The Enlightened Polity as an Autonomous Intentional Collective[1]

Preston Stovall
University of Hradec Králové

I

Reflecting on the months leading up to and following the 2016 United States presidential election, in an essay published in January of 2017 I argued that the left/right dichotomy of the Democrats and the Republicans was no longer carving at a joint of American politics (Stovall, 2017). Instead, it seemed a more salient political division in the U.S. was that between what I called the *urban globalists* and the *non-urban nationalists*. The former consists of people living in places like New York City or L.A., and who identify more with people living in Berlin and London than they do with those living in small-town Louisiana or Montana, and people living in places like small-town Louisiana or Montana who identify more with each other than they do with those living in New York City or L.A.

With similar political upheaval in Europe over the last three years, and watching the rise of various forms of nationalism in Europe and the United States, I remain convinced that these are productive categories with which to think through certain trends in contemporary

geopolitics. This essay situates the apparent conflict between urban globalism and non-urban nationalism in the context of a development in European self-understanding owed to German idealism. I will articulate this self-understanding by relating it to the period of the European Enlightenment, and in the process I will argue that a theory of *collective intentions* may point the way toward a more thorough understanding of the phenomena that lie behind the growing opposition between nationalist and globalist tendencies in Europe and the United States today. Collective intentions are mental states or activities that are in some sense shared among individuals – examples include making dinner together, going for a walk, and organizing a political campaign (for an overview see Schweikard and Schmid 2013). When groups of people come together and share collective intentions in action while erecting and sustaining social institutions we can talk of *intentional collectives*. While there is ongoing debate about how to characterize collective intentions in the philosophies of language and mind, there is also a growing recognition that an understanding of intentional collectives must be grounded in an understanding of the human being as a product of and motor for socio-historical processes (for overviews see Rouse 2007 §1.2 and Zahle 2007). It is my contention that certain ideas developed during the European Enlightenment remain of central importance for understanding the processes through which intentional collectives shape and are shaped by the citizens of different nations today, and over the course of this essay I will suggest that these ideas can be used to reframe how to think and what to do about some of the collective identities that underlie the conflict between non-urban nationalism and urban globalism.[2] It is of the nature of this subject, and the limitations of an essay of this length, that much of what is relevant must only be gestured at, however. More still will go unmentioned. But I hope these

---

[2] Though I am not altogether happy with the term, I choose to speak of *nationalism* for the reason that the connection between the phenomenon in question and the nation-state is evident. One might speak of *patriotism* instead (which is not to say the two notions are the same).

remarks prove a useful contribution to the ongoing effort to systematically understand ourselves, our societies, and the relations among and between both.

II

In his celebrated "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Immanuel Kant argued that the Enlightenment was a period in which humanity was exiting a stage of tutelage and entering into a kind of social adulthood. No longer were people expected to simply believe and do what religious, political, and educational authorities told them; now they were learning to think and act for themselves. This was consonant with Kant's view of autonomy in its literal sense as self-government or self-determination. For Kant, the Enlightenment was a period in which people were beginning to collectively understand the nature of their existence as autonomous beings, and to thereby more successfully exercise collective agency in governing themselves. He thought his own time was not an *Enlightened Age* in the sense that this project was completed, but it was an *Age of Enlightenment* in the sense that the project was underway (Kant 1996, p.21).

As is often the case, Hegel offers a view that contrasts with Kant's in a way that illuminates the issue. Hegel agreed with Kant that a project of collective self-determination was characteristic of certain trends in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Europe, but the two philosophers disagreed over the shape this project took in history. One of Hegel's most trenchant criticisms of Kant was that the latter did not give due regard to the way human understanding is conditioned by the operations through which we reason our way to whatever we come to think of things. In his criticism of Kant's theoretical philosophy this charge took the form of an accusation that Kant illicitly purchased certainty concerning the structure of the world as it appears to us at the cost of circumscribing the domain of cognition so as to exclude any hope to know the world as it was in itself. We could (and were driven perpetually to) *ask*

questions about the nature of things independently of how they are known by creatures with our sort of cognition, but we could not *answer* those questions. Kant famously puts this as follows in the opening sentence of the Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1998, 99):

> Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason.

This view on the limits of human cognition ramified out into Kant's practical philosophy and his understanding of human autonomy: whereas we can conceive of ourselves as self-governing creatures, motivated only by a respect for the moral law (and indeed we *must* so conceive of ourselves if the very idea of human agency is to make sense), we can never be sure that such motivation was efficacious. And so though we are forced to *think* of ourselves as autonomous or self-governing we can never *know* whether we are.

Hegel diagnoses the root of this imposed limitation on human cognition as a dual failure to, on the one hand, sufficiently attend to the dialectical and historical processes of knowledge acquisition, and, on the other, attend to self-knowledge as a domain where what is known for-consciousness is identical with what that thing (the self) is in-itself. In the attempt to overcome the first failure, Hegel argues that it is the nature of consciousness to suppose, when things are going well, that things are in-themselves the way they appear to be for-consciousness (see the Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*). But we habitually discover that what we supposed was the nature of the thing in-itself proves to be merely the way it appeared for-consciousness. In reaction to this discovery we replace a particular conception of what we thought the world to be with a new one. These successive conceptions are built upon and framed in terms of a reconstructive story about how and where we've gone

wrong. So, for instance, our understanding of gravity was deepened when Newton's laws were discovered not to accord with the behavior of Mercury, and one of the achievements of Einstein's theory of gravitation was its ability to explain that behavior.

Attempting to overcome the second perceived failure in Kant's philosophy, Hegel argued that self-knowledge affords a special sort of resolution to the tension between how things appear to be for-consciousness and what they really are in-themselves. For a self is the kind of thing that is what it is, in certain ways, only because of what it *takes itself* to be for-consciousness. To think of oneself as an honorable person is, in general, to be disposed to act honorably, and to have that aspiration is to be generally impelled to act in ways that make it true. Because a self is the kind of thing that is what it is in-itself in part because of what it takes itself to be for-itself, once the self is the object of knowledge it is possible for knowledge of the thing for-consciousness to be knowledge of the thing in-itself. Self-knowledge, and the practical self-knowledge one acquires in doing as one judges one should, makes it possible to know an object (the self) as it truly is. This possibility is made actual through the actions one takes to make it true of oneself that one is in-oneself as one takes oneself to be for-oneself: the honorable person is only honorable insofar as she acts that way (this is a point that Heidegger develops). And so if we are to come to that self-knowledge that is constitutive of philosophical wisdom, Hegel thought, we must understand the various ways that selves have *made themselves* into who they are over the course of their efforts in history. This idea is illustrated in particularly sharp (though metaphorical) form in Hegel's discussion of the struggle to the death that precedes the master/servant relationship in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§178-196. The master is the participant who emerges from that struggle after having been willing to sacrifice his life in the attempt to force the other participant to recognize him as self-sufficient or free. In doing so the master has made it *true* of himself that he genuinely is a being whose freedom and not his physical existence is

essential to who he is; for he was willing to sacrifice his life in the service of acquiring that freedom. Following Brandom (2007), I will call a thing *essentially self-conscious* if what it is in-itself is at least partly determined by how it thinks of itself for-itself. Hegel can be understood as defending the view that an autonomous being is an essentially self-conscious being.

III

Hegel thinks the ability to think ourselves beyond the limitations Kant imposed on human cognition is grounded in a more thorough conception of the interplay between theoretical cognition as exemplified in self-knowledge, and practical cognition as exemplified in what we do and have done over history. For as essentially self-conscious beings who we are is partly determined by the things we do to make it true of ourselves that we are as we take ourselves to be. Hegel also thought communities of people were, *qua* community, essentially self-conscious as well. To understand just what this means we have to examine the relationship between human self-knowledge and human society. Crucially, it need not mean that we reify the community into a super-being of any mysterious sort.

The members of a society come to share a way of life by having been initiated into a common set of institutions. These institutions groom the citizens' dispositions toward whatever social mores they share. Hegel's name for a society's social mores is *Sittlichkeit*. This is usually translated as 'ethical life', which preserves the connotation that the space of value that a society occupies is analogous to the space of value that the organism occupies. Owing to the fact that the formal and informal social education one receives (*Bildung*) will shape one into a determinate sort of person, knowledge of oneself must involve knowing or understanding one's society as well. The process of developing one's sense of oneself as autonomous, by engaging in the critical self-reflection that expresses one's autonomy, is

6

conditioned by adopting a critical perspective on the *Sittlichkeit* of one's society as well. For this to be a feature of one's community, that community's cultural education or *Bildung* must foster such criticism. And so the enlightened polity is one whose *Bildung* confers a self-reflective attitude on its citizens. The interaction between the *Bildung* of a society and the *Sittlichkeit* of the people of that society plays out over a multi-generational and ongoing effort to erect and maintain various institutions. Hegel's name for the society-wide structure of those institutions is *Geist,* usually translated as 'spirit' or 'mind'.[3]

We gain a deeper understanding of human autonomy, understood both as self-determination and as a kind of self-knowledge, if we examine the social processes that make human autonomy possible. Like Kant, Hegel thought that the period of the European Enlightenment saw the emergence of a novel sort of collective self-determination. No longer was the cultural or ethical life of a community simply imposed upon its members with no awareness of the authority they invest in the rules that govern them. Nor was that life simply buffeted about by unthinking forces of power and domination. Instead, people were beginning to search for and craft novel institutional frameworks with the growing recognition that these frameworks derived their authority from the will of the people bound together by them. To do so was to make it possible to be collectively autonomous in ways that were more widespread and revolutionary than anything that had come before. For Hegel, previous historical epochs were marked by a failure to appreciate that 1) trends in cultural change stand in a feedback loop with changing self-conceptions of the citizens of these cultures, and 2) the existence of such a feedback loop gives the people who understand its character the ability to shape their personal and collective identities in ways that are historically unprecedented. On the one hand, the interlinking sets of values that define a cultural community are determined by what the people in that culture (or a privileged class or ruling elite) take to be valuable.

---

[3] My thanks to David Schauffler for discussion about the material in this paragraph.

The normative *attitudes* that people adopt, the views they hold on what is right or wrong, determine the normative *statuses* that different people, actions, events, etc. have within that community.[4] On the other hand, the attitudes we can adopt toward various things are in large part constrained by the space of options that an existing set of institutions makes available: individual sensibilities concerning the values of the culture are shaped by existing institutional frameworks. We can exercise whatever sort of self-determination we are capable of exercising only because of the norm-governed opportunities our society affords us. And this means that self-determination depends upon self-government: we cannot exercise our capacities to be as we will except insofar as we bind ourselves to the norms of the institutions through which our will operates. As a consequence, changes in the normative attitudes among a people can lead to changes in the opportunities for self-determination that individuals can take advantage of within their communities. And so we who collectively recognize this relationship between our normative attitudes and the normative statuses they found, and who also live in a community that gives its members the ability to critically appraise and potentially change our attitudes toward various things, have the potential to exercise a kind of collective autonomy. Notice that there is nothing peculiar about the *nation* as an autonomous intentional collective in this sense. Though the nation has been a historically important domain for instituting the laws that govern more local communities, and so the ability to self-govern will be conditioned by nations where nations exist, there is nothing in the notion of the nation itself that, at this level of consideration, is peculiar to

---

[4] The distinction between normative attitudes and normative statuses, and the idea that the former underlie the latter, is a central line of thought in Brandom (1994).

autonomous intentional collectives. The remarks about self-determination made in this paragraph hold good for book clubs and parent-teacher associations as well.[5]

While this feedback loop between social normative statuses and normative attitudes had always been present in human society, prior to the period of the Enlightenment it was for the most part operating without widespread self-conscious participation on the part of the people shaping and shaped by it. An Enlightened Age would be one in which intentional collectives were knowingly founded on the supposition that the act of adopting what attitudes we do constitutes and is constituted by the institutions within which we exercise those attitudes. And so the Age of the Enlightenment was, people like Kant and Hegel thought, a period in which *self-conscious* intentional collectives were being developed. We saw above that when consciousness has itself for an object then what it thinks about that object plays a constitutive role in determining what the object is in-itself. This is what is meant by referring to a self as an essentially self-conscious being. Because the social normative statuses that define a people's *Sittlichkeit* are underwritten by the normative attitudes of individual citizens, it follows that society is no less an essentially self-conscious being than is the individual. And that means the collective effort to frame an autonomous first-person plural identity is the kind of activity that has the potential to make it the case that we truly are, as a collective, as we think ourselves to be. To participate in that effort is to take part in a project of social enlightenment that has been underway, at least within a certain philosophical tradition, for centuries (at §177 of the *Phenomenology* Hegel refers to "the experience of what spirit is" as "the *I* that is *we* and the *we* that is *I*").

IV

---

[5] Gary Alan Fine's *Tiny Publics* (2012) examines the way local institutions shape and are shaped by the people participating in them, arguing that civic participation is rooted in such groups.

The attitudes that underwrite social normative statuses are collective in the sense that these statuses come to exist through those attitudes only when they are collectively held across the right kinds of groups of citizens.[6] Collective normative attitudes of the sort that underwrite social normative statutes can be understood in terms of planning states. On this proposal, to treat someone or some group as obliged, forbidden, or permitted from doing or saying something is to plan on either doing/saying it or not doing/saying it from different points of view (Stovall, forthcoming). This semantics formalizes the idea that collective intentions, and the normative attitudes they underwrite, result from the way we exercise our capacity to plan from a social point of view.

Though a formal tool, as a heuristic this apparatus offers a way of conceiving the collective mental states characteristic of the normative attitudes that underlie whatever normative statuses a community recognizes. It also offers a way of making sense of the idea that intentional collectives can be self-conscious. Hegel thought it useful to treat spirit or society as an intentional collective with its own purposes, and he supposed that among its purposes was the goal of becoming an autonomous self-conscious collective in the self-knowledge of individual people as autonomous, mediated by the institutions that fostered this autonomy. The struggle for freedom and recognition on the part of individual citizens, then, is also the struggle on the part of a society to know itself as the self-determining thing it is by *becoming* that thing in the lives of its citizens. An enlightened society is one whose trends and tendencies are pursued with the self-conscious participation of the members of that society collectively. And so if intentional collectives can be modelled by planning mental states among individual members, then talk of spirit's purposes, etc. can be rendered both conceptually coherent and naturalistically respectable. Finally, because social normative

---

[6] As my aim here is to outline the relations between attitudes and statuses rather than fill them in with a theory of what counts or should count as the 'right kinds of groups', I shall set that issue aside.

statuses constitute the conditions for exercising individual autonomy, collective intentional planning can be understood as a state of mind consisting of the exercise of first-person plural autonomy or self-determination. Investigation of these autonomous intentional collectives may help us understand how to institute and sustain enlightened polities.

V

Collective intentions are shared in many ways, and we are eager to divine and obey rules. We erect order and regularity wherever we can, sometimes doing so simply for fun. The very idea of a game is the idea of a body of rules that we collectively recognize only because we take some interest in the result. It might seem that all collective intentions require that individuals share some goal, but the existence of competitive games suggests a more discriminating analysis is needed. To play a game of competition is to treat one's competitors as planning on winning, by adopting the normative attitude that it will be correct to regard them as having the normative status of *winners* if certain conditions are met. But from the standpoint of the opposing sides, each is intending to win. So much is done in war as well, of course, and the intentional collective that constitutes two sides in a competitive game or a war are alike in that both sides agree that each will separately try to win. This is to say that each recognizes that the status of having won is in general dependent upon each side agreeing in attitude that there are conditions which establish when someone has won (cases of the complete destruction of the other side notwithstanding). What is peculiar about competitive game-playing is that each must be *willing* to accept his or her own loss in the interest of the others' goals so long as the rules are followed, whereas in war victory involves violently forcing the loser to recognize the victor by inducing the loser to surrender.[7]

---

[7] It might be thought that victory due to violently forcing the surrender of one's foe is itself a convention or rule, so that even here war and competitive game-playing have a common structure. But if the phrase 'willing to

While political struggle may take the shape of war, the existence of agreed-upon conventions for resolving political disagreement makes it possible for political struggle to take the shape of a competitive game instead. Clausewitz's remark that war is the continuation of politics by other means might fairly represent some kinds of political struggle, but within the enlightened polity political negotiation has the structure of a game: political action undertaken in accord with an agreed-upon institutional framework is sufficient to secure agreement in attitude. The existence of a rule-governed institutional framework common to games and politics is compatible with there being a range of dimensions along which politics is more like war than a game, of course. The point is that the normative framework that constitutes a game and the normative framework that constitutes what we might call *enlightened political negotiation* are alike insofar as the normative statuses that are instituted through the processes of each are accorded recognition by participants simply in virtue of the rules of the framework having been obeyed by all sides.

This discussion highlights the need to distinguish three senses in which an intention may be shared in the pursuit of a goal:

1) different people may pursue a common goal (either for the same or different purposes)

2) different people may pursue different but compatible goals

3) different people may pursue different and incompatible goals

It might seem that political life should strive to reach a state like the second. The possibility of enlightened intentional collectives of the third category, as with the participants in a competitive game, suggests a different conception of the enlightened polity. An idealized case of the transition from childhood in the family to adulthood in society offers another point of orientation for thinking about institutions of this sort.

---

accept his or her own loss so long as the rules are followed' is taken in such a way as to include the case of defeat in war, then the notions of 'willing' and 'following a rule' no longer make sense.

In the case of young children the parent's role *qua* parent is one of planning on what the child shall do from standpoint of the parent's own attitudes, their conception of what ought to and may be done. This is a case of the first sort of collective intention. As the child matures the parents begin to plan from the standpoint of the child, where that standpoint is different from though compatible with the parents' standpoint: the child is allowed to spend time away with friends on the weekend. Over time this recognition of the child's autonomy involves allowing the child to do things that are incompatible with the preferences of the parents: the child is allowed to go even when the parents would prefer that the family spend the weekend together. The exit of the child from the family into society involves a change in attitude on the part of the parents, which change is reflected in the change in status the child then has as an adult; when parents are willing to endorse a child's plans where incompatible with their own, the child then acquire the status, from the standpoint of the family, of a self-determining agent.

One way of conceiving civil society is as an intentional collective striving for agreement in attitude analogous to that shared among the family before the child is an adult: the aim, on this view, is to frame a plan that everyone could adopt were one anyone else and without interfering with the plans of others. But collective intentions need not be collective in the sense in which the family is; for the change in individual status one undergoes in passing out of the family and into the community is a transition that the community as a whole may undertake as well. And just as the transition from childhood to adulthood in the family is marked by a willingness on the part of the parents to plan according to the child's attitudes even where incompatible with their own preferences, a similar kind of transition, within the society, marks the transition into an enlightened polity. For just as the family is an institution that provides the child with the opportunity to exercise a nascent self-determination within the rules that are set by the parents, so does the polity afford its citizens the opportunity to

exercise what attitudes and enjoy what statuses it makes possible. And just as the exit from the family unit into society as an adult involves the parents' willingness to plan from the child's point of view, even where incompatible with the plans the parents would otherwise follow, so does the enlightened polity require a similar sort of attitude on the part of its members. This is a kind of collective planning, but it is one that recognizes the *autonomy* of the individuals *within* the group to do as they will even where it is not what others would do were they in their position.

If the enlightened polity involves collective intentions where individuals are willing to let others plan in ways they would not themselves prefer, then the enlightened polity will be a pluralist polity. Echoing themes from Richard Rorty, Hans Bernhard Schmid (2018) has suggested that in a pluralist political order there will always be disagreement on the order of what people plan. The solution to the political struggles that accompany such disagreement is not to hope to converge on a political ideal representing a collective intention of the first or second sort, but rather to converge on a willingness to let others plan in ways that we not only would not adopt ourselves, but which we may prefer others not adopt as well. This is not to say that in a pluralist society anything goes; the pluralist will still demarcate what is permitted from what is forbidden. Nor is it to suppose that what is once regarded as permitted or forbidden must always stay that way. Here again the need for debate about and coordination over the political process, the framework of institutions that determine what may and may not be done, must be respected. But so long as the rules of the system are agreed upon and obeyed, then whatever results from the political process should be acceptable to all. The normative statuses that arise from political competition in a pluralist society may be collectively recognized even where different sides pursue incompatible goals.

In the enlightened polity I must be willing to plan for you from your point of view according to a self-conception that, were it up to me, I would prefer you did not have. And

this means that I must grant you a say in our collective self-determination even where I would have it that we do or be something else. This brings to the fore the question of who 'we' take ourselves to be in an enlightened society. Can there be a stable first-person plural identity in an enlightened polity?

VI

I began by contrasting urban globalists and non-urban nationalists in the United States, and I suggested that the political situation in Europe today is marked by a similar division. Using the resources introduced above, we can sharpen that contrast by seeing it as a conflict that results from disagreement over the following two points of view: the pluralism that urban globalists urge appears to the non-urban nationalists to be purchased at the cost of a loss of national identity, whereas the nationalists appear to the globalists to be trying to preserve national identity at the cost of giving up pluralism. This conflict is fed, on both sides of the Atlantic, by changing demographic, economic, and cultural features of the geopolitical landscape. Because urban centers have come to hold such a large share of the population, they exercise a disproportionate impact on the lifestyles of the people living in non-urban communities. In many of these communities, for instance, land use and access is integral to a people's sense of self. But the resources that come with land use are finite and, while renewable, they can only be enjoyed if there is enough to go around. And that can only happen if population densities remain low enough. With a smaller share of the population, relative to the impact that densely populated urban centers have on a region's geography over time, democratic processes may allow citizens in urban centers to impose a different conception of how those in rural communities shall live. At the same time, in nations whose political systems include institutions like the U.S. Electoral College, shifting population densities may also privilege the interests of non-urban citizens over urban citizens. Where

one's sense of self involves identifying with the community in which one lives, and where nationalists sentiments are variously seen as either the solution to a problem or a problem themselves, changes of this sort will pit urban globalists against non-urban nationalists in a struggle for the definition of who 'we' are.

It is true that some people do not identify with the communities in which they are raised, and one response to the non-urban nationalist tendency might be to argue that we should strive to educate these sentiments out of people. While I can appreciate that response, an extension of the analogy between the family and civil society can be used to illuminate the resistance such a striving would meet with from some people. For most of us the family offers the first proving ground for developing our autonomy, and one who does not have a good family is missing out on part of human flourishing. Not that a good family is necessary for the good life, but that it is part of what typically goes into the good life for human beings. Similarly, one whose community has not been supportive of one's endeavors will have missed out on part of human flourishing. This may be owed to the fact that one has adopted inappropriate endeavors, of course; but it may also be owed to injustices in the system. One who has a good family and who does not love it is missing out on human flourishing in a different way. It is in a sense a more tragic sort of loss, for it is a defect in the person rather than in the conditions for the person's self-expression. And the family is not a fungible unit, as though the loss of one's family might be made up by substituting some ersatz members into their roles. I love my family *de re*, as the people they are; it is no comfort to one facing the loss of a parent or sibling that another person might fill that role. For I love the person – perhaps *because* they perform that role, but it is not the role I love. One way of understanding the non-urban nationalist sentiment is that it is motivated by the belief that something similar is true of the polis and human flourishing. The rise of non-urban nationalism may be at least in part a response to concerns about cultural change and the felt loss of one's community as a

felt loss of oneself. For those in the grips of this sentiment, it is no consolation to say that a community with a different shape will take its place, or that one should strive to give up one's identification with one's community.

More generally, it may be that nationalism is one manifestation of a phenomenon characteristic of human life, at least in this period of history. For our personal identities are intimately connected to our participation in social organizations. We identify with and derive some of our most important values through our social commitments, from participation in a book club once per month to a lifelong career in some industry or a deep-seated religious faith. We also identify with our local and regional communities, often by way of contrasting ourselves with others. "Yes, but *we* aren't like *them*." Seen by this light, in at least some of its forms nationalism is the reification of a basic feature of our (historically conditioned) humanity – our participation in and identification with social institutions. If that is right then whatever else it involves the rise of nationalism in the West today is the working out of a struggle for personal identity that is fought over different conceptions of community voiced in the first-person plural *we*. There are those who say *we* across national boundaries as well, and the question of nationalism is a question of whether, where, and how to draw the political and cultural boundaries between more and less narrow conceptions of who we are. Once again we face the question of just what we mean, or should mean, by 'we'. As Kant recognized, the fact that this is a *theoretical* question that any rational being can face shows that there is a *practical* sense of 'we' that is inclusive of all rational beings as such. [8]

---

[8] Cf. the discussion in chapter 7 of Sellars (1992), a book subtitled 'variations on Kantian themes'. From p.176:

[A] theory of practical reasoning in morals which denies the *in principle* intersubjectivity and truth of the ought-to-be's and ought-to-do's of everyday life must face the challenge of the ought-to-be's and ought-to-do's of theoretical reason….I think, with Charles Sanders Peirce, that the facing of this challenge is the culmination of the philosophical enterprise…

VII

I have been suggesting that non-urban nationalism is one attempt to exercise collective intentionality toward preserving a community's identity, and thereby to preserve both a singular and first-personal plural sense of self. But if it is of the nature of human communities to change over time, then an enlightened nationalist sentiment must be shared and exercised by a community that understands and incorporates this fact about historical change and spiritual identity. The normative attitudes common in the community must be adopted in such a way that their bearers are in general open to the possibility of changes in the normative statuses that are recognized within the community. The sort of land use that made sense during the time my grandfather was working for the Montana Conservation Corps and erecting the trail access points, bridgeways, and forestry infrastructure that the Gallatin Valley currently enjoys may not make sense today. With an area of approximately 2600 square miles, the population of Gallatin County rose from close to 16,000 people in 1930 to over 107,000 people in 2017 (the County gained nearly 30,000 inhabitants in the period from 2000 to 2017 alone – cf. United States Census Bureau 1995, 2001, and 2018). Land management, and the community identities that come with land use, must be sensitive to these changes. Beginning in December of 2012, for instance, one can no longer use firearms in Hyalite Canyon, a popular recreation area in the Valley, unless hunting with them (the law used to be that you were not allowed to shoot within 30 feet of the road). The Forest Service had the following to say about the change (United States Forest Service, 2012):

Use of Hyalite Canyon has increased significantly in both the summer and winter months. In the summertime it is not uncommon for Hyalite Canyon to be enjoyed by over 30,000 visitors a month and in the wintertime over 10,000 a month use this easily

accessible landscape. This intersection of people and high powered weapons is a recipe

for someone to get seriously injured or killed.

I've used land management as an example because it's both something I'm sensitive to and is

for the most part not very politically charged. But concerns over minority rights, migration,

climate change, foreign policy, shifting material and intellectual economies and inequalities,

etc. could just as well be discussed. The more the conversation is taken up, the more might

we be able to call our community one of self-conscious autonomy, and so to know ourselves

for-ourselves *qua* collective as we are in-ourselves *qua* collective.

In the enlightened polity, political understanding is a precondition of political

agreement. For where we will not force the other to agree with us, and we seek agreement,

we must help them understand what motivates us to think and act as we do. I have tried to

articulate part of what I think animates the non-urban nationalist sentiments one sees on the

geopolitical scene today. One might productively channel that sentiment along *regionalist*

lines, where a region may cut across national boundaries.[9] Platitudes loom, but artistic

expression offers another sort of practically-mediated collective identity. If to be a social

being is to be responsive to a body of norms that one adopts and sustains with one's attitudes,

then at one level of consideration the aesthetic experience accompanying an artistic

performance is of the same order as the crafting of a political identity. In both cases we are,

as a group, taking part in the expression of a set of norm-laden activities. Shared artistic

experience may therefore help turn a disparate group of individuals into a collective.

Community engagement and shared meals offer another avenue for forging a collective

identity. A friend in the Czech Republic helps refugees integrate with the local community of

Hradec Králové, and part of what she does is introduce them to the public barbeque and

festival culture that typifies the region. Her aim in doing so is both to help the refugees

---

[9] My thanks to Vojtěch Halama and Michael Mitchell for raising this suggestion in conversation.

understand the norms of the community, and to help the community appreciate their shared humanity with the refugees.

Cultural integration brings with it new opportunities for self-expression, made available from initiation into new groups of norms. Some of these traditions can be adopted by newcomers, as with barbequing in the park, gift-giving during the holiday season surrounding the winter solstice, or the American celebration of Thanksgiving. In other cases it would be unbecoming to do so (consider naming ceremonies among native Americans; a similar tradition is not uncommon among Czech people). What can be said is that when one *is* granted access to this sort of institution, one will have become to that extent a more integrated member of the body politic. There may be very little settled abstractly about where and why some integration is possible or would be proper; as with most of what's true of living things, we have to look to particular features of the environment and the thing in question to determine what will tend toward its flourishing.

VIII

There is a need today, as pressing as it was in the Enlightenment, to rethink both our self-conceptions and our practical commitments. It may seem as though that project was completed, or that there is little left to do beyond filling in the details. But proclamations about a Hegelian End of History (Fukuyama, 1992) to the contrary, there is evidently much to be done in sorting out ourselves and our communities. Alternatively, it may seem as though the errors of that earlier effort show the bankruptcy of the very idea of Enlightenment as a trend in human history worth fostering. But to accept this appearance is to make a decision about how to think of oneself and one's community, and that decision is optional; it certainly is not something we are collectively bound to accept. If society is an essentially self-conscious thing, then the question of whether we ought to see history as tending toward an

Enlightened Age is at least as much a question of what we shall collectively choose to *do* as it is a question of who we collectively *are*.

The enlightened polity is one that knows itself for-itself as it is in-itself, as an autonomous collective. To have that collective self-knowledge the enlightened polity must help its citizens develop the self-reflection necessary for conscious participation in the project of individual and collective self-determination: its *Bildung* must be such as to foster an autonomous *Sittlichkeit* for its citizens. What would it mean for people to engage in a strenuous culture-wide effort to learn from history and frame a conscious view about where to turn next? In the first place it would call for a concerted study of spirit in its various manifestations. Here it may help to think about the kinds of social institutions that historically helped to create autonomous intentional collectives. I will mention three – French salons, Freemasonry, and the early scientific societies. In the salon culture of 17th and 18th century France, men and women could mingle and converse over issues of the day, while artists could share their work for private audiences. This culture had the effect of disseminating a certain sense of French identity among the (educated, elite) citizens of France. A related phenomenon can be observed in the spread of Freemasonry across Europe and North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. The so-called speculative masonic lodge is a place where people of all creeds may come together and participate in the symbolic process of helping to construct and sustain a more perfect social order, on analogy with the practice of operative masonry as a craft devoted to constructing monumental buildings. Just as the operative masons could travel across national boundaries while practicing their craft, so is the speculative mason able to practice his or her craft with the members of lodges across the world (French Co-Freemasonry permits female membership). Finally, early scientific societies offer another framework for thinking about enlightened intentional collectives. In these societies leading scientific research could be discussed among those who shared the

common goal of uncovering the laws that govern the natural world. All three of these institutions included memberships that in some ways cut across nation and class, offering people the chance to develop the higher capacities to sense, act, and think among likeminded members of society. In this regard they are species of a genus of intentional collective that, in another species, constitutes the enlightened polity.

I have maintained that an enlightened polity is one whose members have a first-person plural practical self-knowledge that what the polity is for-itself is what it is in-itself. That self-knowledge must include knowledge of human beings as the historical, socio-political, biological, etc. selves that we are. And though I have argued that urban globalist and non-urban nationalist sentiments are more salient for understanding certain political divisions today than the left/right dichotomy, there may be tendencies among those identifying as on either the political left or the right today that are deserving of study on their own. Work in Moral Foundations Theory suggests that a small suite of moral sentiments or reactive attitudes underlie a range of different political views that can be usefully grouped as left and right (Graham, et al. 2011 and Graham, et al. 2013). Summarizing *Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape* (Hawkins, et al. 2018), a report sponsored by the More in Common project – an international initiative devoted to helping communities face disintegrating threats of polarization and social division – Sean Stevens (2018) writes:

The *Hidden Tribes* report concludes that Americans "are going about their lives with absurdly inaccurate perceptions of each other" (p. 137). Political rivals are increasingly presented as caricatures – helping to create the false impression that outliers who possess more extreme views on many issues are representative of how large swaths of "others" think and perceive the world.

According to the researchers, the best way to overcome increased polarization may be

through appeal to an overarching national identity. They believe this could be effective

based on the large number of people who do report a desire for compromise and an

exhaustion with the current state of political affairs in America. There is also fairly-broad

agreement on issues related to patriotism and national identity…

It is an open question whether and to what extent the American experience of national identity

bears lessons for the European, of course, and nationalist notions are importantly different on

the two sides of the Atlantic. In conversation Michael Mitchell suggested that media studies

and research into group dynamics might offer another disciplinary focus for pursuing the

social self-knowledge necessary for an enlightened polity. While the study of the

Geisteswissenschaften still merits the title, contemporary social science research is

experiencing something of a crisis. That crisis is manifested in both the widespread failure to

replicate areas of social science research that have been influential over the last few decades

(McRae, 2018), and a growing recognition that ideological monovision is having a deleterious

impact on the output of social science research (Duarte, et al. 2015). One beneficial result of

this crisis may be a redoubled effort to engage in the society-wide critical self-reflection that I

have argued is a ground for the enlightened polity as an autonomous intentional collective.

Works Cited

Brandom, Robert. *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive*

    Commitment. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

    ---. "The Structure of Desire and Recognition: Self-Consciousness and Self-Constitution".

    Philosophy and Social Criticism, vol. 33, no. 1, 2007, pp.127-150.

Duarte, José L., Jarret T. Crawford, Charlotta Stern, Jonathan Haidt, Lee Jussim, and Philip E. Tetlock. "Political Diversity Will Improve Social Psychological Science". *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 38, 2015, pp.1-58.

Fine, Gary Alan. *Tiny Publics: A Theory of Group Action and Culture*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.

Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt, Sena Koleva, Ravi Iyer, Sean P. Wojcik, and Peter H. Ditto. "Mapping the Moral Domain". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2011, pp.366-385.

Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt, Sena Koleva, Matt Motyl, Ravi Iyer, Sean P. Wojcik, and Peter H. Ditto. "Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism". *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 47, 2013, pp.55-130.

Hawkins, Stephen, Daniel Yudkin, Miriam Juan-Torres, and Tim Dixon. "Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape". More in Common, 2018 https://hiddentribes.us/pdf/hidden_tribes_report.pdf.

Hegel, Georg W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?". *Kant's Practical Philosophy*. Trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp.15-22.

   ---. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. and eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

McRae, Mike. "Science's 'Replication Crisis' has Reached even the Most Respectable Journals, Report Shows". *Science Alert*. 27 August 2018.

https://www.sciencealert.com/replication-results-reproducibility-crisis-science-nature-journals.

Rouse, Joseph. "Practice Theory". *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Volume 15: Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology*. Eds. Stephen Turner and Mark Risjord. Amsterdam: North Holland, 2007. Pp. 641-681.

Schmid, Hans Bernhard. "Social Ontology and Conceptual Contest". Workshop on Foundations of Sociality: Collective Intentionality, Inferentialism, and the Like, University of Hradec Králové. 2-3 November 2018.

Schweikard, David P., and Hans Bernhard Schmid. "Collective Intentionality." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. 2013. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-intentionality/.

Sellars, Wilfrid. *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing, 1992.

Stevens, Sean. "Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape". Heterodoxacademy.com, 17 November 2018, https://heterodoxacademy.org/social-science-hidden-tribes/.

Stovall, Preston. "Reassessing Cultural Divisions in the United States". Quillette.com, 13 January 2017, https://quillette.com/2017/01/13/reassessing-cultural-divisions-in-the-united-states/.

---. "A Hyperstate Semantics for Descriptive, Prescriptive, and Intentional Sentences". To appear in a volume from Springer Books, as yet untitled. Ed. Ladislav Koreň, Hans Bernhard Schmid, Preston Stovall, and Leo Townsend.

United States. United States Census Bureau. *Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990*. Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau, 1995. https://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/mt190090.txt.

---. United States Census Bureau. "Census 2000 PHC-T-4. Ranking Tables for Counties:

1990 and 2000. Table 2: Counties Ranked by Population: 2000." Washington, D.C.:

United States Census Bureau, 2001.

https://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs/phc-t4/tables/tab02.pdf.

---. United States Forest Service. "Hyalite Canyon Target Shooting Restriction Going into

Effect December 1". Bozeman: United States Forest Service, 2012.

https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/custergallatin/news-events/?cid=STELPRDB5399386.

---. United States Census Bureau. "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1,

2010 to July 1, 2017". Washington D.C.: United States Census Bureau, 2018.

https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkm.

Zahle, Julie. "Holism and Supervenience". *Handbook of the Philosophy of Science, Volume*

15: Philosophy of Anthropology and Sociology. Eds. Stephen Turner and Mark

Risjord. Amsterdam: North Holland, 2007. Pp. 311-341.