceeds. Public discourse is reduced to interest-group strategic posturing. Private institutions like the family become mere resting places which are cut off from community

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[119]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume Two, p. 393.
[120]Ibid., p. 395.

and political life, and are delegitimized as spheres of normative engagement and authority by the encroachment of expert discourses. Thus, while the public sphere is reduced as a political sphere available for normative discourse by the reduction of politics to interest-group posturing, the private sphere also is subjected to constriction as a possible place for normative discourse. I now want to address the impact which this constriction of opportunities for normative discourse has on the capacities of individuals to engage in normative discourse.

I have argued that normative agency shifts in premodernity from being informed by the givenness of social roles to being a matter of the exercise of the capacities of the individual to engage in normative argumentation. In modernity, the condition for ethical agency thus becomes intimately related to opportunities for development of the capacity to engage in normative argumentation. Thus it becomes important to notice that in contemporary Western societies, opportunities for the development of the capacity to engage in normative argumentation are limited. This limitation is a function of the constriction of the public and private realms as places for normative engagement. Counterinstitutions function as opportunities to engage in normative discourse with the goal of impacting specific issues and concerns, but they also function as places for individuals to develop the capacities to engage in normative dispute.

Developing the capacity to engage in normative argumentation involves practice in actually making normative arguments, but it also requires a commitment to some norms. Here we can see the import of MacIntyre's critique of modernity. Norms are always particular norms. The principles which govern normative argumentation are universal, but the norms which

are subject to discussion are particular. The principles which govern normative argumentation are embedded in the notion of rationality itself and thus are always already present and operative. However, norms are not always already present and thus must come from somewhere. The somewhere from which norms come are concrete ways of life. Individuals develop their identities as participants in particular concrete ways of life and thus the norms which an individual accepts have a quality of givenness. Habermas differs from MacIntyre in his appreciation of the different capacities of pre-modern and modern individuals. Modern individuals have the capacity to subject their norms to reflection and thus subject them to critique and possible modification. This process occurs through the subjection of norms to rational argumentation. What is crucial to notice here is the intimate connection between an individual's norms, the way of life which informs those norms, and the individual's identity. As an individual goes through the process of subjecting his or her norms to rational critique, this process impacts the individual's way of life and his or her self-identity. Since, as was pointed out in the discussion of the first objection, a way of life is not an individual's possession, but the possession of a group of people, the group which the individual identifies with is involved and problematized. Thus, an individual who modifies his or her normative commitments is simultaneously involved in the process of change of identity and change of group identification. At this point we can begin to see that the role which Habermas envisions for counterinstitutions goes beyond the resolution or confrontation of specific problems and fears.

> Something that is expressed rather blatantly in the manifestations of the psychomovement and renewed religious fundamentalism is also a motivating force behind most

alternative projects and many citizens' action groups - the painful manifestations of deprivation in a culturally impoverished and one-sidedly rationalized practice of everyday life. For this reason, ascriptive characteristics such as gender, age, skin color, neighborhood or locality, and religious affiliation (sic) serve to build up and separate off communities, to establish subculturally protected communities supportive of the search for personal and collective identity. The revaluation of the particular, the natural, the provincial, of social spaces that are small enough to be familiar, of decentralized forms of commerce and despecialized activities, of segmented pubs, simple interactions and dedifferentiated public spheres - all this is meant to foster the revitalization of possibilities for expression and communication that have been buried alive.[121]

Counterinstitutions function as places for the following simultaneous processes: normative argument; the formation of new self-identities for individuals; and the recognition, formation or modification of social groups whose members share a way of life or are in the process of forging or modifying a way of life. "Consciousness-raising" groups of the sixties and seventies among women and Chicanos are paradigmatic of the simultaneity of these processes. These groups functioned as opportunities for individuals to explore and re-create their self-identities as members of groups of persons also involved in this process. Some of these groups explicitly recognized that they were engaged in the testing of norms which had been part of their self-identities, and that they were explicitly engaged in forming new social groups and individual identities which were the product of their collective norm testing. Some of the pitfalls these groups encountered are useful in revealing the interrelationship between the subjection of norms to critique and the legitimation of that process of critique in terms of the ideal speech situation. I would like now to turn to a consideration of one of these pitfalls in order to demonstrate that interrelationship and to go some way toward bolstering my

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[121]Ibid.

refutation above of the objection that Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation is abstract and thus ignores the particularity of norms. Discussion of this pitfall will also reveal the inadequacy of counterinstitutions as a way of realizing the ideal speech situation. I will refer to this pitfall as the problem of the construction of pseudo-commonalities.

Pseudo-commonalities

Many problems face anyone or any group which engages in the process of exploration of commonalities which might be the basis of group membership and thus the basis of a collective project of norm critique, self-re-creation, and group re-creation. One is that pseudo-communities may be described which in fact mask important differences. An example of such an occurrence was the practice, especially in the 1960's and 1970's, in some feminist writing to refer to "women's oppression" and explore the common experiences of women without attending to the experiential and objective impact of race and class differences.

> While it is evident that many women suffer from sexist tyranny, there is little indication that this forges "a common bond among all women." There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share - differences which are rarely transcended.[122]

The construction of the object 'women' has been severely criticized by some women of color as classist and racist because "the women's movement" in the 60's and 70's was really the expression of middle and upper-middle class white women who took it upon themselves to generalize from their

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[122]hooks, bell, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), p. 4.

experiences to the experience of women who were not included nor

consulted. Such generalizing participates in the strategy of falsely

universalizing your own case. This strategy has the double effect of bolstering

your case by cloaking it in the greater legitimacy that broadening one's base

achieves *and* silencing and excluding those standpoints that one pretends to

include, but may in fact be divergent and even counter to the articulated

aims.

> It was a mark of race and class privilege, as well as the expression
> of freedom from the many constraints sexism places on working
> class women, that middle class white women were able to make
> their interests the primary focus of feminist movement and
> employ a rhetoric of commonality that made their condition
> synonymous with "oppression." Who was there to demand a
> change in vocabulary? What other group of women in the
> United States had the same access to universities, publishing
> houses, mass media, money?[123]

Notice that the middle class white women of the 60's and 70's who had

dominated feminist discourse *had access to the means of defining their*

situation as they chose. As hooks points out, that access was itself a mark of

privilege, not oppression in comparison to the inability of poor women and

women of color to gain access to the means of defining their situation as they

saw it and pursuing their own goals. Two things are important to notice

here. First is that the appeal to a pseudo-commonality, e.g. being a woman,

participated in a practice which was exclusionary because it masked a

difference in aims which could not be tolerated. All women may well have

common experiences or share an objective situation which might be the basis

of a true community, but as long as significant differences are covered over,

the truth of this possible commonality cannot be realized. One of the

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[123]Ibid., p. 6.

differences I am referring to here is that while middle class white women were campaigning for wage work, poor women and women of color were eager to escape from wage work. This difference can be articulated in terms of class and the access to different kinds of wage work which class differences entail. Middle class white women wanted wage work because the kind of work they could get was interesting and well-remunerated. Poor women had access only to work which was demeaning, exhausting and poorly-remunerated. So an immediate point of disagreement concerned the issue of wage work itself. Since the issues of class and race were suppressed by an over-zealous appeal to gender only, it was impossible to thematize this difference and devise a common strategy to confront it. Furthermore, it was not in the interest of the "feminists" to confront this issue because in fact their aims were aims which reflected their class. Of course, I am not claiming that individual women had anything but the best intentions, and I am aware of my own generalizations in telling this story. Nevertheless, an important lesson can be gleaned from this tale and is currently being incorporated into feminist movement: beware of claims of commonality, they often mask class and race interest. Elaboration of the lesson: well-intentioned efforts to construct or reconstruct communities or traditions need to be sensitive to participating in exclusionary practices.

The norm of the ideal speech situation and the notion of the colonization of the lifeworld can be useful as tools of critique in cases like that described above. The exclusion of poor women and women of color in the "women's movement" can be criticized in terms of the ideal speech situation and the notion of the colonization of the lifeworld can be usefully employed here as well. hooks obviously did not require these tools to perform her critique, but

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if we are to avoid rediscovering the wheel in each situation critical tools are necessary.

Inadequacy of Counterinstitutions

The ideal speech situation requires that all persons who might be affected by some matter be able to participate in discourse concerning it. The notion of the counterinstitution and the example of feminist movement demonstrate that the ability to participate in normative discourse requires both not being excluded from discourse and being capable of effective discourse. From my discussion of Kant and my discussion of counterinstitutions, it is clear that the capacity to engage in effective discourse is not something that an individual simply possesses by nature. Rather, this capacity entails active membership in a group or groups which provides the opportunity for practice in argumentation as well as development of norms which are intimately related to the member's self-identity. A conception of autonomy which is quite different from Kant's individualist conception is suggested by these considerations. Fraser suggests a meaning for autonomy which resounds these considerations.

> . . . to be autonomous here would mean to be a member of a group or groups which have achieved a means of interpretation and communication sufficient to enable one to participate on a par with members of other groups in moral and political deliberation; that is, to speak and be heard, to tell one's own life-story, to press one's claims and point of view in one's own voice.[124]

Habermas's discourse ethics or communicative ethics emphasizes the importance of language. We see this emphasis in MacIntyre as well. The

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[124]Fraser, Nancy, "Toward a Discourse Ethic of Solidarity," *Praxis International*, 5:4 January 1986, p. 428.

twist this emphasis on language which Fraser takes from Habermas, and which is apparent in the example above, is that access to the opportunity to engage in actual normative discourse in a setting approximating the ideal speech situation is only part of what is required for effective discursive argumentation. Access to the means of self and group interpretation and presentation is just as important. In the example above, we saw that poor women and women of color were effectively excluded from access to the means of controlling their own cultural identity. Their interests were falsely voiced by others for their own class interests. Here two requirements for the embodiment of the ideal speech situation become clear. First, individuals and groups must be able to control their own self and group identities. Second, an institutional setting must be established which will ensure individuals and groups access to normative discourse with others.

The role of counterinstitutions in embodying the ideal speech situation has two limitations. First, counterinstitutions are not institutions. Counterinstitutions lack institutional embodiment to ensure their survival. There are some institutions which represent counterinstitutions, e.g. food co-ops, women's bookstores, ecological organizations. In so far as these organizations exist, they provide a way for counterinstitutions to endure and enable some members to resist the colonization of the lifeworld in a fuller way than if they did not exist. However, these institutions are very minimal.

The second problem that counterinstitutions are subject to is that they cannot provide for the economic basis which is necessary for achievement of access to the means of developing and communicating individual and group identity and the promotion of the point of view of all individuals and groups. hooks mentioned that poor women and many women of color were

prevented from impacting feminist discourse because they did not have the economic means necessary to effect this impact. Access to "universities, publishing houses, mass media, money" are the material means necessary in Western modernity to make one's interests heard and to control the presentation of one's identity. In so far as counterinstitutions do not have adequate economic means, they will fail to be anything but isolated and ineffective pockets of resistance. Notice, too, that the ideal speech situation requires that *all* persons be able and allowed to participate in effective discourse. This means that the success of some counterinstitutions in presenting their interests and controlling their presentation is not adequate. Here we find that the ideal speech situation has material implications. All persons and groups must have the economic means to develop the capacity for effective normative discourse and the economic means to actually participate in effective normative discourse.

Embodiment of the ideal speech situation poses a challenge to capitalism in so far as it requires a far greater equality of economic means than is likely to occur within capitalist economy. Furthermore, hooks points out that the class interests of middle and upper-middle class white women presented obstacles for the examination of some of the roots of gender and race oppression. She explicitly argues that issues of gender, race and class are interconnected and that successful analysis of gender or race oppression must include economic analysis. Many feminists now argue that capitalism is antithetical to feminist aims in so far as capitalism entails inequality and impedes the recognition and pursuit of common aims.[125] Capitalism is also shown as problematic in the colonization thesis. However, envisioning and

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[125]See, for example, Jaggar, Alison, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N. J. : Rowman and Allanheld; Brighton, UK: Harvester Press, 1983).

working out the details of a viable alternative to capitalism economy is difficult. It may be useful here to note some points at which Habermas and Marx disagree.

Marx and Habermas

Habermas does not follow Marx in arguing that markets must be eliminated. Indeed, Habermas finds that the subsystems of market economy and political administration are very successful in providing for material reproduction and to some extent promoting emancipatory programs.

> Marx is convinced a priori that in capital he has before him *nothing more* than the mystified form of a class relation. This interpretation excludes from the start the question of whether the systemic interconnection of the capitalist economy and the modern state administration do not *also* represent a higher and evolutionarily advantageous level of integration by comparison to traditional societies. Marx conceives of capitalist society so strongly as a totality that he fails to recognize the *intrinsic* evolutionary *value* that media-steered subsystems possess. He does not see that the differentiation of the state apparatus and the economy *also* represents a higher level of system differentiation, which simultaneously opens up new steering possibilities *and* forces a reorganization of the old, feudal class relationships. The significance of this level of integration goes beyond the institutionalization of a new class relationship.[126]

Habermas is pointing out here the historic role the capitalist state has played. In claiming that capitalism and state bureaucracy open up "new steering possibilities" he is pointing to the great efficiency of these systems in meeting needs. These claims lead Habermas to *not* respond to the colonization of the lifeworld by arguing for the elimination of market economy. It is very important to note that capitalism economy and the existence of markets are two different things. Habermas claims that "Between

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[126]Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Volume Two, p. 339.

capitalism and democracy there is an indissoluble tension; in them two opposed principles of societal integration compete for primacy."[127] Capitalist economy tends to organize human relations in terms of money and power instead of traditionally or communicatively legitimized norms. Thus, the meeting of needs through wage labor in the capitalist labor market is problematic. This system reifies human relations and removes them from the realm of communicative discourse. A socialist economy might well have the benefits of capitalist market economy without producing these results, as well as avoiding the accompanying economic inequalities which I have noted as impeding equal participation in democratic decisionmaking. Thus, the project of embodying the ideal speech situation may well be dependent on working out a socialist market economy.[128]

The Role of a Political Institution

The ideal speech situation is not in itself a community. I have argued for the continuing need for communities or social groups as places for the development of the identities and capacities of individuals as well as particular norms. The ideal speech situation functions as the place for the mediation of these particular communities and norms. Here Hegel's insight concerning the role of the state may be useful. Hegel introduces the state as necessary in order to overcome and mediate the particularity of civil society. While Hegel's proposal failed because of his inattention to the material basis of politics, his notion of the role of the state is useful. Certainly, the ideal speech situation requires institutionalization so that it will endure. An

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[127]Ibid., p. 345.

[128]See David Miller's effort toward this goal in Miller, Daivd, *Market, State and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

obvious way in which to institutionalize the ideal speech situation is through a modification of current democratic practices institutionalized through state mechanisms. However, it is important to note immediately, that the concerns about colonization of the lifeworld and the effects of economic inequality will require a very great modification of democracy as conceived of in the United States. Issues which have been insulated from democratic decisionmaking will have to lose their insulation. Matters that have previously been considered the domain of private economic agents will be subjected to collective consideration because of their impact on economic equality and the commodification of normative issues.

While outlining a specific political scheme which will accommodate the requirements of the ideal speech situation is beyond the scope of this dissertation and the current imagination of the author, the outlines are clear. A reformed democratic process which is adequate to the specifications of the ideal speech situation must be include the following: (1) it must not devolve into mere interest-group posturing, (2) it must include previously excluded economic issues and (3) it must have mechanisms for including previously invisible or silenced groups.[129] My proposal for the institutionalization of the ideal speech situation is for the development of reformed democratic mechanisms which meet the three requirements outlined above.

Third Objection: Disappearance of Normative Content

The third objection to the ideal speech situation stated that the realization of the ideal speech situation would entail the destruction of all particular communities and thus eliminate the place of origin of norms. I believe that

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[129]See Young, Iris Marion, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 156 - 191, for interesting suggestions for a reformed democracy.

answers to the first and second objections already contain an answer to this objection. Let me restatement those answers here. First, the ideal speech situation, since it is contentless, requires that content be brought to it from outside. Particular communities or social groups must continue in order for content to be brought to the ideal speech situation. Second, effective discourse in the ideal speech situation requires the development of the capacity for normative argument on the part of participants and it is clear that this capacity is developed in particular communities. This requirement entails that individuals and members have the communicative and economic means to engage in community formation. Thus, embodiment of the ideal speech situation, far from eliminating particular communities, requires the promotion of particular communities and social groups which would function as the locus of norms. Third, in capitalist economy, economic issues have posed obstacles to community-building. Institutionalization of the ideal speech situation requires that such economic issues be subjected to collective argumentation and will-formation, thus eliminating this obstacle to community maintenance and development. Let me also point out clearly that the thesis of colonization suggests that communities are destroyed by the encroachment of economic and administrative subsystems which employ instrumental rationality. The realization of the ideal speech situation would constitute resistance to this colonization and afford opportunities for communicative rationality. Thus, the realization of the ideal speech situation is not at all opposed to communities.

In conclusion, I have presented and responded to three important problems for the ideal speech situation. I have argued that the ideal speech

situation does not fail because it constitutes an empty formalism. In making this argument I have clearly distinguished Kant's conception of practical rationality from that of Habermas. I have discussed ways in which the ideal speech situation might be realized, both in counterinstitutions and through political mechanisms. Finally, I have argued that the ideal speech situation will not entail the end of community, but instead, that its realization will bring about the flowering of particular communities.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by reviewing and commenting on the previous chapters in a way that clarifies the themes, arguments and discussions which move through them.

Review of Chapters

Chapter One - Introduction

The introduction performed three tasks: (1) it stated the motivating problem which the dissertation addressed, (2) it stated the aim of the dissertation, and (3) it described the procedure by which the dissertation addressed the problem and achieved its aim.

The motivating problem of the dissertation has been modern ethical skepticism. I explained the problem of ethical skepticism as it has been articulated by MacIntyre. MacIntyre understands the problem in terms of the interminability of ethical discourse. Ethical argumentation is interminable because of the absence of consensus concerning norms. Norms function as the premises in ethical arguments. Where consensus on norms is absent, argument cannot proceed to a reasoned conclusion. Consensus concerning norms is based on the sharing of coherent ethical traditions and ways of life. This analysis suggests that the problem of ethical skepticism will not be resolved by determining and employing the correct abstract principles. Instead, it suggests that the problem rests in the absence of a single, shared, coherent ethical tradition which is embodied in institutions and ways of life. The aim of the dissertation was taken from this presentation of the problem of ethical skepticism. The stated aim was to determine, at least in a general way, what kind of community, institutions or institutional arrangements

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within a community might provide the conditions for coherent modern ethical agency. I proposed addressing this aim through two levels of analysis: the relationship between self and community, and the relationship between practical rationality and historical conditions.

Modernity itself as a possible historical condition for ethical agency is what has been at stake. I accepted MacIntyre's dual insight that particular norms inform ethical agency, and that these norms are embodied in traditions and ways of life. MacIntyre concludes from these insights that traditions and ways of life become incoherent, then the individuals who are shaped by them become incoherent as well. The universe of discourse of ethical reflection which is given to moderns is like a box of puzzle pieces in which pieces from many different puzzles are placed. The instructions are to put the puzzle together, or to make correct ethical decisions. In both cases, the aim is precluded by the means provided.

While I accepted MacIntyre's initial insights, his pessimism concerning modernity is premised on his conception of the self, his conception of practical rationality and his conception of the relationship between practical rationality and historical conditions. I accepted MacIntyre as posing a serious challenge to modernity as a set of historical conditions capable of supporting coherent ethical agency. Since MacIntyre's indictment of modernity depends on a particular conception of practical rationality and its relationship to historical conditions, I have evaluated these conceptions to determine whether or not alternative conceptions might be adequate. It is my conclusion that MacIntyre's initial insights are correct, but I have presented and argued for a conception of practical rationality which is different from that upon which MacIntyre bases his indictment of modernity. That

alternative conception of practical rationality is appropriate for modernity and suggestive of ways of institutionalizing it. Thus, it allows for the possibility for coherent ethical agency in modernity.

The introduction proposed the way in which the dissertation would proceed. The plan began in the second chapter with a consideration of the relationship between self and community which defended and illustrated my historical approach. After this, the chapters focused on the contributions of four philosophers to the dissertation problematic. Kant, MacIntyre, Hegel and Habermas were the four philosophers whose work was explored and applied.

Chapter Two - Agency and Community

In Chapter Two I defended my choice of approach and illustrated its power. I defended the usefulness of focusing on the relationship between self and community by demonstrating that different ethical theories assume different conceptions of the self and its relationship to its community. Focusing on this relationship revealed assumptions made in ethical theories and demonstrated how important this relationship is for a conception of ethics. While virtue ethics emphasizes that values inhere in small, particular communities, utilitarianism and deontology depend on universal characteristics of human beings as the basis of values. The disagreement is over whether practical agency is rooted in our particular community or in our human nature. Even in the cases of utilitarianism and deontology, which seem not to root practical agency in communities, I find a certain necessary reference to community, albeit a very different conception of community than that which is at home in virtue ethics. For utilitarianism, the relevant community is the ever-changing community of those

individuals who may be affected by an agent's actions. We might consider the conception of community employed to be akin to the sense of community invoked in virtue ethics because the effects our actions have on that community produce our concrete duties and establish a particular action as the moral action.

In Kant's deontology, our membership in the community of ends is important in explaining our nature as ethical agents. The kingdom of ends is a connected system of rational agents who are each the makers of universal laws. In their making of universal laws they are enjoined to treat themselves and each other as ends. The making of universal law necessarily refers to this "community" of rational law-makers.

As a result of the analysis of the relationship between self and community in three kinds of ethical theories, I suggested that every system of ethics employs some notion of community. Different conceptions of community are related to different conceptions of the ethical subject. This analysis sets up two poles between which the argument concerning ethical agency in modernity proceeds: the ethical subject as particular and embodied, as opposed to the ethical subject as universal and abstract.

My approach to understanding ethical agency has been similar to that which I presented in Chapter Two as virtue ethics. This approach suggests that one understands the ethical agent as such by looking at the community and groups of which that individual is a member, as well as by locating the individual in his or her institutional setting. When I applied this approach to a contemporary person, the problem of modern agency revealed itself. I found that modern agents are not members of single coherent communities, but members of multiple groups and institutions each with their own duties,

obligations, rights and norms which conflict with the others. Here I claimed that we can see the concrete roots of modern ethical skepticism. An individual defines him or herself largely in terms of group memberships and institutional relationships. The conflicting norms of the individual's groups and institutional attachments do not constitute a coherent whole but a set of objective and internalized contradictions. These conflicts and contradictions are the conditions for an irrational modern agency. Employing the historical approach, I concluded that the modern ethical agent is incoherent and that this incoherence stems from the conflicting institutions of modernity.

Finally, I compared the historical approach with the transcendental approach to ethics in light of three problems and suggested how the historical approach might avoid these problems. First, I noted that the transcendental approach purports to provide a conception of ethical decisionmaking which does not rely on practical conditions. The pure rational agent as practical reasoner can determine the correct ethical judgment and action despite the social and historical situation. The historical analysis presents coherent ethical agency as dependent on historical conditions. This is a "problem" for this kind of analysis only is so far as it allows for the possibility of the eclipsing of ethical agency from time to time. If the transcendental approach is correct, then coherent ethical agency suffers from no such dependency and coherent ethical reflection is always possible.

I argued that the historical analysis is also problematic in so far as it is unclear how immanent critique of a culture or tradition might proceed, and in so far as it seems to offer no way to adjudicate among conflicting traditions or cultures. This suggests that the historical analysis harbors a deep irrationality. Ultimately, one cannot defend one's values or ethical

judgments by argument. Value change can occur only through some kind of conversion experience which includes an arational switch to another way of life. However, I suggested that the historical analysis can tolerate an historical analysis of how values came to be embraced in a culture, and thus provide an immanent critique in terms of this kind of historical analysis. Thus, these problems do not plague all possible kinds of historical analyses of values, but only certain versions of this kind of analysis. This proposal set the stage in later chapters for an analysis of the importance of politics in developing the conditions for coherent ethical agency in modernity.

Chapter Three - The Autonomous Self

I discussed Kant's conception of ethics and the ethical subject for three primary reasons: (1) to continue to develop a defense of the historical approach to ethics; (2) to further analyze the relationship between self and community; and (3) to begin to develop an analysis of practical rationality and its relationship to historical conditions.

Kant's influence on contemporary ethical argumentation cannot be overstated. In this chapter I discussed the distinctively modern conception of the ethical agent and its autonomy as developed by Kant. This conception of the ethical agent divorces the conditions for ethical agency from the historical and social setting of the individual. Kantian ethics posits a timeless, universal subject prior to any of his or her ends or purposes. I argued against this conception of the ethical subject by arguing that ethical problems, *as* ethical problems, are not states of affairs which exist independently. Instead, ethical problems are constructed by particular individuals out of states of affairs in light of those individuals self-conceptions, desires and aims as

embodied, historically located individuals. Thus, even the existence of ethical problems is premised upon the particularity of a situated individual or set of individuals. The construction of a state of affairs as an ethical problem locates an agent within a particular historical setting. Pure rational agents do not have ethical problems. Persons who are located at particular moments in particular places with particular histories have ethical problems. The articulation of a ethical problem assumes a particular historical location. Thus, universalizability requires us to treat the ethical problem as something quite different from what it is or could be. The problem of the emptiness of the content of the categorical imperative derives from this. The first formulation of the categorical imperative instructs us only to be consistent, but one may be consistent in a number of ways. The second formulation helps us in choosing some definite action, but at the expense of relocating us in a particular social and historical location. To respect another as an end requires actually doing things which acknowledge that that other has certain aims and not others. To respect that person as having those particular aims is to treat that person as a concrete subject, not an ahistorical subject. Since the relationship of the agent to the other and the institutions which inform their social reality are both partial determinants of the meaning of the action, the agent must act from a particular location as a historical subject, not from a timeless standpoint as a noumenal subject. The crucial point is that even the possibility of constructing some situation *as an ethically problematic situation* assumes historically localized subjects.

I also criticized Kant on the issue of moral motivation. I argued that Kant's conception of moral motivation cannot provide content for practical action, and thus, Kant's view of moral agency leaves no basis for agency. I

argued that Kant's conception of moral agency fails because of the gap between the practical agent and the noumenal self, and that this view of agency undermines ways of conceiving of the relation between self and community which might provide an alternative framework for ethical discourse and justification. Conceiving of moral problems in terms of pure moral agency posits ethical problems as matters of the application of the correct rational decision procedure by an individual. Revealing the relationship between self and community as the basis of moral agency suggests that moral problems implicate the community and thus are not the sole possession of a monological subject. This shift suggests a parallel shift in the relationship between practical rationality and historical conditions. Kant's conception of practical rationality is of a rationality which is independent of historical conditions. He assume that rationality is the same for all agents. He has a static conception of the rationality of the agent. Hegel and Habermas challenge this static conception.

Chapter Four - The Rejection of Modernity

In Chapter Two I argued that the conflicting norms in modern institutions are problematic for coherent ethical agency. In Chapter Four I provide MacIntyre's version of this argument. MacIntyre conceives of ethical agency in terms of the development of the virtues. A community is adequate as the condition for ethical agency in so far as it provides the condition for the development of the virtues. The development of the virtues requires the pursuit of practices which aim at internal goods, the experience of life as a unity, and a community which shares a moral tradition. The complexity of modern life prevents all of these conditions from prevailing. Thus,

MacIntyre presents modernity as incapable of supporting communities which might be the condition of coherent ethical agency.

The primary strength of MacIntyre's analysis is that he clarifies some of the problems of modernity. The primary weakness of MacIntyre's analysis is that he fails to successfully to defend his claim that ethical agency is precluded in the modern world. Quite simply, MacIntyre fails to make the case for this claim. MacIntyre's view of practical rationality is unnecessarily limited. Here I connect the discussion back to my claim of the importance of the dual relationships of self and community, and practical rationality and historical conditions. MacIntyre treats moral concepts as functional terms which may be used in practical syllogisms to produce deductive arguments. MacIntyre is clear that only a particular kind of pre-modern community could be supportive of the kind of practical rationality which could provide objective ethical claims and defensible ethical arguments. Such a community must be one in which moral terms have an objective meaning. But what is the price of securing that objectivity? Roles must be defined in ways that are consensually fixed and possess a quality of givenness; they cannot be open to significant reflection upon or discussion of by the members of the community. Individuals must identify very strongly with those roles, so that their actions flow from their conceptions of themselves in terms of those roles like a conclusion from a deductive argument. This view rules out a place for genuine ethical deliberation. MacIntyre's notion of practical rationality as deductive and mechanical cannot allow for ethical deliberation. Here is where MacIntyre fails to make his case. MacIntyre does not demonstrate that his is the only viable conception of practical rationality. If a conception of practical rationality can be defended which is different from

that suggested by MacIntyre, and a kind of community supportive of it can be conceived of and proposed as a real possibility, then it will be clear that modernity need not preclude ethical agency. In the following chapters I made the case for such a conception of practical rationality and the possibility of such a community.

Chapter Five - The Possibility of Ethical Agency in Modernity

Hegel argues that by thinking philosophically we can overcome in thought the conflicts and contradictions of modernity. Hegel and MacIntyre agree that the practical consciousness of individuals is shaped by the institutions which organize social relations. Both identify capitalism as an important institution which shapes the individuals who live within it. However, Hegel sees the changes which participation in capitalism brings as an advance which MacIntyre seems to see it as the beginning of the end for ethical agency. For Hegel, capitalism makes every person free, equal and independent. This change in objective relations gives rise to a corresponding change in consciousness. While capitalism creates divisions within civil society, it also creates new and objective interdependence. Thinking philosophically, i.e. in terms of the whole, Hegel maintains that we can grasp that the diremptions which are experienced at the level of the individual are overcome. Thus, the conflicts and contradictions of modernity are only apparent. There is a coherent whole, according to Hegel, which is the basis for coherent practical rationality. The institutions of the state provide an opportunity for individuals to overcome the particularity of their standpoints and think in terms of the whole. Thus, Hegel introduces political participation as crucial in overcoming the divisions of modernity. Political

participation requires that the individual take the standpoint of the whole. This standpoint enables a practical rationality which is not subject to the conflicting viewpoints of the level of individuality. Thus, it provides the basis for objective practical rationality. MacIntyre's problem was that there seemed to be no defensible way in modernity to choose among conflicting solutions to ethical questions. Here Hegel offers a definitive standpoint from which rational decisions can be made: the standpoint of the whole.

While I argued that Hegel's state fails to to provide a standpoint from which conflicting norms can be mediated, I also claimed that Hegel usefully brings politics and political institutions into the discussion. Furthermore, Hegel argues that modern individuals have capacities for thought which pre-modern individuals did not have. These capacities result from the new objective relations accompanying new institutions. Here we see the hope for employing those new capacities in the service of a new kind of practical rationality and in the possibility of self-consciously bringing into being institutions which accomplish what Hegel's state failed to accomplish.

Chapter Six - Communicative Rationality and Ethical Agency

Habermas provides a way of conceiving of the threat which modernity poses to coherent ethical agency by reconstructing modernity in terms of rationalization processes. As the lifeworld becomes progressively rationalized, the prereflective validity of practical or normative claims is disrupted. This produces interminable moral argumentation and moral skepticism. Habermas's claim is that once problematization has occurred, the gap produced can only be repaired through rational argumentation. Practical or normative claims admit of truth in the same way that claims about the

objective world admit of truth. Both can admit of truth because they can be subjected to rational argumentation. The procedure of rational argumentation can confer the value of truth upon normative claims as well as scientific claims. Here Habermas provides an alternative to MacIntyre's conception of practical rationality. Compelling values and norms, which can function as premises in moral argumentation, can be produced through open argumentation. Rational argumentation can produce consensus and thus a new background of assumptions for moral argumentation. However, as the rationalization processes which are characteristic of modernity occurred, two kinds of rationality came into use: instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. It is Habermas's claim that the employment of instrumental rationality in the practical domain has disabled the process of reworking the assumptions on which ethical agency is based. Instrumental rationality can be used to direct action, but it cannot take over the task of providing justification for human interaction which might provide the basis for consensus about norms. Instrumental rationality cannot provide a new consensus about norms and values. The rules of argumentation can be discerned in communicative rationality, not strategic or instrumental rationality. It is the very procedure of obtaining agreement which confers validity upon some claim. Thus, communicative rationality is privileged.

Democracy promises to guide the development of institutions which can function to produce consensus. However, in most western democracies, the liberal state functions both to support private gain through capitalism and the generalizable interests of all citizens. These are contradictory aims and derail the potential of the democratic state. In the capitalist, democratic state the

conflict between instrumental and communicative rationality is institutionalized.

The condition for coherent ethical agency in modernity is an institutional arrangement which will facilitate the reworking of the lifeworld. Such reworking can only be brought about in modernity through the process of argumentative discourse. The realization of the setting within which such discourse can occur will itself require institutional change. Coherent ethical agency in modernity requires the practical implementation of a setting for discourse which will enable, or at least not impede, the participation of all concerned. Such a setting and practice will confer legitimacy on the results of discourse and provide a consensus on which further moral argumentation can be based.

Chapter Seven - Problems and Questions

In Chapter Seven I articulated and answered three problems which are raised by Habermas's conception of the ideal speech situation. These problems were: (1) the charge that the ideal speech situation constitutes an empty formalism, (2) the realization of the ideal speech situation, and (3) the charge that realization of the ideal speech situation would lead to the end of community. In responding to these charges I reinterated my commitment to an historical analysis of norms in a way that emphasized the relationship between self and community. I argued that Habermas is different from Kant in claiming that norms are embodied in communities and that individuals come to have norms, and thus become capable of ethical agency, only through their participation in communities. This view of the relationship between norms, the self and community suggests that the problem of ethical

skepticism can only be addressed by directly addressing those relationships. Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation offer a solution to this problem. More precisely, the institutionalization of the ideal speech situation can provide a solution to this problem. Institutionalization of the ideal speech situation will not entail the development of a new, worldwide substantive ethical community. Instead, realization of the ideal speech situation will entail a society in which multiple substantive ethical communities flourish, and a political system functions which allows conflicts among communities to be resolved in a way that can be accepted as legitimate by all. Realization of the ideal speech situation is itself conditioned upon the real possibility that all persons and all groups can participate effectively and equality in discourse. This condition would require greater economic equality and a wider scope for democracy than is currently practiced.

The social movements which Habermas calls 'counterinstitutions' represent spontaneous efforts to bring about the realization of the conditions for the ideal speech situation. They also constitute pockets of practice which approximate the ideal speech situation in miniature and provide individuals with the opportunity to develop the capacities, norms and communities which participation in the ideal speech community would require. The existence and persistence of these social movements suggests that the realization of the ideal speech situation is not a utopian dream, but a real possibility. I began this work by pointing out that the condition for coherent ethical agency in modernity is not the working out of the correct ethical theory, but a matter of producing of the historical conditions for coherent ethical agency. I have outlined what those historical conditions might be.

The full test of my theorizing will only be completed by practical interventions in the world.

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