

Restoration, Not Renovation: A Fresh Start for Hartz-Horowitz

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Introduction

In the 1770's, the inhabitants of the British North American colonies had to decide whether or not to support the British Crown, and their decisions were to set the course for the national character of their descendents. The choice of independence or duty, whether to be revolutionaries or loyalists, marked a coming of age for the United States and gave a new sense of purpose for the rest of British North America that would later be Canada. Little wonder therefore that Canadians should so often define their country in relief against the U.S. It is not that Canada has little distinctly its own. The enormous impact of the American Revolution could not help but lead to a significantly different political culture than those colonies which actively chose to remain a part of the British Empire. Canadian political culture is not just the outcome of passivity and neutrality, an absence of the revolutionary spirit; it is the result of an action that was filled with intent, the commitment to a set of ideals that were threatened by that revolution.

This essay is an effort to identify some of the broader implications of this historical parting of the ways, emphasizing their diverging conceptions of freedom. Of particular interest is the relative success of Hegelian Idealism during its revival in the late nineteenth-century. The British parliamentary system, with its unique constitutional and ideological history, is the trunk from which both Canada and the U.S. branch off, hence at their base they have everything in common and cannot be portrayed as radically different political species. However, this does not mean that the differences are minor. Their respective allegiances in the 1770's set them on different paths involving distinctive government policies and social environments, and despite some notable areas of convergence,¹ they seem to continue toward different ends. In the U.S., Lockean liberalism and its attendant commitment to negative liberty still takes precedence when defining the "American way," while "compassionate," collectivist Canada tenuously holds on to positive freedom which in the late nineteenth century came to be understood in Idealist terms.

The argument here is twofold: to reaffirm this traditional account of a Lockean America versus a collectivist, loyalist Canada, thus curbing the efforts of revisionists to treat both countries as indistinguishable variants of Locke's brand of republicanism; and to show that by accepting the Hartz-Horowitz fragment theory we are better positioned to recognize and understand the importance of certain intellectual traditions in Canadian political culture, such as Idealism as an ideological resolution to the Canadian tension between Toryism, liberalism and socialism.

Hartz's Thesis: The Origin of Americanism

The most famous account of the Lockean political culture of the U.S. is Louis Hartz's groundbreaking *The Liberal Tradition in America*, and it is by no means intended to be an unqualified celebration of American freedom. Rather it is largely a response to the restraints on freedom exhibited during the red scare hysteria of the McCarthy hearings. Hartz seeks to explain America's intolerance of socialism and how the ostensible defence of freedom can mutate into an

¹ Canada's new Conservative Party has effectively silenced the Toryism that had once characterized Canada's conservatives and adopted a neo-liberal agenda that has traditionally been at home among the American right. The pull in this direction is also evident to varying degrees in provincial politics and the federal Liberal party.

oppressive, intolerant cultural absolutism. However, he seeks not only causes, but also cures. At the heart of American conformism there is an individualism that he hopes will join forces with alternative ideologies as they are introduced with the emergence of a more integrated global community. Thus, in his criticism there is also a call for an intellectual renewal in the U.S. that will replace liberal homogeneity with ideological diversity.

Feudalism and liberalism are terms Hartz uses as “symbols for a brand of political thought.”² They are generalizations that intentionally overlook those particularities that do not seriously challenge the hegemonic character of a given society. This does not mean that the American character can be found with a thorough philosophical analysis of Locke, to attain the best possible comprehension of Locke’s arguments, nor are we advised to count the number of times Locke is mentioned in the political writings of the Founding Fathers. It is rather the general principles advanced by Locke that informed the discourse of early American political thinkers, found their way into the Constitution and became the self-evident truths that were to guide subsequent decisions. It is the ideology that Locke symbolized, not what he himself may have intended.

Hartz seems to imagine that his readers are sufficiently familiar with Locke’s basic principles and his place in the history of political thought to consider it superfluous to run through them in his text, but we can probably afford to provide a brief overview here. Locke as a symbol represents the idea that political legitimacy is based on a contract that has been rationally consented to, and this consent is granted with the understanding that the rights and liberties of the individual will be protected. His contribution marks a particular stage in evolution of the contractual tradition that begins with Hobbes’ conception of liberty as an agreement among individuals to exit the brutality of the state of nature, which for him was effectively a state of war of all against all, and relinquish their power of coercion to a centralized absolute monarch on the condition that the individual’s right to life is assured. A much later variant was Rousseau’s social contract that regarded the natural condition of humanity as one of blissful mutual compassion and that it is the duty of the state to reestablish this condition in a civilized society, a condition that would promise not just the right to life but true human fulfillment. This is positive rather than negative freedom. It is freedom as fulfillment rather than the mere absence of interference. Locke did not go so far as Rousseau and subsequent thinkers, but he did add property rights to Hobbes’ right to live without violent oppression.

For Locke, the state of nature was a potentially peaceful condition where one has exclusive rights to the fruits of one’s labour. Property rights precede the state because like the right to life they are in accordance with natural law. As such, they must be assured by the state if the state’s authority is to remain legitimate and maintain the consent of the governed. If not, the citizens will gladly return to the state of nature where they were at liberty to enforce these rights themselves. The attraction of a central authority is that it can provide an impartial arbiter of contract disputes and enforcer of contract obligations. Once it fails in this then it is better to rely on one’s own imperfect capacity to enforce contracts than a third party that is clearly violating one’s rights. The priority given to property rights and contracts explains why Lockean liberalism is strongly associated with capitalism. Society is based on the understanding that human beings are naturally competitive consumers, and that attaining peace and order requires the state’s use of

²Paul Roazen, “Introduction,” in Louis Hartz, *The Necessity of Choice* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 8.

coercion to guarantee market exchange agreements. Beyond this, state intervention is less welcome, so education, health, meaningful employment, religious freedom, the right to political participation, and so on, are not necessarily the state's domain.³ In this sense, Locke's conception of freedom is negative - freedom as the absence of external obstacles. In contrast, Rousseau would promote state cultural, educational, as well as economic intervention to assure individuals not only have choice, but have an understanding of their best interests, including the degree to which realizing those interests involves participating in the legislative process.

Hartz's portrayal of the U.S. as a Lockean republic is drawn in part from Alexis de Tocqueville's study of American political culture, in which Tocqueville attributed the success of the democratic revolution to the unique conditions of the colonies. Tocqueville noted that Enlightenment principles had already infused local governments and they enjoyed high degrees of citizen participation. Tocqueville observed that with these practices already in place the revolution required some institutional reform, but very little of the social or cultural transformation that was so destabilizing during the French Revolution. Tocqueville asserted, and Hartz agrees, that whereas Europeans were constrained by the social hierarchies of a firmly embedded aristocracy, Americans were born equal.⁴ "The great advantage of the Americans is, a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution; and that they are born equal, instead of becoming so."⁵

The transition from a colony under a monarch to an independent liberal democracy was more a matter of self-realization than a profound redefinition. For the Puritan culture of America, Locke's theory of stepping out of the state of nature by means of a social contract was familiar. It resembled their own experience in the wilderness of America, as well as their strong egalitarian values. From the beginning, the American colonial experience had been one of a daring Enlightenment experiment, with the notion of a rationalist written constitution being introduced with the Mayflower Compact and Plantation Covenants of New England.⁶ Indeed, in America the notion of a social contract becomes a matter of tradition rather than radicalism, so that by the time of the Revolution the existence of an atomistic social freedom that sought to curb the power of the state is not a point of contention, but rather the "master assumption."⁷ "The theory of colonial resistance to England was an application rather than a repudiation of the doctrines of the American colonial past."⁸ Whereas in Europe Lockean liberalism was regarded as much as a justification for state coercion, with the enforcement of capitalist property rights, as it was for

³ Contractualists are often referred to as natural law theorists because they attempt to structure social and political institutions on what they understand to be the natural state, or essence of humanity.

⁴Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), 5.

⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, epigraph.

⁶ Hartz, LTA, 49. Also see *Founding*, 73-5.

⁷LTA, 61.

⁸Hartz, *Founding*, 73.

limiting state powers, in America state legitimacy based on the social contract was assumed and so Locke was exclusively employed as an argument for limiting the state.⁹

Thus, according to Hartz, Puritanism and Lockean liberalism are combined into a universal and absolute worldview. All that remained was to transform this new identity from a mere fragmentary colonial ideology, which carried with it a certain humiliation of being somehow incomplete, to a new nationalism. Through the revolution, what was once the Puritan minority of Britain is reborn as “American.”

Being part of a whole is psychologically tolerable, but being merely a part, isolated from a whole, is not. It is obvious that there is a major problem of self-definition inherent in the process of fragmentation. Universalism itself comes fairly easily. The fragmented British Puritan can make Calvin universal in New England simply by virtue of his migration. It is nationalism that is more difficult. What “nation” does the universal Puritan belong to? He is no longer completely “English.” Being English means sharing a community in which there are not only Calvinists but Anglicans, indeed all of the future organicists whom Anglicanism will proliferate and New England will also escape. It means being connected precisely to that totality, past and future, which the fragment has fled. Nor are Englishmen unaware of this fact when they look at the migrant Puritan: they see him as a mere “colonial.” What then is to be done? How is wholeness to be recaptured? There is only one way out, determined practically by a bootstrap necessity. The Puritan must convert Puritanism itself, the one thing he has, into a new nationalism which denies the humiliation of the old. He must convert it into “Americanism,” a new national spirit under the sun, grander than anything the world has ever seen.¹⁰

According to Hartz, the competing ideologies in Europe are prevented from evolving because they are too deeply intertwined. Ideological strains are only able to fulfill their potential as fragments. He explains that in new societies, “a part detaches itself from the whole, the whole fails to renew itself, and the part develops without inhibition.”¹¹ These ideological fragments congeal in the new societies because they no longer compete with other widely accepted ideologies, such as Toryism, Whiggery, and socialism. The only way to appreciate this is through comparative study because we are otherwise too immersed in the bounds of our national history. The perspective given by this form of comparison enables us to recognize and explain certain cultural phenomena, such as the exclusion of socialism from mainstream American politics. Hartz argues that socialism needs feudalism to thrive in the mainstream. Not only does feudalism provide a healthy antagonist to give socialism meaning, but feudalism, unlike liberalism, accepts the view that society is currently class structured, corporate and collectivist. No wonder

⁹ Hartz, LTA, 62.

¹⁰ Hartz, *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

socialism cannot get a foothold in America where bourgeois egalitarian liberalism reigns; there are no acknowledged class distinctions that can give sense to the idea of class struggle.

We can conclude from this that even though it was born of a revolution, America “lacks a genuine revolutionary tradition.”¹² From the beginning it largely consisted of petit bourgeoisie who were either democrats or Whigs. There was no unenlightened peasantry or threatening proletariat to contend with,¹³ nor was there an overly burdensome parasitic aristocracy to inspire class consciousness among the bourgeois.¹⁴ Consequently, just as Lockean liberalism became universalized as Americanism, the bourgeois class became members of a classless society, regardless of the degrees of economic disparity. The confidence in liberal egalitarianism endured, Hartz explains, because initially the abundance of available land held promise that anyone could improve their condition, and later, after the transition to industrialization, the dream was sustained by the wealth of material resources.¹⁵ Hope tempered class resentment and the purity of the bourgeois fragment provided continual assurance. Without the class identification that comes with the feudal ethos, and without a tradition of ideological revolutions, socialism cannot gain a foothold.¹⁶

Hartz reminds us of the irony that the hope and passion for acquiring wealth should be the element that binds disparate socio-economic groups. Is not the desire for the wealth enjoyed by others a justification for a proletarian uprising? Instead of turning one’s mind to revolution, the Horatio Alger spirit drives the average man more hotly in pursuit of wealth, oblivious to new hierarchy that is being created by this hard-nosed individualism. “Collectivism,” Hartz asserts, “is the great secret that American history hides from its economically energetic citizens.”¹⁷ He wishes to remind Americans of their implicit collectivism, of which the pursuit of wealth is a part, and help to make it more explicit. American collectivism revolves around the sense that they are participants in common way of life that upholds the principles of individual freedom and egalitarianism. This is what makes America simultaneously individualist and highly uniform.¹⁸ American nationalism is grounded in the conviction that Lockean liberalism is a universal truth that has been realized in American institutions, as well as American hearts, and foreign countries and ideologies are sadly benighted.

To explain further, Hartz distinguishes between the freedom of Thomas Paine and the freedom of Edmund Burke. The freedom of Paine is one of equality, conformity, and potentially the tyranny of the majority, as Tocqueville feared, and the freedom of Burke enjoys ideological

¹²Ibid., 5.

¹³Hartz, “The Rise of the Democratic Idea,” in Arthur M. Schlesinger and Morton White, ed., *Paths of American Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), 42.

¹⁴ Hartz, LTA, 53.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷ Hartz, FNS, 106.

¹⁸Hartz, LTA, 56.

diversity but also historically inherited inequalities.¹⁹ The cultural absolutism of the pure liberal fragment does not debate its fundamental principles, which explains the emergence of pragmatism in the U.S. It is also characteristically cheerful, and rather indifferent to criticism except on those rare occasions it is threatened, at which point it suddenly gives rise to a great national hysteria and civil liberties begin to collapse.²⁰

This is sort of hysteria that drove Senator McCarthy's grim campaign. America was confronted with an ideological challenge that threatened its conviction of universalism by exposing it as a mere fragment. "The fragment reactionary exhausts himself in a thousand Treason Trials, clerical excommunications, and congressional investigations. But after all of his effort the Martian remains. Indeed, as in a horror tale, he keeps coming closer all the time."²¹ As stated above, it is ultimately Hartz's hope that America's individualism will lash back against the tyrannical conformism and choose to relinquish its own strict national identification with Lockean liberalism and invite a variety of views into the American pantheon.

Bailyn and Pocock's Civic Republican Thesis

As one might expect from absolutists who have been shown a mirror that exposes their blemishes, the first reaction to Hartz was a defensive denial. The most widely adopted denial was that it is not contractual individualism that defines the U.S. but rather civic republicanism. With the iconic Locke exposed as fallible by Hartz and others,²² champions stepped forward to defend America's honour by minimizing the importance of Locke's influence on its culture. In 1967, Bernard Bailyn composed what has become known as the republican thesis, asserting that individualism and property rights were not truly the primary concern of those formulating the U.S. Constitution. Instead of Locke, the Founding Fathers were filled with dread that, like the Roman Empire, the republican elements of the British system would descend into tyranny as the empire expanded.²³ He returns to the original literature of the day and finds that they were neither exclusively liberal nor civic humanists; they were radical defenders of liberty and drew on an eclectic array of sources.²⁴ By exposing this vulnerability, Bailyn cracked the dykes, giving rise to a deluge of revisions of early American political thought to the point that within a

¹⁹ Ibid, 57.

²⁰ Ibid., 58-9. Given the current economic climate this seems highly poignant.

²¹ Hartz, FNS, 22.

²² Leo Strauss cast him as a hedonist, while C.B. Macpherson argued that his was a capitalist doctrine based on a conception of human nature as infinitely acquisitive and this doctrine would result in economic inequality. Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

²³ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1992), 25.

²⁴ Ibid., vi.

generation Hartz's thesis had fallen entirely out of favour. Prominent among these was J.G.A. Pocock's historical study, which contends, through a series of torturous connections, that a Machiavellian civic republicanism had been the principal force directing the Founding Fathers.

As Machiavelli and Cato had taught them, once they mistrusted government there was nothing they should not fear. Tyranny was indeed to be dreaded "in every tainted breeze." The interpretation put forward by Bailyn and Wood altogether replaces that of Boorstin and Hartz, who seem to have held that there was no ideology in America, because ideology could be produced only by Old World social tensions which had not been transplanted. As we now see it, modern and effective government had transplanted to America the dread of modernity itself, of which the threat to virtue by corruption was the contemporary ideological expression.²⁵

There is little doubt that the British, including Locke, and then the American intellectuals were familiar with classical republicanism and Renaissance civic humanism. The question is, can the predominant ideology of America in the late eighteenth-century be best understood as a form of Machiavellianism or the more modern liberalism articulated by Locke? Locke, too, feared tyranny and his work was essentially a justification for revolution when confronted by an oppressive ruler. Moreover, the rationalist contractualism that informed the Constitution could not be mistaken for anything pre-Enlightenment. Thus while Machiavelli may indeed have feared tyranny and harboured a modern skepticism about human nature and virtue, the contractual solution was distinctively the product of the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, we find above that just as he proclaims the end of Hartz's thesis, Pocock exposes his own profound misreading of it. Hartz was concerned by America's ideological absolutism, not the omission of ideology. Indeed, he argued that America was unique in that it required ideologists to define and defend its nationalism, and then to "hide" the presence of an ideology.²⁶ Is it possible that Pocock is blind to Locke as one ideology among others? He himself only seems to see a tension between corruption and civic virtue, including when assessing Locke's own work.²⁷ Of course, his misreading of Hartz can partly be attributed to his being misdirected by his overzealous confidence in Bailyn. Bailyn had provided a way out from the implied criticism of the United States and it seems many were eager to take it. While Bailyn, Pocock²⁸ and their colleagues do some valuable historical digging to identify many of the

²⁵J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 509.

²⁶ Hartz, FNS, 15.

²⁷ Pocock, 436.

²⁸ Pocock's contributions are in some ways more a hindrance to understanding than a help, if for no other reason than because he ties everything to a faulty premise. In contrast, Bailyn focuses on the primary sources and makes less of an effort to force them into a schema, like Pocock's corruption-virtue formula.

particular aspects of the political discourse of eighteenth-century America, they do not successfully refute that, generally, Locke's influence was predominant. A considerable body of literature has emerged to make this case,²⁹ including an empirical study that has found American Lockean absolutism and its attendant intolerance is alive and well. This study by Jack Citrin, Beth Reingold, and Donald P. Green has found that the values Hartz and others identify as characterizing the American nationality are indeed firmly in place: "democracy (republicanism, popular sovereignty), liberty (freedom), equality (of opportunity, in manners), and individual achievement (individualism, self-reliance)."³⁰ They contend that there is considerable empirical evidence that "Americanism" as a symbolic predisposition continues to manifest itself in "liberal and ethno-cultural or exclusionary elements." Joyce Appleby, a rigorous intellectual historian, was struck by the contradiction between America's blind affirmation of liberal values and the efforts of Bailyn and others to deny it. She found that despite points of discord, the Founding Fathers did come together on the core assumption of Locke's liberalism.

Unfortunately the misinterpretations of Hartz by his critics have crept into the work of some of his defenders. It is worth considering one example of this, the work of Joshua Foa Dienstag, because it provides an opportunity to see where the line is drawn, and what is at stake. Dienstag returns to the writings of Jefferson and Adams to identify the prominence of Locke's influence on their thought.³¹ His argument is something of a middle ground, conceding that despite their haste in discarding Hartz, the revisionists contributed some texture to the picture, while asserting that the term Lockean is the best option when identifying the sympathies of the period. He chooses the word "sympathy" over stronger language such as "ethos" or "consensus" because he wishes to clarify that it was not so all consuming.³² In doing so, he believes he is tempering Hartz's argument. Here Dienstag is grappling with the same strawman that was constructed by the republican theorists. As stated above, Locke is meant as a symbol, not a precise description. Thus Dienstag's interpretive efforts to try to identify the true Locke, and those of many of Hartz's other critics, are misguided. It is the common interpretation of Locke that is important, not the reality as to whether or not he was a religious thinker, or more

²⁹ See Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). John Diggins, *The Lost Soul of American Politics: Virtue, Self-Interest, and the Foundations of Liberalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Steven M. Dworkin, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990). Jerome Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995). Isaac Kramnik, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³⁰ Jack Citrin, Beth Reingold, Donald P. Green, "American Identity and the Politics of Ethnic Change," *Journal of Politics* 52 (1990), 1129.

³¹ Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* 90 (September), 497-511.

³² *Ibid.*, 498.

concerned with virtue than property. It is even questionable whether Dienstag's detailed analysis of the primary sources was entirely necessary. Moreover, his assertion that Lockean liberalism is unlike modern liberalism because Protestantism has been abandoned is also relatively unimportant in terms of Hartz's stated purpose. Evidently Dienstag is uncomfortable with symbols.

Elsewhere, Dienstag mistakenly believes that the interpretation of Locke by Leo Strauss and C.B. Macpherson would have posed a problem for Hartz. Again, he is failing to see the forest for the trees. Dienstag also follows Bailyn and Pocock in believing Hartz would have considered the language of civic republicanism to be unLockean.³³ This was not the case. Hartz was aware that Locke's political thought has republican elements. The proponents of the republican thesis over-simplify Hartz's arguments. In *The Founding of New Societies*, Hartz remarks on the importance of republicanism and republican virtue to the Founding Fathers.

Virtue was suffused throughout the American world, and it was associated precisely with property, the pervasive presence of the bourgeois spirit... Whatever the Americans thought, their republican virtue was insured by a cultural heritage out of the past, ultimately out of the first of the seventeenth-century migrations. It was a heritage which had given them a tempered Enlightenment, a traditionalistic revolution, ultimately a successful republican constitution.³⁴

Hartz was aware of the republican influence, as he was aware of other ingredients, but this does not pose a problem for his thesis. It was Locke's dark account of human essence and natural law that prevailed, as is evident in a constitution that relies heavily on checks and balances.

The Case of Canada: Hartz-Horowitz and the Canadian Revision

Hartz compares the U.S. to Canada, and finds that Canada is markedly different and less prone to liberal absolutism. For the purposes of this paper, we are primarily interested in his conception of the political culture in English-speaking Canada.³⁵ Hartz finds that although Canada is also a liberal fragment, it is not so unadulterated. It is infused with a Tory touch, which means that there is a slightly feudal conception of society. With feudalism comes both an acceptance of historically inherited social hierarchy and collectivism as members of the community defines themselves in terms of this traditional social role. According to Hartz, this explains why the establishment of popular government was delayed, and it also explains why socialism has had slightly more success in Canada than in the U.S.³⁶ Just as it is the absence of feudalism in the U.S. that keeps Americans from developing a class consciousness and therefore any major socialist movement, so can it be said that the Tory touch in Canada brings with it sufficient class consciousness to inspire a mild socialism as found in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (now the New Democratic Party). However, it seems the degree of

³³ Ibid., 499.

³⁴ Hartz, FNS, 80.

³⁵ He regards French-Canada as predominantly feudal.

³⁶ Hartz, FNS, 40

socialism is proportionate to the degree of Toryism, therefore it is not sufficient to threaten a socialist revolution as it does in Europe.³⁷

Gad Horowitz's landmark essay, "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," expands upon Hartz's thesis to give a more complete picture of the characteristics that distinguish Canada from the U.S. and how these characteristics play out in contemporary political parties.³⁸ Where Hartz seeks to explain the failure of the U.S. to develop a mainstream socialism, Horowitz explains why Canadian socialism has been so much stronger than U.S. socialism, though weaker than European socialism. Our interest is not in the political parties but in his account of Canada's character, which he attributes to there being a "Tory touch" in Canada prior to the American Revolution that was further enhanced by the immigration of United Empire Loyalists as a consequence of the revolution, and again by the proportionally substantial immigration of Britons who were "infected with non-liberal ideas" in the first half of the nineteenth-century.³⁹ The established "imperfection" of the Canadian bourgeois liberal fragment meant that new arrivals from Europe were not compelled to give up their Tory or socialist ideas; they are not dismissed as un-Canadian. Whereas in the U.S. the liberal democracy of Jefferson and Jackson had thoroughly imposed a one-myth ideological absolutism, in Canada ideological diversity was legitimate, and aside from the dominant bourgeois liberalism it included most prominently the right wing, elitist liberalism of the Whigs, as attested to by the Family Compacts, and socialism.

The Tory touch found expression in a political culture that was more deferential to authority, less inclined to celebrate achievement and egalitarianism, maintained a greater respect for the law over individual liberty, and a "far greater willingness of English Canadian political and business elites to use the power of the state for the purpose of developing and controlling the economy."⁴⁰ This is effectively a more organic, collectivist conception of community that opposes the contractualist view of society as an "agglomeration of competing individuals."⁴¹ And this component is required for socialism to thrive. When the Tory or feudal society struggles for equality it leans more heavily toward equality of condition rather than equality of opportunity. There is a greater emphasis on cooperation and community over competition and a laissez-faire self-serving pursuit of happiness.⁴² In brief, the call for equality can transform Toryism into socialism, and it might also take on a combination of the two, as found in the red

³⁷ Ibid., 34.

³⁸ Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism: An Interpretation," Hugh G. Thorburn, ed., *Party Politics in Canada* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Canada, Inc., 1996). Other leading historians, political scientists and philosophers who have described Canada's history similarly include Donald Creighton, Hugh MacLennan, S.M. Lipset, W.L. Morton, and George Grant.

³⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 149.

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² Ibid., 148.

Tory. Horowitz identifies George Grant as an example of the red Tory at the highest level, “a philosopher who combines elements of socialism and Toryism so thoroughly in a single integrated *Weltanschauung* that it is impossible to say that he or she is a proponent of either one as against the other.”⁴³ The tie that binds is prioritizing the public good over private freedom.

Horowitz’s article includes a criticism of Canadian liberals who do not recognize the value of this diversity and wish to free Canada of its old, stodgy Toryism and persistent appeal to Britishness. “The secret dream of the Canadian liberal is the removal of English Canada’s “imperfections” - in other words, the total assimilation of English Canada into the larger North America culture.”⁴⁴ A collection of essays by a group of Canadian thinkers influenced by Bailyn and Pocock has come out to challenge the Hartz-Horowitz account of Canada, and either to recast as negatives those characteristics that comprise the Tory touch, or deny there is any notable distinction at all between the two political cultures. They claim,

The challenge to nineteenth-century liberalism arose from a republican ideology on the political left, rather than Toryism on the right. The formative influence in Canada’s past was not solely liberalism, or the combination of liberalism and Tory conservatism, but a lively opposition between liberalism and a civic republican philosophy with a progressive agenda.⁴⁵

Their scholarly historical study has an explicit practical purpose. They hope that in reviving the overlooked republican tradition they will dispel the “culture of distrust” that has enveloped Canadian politics and invite a greater will to political participation.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, in their haste to rescue Canada’s civic participation, these new contextualists have borrowed a mythology that erases the distinction between Canada and the U.S. Just as Bailyn and Pocock erased the Lockeanism that distinguished the U.S. and replaced it with an amorphous republicanism, Ajzenstat and Smith are taking Canadian history in the same direction. The implicit practical significance of this argument is that there is little or no difference between Canada’s political tradition and that of the U.S., other than the names. If accepted as the authoritative reading of Canada’s political culture and its history, there will be no defence

⁴³ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁵ Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith, eds., *Canada’s Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1997). More recently Ajzenstat published *The Once and Future Canadian Democracy: An Essay in Political Thought* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), in which she further argues that there is no significant distinction between Canadian and U.S. political culture, though here she replaces civic republicanism with romanticism. She has also co-edited with Paul Romney, Ian Gentles and William D. Gairdner a selection of foundational political documents, *Canada’s Founding Debates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). The latter is a bold example of strategic editing.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3, 8.

against the loaded questions, “Why does Canada have different policies on taxation, health care, welfare, employment and culture than its wealthy and powerful soul mate to the south?” And, ultimately, “Do we need a border separating Canada and the U.S.?”

These new Canadian republicans have overlooked the works of many others and build their case on a refutation of Horowitz’s contention that the organic-collectivist aspect is inherited from Canada’s Tory tradition.⁴⁷ They view the definitive struggle of emerging liberal democracies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one between republicans and Lockeans. “When the searchlight of this new outlook is turned on Canadian political history it indeed finds little evidence of Tory conservatism in Canada’s past or in Canadian political culture today. Toryism is being read out of the ideological temple.”⁴⁸ Whereas Hartz’s success at revealing general ideological themes that distinguish different political cultures rested on his comparative method, the republican thesis is built upon a miscellaneous collection of data which, by force of imported ideas and creative thinking, is made to conform to a republican framework. The results of these creative efforts range from the unlikely to the monstrous.⁴⁹ They pick up Bailyn and Pocock’s republican tinted speculum and look for republican traces in Canada’s intellectual history. The trouble is that republicanism is and has been present in European political thought for over two thousand years and even more so since the Renaissance. It has been a basic element of the political atmosphere and can hardly be regarded as a distinguishing factor unless it is intentionally isolated from all other influences. Whether or not republicanism is present in modern political discourse ought not to be a question. The question is whether other ideological influences are in play and to what extent? Must Whigs, Tories and socialists really be read out of the history books?⁵⁰

Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith spearhead the group, refuting Horowitz’s claim that feudal Toryism has had a formative impact on Canadian culture, by dubbing those who have

⁴⁷They do mention the work of William Christian and Colin Campbell, but this is quickly dismissed with a cursory reference to Kenneth McRae and David Bell’s argument that the Loyalists were “not bearers of a strain of Tory conservatism, but typical bourgeois liberals, like most citizens of the United States in the Revolutionary era.” *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁹ For the monstrous, see the surprisingly regressive essay by Rainer Knopff, “The Triumph of Liberalism in Canada: Laurier on Representation and Party of Government.” This triumph of liberalism is effectively a triumph of tyranny. He celebrates the most rudimentary and coarse form of liberalism and attributes it to Wilfred Laurier and Canada’s party system. While the other advocates of the republicanization of Canada adhered to some notion of human virtue, Knopff is less sanguine. Laurier and Canada, he says in “Triumph,” are Hobbesian.

⁵⁰ It is interesting to note that the artwork on the cover of *Canada’s Origins* consists of brief sentences on a red background. They read, “Canada is a toothpick on the dashboard of a pickup truck. Canada is a cigarette. Canada is a table filled with beer....” The list goes on. This in itself could be a criticism of the book’s approach to intellectual history. If one looks closely enough, Canada can be anything and everything to the point of being nothing in particular. The concern of Hartz and others is to identify the large overarching themes.

constituted Canada's elite "capitalist robber barons."⁵¹ The Christian morality and sense of *noblese oblige* that historians understood to be the elite's ideological foundation are replaced with the self-interest of capitalism, thus recasting them all as Canadian J.P. Morgans. Horowitz's effort to salvage the worthwhile facets of Canadian conservatism is dismissed as clinging to an impotent myth. While Ajzenstat and Smith share the view that Toryism is insignificant to Canada, they disagree on whether liberalism or civic republicanism is the dominant or most valuable strain in Canadian political culture. Azjenstat argues that Canada was founded on the competing vision of populist democrats, constitutionalists and Lockean liberals. Smith argues that the primary strains included civic humanism, natural jurisprudence and commercialism. Central to Smith's argument is the notion that John Locke was not the fountainhead for North American liberalism.

Smith contends that there was a competition between commercialism and civic humanism, which he describes as the "dialectic of wealth and virtue." This dialectic repeated itself in Canada and the U.S. In Canada, the capitalist elite were known as "Tories," though they held no similarities to Britain's pre-capitalist Toryism.⁵² Canada's Tories may have valued order, authority and hierarchy, as Horowitz maintains, but only to support their position of privilege and their principal interests - trade, commerce and empire.⁵³ In other words, these were Whigs for whom liberty meant "social liberty, the freedom to add to one's economic and cultural resources."⁵⁴ Political participation was reserved for the wealthy elite. Smith believes Canada's civic humanist, republican position was represented by the Reformers who valued democracy and responsible government. These were Canada's republicans who advocated civic virtue and universal education, but they were not history's winners. Smith contends that the major force behind Canadian confederation of 1867 was the desire of the "robber barons" to have a strong central government that would better facilitate trade and commerce while maintaining political stability. For him, Tories were mere statist keeping government beyond the reach of the people. Nevertheless, despite their contrary views, over time the republicans and the robber barons began to overlap in a peculiar melange that foils any effort to isolate identifiable groups today.⁵⁵

Azjenstat agrees with Smith that civic republicanism has played a role in the formation of Canada, but she argues that it is not as important as the role of liberalism or liberal constitutionalism.⁵⁶ She believes Smith is "wrong to see Upper Canada's conservatism as little more than a justification of patronage and privilege."⁵⁷ She presents Lord Durham and John Beverly Robinson as notable exceptions whose conservatism was informed by strong and

⁵¹ *Origins*, 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

cherished liberal values. They sought solutions to Canada's political divisiveness. They were not Tories promoting a feudalistic notion of an organic-collective society; they were liberals concerned with protecting social stability and individual rights and freedoms through the establishment of a democratic political system that would reign in the destabilizing influence of populist parties. According to Ajzenstat, Durham and Robinson criticized populist leaders for deceiving and exploiting their followers to further their own ambition. To curtail this, Durham and Robinson proposed to institute a popular house while ensuring moderation would prevail. For Robinson this meant restricting the power of the popular house to voting on money bills. For Durham, this meant a mixed constitution where in the political executive is distinct from the popular house, thus curtailing a tyranny of the majority.

In another contribution, Ajzenstat examines the ideologies of Etienne Parent and Joseph Howe. She argues that they represent an important strain of constitutionalism that struggled against the populist democratic movements of Papineau and Mackenzie. In their efforts, Parent and Howe sought a responsible government within a parliamentary system rather than the Jacksonian democracy of the US.⁵⁸ Ajzenstat's constitutionalism is a synthesis of Locke's individual equality and a mixed constitution. Her argument ends with the disconcerting conclusion - at least from a Canadian nationalist's point of view - that Canada did not have "a cultural or national character markedly different from that of the US."⁵⁹

Refuting the Canadian Republican Thesis

Jeremy Rayner accuses Smith and Ajzenstat of distorting the past to fit the present.⁶⁰ Rayner argues that the basis for their historical methodology is sound, but they fail to stick to it. The method involves studying the history of ideas by considering them in light of "the rules and conditions that made them meaningful to those to whom they were directed."⁶¹ Rayner argues that Ajzenstat and Smith, among others, use this method up to a point then corrupt any good work they might have done by discussing their discoveries in terms of "a grand atemporal context masquerading as an historical context, the great tradition of western political thought, thereby contributing to a gigantic anachronism."⁶² They subordinate the past to fit the present by imposing contemporary categories on the people they study, such as the liberal-communitarian debate.⁶³ This present-centredness results in one or all of three major distortions. It either creates a past in the image of the present, discusses occurrences in terms of present categories that were absent, or allows preconceptions to determine what parts of the past are important thus putting

⁵⁸ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁰ Jeremy Rayner, "The Very Idea of Canadian Political Thought: In Defence of Historicism," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol.26, 2 (Summer 1991).

⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

⁶² Ibid., 14.

⁶³ Ibid., 11.

the cart before the horse, the conclusion before the evidence. The sources are thus transformed by the assumptions that were “smuggled into the process of sifting and assembling the ‘evidence.’”⁶⁴ Historical figures and their works are rescued from history and tailored to fit a given thesis within a contemporary debate, such as the presence of a civic republican tradition in Canada, in an effort to reconcile the conflict between liberalism and communitarianism.

Blinded by their efforts to impose the present on the past, Ajzenstat and Smith overlook the importance of Hegelian and British Idealism to Canada’s intellectual history. Idealism played a far larger role in promoting a holistic conception of society than the form of republicanism Bailyn attributes to the U.S. Ajzenstat and Smith obscure the existence of Canada’s idealist tradition by following Bailyn and Pocock’s misreading of American political culture and adapting it to dismiss Hartz-Horowitz. Though Horowitz’s article has been criticized before, until now, even Horowitz’s critics appreciated that he was on to something.⁶⁵ Consequently, Ajzenstat and Smith are left seeking what is not there, and blind to what is. Had they followed Horowitz’s Tory touch argument, they may have been open to the philosophical transformation this Toryism took in the late nineteenth-century.

The idealists were enormously influential both within universities and in public affairs.⁶⁶ They offered a system of thought that unified conservative,⁶⁷ Christian, monarchical leanings with a socially progressive agenda. They adhered to certain key liberal principles, but only within the precepts of idealism as it was inherited from the British Idealists who in turn borrowed from the Germans.⁶⁸ One clear voice for this conservatism whose work played a formative role in the maturation of Canadian politics was that of Canadian philosopher John Watson (1847-1939), one of the many students of the British Idealists to immigrate to Canada to teach. Watson had an enormous influence on Canada through his work in developing the principles for the United Church, his impact on the teaching of moral philosophy, and his training of the country’s elite. Unlike his idealist colleagues in the U.S., Watson and other Canadian Idealists could move their ideology into the mainstream because the country was open to an organic collectivist conception of community that promoted human freedom with that framework. Canadians were committed to a certain political system, but one that welcomed divergent ideological influences. Intellectual historians such as A.B. McKillop, Leslie Armour and Doug Owrarn have done

⁶⁴Ibid., 11-12.

⁶⁵See H.D. Forbes, “Hartz-Horowitz at Twenty: Nationalism, Toryism and Socialism in Canada and the United States,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XX:2 (June 1987).

⁶⁶Though there were many prominent Hegelian Idealists in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it did not achieve the same degree of mainstream success. For more on this, see Frances A. Harmon, *The Social Philosophy of the St. Louis Hegelians* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), and William H. Goetzmann, ed., *The American Hegelians: An Intellectual Episode in the History of Western America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).

⁶⁷Using “conservatism” here as a term for a type of Burkean liberalism that values traditional institutions and gradual social reform.

⁶⁸It is worth noting that beginning with Hegel and Schelling, idealism has indeed looked to the example of the civic republicanism of the classical world, but this is only another part of their system and does not nearly account for its holistic perspective.

extensive research in this area and revealed that idealism gave twentieth century Canada its uniquely communitarian ethos.⁶⁹ So why do Ajzenstat and Smith merely mention Watson in an endnote in their introduction? They suggest that, “Watson’s ideas and influence merit further study by Canadian political theorists.”⁷⁰ Why have they not followed their own advice?

Canadian idealism is a philosophical movement that was brought to Canada in the mid to late nineteenth century by students of the British Idealists. It is critical of classical liberalism’s conception of the self as an atomized individual whose membership to society is only through self-interest and a contract. Idealists conceive of individual fulfillment as the realization of rational autonomy, which necessarily involves acknowledging the self as embedded in a particular historical and cultural moral framework, and intersubjectively united with others in society through the common ethical project and a deep need for recognition. Freedom, or autonomy, involves rationally engaging with the ethical life of one’s society. Idealists oppose the empiricist approach to human nature, as with Locke’s theory of natural right, and conceive of reason as combining the concept and the concrete. Idealism had a receptive audience in Canada at a time when a traditional Christian and agrarian society struggled to make sense of the world being increasingly moved by the materialist philosophies that accompanied industrialization. This idealism has a contemporary presence in the work of Charles Taylor, among others. For instance, Taylor’s conception of community is an example of the traditional idealist project. His theory of deep diversity is meant to reconcile the principal conflicting modern ontologies, such as those that underlie substantive and procedural formulas for citizenship, which is a reformulation of the Hegelian project to reconcile the Romantic holistic society and the Enlightenment contractualist state. Another important aspect of this idealism is the defence of positive liberty and the criticism of atomism. These political views are anchored by an epistemology and theory of agency that acknowledges the formative role of culture (ideas) on identity. For the Idealist, freedom is more than the absence of obstacles to one’s pursuit of satisfying sensory appetites, but involves a commitment to a social whole that includes an ethical horizon that is integral to one’s own fulfillment.

By overlooking the idealist tradition, Ajzenstat and Smith make an ironic mistake. Unaware of Taylor’s debt to this tradition, they invoke his arguments to justify their interpretation and approach. They claim that Taylor promotes republicanism as a solution to the modern malaise of citizens who feel disconnected from their political community.⁷¹ In fact, one gets the impression that Taylor’s work was the impetus for their arguments and that they believed they were following his lead when they sifted through Canadian history looking for influential republicans. In “Cross Purposes: The Liberal Communitarian Debate,” Taylor portrays the Quebec crisis as a conflict between Rousseauian and Lockean political cultures. He also shows how these two views need not be mutually exclusive and that even the liberalism of the United States, with the influence of civic republicanism, entails a holistic conception of

⁶⁹ For a short overview of this line of research, see my “Canada’s Philosophical Idealism: Tracing and Defending its History.” Request a copy from: rmeynell@uottawa.ca. This does not necessarily contradict Horowitz’s thesis, particularly if it could be shown that it was Canada’s Tories who embraced Watson’s teachings.

⁷⁰ *Origins*, 18.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

community and therefore can afford to be tolerant of a culture that has a Rousseauian sense of a general will.

Ajzenstat and Smith claim to be agreeing with Taylor that the current political malaise is aggravated by the rise of a rights based liberalism and that this can be overcome by reviving the “communitarian-republican element in the Canadian political tradition.”⁷² But neither in “Cross Purposes” nor in his other writings does Taylor suggest that Canada is republican or that it could benefit from becoming republican. He clearly states that he discusses republicanism only to illustrate to those who support American procedural liberalism that a holistic conception of community and a notion of positive liberty does not threaten the integrity of the “American way.” He hopes to show that republicans need not fear his communitarianism, and he also seeks to explain that the liberal-communitarian debate must be approached and settled on the level of ontology.⁷³ In fact, in “Cross Purposes” and elsewhere, Taylor explicitly asserts that republicanism could not work in Canada because it would conflict with the national culture of Quebec.⁷⁴ Moreover, when Taylor mentions the presence of Lockean procedural liberalism in Canada outside Quebec, he presents it as a foreign American import,⁷⁵ thus refuting the other half of Ajzenstat and Smith’s depiction of Canada.

In addition to mistaking Taylor’s position regarding republicanism, Ajzenstat and Smith ignore his recommendation to study these issues on an ontological level. Whereas Taylor concerns himself with questions of identity, they approach the problems of community politics by first imposing their republican-liberal thesis on the political writings of a few historical figures, such as Lord Duhram, John Beverley Robinson, William Lyon Mackenzie, and John A. Macdonald. They then extrapolate arguing that they have defined Canada as a whole. Ultimately, Ajzenstat concludes that Canada has been formed by constitutionalists and therefore fits the procedural model, whereas Smith tries to keep hold of the holistic view of community by concluding that Canada is truly republican. They eventually delve into ontology by accident. In their dialogical concluding chapter they face off, forcing one another to address the questions that their arguments beg, and thus push one another into ontological waters that seem to be too deep for them. Ajzenstat criticizes Smith for attempting to cling to collectivism by asserting that Canada must be procedural because there is no distinction between Canada and the U.S. Smith responds with Taylor’s republican patriotism argument, arguing that citizens must identify with the common purpose of the state for society to flourish. This argument is effective, so Ajzenstat retreats into an as yet unmentioned defeatist Straussian conclusion about moral relativism and the decline of Western civilization. However, she wins a point by arguing that republicanism has a homogenizing effect on pluralistic societies. Then Smith too becomes despondent, craving a better form of communitarianism. He dreams of a model that can accommodate liberalism,

⁷² Ibid., 12.

⁷³ Charles Taylor, “Cross Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate,” *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MASS: Harvard University Press, 1995), 202.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 203. Also see, “Why do Nations Have to Become States?” and “Impediments to a Canadian Future,” *Reconciling the Solitudes* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 40, 50, 199.

⁷⁵ *Reconciling*, 25, 94-5, 127, 174.

somehow failing to appreciate the lengths to which Taylor has gone to provide exactly that in his notion of deep diversity. In the end, their deontological neo-new contextualism leads them to conclusions that cannot withstand their own honest analysis.

There are two things to keep in mind when reading the works from the Azjenstat-Smith school of Canadian political thought. First, their methodology allows them to construct a new mythology, and second, the myths they have constructed serve to suppress Canada's distinctive intellectual history in favour of cultural and, ultimately, political continentalism. I do not suggest that their research is disingenuous, but only that their method allows them to disregard historical realities that do not fit their assumptions. So if their political views are largely informed by an American dominated political theory discourse, it is natural that their present-centred view of the past will reflect that. In some cases, they not only begin with American assumptions, but they borrow the formulas of American historians, such Pocock and Bailyn, and impose them on Canadian history. For instance, they recast the United Empire Loyalists as displaced American liberals. In approaching history this way, they not only repeat Bailyn's mistake with respect to Hartz, but they do not meet the methodological standard set by Bailyn.

One valuable element they have disregarded is the role of idealism in Canadian history. Had they been open to seeing it, not only would they have been obliged to reconsider their interpretation of those figures they studied, but they would come out with a very different sense of Canada's political culture, one that is importantly different from that of the United States, and one that, despite its many flaws, manages to avoid the tendency toward absolutism that has continually plagued the American struggle to live up to its own liberal standards.

Conclusion

Ours is a time of increasing pressure for deep North American integration, just as the troubles that inspired Hartz forty years ago seem to have returned with a vengeance in the U.S. How we conceive of human agency, freedom, and the role of government in the market determines how we arrange our society. The positive freedom of the idealists and the negative liberty of classical liberalism will bring forth radically different policies on matters including health care, market regulation, and tolerance of difference. If the Hartz-Horowitz thesis is correct, and if it is true that liberal absolutism is once more run amok in the U.S., then it is increasingly important to remember what it is that has distinguished Canada that we may nurture it and be prepared to answer the query, "Why is Canada a separate country anyway?" It is important to remember that the Tory touch laid a foundation in Canada for tolerance of competing ideologies. Hartz is being restored in American political thought. Hartz-Horowitz should be restored in Canadian political thought, and with it should come further analysis of the road Canada has traveled since Confederation and the importance Idealism has played in its political development.