

sharply between Newton and Bacon and between Emerson and Rousseau; it was Bacon and Rousseau, he believed, whose philosophies were at the root of the contemporary malaise. Though Newton is a controversial figure for Pontynen and Miller, he was not for Babbitt. And while Babbitt sometimes criticized Emerson's romantic leanings, he repeatedly emphasized his own intellectual indebtedness to Emerson (see, for example, his introduction to *Rousseau and Romanticism* [Transaction, 1991], lxix–lxx). The most striking omission, especially for commentators claiming Babbitt as an ally against “the positivism of fact” and “the positivism of feeling,” is the failure to mention that Babbitt proudly labeled himself “a complete positivist” in contrast to “the incomplete positivist, the man who is positive only according to the natural law.” In explaining his kind of positivism, Babbitt affirmed a view of science directly contrary to that held by Pontynen and Miller: “I hold that one should not only welcome the efforts of the man of science at his best to put the natural law on a positive and critical basis, but that one should strive to emulate him in one's dealing with the human law; and so become a complete positivist” (ibid., lxxi, lxxii).

Though Pontynen and Miller are primarily concerned with “conflicts over the nature of science and reason,” as their subtitle puts it, they make use of their professional expertise in art history to demonstrate the ways in which the arts, especially painting and architecture, illustrate reigning notions about morality and ultimate reality. The erudition of the authors in the most diverse fields is impressive, and their ambition is great, but it seems doubtful that *Western Civilization at the American Crossroads* will be recognized as a work worthy to rank with the critiques of figures such as George Santayana, Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, and Irving Babbitt, let alone one that takes their thought to a higher level. Pontynen and Miller's concluding call to “rededicate ourselves” to an “optimistic ontology” by embracing a “purposeful scientific rationalism” that is “Incarnational” (365) seems likely to go unheeded.

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AN INVENTED TRADITION

Robert Meynell: *Canadian Idealism and the Philosophy of Freedom: C. B. Macpherson, George Grant, and Charles Taylor*. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011. Pp. xv, 303.)

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Jack Layton, who died in August 2011, was the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada. In his foreword to the book under review Layton mentioned

the influence that Charles Taylor (b. 1931) of McGill, C. B. Macpherson (1911–1987) of the University of Toronto, and George Grant (1918–1987) of Dalhousie and McMaster Universities had on him. (For the record, I also taught Layton when we were both at York University in Toronto.) One can draw two conclusions from Layton's observation. The first is that the world of Canadian political philosophy constitutes a very small village. The second is that, for the most part, it is located on the liberal and left side of the political spectrum.

Meynell argued that the three individuals who so influenced a prominent socialist or social-democratic politician were part of a Canadian intellectual tradition, which he called "Canadian Idealism." Members of this tradition share a vision that, he said, is "deeply indebted to the political philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel." Both Taylor and Grant have received a good deal of commentary that emphasizes their nationalism, which in Canada is reflected chiefly in a deep distrust of the United States, and Macpherson's Marxism has likewise received considerable discussion. Meynell argued, however, that the debt of the first two to Hegel has been underemphasized; in the case of Macpherson it has been "universally unrecognized."

Meynell then took thirty pages to summarize Hegel's thought, the centerpiece of which was Hegel's criticism of the Enlightenment, which Meynell identified with a "neo-Enlightenment view" exemplified by Isaiah Berlin, who appeared several times in the narrative in order to be criticized by Macpherson, Grant, and Taylor. In short, Meynell has written a "history of ideas," where "ideas" are conceived as dogmatic entities, like cars on a freight train following one another down the track of Canadian (and Western) history. The chief problem with a history of ideas, apart from the abstract nature of the exercise, is that one must make Procrustean adjustments when the recalcitrant evidence refuses to fit.

Thus Macpherson, who scarcely mentioned Hegel in his writings and who often claimed not to understand him, "unwittingly engaged in the restoration of the original and much maligned Hegel," which he "received second-hand" from his teachers at the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics. Macpherson himself however traced his own intellectual genealogy to J. S. Mill, T. H. Green, and, of course, Marx. Meynell ignored the only book Macpherson wrote on Canada, a condescending, hostile, and Marxist analysis of Social Credit in Alberta. His exegesis of Macpherson's other work was innocent of close textual analysis but abounded in general references and citations of secondary texts.

Turning to George Grant, Meynell found similar "misreadings of Grant's intellectual development." Those who have done the misreading include just about anyone who has written on Grant, "and George Grant himself." According to these erroneous interpreters (including Grant), his "Hegelian" period ended with the publication of *Philosophy in the Mass Age* (1959). Meynell disagreed and thus claimed to have understood Grant better than Grant understood himself. He did so, moreover, without the bother of showing that he understood Grant on Grant's own terms.

And so, for example, Meynell argued that the influence of Leo Strauss on Grant was emotional rather than intellectual: "Leo Strauss put an end to Grant's optimism. On reading Strauss, Grant fell into a funk" because Strauss's teaching "turned Grant's story of Canada from a comedy into a tragedy," inspiring Grant's famous tract *Lament for a Nation* (1965), which according to Meynell was expanded to a lament for "Western civilization as a whole." Likewise Grant's splendid analysis of the Strauss-Kojève discussion of Xenophon's *On Tyranny* was dismissed as trivial because "Kojève was wrong about Hegel" and "misrepresents" him (Meynell takes three pages to discuss 597 pages of Kojève's line-by-line analysis of Hegel's 581-page *Phänomenologie des Geistes*) whereas Strauss "is in agreement with Hegel's philosophy of history" because Strauss (as Hegel) wrote of ancients and moderns. At this point, one is likely to throw up one's hands in despair, except that Meynell still had to deal with Taylor.

Here at least there is a surface plausibility of Hegel's influence because Taylor himself would acknowledge a continuing interest in Hegel. Unfortunately, Meynell's discussion of Taylor's writings on Canadian politics was uncritical. For example, Taylor's notion of "deep diversity," which applied to French-speaking Canadians and to Indians, made the diversity of Indo-Canadians, or Chinese-Canadians or even Ukrainian-Canadians, not deep but shallow. Meynell also accepted at face value Taylor's proposal "that we accept having more than one formula for citizenship" without understanding or acknowledging how divisive (because insulting) such a proposal must be for second-class citizens.

Indeed, the least satisfactory part of Meynell's book followed from his assumptions regarding the grounds of Canadian political life and what is often referred to as "Canadian identity." As did Grant and Macpherson, Meynell considered "Canadian identity" to be a real entity and on its basis was able to discover a great caesura at the time of the rebellion of the thirteen colonies: they "chose violent revolution" whereas the "Canadian colonies purposely chose loyalty to the Crown." The last statement is misleading insofar as the two colonies of the St. Lawrence Valley, Upper and Lower Canada, were pretty much indifferent to the rebellion and the most important colony of what later became Canada, Nova Scotia, was both invited to send delegates to Philadelphia and was the home to "neutral Yankees" whose neutrality was ensured by the large Royal Navy base at Halifax. For Meynell, however, the division between Loyalists and Patriots was fundamental because it allowed him to raise the "natural" question: "which country turned out better?" In his opinion, "a more collectivist national spirit" in Canada provides an answer to this fundamentally meaningless and in no way natural question.

With respect to those who understood Canadian intellectual history and the political division between the United States and Canada on rather different grounds, Meynell again indulged a regrettable tendency to pronounce ex cathedra judgments on their arguments. Such individuals made "major

missteps" or "common errors" and "erroneous interpretations"; but he did not supply detailed analysis and refutation of, for example, Janet Ajzenstat and Peter Smith, J. G. A. Pocock, or Bernard Bailyn.

Apart from the hitherto unpublished biographical information regarding Taylor's early years as a schoolboy at Trinity College School or his university career at McGill and his time as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, the significance of Meynell's book is that, on Hegelian grounds, it reflects accurately the parochial perspective of Ontario intellectuals at a time when their province was undergoing a painful dislocation and decline. The former economic, political, and spiritual center of Canada, which once had a dominant and self-sufficient understanding of its own prominence in the country akin, in the American context, say, to that of New York and New England, has had to make some fundamental adjustments, much as New Yorkers had to acknowledge the importance of Texas or California. Meynell's effort to salvage a modicum of political self-respect was to invent the tradition of Canadian Idealism. Other Canadians, including this reviewer, prefer, as did Hegel, to acknowledge the reasonableness of reality.

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CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENTS

Bill Kissane: *New Beginnings: Constitutionalism and Democracy in Modern Ireland*. (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011. Pp. xix, 200.)

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Bill Kissane's *New Beginnings: Constitutionalism and Democracy in Modern Ireland* provides a rich historical overview of Ireland's twentieth-century constitutional development. The book successfully employs the Irish case to analyze broader empirical, theoretical, and normative issues associated with establishing and preserving effective and stable democratic regimes. To this end, the book engages five "constitutional moments": three deal with the successive stages of Ireland's fight for independence from Britain that culminated in de Valera's 1937 constitution; one explores political unrest in Northern Ireland and social changes in the Republic between 1969 and 1974; and the final one addresses the 1998 Belfast agreement which altered institutional arrangements in the North and consolidated peace in that part of Ireland. The detailed historical account of these constitutional moments provides a useful framing to examine critical junctures in Ireland's political development. Though the narrative is engaging, at times